



Redefining the Philosophy of *Mikul Dhuwur Mendhem Jero* in Elderly Care in Rural Java

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ABSTRACT

Modernization has shifted the meaning of the philosophy of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* or filial piety of children caring for parents or the elderly in rural Java. Changes in family structure have led to fewer children being able to care for their parents, although the value of filial piety remains in the hearts of children. It is important to explore the shift in meaning in local wisdom-based elderly care mechanisms in the context of modernization. This article aims to describe the importance of redefining the Javanese philosophy of parental care due to changes in family structure and relationship patterns.

The research used qualitative approach. The study was conducted in Bantul, Yogyakarta between May and July 2023. There eight informants involve in this study who are either elderly or caregivers. Data was collected using in-depth interview and observation.

The findings show that even though there are four pattern of elderly care (family care, paid care, self-care, and social care), family care is still favor by members of the family. Material becomes a benchmark for the level of devotion to parents that they recognize together, and the role of social mechanisms is still running well, although limited. The level of filial piety of children to their parents is reflected in the quality of care and how well they pay attention. This research emphasizes the adaptation of traditional values to modern realities while maintaining the essence of children's filial responsibilities in the Javanese cultural context.

1. Introduction

In Indonesian society, caring for elderly parents is a hereditary family tradition. In Javanese society, the awareness that children are willing to take care of their parents is instilled through the philosophy of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* which is inherited as a guide to preserve the awareness of filial piety and regulate the course of community life (Tartono, 2009; Nugroho, 2021). In Islam, this philosophy is known as *birrul walidain* which means obeying and doing good to parents (Kusumawati, 2015). The stigma of disobedient children to children who are not willing to take care of their parents is considered a moral sanction for violating the teachings of this philosophy.

Based on the results of research on the role and responsibilities of children in elderly care, the CBNC survey in 2021¹ found that 48.7% of productive people (25-45 years) or the adult generation in Indonesia must bear the lives of three generations at once, namely parents, children and themselves. This adult generation is called sandwich generation (Miller, 1981; Ward & Spitze, 1998), which is described as sandwiched between the top and bottom two sandwiches, which are interpreted as parents on the top layer and children on the bottom layer. This sandwich generation in our society lives in family norms and social propriety that teach that children are obliged to help parents as a form of devotion, so that the demands of increasingly complex economic needs do not discourage children from supporting parental care at all costs.

This fact has led to new phenomena in the practice of elderly care due to changes in the way of looking at values that were previously prevalent in society. In her study on the influence of modernization on elderly care, Iring (2022) found that patterns of relationships, values and norms in families in society have changed. Today, not many children are able to stay with their parents when they grow up because of the increasing demands of work in the public sector. The intensity of relationships and physical closeness with their parents is decreasing. This decreasing intensity of physical encounters with parents is one form of shifting patterns of relationships between parents and children in the modern era. The demands of this situation gradually change the way people live and the way they view their philosophy of life. The Javanese philosophy of "*mikul dhuwur mendhem jero*", which is closely related to the meaning of filial piety as well as other East Asian societies (Dai & Dimond, 1998; Sung, 1998; Bedford & Yeh, 2021) in practice it has experienced changes in value and meaning. This shift in philosophical meaning affects the way children care for parents in their families.

The role of children who want to realize their desire for filial piety appears in more practical forms of care. Children want to show their devotion to their parents in their own way. Some choose to take care of them themselves in collaboration with family members (Wiyono, et al., 2008; Prabasari, et al., 2017), others choose to leave the care to other parties, both individuals such as paying people to care (cagiver) (Agustin, et al., 2022) and institutions such as sending parents to nursing homes (Sartikasari, 2017; Windy, 2017; Irawan, et al., 2017;

¹ <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/market/20230818065543-17-463958/49-warga-ri-sandwich-generation-ikuti-4-hal-ini-biar-kaya>, accessed on January 15, 2025.

Sari, 2021). In the modern era, the latter two methods are considered representative of replacing the role of children caring for their parents, which is common in urban areas. Children still have an emotional attachment to their parents but have difficulty realizing it because they are busy working, so children look for alternative care for their parents. Children hope that their parents still feel their attention even though they do not feel the physical touch of their children's presence. This process of institutionalization of the elderly is not always socially acceptable and often causes conflict in the eyes of a society that values children who can care for their parents themselves rather than leaving the care of their parents to others.

