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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

How does Moslem Community Apply the Tahneek to the babies?

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ABSTRACT

Background. Midwives as health practicioners are expected to give the best practices which are based on proves, such as initiation to pre breast feeding and exclusive breast milk. In the other hand, midvives are also expected to apply the cultural sensitivity care which is focused on the fact that women are the representation of midwives' care philosophy, where Moslem community choose to feed dates to their new born babies.
Aim: To explore the description of tahneek application conducted by Moslem to their new born babies.
Method. Qualitative research with phenomenologic approach was conducted in this study. The data collecting was done by conducting thorough interviews in June 2016 in Bojong Kulur sub district. The sample was done using purposive sampling technique. The thorough interviews involved 21 participants. The data verification was carried out using data triangulation.
Result. Findings of this study described the time for conducting the tahneek, the person who conducted the tahneek, frequency of feeding, the substance used, preparation before conducting the tahneek, how to masticate or chew dates, amount of dates which should be prepared for the baby, the use of hands and fingers, how to conduct tahneek, and the breast feeding after conducting tahneek.
Conclusion. There were still some differences in conducting the tahneek in Moslem society. The decision on what should be done while conducting the tahneek was based on the beliefs of the person who conducted the tahneek.
Keywords: Tahneek, new born baby, Moslem

INTRODUCTION

Religion is a system that regulates beliefs and the ways to communicate with God. There are many religions which have been declared in the world. All religions teach goodness, tolerances toward others who have different religions, respecting each other and living side by side in perfect and harmony. In the context of human as bio-psycho-socio-spiritual-cultural beings, the basic level of cultural awareness is one of the prequisites needed by health service facilitators in order that they are capable of providing sensitive cultural care. The sensitive cultural care requires unique combination of emphaty, curiousity, and deep respect for others[1,2]. Midwives as health practicioners are expected to provide the best prove based practices. In the other side, midwives are also required to give sensitive cultural care which are focused on women as the representation of midwive care philosophy, where the care options received are based on the patient's own choice. It should not be a difficult matter if the belief is in line with the prove based practices, however it will become a dillema when the belief is in contradictory with the practice regulations which have been set up by the government.

The high mortality of babies push the WHO, UNICEF and the government to recommend the initiative of giving pre breast feeding, exclusive breast feeding starting from the born of the baby up to the first six month, then providing nutritious baby food and continuous breast feeding until the baby is two years old or more in order to be able to decrease the sickness and mortality rate of babies[3]. However, this is not in line with the belief of some Moslem society, where they prefer to feed dates to their new born babies. This is well-known as "tahneek". The similar findings are also described by McKenna and Shankar. When midwives are going to implement pre breast feeding initiation, the family of the patients ask for permission to feed sweety food to the baby. They explain that it is a habit in Moslem family in which "*the first food to be fed to a baby should be something sweet*". After the midwive agrees, the family will feed sweety food to the baby and pray for him/her. Then, the baby will be given breast feeding for six month only[4].

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Tahneek which refers to sunnah in Islam has been taught by Mohammad S.A.W by masticating or chewing dates before it is given to the baby and then rubbing some small part of the dates on the upper part of the baby's mouth. Everybody can do this and may pray for the baby.[5] Abu Musa said that "*my baby was born and I brought him to Mohammad S.A.W., and then he was named Ibrahim. He conducted the tahneek to the baby by feeding dates, then prayed that Allah blesssed him. After that, he gave the baby back to me*" (Hadith narrated Bukhari no. 5467)[6].

The idea of tahneek may sound strange to those who are not accustomed to it. For Moslem, however, tahneek is considered the first natural immunisation for a new born baby, which then it is continued by breast feeding for six month. The spiritual meaning can only be understood by Allah and the messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) who had been given tasks to practice this to Moslem society)[5], while the scientific advantages of this are still studied by many researchers. Ibn Hajar said that the purpose of implementing tahneek is meant to give pratice to the baby when the baby is having breast feeding[7].

