



Ki Ageng Suryomentaram's Concept Of *Mawas Diri* In Psychology: A Review

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ABSTRACT

The exploration of cross-cultural psychological studies presents an intriguing avenue for research, not solely for the purpose of exploring existing theories, but also for acknowledging the diverse cultural backgrounds and the profound impact of cultural interactions on various aspects of individuals. This article delves onto the concept of *mawas diri* (self-awareness), which constitutes an integral component of Ki Ageng Suryomentaram's teachings on *Kawruh Jiwa* (the science or knowledge of the human psyche), particularly in its relevance to the field of psychology. *Mawas diri* entails a methodical process of self-exploration through the discernment between subjective experiences and conceptualisations thereof (Suryomentaram, 1991). The concept of *mawas diri* exhibits significant parallels with established psychological notions, including emotional regulation, mindfulness, and its practical applications within counselling and psychotherapy.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural Psychology ; Kawruh Jiwa; Mawas Diri; Self-Awareness

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INTRODUCTION

Culture is an inseparable aspect of human life. Wherever humans reside, culture emerges and develops. Matsumoto (2009) as cited in Keith (2011) defines culture as a unique shared meaning and information system that is collectively owned by a group and transmitted, enabling the group to meet basic survival needs by coordinating social behaviour to achieve a dignified existence, foster successful social interactions, pursue happiness and well-being, and attain a sense of purpose in life. Berry et al. (2002) described culture as a collective way of life of a group of people. Diverse cultures inevitably shape distinct personalities, perspectives, and behaviours of individuals. Cross-cultural psychology is a scientific study of human behaviour variation, taking into account how behaviour is influenced by cultural contexts (Berry et al., 2002). Based on this understanding, although behaviours may appear similar, they possess specific uniqueness that sets them apart based on the cultural context in which individuals reside. Various topics addressed in cross-cultural psychology include perception, development, cognition, social interaction, and emotions. The study of cross-cultural psychology is not only captivating for exploring existing theories but also for acknowledging the diversity of backgrounds, particularly cultural background, and how the interaction with culture can influence different aspects of the individual.

This article discusses the concept of *Mawas Diri* (self-awareness), which is part of the teachings of *Kawruh Jiwa* by Ki Ageng Suryomentaram in relation to psychology. *Kawruh Jiwa*, which can be translated as the knowledge or science of the human soul, shares similarities with the field of psychology. *Mawas diri* is a technique of self-exploration that involves differentiating

between one's genuine feelings and the thoughts or interpretations one has about those feelings (Suryomentaram, 1991). By practicing this technique, individuals learn to recognise and understand themselves better. When individuals achieve self-acceptance, they are able to transcend their ego and prioritise the greater good rather than being driven solely by self-interest. This concept exhibits resemblances to various existing concepts and theories in psychology, thus providing an intriguing avenue for further investigation. The Javanese cultural perspective, rooted in traditional values, may find particular relevance and applicability within Indonesian society, particularly among the Javanese population.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using a literature review method. The literature review involved gathering data from various published sources, including journals and books. The purpose of the literature review was to explore theories related to the study topic, enrich the data, support data analysis and interpretation, and suggest further research that could contribute to, support, and/or elaborate on existing knowledge (Trent & Cho, 2015). The literature review sources for this study consisted of specific books and scientific articles that discussed the concept of *mawas diri* as part of *Kawruh Jiwa* (the science or knowledge of the human soul) taught by Ki Ageng Suryomentaram and its relation to the psychology field. The selected scientific articles were identified through screening numerous articles that met specific criteria and were obtained through Google Scholar.

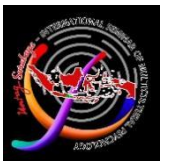
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. The 'I' as the Subject of Knowing

Derived from the Eastern philosophical framework concerning the issue of human salvation achieved through self-mastery and subsequent self-discovery, the philosophical underpinnings of Ki Ageng Suryomentaram's teachings bear significant resemblance. Within the realm of philosophy, human beings are regarded as microcosms intricately intertwined with the macrocosmic universe, prompting individuals to strive for self-understanding as miniature manifestations of the universe. As expounded by Ki Ageng, as cited in Afif (2012), humans are not perpetually controlled by their desires, primarily owing to their endowed faculties of rational thought and emotional sensibility, which enable them to establish a discernible separation between themselves and their surrounding environment.

