

# JAVANESE BRIDE *SIRAMAN* RITUAL IN TERMS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS, FLOURISHING

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**Abstract.** The *siraman* ritual is a procession performed by the bride and groom before their wedding ceremony. It is a Javanese tradition that holds symbolic and spiritual significance. This practice is deeply rooted in the philosophies of Javanese society, which emphasize harmony and conformity. This research aims to conduct a comprehensive review of the concept of flourishing as it pertains to the *siraman* ritual performed by the Javanese community, as well as to explore the notion of life satisfaction as a component of subjective well-being. The research methodology employed in this study is a literature review. Based on the literature study, the Javanese culture is steeped in symbolism. The *siraman* ritual is replete with symbolic meaning at every stage of the process. The psychological aspect contained in this ritual is flourishing and the author wants to reveal more clearly the meaning of the ritual for the bride-to-be.

**Keywords:** *siraman*, Java, symbolic, flourishing, well-being

## INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a cultural entity. It holds sacred and joyful significance. It is ideally carried out with an open heart, equipped with knowledge of the rules and procedures for building a happy household, and at a sufficient age (Ambarwati, Anindika, & Mustika, 2018). In religious teachings, marriage is considered a sacred union that forms the foundation of a happy family (Dewi, & Sudhana, 2013). Currently, marriage serves not only religious purposes but also fulfills human biological needs (Shamad, 2017). It is important to note that subjective evaluations have been excluded from this text. Additionally, marriage holds significant meaning for human life as it aims to prevent adultery (Ardhianita, Iis, and Budi Andayani, 2015) and allows individuals to build a new life.

Wedding ceremonies vary greatly depending on ethnic traditions, religions, and social classes. The use of specific procedures or rules in the wedding ceremony is determined by the norms, customs, and culture of each region. Indonesia, with its diverse tribes, religions, ethnicities, and local cultures, has given rise to a wide range of wedding traditions and rituals that differ from region to region. Each tribe and culture have its own unique identity and characteristics in their wedding ceremonies. Javanese culture is particularly significant due to the large population of Javanese people in Indonesia.

Javanese culture is considered a symbolic culture due to its abundance of symbols (Octaviana & Friska, 2014). The culture is unique and challenging, making it an attractive subject to learn about (Astuti & Marvelia, 2019). Many Javanese philosophies are still applied in daily life by the Javanese people today, whether consciously or not (Irmawati, 2013). Javanese culture is rich in symbols that possess aesthetic and ethical value, often in the form of antique and artistic pseudo-signs (Irmawati, 2013). Javanese culture is rich in symbols that possess aesthetic and ethical value, often in the form of antique and artistic pseudo-signs (Irmawati, 2013). To fully comprehend the hidden meanings and values behind these symbols, a comprehensive understanding is required. Symbols are an integral part of Javanese culture and are often present in activities, ceremonies, and rituals. Javanese culture is rich in symbols that possess aesthetic and ethical value, often in the form of antique and artistic pseudo-signs (Irmawati, 2013). Symbolic processions are often carried out in Javanese culture, including one that symbolizes marriage as a sacred ceremony for the perpetuation of married life (Octaviana and Friska, 2014). The wedding procession in Javanese society reflects the prioritization of balance, harmony, and peacefulness in daily life (Astuti and Marvelia, 2019).

Javanese culture has a well-defined procedure for conducting wedding ceremonies. The Javanese wedding ceremony typically consists of three parts: pre-wedding, wedding day, and post-

wedding procedures (Pratama, Bayu Ady, and Novita Wahyuningsih, 2018). One of the preserved Javanese wedding processions is the bridal *siraman* ritual. The term '*siraman*' originates from the Javanese word '*siram*', which means bathing (Purwadi and Enis Niken, 2007). It is a traditional Javanese pre-wedding ceremony (Pratama, Bayu Ady, and Novita Wahyuningsih, 2018). *Siraman* is a symbolic procession that involves giving holy water to the bride-to-be. The purpose is to cleanse not only her body but also her soul and to bless her for a smooth and happy marriage (Irmawati, 2013).

