

## MEANING OF LIFE IN BANYUWANGI TRADITIONAL DANCERS

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**Abstract:** Meaning of life is the value of life that needs to be realized to be interpreted by each individual in carrying out his life process. Traditional dancers are part of society and have their uniqueness. The study of the meaning of life in Banyuwangi traditional dance dancers was carried out with a qualitative approach to phenomenological studies through interviews and field observations as well as social media to students with dancer backgrounds. Their Findings meaning of life are three dancers, namely 1) dancing as a necessity; 2) dancing as self-expression; and 3) dancing as an escape. The meaning of life possessed by dancers can become a frame of reference for providing services for counselors to students with dancer backgrounds.

**Keywords:** Escape, Meaning of life, Self-expression, Traditional dancers

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## INTRODUCTION

The meaning of Banyuwangi is known as an area that is thick with cultural richness. One that stands out is traditional dance as an art and embodiment of ancestral rituals. Now the Banyuwangi traditional dance has begun to be recognized by modern circles and introduced to the international scene. Banyuwangi traditional dances, especially and rung as a reflection or cultural identity of Banyuwangi as an expression of society and embedded noble values in it (Yuliana, 2018). One of the distinctive cultures of Banyuwangi is the traditional dance. Dance is a form of an imaginative statement of the melting of the symbols of motion, space, and time as an embodiment that must be lived (Martono, 2012). Dance as a kinetic activity contributes to the development of

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kinetic activity and physical and mental health (Filippou et al., 2014). The dance that is moved in line with the music can hypnotize anyone who watches. Banyuwangi is very grounded in local culture in the community. It is proven by the number of extracurricular and dance studios for students. Banyuwangi traditional dances are also intensively introduced to a wide audience such as the *gandang* new festival, knowing festival, and other dance performances. Although there are still people or youth who are not interested in the local culture, efforts continue to be made.

Teenagers or young people are still a milestone in preserving local culture. Even though teenagers have problems with their lives. Adolescents are also one of the most vulnerable to mental health problems. The results of previous studies stated that there was a depression rate of 6.2% which resulted in suicidal ideation or self-harm (Mental Health Emergency for Adolescents, 2020). Most cases go undetected and do not receive treatment, preventive efforts are one of the keys to helping adolescents develop (Health, 2009). Teenagers' problems are often not realized by themselves. One of them is knowing oneself and the purpose of life. Presumably, self-meaning or meaning of life becomes an important part for teenagers.

Meaning of life is a question that has been pondered by humans for centuries about what is the meaning of all life? Why are we here? And how can it make life more meaningful? (Glaw et al., 2020). The meaning of life of the Banyuwangi traditional dance dancers gives a strong description and characteristics. Recognizing and knowing the meaning of life is an effort to prevent mental health problems. Meaning of life is at the core of motivation and human psychology. Meaning of life as a valuable main component, namely 1) significance, the extent to which relationships with other people are considered important; 2) goals, involvement in goal-directed pursuits; and 3) coherence, the extent to which a person's life and experiences are formed (Heintzelman et al., 2020).

Regional dances that have been instilled in the community, including students, bring their impression. Some students choose to become a dancer. In addition to preserving the local culture, dancing also has meaning in life. The existence of meaning in life in traditional dancers brings them to a meaningful life. Meaning of life that someone longs for meaning in the search for life that is associated with the depth of life (Wolf, 2010). Meaning of life is defined as the process of someone seeing and interpreting life by having goals and

missions that cross the boundaries of life (Zhang et al., 2016). The dancers find themselves during the dancing process by stringing together their life goals.

"The expression of sad and happy movements that are poured through dance has its satisfaction and happiness. Dancing is my life," (HLD/Ssw/Wwn/P).

Dancing is an expression and a place to channel all emotions that are owned. Meaning of life has an activity that is considered meaningful when it can provide opportunities to be physically active, find significance and purpose in the activity, and when it encourages the desire to contribute or positively influence the life of one's community or the wider community (Mmako et al., 2020). Meaning of life arises when a person feels his life has deep or lasting importance (existential significance), when he feels behavior is goal-directed, or when life feels reasonable (coherent) (Womick et al., 2020). Dancing is an activity that is poured as self-expression and a reflection of the souls who want to unwind.