One of the concepts taught by Ki Ageng is the awareness of the "self-sense" (*raos aku*), which arises from human interpretation of events occurring in their surroundings, leading to the recognition of this subjective sovereignty as the origin of meaning itself. The "self" (I) in this context serves as the subject that gives birth to meaning, possessing the capacity to analyse the presence of objects in its environment, observe and dissect the movements prompted by impulses. Thus, this meaning-giving *self* is eternal, having existed yesterday, existing in the present, and enduring into tomorrow. Accurate meaning must be ascribed to the surrounding objects, according to their inherent nature, as this attribution will impact what the self perceives. Individuals who can differentiate themselves from their knowledge and become aware of their own existence will be capable of elucidating the meaning underlying an event, thereby avoiding a sense of diminishment when faced with such an event (Afif, 2012).

b. Becoming '*Menungso Tanpa Tenger*' (Human Without Attributes)



The consciousness of “the knower” and “the known” constitutes a fundamental doctrine in the science of *Kawruh Jiwa* by Ki Ageng Suryomentaram. To comprehend the events unfolding in one’s surroundings, it necessitates not only analytical thinking prowess but also the capacity for introspection. However, the application of reflective ability may not be readily attainable due to human inclination to be misled by their preexisting knowledge, rather than focusing on the correct way of knowing based on their self-awareness as the knower (Afif, 2012).

Throughout their lives, humans act as record keepers, which is done through their senses. Initially, these records are neutral, merely capturing the events perceived by the senses. However, when desires also become part of the recording process, these records are no longer neutral. Records influenced by desires give rise to *Kramadangsa* (ego) (Boneff, 1994). *Kramadangsa* has a natural inclination to fulfil three types of needs: *semat* (position), *drajat* (honor), and *kramat* (power) (Afif, 2012). According to Ki Ageng, *Kramadangsa* begins to emerge when humans reach the age of three, at which point they are capable of observing, recording, and remembering their observations. *Kramadangsa* thrives as age increases, resulting in a greater accumulation of records, as desires also multiply. The formation of *Kramadangsa* is depicted in Figure 1.

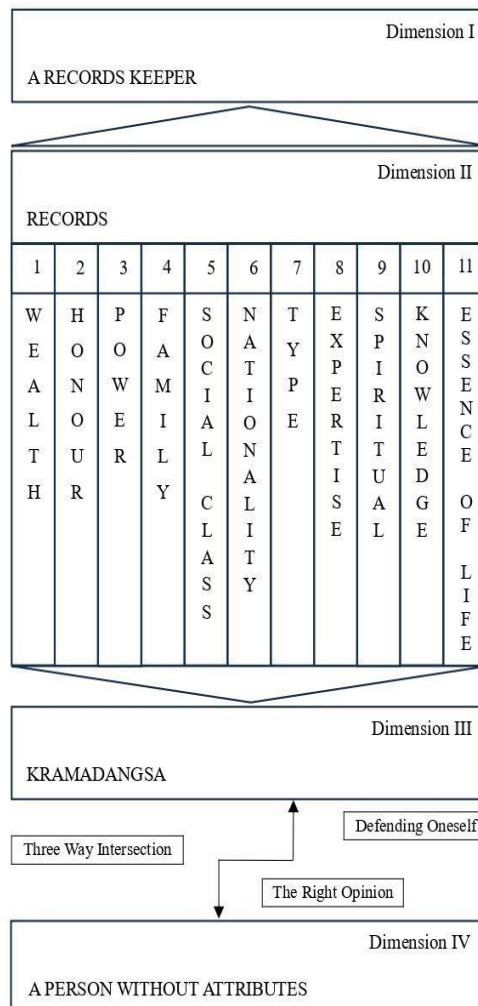


Figure 1. The Formation of Kramadangsa

There are eleven types of record groups that support *Kramadangsa*, namely records related to wealth, honour, power, family, social class, nationality, type, knowledge, spirituality, expertise, and the essence of life (Ki Pronowidigdo in Suryomentaram, 2003). These eleven types of record groups will be described in Table 1. Table 1. Eleven Types of Records in *Kramadangsa*