Referring to the basic concept of midwive care, midwives belief that women are unique and they have different needs, therefore midwives should give women options to decide kinds of health care provided (both for the women themselves and the babies). This is not only related to the implementation of midwive care philosophy but also to the women's right. In oder to be able to understand women's needs and give respect to their belief, midwives need to ask some questions and find out the answers to the questions (what, who, when, where, why and how). By doing so, midwives can offer the opportunity to their patients to implement their belief. This study aims to explore the description of tahneek implementation conducted by Moslem couples towards their new born babies. The results of the study are expected to give a clear description to midwives so that they can facilitate the best health care, and at the same moment they can give respects to their patients' belief.

STUDY PLAN

Qualitative study using phenomenological approach was applied in this study through thorough interviews. Data collecting was done using purposive sampling technique which was based on particular considerations applied by researchers and experts, and based on characteristics or natures of population known before. The participants were Moslem couples who admitted that they implemented tahneek to their babies. The researchers received the first data of the participants from private practice midwives and religious figures in the society. Then, the researchers made cross checks in the houses of the participant candidates. The data collecting was done in June 2016, in Bojong Kulur Subdistrict, Gunung Putri District, Bogor Regency. Thorough interviews were held face-to-face around 30-45 minutes using interview guidance which was the result of the previous interviews. Thorough interviews were conducted in participants' houses, in houses of participants' family, and at participants' work places. The number of involved participants depended on the maximum data received. Thourough interviews were conducted after having an agreement from the participants, including having an agreement to use recorder. In order to get participants' experiences in implementing tahneek to their babies, 21 thourough interviews were conducted.

Recorded data and results of observation were then made in the form of narration (transcript). Next, the researchers made some codes in the form of word samples in order to be able to comprehend the results of the interviews. Then, the researchers compiled the data by categorizing the participants, the situation and the condition when the interviews were conducted. The results of the categorization were then interpreted in the form of value comparison between outcomes of interviews and information received from the participants. The data verification was done by comparing the information received from some participants and cross checking the data received from some other participants in order to be able to confirm the validity of the data received.

RESULT

Time of conducting tahneek: Syaikh Ibnu 'Utsaimin says that tahneek should be better given as soon as the baby was born so that the first food consumed by the baby is dates or something sweet. This is in line with Imam Nawawi's words that the baby who is given tahneek is the one who has not been given breast feeding before[8]. However, if it is impossible to do it after giving birth or one day after the baby was born, tahneek may be done a few days after birth, though this is not recommended. The same was also expressed by Ibn Hajar "*if the baby was born during the day, the right time to implement tahneek is sometime before dawn*"[7]. The findings of the study showed that there were time variations in the implementation of tahneek in practice. Most participants (85.7%) revealed that they conducted tahneek as soon as their babies were born, and the rest conducted tahneek 5 hours after giving birth. These couples left the hospital as soon as possible and conducted tahneek at home. Some others conducted tahneek to their babies a week after their

babies were born because they found it difficult to get dates.

"*our baby was given tahneek a week after the baby was born because at that time it was very difficult to get dates*" (participant 1)

The Persons Who Deserve to Conduct Tahneek: In the Hadith which refers to Musa Al Asy'ari (Hadith narrated Bukhari no. 5467),[6] and Aisyah (Hadith narrated Humaidi no. 1876)[9], it is said that "*Prophet (S.A.W.) conducted tahneek and prayed prospherity for those (babies)*". There are two opinions related to who deserves to conduct tahneek. First, it is recomended that tahneek should be conducted by a good and wise people in the hope that his prays for the baby will be blessed by Allah SWT. They can be men or women.[10] Secondly, tahneek can be done by anyone with the reasons that, 1) Rasullulah (S.A.W.) can not be compared to any person; 2) the goodness of a person can not be judged so it is hard to make sure that the person who conducts the tahneek is good and wise or not. Besides, there are arguments on the possibility of having infected from a person who suffers diseases when this person conducts the tahneek to the baby. Therefore, tahneek should be better done by a good and wise person who is believed to have good health.

The same cases were found in most participants (90.5%) who admitted that their babies were given tahneek by their fathers, and few participants said that their babies were given tahneek by midwives or by some people – the baby's father and religious figures. The participants believed that tahneek should be conducted by the baby's father and some religious wise persons who have good health.

