

Ngayah and Bakti: Exploring The Essence of Happiness in The Bayung Gede Traditional Village, Kintamani, Bali

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Abstract

This study is carried out to explore the concept of happiness in the Bayung Gede Traditional Village community, Kintamani, Bali, Indonesia. The community adheres to the *ngayah* tradition, embodying profound spiritual, communal, and artistic elements in their daily lives and practices, closely tied with binding obligations. A qualitative method is adopted using Moustakas' phenomenological approach, with data processed through NVIVO 12 Pro software. The community of Bayung Gede Traditional Village are not expected to embark on distant quests to attain happiness. The results show that happiness is found within the confines of the village and manifested through the ability to engage in *ngayah*, with the sincere practice of *ngaturang bakti*. These cultural practices serve as wellsprings of joy, emblematic of the profound significance of tradition and gratitude.

Keywords: Happiness, Tradition, *Ngayah*, Gratitude, Obligation of proposal.

INTRODUCTION

Development is related to the transformation of the entire social system, including politics, economy, infrastructure, defense, education, technology, institutions, and culture (Alexander, 1994). According to Sen (1999), development expands the freedom of individuals and reduces the feelings of suffering (unfreedom), such as hunger, poverty, and fear, making freedom difficult to experience. In the classical era, the happiness of the community was solely determined by per capita income. Additional income enhances welfare by promoting happiness and can be traced to ancient times as a concept that holds a central role in human existence. In the 4th Century BC, the Greek philosopher Aristippus articulated this idea by stating that the main purpose in life is to maximize the pleasure of an individual.

In this context, ancient Greece designated happiness as eudaimonia and hedonic concepts (Eid & Larsen, 2008). Eudaimonia is concerned with defining happiness (White, 2006) as the achievement of a fulfilled life and the realization of human potential (Franklin, 2010; Uchida, Takahashi, & Kawahara, 2013). Meanwhile, hedonism refers to individual happiness that includes positive emotions (Eid & Larsen, 2008). This concept is associated with pleasure (White, 2006; Demir, 2007; Demir & Ozdemir, 2010; Uchida, Takahashi, & Kawahara, 2013) and can often be interpreted as a state of mind experienced during indulgence in food, drinks, recreation, and other pleasurable activities. Easterlin (1974), conducted the first study on the correlation between income and happiness, renowned as the Easterlin Paradox. According to this study, an increase in income does not necessarily raise the level of well-being or happiness. This factor leads economists to adopt diverse methods and approaches to measure happiness. Economics study is one of the subjective well-being approaches, which measures utility through various means such as collecting information using multiple techniques. By adopting the subjective approach, happiness levels in the economy can be evaluated through a range of questions. The Easterlin paradox shows that the variable is affected by factors other than material income. Absolute

income is not a significant factor in determining happiness. However, relative income and the act of comparing to others play a crucial role.

The happiness index in Indonesia is measured using three dimensions, namely life satisfaction, affect, and the meaning of life (eudaimonia). According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics for the year 2021, Bali Province did not rank among the top 10 happiest provinces in Indonesia. The province scored below average with a rating of 71.44, compared to the national score of 71.49. Despite being renowned as the "Island of the Gods" and a coveted destination for many tourists due to its association with Paradise Island, the residents of Bali, as indicated by the survey results, did not secure a position in the top 10 in terms of happiness (BPS, 2022). This disparity prompts a need for an in-depth exploration to understand why the community reported lower levels of happiness than the national average. The community of the island of Bali are characterized by a deep connection to their unique customs. In the context of happiness within the Desa Adat community, particularly concerning *ngayah* as a social obligation, it becomes an obligatory allocation from the income earned by the indigenous community. This practice is inseparable from the increasingly open interactions among individuals. The fulfillment of rights (*swadikara*) and obligations (*swadharma*) holds significant weight in family matters within Balinese society. Desa Adat Bayung Gede situated in the Kintamani District, Bangli Regency, is part of the Bali Mula villages and remains committed to its customs and traditions. This village, with its 547 households, exemplifies the preservation of Bali Mula traditions. Among the residents, 163 *krama pengarep*, or main residents, bear the responsibility of dedicating their lives to the village, focusing on the integral role of tradition and communal responsibilities.