No	Type of Records	Explanation
1	Wealth	It comprises of material possessions such as houses, land, pets, jewellery, and so on. The nature of these records related to material possessions is such that if they are taken or diminished, it can evoke feelings of anger, whereas if they are acquired or augmented, it can bring about a sense of happiness.
2	Honour	It encompasses the manners of paying respect, such as handshakes, bows, worshipping, signalling, kneeling, and others. The nature of these records remains consistent, assuming that receiving respect brings joy, while its absence may evoke anger.
3	Power	It encompasses one's entitlement to everything they possess or have authority over. When someone or something within their sphere of power is disrupted, it evokes feelings of anger. Conversely, if they receive assistance, it brings them happiness.
4	Family	It encompasses all family members residing together, including spouse, children, father, mother, and others. The characteristics of this record group remain consistent with those described earlier.
5	Social Class	According to Ki Ageng Suryomentaram, there are two paths by which individuals enter a particular group: consciously and unconsciously. For instance, someone may unknowingly become part of the poor group, as it is the society or others who categorise them as such. On the other hand, deliberately joining a group can be achieved through religious or political affiliations, such as adhering to a particular faith or joining a political party. The characteristics of this record are comparable to those of other records.
6	Nationality	It contains information related to the social class records as mentioned previously. This group of records also shares similar characteristics with the aforementioned records.



7	Type	The content of this group of records, when encountering someone, regardless of their religion, nationality, or social class, is the sense of belonging to the same kind, which is being human. The nature of these records is similar in that if one of the same kind is provoked or disturbed, it may trigger anger. Conversely, if one of the same kind is helped or supported, it brings about a sense of joy and happiness.
8	Expertise	It encompasses an individual's skills and talents, such as dancing, martial arts, writing, and various other abilities. The nature of these records is such that when one's expertise is praised, it brings about a sense of joy and satisfaction. However, if criticised or insulted, it may trigger feelings of anger and frustration.
9	Spiritual	The content of these records exhibits variation and divergence among individuals. This phenomenon can be attributed to the influence of their distinct life experiences and the environmental factors surrounding them. The diversity of experiences and cultural backgrounds among individuals significantly contributes to the heterogeneous nature of these records.
10	Knowledge	It contains knowledge for creating objects such as mats, clothes, and others. The nature of these records is similar to what has been explained above.
11	Essence of Life	It contains various memories of sensations and experiences that are generated by the sense of living of each individual. Besides the records of one's life, it is the sense of living that drives human movement.

Becoming '*Menungso Tanpa Tenger*' (Human without Attributes), there are four dimensions that are traversed. Dimension I explains the habit of being a record keeper, where these records are obtained through the perception of the senses. The number of records will increase as one grows older because human desires become more complex and abundant.

Dimension II represents the world of records itself. Among the eleven types of record groups, the quantity and content of the records will vary from one person to another. Certain records will receive more attention based on individual desires and experienced events.

Dimension III is known as *Kramadangsa*. When the records have accumulated significantly, it gives rise to *Kramadangsa*. *Kramadangsa* is the thinker who constantly observes the fate of these records, although the way they treat them may vary. When the records receive significant attention, it brings about benefits and a sense of comfort for *Kramadangsa*. Individuals dominated by *Kramadangsa* are more prone to slipping and experiencing misfortune, and it can trigger feelings of anger. At this stage, individuals face a crossroads that serves as a barrier, namely self-defence that considers oneself as right and others as wrong. If the arising anger, as a response to the perceived injury of the records, is not followed through, one returns to Dimension III, which is *Kramadangsa*.

However, if the anger is reflected upon and reconsidered in its essence, one ascends to Dimension IV, which is a person without attributes.

Dimension IV, known as '*manungsa tanpa tenger*' or 'a person without attributes', is the stage where humans are liberated from their records. When *Kramadangsa*, who is dominated by these records, is recognised and reevaluated, it dies, giving birth to a person without attributes (Suryomentaram, 2003). This cycle continues to occur in every situation faced by individuals.

c. Practicing *Mawas Diri*

Becoming a person without attributes, the practice of *mawas diri* is crucial, wherein the process entails a preliminary understanding of surface-level phenomena before delving into deeper layers. *Mawas diri* serves as a technique for self-recognition by discerning between the authentic depiction of sensations and the conceptual or distorted portrayal of sensations (Suryomentaram, 1991). The authentic depiction of sensations is composed of accurate observations, while the conceptual portrayal of sensations arises from flawed perceptions.