"Banyuwangi dance for me as an escape. There were times when I couldn't express what I was feeling and it felt like I was about to explode. I channel it in dance," (DAV/Ssw/Wwn/P).

Dancing is a step taken in finding the meaning of life (meaning of life). The activity is considered meaningful when it can provide an opportunity to be physically active, find significance and purpose in the activity, and when it encourages the desire to contribute or positively influence the life of one's community or the wider community (Mmako et al., 2020). Dancing is not only limited to oneself but also tries to open up to the social environment. Dancing is also a means to see outside yourself.

"For me to dance the Banyuwangi dance, it gives me more opportunities to explore myself and can travel," (RND/Ssw/Wwn/L).

"I dance because I'm really happy. Since I was a child, every time I hear music, my hands reflexively move on their own until now. In public places, listening to music automatically becomes like that and only realizes when you have been reprimanded," (HLD/Ssw/Wwn/P).

Through dance, the dancer is free to express himself. Meaning of life does not matter what is done as long as it is loved and makes life enthusiastic (Wolf, 2010). Finding meaning in the things you love. For dancers, dancing is a spirit that brings enthusiasm to live everyday life.

Students who choose the role and cultural background as a dancer will certainly continue to live in the future. Banyuwangi traditional dancer students, of course, also continue to interact with colleagues who have different hobbies and values. The counselor's role has an important role in assisting students who have a background as a traditional dancer. The dancer has had the meaning of life in his journey when dancing. This meaning needs to be understood by counselors in facilitating dancer students. Counselors can help the dancer to further define the purpose of life and identify himself. The meaning of life possessed by traditional dancer students can sign in providing counseling services. An individual or group approach is an introduction to a more meaningful life. One thing that can be seen is the meaning of life for the dancer students as a meaningful life and able to express it with the activities they have. Therefore, an assessment of the objectivity of the meaning of life of traditional Banyuwangi dancers will be a source of counselor referrals. Although the meaning of life is formed on the element of student subjectivity, the objectivity framework of the meaning of life of traditional dancers can be a benchmark for achieving the meaning of life of students with the preferences of traditional Banyuwangi dancers.

## **METHOD**

The research subjects consisted of three junior and senior high school students. One male subject and three female subjects. There is one junior high school student and three high school students who are members of the Banyuwangi traditional dance studio. The research uses a qualitative method of phenomenological studies which seeks to understand the culture of the research subject. Moleong (2005) suggests that phenomenological studies seek to understand the meaning of events and their relation to individuals in certain situations and attempt to enter the conceptual world of the subject under study.

Research with phenomenological studies is an effort to explore individual experiences and be able to interpret them and take the essence (Creswell et al., 2007). The study of phenomenology is closely related to questions about every day, life, human experience (Sheperis et al., 2010). Phenomenological studies with in-depth interviews as the main tool to collect data. The phenomenological approach describes and explains the subject's view of a situation without assumptions (Van Iwaarden et al., 2004). Researchers in phenomenological studies enter the real world of the subject under study to gain a true

understanding of the meaning of the world from the subject's point of view (Sheperis et al., 2010).

The research was obtained from the results of interviews, field observations, and observations on social media. The data obtained descriptively are then interpreted according to the theoretical concept. The researcher deepens the data to the subjects of RND, HLD, FHM, and DAV regarding everything related to the world of traditional dance that they are engaged in. The research was conducted in dance studios and active communication through WhatsApp and google meet.

### **The Research Steps**

The main instrument in the research is the researcher himself who acts as a data collector. The data collection instrument used an interview and observation guide. According to Miles and Huberman, there are three steps to phenomenological data analysis, namely phenomenological reduction, editing reduction, and transcendental reduction (Hanurawan, 2012).

