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Religious Well-Being and Suicide Ideation in Gunungkidul: Exploring the *Pulung Gantung* Phenomenon among Javanese Communities

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The phenomenon of suicide in the context of the Pulung Gantung myth has become a serious concern. However, research that specifically examines the relationship between religious well-being and suicidal ideation in the context of Javanese culture, particularly in areas with a high prevalence of suicide, such as Gunungkidul, is still minimal. The present study aims to identify the role of the Pulung Gantung myth in mediating the relationship between religious well-being and suicidal ideation. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed to explore the unique experiences of Javanese people in Gunungkidul. Snowball sampling was used to identify key informants who met specific criteria, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data on religious well-being and suicidal ideation. To ensure the accuracy and avoid any offence, all collected data underwent a meticulous verbatim analysis. The Pulung Gantung myth exerts a substantial influence on the incidence of suicidal ideation within the Javanese community of Gunungkidul. This myth has the capacity to intensify feelings of despair, thereby expediting the process of arriving at the decision to take one's own life. The development of programs that promote community participation in religious activities. The implications of this study suggest a necessity to reinterpret the meaning of the Pulung Gantung myth so that it is no longer directly associated with suicide.

Keywords: *Pulung Gantung; religious well-being; suicide ideation; psychological well-being; Gunungkidul*

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INTRODUCTION

Through Kejawen beliefs, the Javanese had incorporated religious ideas and principles into their spiritual traditions prior to the arrival of Islam (Andrianto et al. 2023; Meyer 2019; Suroyo et al. 2025). According to this indigenous knowledge system, *manunggaling kawula gusti*, or the pursuit of religious prosperity in Kejawen, is a spiritual path that leads to oneness with the Creator (Muraresku 2020; Hidayat et al. 2023; Isnaini et al. 2020). This idea highlights that inner harmony, harmonious relationships with others and nature are all components of well-being, which goes beyond material possessions (Santoso et al. 2024; Haq and Medhekar n.d.). This belief system, which sees life as a journey towards greater meaning, is based on behavioral practices that involve spiritual connection and self-improvement (Mashau and Kgatele 2019); (Larson 2022).

Despite the widespread acceptance of Islam, many Javanese people continue to practice Kejawen Islam, which is based on ancestral customs and beliefs (Lasfeto et al. 2022; Liora et al. 2023; Martanti and Mukti 2023; Zulaihah et al, 2023). Because it entails ancestor worship, sacrifices, and the veneration of other beings, this practice is disapproved of by Islamic teachings (Soenjoto 2022; Suroyo et al. 2023). According to the Qur'an (Surah Al-Jinn verse 6 and Surah Al-An'Am verse 128) on belief in jinn and demons, this behavior is regarded as shirk (associating partners with God) in Islamic doctrine, which is a grave sin (Linnhoff 2020).

Unusual behaviors like *Pulung Gantung* or suicide by hanging, are revealed by further examination of Gunungkidul beliefs (Budiarto et al. 2020). It is thought that encounters with the entity Banaspati, which is frequently depicted as a flying fireball, are the cause of this practice. Traditional customs, spiritual beliefs, and an awareness of life's spiritual purpose all

have an impact on this local knowledge system (McDaniel 2022). Because it entails asking spirits for "guidance" to end one's life, this belief system is frequently viewed as shirk by non-Javanese (Muslims) who do not engage with Kejawen culture (Azis et al. 2023). They contend that, as mentioned in surah An-Nisa verses 29 and 30, people with a strong religious bent are supposed to comprehend that suicide is forbidden in Islamic teachings (Abiyusuf et al. 2024).

According to Fatima et al. (2018), life satisfaction is positively connected with a high level of religious well-being, whereas low level is linked to doubtful tendencies and susceptibility to outside influences (Mahamid and Bdier 2021). Suicide is one way that this vulnerability can show up as a desire to take one's own life (Counted et al. 2022). According to research on Islamic psychology, deteriorating religious well-being can cause behavioral changes like aggression or self-harm (Cregeen et al. 2018), stress (Rodrigues-Sobral et al. 2022), depression and anxiety disorders. The impact of low well-being on anxiety, physical aggression, personality changes, lack of self-acceptance, withdrawal, and suicidal thoughts is also explained by studies on general well-being (Lin et al. 2024). There are currently insufficient studies, though, that connect psychological well-being to suicidal behavior, especially among the Javanese community of Gunungkidul.

