

The dynamics of *Jothakan*: How it becomes a conflict resolution in Javanese context

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Abstract. This study aimed to explain the dynamic of *jothakan* as a conflict resolution in Javanese friendship. Participants of this research consisted of five Javanese adolescences who were familiar with and had experienced *jothakan*. Data were collected through in-depth interview and analyzed using content analysis. The result showed that *jothakan* happened when one or both parties felt right and was difficult to forgive his/her friend's mistakes. It was done to avoid open conflict and hope the problem fixed itself. The duration of *jothakan* was one until three days in average. Sometimes during this period, someone realized that his/her mistake was not a big deal so that it could be forgiven or forgotten. This phase is called *mupus*. Whenever someone could *mupus* then he/she could be in peace with him/herself so he/she could behave well again when interacting with others (*wawuh*). This process sometimes needs intervention from the third party, such as teachers or parents. Hence, it could be understood that *jothakan* may become a conflict resolution when it is used as an opportunity to introspect somebody's mistake so that he/she can make peace voluntarily then a solid harmony may exist.

Keywords: *jothakan*, conflict resolution, Javanese adolescence

INTRODUCTION

A conflict resolution becomes an essential part of maintaining friendship [1, 2, 3]. The strategy of conflict resolution is often influenced by culture. Previous cultural research showed that in an individualistic society, people tend to be oriented in saving self-esteem and use controlling and confrontation strategy in conflict resolution. On the contrary, collective society emphasizes collective harmony, so they used avoiding and obliging [4]. So how was the reality in Javanese society context? Research in Javanese marital relationships done by Andayani [5] showed that the wife would keep it as tight as possible in order not to become an open conflict. It also happened in a friendship context. A preliminary study by Andayani [6] on 346 Javanese adolescence in Surakarta consisted of 187 girls, and 159 boys (M 14.63, SD 1.66) showed that 330 (95,38%) participants of 180 girls and 150 boys said that they had conflicts with their friends. The conflict appeared mostly because of having a communication problem (experienced by 105 girls and 70 boys); because of psychological hurting (experienced by

63 girls and 46 boys); because of unfavorable personal traits (experienced by 58 girls and 24 boys); because of competition (experienced by 18 girls and 29 boys); and conflict by physiological hurting (experienced by 7 girls and 14 boys).

Interestingly, the research [6] showed that there was no difference between boys and girls in choosing the kinds of strategy when they had a conflict with their friends. Both of them mostly chose avoiding strategy (124 girls and 90 boys), and they chose *jothakan* or *neng-nengan* as the first choice. *Jothakan* means refusing to talk or staying away from friends for a certain period of time. The second strategy was confronting (experienced by 25 girls and 29 boys), accommodating was done by 24 girls and 26 boys, whereas compromising was the last choice of seven girls and five boys. So, if a conflict appeared in any kind of social relationship, the Javanese values system would not give any room for a person to express the feeling openly. Behavior should be managed, any kind of harmony must be kept, the open conflict must be avoided, and all desires, ambition, and private ego that threaten the social harmony must be suppressed or hidden [7].

The reality that most participants chose *jothakan* as a conflict resolution strategy, but at the same time had a low level of compromise could be understood. Mulder [7] mentioned that if there was a conflict in a relationship, *jothakan* or *meneng-menengan* (silent) was chosen by Javanese. He defined *jothakan* as an individual punishment by withdrawing attention toward someone as if he/she did not exist or socially considered to be "dead." Furthermore, Mulder [7] stated *dijothak* (being ignored) was the hardest social punishment for Javanese. Overseeing the cultural factor plays an important role in managing conflict, and a conflict resolution strategy needs to be developed based on local culture. This study aims to explore and understand more deeply the dynamic of *jothakan* as a conflict resolution strategy in Javanese friendship.

METHOD

Five participants (two boys and three girls) of this study were Javanese adolescence who had had *jothakan* and agreed to participate in this study. Because they were still underage (13-14 yrs), so the informed consent was signed by their parents. The data were collected through an in-depth interview to find the cause of conflicts they had with their friends and how *jothakan* could work well

as the conflict resolution. The data were analyzed using content analyses.

RESULT

Triggering factors of *jothakan*

This research found out five triggering factors of the conflict, i.e. (1) SD, the first participant, felt insulted because her friend ignored her warning not to step on her new shoes; (2) RV, the second participant, was a victim of *jothakan*. He was accused of doing something unfair by someone who was insulted by his action; (3) FR as the third participant felt jealous because her ex was close to her best friend; (4) RM as the fourth participant felt threaten by her best friends' increasing academic achievement; and RH (the fifth participant) felt betrayed because his best friend broke the promise not to tell the secret to others.

From those findings, it could be seen that the triggers maybe things considered mundane by adults but could be significant and important problems for teenagers; betrayal destroyed trustworthiness in friendship; the tension made someone more sensitive.

Duration of *jothakan*

Jothakan usually lasted for three days. It depends on the ability of participants to cope with the conflict and the sensitivity of the people around to know if there was a conflict in the participants' relationship with friends.

