

# The dynamics of family harmony in the Javanese *weton* perspective

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## Abstract

The day of birth is considered as a sacred day relating to the marriage concept well-known as *weton*, and it is a hereditary heritage. Javanese believe that *weton* influences psychological aspects relating to social life. This study examines *weton* measurement that is conceived to take an action and a decision, including in the marriage aspect. This study employs qualitative description to elaborate the phenomena. In addition, this study utilizes ethnography to seek the social pattern in Kartasura, Central Java. The result shows that ancient people used *weton* as a fundamental aspect to decide their heir's marriage, and the *weton* is related to philosophical values upholding family harmony. Therefore, *weton* becomes popular among Javanese to decide every aspect of life, including marriage.

**Keywords:** *Javanese weton, harmony, family*

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## Introduction

Family is a small part of the nation, so it is crucial to be understood clearly. In family concept, a partnership between husband and wife becomes a main aspect in a family, but having a kid is crucial aspect to be called as *nuclear family*, a complete family. Sometimes, the *nuclear family* together with a grandfather and a grandmother who living together in the same roof is conceived as a quiverful (Musnamar, 1992). However, the meaning of family in Javanese has another concept, which elaborates close friendships that do not have blood relations but have a high caring empathy spirit. In addition, they have a sense of suffering and a sense of kinship in the same group or organization. Instead of understanding it as a *nuclear family*, it is considered as a family group (Geldard & Geldard, 2011). In other words, a family group focuses on close relationships among the members instead of marriage.

In Indonesia, the term of family sometimes depends on the culture. For instance, a chieftain is an important role in a group family or a clan, especially in East Indonesian. A chieftain has a main role to accommodate every aspect of the members, including a marriage. Every pair who wants to marry should ask permission to a chieftain. Thus, the chieftain orders all members of the family group to hold marriage wedding based on their fundamental values. Some people believe that this concept is more effective to retain the marriage instead of the new phenomena in modern society. Today, modern society consider that marriage is about personal need, so they do not need to legally marriage, but they tend to be a pair in their reality based on their love and their agreement. However, this modern concept is considered as insufficient commitment, so it breaks easily if the pair does not feel suitable anymore (Musnamar, 1992).

In some meanings, a family is understood in two fundamental concepts, depending on the social context. First, a family can be understood as the members of father, mother, and children because of similar values although it is out of the law. Second, a family is considered as if they are registered institutionally from the local government and conceived in certain religious laws.

In addition, Indonesia, which has many cultures and tribes, has several ways to establish a family based on their identity. Instead of having similar procedure in marriage, each identity has developed their fundamental values to pursue their local agreement. To illustrate, Minang tradition conceives that women have crucial role in marriage because they propose men to marry them while the other believe that men should propose women. This phenomenon happens because Minang culture has different socio-culture among majority culture in Indonesia.

Similarly, Javanese has different concept of marriage based on their social life, norms, and tradition among the society. Therefore, they remain employ *weton* as a calculation method to decide several aspects in marriage, such as deciding a day date, seeking spouse, looking characteristic, and others. According to Wijayanti (2013), stated that villagers tend to obey their culture and seeking information from *weton* because they conceive that following *weton* avoids a bad situation, and allows them having a peaceful life. In addition, believing in *weton* is considered to calculate the possibility of the experiences either good or bad (Oktisasi, 2016).

In this study, Tojayan village, which is in Sukoharjo distric, Central Java, is a location to obtain the data and examine the phenomenon. The reason is based on villagers there obeying *weton* although sometimes the parents disobey the rule because they follow their kids need (Manik, 2012). Instead of some parents disobey *weton*, most parents remain following *weton* to direct their kids' marriage. This is caused by the most parents are *kejawen* (indigenous religion).

In search of the data, this study collects several information from people in Tojayan. Using ethnography has a main purpose to examine social life in the research locus to elaborate the people behavior in understanding *weton* as a part of calculation method to decide every aspect in their lives.

