

Ewuh pakewuh as a culture in Java society: A psychological study

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KEYWORDS

ABSTRACT

**Ewuh Pakewuh
Compliance
Interdependent
Self-conscious shyness
Obidience**

Ewuh Pakewuh is a common attitude in Javanese society. Ewuh pakewuh is a manifestation of reticence that is formed because there is respect in order to maintain good relations and avoid conflict (rukun principle). This article was made using the literature review method with the aim of discussing what matters are related to the ewuh pakewuh so that it is hoped that it will be able to add new studies about the culture of the ewuh pakewuh. This article attempts to explain three psychological aspects that can explain ewuh pakewuh in Javanese society, namely obedience, compliance, and self-conscious shyness. The attitude of ewuh pakewuh in Javanese society shows that there is an interdependent pattern which is a form of individual adjustment with other people in a relationship or a group.

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Introduction

Javanese culture is a culture that originates from Java and is embraced by the Javanese people (wong Jawa) who use Javanese as their daily language with a variety of accents, residing in parts of Central Java, Yogyakarta and East Java (Soehadha, 2014). Javanese people have teachings regarding ethical concepts that must to do by Javanese people which are based on "proper and inappropriate" with morals as the object of ethics. For example, it is stated in the expression "ungkapan *Sugih tanpa banda, Digdaya tanpa aji, Nglurug tanpa bala, Menang tanpa ngasorake*". This expression has the meaning of being rich without possessions, Power without amulets or weapons, attacking without an army, and winning without defeating or humiliating. The meaning of the expression Javanese people without wealth does not mean they have to be poor, but apart from having wealth they also have to be rich in character. Sakti without weapons means that one does not need to be arrogant with his physical or scientific strength, but strength because of his character and faith becomes a light. Then, *nglurug tanpa bala* explaining that when fighting a warrior, he is brave alone without his group

mates. "Menang tanpa *ngasorake*" explains that when fighting, winning is not by humiliating or embarrassing your opponent.

Apart from that, Javanese people have basic rules that are considered important values in interacting with Javanese people. Suseno (1996) mentions that there are two basic rules, namely that under any circumstances humans should behave in such a way as not to cause conflict (rukun principle). Then demand that humans in speaking and carrying themselves always show respect for others according to their degree and position (the principle of respect). Based on these two basic principles, Javanese cultural values emerge which place a strong emphasis on aspects of harmony and conformity in socializing life wherever they are, which ultimately regulates patterns of behavior in the daily lives of Javanese people. As stated in the expression "*wong Jawa nggone semu, sinamuning samudana, seadone ingadu manis*" which means the Javanese are all pseudo, full of symbols, like to convey disguised words, every guest who comes is always received with a sweet face (Santosa, 2011). This expression refers to the *ewuh pakewuh* attitude that is often done by the Javanese.

Tobing (2010) explains that *ewuh pekewuh* is a manifestation of the basic rules of Javanese life. A form of the feeling of discomfort that is almost reminiscent of embarrassment. With this feeling, someone will feel worried if their behavior or speech will offend or make someone offended. Pakewuh is related to social strata. Pakewuh generally occurs between juniors to seniors, subordinates to superiors, servants to bosses, servants (people) to gusti (rulers), children to parents, and so on (Soehadha, 2014). The existence of the "*ewuh pakewuh*" culture is proof that there is a large power distance factor in Javanese society. Someone who is at the bottom will try to please his boss so that this Javanese flavor will foster an attitude of "as long as you are happy". For example, in the world of work, an employee often feels forced to rebuke a boss or friend who has done something wrong. Another example is a child who does not dare to go against the wishes of his parents so that his whole life is regulated by his parents. This aims to continue to create harmonious conditions to avoid conflict as much as possible.

"Ewuh Pakewuh" is often studied in research related to work culture (Tobing, 2010; Soeharjono 2011; Frinaldi & Embi, 2014; Fatmawati, 2016; Wibowo, Ramli, & Nukman, 2016; Usman & Widagdo, 2016; Rizal, 2019) although Thus, literature studies that study in detail the background and origins of the Ewuh Pakewuh culture are still few. In addition, there are still very few research sources that discuss psychologically the "ewuh pakewuh" culture. So based on these things, this article aims to discuss ewuh pakewuh from a psychological perspective. Hopefully that this article can add new studies regarding the ewuh pakewuh culture which doesn't only focus on work culture.

Result and Discussion

1. Ewuh Pakewuh as Javanese Culture

Culture is seen as a dynamic structural interpretative that makes individuals read the social environment as a shared knowledge system that results in a decrease in individual interpretation variations of self-stimulation (Erez, 1993). The word culture comes from Sanskrit which is the plural form of the word *budhii* which means mind and reason. One of the cultures inherent in Javanese society is Ewuh Pakewuh.

Ewuh pakewuh is one of the values taught in Javanese society. Harry (2013) explains the culture of ewuh pakewuh, namely the pattern of politeness in the bureaucratic environment carried out by employees or officials as subordinates who are reticent or reluctant to express opinions that may be contradictory, that avoid conflict and maintain good relations with their superiors or seniors. That are considered to have a higher social status. Ewuh Pakewuh also appears when an individual already knows or receives kindness from another person so that the individual has difficulty or refuses or disapproves of a request from that person even though this contradicts himself (Nuryatiningsih, 2022). This reluctance or reticent exists because it upholds respect for other people, especially someone who has a higher position (Soeharjono, 2013). This respect has differences from the general meaning of respect in society.