This article highlights the shift in meaning of the practice of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero*, which has been the main foundation in elderly care in Javanese society for a long time. Based on this cultural practice, elderly care has been the responsibility of the nuclear family. When there is a shift in meaning and the practice of *Mikul Dhuwur Mendhem Jero* disappears, the nuclear family is no longer able to carry out care practices properly, so the social burden on society increases because they have to help the elderly to stay alive. So far, social assistance from the local community has not been binding but rather based on the principle of volunteerism. The increasing number of elderly individuals should enable them to improve the quality of care for their children and descendants. Their descendants must have a high responsibility for the survival of their parents. The loss of the practice of *Mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* will have an impact on the pattern of elderly care, because their descendants will tend to ignore it.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the phenomenon of changes in the meaning of the Javanese philosophy of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* which affects the pattern of elderly care in the family and analyze the relationship between factors that influence each other, and how these changes can be accepted by the community. How meaningful community relations have shifted to human relations based on practicality and are often considered less in line with the philosophy of life as an oral tradition of ancestral heritage about human relations that mean unconditional kindness.

Previous studies have not talked much about changes in the meaning of the philosophy of life related to parental care in the midst of modernization. Some existing studies emphasize the meaning of the philosophy in religious life (Prihatini, 2020; Solehuddin, et al, 2024), social reflection of a work of literature (Feriandi, 2017; Kumala, 2022; Rejeki, 2022; Saputri & Ginting, 2023; Sudiyan, 2023), and character education (Budiyono & Feriandi, 2017; Gumilang, 2022; Widyastuti, & Hartanto, 2023). Studies linking the Javanese philosophy of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* with elderly care have so far been minimal, limited to studies related to community-based elderly services (Suminar, 2013; Irmawan, 2017).

This research tries to find answers through facts found in rural communities, how people interpret their philosophy of life in their role of caring for the elderly in their families. This redefinition is an effort to reinterpret the Javanese philosophy of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* seen from another perspective than that commonly

understood by the community. This shift in the meaning of this philosophy remains relevant to the function of care, although with a different appreciation due to the complexity of life in modern society today. Scientifically, the study of the shift in the meaning of the philosophy of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* is important in order to find a model of care that prioritizes the welfare of the elderly in accordance with the demands of the times.

This research is interesting because it is different from previous studies. If previous research focused on the lives of the elderly and their health problems, this research takes a different perspective, namely the shifting meaning of the Javanese philosophy of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* among children towards their parents who are suffering from illness. The novelty of this research is not only in the shift of meaning but the factors of the shift of meaning are also observed. Therefore, the shift in meaning that exists can then be accepted by local residents and even the community then takes over the concept of philosophy in helping the elderly who are sick, especially the elderly who are neglected by their children.

2. Method

This qualitative research was conducted in Bantul, Yogyakarta. This location was chosen because in this rural area of Java, there were many people migrated and left their family members behind, including elderly. The research was conducted between May and July 2023.

The study involved eight caregiver who have sick elderly in their families. They were selected purposively based on their participation in elderly care. Elderly are generally unable to carry out their basic daily activities independently because of their health condition.

Data was collected using in-depth interview and observation. The elderly were not able to be interviewed because of their health. While interview was conducted to explore how members of their family care for their elderly, type of elderly care; observation was conducted to observe the daily life of elderly and how members of their family care for their elderly.

In this study, we preceded by informing the research topic, objective, and benefit before asking their consent to participate in this research. In the interview process, everything was done in Javanese, which is the language used in their daily interaction. The interviews were conducted with the consent of our informants. All names are pseudonym to protect the privacy of our informants.

3. Result and Discussion

• Patterns of Elderly Care

The research findings indicate that there are four patterns of elderly care in rural areas which are described in several trends. The general tendency is for children to take care of their parents themselves (family care), another pattern is to pay other people to help take care of parents at home (paid care), elderly who take care of their spouses because there are no children living with them (self-care), and elderly who live alone and are taken care of by neighbors (social care), which will be discussed in the following sub-sections:

Family Care

Family care is the care of members of family, such as child, parent, grandparent, or sibling, or the step relations of any of these persons, care of a spouse or domestic partner, or any member of family. For example, Sutarno (45 years), an unmarried man, is the youngest of six siblings in the family, consisting of three men and three women who all migrated. In the past three years, Sutarno has returned home to take care of his mother (82 years) who is bedridden due to a broken bone. His father had passed away when they were young, leaving a pension to support the family. Now Sutarno is focused on caring for his mother and has given up his job at a cleaning service company. Initially, Sutarno objected to return home to care for his mother because he had to leave his job, especially since his other siblings were already married. They had an argument about who would take care of their parents, before Sutarno finally gave in because no one else was willing. Sutarno explained that:

I don't have any dependents yet, but if they have to give up their jobs to take care of mom, their responsibilities will become heavier. Even though I'm a boy, I'm quite fit to take care of my mom because I like cleanliness and I'm much stronger if I have to lift my mom to the bathroom than my older sister.

Among Sutarno's siblings, one older sister cares about her mother's condition. She tries to help him to fulfil his mother's care needs by sending monthly money on a regular basis, while the other siblings do not contribute much to the care.

Satini, a married woman (35 years), is the youngest women of five siblings consisting of three girls and two boys. Satini, who is married with two children, lives with her mother (88 years) who suffers from osteoporosis. Satini once wanted to work out of town like her other siblings but was discouraged by the condition of her mother's health, who is bedridden. Satini's husband works in the fields and helps her with her care. As his mother's health condition worsened, her care needs grew. By mutual agreement, they share the task of fulfilling their mother's care needs such as sending money regularly, sending other forms of needs, such as diapers, tissues, medicines, and wheelchairs, and portable toilets. If there is time off, they take turns going home to visit their mother. Satini said that: "I told my brother that I can only provide my energy to take care of my mother, not money because I don't work, so I agreed that they would voluntarily send money every month for my mother's needs, while I only contribute my energy."

Another case is Rubinah, a widow woman (60 years) with three children, is the eldest of six siblings who cares for her father. Rubinah's husband has passed away. About three years ago Rubinah decided to take early retirement and return to her village to care for her father (88 years) who lives alone suffers from dementia. Previously, her father was cared for by her late mother who died after falling and slipping on her father's urine. It is not easy to care for a person with dementia, who has to be assisted in almost all of his daily activities. His father gets lost several times and the whole village helps to look for him, or sometimes he falls in someone's garden without being noticed. In her golden age, Rubinah

felt physically and emotionally exhausted caring for her father alone. Other siblings who overseas seemed less concerned about her difficulties, while Rubinah needed someone else who could help her care for her father. Employing helper to care for her father in the village is not easy to find nowadays as many young people in the village have gone overseas. Rubinah had thought of looking for alternatives to caring for her father, such as sending him to a nursing home, but Rubinah was hesitant and did not have the heart to do so. Rubinah said that: "There's still a feeling of not having the heart to send my father to nursing home, I feel like I'm wasting my parents like I don't have any children."

Musinah, female (60 years), is an example of an elderly caregiver in the family. She is the eldest of three siblings. Musinah is married and has two grown-up children. From marriage to retirement, Musinah followed her husband and lived with her parent's in-laws and took care of them when they began to age sickly. One day, Musinah, received news that her elderly parents were also sick and were being cared for by a close neighbor. There was no one to take care of them because Musinah's two younger brothers had married and had gone overseas. During this time, the three siblings regularly sent money to fulfil their parents' daily needs. By an agreement with her husband, Musinah brought her parents to live with her in her in-laws' house. Musinah practically takes care of four elderly people, her parents in-laws and her own parents with the help of her husband and two children. While in her care, her two younger siblings regularly sent money and fulfilled all their needs until their parents died, including sending contribution for 100 days ritual after death (*nyewu*).²

Musinah's husband is the eldest of six children in the family, all of whom have migrated. His five younger siblings rely on Musinah, Musinah said that:

I understand if my sister-in-law's do not send money, perhaps because of economic difficulties. At least visiting your parents once in a while or making a phone call may not be difficult. My mother-in-law once cried sadly when she had bone surgery and none of her children came home or just called to ask how they were doing.

In another case, Tari, a married woman (50 years) with two grown-up children. She is the second of five children in the family. Since her mother became ill, Tari chose to live with her mother (80 years) who has diabetes and bone fractures in order to care for her, while Tari's other siblings who are overseas helping her with her care costs. In relation to this Tari said that:

We children share tasks. Those who can go home [to visit our mother], try to go home, those who can only send money, they send it. Now is the time for filial piety... life only takes turns. When we were young, we were taken care of by our parents, even when our parents were still healthy, they often helped their children with their shortcomings. Now parents need us to take care of them. So, what I do to my mother is actually not comparable.