However, it does not address the connection between religious well-being and the *Pulung Gantung* belief in Gunungkidul, research by Nwafor (2024) indicates that communal religious well-being can affect the propensity for suicidal behavior. Generalization is challenging due to the study's focus on demographics and disregard for cultural factors (Yuriswandha 2021; Pleeing et al. 2021; Gearing and Alonzo 2018). A related study by Kristiawan and Susilo (2023) does not address the

relationship between *Pulung Gantung* and the low religious well-being of the Javanese community. However, it does link religious well-being to an increase in suicidal behavior. This study excludes other communities despite being centered on the Javanese community.

The goal of this study is to better understand the relationship between religious well-being and suicidal ideation among Javanese, specifically in Gunungkidul, from the perspective of Islamic studies and Islamic psychology, given the notable differences in religious practices and beliefs among the Javanese communities in Gunungkidul compared to other regions (Banjaransari 2024). In this qualitative study, the Javanese community's meanings and experiences with the concept of *Pulung Gantung* in day-to-day life will be examined, along with how religious practices and beliefs affect their views on life, death, and the choice to end one's life. By examining the relationship between religious well-being and suicidal ideation, this study is crucial to an objective understanding of the suicide phenomenon on the Javanese community, particularly in Gunungkidul.

As a result, this study advances the disciplines of psychology, mental health, cultural and religious studies in Indonesia. It is anticipated to offer a thorough grasp of the causes of the high suicide rates in the area, along with recommendations for more successful community-based interventions.

Literature Review

Pulung Gantung, while not officially recognized as a medical ailment, reflects the perspectives of the Gunungkidul community and is frequently associated with suicide. This article examines the correlation between religious well-being and suicidal ideation, positing that robust religious foundations may mitigate suicidal

urges. Counted et al. (2022) associated successful religious coping with enhanced well-being and a reduced risk of suicide. According to Abu-Raiya et al. (2021), transcending life and the quest for meaning are aspects of spirituality that reduce the risk of suicide in those with mental health issues. Suryani and Fitri (2023) identified religious and community values as sources of resilience in Central Java, whereas Lestari and Sukamto (2022) emphasized that social support and religion assist the Javanese in alleviating stress. Nevertheless, few studies specifically examine how local beliefs, such as *Pulung Gantung*, converge to affect religious well-being and shape suicide ideation.

Some study emphasizes worldwide religiosity and spirituality (Trudel-Fitzgerald et al. 2019; Awaad et al. 2023), while others concentrate on religious groups and activities. While several anthropological or sociological research elucidate societal beliefs regarding *Pulung Gantung*, they inadequately establish a quantifiable connection between these notions and religious well-being or mental health. There exists a significant information gap about the relationship between local beliefs such as *Pulung Gantung* and religious well-being, as well as its implications for suicide within the Javanese context. Numerous research studies continue to be descriptive or correlational, often neglecting the distinct psychological and cultural dimensions of Gunungkidul.

This study is innovative in emphasizing three neglected aspects: religious well-being, suicidal ideation, and *Pulung Gantung* in Gunungkidul. The objective is to assess the impact of *Pulung Gantung* concepts on the correlation between spiritual well-being and suicide, therefore providing a comprehensive understanding of the connections among communal beliefs, individual spirituality,

and mental health within this cultural context.

Conceptual Framework

The work is predicated on a comprehensive theoretical framework integrating Alternative Modernity Theory with acknowledged psychological theories. Drawing on Ryff's psychological well-being (Seifert 2010), which is similar to Maslow's self-actualization, the meaning of life, and divinity conceptions from theosophy (in McLeod 2007), permits comprehensive research of religious well-being across psychological, religious, and cultural domains.

According to this paradigm, religious well-being is a main barrier against negative and suicidal thoughts (Lytle et al. 2018). Including traditional beliefs such *Pulung Gantung* in Javanese communities, which provide cultural interpretations of life, death, and destiny, so providing order and purpose and so enhancing psychological wellness.

Religious groups also offer emotional, pragmatic, spiritual (Fauziah 2023) which fights suicide thoughts which helps against suicidal concepts. Participating in religious activities allows one to develop coping strategies like acceptance, therefore minimizing despair and thereby reducing stress (Khajedaluae et al. 2021).

Within theosophy, religion allows one to develop spiritual self-actualization and connection to a higher force, therefore boosting purpose and resilience (Kumari 2018). Linked to ideas in an afterlife or greater purpose, religion usually motivates hope and optimism, therefore fostering a future oriented viewpoint (Eskin et al. 2020).

This study investigates how conventional ideas like *Pulung Gantung*

coexist with modernity so maintaining basic parts of the cultural identity of the society using Alternative Modernity Theory. These ideas are considered basic as they give frameworks for understanding death and suffering, thereby lowering existential crises and not being out of date or an impediment. Such ideas also improve social relationships and communal support, which are vital defensive qualities (Durkheim 1897).

