

BETAWI COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF ONDEL-ONDEL AS A STREET PERFORMER ATTRIBUTE IN NORTH PETUKANGAN, SOUTH JAKARTA

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Abstract

Ondel-ondel is a distinctive Betawi art form characterized by large puppets made from bamboo weaves, adorned with masks and palm fiber hair. This study aims to alter public perceptions regarding the use of Ondel-ondel as street performer attributes, employing intercultural adaptation theory. The research uses a qualitative descriptive method with interviews conducted with five purposively selected informants, specifically Betawi residents in Petukangan Utara who have never used Ondel-ondel for busking. The Betawi community in this area is divided into urban Betawi, who are more technologically savvy and educated, and peripheral Betawi, who are less educated and typically work as traders. The study found that the Betawi community's perception of Ondel-ondel as a street performer attribute is divided into two: some view it as cultural preservation, while others see it as damaging the cultural image of Betawi and disturbing street order. Economic factors are one of the main reasons for the use of Ondel-ondel for busking. Data analysis was conducted using two types of coding: open coding and selective coding, to extract information from interviews with informants. The results of this study are expected to provide input to the government and society on ways to preserve culture without sacrificing the intrinsic cultural values.

Keywords: Betawi, Busker, Intercultural Adaptation, Ondel-ondel, Perception

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Ondel-ondel is one of the traditional arts of the Betawi people that holds significant historical and cultural value. Initially, ondel-ondel was used as a symbol to ward off evil spirits or misfortune. However, over time, its function has shifted to a form of entertainment used in various events and celebrations. A recent phenomenon that has drawn attention is the use of ondel-ondel by street performers in Jakarta, particularly in the Petukangan Utara area. This has sparked controversy, especially among the Betawi community and cultural experts.

Some people view the use of ondel-ondel for busking as a form of creativity and cultural preservation. They believe that by performing on the streets, ondel-ondel continues to showcase the unique aspects of Betawi culture to a broader audience. However, others argue that this practice tarnishes the sacred image and cultural value of ondel-ondel. They contend that ondel-ondel should be used in sacred events such as weddings or traditional ceremonies, not for street busking which can disrupt public order.

Economic factors also play a significant role in why ondel-ondel is used as a means to earn a living. Ondel-ondel street performers generally come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and see busking as a way to meet their daily needs. Additionally, there has been a shift in the function and meaning of ondel-ondel within the Betawi community. Historically, ondel-ondel was used as a symbol to ward off evil spirits, but now it has taken on a more commercial role.

This study aims to understand the perception of the Betawi community in Petukangan Utara regarding the use of ondel-ondel as a busking tool. The results of this research are expected to provide input to the government and society on how to preserve culture without sacrificing its original values.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the above background, this study focuses on the following question:

1. How do the Betawi people in Petukangan Utara perceive the use of ondel-ondel by street performers?

1.3 Purpose and Objective

This study aims to achieve several objectives, including:

1. To understand the Betawi community's perception of the use of ondel-ondel as a busking tool in Petukangan Utara.
2. To identify the impact of using ondel-ondel by street performers on the cultural image of Betawi in the eyes of the community.
3. To provide recommendations to the government and the Betawi cultural community on steps that can be taken to preserve the sacred values of ondel-ondel.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Previous Research

1. A study published in the Modern Journal in 2019 by Tarumanegara University Jakarta, titled "The Shift in Cultural Meaning of Ondel-ondel in Betawi Society," was conducted by Sinta Paramita. For this research, the researcher observed every Ondel-

ondel performance passing by her residence in Slipi Kemanggisan. This study employed a qualitative methodology, utilizing observation and interviews to gather information on the evolution of the cultural meaning of Ondel-ondel within contemporary Betawi society. The research provided deep insights into how the function and meaning of Ondel-ondel have shifted over time due to social and cultural changes in the Betawi community. It also identified changes in public perceptions of Ondel-ondel, whether seen as a preserved cultural symbol or a commercialized element.

2. Elida F. Simanjorang, in her research titled “Audience Perception of the Sitcom Orang Betawi Image Bajaj Bajuri,” published in the *Kuncika Journal of Universitas Medan Area* in April 2015, used a qualitative strategy with a descriptive research method. The findings revealed that despite high ratings for the Bajaj Bajuri sitcom, the portrayal of Betawi people in the storyline and character roles was generally not well received by the audience. Elida suggested that sitcom producers should adopt more instructive plots and character depictions to build a more positive image of the Betawi community. This study illustrates how popular media can influence public perceptions of local culture and highlights the importance of accurate and positive representation in media, which is relevant to understanding how Ondel-ondel is perceived and portrayed.

