

# Women's Reproductive Experiences: Islamic Values on Local Wisdom at Kampung Naga, West Java

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Keywords: Reproductive Health, Values, Women.

Abstract: The fulfilment of reproductive health is the rights of all member of the community in term of information and facilities. Women are the most affected because of experiencing prolong reproductive process. A unique experiences shown in Kampung Naga, a community that still preserve traditional and cultural heritage, in accordance with women's experiences of reproductive health. This article attempts to investigate Islamic values in women's reproductive experiences in Kampung Naga. This study employs qualitative method that contains both: fieldwork and textual study. For fieldwork, feminist ethnography with in depth interview will be utilised to gather data in more egalitarian relationship between researchers and respondents. For textual study, hermeneutical approach is suitable for critical analysis on Islamic texts related to reproductive health. This research shows that women experiences of reproductive health are influenced by both Islamic values and cultural traditions. This is evidence from their practices related to reproductive health: menstruation, courtship, marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeed and menopause that refer to Islamic rituals and traditions. Although, there are also some traditional practices that seems incompatible with Islam, they still preserve both practices simultaneously.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Reproductive rights according to ICDP (International Conference on Development and Population) is "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters related to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes" (UNFA, 2014). Thus, reproductive rights include not only related to physical health but also related to psychological and social aspects of someone's life. Information related to reproductive rights is important to be given to man and more so to woman who experienced more on reproductive experiences than man do. Woman should understand reproductive information related to their bodies and know better how their bodies work. This information could prevent them from experiencing unhealthy and dangerous situation related to their reproductive functions.

The government and the society in general is responsible for the fulfilment of women's reproductive rights. However, the socialisation on information related to women's reproductive rights in Indonesia is still low and limited. It can be showed

from the data on SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) since 2016 to 2030 to be achieved one of them is to decrease maternal mortality which still high in several areas in Indonesia. In several areas in Indonesia, especially remote area, information on reproductive rights for women is still limited due to geographical difficulty and lack of government commitment on this issue. Besides, many ethnics in Indonesia should be considered in giving information on reproductive issues by accommodating local wisdom. It is related to the strategy on how the issues of reproductive health and rights could be received and understood effectively among those communities who still preserve cultural traditions and their ancestor values. One of the area in West Java that still honouring and preserving the cultural tradition and living the way their ancestors values is Kampung Naga.

Kampung Naga is located in municipal of Tasikmalaya in Southern part of Bandung, capital city of West Java. There are approximately 300 people living in this village. Living in this village, they should follow the norms and values they learned from their ancestors. The people in this village usually perform certain rituals to honour their ancestors.

Interestingly, the people of Kampung Naga although they are living their ancestors' ways of life, they are also adhering to a religion, namely Islam. Almost all the people of Kampung Naga is Muslim and they are also a good Muslim. They perform regulations stipulated in religious prescriptions. Thus, it is interesting to investigate on how they could preserve their ancestor's norms while at the same time implementing Islamic values in their lives.

Research on Kampung Naga have been conducted by several scholars on various aspects. For example, Iryana (2014) explores the rituals performed by people in Kampung Naga and their myth believed by them. Other researchers like Misno and Prawiro (2015) investigate life cycles' rituals from birth to death and its significant. Ningrum (2012) look at the spirit that mobilised the people of Kampung Naga in keeping and performing their tradition up to now. Research by Hermawan (2014) and Ramelan and Handayani (2009) investigate architectural building in Kampung Naga. This research show how the people of Kampung Naga always consider the nature in building their houses, the use of material that available from nature, the shapes and the space between the houses. Other research on Kampung Naga as tourist destination have been conducted by Aqsha (2013) and Kusnandar (2013), these researches show that in Kampung Naga all the traditions should be maintained and preserved because they have great local wisdom and become an interesting site to visit.

From the above mentioned researches conducted by several scholars, there have no research related to women's experiences of their reproductive health and rights. Thus this research attempts to investigate women's experiences of reproductive health and rights and to analyse between Islamic values and local wisdom in those experiences. This research aims at understanding women's experiences related to their reproductive capacity and to know which values they influenced related to reproduction. By understanding values reside in reproductive experiences of women in Kampung Naga hope to give inspiration for other places to be implemented.

This research also aims to give recommendation for government in giving information to the community where traditional norms and religious values influenced their daily life. By accommodating both values, the community could better accept and understand the government's goal in giving important knowledge on reproductive health and rights.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

This research employs qualitative method adopting interdisciplinary study that is combining between religious text analysis on one side and fieldwork on the other side. In qualitative research, the study includes not only try to understand and document the life of the people being researched, but also how the researcher involved in the interaction with the participants (Leavy, 2014). Data collection in fieldwork for this research use in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The fieldwork is inspired by feminist ethnography which suggests to interact with participants in a less hierarchical and exploitative manner (Oakley, 1981; Chiseri, 1996). Employing feminist ethnography in research on women's experiences could contribute to the understanding of women's voices to be considered and to be part of knowledge. The primary participants are ten Women aged between 20 to 50 years old with different educational background.

Textual study for this research employs hermeneutical approach to understand Islamic values on reproductive health and rights. Hermeneutics emphasizes understanding the text not only to its literal meaning but also to its contextual understanding (Wadud, 1999; Rahman, 1982). By employing both methods could gather data on Islamic values identified in women's reproductive experiences comprehensively.

The data is analysed using descriptive analysis in thematically order related to women's reproductive capacity in their lifecycle. The process includes transcribing, categorisation in thematically order and data analysis. Critical examination is used to the content of Islamic texts used as the basis for their understanding in reproductive practices.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Understanding Women's Reproductive Health and Rights in Kampung Naga: Contesting between Islamic Values and Local Practices

As stated above, reproductive health and rights covers every aspect related to not only physical but also mental and social wellbeing of human reproductive functions. Especially so, women are the most affected person related to reproduction because biologically, women's body are more complicated than that of men.