At last, how communities negotiate *Pulung Gantung* might provide effective, culturally relevant indigenous coping techniques (Berry 2005). Emphasizing the continued importance of indigenous beliefs in a modernizing society, the framework offers a full, culturally sensitive way to comprehend the relationship between religious well-being among Javanese in Gunungkidul and suicidal attitudes by merging various points of view.

Psychological Wellbeing by Ryff (2007)

In psychology research, "psychological well-being" is usually understood as a positive mental condition (Matud et al. 2019), marked by life satisfaction, strong social relationships, and the ability to cope well with life's challenges (Frost et al. 2022). Carol Ryff identifies six primary dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, personal development, real relationships, autonomy, purpose in life, and environmental mastery (Ryff 2019). Low psychological well-being has been linked in many studies to more suicidal thoughts. Those with poor psychological well-being often feel hopeless and unworthy and lose hope (Gao and McLellan 2018; Suroyo et al. 2023; Suroyo et al. 2022).

Negative ideas, including feeling powerless to handle problems, life being too heavy, and lacking direction, can be triggered by this disorder. Persistent negative thoughts can cause suicidal

thoughts as a means of ending the perceived suffering (Karaś & Ciecuch 2019); Suroyo et al. 2023). These psychological dynamic reveals that emotional and cognitive balance is also disturbed when psychological well-being is disturbed, so raising the likelihood of impulsive behavior, including suicide.

Self-Actualization by Maslow (1987)

From Maslow's theory's standpoint, self-actualization is defined as the human drive to reach one's full potential—the height of the hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1987). Once physiological, safety, love, and esteem needs are satisfied, people will be driven to keep growing and realizing their best versions of themselves. When someone feels hampered in reaching self-actualization, though, they may become frustrated, disappointed, or lose meaning in life (Compton 2024). People start to doubt their existence if they feel their life has no purpose or are unable to fulfill their full potential.

Deep emptiness, loneliness, and despair resulting from this can then inspire negative ideas and even suicide thoughts (Tripathi 2018). Those who feel imprisoned in circumstances that impede their progress could view death as a means of release from their suffering (Hoffman 2020). This point of view underlines that maintaining ideal mental health depends critically on self-actualization, which is a basic human need (Kaufman 2023).

Levels of Religiousness

In Islamic theosophy, religiosity is defined as a whole concept transcending simple ceremonial observance. It is distinguished by a close spiritual relationship the person has with God. By means of religiosity, one seeks the meaning of life, the goal of existence, and to

experience God in all spheres of existence. Strong religiosity helps to build a resilient character by means of security, hope, conviction, and assurance (Hefner 2021). On the other hand, low degrees of religiosity have been linked to a higher risk of suicidal thoughts. Lack of spiritual connection can cause feelings of alienation, hopelessness, and a sense of meaninglessness in life (Sahin 2018).

Faced with life's difficulties, without spiritual ties, it gets harder. The lack of hope and answers can lead to bad psychological behaviors including the want to take one's life (Alaszewski 2018). According to this psychological dynamic, religiosity serves as an emotional shield against negative ideas that guards's people.

The Meaningfulness of Life

In Islamic psychology, the quest for the true purpose of life and the endeavor to establish a connection with the Creator are pivotal elements in the search for meaning. This meaningfulness is predicated on the belief that human life possesses a greater purpose than mere worldly satisfaction (Fatimah & Nuqul 2018). When an individual identifies meaning in their life, they are more likely to feel connected, possess a clear sense of purpose, and demonstrate greater resilience in the face of life's challenges (Syah 2021). Conversely, when an individual experiences a sense of life's meaninglessness, they are prone to feelings of emptiness, hopelessness, and a loss of hope (Rahmelia 2020).

These feelings can give rise to deleterious thoughts and depression of a profound nature. In the absence of adequate support, the affected individual may resort to the contemplation of ending their life as a means of escaping their perceived suffering. This psychological dynamic underscore the notion that when people lose their connection to higher values in life, they are

more likely to perceive their lives as devoid of purpose and value (Afidah et al. 2020).

Structuralism Theory in Cultural Belief

Cultural beliefs refer to a set of beliefs, values, and practices held by a group of people and passed down through generations, shaping a culture's worldview, behavior, and collective identity (Biddlestone et al. 2020). These beliefs can be religious, mystical or secular (Downe et al. 2018), and are often linked to explanations of the origins of the universe, life, death and other natural phenomena (Withers et al. 2018); (de Leeuw et al. 2020). Belief in beings such as Banaspati is a clear example of cultural belief. In this context, Banaspati is regarded as a supernatural entity that wields specific powers and plays a role in human life. This belief emerges from human endeavors to comprehend natural phenomena that defy scientific explanation and to ascribe significance to life experiences (Permadi and Yantari 2023).