² The *nyewu* tradition is a Javanese custom to commemorate a thousand days of the dead, is the process of closing rituals (*pungkasan*) by slaughtering goats, installing gravestones, praying together, and distributing *kenduri* (*weweh*) to neighbors.

These cases indicate that family care varies according to the condition of members of the family (son/s and daughter/s). They share the task according to their respective abilities and level of attention.

Paid Care

Paid caregivers play a significant role in meeting the care needs of those with functional impairment and serious illness and high paid care hours are common (Reckrey et al, 2021:1). Paid care is often compared to an idealized version of family in which a loving relationship provides the basis for responsive, person-centered care (Duffy et al. 2015:1). But, when members of a family is unable to be caregiver or to provide care for elderly, paid caregiver is needed.

Sujadi, a single man (52 years) who lives with his mother (80 years). He is the youngest of six children of the family. who has a heart condition and broken bones. Sujadi other siblings are married and no longer live with their parents. Sujadi and his siblings are busy taking care their work and family, so they decided to pay a household assistant to help with their mother care. Sujadi stated that: "Even if they live nearby, the children usually only visit for a short time while bringing food. If we ask them to bathe the mother or change her diaper, they don't want to, so we send Yu Nah, our paid household assistant, to care for our mother."

It seems that it is only in emergency situations that children will come and involve themselves in care matters such as when parents are sick and have to undergo certain medical procedures. Sujadi explains that:

When it's time to go to the doctor, my eldest brother is responsible for driving my mother, while my sister helps with the administration and assists with consultations with the doctor. If she is hospitalized, I am in charge of looking after my mother in the hospital.

Thus, in such case paid caregiver plays an important role because none of her children can play this role since, they only come once in a while, such as in an emergency situation.

Selfcare

Self-care is the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health worker. In this case, selfcare is related to elderly who care for her/himself without any assistance, including her/his children.

Lasiyem is an example of an elderly woman (80 years) care for her husband (85 years) who suffers from heart failure. Lasiyem has seven married children. None of her children accompany them in their golden age, four of them live overseas. Without her children, Lasiyem cares for her spouse alone. Nevertheless, Lasiyem never felt lonely and worried even though she was separated from her children because the existence of close neighbors who helped each other all this time strengthened her.

Every month, one of her children would come to take her parents to the doctor. At the end of the week, they again take turns coming to visit, while Lasiyem's other children who are overseas contributes to the care for their parents by sending money and call them just to chat or remind them, for example, to take medicine, to eat proper food, etc. The children also buy medical equipment, such as oxygen cylinders, wheelchairs, temperature gauges, tension, saturation, medicines, vitamins, milk, honey and several other necessities to support their parents' care. Lasiyem further stated that:

If the oxygen runs out, I just call my children. I understand how busy they are, going to work in the morning and coming home at night. Taking care of their own families is already a hassle. If our needs are met, my children have enough, so I have to be able to do everything myself. It's important to take care of my parents, but nowadays it's easy to communicate as often as possible over the phone.

In this case, despite the fact that the parents are old enough to care for themselves, Lasiyem is healthy enough to care for herself and for her sick husband. Even though their children do not live with them, Lasiyem understand enough that her children have their own life. Lasiyem feels that her children because they communicate by phone. What is more is that their neighbor is very handy, and this makes her not feeling lonely.

Social Care

Social care is a term that generally describes all forms of personal care and other practical assistance for children, young people and adults, including elderly who need extra support. Suharsi, an elderly woman (75 years) who lives alone, is an example of an elderly who are cared for by her neighbor. Her husband has passed away. Despite the fact she has six children, they live overseas. Suharsi's children rarely visit her and leave their mother to live alone. Later, some of her neighbors began to worry because Suharsi was often caught forgetting to turn off the stove or sometimes pacing back and forth, walking aimlessly and looking confused.

Although her physical condition for daily activities was still good, it appeared that Suharsi was starting to experience memory loss (senile dementia). Fortunately, Suharsi received good social support from the local neighborhood. She receives a lot of sympathy from her close neighbors, such as help with food, medication and even money. Some of her close neighbors are often seen accompanying Suharsi to chat in her yard.