In Javanese culture, a wedding ceremony includes a ritual called '*siraman*' which is performed one day before the '*ijab*' and '*panggih*' ceremony. The purpose of *siraman* is to cleanse the bride and groom both physically and mentally. According to tradition, the bride's parents and several respected elders, who have not been divorced, are chosen to bathe the bride-to-be. The number of elders is usually seven, which is called '*pitu*' in Javanese. They are expected to act as helpers or '*pitulungan*' (Purwadi, 2004; Purwadi and Enis Niken, 2007). According to Javanese beliefs, the *siraman* ritual symbolizes the elimination of all negative elements from the bride and groom. It also serves as a reminder to pray for the spirits of the ancestors and to seek their blessings for a smooth wedding ceremony (Purwadi, 2004). The ritual is intended to prepare the bride and groom to enter the wedding gate in a clean and holy state, ready to embark on their new life together (Irmawati, 2013).

The *siraman* ritual is typically performed on the day preceding the marriage contract, either in the morning at 10:00 or at 3:00 p.m. (Irmawati, 2013). Astuti and Marvelia's research (2019) indicates that the *siraman* ritual holds symbolic significance in each of its equipment and processions. The *siraman* ritual involves a specific set of procedures and sequences, as well as the use of certain equipment. This equipment includes water from seven different springs, dippers made of coconut shells, jugs, *tumpeng robyong*, *tumpeng gundul*, five-color glutinous rice porridge, market snacks, *batik* cloth, jasmine flowers, roses, reject leaves, bridal scrubs, and suit clothes (Astuti & Marvelia, 2019). During the *siraman* ritual, holy water is sourced from seven different locations and mixed with roses, jasmine flowers, and spices. This mixture is believed to have the ability to cleanse the body of impurities, known as *hadas* in Islam (Irmawati, 2013).

The Javanese bridal *siraman* ritual holds a philosophical meaning of preparing the bride and groom for harmonious household life. The ritual of *Siraman* serves as a symbol to eliminate all negative aspects from the couple, allowing them to enter the wedding gate in a pure and clean state (Irmawati, 2013). Symbolically, *siraman* represents the bride-to-be's strong determination to behave virtuously in thought, word, and deed. This behavior is primarily used to facilitate social interaction among individuals (Astuti & Marvelia, 2019). According to Astuti and Marvelia (2019), brides-to-be who perform the *siraman* ritual are making individual efforts to build social interactions with their environment. Individuals who are skilled at building social interactions tend to have positive relationships with others, which can affect their level of life satisfaction (Ryff, 2018).

In their study, Wahyuni and Maulida (2019) found a positive relationship between life satisfaction and individual well-being. Life satisfaction is the process of accepting one's life as a whole, including consciously setting and achieving goals, guided by personal standards (Wahyuni & Maulida, 2019). According to Dinner (2009), life satisfaction is a subjective measure, meaning that each individual has their standard for what constitutes a satisfying life. This standard is determined by the individuals themselves (Diener, 2009). Additionally, research has shown a significant correlation between life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Rathore, Kumar, & Gautam, 2015).

The concept of well-being in positive psychology has evolved over time. Seligman (2011) developed the concept of flourishing as a state in which individuals show optimal development and are able to carry out social, mental, and physical functions properly. Huppert (2013) defines flourishing as the experience of life going well. Flourishing is a term used to describe the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively. According to Huppert (2013), it is synonymous with a high level of mental well-being and symbolizes mental health. Huppert (2009) defines flourishing as the highest level of mental well-being, which represents mental health itself.

Seligman (2011) identifies five aspects that constitute flourishing, commonly known as PERMA: Positive emotion, Engagement, Positive Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement. The Javanese bridal *siraman* ritual aims to prepare the bride-to-be for a new life through positive social interactions and a focus on physical and mental readiness. It reflects a belief in the importance of

maintaining a positive outlook and emotional well-being. This explanation suggests that individuals who engage in positive social interactions while in good psychological or mental health experience a state of well-being, also known as a flourishing condition (Seligman, 2011).