Cultural studies theories, such as anthropology (Bowie 2021), offer a framework for understanding the formation, development and function of such beliefs within a society (Kurniawati et al. 2022; Veissière et al. 2020). Anthropologists, through the examination of culture's influence on thought, emotion and action, as well as its interrelation with other aspects of social, economic, and political life (Lutz 2024), seek to comprehend these beliefs (Mutiara et al. 2023).

The concept of Banaspati, in particular, is illuminated by structuralism theory, which underscores the underlying structures that govern human thought and behavior within a cultural context (Agustina 2021). The symbols and myths associated with Banaspati, such as fire and mystical powers, are imbued with profound

significance and are intricately intertwined with the overarching belief system that permeates Javanese society. Consequently, the belief in Banaspati is not merely a mythological construct, but rather a reflection of the Javanese people's ontological and epistemological understanding of the world and their place within it.

The Relationship between Psychological Well-Being, Self-Actualization, and Religiousness on Suicidal Ideation

An overview of the psychological, social, and spiritual elements causing suicidal ideas is given in this literature by Wojtekowiak (2018). Among the primary theories are psychological well-being, self-actualization, religiosity, meaning of life, and cultural influence (Ferngren 2022; Voth 2020). Explaining the mental state of persons prone to suicide mostly depends on psychological well-being and self-actualization. Low psychological well-being—that is, lack of self-acceptance and meaningful relationships—can lead to negative ideas, Ryff says. Maslow, meanwhile, underlined that a lack of reaching one's full potential might cause emotions of emptiness and a loss of life's value.

Furthermore, crucial in preventing suicide are religiosity and the definition of life, since religious beliefs give hope and security. Conversely, the loss of spiritual values might make one more prone to negative ideas and depression. Structuralist theory emphasizes, from a cultural standpoint, how society's ideas shape personal mental health. Many unresolved issues still need research, including how these elements interact with one another, how culture shapes suicide risk, and how these results affect clinical treatments.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a cross-sectional qualitative approach, utilizing the case study method due to the unique characteristics of the subjects involved. The subjects, comprising Gunungkidul residents, were considered to possess distinctive samples, and qualitative studies were adept at providing comprehensive insights into phenomena within the field. The research was situated in the Gunungkidul region, encompassing Wonosari, Patuk and Gedangsari. Snowball sampling was employed to select key informants, with a focus on Javanese ethnic groups residing in Gunungkidul.

This approach was deemed appropriate due to the sensitivity of the information concerning the *Pulung Gantung*, which precluded the use of purposive sampling, as the key informants were not known a priority. The researcher had five key informants with the following criteria: 1) individuals of Javanese ethnicity who still understand *Kejawen* culture; 2) individuals who can conduct two-way communication; 3) This includes individuals who have personally witnessed the *Pulung Gantung*, as well as those whose family members or close friends have experienced it; 4) individuals who are willing to provide information voluntarily for the sake of research.

The data collection instrument employed a semi-structured interview method, focusing on variable indicators such as religious well-being and suicidal ideation. Statements were made in the form of open-ended interviews, where answer choices did not have to be limited to 'yes' or 'no'. This approach was adopted to ensure the provision of more extensive information regarding the findings. This research data collection technique employed a variety of media, including microphones and mobile phones for recording. Small notes were used

to facilitate understanding and anticipate any potential data loss.

However, in accordance with the necessity of maintaining the privacy of the key informants, no visualization activity was incorporated. All interviews underwent language validation in accordance with the code of ethics during the data collection procedure. The interviews were validated by a panel of three individuals, comprising a linguist, an expert in psychological studies, and an expert in Islamic studies.

This validation process aimed to ensure that all interview questions were formulated with precision and clarity, and to guarantee that none of the questions would cause any offence. The analysis of the interview results was conducted through a meticulous verbatim approach, entailing the transcription and subsequent interpretation of the interview data.

It is imperative to note that the findings presented are the result of a meticulous interpretation of the included verbatim interviews. Moreover, the critical discourse analysis was used for this study to analyse how the concept of "*Pulung Gantung*" is constructed on how it is reproduced.