The acquisition of customary leadership rights is a social status obtained from birth in a community environment. Inhabitants of customary land have ties in the form of obligations to the village or temple often referred to as "*ngayah*". This *ngayah* curbs or binds the father's land to form a restricted property right. Happiness, when examined in the context of having, thinking, and doing, is perceived as a deliberate process. In line with the extensive study and definitions, the local wisdom of Bayung Gede Traditional Village should be examined to understand the developmental process of the variable. This exploration is particularly relevant to the concept of *ngayah*, an inherent and customary practice in the daily behavior of the community. The connection of daily life and behavior is closely linked to binding obligations. Therefore, this study aimed to show the relationship between the aspects and happiness in Kintamani, in Bali, Indonesia. In this context, the contributions of the meaning of happiness to the reinforcement and preservation of Balinese culture are stated. The result is poised to answer questions regarding the capabilities possessed by the Bayung Gede Traditional Village community. By showing the connections between daily practices, binding obligations, and the concept of *ngayah*, insights are provided into the unique dynamics that shape and define happiness in the community.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Happiness is lacking a universally accepted definition and is not comparable between individuals. Veenhoven (1988) stated that the variable was indistinguishable from life satisfaction. According to Veenhoven, happiness refers to an "overall appreciation of life," a definition that is consistent with Jeremy Bentham's notion, where the variable is seen as "the sum of pleasures and pains." Dutt and Radcliff (1989) proposed that happiness is influenced by innate qualities and predisposition, social comparison, and fundamental needs. Seligman (2005) defined the concept as a key objective within positive psychology, which includes both positive emotions (joy, satisfaction) and activities that lack any emotional content (inclusion and focus).

The Capability Approach is an alternative method for measuring an individual's quality of life that differs from utility-based measurements or Gross National Product (Nussbaum, 2011). This approach determines the quality of life in terms of a person's ability to function, be, or do something considered valuable (Sen, 2009; Nussbaum, 2006). Sen (1999) stated that the "nudge" theory could be used to assist people in making better decisions across a variety of aspects. The theory values individual freedom by avoiding the implementation of restrictive measures in decision-making.

Even though Nussbaum, Sen, and "nudge" theory use distinct methodologies, a common acknowledgment that happiness transcends emotional states or material accomplishments is shared. The approaches converge in the pursuit of comprehending and facilitating individuals in attaining a deeper

and more enduring sense of happiness. This includes enhancing capabilities, ensuring freedom in decision-making, and using nudges to assist individuals in making informed choices. The concept of *ngayah*, characterized by a purposeful community or religious rituals conducted with sincerity is in line with broader perspectives on enhancing the well-being of individuals and community (without being paid). The application of the concept of *ngayah* is based on *Tri Hita Karana*, including *ayah ayahan*, *urunan*, and *pepeson*. Technical terms are explained, and the language remains formal, concise, and objective, adhering to standard grammatical correctness, spelling, and punctuation conventions.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a transcendental phenomenological methodology (Moustakas, 1994), where the explanation of participants' experiences is given priority. Therefore, the concept of transcendence implies perceiving all things in a novel manner for the first time (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative approach investigates factors that influence the Bayung Gede Traditional Village community's decision not to seek employment or migrate elsewhere. Educated individuals should return to their village to participate in *ngayah*, a traditional practice of honoring the ancestors and homeland. In qualitative study, variables lack categorization, and the values form mutually exclusive categories. These variables are centered on individual happiness within the Bayung Gede community, which comprises both *ngarep krama* and traditional village *krama*, through life, physical well-being, social connections, and control over the surroundings.