## **Javanese weton**

The term of *weton* is derived from Javanese word “*wetu* or *metu*” which relates to Javanese days, namely *pasaran*. According to Safitri & Mustafa (2021), explained that *weton* has category days including *pahing*, *pon*, *legi*, *wage*, and *kliwon*. These terminologies are inherited by the ancestors, and it becomes popular among Javanese society. Regarding the tradition, Javanese conceive that *weton* is like a local wisdom that should be nurtured by the society (Arifah, 2017).

Conversely, some people consider that conceiving *weton* is like the ancestors who believe in animism, either praying spirits or praying their ancestors. However, people who believe in *weton* tend to consider that every phenomenon relates to this concept. For instance, when there is natural disaster, people suddenly assume that it is predicted in *weton*, so elders recommend young generations to study *weton* because it is useful. Moreover, elders write a special book to understand *weton*, namely *Kitab Primbon* (Handiki, 2021).

In *Kitab Primbon*, there are various lessons which relate to social life in Javanese. The interesting of the lessons in *Kitab Primbon* includes *weton* to calculate certain moments, such as marriage, cultivation, establishing a house, and others (Purwadi, 2006). Additionally, *Kitab Primbon* covers *weton* not only to calculate the day date of marriage but also to prohibit

marriage if the calculation does not match between the spouse (Setiawan, 2022). In this concept, people who believe in *weton* but not following the rules, they will be suffering one day.

In Javanese tradition, most people believe that *weton* is reasonable and contains philosophical values. To illustrate, *weton* forbids a first child cannot marry a first child because Javanese elders believe that a first child should take care of their family, so if the first child marries a first child, it would be a bad situation. Emotionally, a first child bears many problems in the family, and it creates emotionally unstable (Yuli et al., 2018). Regarding this understanding, a marriage between a first child led to a vulnerable relationship with the spouse.

Therefore, Javanese follow the rule derived from *weton* to avoid a bad situation in the future. This decision is popular among Javanese because they believe that the ancestors have calculated *weton* as well as observed characteristics of human beings by their *weton*. Therefore, *weton* began the important aspect to decide marriage data among the society.

### **Family resilience and harmony based on *weton* among Javanese**

Javanese *weton* has been related to local knowledge and inherited teachings derived from the ancestors. Javanese elders teach *weton* to the next generation continuously as a part of nurturing local knowledge that is considered as pursuing a wisdom. Therefore, the teachings include doctrines and suggestions based on Islamic values which is avoiding the evilness. The elders point out philosophical values when they deliver *weton* knowledge to be easily understood by common people, such as obeying and practicing the values as a part of respecting the ancestors.

*“Kalau menurut kulo niki kan sebenarnya dari dulu merupakan sebuah keyakinan yang dipercaya sampai sekarang. Seperti dalam islam ketika kita yakin bahwa sholat tahajut akan mendatangkan rejeki, maka perhitungan weton juga seperti itu. Ketika kita masih yakin maka akan ada akibat dan sebaliknya. Sehingga ketika saya masih meyakini maka untuk anak-anak saya juga masih saya gunakan weton jawa. Saya juga masiih meyakini bahwa hidup kita saat ini masih berdampingan dengan leluhur yang perlu kita hormati”*(S1,W1,Baris 40).

“For me, this (*weton*) is a belief system that is inherited from the old generation to the new generation. In Islam, we believe that *tahajud* would bring bless from God, as well as *weton*. If we believe in the causal effect, we conceive that it is better to be taught to youth generations. I also believe that our ancestors live with us today, and we should respect them (S1, W1, line 40)”

In *weton*, forbidden marriage is ruled for the spouses regarding the birth order in their family. As I mentioned, the first child forbids to marry the first child because it leads them to have a vulnerable relationship in the future because *weton* concept considers that the first child would uphold their family, so it allows them to have more responsibility in their family. Additionally, the first child usually has a harsh nature because they bear more responsibility.