In accordance with the principles of safety and comfort, all key informant demographics were kept confidential through the utilization of pseudonyms. All research activities, from data collection to the presentation of verbatim results, have passed the ethical approval process from the institution, thus ensuring the safety of the author and key informants.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pulung Gantung in the Cultural Belief of Gunungkidul Community

The belief in *Pulung Gantung* in Gunungkidul Javanese society, a spiritual entity believed to be a sign or cause of

suicide (by hanging themselves), can be critically analyzed as a social construction full of meanings and implications. Anthropologically speaking, the concept of *Pulung Gantung* functions as an interpretative mechanism, that is, a means of understanding or interpreting events. It is employed to explain the elusive and often taboo phenomenon of suicide.

In rural agrarian societies, such as Gunungkidul, which is deeply rooted in Javanese cosmology, *Pulung Gantung* is not merely a superstition but rather an integral component of the local knowledge system, that is, the manner in which traditional communities comprehend and interpret the world. The *Pulung Gantung* discourse exerts a significant influence on the cultural perceptions of death, fate, and destiny, as well as on the societal responses to suicide. Transcendent justifications, which are rationales ascribed to supernatural forces, are frequently employed to explain suicide, thereby diverting attention from the potential underlying socio-economic or psychological factors.

Furthermore, it is evident that the phenomenon of suicide is intricately intertwined with powerlessness and stigma within cultural narratives, which are often employed to mitigate feelings of guilt or to attribute blame to non-human entities. *Pulung Gantung* is a strong belief held by the people of Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta. This phenomenon is described as a luminous object, resembling a light or fireball, falling from the sky and landing on the roof of a house. Javanese people believe those whose houses are struck by this phenomenon are believed to experience misfortune, and in some cases, this belief can lead to extreme actions, including suicide by hanging. This belief system is further elaborated upon by Sumardi (pseudonym), aged 38, and Yu Watini

(pseudonym), aged 59, both residents of Wonosari;

“*Wis dadi pepatah zaman mbiyen, nek kena Pulung Gantung kuwi ora becik. Bisa ngundang malapetaka, malah bisa nyebabke wong gantung diri*” (Sumardi, November 2024)

(It is said that if one were to be struck by a hanging pulung, it would not be a positive experience. There is a belief that it could potentially lead to misfortune and even, in some cases, individuals taking their own lives. (Sumardi, November 2024)

“*Duh, ngeri tenan nek omah kuwi diparani Pulung Gantung. Iku tandané bakal ono musibah gedhe, ya nganti nyawa ilang*” (Yu Watini, November 2024)

(*duh* (expression of scared), it's very scary if the house is hit by *Pulung Gantung*. it's a sign that there will be a big disaster, yes until the life is lost) (Yu Watini, November 2024)

The phenomenon itself is more accurately described as a myth and a hereditary belief. The local people interpret this phenomenon as a sign or curse from the supernatural realm, and, when viewed from a cultural perspective, the belief in *Pulung Gantung* can be understood as being closely related to the spiritual beliefs of Javanese society. Common to Javanese beliefs are the concepts of *karma*, which is a universal law of causality. It is believed that every action, word, and thought of a person, good or bad, will have its corresponding consequences, affecting their fate and condition in this world as well as in the next.

This concept emphasizes the existence of cosmic balance and the importance of individual responsibility for their deeds, with destiny and supernatural forces that influence human life. *Pulung Gantung* is regarded as one of the manifestations of these supernatural forces, a notion that is corroborated by the statements of 38-year-

old Sumardi (pseudonym) and 59-year-old Yu Watini (pseudonym);

“Nek aku ki ngono, ya percaya banget karo Pulung Gantung kuwi. Iku kan koyo ono pertanda seko alam ngono, arep ono wong bakal gantung diri. Wong jaman dulu wis percaya banget, iku kan seko soal karma, takdir, lan kekuatan gaib” (Sumardi, November 2024)

(For me, I believe in *Pulung Gantung*. it's like a sign from nature if someone is going to hang themselves. people in the old days really believed, it's about karma, destiny, and supernatural powers) (Sumardi, November 2024)

“Mbiyen rikolo semono, Mbahku ngomong, nek ono Pulung Gantung jatuh di sawah, ya langsung pada geger. Wong-wong pada wedi, mikir bakal ono sing arep gantung diri. Pas dhisik aku cilik yo ikut-ikutan takut utowo wedhi. Tapi, ya wis, itu kan seko kepercayaan turun-temurun. Katanya sih, itu pertanda seko ndonyo ghoib, lan soal takdir” (Yu Watini, November 2024)

(In the past, *my grandparent said*, if there were a *Pulung Gantung* that fell in the rice fields, people would immediately turn their backs. People were afraid, thinking that someone would hang themselves. When I was little, I was also afraid. But, yes, it's a hereditary belief. He said it was a sign from the supernatural world, a matter of karma and destiny) (Yu Watini, November 2024)