Participatory observation techniques were used to interrogate fifteen informants. These included *Jero Kubayan Muncuk Nyada*, one person; *Jero Kubayan Mucuk Istri*, one person; *Ririgan Ulu Apad*, four people; *Daa/truna*, two people; *Krama Desa*, six people; and a *land contractor*, one person.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Community capability is the capacity to confront, manage, and adjust to different challenges, modifications, or prospects within their social, economic, political, and cultural environment. The capability notion covers several features, such as a community's knowledge, abilities, resources, values, and social order. Important components of the variable comprise individuals' aptitude to understand prevalent issues and possess the requisite proficiency to tackle specific predicaments and scenarios.

Community in Bayung Gede Traditional Village that possess strong capabilities are more inclined to confront and take advantage of existing opportunities, handle demanding changes, and enhance quality of life. The creation of capabilities is frequently the objective of diverse development initiatives and endeavors to generate substantial social change. The achievement of happiness is evident through various practices, including the expression of gratitude as well as devotion to God and ancestors through *ngayah* and *ngaturang bakti*. *Ngayah*, a communal tradition in Bali, includes sacrifice and dedication towards divinity, ancestors, the community, and the environment. This tradition can take several forms, such as cleaning temples, construction of public facilities, or extending aid to the needy. The Bayung Gede community's interpretation of *ngayah* comprises:

Ngayah to God and Ancestors as a source of happiness

Ngayah, originating from the Indonesian language, has become a popular term in Bali. This tradition describes a voluntary form of community service conducted to benefit the public interest, including participating in religious events, cultural celebrations, or contributing to the development of facilities. Bayung Gede Traditional Village successfully upholds its environmental conservation practices due to a well-established and sustainable social system.

This traditional village follows the Bali Mula model and uses the *Ulu Apad* system. The customary elders of *Ulu Apad* and the *Bandesa Adat*, who act as the enforcers of the law, regulate environmental issues according to the teachings of Hinduism through *awig-awig* and *perarem*. Furthermore, the Bayung Gede Traditional Village community strives to preserve local knowledge while adapting to modern life, achieved by maintaining the original values passed down from the ancestors.

Among the 547 households, 164 are designated as *krama desa pengarep*, signifying core residents with a lifelong commitment to the village. Customary leadership rights are gained through societal recognition rather than by birthright. The title is bestowed on individuals who have earned the trust and respect of the community through merits. The steadfastness of the Bali Mula community to uphold their

authentic culture is apparent in the method for selecting leaders based on pacts passed down through multiple generations.

The leadership structure of the traditional village is presided over by *Kubayan*, *Jro Kubayan Nyoman*, and *Jro Kubayan Mucuk*. These people are supported by *Saih Nembelas* - customary officials whose appointment is restricted to individuals without physical disabilities. In this context, *Saih Nembelas* maintains the authority to oversee the temple's profit land while holding positions.

Residents of customary land are subject to obligations of the village or temple, known as "*ngayah*". This tradition restricts the father's land, transforming the concept into a limited property right. The primary objective is to control the business and personal mobility of individual members of the customary village. This limitation is in favor of the customary village since the father's land represents the *Beschikkingssgebied* or territory of the village.

Ngayah is an enduring and evolving philosophy deeply connected to Balinese culture. The tradition endures as a thriving cultural practice, and its essence has not faded with time. The process includes individuals or groups dedicated to a cause without anticipating material rewards. This global concept bears a resemblance to volunteering but adheres to the specific Adat rules and social protocols unique to Balinese society. *Ngayah* is not merely a voluntary act since the concept embodies social responsibility within the Balinese community and is consistent with Hindu principles. In the context of Bayung Gede, *ngayah* extends beyond fulfilling social commitments. *Ngayah* transcends considerations of educational background, occupation, or social status carried out through the communal cooperation of *gotong royong* within the *banjar* (neighborhood association) or sacred places such as temples. The participation is open to anyone with a genuine desire and intention to contribute selflessly to the community.