2.2 Theoretical Concept of Perception

1. The theoretical concept of perception in this research refers to how the Betawi community views and evaluates the presence of Ondel-ondel street performers. Public perception of this phenomenon can be influenced by various factors such as cultural background, level of education, and personal experience. Understanding how these factors affect views on Ondel-ondel helps provide a comprehensive picture of the cultural dynamics at play. Perceptions are shaped not only by internal factors but also by broader social and cultural contexts, which influence how traditions like Ondel-ondel are accepted or transformed.
2. Ali A. R. (2008), in his book “Cultural Acculturation of Betawi with Chinese,” examined how intercultural communication occurs in the Gambang Kromong art form in the Betawi Cultural Village. This research offers insights into cultural interactions that influence public perception of traditional arts. The study is relevant as it demonstrates how cultural exchanges can impact understanding and acceptance of different art forms, including Ondel-ondel. This intercultural interaction provides a useful context for understanding how Ondel-ondel’s function and meaning may change due to cross-cultural influences in the Betawi community.
3. Moleong L. J. (2007), in “Qualitative Research Methods,” explained that qualitative data is crucial for deeply understanding social phenomena. This research utilized in-depth interviews to explore public perceptions of Ondel-ondel street performers. Qualitative approaches allow researchers to uncover the nuances and complexities of perceptions that may not be revealed through quantitative methods, thus providing a deeper understanding of how societal changes affect views on cultural traditions. In the case of Ondel-ondel, qualitative data helps reveal how factors like social and

economic shifts impact community perceptions and the evolving role of this traditional practice.

3. Research Methodology

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to deeply understand the perceptions of the Betawi community regarding the use of Ondel-ondel by street performers. The study focuses on Petukangan Utara, South Jakarta, a region known for its rich cultural heritage and the presence of the Betawi community. The selection of this area was strategic, given its historical and cultural significance in maintaining the Ondel-ondel tradition.

The study utilized purposive sampling to select informants. This method was chosen to ensure that participants were specifically relevant to the research objectives. The informants were Betawi residents of Petukangan Utara who had not engaged in the use of Ondel-ondel for street performances. This criterion was essential to gather authentic perspectives on the traditional use of Ondel-ondel and its current adaptation by street performers.

The primary data collection method employed was in-depth interviews. These interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing for both guided questions and open-ended responses. This structure ensured that while the interviews covered specific topics related to the research, there was ample opportunity for informants to express their views in detail and provide additional context. The semi-structured approach was particularly effective in exploring the informants' nuanced perceptions and experiences, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of their attitudes towards the Ondel-ondel tradition.

In addition to the primary data collected through interviews, secondary data were gathered from a range of sources. These included previous research studies, academic journal articles, and cultural documentation pertinent to Ondel-ondel and Betawi traditions. The integration of secondary data enriched the research by providing historical and contextual background, which complemented and informed the primary data analysis.

Data analysis involved a systematic process using open coding and selective coding techniques. Initially, open coding was applied to identify and categorize significant themes and concepts emerging from the interviews. This phase involved breaking down the data into discrete elements to uncover patterns and insights. Subsequently, selective coding was employed to refine and organize these themes into more specific categories. This iterative process allowed for the construction of a coherent narrative that addressed the research questions and reflected the informants' viewpoints accurately.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the research incorporated triangulation techniques, particularly researcher triangulation. Multiple researchers independently analyzed the data and compared their interpretations. This approach helped to cross-verify results and mitigate individual biases, thereby enhancing the credibility and robustness of the conclusions drawn. The use of triangulation ensured that the analysis was not only thorough but also reflective of diverse perspectives.

The methodology adopted in this research aimed to provide a comprehensive and accurate representation of the Betawi community's perceptions regarding the use of Ondel-ondel by street performers.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Research Findings

The Betawi folk performance, Ondel-ondel, originally symbolized the ancestors who watched over their descendants or villagers. Initially, Ondel-ondel's purpose was to ward off evil spirits or poltergeist disturbances. However, over time, Ondel-ondel has increasingly been used to enliven social gatherings, welcome distinguished guests, mark circumcision ceremonies, or celebrate weddings. Today, only a few Ondel-ondel groups remain, as the current generation prefers modern entertainment such as bands or movie screenings. Consequently, it is possible that Ondel-ondel performances may eventually disappear due to the lack of cultural value transmission from older Betawi generations to the younger ones.

The rhythm of the “Sirih Kuning” song originates from cassette recordings found in Ondel-ondel carts. A dedicated individual is responsible for pushing the cart, positioning it close to the person behind the Ondel-ondel costume. Another person distributes small buckets of water to the public, a practice that is now commonly seen on the streets, particularly on Saturday and Sunday nights.