Part of the local belief system existing before the arrival of major religions, the *Pulung Gantung* tradition in Javanese society—especially in Gunungkidul—is present. This system holds that every natural event—including suicide—has supernatural elements or spirits. *Pulung Gantung* is not only a static "superstition," but a social construct kept and reinterpreted constantly by the people of Gunungkidul in critical discourse analysis. This talk clarifies the elements causing suicide as well as the ways in which people see death, fate, and

free will of action. *Pulung Gantung* acts as a cultural lens influencing opinions and shared stories about the phenomenon of suicide. This assertion is corroborated by the following statement from Yu Watini (pseudonym), aged 59;

“Nek simbahku crita, Pulung Gantung kuwi wis ono. Wong jaman biyen ngira kabeh sing ono ing ndonyo iki duwe kekuatan gaib. Koyo angin, udan, udan watu krikil, kabeh dipercaya duwe nyowo. Mula, ora aneh yen ono sing percaya karo Pulung Gantung” (Yu Watini; 59 thn)

(My grandmother told me, *Pulung Gantung* already existed. People in the past thought that everything in nature had supernatural powers. Like the wind, rain, even rocks, all are believed to have lives. That's why it's not surprising that some people believe in *Pulung Gantung*) (Yu Watini; 59 years old)

The Relationship between Religious Well-Being and Suicidal Ideation among Gunungkidul People

The *Pulung Gantung* phenomenon is frequently interpreted as a malevolent omen or curse, which is associated with misfortune or even death. This belief is closely associated with the religious belief system of the Javanese people, particularly with regard to the concepts of karma, destiny, and supernatural powers. This assertion is supported by the observations of Sumardi (pseudonym), 39, who stated;

“Wong Jowo iku percoyo karo opo sing di alami saiki iku akibat soko tumindakke biyen. Terus wong iku ora iso ngelawan nasib, lan kabeh iku ono sing ngatur” (Sumardi, November 2024)

(The Javanese belief system posits that the present moment is the outcome of past actions. This perspective renders the concept of predestination salient, with supernatural forces assumed to regulate all aspects of existence. (Sumardi, November 2024)

Religious well-being—including good religious experiences and close relationships with God—offers emotional and spiritual support, so enabling people to negotiate the demands of life, including those of their beliefs, *Pulung Gantung*. Greater degrees of religious well-being are connected to a sense of hope and purpose that can help one overcome hardship. In Gunungkidul, religious activities, including prayer and community involvement, help to build resilience and strengthen social ties, thus lowering the risk of self-harm. Though social pressures or fatalistic stories abound, belief in an afterlife or divine plan gives hope and drive. Low religious well-being, however, can aggravate loneliness and alienation, aggravate depression and anxiety, and increase the risk of suicide. Thus, religious well-being affects personal psychology, social cohesiveness, and community resilience, which are essential for the general society's health.

Belief in *Pulung Gantung* has been demonstrated to engender excessive fear and anxiety, a phenomenon that has been observed to be particularly pronounced in individuals lacking a comprehensive grasp of their religious teachings. This observation is corroborated by the testimony of Mbah Satinem (pseudonym), a 65-year-old resident of Wonosari, who has stated;

“Atiku yo ora tentrem sababe aku percaya banget karo Pulung Gantung. Akibate malah nggawe tambah bingung. Mulakno ben ayam mangkane sinau agomo sing bener supoyo ora bingung” (Mbah Satinem, November 2024)

(If I really believe in *Pulung Gantung*, my heart is not at peace. it even makes more confusion. let's not do that, it's better to learn the right religion so that there is no confusion) (Mbah Satinem, November 2024)

In the absence of a robust spiritual foundation, individuals may encounter difficulties in ascribing meaning to life and

may experience a sense of existential despair.

The Role of Pulung Gantung Beliefs in Influencing Suicide Ideation in the Context of Religious Wellbeing

Although most Gunungkidul residents are Muslims, the belief in *Pulung Gantung* is regarded as part of the ancestral legacy that preceded the entrance of Islam. This reveals cultural syncretism—that is, the mixing and coexistence of Islamic teachings with pre-Islamic ideas. Some people attempt to explain tragic events by harmonizing *Pulung Gantung* with the ideas of Qada and Qadar, so acting as a kind of cultural adaptation. But since this view is seen as contradicting Islamic teachings, which stress the part humans play in effort and personal responsibility, and reject supernatural forces as the reason for suicide, conflicts develop in society. Reflecting the complexity of cultural and religious identity in Gunungkidul, this dynamic shows how the community negotiates and reinterprets their traditions under the influence of the dominant religion. This viewpoint is corroborated by the statements of Marni (pseudonym), aged 47, and Agus, aged 43, both residents of Gedangsari;