Two ways of *jothakan*

In the dynamic of *jothakan*, there were many phases. It was mostly started by a trigger, which was subsequently developed into interpersonal conflict. It may make the doer keep silent and refuse to talk to others temporarily. This is what we called *jothakan*. During that period, almost all of the participants hoped that the conflict would be automatically over. Some participants used the silent period as a cooling down to reduce the anger and to understand the root-causes of the conflict so that they could accept the situation and be in peace with themselves. It was called *mupus* phase. When they succeeded in this phase, it would lead them to have a good relationship with his friend again, or *wawuh*. *Wawuh* is a moment of peace that was usually marked by shaking hands or chaining two little fingers. Not every people felt comfortable to apologize in person, so they chose to send messages to make up the relationship. It was done by FR who used a cellphone to start communication, a sign that the *jothakan* was over, so she and her friend would not feel awkward when they met at school the following day. In fact, the dynamic of *jothakan* can be explained in two ways.

Firstly, it showed that the initially interpersonal conflict might become intrapersonal. In anger, participants were sometimes confused whether forgiving mistake or staying angry. In this phase, the help from the third party was needed to reduce the emotion and internal tension while trying to understand the real situation. One of the ways was religious approach done by the father of RH who reminded him that in Islamic value, not talking to others for more than three days was prohibited because it meant cutting *silaturahmi* (Moslem's brotherhood). There was

another way used by RM's mother who combined Islamic and cultural values by emphasizing that harmony is the most crucial thing in Javanese society.

In contrast, SD had a different experience, where mediation was done at home initiated by her father. In the beginning, her father saw a changing behavior in the relationship between SD and her best friend. Previously, every time he picked her up from school, they waited together, and they give a ride whenever no one pick her friend up. However, for a few days the father did not see her friend around. The father felt curious because although t his daughter said that nothing went wrong, but he did not believe it, so he gave her friend a ride to go home together and asked them to tell him what happened. After the mediating process, both parties realized that the problem was not a big deal, so they made up their friendship. Finally, if the doer were successful in the *mupus* phase with or without intervention, it would lead to a solid harmony.

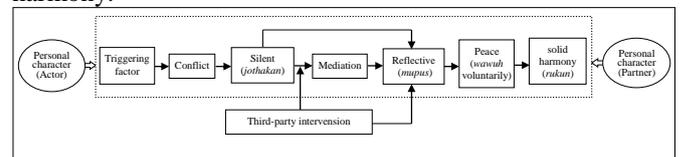


Figure 1. The dynamic of *jothakan* toward a solid harmony

Secondly, there was a participant who could not use the silent period as a meaningful way although he had been helped by the mediator (i.e., teacher at school). It was found that it was not impossible for an interpersonal conflict to become an intergroup one when someone who felt right looked for supporters to stand on her/his side. It was experienced by RV. After the teacher mediated and they made up their friendship, the enmity still existed. His friend, who started *jothakan* persuaded others to make RV a mutual enemy in class. When it happened, a term *ora kanca maneh* (you are not my friend anymore) or *dudu bala* (you are out of my group now) appeared. This dynamic showed that *wawuh* by force would create a fragile harmony. Basically, the doer of *jothakan* has not accepted the situation or reduced the feeling of enmity, so he was not sincere when asking for apology. On the surface, it looked harmonious, but deep down the anger remained. Hence, *jothakan* should be handled by other people, such as teachers. In this case, a teacher could serve as a mediator not only to end the conflict immediately but also to make the students realize their mistake by understanding the problems and situations so that they make up their relationship genuinely. The intervention of the third party could prevent teenagers from involving in *jothakan* and help to solve the conflict.

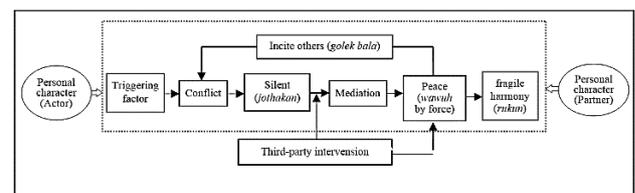


Figure 2. The dynamic of *jothakan* toward a fragile harmony

From the two dynamics, we could understand that *jothakan* may end in a fragile harmony or a solid harmony depending on the success of the *mupus* phase. When the *mupus* phase failed, it may lead to fragile harmony or *rukun semu*. It was like a time bomb, and the latent conflict may explode once there was a trigger. On the contrary, when the silent period was used wisely, and the *mupus* phase worked well, then the solid harmony would be created. Sometimes in this phase, the third-party intervention was needed. In the mediating process, they were hoped to compromise the solution, make an agreement, and to talk about things they both needed to make up the relationship. So, *wawuh* could be done voluntarily.