Data analysis was carried out in three stages, namely phenomenological reduction, editing reduction, and transcendental reduction. Phenomenological reduction is defined as the process of interpreting field phenomena into one term (Mappiare, 2013). The essence of interpretation of the phenomena is found as a researcher (Mappiare, 2013). Transcendental reduction is the last stage that brings researchers into the conception of universal abstract reflection in its true nature (Mappiare, 2013). Checking the validity of the data findings is done by re-examining the results of the interpretation directly to the research subject.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Findings**

The results of the findings and analysis of interviews as well as observations of students of Banyuwangi traditional dance dancers provide three descriptions of the value of a traditional dancer. The first dance is a necessity. The two dance as self-expression. The three danced as an escape.

Dancing as a need is interpreted with a sense of wanting to be involved continuously with dancing activities. Dancing is a routine that must be done with friends or alone. Every time there is music that sounds automatically body parts will move, both hands and feet. Feeling that something is missing if you don't do dance activities. Dancing is an inseparable part of life. RND and FHM

said that dancing is a necessity in their life. Passing a day without dancing is bland. Dancing has become a daily activity for them.

“Dancing has become a necessity in my life,” (RND/Wsw/Wwn/L).

"Relax and cheer up. If you don't think about it, you don't have to practice at home yourself, you don't have to be in a studio," (FHM/Ssw/Wwn/P).

According to observations, both RND, FHM, DAV, and HLD continuously and regularly carry out activities as dancers and trainers for beginner dancers. Every two weeks there is always in the dance studio and at home often doing the exercises alone. Dancing is not only limited to when there is a big event or festival that requires preparation but is a part of everyday life. Dancing as self-expression is shown by expressing all emotions with swaying to the accompaniment of music. Dancers can express themselves with the choreography that is made or during the dancing process. When dancing the dancer does not feel there is a burden, there is a feeling of happiness and satisfaction. Want to be known as a professional dancer.

"Dancing relaxes my mind, the burden doesn't exist, dancing is entertainment and a place to relax my mind and music adds energy," (RND/Ssw/Wwn/L).

"The expression of sad or happy movements is poured through dance, there is a certain satisfaction and happiness in itself," (HLD/Ssw/Wwn/P).

Dance as a reflection of yourself and let go of existing burdens. Born happiness and satisfaction while dancing. The dancer shows his identity by dancing. Total emotional expression is poured into dancing. Dancing with a blend of tempo music can be done flowing by the dancer. It is clear from the Instagram social media of RND, FHM, DAV, and HLD with postings of traditional dancer costumes and activities in dancing during practice or at big events. They show that dancing is a part of life and from dancing they express themselves.

Dancing as an escape from oneself. Meaning of life affects the way people avoid anxiety and the way it impacts their daily lives (Kelso et al., 2020). The dancers have a way to treat themselves from sadness and anger. Dancing becomes the path chosen when life is so heavy. Dancing can make itself melt and flow in the strains and movements of traditional dance arts.

“Because for me dancing is my life, by dancing I can relieve the burdens and problems that I am experiencing. I if there is a problem how to cool the mind by dancing, dancing, and dancing. If my mind and brain are hot, I feel like I can't control myself anymore, so by dancing, I will eliminate the problem,” (DAV/Ssw/Wwn/P).

DAV and other research subjects explained that a healthy escape is dancing. According to observations when DAV had problems with his family he chose to heal. One way that is taken is by dancing. The negative energy that is owned is channeled into activities with dance movements while enjoying the strains of traditional music. Dancing is an important part of the dancer's life. Dancing has meaning in self-processing and emotional balancing. Dance movements become self-expression for the dancer. Activities that are run as a momentum to please yourself and recognize yourself. Dancing is not just a hobby for the dancer. But also part of life that is inseparable. Banyuwangi traditional dance is not only limited to preserving local culture but also a journey to find the meaning of life

**Table 1**  
**Findings of the Meaning of Life Framework for Traditional Banyuwangi Dancers**

<b>Aspect</b>		<b>Indicators</b>
1.	Dancing as necessity	a. Dance every day either alone or in groups, with a coach or self-taught
		b. Every week it is mandatory to meet fellow dancers and practice together
2.	Dancing as self-expression	a.
		a. Want to be known as a professional dancer
		b. Sad and happy poured into the choreography with the rhythm of the music
		c. There is satisfaction and happiness after dancing
		d. There is no burden when dancing even on stage
e. Will introduce traditional dance to the smallest to the global environment		
3.	Dancing as an escape	a. Bringing the mind more relaxed
		b. Suppress anger
		c. Give life more enthusiasm
		d. Expressing feelings of anger, sadness, and happiness with dance movements and musical accompaniment.