This literature study aims to describe the psychological aspects of the bridal *siraman* ritual and review the meaning of flourishing for Javanese people as represented through the Javanese bridal *siraman* ritual. The purpose of this article is to provide readers with a better understanding of Javanese culture and the significance of the bridal *siraman* ritual for Javanese people. Additionally, it aims to enhance readers' knowledge and comprehension of the concept of flourishing.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research methodology employed in this study is a literature review. A literature review involves reviewing books, journals, scientific articles, and other relevant sources pertaining to a particular issue or theory. It provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of those works in relation to the research problem being investigated (Fink, 2014). A literature review is a comprehensive summary of the sources used to research a particular topic. It serves as a foundation for further research activities (Fink, 2014). The data collection technique used in this research involves gathering relevant information related to the research topic from the latest journals, scientific articles, and related books. Researchers use multiple journals and books to conduct a literature review. The aim is to find as many sources or references as possible. This research provides a descriptive analysis and detailed explanation to help readers understand the cultural context of the Javanese bridal *siraman* in terms of positive psychology.

## RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Javanese bridal bathing is a traditional practice that involves bathing the bride-to-be to ensure physical and mental purity for both the bride and groom (Setyaningsih and Atiek, 2015). According to Setyaningsih and Zahrulianingdyah (2015), the *siraman* ritual is intended to purify the bride-to-be both inwardly and outwardly. The *siraman* ritual serves as a means of providing marriage advice or advice for prospective brides to navigate their future household (Astuti & Marvelia, 2019). Spiritually, *siraman* is a form of prayer and request for physical and mental perfection and peace (Risianti et al., 2022). The Javanese society prioritizes balance and harmony in order to coexist with others (Astuti & Marvelia, 2019). During the *siraman* ritual, the bride-to-be undergoes a series of processions symbolizing her readiness to welcome a new life through marriage. This can be interpreted as an indication of high life satisfaction (Diener, Inglehart, & Tay, 2013).

According to Diener et al. (2013), life satisfaction refers to an individual's ability to enjoy life experiences accompanied by subjective well-being. Margolis et al. (2019) define life satisfaction as a cognitive assessment process based on an individual's evaluation of their life in general. Therefore, life satisfaction assessment is based on subjective criteria and does not reflect external conditions (Margolis et al., 2019). The *siraman* ritual, performed by the bride-to-be, reflects her level of life satisfaction and achievement of personal ideals. This is demonstrated by the individual's awareness and readiness to enter the new phase of life, marriage (Wahyuni & Maulida, 2019). In summary, life satisfaction can be understood as the process of an individual accepting the life they desire, which is subjective and based on personal criteria or standards (Wahyuni & Maulida, 2019). Life satisfaction is a component of happiness and subjective well-being (Proctor, 2014). It refers to an individual's subjective feelings about their life going well. The *siraman* ritual performed by the bride-to-be is an example of this.

Subjective well-being is a personal and experiential perception of positive and negative emotional responses related to life satisfaction (Proctor, 2014). It is an individual's statement about their quality of life, representing the cognitive aspect, and happiness, reflecting the emotional aspect. Subjective well-being encompasses not only the correlates and characteristics of happiness but also the underlying processes and interactions between internal and external circumstances, as well as the presence of individual and environmental factors that can influence how individuals perceive

their lives (Proctor, 2014). It is concerned with an individual's evaluation of their satisfaction and happiness with life as a whole, including in areas such as work and family (Keyes, 2014). According to Keyes (2014), happiness and well-being are indicators of well-being. Meanwhile, associates the concept of flourishing with subjective well-being, which is reflected in positive emotions, life satisfaction, and the absence of negative emotions Seligman (2011).

