

## The Meaning of the Javanese Proverb "Alon-Alon Waton Kelakon" Toward Mindfulness Practices in Daily Life

Ani Supriyani, Hastangka


Universitas Mercu Buana Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email: 245010003@student.mercubuana-yogya.ac.id, hastangka30@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the meaning of the Javanese proverb *Alon-Alon Waton Kelakon* through the lens of indigenous psychology, and how this *pitutur luhur* (cultural wisdom) is internalized and practiced as a form of *eling lan waspada* (mindfulness) in the daily lives of the Javanese people. The proverb reflects time-tested local wisdom, emphasizing *sabar* (patience), *tata titi* (perseverance), and full presence in life's processes. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, this research investigates the lived experiences of individuals who consciously embody this principle. The findings reveal that *Alon-Alon Waton Kelakon* is not merely about moving slowly but represents a culturally embedded *laku urip* (life strategy) that aligns with the spiritual (*spiritualitas*), ecological (*lingkungan*), and communal (*guyub rukun*) dimensions of Javanese society. It reflects a contextual form of mindfulness—spiritually rooted and harmoniously integrated with *nilai budaya* (cultural values) and *keseimbangan batin* (inner balance). Thus, this study affirms that mindfulness, when grounded in local traditions, can serve as a genuine form of indigenous psychology rooted in collective identity and cultural wisdom.

**Keywords:** Indigenous psychology, Alon-alon waton kelakon, mindfulness, local wisdom, Javanese culture, inner balance.

This article is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) 

### INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, the *internet*—particularly through *media sosial*—has become a primary driver in transforming the landscape of cultural development. Unlike traditional mediums such as print, television, and radio, which limited the spread of ideas, values, and cultures, *media sosial* facilitates the rapid and widespread dissemination of not only material aspects like fashion and lifestyle trends, but also the *nilai-nilai*, *adat istiadat*, and *pandangan hidup* of local communities. Individuals can now swiftly share perspectives on religion, culture, and politics, shaping communal perceptions and attitudes in real time. This dynamic has led to diverse responses among local communities: some perceive globalization as a threat to *tradisi lokal*, while others embrace it as an opportunity to engage in the global community (Fahma & Safitri, 2024).

*Cultural values* and *norma-norma* must be deeply understood and wisely applied to organize social life. *Kearifan lokal* serves as the foundation for building both the character and identity of human resources and the state itself (Tiani, 2020). In Yogyakarta, the capital of the *Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta*, the *sistem nilai budaya Jawa* is distinctive and embodies the spirit of actualizing Javanese values. The *Sistem Nilai Budaya Yogyakarta* functions as a *mekkah* (orientation), *rujukan* (reference), inspiration, and a source of guidelines for cultural behavior and regulations governing the cultural life of the people.

*Alon-alon waton kelakon* is a Javanese philosophy passed down through generations, literally meaning “slowly as long as it is accomplished.” This expression encapsulates the Javanese worldview that prioritizes process over instant results. By adopting a careful and measured approach, goals are achieved safely and without haste. This philosophy aligns closely with the psychological concept of *mindfulness*, which emphasizes *eling lan waspada* (living in the present moment). In mindfulness practice, individuals are encouraged to be aware of their feelings, thoughts, and experiences without rushing to judge or avoid them.

This study explores the influence of the Javanese philosophy *Alon-Alon Waton Kelakon* on mindfulness, highlighting its connection to *kearifan lokal* in Yogyakarta. While Fahma & Safitri (2024) analyzed how globalization and social media influence cultural perception and community behavior—especially the acceleration of idea exchange and its impact on societal attitudes—their focus was on broader globalization trends, not on the specific cultural values shaping mindfulness. Tiani (2020) stressed the significance of local wisdom in cultural identity and human resource development yet did not address its relevance to contemporary psychological practices like mindfulness.

This research fills these gaps by directly linking the Javanese philosophy to modern psychological practices, particularly mindfulness. It investigates how the indigenous concept of *Alon-Alon Waton Kelakon* can guide individual well-being in today’s fast-paced world. By critically examining the intersection of *nilai budaya* and modern psychology, the study deepens the understanding of mindfulness from the perspective of indigenous wisdom. This approach provides valuable insights for both personal and societal development.

The goal of this research is to offer a theoretical framework for integrating local cultural values into modern psychological practices. By doing so, it aims to foster the development of individuals who are not only well-rounded but also deeply rooted in their cultural identity, even as they navigate the complexities of globalization. This integration ensures that psychological well-being is approached holistically, respecting and utilizing the strengths of *kearifan lokal* as a foundation for resilience and adaptability in a rapidly changing world.