“nek uwong pado ngomong lan percaya Pulung Gantung malah dadi ora semangat ngapa-ngapa. Padahal, Islam ngajarin kita supaya usaha terus lan berdo'a. Terus, percaya karo roh-roh jahat kuwi malah nggawe bingung. Wong Islam kan ora ngajarin kaya ngono” (Marni, November 2024)

(The aforementioned individual expounded on the notion that adhering to the belief in *Pulung Gantung* engenders a sense of discouragement, hindering one's propensity to undertake endeavours. In contrast, Islam advocates for perseverance and the practice of prayer. Moreover, the belief in malevolent spirits has been observed to engender a state of perplexity. It

is noteworthy that Islam does not advocate for such beliefs. (Marni, November 2024)

“*Nek percaya Pulung Gantung ya koyo dadi pasrah. Lha wong Islam kudu usaha lan berdoa terus, kok malah nyerah pasrah. Terus, soal roh-roh gaib sing ngajak bunuh diri kuwi, yo ora masuk akal.*” (Agus, November 2024)

(If you believe in *Pulung Gantung*, it's like giving up. After all, Muslims have to keep trying and praying, so why even give up. Then, about the spirits that invite suicide, it doesn't make sense. Islam does not teach people to commit suicide) (Agus, November 2024)

The Pulung Gantung Phenomenon and Its Impact on Community Mental Health

Mental health in *Pulung Gantung* in Gunungkidul is much influenced by the belief that there is. This belief frequently results in anxiety, an emotional stress state accompanied by worry, intrusive thoughts, and physical changes, including higher blood pressure. Usually connected with particular events, such as death, this fear and anxiety can make people feel helpless against the threats that could befall their families or themselves

This relationship indicates that belief in supernatural powers can raise levels of stress and anxiety, which in the long run runs the danger of generating mental health problems, including mood disorders Along with depression, which causes extreme sadness, loss of interest, and low energy, this protracted anxiety can set off the idea that supernatural entities control fate, which might cause one to feel powerless, which lowers the drive to participate in daily activities.

Other psychological effects include sleeplessness, including insomnia, trouble sleeping, and repeated waking in the middle of the night. Understanding *Pulung Gantung* as a belief without a scientific basis, however, can help lower anxiety and

fear, so enhancing psychological well-being, including sensations of calm, happiness, and life satisfaction (Ryff 2019).

Moreover, a common knowledge of this phenomenon can help strengthen social ties and inspire support and sharing events within the society. People can more freely explore their possibilities and reach their life objectives when they are not under the constant shadow of anxiety. Beyond the constraints of fate, understanding a deeper purpose for life can ignite the spirit, fostering self-achievement and leading to a more profound life.

Religiosity of Wellbeing in Javanese Culture

Within Javanese society, the idea of spiritual well-being is intimately connected to preserving the harmony among people, the environment, and supernatural powers. One can consider *Pulung Gantung* as a cultural reaction meant to preserve this delicate equilibrium. Believing someone to be affected by *Pulung Gantung*—a belief system akin to *Tri Hita Karana* in Balinese culture—indicates an imbalance in their life or their interaction with the cosmos. It should be mentioned, nevertheless, that the idea of *Pulung Gantung* is not the same as *Leak* (a Bali folk story).

This view is not stigmatized in the Gunungkidul society. Often connected with the fundamental teaching of Javanese philosophy, karma is the belief under discussion. This view is predicated on the conviction that past actions will affect present life and that bad behavior can lead to *Pulung Gantung* as punishment. *Pulung Gantung* is also sometimes understood as a means of communication or message from ancestors or other supernatural entities, guiding or warning people or societies. This notion is further elaborated by Mbah Satinem, a 65-year-old resident of Wonosari, who offers the following insight;

“leluhur iku penting, Nak. Pulung Gantung kuwi pesen seko wong leluhur mbiyen. kuwi percoyo banget karo leluhur. Pulung Gantung iku, ya koyo pertndho yen leluhur lagi ngomong karo awakdewe kabeh. Kudu disimak, Nak” (Mbah Satinem, November 2024)

(Ancestors are important, son. *Pulung Gantung* is a from ancestors. They really believe in the ancestors. *Pulung Gantung* is like a sign that the ancestors are talking to us. We have to listen, son) (Mbah Satinem, November 2024)

In *Pulung Gantung*, belief differs greatly from the Islamic conception of fate. Though both have to do with fate, Islam sees destiny as yielding to Allah rather than fatalism. In Islamic theosophy, this promotes peace between people and their surroundings. Emphasizing the need to keep equilibrium between people and the surroundings, *Pulung Gantung* can be considered a cultural expression of this spiritual harmony. For those who find it difficult to grasp life's events, this belief offers a sense of security and assurance, but if taken too literally, it can also lead to anxiety and fear.