The term 'flourishing' is commonly used to describe the highest level of well-being (Huppert & So, 2013). It refers to a positive life experience that is associated with good mental health (Huppert & So, 2013). Flourishing is an individual condition that indicates optimal development. It is characterized by high levels of positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning in life, and achievement. When individuals reach a state of flourishing, they experience overall happiness (Arif, 2016). These five aspects of flourishing were first introduced by Seligman (2011). According to Fowers and Owenz (2010), flourishing is an open concept that refers to a good life, which individuals can achieve by combining various forms of goodness. The *siraman* ritual symbolizes the flourishing condition of the bride and groom, as they are ready to start a new life in a physically and mentally healthy state (Risianti et al., 2022).

The first aspect of the developing concept is positive emotion. The *siraman* ritual symbolizes positive emotion reflected in the happiness of the bride and groom in welcoming their new life (Setyaningsih & Atiek, 2015). This is reflected in the ritual of the bride's shower, which symbolizes the individual's condition of starting a new life with their partner. Positive emotions create opportunities for individuals to discover and build new connections, knowledge, and ways of life (Sekarini, Hidayah, & Hayati, 2020). Positive emotions can also influence social relationships that have a significant impact on an individual's future happiness (Sekarini, Hidayah, & Hayati, 2020). Positive emotions motivate individuals to take an active role in their environment and participate in various activities that are evolutionary for the individual, their species, or both (Fredrickson et al., 2008). In this case, the positive emotion indicator is shown by the happiness felt by the bride and groom when getting married. Additionally, positive emotions are reflected in the enthusiasm and hope to build a new and better life in the future. Therefore, it can be assumed that the positive emotions experienced by the bride and groom during the *siraman* ritual will encourage them to build a more intimate relationship with their partner and may provide social benefits for them (Seligman, 2013). Positive emotions are an important aspect that signals the achievement of flourishing in the *siraman* ritual (Edwina et al., 2022).

Moreover, the second aspect is engagement, which refers to the attachment and behavior of individuals who are interested and focused on a particular activity (Budisetyani et al., 2018). Engagement implies that individuals take pleasure in and wholeheartedly involve themselves in the activity, experiencing a sense of flow where time seems to stop (Budisetyani et al., 2018). Attachment refers to a psychological connection to certain activities. In the context of the *siraman* ritual, the engagement aspect is manifested through the willingness of the bride-to-be to undergo a series of *siraman* processions. These processions are quite sacred and require a short preparation time and high concentration. Budisetyani (2018) found a positive correlation between engagement and well-being, indicating that higher levels of engagement lead to greater individual well-being. Some literature suggests that engagement can also increase partner commitment, as evidenced by individuals' willingness to pursue adult romantic relationships that may develop into full attachment.

The following section discusses the importance of positive relationships in achieving flourishing. Human relationships serve the purpose of fulfilling the needs of the individuals involved (Budisetyani et al., 2018). This aspect involves feeling valued for having positive relationships with spouses, siblings, friends, or neighbors (Budisetyani et al., 2018). Positive relationships are essential for achieving flourishing conditions (Fowers, et al., 2016). Strong bonds between individuals can improve well-being. Maslow (Ryff and Singer, 2006) suggests that self-actualization involves empathy, compassion, and a capacity for love and deep friendship, all of which reflect positive relationships (Ryff, 2018).

In the context of *siraman*, this ritual focuses on social interaction between people. Social interaction refers to the relationship between two or more individuals and can influence the behavior of others (Sisrazeni, 2017). The *siraman* ritual exemplifies the social interaction that the bride-to-be successfully establishes with her surroundings (Astuti & Marvelia, 2019). The *siraman* ritual, as a form of wedding preparation, can be considered a positive social interaction. Such interactions have been found to contribute to individual well-being (Lee et al., 2023). Close relationships, including

romantic relationships, family, and friendships, have been shown to positively predict individual well-being (Lee et al., 2023). Research indicates that married individuals tend to experience greater levels of happiness, improved health, and a longer lifespan compared to their unmarried counterparts (Lawrence et al., 2019).