The definition of respect in society appears in many forms. Respect occurs or arises because of a sense of admiration for one's achievements or what one has achieved. Then according to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), respect means to appreciate. There is also "takzim" which is interpreted as a more respectful and polite attitude towards other people which is usually shown by bowing. Another explanation regarding reticent explained by Geertz (in Suseno, 1996) describes polite respect for superiors or strangers, as a subtle restraint on one's personality in order to respect others. Based on several definitions, reticent can be interpreted as a form of respect by showing politeness to someone who has a higher status to avoid conflict and maintain good relations.

A polite form of respect to avoid conflict can be explained as a form of emotional expression in Javanese society. Emotions are the result of manifestations of human physiological and cognitive states, as well as a reflection of cultural influences and social systems (Barrett & Fossum, 2001). The culture and social system can be seen in the demands that exist on the Javanese community to be able to control the emotional impulses and attitudes that should be displayed when a person is dealing with other people who have a higher social status or who are older in terms of age.

This explanation is in line with what was conveyed by Ekman in (Kurniawan & Hasanat, 2010) that cultural factors and social systems covering where the individual lives and resides which will limit and regulate to whom, when, and where a person may show and keep emotions secret. and in what way these emotions will be expressed through nonverbal behavior and facial expressions. For example, if an individual doesn't like something, just show it with expressions, facial expressions, and gestures. It can be concluded that when the Javanese express their heart's desires, they are not passionate, grusu-grusu (grudging), but sufficient with certain symbols and pre-symbols, this is because there are elements of Javanese ethics regarding alus and rudeness (Soehadha, 2014).

2. The Process of Forming Ewuh Pakewuh

The formation of the pakewuh value (reluctant) is preceded by the manut and isin values (Susesno, 1998) which are shown in chart 1. Manut means obedience to older people, a child who obeys is considered a good child because there is an assumption that a child who obeys will be very successful in his career because it follows the opinion of the parents.

In addition, this value teaches control and respect for parents to Javanese children. Manut values can be explained based on the psychological concept of obedience. Obedience is defined as an obedient attitude which is a consistent response to the requests or needs of others (Levy, 2008). But apart from that manut can also be explained based on the concept of compliance depending on the situation. Compliance occurs when there is an agreement between the requester and the requested or between those who command and those who receive orders (Cialdini, Zanna, Olson, & Herman, 1987). In contrast to obedience, which is a unilateral relationship in fulfilling a request or an order. It can be seen that the difference between obedience and compliance is the presence of power. Obedience occurs when there is power in the form of direct orders (Mayers, 2014). This shows that the form of power that influences obedience personally.

The second value is isin or shame. This value will foster feelings of wedi (fear) and isin (shame) in front of other people. Fear when his behavior becomes *pocapan* (gossip) of many people (Soehadha, 2014). The psychological concept that can explain the value of isin is shyness. (Henderson & Zimbardo, 2010) explained Shyness is a highly individualist state characterized by excessive egocentric fulfillment and too concerned with the social evaluation that the individual will receive. The consequence is that a shy person will inhibit, withdraw, avoid, and run away. Xu and Farver (in Afandi, Adhani & Hasiana 2014) explain feelings of shame (shyness) divided into two, namely fearful shyness, namely shyness caused by social fear, and fear of new people while self-conscious shyness is a feeling of embarrassment (shyness) because it is caused by public attention, for example

answering questions from lecturers or teachers, giving presentations in front of the class. Self-conscious shyness is caused by the fear of getting a negative judgment from the social environment. Someone who is shy feels tense, afraid to express words or expressions, is reluctant to express opinions, and responds when interacting with the social environment.



Figure 1. The process of forming the attitude of ewuh pakewuh in Javanese society

The attitude of ewuh pakewuh in Javanese society shows that there is an interdependent pattern which is a form of individual adjustment with other people in a relationship or a group. Interdependent individuals are given cultural assignments designed and selected through history in cultural group situations in the form of "being able to read other people's intentions", "being sympathetic", "carrying out the role assigned to him" and "acting appropriately" (Saliyo, 2012).

Conclusion

From this article, it can be concluded the Javanese people are polite and refined individuals, who do not like situations that are not harmonious so they will try to suppress it as much as possible so that disputes do not occur. This condition makes the Javanese always carry an attitude of fear, shame, reluctance, and pretense in social life to maintain harmony, so the attitude of ewuh pakewuh is formed in Javanese society. *Ewuh Pakewuh* can be explained by several psychological concepts including obedience which is defined as obedience which is a consistent response to the requests or needs of others. Compliance occurs when there is an agreement between the requester and the requested or between those who give orders and those who receive orders. Self-conscious shyness occurs when there is fear of getting a negative assessment from the social environment.

Obedience, compliance, and self-conscious shyness are forms of individual adaptation to other people in a relationship or a group that illustrates the concept of interdependence. This concept is indeed suitable to be applied in the regions of Asian countries. This is due to the existence of a culture of patembayan, gotong royong (mutual assistance) and there is a feeling of going awry when expressing yourself, afraid that someone will be offended and said they have no manners (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). This is because Asian countries do not provide a public sphere or space for expression. In other words, they are still bound by collective culture or association so the boundaries

of existing norms are still strong for the Javanese, therefore the attitude of ewuh pakewuh can backfire if applied to certain situations which will lead to negative consequences. This paper is the result of a review of several works of literature. Authors and future researchers who focus on topics relevant to this article are advised to conduct field studies on this matter. It is necessary to carry out further studies on ewuh pakewuh as an effort to confirm the findings in this article so that ewuh pakewuh can be used as a patent psychological construct.

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