"*Those who conducted tahneek to our baby were my husband and the religious figures*" (participant 8)

The Frequency of Conducting Tahneek: It is told from Aisyah R.a, "Asma' binti Abu Bakar left for migrate when she was pregnant a baby named Abdullah bin Az-Zubair. She left for Quba'. When she arrived in Quba' she gave birth her baby. After giving birth, she went to see Rasulullah (S.A.W.) then Rasulullah (S.A.W.) took the baby and put the baby on his lap. Rassulullah (S.A.W.) then asked for dates. Aisyah said: "*We have to find dates first*". Rasulullah (S.A.W.) conducted the tahneek and rubbed the baby's head and prayed for him and named him Abdullah. In the Hadith, repeated tahneek is not mentioned. This is in line with the findings in this study, where most participants (85.7%) admitted that they conducted tahneek to their babies once only. However, there were few participants admitting that they conducted tahneek to their babies 2-3 times. Some were done by the same persons, but some were done by different people.

"*My baby was given tahneek three times. An hour after the baby was cleaned, then when the wise and religous figures came to my house*" (participant 8)

The Substance Used: Rasulullah (S.A.W.) conducted the tahneek to Abdullah bin Zubair (Asma binti Abu Bakar's baby) using dates. Imam An-Nawawi explained that tahneek is conducted by using dates and it is a Sunnah (advisory). Ibnu Hajar Al-Asqalany explained that tahneek is conducted primarily using dried dates (*tamr*). If it is difficult to get *tamr*, *ruthab* may also be used; if *ruthab* is not available, use honey; if it is still unavailable, give something sweet which comes from natural resources and which are not processed using fire.

Dates fruit has many special substances. Dates is a kind of fruits which is most frequently mentioned in Al-Qur'an. Dates contains calsium, calium, phospor and celenium which are very important for cell metabolism in human body[11]. Dates is proved to be significantly important for human being because it has high nutrition in it[12,13] and it has become a potential and vital nutrition for babies, adults and patients who suffer from metabolism syndrome and it may prevent diabetic disorders, coronary heart disease, and stroke[14].

This study also found that most participants (90.5%) conducted the tahneek to their babies using dates, but the rest used honey because it was difficult to get dates. Kind of dates which are most frequently used by the participannts were Dates Madinah or Dates Ajwa. However, some participants admitted that they did not really stick on particular dates used for tahneek. The most important one for them is that the dates has a good quality.

"*My first and second children were given dates when they got their tahneek. But I used honey for my third child because there was no dates at that time*" (participant 4)

Preparation before Tahneek: Recomendations done by participants before conducting the tahneek to the babies are 1) washing your hands or wudhu to keep clean the hands at the moment of feeding dates into the baby's mouth; 2) say basmalah, all good works should be started by mentioning the name of Allah; 3) praying for the baby so that in the future the baby will become a good boy or girl (shalih boy or shalihah girl), and mentioning other good hopes. Some participants prayed for the babies before conducting the tahneek, but some other prayed after conducting the tahneek. It is told that Rasulullah (S.A.W.) prayed for the baby after conducting the tahneek. Ibnu Hajar Al Asqalany R.a. explained that tahneek is feeding dates into the baby's mouth and then rub it, after that, praying, "*Baarakallahu fiihi (may Allah bless the baby)*" or "*Allahumma baarik fiihi (oh Allah, bless him/her)*".

"*Before conducting the tahneek, I washed my hands and then prayed "Oh Allah, make our baby a shalih boy if he is a baby boy and make the baby a shalihah girl if she is a girl". Also, make him/her a person who has the ability to memorize Al Qur'an; after that, I read the Al-Furqan verse 74-77*" (participant 4)

How to Chew Dates: It is told that Rasulullah (S.A.W.) gave an example of conducting tahneek to the baby by masticating or chewing dates in his mouth before feeding it to the baby. Rasulullah (S.A.W.) was a man who always kept his body clean. But in this era, there is a worry that is related to the health and infected diseases issues from people's saliva who grind dates using their mouth. This has arrised arguments and different point of views in responding to the practice of chewing dates in the mouth. There are people who continue chewing dates using mouth, but there are other people who use *ruthab* so that it can be chewed by using fingers, and some others choose to use honey.