*“Mungkin begitu, walaupun memang banyak faktor yang membentuk keharmonisan, hla menurut saya faktor-faktor ini yang kemudian dipelajari orang dulu dan dijadikan patokan. Seperti anak pertama kurang cocok dengan anak pertama, ya mungkin karena anak pertama biasanya memiliki watak yang keras, suka ngeyel. Hla seperti itu kalau bersatu pasti ada kemungkinan bertabrakan sifat dan akhirnya hubungan tidak bisa harmonis”*(S3,W3,Baris 80).

“It could be, although many factors which create family resilience, our ancestors observed this phenomenon derived from many situations and patterned it as a rule to avoid a bad situation for the next generation. Likely, the first child usually has harsh nurture, so it is better to preserve a vulnerable situation in the future by forbidding the first child to marry the first child” (S3, W3, line 80).

However, each family has different knowledge of a happy family based on certain aspects, such as situations, conditions, financials, knowledge, social status, and others. The first informant explained that a happy family sometimes is measured by a social status or financial issues.

*“Menurut kolu mboten, karena banyak orang kaya tapi malah sering cekcok sampai akhirnya malah bercerai. Yang terpenting kita harus mengajarkan prinsip gampang legowo terhadap keluarga, yang orang sekarang menyebutnya ikhlas lan sabar”*(S1,W1,Baris 70).

“In my opinion, being rich is not an important aspect to have a happy family because some rich family ends up with divorce. The crucial aspect is to have principle values in their family, such as patience, sincerity, or genuine” (S1, W1, line 70).

Either being rich or having a noble status is not an important aspect of a relationship. This study explains that most people who were interviewed elaborated that the crucial aspect of establishing a happy family is sincerity and intimacy. Both are conceived as crucial aspects to respect for each other in a relationship, so the spouses should uphold respect sincerely and intimately.

Additionally, culture and tradition are other important aspect to guide the spouses in establishing the relationship and upholding their commitment to their marriage. According to

Widyosiswono (2006), stated that a tradition is a form of respecting the ancestors, so if they obey the tradition, it means that they believe in respecting leads them to respect their spouse. Some people also conceive that communication is an important part of establishing a happy family because communication is a way to deliver emotions, thoughts, and feelings.

*“Pokoknya dalam keluarga kita harus melakukan apa saja sesuai peran masing-masing dengan baik. Misal saya seorang ayah berarti saya harus bertanggung jawab dengan kebutuhan ekonomi keluarga dan juga menjaga marwah keluarga. Berkomunikasi dan meluangkan waktu untuk bersama, dan satu lagi jangan pernah menyepelkan aturan baik dari adat ataupun dari agaman. Jika kita dilarang melakukan sebuah perbuatan maka jangan lakukan. Jika kita disarankan untuk melakukan ya kita lakukan, itu saja”*(S4,W4,Baris 80).

“In the family, we must do many things to fulfill our role in a good way. For instance, a father should have a responsibility to fulfill household needs as a part of nurturing the family. Having good communication with the spouse and spending quality time with family are crucial. Another important part is respecting the rules derived from the religion or tradition. If the rules forbid us, avoid it, if the rules suggest it, just do it” (Sa, W4, line 80).

Dayakisni and Hudaniah (2012), explained that obeying the rules is a part of strengthening the value and keeping it as a valuable aspect. In other words, the rules of religion or tradition are meant as the important things that will preserve the followers to have a bad action. It is caused that human beings tend to protect everything that these are important. In this case, *weton* is a part of a combination of tradition and religion that allows the followers obeying the rules to pursue the best situation in their life, especially in marriage.

## **Conclusion**

Javanese *weton* is believed as a preference in society to decide on a marriage event, such as deciding a day date or the spouse. Today, *weton* is conceived as a sacred process, so society considers that it should be followed to avoid a bad situation in the future, especially in marriage. Moreover, they believe that *weton* calculation is better to establish a happy family, so it influences the spouses and the people psychologically. Therefore, most villagers in Java uphold the sacred of *weton* because it is considered as a crucial part of their life continuously, so the spouse would be calculated *weton* in advance before they decide to hold a marriage event by believing that obeying *weton* allows them to have a happy family ever after.

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