



# A *Pasung* Case during Twenty Years of Batak Man in Simalungun District, North Sumatera, Indonesia

Fenny Saragih\*, Elmeida Effendy

Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

## Abstract

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**\*Correspondence:** Fenny Aprilia Saragih, Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia. E-mail: [fennyaprilia12@gmail.com](mailto:fennyaprilia12@gmail.com)  
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**BACKGROUND:** In 2019, the Government of Indonesia prioritized mental health programs to achieve a country that is free from *pasung* of psychiatric patients. Whereas based on Basic Health Research, The North Sumatra province since 2017 had 315 cases of people with hallucination, delusion, suspiciousness, confused and disturbed thoughts, and a total of 25 patients have been *pasung* by their own family.

**CASE PRESENTATION:** Here, we report one case adult individual who was *pasung* for 20 years by his poor family in Simalungun District, North Sumatera, Indonesia. He is 41 years old, who never gets formal education at school, has no wife and friends, and who lives with his mother and two brothers. Disorders appeared 20 years ago when he was lost his father, who also likes him were diagnosed with schizophrenia. After his father died, he has many strange behaviors like talk and laughs by himself, anger without cause, hit his family, and when he meets other people besides his family, he immediately attacked them with any objects around him like stones or chopper.

**CONCLUSION:** *Pasung* on psychiatric patients does not cure them but instead increases mental disorders that occur in patients. Family support is needed for patients to heal and prevent recurrence includes support assessment, instrumental, informational, and emotional support.

## Introduction

Schizophrenia is one of the most common mental disorders found in Indonesia. People with this disorder show aggressive behavior; consequently, they often experience physical violence from the family or community on people can take the form of physical restraint or confinement as well *pasung* [1]. The shape of the *pasung* itself, such as chaining or tying the feet or even the hands of someone who has a mental disorder with something such as wood, stakes, or hard objects as a form of restriction of movement, even locks in an empty room so as not to harm the environment [2].

Data from Basic Health Research which one of the national scale research based on community and has been conducted periodically by the Agency of Health Research and Development of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia in 2013 for severe mental disorders such as psychosis disorders in Indonesia, the prevalence is 1.7 per 1000 inhabitants, or more than 400,000 people suffer from mental disorder (psychotic), and the second-highest cases are in North Sumatera Province [3]. The rate of physical restraint and confinement (*pasung*) in people with mental disorders like schizophrenia of 14.3%, or around 57,000 cases, and the since 2017, North Sumatera province has had

315 cases of people with mental disorders, and a total of 25 patients have *pasung* by their own family [4].

The presence of a bad and wrong response to stressors from within or from the environment is the beginning of the onset of mental disorders, which, if sustained and insurmountable, can affect mood and behavior in ways that are in line with the habits, norms of society, and culture embraced by the environment even worsen social functions, education, work to themselves to create a sense of hopelessness, loss of confidence, not even a few who intend to kill themselves [5].

Most cases that occur in Indonesia are part of actions by families that protect their mentally ill members from community violence because they often commit actions that endanger others and the environment, such as beating people, damaging the public environment, throwing things, and shouting to provoke emotions and tantrums from the local community due to the inconvenience caused by family members who have mental disorders. These cases can occur due to weakness and lack of education and a good understanding of mental disorder problems, bad stigma against this disease, and the treatment that people with mental disorders need to the wider community in Indonesia, so the need for an active role of good health servants who are in hospitals and even public health centers [6], [7].

Mental disorder is often associated with hereditary diseases but can also be a syndrome of clinically functional changes in psychological behavior resulting from prolonged stress or disability. To define a mental disorder for sure is not a simple decision; a factor that can be explained as a benchmark to decide whether a person is an affected mental disorder varies from family, self, and even the surrounding environment. In short, if it is concluded that mental disorder affects thoughts, verbal attitudes, abnormal behaviors, either related to physical or mental conditions and which are considered incompatible with the concepts of norms and habits accepted by the community environment [8], [9].

A series of unusual symptoms in people with psychotic disorders make their condition worse. Delusions or hallucinations experienced when symptoms of psychosis appear often go unnoticed; they even consider it real as a result of fear or distress. Paranoid and irritable attitudes often arise against things that do not correspond to his thoughts and feelings. This feeling of uncertainty results in the reluctance to interact socially, work, and even self-care so that it is vulnerable to conflict in the workplace, family, or closest relatives [9].

The total population in Simalungun District in 2017 is 859,228 or 196,49/km<sup>2</sup>, the highest population in the Siantar sub-district is 902 population/km<sup>2</sup>, and Banjar sub-district is 692. population/km<sup>2</sup>. The Government of Indonesia, since 1950, has established a compulsory 6-year basic education program with the target of school participation for every child aged 8–14 years old (Law number 4 of 1950 in conjunction with the number law 12 of 1954) [7].