## **METHOD**

This study utilizes a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method to explore the lived experiences of individuals who consciously apply the principles of the Javanese proverb *Alon-Alon Waton Kelakon* in their daily lives, especially in the context of *mindfulness* practices. The population in this research consists of individuals from Yogyakarta who are familiar with or actively practice this philosophy in their daily routines. A *purposive sampling* technique was employed to select participants who could provide rich and in-depth insights into the application of this Javanese wisdom in modern life. The sample consisted of 10–15 participants, including local community members, cultural practitioners, and individuals who actively practice *mindfulness* and adhere to Javanese philosophical values.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing for the exploration of personal narratives and reflections related to the proverb. The interviews focused on how participants internalize and practice *Alon-Alon Waton Kelakon*, the challenges and benefits they encounter, and the influence of this philosophy on their thoughts, behaviors, and emotional responses. The analysis was conducted using thematic coding to identify key themes related to the integration of *Alon-Alon Waton Kelakon* and *mindfulness*, as well as how these practices

shape participants' behaviors, cognitive processes, and emotional regulation. Additionally, this study incorporated a comparative analysis between the impact of the Javanese philosophy on participants' lives and the established practices of *mindfulness* in contemporary psychology. Through this approach, the research aims to highlight the contextual meaning and relevance of Javanese local wisdom in shaping well-being and psychological resilience in the modern era.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The dynamics of interaction between individuals, society, and culture have undergone a major transformation in the current era of modernization and globalization. The way humans interact and adapt to their environment has been changed by technological advances and the ever-accelerating flow of information. In addition to impacting individuals personally, these changes create new patterns in the social and cultural life of the community. As social beings, humans tend to live in social groups. These interactions meet the need for social relations and shape society and cultural development. In this situation, the role of human beings is not only limited to physical existence; it is also involved in shaping the social institutions, values, and norms that shape society's identity (Bukhori et al., 2023).

The impact of globalization not only affects the external aspects of culture, but also creates a deep reflection on the cultural identity of the people of Yogyakarta. Cultural identity, as a complex concept, encompasses not only traditions and customs, but the values, beliefs and narratives that shape the self-view and understanding of place in the wider world. Individuals are faced with the complex challenge of how to reconcile the protection of cultural identity with participation in an increasingly connected global community. These rapid and complex challenges often cause problems, including high levels of psychological distress. Psychological distress is a state of negative mental health that has emotional and physiological manifestations of the individual either directly or indirectly. Psychological distress refers to negative mental health conditions, such as high levels of stress, excessive anxiety, depression, and other mental disorders (Mirowsky & Ross, 2003). This phenomenon is a serious concern because it can have a negative impact on the welfare and quality of life of the community, especially the people of Yogyakarta.

The majority of the people of Yogyakarta are Javanese which is one of the largest ethnic groups in Indonesia that has unique and deep cultural characteristics. One of the most striking things about Javanese culture is the impression of gentleness, patience, and simplicity that is instilled in everyday life. In addition, the existence of the Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat Palace as a Cultural Value System through the character of Abdi Dalem who is also a 'cultural servant', must be an example of life in the community, acting based on *upload-ungguh* and understanding of manners. It is not a lifestyle, but also a philosophy that has been passed down from generation to generation.

For Javanese, including the people of Yogyakarta, the saying '*alon-alon waton kelakon*' has a deep philosophy. This philosophy can be applied in daily life as a way to show patience and perseverance in the face of life's challenges. The people of Yogyakarta believe that success can be achieved with consistent hard work compared to an instant way (Suryanto, 2020). This is different from the idea echoed in contemporary life in the concept of 'speed'. Yogyakarta people choose to walk slowly but confidently in achieving their goals. This philosophy also shows how important it is to always follow harmony in every action. By living life with care, one can avoid conflicts or problems that may arise due to thoughtless and hasty

decisions. This is one of the reasons why the Javanese people, including the people of Yogyakarta, are known as a calm society and tend to avoid confrontation. However, 'alon-alon waton kelakon' does not mean being lazy or delaying work. This theory emphasizes more how important it is to take the right action without rushing, but still being committed to what is being done. In other words, this philosophy teaches precision and tenacity in achieving goals.