Besides, women's experiences of reproduction are not limited to their period of pregnancy and delivery but along the lifecycle of their life. Since birth, woman's body is very sensitive to many kinds of unhealthy encounters. Entering puberty, woman's body is being prepared for their reproductive function through menstruation, and should be managed properly in order that their body functioned perfectly. During this period, any harmful practices related to reproductive organs could jeopardize their physical and even mental health. These harmful practices include: unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, sexual violence and many others that can cause detrimental health consequences.

The result of this study shows that apart from preserving local tradition, the women in kampung naga also influenced by islamic values in their reproductive experience. Both practices will be explaining in detail below.

### 3.2 Islamic Values on Women's Reproductive Health and Rights

Islam as a way of life regulate many aspects of human 's life including the issue of reproduction. There are many Islamic teachings derived from primary Islamic sources: The Qur'an and Hadith that contain reproductive health and rights. Several of them related to: menstruation (Q.S. 2: 222): during this period woman should be treated nicely because she is experiencing uncomfortable condition related to bleeding include in it should free from having sex, pregnancy (Q.S. 22: 5): during this time woman should be taken care of by providing her with healthy food, maintenance and housing, childbirth and breastfeed: Islam regulate the period the baby should be breastfeed. In addition, Islam regulate that to get married one should reach 'aqil baligh' (thoughtful and mature). This requirement means to be mature not only physically but also mentally. This regulation could also mean to avoid early marriage. Islam also forbid *zina* (fornication, adultery) and gives sanction for the perpetrator (Q. 17: 32; 24: 2 – 3).

Islamic values derived from those texts are significantly usefull to be implemented in Muslim society. These Islamic values can be a good and rich sources for those who intend to promote reproductive health and rights. Bennett (2007) suggests that religious values and cultural norms should be considered when giving information related to reproductive health and rights. This suggestion is exactly what we did for our research related to Islamic values and cultural norms that are preserved in the life of women in Kampung Naga.

### 3.3 Combining Values: Islam and Local Wisdom Related to Reproductive Health and Rights in Kampung Naga

Kampung Naga is one region in West Java which still preserve the life traditions passed by their ancestors. Uniquely, a part from honouring their ancestors' way of life, they also considered a devoted adherents of Islam. They combine Islamic values and cultural traditions in their daily life in their society. Besides the taboo (*pamali*) term internalised in their life that should be avoided, they are also concerned with Islamic regulation of prohibition and permission. Here are some of the example: *Zina and Marriage*.

As mentioned earlier, Islam forbid *zina* (illicit sex) out side lawful marriage. The people of kampung Naga very concerned with the concept of *zina* in Islam. Never did in Kampung Naga ever experienced a girl or a woman fell pregnant before married. In Kampung Naga, courtship is not forbidden but only allowed for whom has reached 17 years old. And surprisingly, in this village they get married when they reach 18 to 20 years old. Those, almost never showed found child marriage case.

#### *Menstruation*

During menstruation, woman has limited access if not forbidden to entering the mosque and performing religious rituals like praying (*sholat*) and fasting (*puasa*) as stated in Islamic prescriptions. Besides, they are also forbidden to have their nail cut and they should gather all their falling hair and to be washed when finish menstruation periode.

#### *Pregnancy*

During pregnancy, the women are protected by several taboo (*pamali*) like forbidden to go out at night (for their safety), instructed to bring/or put pin in their cloth/dress, forbidden to go near the grave, instructed to read the Qur'an and avoid unnecessary words while talking.

People of Kampung Naga respect their traditions and preserve those traditions by practicing them in their life. Most of them are trying not to break the rules stated in their ancestors wisdom.

### 3.4 The Relevance of Local Wisdom of Kampung Naga and Islamic Values

From the above explanations, it is interesting to see how the people of Kampung Naga, Tasikmalaya, West Java who preserved their traditional values from their ancestors also influenced by Islamic values. The majority of people in Kampung Naga is Muslim and they are a good adherent of Islam. Some of their ways

of life is influenced by Islamic values including in reproductive experiences of women in this village. Thus, in this case, traditional values side by side be implemented alongside Islamic values without contradict to each other. Both values are preserved and influenced their daily practices.

In the case of women's reproductive experiences, Kampung Naga protect the women through their terms of taboo/pamali to be obeyed. Several example like their rules of no courtship except for someone who is 17 years old and ready for marriage support the Islamic values of aqil baligh. Other example like the prohibition for pregnant woman to go out at night means as a way of protection of the pregnancy from harmful encounter because in this village no electricity allowed.

The practices of people in Kampung Naga should be respected and can be taken into consideration in giving information related to reproductive health and rights in this region.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

Women's experiences of reproductive health and rights in Kampung Naga statistically is well preserved supported by traditional values respected by all members of the community. All the regulations they obey to is a way of balancing their life in the name of preserving their ancestor's values. Furthermore, they also preserve and respect for implementing the values derived from Islamic texts such as the protection of falling for zina, regulating menstruation, avoiding child marriage, and protecting pregnancy. They did not put both values in contradiction to one another but accommodating both values in their life. For them, both values are influencing their daily interaction with God, among people and with the nature.

This study expects to give contribution for any agencies (government or NGOs) trying to give information on reproductive health and right to also accommodating both values: Islam and local wisdom in Kampung Naga. Recommendation for further studies related to giving information on strategy of women in handling and coping with danger situations related to their reproductive experiences.

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