The parade used to be relatively elaborate. It required at least eight or nine people to carry a pair of Ondel-ondel. Seven individuals played musical instruments such as Tehyan, two drums, a large gong, a medium gong, Kenong, and Kecrek. One person would don the Ondel-ondel costume. In the past, the parade placed great importance on cultural values and government regulations, ensuring that the process was orderly, well-organized, and respectful of tradition.

Nowadays, the role of the musicians has been replaced by cassette recordings, leading to a decline in the use of traditional instruments. The Ondel-ondel parade no longer features uniforms that represent Betawi cultural characteristics. The current practice of parading Ondel-ondel often disregards established rules, allowing for performances at any time and place, which diminishes its aesthetic appeal and cultural value.

People no longer only see Ondel-ondel at weddings, circumcision ceremonies, or other major events. Its presence on the streets now offers a closer acquaintance with the figure. Ondel-ondel has become a form of entertainment, especially for children who get to see it up close. Today, the large Betawi puppets appear more charming; where once they might have seemed scary or fierce, Ondel-ondel now appears more endearing.

Figure 1. Street Performers Phenomenon



This study found several key insights regarding the Betawi community's perception of Ondel-ondel used as street performer attributes in Petukangan Utara, South Jakarta. These findings were obtained through in-depth interviews with five purposively selected informants who are Betawi residents living in Petukangan Utara and have never used Ondel-ondel for busking.

1. Positive and Negative Perceptions

Four out of five informants provided views that were divided into positive and negative perceptions. Informants with a positive perception view the presence of Ondel-ondel street performers as a form of Betawi cultural preservation. They believe that even though Ondel-ondel is used for busking, it still carries the unique characteristics of Betawi culture that can be seen by the wider community. For instance, Mrs. Kholifah remarked, "In my opinion, it's a positive thing because with the presence of Ondel-ondel street performers, children become aware and familiar with Ondel-ondel. As they see these performers walking around, they learn that Ondel-ondel is a part of Betawi culture." Similarly, Naufal stated, "Certainly, there are positives and negatives; the positive aspect is that the culture becomes more widely known." Putri Miranda added, "The positive aspect of Ondel-ondel is that it is not just left idle or put in a museum; it can be developed and showcased to the public, demonstrating that Ondel-ondel is a form of art from Betawi culture." Ridho also supported this view, saying, "In my opinion, there is a positive side; if Ondel-ondel is used as a tool for street performance, Betawi culture will be appreciated and recognized by more people."

Conversely, informants with a negative perception feel that the use of Ondel-ondel as a busking attribute damages the image of Betawi culture. Betawi cultural expert Rizki Hidayat expressed concern, noting that the current use of Ondel-ondel in street performances is seen as distressing and does not adhere to established norms or rules. Rizki Hidayat explained, "In my opinion, the result is negative. Ondel-ondel has been known for a long time; why introduce it again with street performances like now? Moreover, Ondel-ondel was already an icon, one of the eight Betawi icons: Ondelondel, Batik Betawi, Kembang Kelapa, Baju Sadariah, Kebaya Kerancang, Bir Peletok, Kerak Telor, and Ornamen Gigi Balang. Nowadays, people assume, 'Oh, is this how Ondel-ondel is used? Just like this?' So, in my opinion, the image produced

is poor. Moreover, now because they are rented, they are not maintained; some even have torn clothes and faded colors. Previously, there was a program for washing clothes from each studio; when they got dirty or damaged, they would replace or repair the clothes. Nothing positive is produced for the children who are now performing; in my opinion, it is distressing. As a Betawi person, I am very ashamed to see this, especially with the lack of order among today's street performers. So, I believe there is nothing good about it." They argue that Ondel-ondel should be used in sacred events such as weddings or traditional ceremonies, not for street performances, which can disturb public order.

2. Economic Factors

Another finding indicates that economic factors are one of the main reasons why Ondel-ondel is used as a tool to earn a living. Ondel-ondel street performers in this area largely come from underprivileged backgrounds and view busking as a way to meet their daily needs.

3. Changing Function and Meaning of Ondel-ondel

The study also found a shift in the function and meaning of Ondel-ondel within the Betawi community. Historically, Ondel-ondel was used as a symbol to ward off evil spirits and protect the village. However, over time and with social changes, its function has shifted to a more commercial nature. According to information from Rizki Hidayat, an expert in Betawi culture, Ondel-ondel has a long history dating back to the Dutch colonial era. It was believed that Ondel-ondel could ward off crop failures, epidemics, negative forces, and other rituals. The community used Ondel-ondel to drive away these harmful influences.