Based on the findings in this study, most participants (80.9%) chewed dates by using their mouth, and few participants crushed dates by using their hands, and some others only put it in their mouth until the dates had become softened pulp. Besides, they did not have any reference on how dates should be chewed in the mouth. In this study, most participants chewed dates without any limitation. The most important one for them was that the dates had to be crushed well. However, there were people who followed the limitation of chewing, which was odd numbers such as 3, 5 or 7. But there were others who did it ten times of chewing.

"*As long as I know, there is no limitation on how many times we must chew dates in the mouth. The most important one is that dates should be chewed until it is soft*" (participan 20)

Amounts of Dates Chewed by Mouth: In Hadith which refers to Abu Musa, he says, "*when my baby was born I brought him to Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.) and he was named Ibrahim. Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.) conducted the tahneek to the baby using a date*" (Hadith narrated Bukhari no. 5467).[6] Meanwhile, in other Hadith which was told by al-Humaidi, it is said "*When Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.) asked if I had a tamr, I answered yes, then I gave him some dates. Mohammad (S.A.W.) grinded all the dates using his mouth and fed it to the baby*" (Hadith narrated Humaidi no. 1876),[9] (Hadith narrated Muslim no. 2145)[14] and (Hadith narrated Al-Bhagawi)[16]. The findings in this study revealed that most participants (66.7%) admitted only chewing little date and the rest of the participants (33.3%) chewed a date using their mouth.

"*I chewed a date using my mouth*" (participant 5)

Amount of Dates Fed to the Baby: Both Hadith which were told by Bukhari and Humaidi do not explain the amount of dates fed to the baby. The finding in this study revealed that participants fed dates variously. Some people fed all the dates which were already grinded using mouth to their babies, some others fed it only a half, a quarter, a nail tip, and a very small amount of dates.

"*I gave my baby only a small part of the chewed dates*" (participant 17)

The Use of Hands and Fingers: Islam teaches us to always use our right hands when doing things such as shaking hands, eating and drinking, and many other good things. Therefore, we need to use our right hands when conducting the sunnah tahneek. In accordance with Hadith from Abdullah bin Umar R.a., Rasulullah (S.A.W.) said, "*When you eat, always use your right hand. When you drink, you also have to use your right hand, because evil eats and drinks using its left hand.*" (Hadith narrated Humaidi no. 1493).[9] There is no explanation on which finger used by Rasulullah (S.A.W.) when conducting the tahneek.

All participants used their right hands when conducting the tahneek to their babies. However, there was a difference on the fingers used for tahneek. Most participants (80.9%) used their pointing fingers, but few used their small fingers, and some others used their thumbs and pointing fingers at the same time.

"*Since Islam teaches us to always use our right hands in doing good things, I used my right hand. In the mean time, I used my pointing finger to conduct the tahneek to our baby*" (participant 10)

How to Do the Tahneek: Ibnu Hajar Al-Asqalani Rahimalullah explained that tahneek is masticating or chewing dates and put it into a baby's mouth and then rub it around on the upper part of the baby's mouth. There are various ways in conducting the tahneek to a baby, in defining the location, and in the way to rub the dates and the frequency of rubbing the dates. Findings showed that some participants chewed the dates and rubbed it to the upper part of the baby's mouth, but some just rubbed it once and some others rubbed it around clockwise. When using honey, they said that it would be much better if the pointing finger touched the back part of the baby's jaw. Some said when it was rubbed on the upper part of the mouth, the baby's tongue would move around and automatically the tongue would rub all parts of the baby's mouth. Some participants conducted the tahneek by putting the masticated and softened dates into the baby's mouth and pushed it so that the softened dates was swallowed by the baby.

This study found that there were differences in location and the way to rub dates, they were 1)

participants rubbed the softened dates on the upper part of the baby's mouth; 2) participants did not rub but put some on the upper part of the baby's mouth; 3) participants repeatedly rubbed around the baby's mouth clockwise until their pointing fingers touched the back part of the mouth (the back jaw when using honey); 4) some participants only put the softened dates or honey on the upper part of the baby's mouth and the baby's tongue would automatically move around; and 5) participants put the softened dates into the baby's mouth and pushed it using their pointing fingers so that the dates could be swallowed by the baby. Other differences related to the frequency of rubbing around the upper part of the baby's mouth were; once, once or twice, and three times of rubbing around. However, there were some participants rubbing around the dates until they thought it was enough for the baby.