## Discussions

The findings from the Meaning of life of traditional dancers found three meanings for students. The three meanings become a benchmark for the

meaning of life of students with cultural backgrounds as Banyuwangi traditional dancers. The findings of the meaning of life have been presented in Table 1. Banyuwangi traditional dancers have their meaning in life which is summarized in the meaning of life of Banyuwangi traditional dance dancers.

The third presentation of the findings from interviews and observations is part of the characteristics and values of a Banyuwangi traditional dance dancer which is the content of the meaning of life. The value-form of the meaning of life of Banyuwangi traditional dancers by the students shows that dancing is part of the need, dancing as self-expression, and dancing as an escape.

Meaning of life involves all aspects of a person's life through aspects of values, character, relationships with other people, the meaning of oneself, and decisions are taken. Meaning of life refers to the extent to which individuals find their life meaningful by actively exploring to find meaning in their lives (Kiang & Fuligni, 2010). In line with the activities of traditional dance dancers. That exploration is a crucial part for oneself to find a very meaningful meaning. Exploration that still involves yourself and the people around you. Meaning of life has an important role in understanding life experiences and goals (Steger et al., 2009). It is undeniable that the dancers find the meaning of life in themselves by exploring life and assembling goals that are built based on embedded values. For the dancer, dancing is a part of her life needs. There is no day without dancing. Dancing for the dancer is a source of passion for life. Meaning of life is interpreted as a fundamental life motivation because humans can surpass themselves (Kok et al., 2015). Meaning of life is a core element of well-being which is defined as the extent to which a person understands or sees significance in their life (Yu & Chang, 2021). The meaning of life of traditional dancers shows that his life to dance from dancing also finds meaning in life. The dancers reach their highest point when they can create choreography and participate in dance festivals. Results The dance movement becomes a reflection of oneself and an outpouring of anxiety. A person's life is meaningful only if he or she cares enough about something, is engaged, excited, interested, involved to become something of value (Wolf, 2010). The energy produced by the dancers of traditional dances brings a precious life and the spirit that is emitted within.

The dancers make dancing as an escape from the fatigue of life. Making dancing an outlet and channeling emotional energy that must be channeled. Dancing has the meaning of healing himself from psychological pain. Through dancing the dancer can find meaning and life. The search for the meaning of life in oneself is an important matter in discovering who one is (Kok et al., 2015).

Having a high meaning of life can reduce the intensity of negative emotions, facilitate adaptive coping (eg social support) that allows perspective-taking and problem-solving (Fischer et al., 2020). The meaning of life is found in the journey of dancing. How the dancer interprets his life and finds his identity from dancing. The meaning of life refers to the subjective satisfaction that individuals feel when reflecting on life experiences that are inseparable from subjective experience (Kok et al., 2015). The personal experiences of dancers fuse reflect personal life stories. The meaning of self (meaning of life) is reflected through the movements and instincts of each dance movement. The process of dancing becomes the discovery of the meaning and identity of life.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Meaning of life of Banyuwangi traditional dancers is a qualitative study of phenomenological studies from interviews and social media observations of three junior and senior high school dancers. The meaning of life of Banyuwangi traditional dancers studied by researchers is an objective element of the meaning of life owned by students who have roles as Banyuwangi traditional dancers. The meaning of life framework for traditional Banyuwangi dancers will help students to find the meaning of life that can help them to develop and recognize themselves.

The suggestion given by the researcher to counselors is that the meaning of life framework can be used as a direction to take a service delivery approach to students, especially dancers in helping to fulfill and improve their meaning of life. Suggestions for further researchers can study further about the meaning of life in Banyuwangi dancers to improve the framework and concept of the meaning of life of Banyuwangi culture. Further researchers can also use the results of the findings of the meaning of life of traditional Banyuwangi dancers as a reference in further studies related to the meaning of life of traditional dancers.

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