Literature data show that the low level of education is one of the obstacles in accelerating development. Thus, the level of education is very necessary to improve the welfare of the population. This situation is by the nature of education itself, which is a conscious effort to develop personality and abilities inside and outside school that lasts a lifetime. In 2019, Pure Participant Rate according to education level in Simalungun for primary school is 98.10%, junior high school is 77.26%, senior high school is 67.61%, based on that presentation, there are still children who never get a formal education, 1/8 of 13–15 years old children drop out from junior high school and 1/3 of 16–18 years old children drop out from senior high school [7]. Educational graph of Simalungun district is available in Figure 1.

This study aimed to present the influence of *pasung* by families for cure patients according to structural and cultural aspects.

## Case Presentation

Here, I report a case of a man from Indonesia, North Sumatera Province, Simalungun District, who

was sustained physical restraint or *pasung* for almost his whole life exactly 20 years that the culprit his mother. He is a 41 years old man, who never gets formal education, never being married, and his mother said he seems never to have a close relationship with the opposite sex, even just friends.

Within the course of the 1<sup>st</sup> years, when he was still 19 years old, he has shown strange behavior such as talk and laughs by himself after his father died that according to his mother's confession that her husband was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Before his mother decided to do *pasung* with him when first her son represent strange behavior, she immediately brings him to midwife's practice near their house because the hospital is far from their sub-district. After twice they go there, her son's behavior is not being healed even worse like anger without cause, hit his family, when he meets other people besides his family, he immediately attacked them with any objects around him such as stones or chopper. With forced, even though she has less money but her determination to cure her son, she still takes her son to meet a doctor in the regional hospital without insurance, and he was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

During the day hospital patient was treated with pharmacologic agents (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI), anti-depressive, anti-psychotic, and psycho-stabilizing therapy), which showed modest success, that is, reduction in impulsive behavior; sleep improvement, and reduction in self-harmful behavior. In addition to pharmacology therapy, patients were treated with individual and group psychosocial therapy procedures but without significant success in their normal reintegration in their families, social, and professional environment.

Initially, the state of her son has been better than before, but because she does not have enough money to bring him and difficult to find public transportation and family who can bring him to meet the doctor again, so she immediately stops his treatment just traditional treatment with the shaman and the shaman said that someone had done black magic with him, but unfortunately, they believed with the shaman statement.

His condition is not being healed even worse like before, he has been very troubled in his neighbors, and also all of the families have been busy with their jobs, and no families can take care of him, and she saw other neighbors do *pasung* with their family who has a mental disorder like her son so when he is 20 years old, she decides to do physical restraint or *pasung* too with expectation her son will be healed with the calm situation and far from crowd people.

*Pasung* was done to him by locking him in a room, and sometimes when he shouts in the night so his family will stake him to anything made from wood or hard objects as a form of restriction of movement.

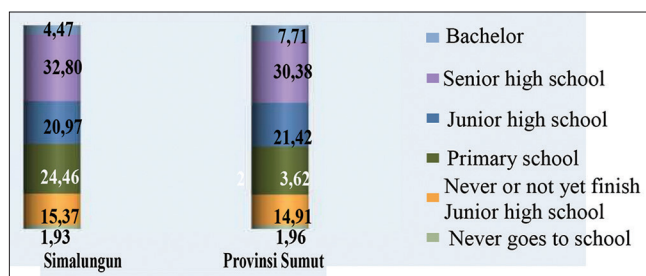


Figure 1: Population over ten years old according to the highest education level in percent

Finally, he was a bit calm down, and his family also neighbors can sleep again; it was done for 20 years, and his mental disorder is severe.

## Discussion

Confinement in a small room or shack those smells, away from the house or near the house, there is no adequate air ventilation, and no lighting is a form of *pasung*. The discovery of a case of *pasung* locked up in a hut in the middle of the rice fields to find the hut should be ten minutes walking distance from home if further traced the family even rarely come to him only in the morning to put water and food that is often left alone not eaten. The length of this cage or *pasung* was found at least 2 years to 21 years [10].

Atrophy of body parts, especially in legs that have been in the long-standing for several years, can make them in pain, have muscle contractures, suffer damage to the bones, face the risk of infectious diseases due to the dirty and smelly *pasung* environment until they fly and the mosquito is engulfed or the risk of death from the abandonment of the family so that the mental healing process is slower and harder to reach. In the absence of verbal and physical contact with the surrounding person, psychosis symptoms such as audio and visual hallucinations become clearer, and the patient seems to create a figure or feel that someone is accompanying him at the place so that the function globally does not increase even decreased [8].

This conflict occurs whichever way the family decides, whether they choose *pasung* or not, as both decisions will have the same burden of consequences. The decision is not an easy one, and the family often goes through a long process in which they consider all the possible consequences. The decisions taken are not easy, often through a long process in which they consider all the possibilities that happen both

badly for their family members. Considered family two things either *pasung* or not, both have the same consequences, if not in *pasung* feared neighbors or the surrounding environment would rage and angry to them if in *pasung* then avoid it. This is the importance of good education to the community [6].

## Conclusion

People with mental disorders should not *pasung* if they get the cure, but the right treatments for mental disorders are psychopharmaceutical therapy, somatic therapy, and therapy modality, so immediately they should get all therapy as soon as possible when diagnosed as a mental disorder like schizophrenia.

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