"*After being masticated or chewed until the dates is softened, we put it some into the baby's mouth. The dates was rubbed around on the upper part of the baby's palate, and it would be much better if the dates touched the back jaw*" (participant 18)

Breast Feeding after Tahneek: After tahneek, it is suggested that only breast feeding which should be given to the baby until the baby is six years old. In Al Qur'an, Al-Baqarah verse 233, "*Mothers are expected to give breast feeding to their babies until the baby is two years old. It is a perfect breast feeding*". The same case could be found in most participants (85.7%). They admitted that after tahneek, the baby was given only breast feeding for six months and then the breast feeding was continued until the baby was two years old. However, few participants admitted that besides breast feeding they also fed honey until the baby was 6 months old.

"*After tahneek, we only gave breast feeding until the baby was six months old*" (participant 21)

DISCUSSION

Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.) was a chosen man who had been decided by Allah to spread Islam beliefs to the Moslem. One of the beliefs which should be obeyed by every Moslem is the belief to Rasulullah, particularly Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.) Moslems have to prove their belief to Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.) by obeying His comandments and staying away from the prohibitions. The lessons taught by Rasulullah (S.A.W.) are always based on the Holy Al-Qur'an. Many facts in Al-Qur'an have been proved true by scientists.

In Hadith, which is told by Bukhari no. 5467[6] and referred to Abu Musa Al Asy'ari, and in the story of Humaidi (no. 1876) told by Aisyah R.A[9],. it is mentioned that Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.) had given examples of tahneek and prayed for the babies. Moslem society strongly believe that tahneek is the first natural immunisation for the baby and tahneek gives various health benefits to their babies' future lives. Nevertheless, up to now there are only few researches and scientific proves on the benefits of tahneek for new born babies.

There is an assumption saying that tahneek has something to do with baby's hypoglicemy, where any baby has the risks of having hypoglicemy. This is caused by the fact that glucose production of a baby is not yet perfect. Up to now, the limit of blood glucose standard is still a controversial topic. Srinivasan defined that a baby is in hypoglicemy condition when the baby's blood glucose is <2.2 mmol/l in the first 24 hour of birth and <2.6 mmol/l after it[17] while Heck and Erenberg set the hypoglicemy condition on blood glucose of <1.7 mmol/l on the first day of birth and <2.2 mmol/l after it[18]. Next, Sexson simplified it, where 72% babies have the risks of suffering from hypoglicemy[19]. Continuous hypoglicemy may cause permanent neurology disorder and death. Therefore, health practitioners have to consider the risk of long-term negative effects and decide a quick and proper intervension[20]. Related to the breast feeding as recommended by UNICEF and WHO, initiative to have early breast feeding is an effort to stimulate the production of mother's milk in order to support breast feeding exclusively up to six months. However, generally mothers produce their breast milk on the third day of birth. Remembering the potential of hypoglicemy in new born babies with all the long-term consequences, the feeding of dates to a new born baby is considered an anticipative or preventive action towards sickness and death.

The choice of dates as a substance used to conduct tahneek, as showed by Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W.), is not by accident. Dates has proved to have many benefits and it functions as a high nutrition to boost the energy because it has a high content of sugar (65-75% of dates fruit weight). Dominant sugar found in dates is simple reductive sugar. Dates has a high antioxidative activity[21,22,23,24]. Dates also contains high level of carbohydrate (73%) in the form of glucose, fructose and sucrose, which are easily digested in the human cells and helpfull in getting the energy for metabolism process. Besides, dates contains xylose mannose, lactose and minimum lactulose. Consuming dates regularly will prevent us from cancer and heart disorder[11]. Scientific proves of dates show that dates has antibacterial effect towards patogenia bacteria which may cause serious diseases on human, such as Bacillus Subtilis, Staphylococcus Aureus, Salmonella Typhi, Pseudomonas Aeruginosa[25,26], Escherichia

Coli, Salmonella Enterica, Listeria Monocytogenes, Staphylococcus Saprohyticus[26], and antifungus in vitro[25,27]. Besides, like colostrum and breast milk, dates also contains neutralizer substance. The neutralizer is usefull for cleaning unused substances from new born baby's testines and it prepares the baby's digestive outlet for nutrition which will be then received by the baby's digestive outlet. The content of neutralizer in dates has been proved by gastrointernal transit effect measurement on rats. When compared to control group, animals which get the extract of dates experience a quicker cleaning of digestive system. The average is 4-22%[28].