Ngayah in Bayung Gede Traditional Village is classified into three categories, illustrated in Figure 4.1

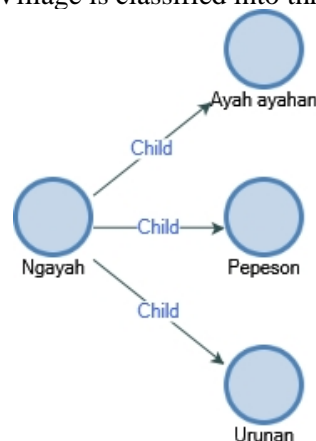


Figure 1. Ngayah in the tradition of Bayung Gede Traditional Village

Source: Data processed

Ayah-ayahan refers to the physical obligations that citizens and community must abide by, following customary norms and rules (*awig-awig*). The aim is to enhance a reciprocal relationship between residents in the customary village, including those from *banjar*. *Urunan* is a customary obligation conducted by citizens or dormitories to fulfill monetary dues required. These activities are carried out in compliance with the rules outlined in the *awig-awig* or *perarem*, which have become a collective agreement through the implementation of *paruman*. As a customary citizen/dormitory, it is mandatory to make a contribution or payment known as *pepeson*. The dues will be in the form of objects such as coconut leaves, coconuts, bamboo, among others. This is needed to follow the rules laid down in the *awig-awig* that serve as a collective agreement (*paruman*). Meier and Stutzer (2004) asserted that volunteering increased happiness compared to those who did not participate. *Ngayah* and volunteering include pro-social behavior in individuals without the expectation of reciprocity. This is exemplified by informant *Jero Kubayan Mucuk Nyada's* statement in an interview:

"Our family has been active in the village for generations." Furthermore, I am also an active member of the *Ngusaba Lampuan* committee in my village, and I have even held the position of committee head at times. I am also an active member of the *Ngusaba Lampuan* committee in my village, and I have even

held the position of committee head at times. My involvement in Ngayah extends beyond my village to other community as well. (IWT, 22 April 2023).

Ngayah is a form of voluntary work carried out with the deliberate intention of helping others and promoting mutual support. Even though the tradition demands time and effort from the participants, it is regarded as an indispensable part of the social and spiritual life in Desa Adat Bayung Gede. *Ngayah* is considered an important and meaningful element of community life in the culture of Desa Adat Bayung Gede, and many people take part in the activities joyfully. The motives are typically founded on an authentic desire to serve the public interest, confer advantages on the local community, and express social and spiritual values. *Ngayah* is a fulfilling endeavor for every member of the *Bayung Gede* community since the tradition reinforces social connections and unity. In the Bayung Gede Traditional Village Community, the concept embodies religious devotion to deities, providing a source of contentment through the act of contributing positively in a spiritual context. *Ngayah* embodies religious devotion to deities, providing a source of contentment through the act of contributing positively in a spiritual context, and includes a diverse range of tasks and skills. These activities provide opportunities for individuals to gain new experiences, enhance their skills, and derive satisfaction from contributing meaningfully. In carrying out *ngayah*, individuals can find a sense of fulfillment in contributing to the betterment of society and achieving a shared objective. The voluntary aspect and willingness to participate personally in *ngayah* are crucial. An activity perceived as a compulsory duty can detract from the significance and pleasure of the *ngayah* experience. Therefore, voluntary devotion holds greater importance in Balinese tradition as the concept brings joy and contentment rather than being an obligatory burden. The sincere attitude toward fulfilling the obligations is deeply rooted in the Bayung Gede Traditional Village Community's ancestral beliefs, and volunteerism remains inseparable from the acceptance of duties.