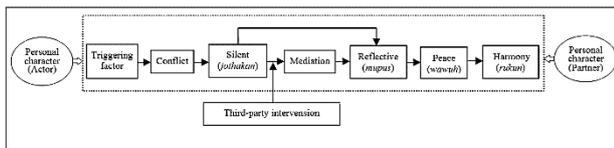


Figure 3. General dynamic of *jothakan*

DISCUSSION

The result showed that *jothakan* involves at least two parties, namely the person who started *jothakan* (actor) and the one who was ignored (victim). Usually, the actor felt that he/she was right, and it was difficult for him/her to forgive his/her friend's mistakes at once. Other reasons were he/she was insulted by his/her friend's misbehavior like broken promises, feeling threaten because of academic achievement, physically hurt, jealousy, and treated unfairly. *Jothakan* can be considered as one of conflict resolutions because some strategies in *jothakan* can be done systematically to solve any problems in a relationship. The first phase of *jothakan* was marked by *meneng* (silent), having no contact, no talking, and staying away from other parties. Being silent may have two meanings, as nonverbal communication and as a sign of stopping the conversation or covering the conflict temporarily [8]. As a part of non-verbal communication, being silent had a positive connotation for Japanese and Chinese society but not for non-Aboriginal North America since it was embarrassing if someone kept silent during a conversation [9]. As a conflict resolution strategy, silent was one form of avoiding or withdrawal strategies [10]. It was found in Japanese [11] and Javanese society [5,7,12,14].

Referring to the model of conflict resolution by Thomas-Kilmann [10], there are five styles of conflict management i.e., accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, competing, and compromising which encompassed two dimensions of assertiveness and cooperativeness. However, it is not easy for Javanese to be assertive to compromise as the first step strategy. They prefer using a non-confrontational strategy, which was characterized by avoidant and withdrawal behaviors. Javanese society is not used to showing the feeling and opinion openly in conflict [7,14,15,16].

From the general dynamic of *jothakan*, it was known that the main point of *jothakan* is *mupus* phase, a kind of a self-negotiation process. In this phase, someone involved in *jothakan* tried to understand what happened, to accept the situation, to be peace with oneself, to muffle the anger, to control the emotion and to have the right attitude. This process could help to overcome the conflict peacefully. If the actor succeeds in *mupus*, *wawuh* will be done voluntarily. If someone could not *mupus* by her/himself, then an intervention from the third party is needed. One form of interventions is by applying religious approach i.e., the importance of *silaturahmi*/having and keeping a good relationship (HR. Al-Bukhari 10/348, Muslim No. 2558, or prohibition of silencing others for more than three days (HR. Abu Daud No. 1693) as well as the virtue of forgiving (QS Al-Baqarah: 263 and QS Asy-Syura: 40).

The result showed that not all participants, even after being mediated, succeeded in having a good relationship again. It proved that personal character could influence the choice of conflict resolution strategy. More agreeable persons could manage their anger better, handled conflicts with a minimal side effect, and tended to use much more positive problem-solving strategies [17,18]. The personal character had a close relationship with conflict resolution, which was making compromise and agreement with others as it entails motives to maintain positive interpersonal relationships [19]. The research done by Yu, Branje, Keijsers & Mees [20] showed that resilient teens had less conflict with friends compared to under-controllers and over-controllers. During the conflict, resilient teens used the least hostile conflict resolution and compliance and employed the most positive problem-solving.

On the other hand, under-controllers adopted the least positive problem solving, and over-controllers complied and withdrew the most. Besides personal character, friendship status could affect the choice of conflict resolution strategy. This research showed that those who had a relationship as close or best friends tend to end the *jothakan* period sooner and more successful in *mupus* phase. They could make up the friendships and positive emotion quicker than those who were mere acquaintances.

Effective use of the silent period was caused by an intervention of parents at home or teacher at school. Parents who knew their teenagers well and always monitored their teenagers' relationship with friends would immediately detect something wrong and would do something to prevent bigger conflict. Some previous studies showed that parents' control and monitor were related to the quality of friendship [21]. Likewise, a good student-teacher relationship supports the quality of friendship [22].

CONCLUSION

Findings showed that *jothakan* was done mostly by Javanese adolescence to avoid open conflict. It happened because Javanese culture did not give room for an individual to express conflict openly. In fact, *jothakan* does not necessarily mean bad things in a friendship. It

could be used to solve problems constructively and to promote peaceful behavior. The dynamics of *jothakan* would lead to a solid harmony or fragile one depending on what happened in the staying-away period. If during the period someone could introspect, look inside her/himself, forgive, and be in someone else's shoes, it would create a solid harmony because making up (*wawuh*) was done voluntarily. However, if someone insisted on blaming others, hid the anger and conflict becomes unsolved, it would create a fragile harmony because *wawuh* happened by force.

The findings of this study have implications for parents and teachers. They could help teenagers find out appropriate ways to cope with the conflict because resolving conflicts effectively is an essential skill that all adolescence has to acquire. Some limitations of this study need to be recognized. First, it focused on a restricted age range of participants, early adolescence. It would be more informative and give a bigger picture of the dynamic conflict resolution for the whole of adolescence if the data from middle and late adolescence were included. Secondly, data were derived from one side, but in the future research, it must be affirmed by both parties because friendship is a dyadic relationship. In other words, data collection through more complete sources and longer assessment of adolescence are needed.

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