Rizki Hidayat explained, "Originally, Ondel-ondel was called Barong or Barungan, which is not related to Barongsai. The term 'Barungan' is an archaic Betawi term meaning a group or assembly. So, the art form was expressed in a group performing in open spaces, and it was originally known as Barongan or Barungan. It symbolized power. At that time, the Betawi people thought, 'What could symbolize something significant enough to counteract evil forces and negative energies of that time?' They thought that this art form, which predates Islam, was already known in Betawi society."

He further elaborated on the function of Ondel-ondel: "The function remains the same, but it is not utilized as it once was. Previously, whenever there was a new land opening, agricultural activities, or earth offerings to ensure abundant harvests, or other major events, Ondel-ondel was used according to its function to ward off disease, counteract evil forces, and protect against malevolent spirits. This use is still applicable today."

According to Rizki Hidayat, while the function of Ondel-ondel has not changed, the understanding of its owners towards the art form has evolved. "And from ancient times until now, its function has not changed. What has changed is the owner's understanding of the art. So, there is no change in its function from then until now, but the use of Ondel-ondel has changed. Nowadays, Ondel-ondel is often just placed or displayed in front of a decoration. In Jakarta, during ceremonial processions like

weddings or circumcisions, it is now used to liven up the atmosphere without knowing the meaning behind it.”

4. Youth Perception of Ondel-ondel

The study also uncovered differences in perceptions between the older and younger generations within the Betawi community. The older generation tends to uphold the traditional and sacred values of Ondel-ondel, while the younger generation is more open to innovation and using Ondel-ondel in more modern contexts. Some younger individuals even see the commercial potential of Ondel-ondel as a form of cultural expression that can be promoted more broadly. Opinions from younger informants about using Ondel-ondel for street performance include Naufal’s view: “There are certainly positives and negatives; the positive aspect is that the culture becomes more widely known.” Putri Miranda added, “The positive aspect of Ondel-ondel is that it is not just left idle or put in a museum; it can be developed and showcased to the public as Betawi art.” Ridho also noted, “In my opinion, there is a positive side; if Ondel-ondel is used for street performance, Betawi culture will be valued and recognized by more people.”

In contrast, Rizki Hidayat expressed a negative view: “In my opinion, the result is negative. Ondel-ondel has been known for a long time; why introduce it again with street performances like now? Moreover, Ondel-ondel was already an icon, one of the eight Betawi icons: Ondel-ondel, Batik Betawi, Kembang Kelapa, Baju Sadariah, Kebaya Kerancang, Bir Peletok, Kerak Telor, and Ornamen Gigi Balang. Nowadays, people assume, ‘Oh, is this how Ondel-ondel is used? Just like this?’ So, in my opinion, the image produced is poor. Moreover, now because they are rented, they are not maintained; some even have torn clothes and faded colors. Previously, there was a program for washing clothes from each studio; when they got dirty or damaged, they would replace or repair the clothes. Nothing positive is produced for the children who are now performing; in my opinion, it is distressing. As a Betawi person, I am very ashamed to see this, especially with the lack of order among today’s street performers. So, I believe there is nothing good about it.”

5. Cultural Awareness and Community Identity

Cultural awareness and community identity were also key focuses in the findings of this study. Informants with high cultural awareness tend to be more critical of using Ondel-ondel as a busking tool, while those with low cultural awareness are more likely to accept the change in function. This indicates that the level of cultural awareness plays a significant role in shaping perceptions and attitudes toward cultural preservation.

4.2 Discussion

The discussion of the research findings is based on intercultural adaptation theory and relevant literature related to the research topic.

1. Intercultural Adaptation

Intercultural adaptation theory helps explain how Betawi culture, including Ondel-ondel, adapts to social and economic changes. The Betawi community in Petukangan Utara has to adapt to difficult economic conditions, making the use of Ondel-ondel for busking a practical, albeit controversial, choice. This adaptation

reflects how traditions can evolve to meet economic needs while striving to maintain cultural essence. The research shows that Ondel-ondel, as a historic cultural symbol, has experienced a shift in function that mirrors changes in how the Betawi community addresses current economic and social challenges. This adaptation is not merely a change but an effort to connect cultural heritage with contemporary realities faced by the community.