Performing *ngayah* to God and ancestors is a form of respect and devotion to spiritual entities that are considered the source of life and blessings. The people of Bayung Gede Traditional Village believe that by performing *ngayah* sincerely and gratefully, they will receive blessings and protection from God and ancestors. This belief creates balance and harmony in people's lives. *Ngayah* is often performed in traditional ceremonies held in the village. The community collectively participates in the preparation and execution of the ceremony, including providing food, offerings, and decorations. In traditional ceremonies, the community also contributes by making donations of money or goods. These contributions help finance ceremonial activities and fulfill economic needs in the village. Bayung Gede Traditional Village has strong tourism potential due to its rich culture and traditions. *Ngayah* is also performed in the preparation and organisation of cultural events, such as traditional ceremonies, dances or festivals. This allows the community to promote their culture to tourists and generate income from *ngayah* activities play a significant role in the economy of the community, particularly in traditional villages like Bayung Gede. *Ngayah* is commonly employed in constructing village infrastructure, such as roads, irrigation systems, and public buildings. By involving the entire community in these activities, the village can save significant costs that would otherwise be incurred if using wage labour. *Ngayah* can also be used in agricultural activities, such as planting rice, cleaning rice fields, or harvesting together. *Ngayah* not only increases agricultural yields but also strengthens social solidarity among farmers.

Additionally, it is often related to the preparation and execution of traditional ceremonies, which can attract tourists to the village. Travellers who come to the traditional village of Bayung Gede to attend or witness ceremonies can make an economic contribution through the purchase of local goods and services. *Ngayah* can involve making items for ceremonial purposes, such as carvings, wickerwork, or traditional fine art. Local craftsmen and artists may receive orders or sales from the items produced during *ngayah* activities.

Ngayah can also support education and social welfare activities in the village, such as cleaning the school environment, improving public facilities, or helping with community social programmes. These investments in education and social welfare can improve the overall quality of life of the community, which can have a positive impact on the economy. Through *ngayah* activities, the people of Desa Adat Bayung Gede can strengthen social solidarity, support local economic development, and reinforce the cultural identity of the community. This is an essential part of the Balinese culture and value system that significantly contributes to their economic well-being.

Ngaturang bakti

Ngaturang bakti in Bayung Gede Traditional Village is a way of showing genuine gratitude and appreciation for all the goodness in life, irrespective of the magnitude. The ceremony includes acknowledging the blessings and kindness bestowed on the people by God, nature, others, and the local community. Gratitude can be directed towards different aspects of life, ranging from necessities like food, shelter, and good health to more elaborate ones like supportive relationships, opportunities for personal growth, and career achievements. This tradition includes acknowledging positive elements as well as learning from challenging and demanding experiences. Having a positive mental attitude can lead to greater happiness, fulfillment, and optimism in life. In Desa Adat Bayung Gede, individuals practice *ngaturang bakti* through religious rituals, prayers, *ngaturang ayah/ngayah*, and daily reflections. By reflecting and expressing gratitude, awareness is created regarding blessings in their lives, and are less likely to focus on feelings of dissatisfaction or insatiable desires.

Ngaturang bakti originates from Indonesia, specifically from Bali. The literal translation is "giving respect or devotion" and the concept describes the act of paying homage to revered entities, including God, ancestors, or respected figures. In Bali, *ngaturang bakti* plays an integral role in daily life as well as religious ceremonies. In the context of Balinese Hinduism, the concept expresses gratitude, respect, and devotion to *Sang Hyang Widhi* (God) and the universe. This includes praying, offering, attending religious ceremonies, or performing social acts. Additionally, *ngaturang bakti* comprises an attitude of respect and gratitude to ancestors, parents, teachers, or other figures with a beneficial and direct impact on an individual's life. This shows the Balinese culture of honoring and valuing social connections while also meeting the necessities of daily life. Ritual life in Desa Adat Bayung Gede is inseparable from devotion (*banten*). The relation between *ngaturang bakti* and gratitude is conveyed through offering devotions in line with the village's practices when the *patra* is offered. Praying cultivates a sense of security, and peace as well as enhances spirituality, mentally and physically, serving as a ritual form of self-cultivation (Atmadja et al., 2017). *Ngaturang bakti* holds particular significance and distinctiveness, as articulated by Sujana in the following statement:

We express our gratitude by presenting devotion that is visible in the seribet of the city. The devotion we provide is uncomplicated and aligned with our capabilities. (Sujana, April 2023).