Seligman (2011) posits that positive relationships predict individual happiness, making them a crucial factor in creating flourishing conditions. According to Ryff (2018), individuals attain a flourishing state when they possess high levels of positive relationships, including empathy, love, and compassion for others. This is illustrated through the *siraman* procession undertaken by the bride-to-be by involving close family, distant relatives, and neighbors, and this can also be interpreted as a positive relationship that is built and successfully formed by the bride-to-be. Seligman states that individuals who reach a flourishing state will develop optimally and function fully (Seligman, 2011). The bride and groom who perform the *siraman* ritual are in optimal condition and can fulfill their social functions, marked by positive relationships with both their families and partners.

The fourth aspect, Meaning, refers to having a greater purpose in life beyond fulfilling one's desires (Budisetyani et al., 2018). This indicates that individuals aspire to make a positive impact on others, not just themselves (Efendy, 2016). Life becomes more meaningful when individuals strive to dedicate themselves to something bigger and broader that can benefit others. The search for meaning in life is closely linked to higher life satisfaction (Budisetyani et al., 2018). When individuals have a clear sense of purpose, it is akin to having a life compass that provides direction and meaning. Successfully finding the meaning of life can lead to a more fulfilling existence and a greater sense of happiness (Budisetyani et al., 2018). The level of an individual's well-being can be influenced by the meaningfulness of their life (Budisetyani et al., 2018). The *siraman* ritual, performed by the bride-to-be, is believed to contribute to the individual's ability to find meaning and purpose in life. This is then actualized through a marriage commitment, which is an agreement to continue living together with another individual in the long term. According to some theories, individuals achieve a state of flourishing when they discover the meaning of their life, as evidenced by their desire to fulfill their purpose.

The last or fifth aspect of flourishing is Achievement, which refers to an individual's desire for achievement or pursuit of success which is closely related to life goals and meaningfulness of life (Jisung & Soonhee, 2013). Achievement can be in the form of personal growth, which is not only in material form, but can be in non-material form. According to Seligman (2011), Achievement can mean distance, so the value of an achievement is seen from how far the individual goes from the starting point to the end point (Seligman, 2011). Individuals reach a state of flourish when they are willing to strive to achieve good life goals, thus requiring a struggle to achieve these goals represented through virtue and collaboration with other individuals (Fowers, 2012). The *siraman* ritual is a starting point towards the next gate of life, namely marriage which is a joint commitment with a partner to navigate the household ark. The bride-to-be who undergoes this ritual can be said to have reached a flourish state because she is trying to fulfill her desires and achieve long-term life goals by stepping into a new life through marriage.

The *siraman* ritual is performed by the bride-to-be, parents, and closest relatives as a symbol to cleanse the soul and body before embarking on the next stage of life. According to Javanese tradition, bathing (*siram*) is a way to purify oneself, and the *siraman* ritual represents purity for brides-to-be who are about to begin married life. During the *siram* ritual, the bride-to-be aims to achieve a state of flourishing, which is characterized by the PERMA aspects that arise during the *siraman* ritual.

## CONCLUSION

The *siraman* ritual is a tradition for brides-to-be who are preparing for their wedding ceremony. The ritual symbolizes the bride's physical and mental readiness to begin her new life with her partner. Individuals who perform the *siraman* ritual aim to achieve a flourishing condition characterized by positive emotions, such as happiness and engagement, to start a new life. The *siraman* ritual is believed to strengthen the relationship between the bride-to-be and her family, as



represented through the request for blessings from both parents during the ritual. Additionally, the ritual symbolizes how the bride-to-be can derive meaning from her life experiences. This, in turn, creates a sense of fulfillment. Through the ritual, the bride-to-be affirms that her life goals have been achieved, not necessarily in a material sense, but through marriage. This pre-wedding ritual has a positive impact on the bride-to-be, promoting good feelings and preparing her both physically and mentally for married life. It is important to note that any subjective evaluations have been excluded from this description. Therefore, the bridal shower ritual is interpreted as a symbol of the bride-to-be's readiness to enter a new phase of life, encompassing both physical and mental aspects.

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