- **Changes in the Meaning of *Mikul Dhuwur Mendhem Jero***

Mikul dhuwur mendhem jero in general meaning is highly upholding good things and deeply burying bad things which is a family secret. This study wants to restore the philosophical values in caring for parents, because in ancient times that was the case. In order for children to care for their parents, this philosophy was used as a guide, so that children in ancient times had a fear of sinning if they ignored their parents. This teaching contains rewards and punishments, and this teaching is inherited. The hope is that their descendants will understand the meaning of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* and then transmit it back so that the welfare of the elderly is fulfilled.

There are similar pattern elderly people who suffer from illness and are cared for by their children, that the care of sick parents is still the responsibility of their children. Although the contribution of thoughts, time, energy, and funds is not the same among their children, there is still concern for the health conditions of their parents. Children's contributions to their parents seem to be influenced by the position of the child's residence to the parent's house. If the child migrates outside the city, the contribution is in the form of money/funds to meet the needs of their parents. Meanwhile, children who live close to their parents' house tend to choose to contribute energy, thoughts and attention. The economic limitations of children who are geographically close to their parents force them to contribute only what they can afford or not contribute at all.

The impact of modernization has led to changes in the family structure in rural areas, including the pattern of relationships in the family and the function of values and norms adhered to by the community. One of the changes in the function of family values and norms is on how the strength of the Javanese philosophy *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* works to regulate the mechanism of parental care for intergenerational survival in the family (Tartono, 2020; Nugroho, 2021). The extent to which the philosophy works is influenced by relationship patterns, employment patterns, residence, education and the number of children in the family.

Taking care of one's own parents (family care) is a common case that still colors the way parents are cared in rural areas, as can see in the cases of Sutarno, Sutini, Rubinah, Musinah, and Tari's families, while the other three cases are were handled by paid care (Sujadi, Lasiyem, and Suharsi's family) who let their parents live alone and are cared by their neighbors (social care).

In the context of parental care, a child is considered *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* if he or she can elevate the good name of his or her parents and behave in a way that is not embarrassing. A child who applies this philosophy is a child who takes good care of his or her parents (*ngopeni*) so as to elevate the dignity of his or her parents. Looking at the cases found, there is a level in the philosophy of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* which is interpreted based on informants' perceptions that providing oneself to take care of parents requires enormous sacrifices, even how much the child contributes cannot return the sacrifice of parents in caring for and raising their children.

Based on these eight cases, the level of philosophy is interpreted to work very strongly in the families of informants Sutarno, Satini, Rubinah, Musinah and Tari who take care of their parents themselves even though not all of their children are involved, even in Sutarno's family, the elderly are cared for by sons who are considered lighter in burden (*legan*) because he is not married and is not economically established. On an individual scale, the role of children who care compared to those who send money is considered equal, while if there are some children who do not contribute at all, it is not considered a problem that can be an obstacle to the continuity of the care mechanism in the family. The emotional needs of the parents are also still met by one of the children living with the parents and visits from children who take turns coming occasionally or regularly. At the family scale, the philosophy works at the highest level because it succeeds

in carrying out the family care mechanism according to its function. The family care cycle is still functioning in the philosophy of filial piety with the expectation that one day the next generation will take turns receiving care (*gumanti*).

The case of informant Sujadi's family shows that the philosophy is still at work although its power is weakening. Parental care is no longer in the hands of the children but has been handed over to others. Children are still directly involved by fulfilling all care needs and emotional needs such as regular alternating visits, or there is still one child who is willing to live together. Children still leave the responsibility of caring for their parents by trying to fulfil all their needs. At the family scale, although the philosophy works at a lower level, the family still manages to carry out the family care mechanism according to its function.

In the case of informant Lasiyem's family, the philosophy is also still at work but to a lesser extent than informant Sujadi's family. The children can fulfil all the care needs but none of the children make themselves available to stay together, and let the parents take care of themselves without the help of others. Some children who do not migrate try to visit their parents occasionally. In informant Lasiyem's family, the philosophy works at a very low level and her family's care mechanism can malfunction or stop at any time due to weak solidarity ties. The philosophy will strengthen again when the parents suddenly need help due to illness or death.