The practice of *bakti*, known as *upakara* in Desa Adat Bayung Gede, is simple and does not include the glamour associated with other Balinese villages. The *bakti* performed follows a logical sequence and is characterized by objective evaluations with an absence of subjective language. The academic writing is clear, concise, and complies with the formal register. Regular institution and formatting are followed, using high-level language with a consistent choice of technical terms. Grammatical accuracy, proper citation, and footnote style, as well as spelling consistency and stylistic adherence to British English are necessary.

The *ngaturang bakti* activity in Bayung Gede Traditional Village holds significant cultural and spiritual value. Additionally, it can serve as a source of supplementary income and support local economic development. The village may also offer unique traditional ceremonies that could attract tourists interested in learning about local culture and traditions. Tourists who attend or observe the ceremonies could provide additional income for the community through the sale of handicrafts, traditional food and drinks, as well as accommodation and transport services.

Some traditional ceremonies in Bayung Gede may be closely related to agricultural or livestock cycles. For instance, ceremonies related to the planting or harvesting season may provide blessings for agricultural produce. Similarly, ceremonies involving animal sacrifice may affect the local livestock sector. *Ngaturang bakti* activities often involve respect for nature and natural resources. The people of Bayung Gede village can be made aware of the importance of protecting the environment and managing natural resources sustainably through traditional ceremonies. This can support the growth of the agricultural sector, fisheries, or ecotourism activities. Social activities such as giving donations or assistance to the needy in the community often follow these ceremonies. This approach can reduce economic inequality and enhance social welfare in the village, promoting more inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

This study is consistent with Anwar's (2018) findings that there exists a positive correlation between *dhikr* intensity and happiness levels in college students. Therefore, the more intense the *dhikr*, the greater

the happiness experienced by the students. Khairunissa (2016) also discovered a positive correlation between religiosity and the happiness of hemodialysis patients at the Cipta Husada Muslimat NU Hemodialysis Clinic. The results indicate that in the Bayung Gede Traditional Village community, happiness is derived from material and non-material elements. Additionally, happiness is observed to arise from skills shown through shared activities and constructive social bonds. For the residents of Bayung Gede Traditional Village, the pursuit of happiness does not necessitate venturing far from their community, island, or nation. The elements, including a harmonious relationship with nature, the fruition of hope, good health, positive social connections, and gratitude through traditional forms of voluntary work known as *ngayah*, are readily accessible within the village. Duties should be performed with devotion and sincerity, and the requirements can be met within the community.

Happiness in the people of Bayung Gede Traditional Village

In the Bayung Gede Traditional Village Community, happiness is derived not only from material possessions but also from non-material sources. Both resources are equally important in their lives. Happiness also tends to arise from the capabilities demonstrated through simple activities or activities that they engage in together based on positive social relationships.

The people of Bayung Gede Traditional Village find happiness within their own community. They believe that balance with nature, the realization of hope, good health, positive social relationships, and fulfilling obligations through *ngayah*, *ngaturang bakti*, and sincere actions are the key elements of happiness. All necessary needs are readily available within the village, making it unnecessary to seek happiness elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study showed the distinctive physical environment and unique cultural practices, expressed in the everyday life of the community. Bayung Gede Village was a traditional village situated in a mountainous region of Bali and the majority of residents were of Balinese Mula descent. The proficiency of the residents was shown through adeptness in executing communal activities for the acquisition of pleasure, including ceremonies such as *ngaturang bakti* and *ngayah*. The residents performed *ngayah* activities both to God and their ancestors, as well as at the temple, despite having a hectic schedule. The consistent engagement did not discourage commitment but enabled the acquisition of income and the diligent provision for families. *Ngaturang Bakti* served as a way to express gratitude to God for all the blessings and grace bestowed. In addition, the devotion practiced by the community represented a straightforward approach that improved the authenticity of the offerings. Sustained commitment did not present a burdensome challenge but the engagement showed a profound sense of satisfaction and joy for the individual.

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