2. Social and Cultural Implications

The use of Ondel-ondel as a street performer attribute has significant social and cultural implications. On one hand, it can be seen as an effort to preserve culture in a new and more modern context. The presence of Ondel-ondel on the streets allows younger generations and the wider public to become more familiar with and appreciate traditional Betawi art. On the other hand, it raises concerns about the decline of the sacred value and reputation of Ondel-ondel as a symbol of Betawi culture. Using Ondel-ondel in a commercial context might blur its original meaning and damage the traditional image that has been built over centuries. This tension highlights the challenge of balancing tradition preservation with adaptation to social changes, requiring a careful approach to ensure that cultural preservation is maintained without compromising its essence.

3. Challenges in Cultural Preservation

One of the main challenges in preserving Ondel-ondel culture is maintaining a balance between upholding traditional values and adapting to continually changing social dynamics. Both the government and the community need to collaborate to find the right ways to preserve Ondel-ondel without diminishing its meaning and value. This requires collaborative and innovative efforts to ensure that traditions remain relevant amidst changing times. Efforts may include developing policies that support cultural preservation, educational programs for the community on the importance of traditional values, and initiatives to promote Ondel-ondel in a context that respects tradition while considering the economic needs of the community.

Additionally, it is important to create forums for dialogue between older and younger generations, as well as between cultural practitioners and policymakers, to discuss the best ways to manage and promote Ondel-ondel. This will help maintain cultural integrity while allowing for the necessary innovation and adaptation to thrive in the modern era.

By using this approach, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of how traditions like Ondel-ondel can adapt and remain significant in a modern context can be achieved. This will ensure that cultural heritage remains vibrant and relevant while honoring the traditional values and practices that have long existed.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the use of Ondel-ondel as a street performer's attribute in Petukangan Utara, South Jakarta, reflects a complex dynamic between cultural preservation and economic needs. The research found that the use of Ondel-ondel in the context of street performance is driven by economic factors, as

Ondel-ondel performers, who generally come from underprivileged backgrounds, view this activity as a practical livelihood source amidst difficult economic conditions. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that perceptions of Ondel-ondel used for street performance are not entirely negative. Some members of the Betawi community view the presence of Ondel-ondel street performers as a form of cultural preservation that allows the wider public to become more familiar with and appreciate traditional Betawi art. The presence of Ondel-ondel on the streets is seen as an effort to introduce and maintain Betawi cultural heritage in a broader modern context.

However, the shifting function and meaning of Ondel-ondel also raise concerns among some members of the community. They argue that using Ondel-ondel in a commercial context may obscure its sacred meaning and damage the traditional image that has been built over centuries. These findings highlight the tension between preserving tradition and adapting to evolving social changes. On one hand, the younger generation is more open to innovation and sees the commercial potential of Ondel-ondel as a form of cultural expression that can be promoted more widely. On the other hand, the older generation tends to uphold traditional values and is concerned that using Ondel-ondel in inappropriate contexts may harm its reputation as a symbol of Betawi culture.

Cultural awareness plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward the preservation of Ondel-ondel. Informants with higher cultural awareness tend to be more critical of using Ondel-ondel as a busking tool, while those with lower cultural awareness are more accepting of the shift in function. Therefore, this study underscores the importance of collaborative efforts between the government, community, and cultural practitioners to find a balanced solution for preserving Ondel-ondel without diminishing its cultural meaning and value. This conclusion reflects the need to maintain a balance between upholding tradition and addressing the existing economic and social challenges.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to address the issues and opportunities related to the use of Ondel-ondel as a street performance tool. First, it is crucial for the government and relevant institutions to develop policies that support the preservation of Ondel-ondel while considering economic factors. These policies should include support for community-based cultural programs and incentives to maintain the authenticity and traditional value of Ondel-ondel.

Additionally, educational programs should be introduced to raise public awareness about the importance of preserving Ondel-ondel and its traditional values. Such programs can help foster a deeper appreciation for Betawi culture among the younger generation and mitigate the potential for misinterpretation or degradation of its significance.

Collaborative initiatives involving the Betawi community, cultural practitioners, and policymakers are essential to finding effective ways to promote and preserve Ondel-ondel. Creating forums for dialogue between different generations and stakeholders can facilitate balanced solutions that respect both tradition and modern adaptation.

Furthermore, efforts should be made to improve the management and maintenance of Ondel-ondel by street performers. Training programs for proper care and

preservation of cultural attributes will help ensure that Ondel-ondel remains in good condition and continues to represent its cultural value effectively.

Finally, promoting Ondel-ondel within contexts that honor and preserve its traditional significance, while addressing the economic needs of the community, will contribute to maintaining its relevance in the modern era. This may include organizing cultural exhibitions, festivals, and other events that showcase Ondel-ondel as an integral part of Betawi heritage. Through these measures, Ondel-ondel can continue to thrive as a symbol of cultural pride and resilience.

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