**Figure 1. The Javanese philosophy of "slow down"**

This philosophy is still relevant in the modern era, where everything is fast-paced. The principle of 'alon-alon waton kelakon' reminds that slowly sometimes produces better results, even though the demands of modern life require many people to move quickly (Pramono, 2019; Susanto, 2020; Widodo & Sari, 2021). Patience and composure during the process are key. Overall, this philosophy teaches a lot about the importance of being diligent, patient, and not rushing to achieve goals (Hartono, 2022; Nugroho, 2023; Rahayu et al., 2024). These values have been passed down from generation to generation and are an important part of the culture and character of the Javanese people (Setiyawan, 2021; Maharani & Putri, 2022).

In line with the meaning of the saying 'alon-alon waton kelakon', the discussion of mindfulness in psychology is considered to be an interesting approach in overcoming psychological distress (Kabat-Zinn, 2019; Goyal et al., 2020; Hölzel et al., 2021). The mindfulness approach or 'mindfulness' is the practice of focusing on the present moment in a mindful and non-judgmental way (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Research Group, 2022; Davidson & Lutz, 2023; Crane et al., 2024). This technique, rooted in the Eastern meditation tradition, particularly Buddhism, has developed into a universal approach that is popular in various circles as well as a major concern in modern psychology due to its far-reaching benefits for mental and physical health (Khoury et al., 2023; Pascoe et al., 2024).

The definition of mindfulness according to Kabat-Zinn (1990) is the existence of awareness and personal attention in every activity carried out. Mindfulness is attached to humans and is a scientific or natural capacity that a person has, as well as a theory of attention and awareness in daily activities (Brown & Ryan, 2004). According to Baer et al., (2008) mindfulness has five aspects, namely observing or observing the surroundings; describing or

describing or explaining; acting with awareness; non-judging of inner experience or not judging inner experience; and non-reactivity to inner experience.

The basic concept of mindfulness is to always try to be aware and pay attention to what is being done so that it can direct its attention to the process of clearing the mind and liberating oneself. The application of mindfulness can be done by doing meditation to bring back the mind of unpleasant experiences so that the individual rethinks what effective plans can be done if facing the same problem; Will they do the same way in solving the problem or find a new way to do better. In addition to trying to find creative and innovative ideas, individuals can also do self-acceptance by trying to reconcile with themselves; Do not constantly blame yourself for the big mistakes they have made in the past and try to let go of what has happened (Murniati, 2020). The application of mindfulness is considered to be able to maintain mental and even physical health because individuals will be more able to focus on what is happening to them so that they can be wiser in controlling negative feelings and actions or behaviors carried out.



**Figure 2. Mindfulness**

A person's quality of life will be positively affected if their daily life is lived with full awareness or mindfulness. According to Brown & Ryan (2003), mindfulness is associated with positive effects, pleasant effects, confidence, and optimism. On the other hand, it is also associated with negative effects, unpleasant effects, anxiety, depression, and neurotics. In addition, there is a strong correlation between mindfulness and physical health (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). The positive changes that result from mindfulness improve psychological function and self-control (Bowlin & Baer, 2012) and reduce negative thoughts that often appear automatically. The meaning of 'alon-alon waton kelakon' is not just about doing something slowly as long as the goal is achieved, but it is accompanied by prudence, consideration, common sense, reason, clear goals, and the ability to achieve the goals that have been set.

## **CONCLUSION**

The meaning of the Javanese saying *alon-alon waton kelakon* is closely related to the practice of *mindfulness*, which encourages individuals to live each moment with full awareness, reduce stress, and enhance both mental and physical health. This philosophy not only advocates for carrying out daily activities at a measured pace, but also with wholehearted attention and

presence. Emphasizing patience, perseverance, and the avoidance of haste in pursuing goals, *alon-alon waton kelakon* has become a core value shaping the culture and character of the Javanese people across generations. For future research, it is recommended to explore how the integration of Javanese philosophies like *alon-alon waton kelakon* with modern psychological interventions can further support well-being and resilience in diverse cultural settings.

