

Research on Suicidal Acts in Gunungkidul, Suwena Earns Doctorate

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Cases of suicide in Gunungkidul regency, Yogyakarta, tend to increase in the past few decades. Between years 2003 - 2012 there have been 330 cases or an average of 33 cases annually.

Efforts have been made by the Gunungkidul local government to prevent the case, among others to design and socialise preventive programme to all members of the public there, module and guidelines distribution as well as mentoring to vulnerable groups.

“The suicide case in Gunungkidul is a humanitarian tragedy. The cause of this phenomenon is still a mystery. Often the act of suicide is related to myths, which is the *pulung gantung* myth,” said Drs. I Wayan Suwena, M.Hum., sitting in his open doctoral promotion at Faculty of Cultural Sciences at UGM on Tuesday (19/7).

Some people believe that the suicidal acts in their place happened because the perpetrator had experienced the *pulung gantung*. This myth justifies the act of suicide, so suicide is placed as a symbolic fact.



Suwena's research into the phenomenon showed that suicide in Gunungkidul is a symbolic act of communication process. The perpetrator had in fact wanted to establish communication with other people to resolve their problems, but they cannot access the media to deliver this intention.

"The people who fail in communicating their intention are failing, making mistakes or going astray when giving significance to the *pulung gantung* myth," said the lecturer from Udayana University.

Suwena said the *pulung gantung* myth that should have been interpreted as a natural phenomenon has instead been interpreted as an indication to commit suicide by hanging oneself. The way people recount the *pulung gantung* myth and rituals that are given after a suicide justify that the suicide is a natural and normal process of death.

To prevent this from emerging further, efforts need to be made to create harmony in communication whether in the family or society. This can be done by enriching or producing as much as media to allow communication be established.

"Use of communication media intensively is expected to deal with failure, mistake, or off-track perception in interpreting the *pulung gantung* myth that is actually a mere natural phenomenon," he said.

Suwena hoped through this step the community will no longer consider it too serious if they see a *pulung gantung*, hence preventing a suicide from happening.

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