The Islamic Perspective on The Concept Pulung Gantung

From the Islamic point of view, *Pulung Gantung*, as a local belief in Gunungkidul, is connected to fate or Qada and Qadar. Islam stresses that people still have the freedom to act, even if it admits that fate exists (known as *ikhtiar*). Fate is not absolute without space for humans; its impact depends on personal effort and endeavor. This idea corresponds with the theory of agency in sociology, which emphasizes the capacity of people to act independently within the framework of social institutions. Thus, as studies on freedom and will in Islamic theology support, even if *Pulung Gantung* is seen as

a reflection of destiny, responsibility and effort still exist in Islamic teachings.

Islam stresses the need for prayer and work as aspects of daily life. While praying to Allah, people are supposed to always be better than their surroundings as well. Passive and fatalistic *Pulung Gantung* runs counter to Islamic dynamic and hopeful lessons. In Islam, shirk—belief in supernatural forces other than Allah—is regarded as stated in Surah Al-Isra (84), Surah An-Nisa (29), and Surah Yusuf (84). The belief in *Pulung Gantung*—which links fate with supernatural powers—contests the Qur'anic lessons.

Within the framework of suicide connected to *Pulung Gantung*, psychological resilience can find expression in spiritual well-being. Acceptance of fate improves when one believes that God controls life and death. This view motivates people to grow personally and live according to religious values, thus lowering the possibility of extreme behavior, including suicide. Hadiths against suicide abound as well, those found in the books of Bukhari and Muslim.

Many studies demonstrating that people who feel connected to a higher power are more likely to be persistent in the face of challenges prove the part religion plays in offering hope and direction in life. Maintaining mental resilience, religion can be a source of hope and drive. Religious organizations like study circles or prayer groups also enhance social networks, offer a feeling of togetherness and support, and help to lower loneliness that might set off negative ideas. In Islam, the conviction in the hereafter also inspires hope and lessens the death, which frequently sets off suicide. Still, spiritual well-being is not the only risk factor for suicide; mental health, social support, and the surroundings also count. The effect of religious teachings and practices on their well-being differs since some religious people still suffer a crisis of

faith or believe religion does not satisfy their demands.

CONCLUSION

The conviction in *Pulung Gantung* in Gunungkidul influences the mental health of the society and frequently results in death-related anxiety and fear. *Pulung Gantung* is connected, in Javanese belief, to karma, destiny, and supernatural powers, according to an old story. This conviction strengthens spiritual well-being and helps to preserve the harmony among people, the environment, and supernatural powers. Knowing *Pulung Gantung* symbolically helps mental health by means of social support and helps to lower fear and anxiety.

From an Islamic standpoint, Islamic teachings stress human effort and oppose fatalism and suicide, even if occasionally fate is taken into account. Belief in supernatural powers deciding fate runs counter to the ideas of prayer, endurance, and the ban on suicide. Through a close relationship with Allah and the community, spiritual well-being in Islam functions as a psychological protector, encouraging hope and meaning in life and lowering the possibility of extreme behavior.

The findings of this study are significant for improving mental health management and cultural awareness in places with similar values. Professionals must grasp cultural and spiritual backgrounds if they are to be more sensitive with therapeutic approaches. Interventions should direct the reinterpretation of this concept to help in good coping and lower negative ideas, without rejecting them. Emphasizing resilience, personal agency, and the meaning of life, community and religious leaders should enhance spiritual well-being using education, separating official teachings from traditional beliefs. The knowledge that *Pulung Gantung* is a cultural reaction to preserve equilibrium

emphasizes the need to tackle community anxiety and enhance social cohesiveness to minimize the bad effects. Comprehensive plans with spiritual direction, psychological support, and cultural awareness will help to improve community well-being.

This study has limits, even if it offers some insightful analysis. First of all, the qualitative character of a small sample size and pseudonymous identities restricts the generalization of the findings. Second, depending on self-reports, the measurement of anxiety and fear runs the danger of being biased. Third, the Islamic and Kejawen points of view are incomplete and might not cover all variances of interpretation within those belief systems. Larger and more varied samples, a mixed-methods approach, and cross-cultural comparisons are advised for subsequent studies.

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