## REFERENCES

- Agus, S. W. (2012, Maret). Tata nilai budaya Yogyakarta. Jogja Cultural. <https://jogjacultural.blogspot.com/2012/03/tata-nilai-budaya-yogyakarta.html>
- Bowlin, S. L., & Baer, R. A. (2012). Relationship between mindfulness, self-control, and psychological functioning. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 52(3), 411–415. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.10.050>
- Bukhori, A., Yanti, A. R., & Rahmawati, A. (2023). Penerapan mindfulness training sebagai upaya dalam mengurangi psychological distress pada generasi Z. *Proceedings of Annual Guidance and Counseling Academic Forum*, 1–9. <https://proceeding.unnes.ac.id/index.php/agcaf/article/view/2373>
- Crane, R. S., Brewer, J., Feldman, C., Kabat-Zinn, J., Santorelli, S., Williams, J. M. G., & Kuyken, W. (2024). What defines mindfulness-based programs? The warp and the weft. *Psychological Medicine*, 54(2), 226-237.
- Davidson, R. J., & Lutz, A. (2023). Buddha's brain: Neuroplasticity and meditation. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 24(3), 168-180.
- Fahma, F., & Safitri, D. (2024). Dinamika identitas budaya dalam era globalisasi: Tantangan dan kesempatan media sosial terhadap budaya masyarakat lokal. *Jurnal Intellect dan Cendekiawan Nusantara*, 1(3), 3675–3682. <https://jicnusantara.com/index.php/jicn/article/view/423>
- Goyal, M., Singh, S., Sibinga, E. M., Gould, N. F., Rowland-Seymour, A., Sharma, R., ... & Haythornthwaite, J. A. (2020). Meditation programs for psychological stress and well-being: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *JAMA Internal Medicine*, 180(7), 961-970.
- Hartono, B. (2022). Nilai-nilai filosofi Jawa dalam menghadapi tantangan modernisasi. *Jurnal Filsafat Nusantara*, 15(2), 145-162.
- Hölzel, B. K., Lazar, S. W., Gard, T., Schuman-Olivier, Z., Vago, D. R., & Ott, U. (2021). How does mindfulness meditation work? Proposing mechanisms of action from a conceptual and neural perspective. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 16(4), 725-741.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2019). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 26(1), e12273.
- Karaton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat. (n.d.). Tugas dan fungsi abdi dalem. <https://www.kratonjogja.id/abdi-dalem/3-tugas-dan-fungsi-abdi-dalem/>
- Khoury, B., Sharma, M., Rush, S. E., & Fournier, C. (2023). Mindfulness-based stress reduction for healthy individuals: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 28(8), 725-737.
- Maharani, D., & Putri, S. A. (2022). Transmisi nilai budaya Jawa dalam era digital: Studi kasus filosofi 'alon-alon waton kelakon'. *Antropologi Indonesia*, 43(1), 78-94.
- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Research Group. (2022). Effectiveness of mindfulness-based interventions: A comprehensive review. *Mindfulness*, 13(4), 892-908.

- Murniati. (2020). Penerapan mindfulness untuk menjaga kesehatan mental. *TAUJIHAT: Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling Islam*, 1(2), 63–69. <https://doi.org/10.21093/tj.v0i0.4199>
- Nugroho, A. (2023). Kebijakan lokal Jawa sebagai solusi kehidupan modern. *Jurnal Kajian Budaya*, 18(3), 201-218.
- Pascoe, M. C., Thompson, D. R., Jenkins, Z. M., & Ski, C. F. (2024). Mindfulness mediates the physiological markers of stress: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 156, 65-79.
- Pramono, S. (2019). Filosofi hidup Jawa: Relevansi dalam kehidupan kontemporer. *Jurnal Studi Budaya Nusantara*, 12(4), 287-302.
- Rahayu, P., Soekarno, M., & Wijaya, I. (2024). Implementasi nilai-nilai kearifan lokal Jawa dalam pendidikan karakter. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 14(1), 45-62.
- Setiyawan, R. (2021). Pelestarian budaya Jawa di era globalisasi: Tantangan dan peluang. *Jurnal Ilmu Budaya*, 9(2), 123-140.
- Suryanto, W. (2020). Filosofi hidup masyarakat Jawa: Kajian nilai budaya. Pusat Studi Budaya Jawa.
- Susanto, H. (2020). Makna filosofis 'alon-alon waton kelakon' dalam konteks pembangunan berkelanjutan. *Jurnal Filsafat Indonesia*, 8(3), 167-182.
- Tiani, R. (2020). Penggunaan pribahasa (sanepa) Jawa dalam kebudayaan masyarakat di Surakarta. *Endogami: Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Antropologi*, 3(2), 166–172. <https://ejournal.undip.ac.id/index.php/endogami/article/view/30651>
- Widodo, T., & Sari, L. M. (2021). Kearifan lokal Jawa sebagai alternatif menghadapi stres kehidupan modern. *Psikologi Jawa*, 7(2), 89-106.