Another explanation shows that bacteria in neonate digestive system has an important role in the baby's health. The bacteria has various benefits such as, helping to develop and differentiate epitel cells, strenghten the enzym tissues which layer its system, support the maturity and development of body immune system, prevent the development of pathogen bacteria and promote the beneficial relationship, assimilate the nutrition, particularly carcinogenic substance, and prevent cancer. The bacteria stays in the digestive testines when the baby was born. The first bacteria that lives in testines is very important for defining the floral structures of human testines all his/her life. And unbalance of microba composition of testines creates disorders. Tahneek using dates will improve the existence of usefull bacteria which are needed by a baby[29]. Dates contains pre-biotic which plays a role as food for pro-biotic (normal flora of digestive system). One example of pre-biotic in dates is polisakarida[30].

In human testines, there are around 1.013 micro-organisms and more than 1000 species of bacteria. This place is also considered as the most active metabolism area in human body[31]. Food which has high fiber and polifenol will influence the testines micro-biotic because food effects depend on the content of fiber and polifenol in the food. The two become an effective strategy in maintaining the beneficial testine microba ecology, which results in better testine health system and influences the etyology and patogenetic of various diseases and disorders including testines disorders, diarhea and colorectal cancer[32,33]. Dates (Phoenix dactylifera L.) is a food source which contains high fiber and polifenol. Consuming dates fruit may improve testine health since it increases the beneficial bacteria and prevent the proliferation of testine cancer cells. It is suggested that dates is consumed in the earliest phase of human life (when the baby was born) in order to help maintain the testine health and decrease the development of colorectal cancer[30].

The question is why should dates be better masticated or chewed? It may be explained by the following theories. First, the digestive system of a new born baby is not so perfect that it needs helping enzym such as amylace and licosim which can be gained from the person who conducts the tahneek. The role of amylace is to change polysaccharides (amilum) into glucose which is easily absorbed by a baby[34] and licosim enzym which plays a role as antimicroba[35]. Besides, saliva contains a substance called sialic acid in the form of glicoprotein which functions to block microba and has an ability to tie viruses and bacteria. In a new born baby, sialic acid will function better after the baby is ten days old[36].

Secondly, the reason why Moslem society conducts the tahneek for their new born babies, which is by rubbing dates on baby's palate, is related to activating the function of stem cells located on baby's palate and on the area where the teeth will grow. Stem cells are top cells/new cells which can develope in human body and they are the main cells which are not yet differentiated into any cell[37,38].

The third hypothesis is related to miRNA found in the saliva of the person who conducts the tahneek. This substance is covered by exosome which may give an immune respond to the baby's body[39,40]. MiRNA is a 18-25 nucleotida length of single strand and non coding RNA which can give negative regulation towards miRNA expression as the target, so that it causes degradation of miRNA or blocking of translation process[41]. MiRNA is stable in body liquids such as saliva, breast milk and blood. MiRNA is stable in body liquids because it is covered in exosomes or microvesicles. Besides, miRNA can be tied with High Density Lipid (HDL) or tied with protein Argonaute (AGO). This is why miRNA can not be degraded and it is stable in body liquid[42].

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCY

There are only few studies on tahneek. This study can be referred as one of scientific bases on the description of tahneek application for babies. It is particularly useful for health personnels and Moslem society who have no knowledge about tahneek. Comprehensions on procedures of tahneek can help health practicioners in facilitating the implementation of the patient's belief so that they can build a better and closer interpersonal relationship. The results of the study can also be used as a basic knowledge in formulating the operational procedure of conducting tahneek to new born babies. Next, findings of the study are also expected to give inspiration and to initiate other researchers to do further researches on other benefits and further impacts of tahneek towards the development of babies.

CONCLUSION

Tahneek should be conducted by those who have already understood the concept of tahneek in order that the babies can get the benefits and blessings. Midwives need to understand the implementation of tahneek to new born babies in order that they can facilitate the patients to implement their belief, in the hope that midwives can build trust and closer emotional relationship with their patients.

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