The case of informant Suharsi's family is the lowest level of philosophy because the children have almost forgotten her. This is shown by the children's lack of certainty in visiting their parents, letting their parents live alone and not sending regular help for daily living. The *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* philosophy is not seen in Suharsi's family. Suharsi was able to survive in the midst of her economic limitations thanks to strong social support from her neighbors. The *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* philosophy is still alive in the village community. Suharsi is considered an elderly person who, in terms of social appropriateness, deserves to be respected by her neighbors.

In the context of modernization, sending money is considered a form of responsibility and devotion to parents embodied by children who are overseas. Whatever the amount will be borne jointly among their children. It is fortunate that in the era of the sandwich generation described in these cases, the average rural family has more than 5 children so that the burden of care becomes lighter because it is borne together. However, changes are beginning to appear where there is a tendency for some children in a family to not contribute anything to their parents.

Javanese society, which has a philosophy of life *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* which means filial piety, is thought to influence the quality of parental care through the operation of community values and norms. The fact is that in the modern era, children's role in care is decreasing, displaced by economic interests so that the quality of care is not comprehensive and often cannot meet their physical and emotional needs at the same time.

The redefinition of the philosophy of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* is necessary because in the context of the modern era, the meaning of the philosophy has

shifted. The philosophy is still lived out in other patterns, but it remains a benchmark to what extent the oral tradition of this community culture can still maintain its values so that the mechanism of parental care today can run according to its function. Families must go through a process of adaptation to face various challenges due to shifting societal conditions in an increasingly complex life.

It is undeniable that the extended family form is shifting to a fragmented nuclear family. It is not impossible that the next generation may not know each other even in the closest line of the nuclear family. Caring for parents through the oral tradition of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* should be a legacy of teachings that are obeyed, but in some families caring for parents is a dilemmatic problem that undermines their obedience. Caring for parents becomes the last terminal at the critical point of disengagement of kinship solidarity ties between nuclear families. The nuclear family as the smallest kinship bond in society becomes fragmented if there are no longer parents as a symbol of family unification. The greater the desire to maintain that solidarity, the greater the desire to care for and pay attention to their parents.

Improved economic conditions did not fully positively affect the role of children caring for the elderly. Improved economic conditions slowly shifted the role of children and the development of commodification of care through hired people and institutions offering care services. For reasons of practicality, children relinquish their primary role as children as the philosophy of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* by entrusting the care of parents to the services of other parties. In egalitarian rural communities, it is common to find elderly people caring for their elderly spouses or even living alone, but social support is a lifeline for these elderly people left behind by their children. Some children are able to provide enough care by meeting their needs from afar and others completely ignore them. What is often overlooked is the notion that providing enough care fulfils a child's filial duty, when the decision to provide the best care possible in this way or to use others to care for them and rely on social support both ignore the emotional needs of the elderly as important. Parents lose touch with their children at the end of their lives. It is a difficult time filled with anxiety and sadness.

In Javanese society, parents are entitled to high respect in a hierarchically organized society because of their older age (Geertz-Hildred, 1985; Suseno-Magnis, 2004). The willingness to care for the elderly becomes a system of awareness of community responsibility, which is a cultural wisdom that is present as a safe space for parents to be happy at the end of their lives. The phenomenon of children returning from migrating to care for their parents indicates the strength of these values and norms (Absor, 2023) and the close emotional relationship between children and parents. Children not only feel it as an obligation but also to fulfil their psychological needs such as venting love, respect and reciprocity to parents so that children are willing to sacrifice themselves to care for parents.

Caring for the elderly in rural Javanese society has long been framed in a gender-biased way as the duty of girls. The role of girls has always been more than that of boys in caring for their elderly parents (Insiyah and Hastuti, 2014), so the birth

of a daughter in a Javanese family is expected to take care of parents in old age. The effects of globalization are gradually eliminating gender bias in the realm of elderly care in these rural areas, which is now not always in the hands of girls. Modernization has implications for the high economic demands of girls and boys to work in the public sector as education levels improve so that they have the same opportunity to determine how they are cared for. It has become common for genders to swap roles due to practical and logical considerations. This is reminiscent of a study on parental care among siblings (Checkovich & Stern, 2002; Ingersoll-Dayton, 2003; and Grigoryeva, 2007) which found an imbalance in girls taking care of activities of daily living (ADLs) or any sibling who is single (without dependents), has a lower income, and is not yet established. A very unenviable position to be in. The task of caring for parents falls disproportionately on their shoulders. They are the mainstay of other siblings who have a more established life. Establishment becomes a loophole to avoid the task of caring for parents. The Javanese Pemeo calls it *kepeksa merga kulina, kulina merga kepeksa* (forced because used, used because forced).