Human beings possess various *rasa* (sensations), both superficial ones that are perceived through the senses and deeper ones that can be discerned through self-awareness, which involves accurately capturing one's own experiences and feelings (Afif, 2012). These sensations, or "*raos*," are not visible but rather experienced. The concept of "*raos*" encompasses the acceptance of the present moment and is referred to as the enduring sensation (*raos langgeng*). Enduring denotes the existence of the past, present, and future. It also signifies the coexistence and alternating nature of happiness and suffering. When investigating the enduring sensation, attention becomes focused on something that arises from a state of liberation (*raos merdika*).

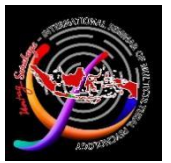
One of the exercises we can engage in for *mawas diri* is to consider the six principles of "*sa*" as guidelines for fulfilling our life's needs. When these six principles are applied in our lives, they can lead to greater happiness. The six principles include *sabutuhe* (according to what is truly needed), *saperlune* (according to what is truly necessary), *sacukupe* (according to what is sufficient), *sabenere* (according to what is true), *samesthine* (according to what is appropriate), and *sakepenake* (according to what is fitting) (Boneff, 1994). *Sabutuhe*, *saperlune*, and *sacukupe* involve the ability to limit our material needs so as not to be excessive. *Sakepenake* means doing something without forcing oneself. *Sabenere* and *samesthine* mean acting in a righteous, correct, fair, and ethical manner. When individuals practice limiting their material needs, they strive to avoid being trapped in impulsive reactions that merely aim to satisfy personal desires.

Another exercise is '*Kandha-Takon*' (dialogue-questioning). In the '*Kandha-Takon*' practice, individuals cultivate the awareness to engage in a dialogue with their present *self*, embracing their thoughts and feelings. Moreover, individuals strive to remain mindful, perceptive, and accepting of their unfolding reality in each moment. Being mindful entails not being ensnared by the shadows of the past or ensnared by illusions of the future (*saiki* or right now, *neng kene* or right here, *ngene* or like this, *gelem* or wants) (Prihartanti, 2003, as cited in Prawitasari, 2012).

d. Application in Psychology

Previous studies and literature reviews have been published exploring the application of Ki Ageng Suryomentaram's concept of *mawas diri* (self-awareness) within the field of psychology, particularly in the realms of counselling and psychotherapy. The concept of *mawas diri* shares similarities with emotional regulation in several aspects. Prastiti & Prihartanti (2012) note that both concepts share the ultimate goal of achieving subjective well-being and involve similar cognitive processes. The cognitive approach employed in both concepts also exhibits parallel attitudes when confronted with an event.

The *kandha-takon* method of self-awareness is also employed in counselling and psychotherapy. Widya (2022) asserts that the utilisation of *kandha-takon* in cultivating self-



awareness is akin to problem-solving-based counselling, which enhances problem-solving skills. *Kandha-takon* also bears similarities to Carl Rogers' client-centred counselling approach, wherein counselling occurs in a non-directive manner, devoid of judgment and didactic interactions (Widya, 2022). Rogers' humanistic approach emphasises empathy as the ability to comprehend others' experiences, which aligns with Ki Ageng Suryomentaram's teachings regarding the capacity to empathise with others' emotions (Prihartanti & Karyani, 1998, cited in Kholik & Ilham, 2015).

Furthermore, the concept of *mawas diri* shares resemblances with the notion of mindfulness, emphasising a state of full attentiveness without excessive fixation on specific thoughts or emotions. Group counselling can incorporate the *kandha-takon* method, wherein interpersonal dialogue, such as sharing, takes place within a group characterised by equal status, devoid of hierarchical teacher-student dynamics (Kholik & Ilham, 2015). In this setting, all group members can simultaneously serve as both students and teachers to themselves, focusing on the present moment.

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