Economic demands and the obligation to be devoted to parents become a dilemma, a source of physical and psychological fatigue, especially if they do not get fair support from other nuclear family members. Parental care becomes less qualified due to unequal burden (Maryam, et al., 2012; Erwanto, 2017; Mubin, et al., 2019) or even neglect of parents without care. The effects of globalization have stretched the closeness of emotional relationships between family members and weakened solidarity ties so that it affects the philosophy of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* which no longer functions optimally to drive the mechanism of parental care in the family. The number of children in the family, which assumes that the more children there are, the lighter the burden of parental care, turns out not to be the determining factor.

The factor that determines the operation of the philosophy of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* in the function of parental care is the equal value of children's voluntary contributions, both moral and material. Seeing the role of parents in giving birth, raising and educating children to become adults certainly cannot be converted into anything. No matter how much the child contributes, it cannot return the sacrifice of the parents to care for and raise them. In Javanese culture, there is no judgment that the greater the contribution, the more devoted the parents will be.

In the modern era, this contribution has become a calculation that can be converted on a transactional basis (profit and loss). The child who has taken care is relieved of the responsibility of spending funds and vice versa, both are equally considered to have been devoted to the parents. Windy's (2017) findings show that the more often children send monthly money, the better the condition of their parents' care. This shows that the message of equality between contribution and care functions is linear. An advice "*dadiya bocah kang can mikul dhuwur mendhem jero wong tuwa, migunani marang pepadha, ambeg utama*" (be a child who is able to respect parents, be useful to others and have a main personality (Mononimbar, & Nugroho, 2019) is contained in the harmony of children without anyone feeling that they contribute the most in caring for parents. The cultural

values underlying parenting in Javanese families are the values of respect, harmony, behavior control, unconditional acceptance (*nrima*), discipline, honesty, and love (*tresna*) (Etikawati, et al., 2019) which will melt into the shoulder to shoulder of children caring for parents.

4. Conclusion

From the care patterns found, the meaning of the philosophy of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* still colors mostly rural families in the measure of devotion that is equated with the abundance of material given by children to their parents. The contribution of children who send money to their parents is more appreciated than children who devote their energy and attention to taking care of their parents every day. The higher the intensity and value of the money sent, the more the child is considered devoted.

Family economic factors influence the course of the *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* philosophy, but there is no relevance that good economic conditions will always have a good impact on the course of the philosophy. Likewise, limited economic situations do not always have a bad impact on the course of philosophy. Families with economic limitations can be very caring, and even children work together and maintain emotional ties by visiting their parents as often as possible. In families with better economic conditions, they fulfil it with an abundance of material without having to live together, they only need to pay someone else to take care of them.

The theory of family functionalism, adopted from the thoughts of G. P. Murdock and Talcott Parsons, tries to answer by correlating how much the *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* philosophy contributes to parenting. As a symbol of unification and bonding of family solidarity, parents play an important role in driving this philosophy. This philosophy is not apparent when parents are still alive. When parents are old and retired, this philosophy only appears and reaches its peak when parents suffer from illness and die. In the context of caring for elderly parents, the philosophy of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero* in modern times can be applied in many ways, not only by caring for them directly but also with attention to other forms. Both are equally valuable, even if by giving donations in the form of money, someone seems more appreciated and feels more dignified. Practical and materialistic are the views of modern humans. To maintain the harmony of community life, the family, which is the smallest institution in society, needs to preserve the values inherited from their ancestors so that they are not lost, and in the future, the elderly care model remains under local cultural values and norms.

At least, this study will increase the insight of Javanese descendants and policy makers of programs for the elderly as part of the community who depend on their lives on others. It must be considered by their own families, including aspects of physical, mental and social health. The government, among others, provides health and social facilities that are friendly to the elderly and are able to make them independent and formulate policies that are well integrated with care values based on local wisdom, such as positive oral traditions in the practice of *mikul dhuwur mendhem jero*.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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