



Public Perception of the Rain Handler at the Mandalika MotoGP International Circuit

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ABSTRACT

The rain handler ritual is a local cultural tradition carried out from generation to generation by the community in several regions in Indonesia. This study aims to determine the public perception of the rain handler at the Mandalika MotoGP International Circuit. The location of this research is at the Mandalika International Circuit, Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, while the informants in this study are the general public, especially in South Sulawesi. The data collection techniques in this study were observation, interview, and documentation techniques. Data analysis techniques in this study are data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and data verification or conclusions. The results of the study indicate that the public's perception of the rain handler at the Mandalika MotoGP International Circuit is a "local wisdom" that has existed for a long time and was taught by the ancestors using different spells according to the customs and culture of a region. This research can be used as a reference regarding local wisdom and rituals carried out by the rain handlers at the Mandalika MotoGP Circuit, because previous research focused on the rain handler profession at celebration events only.

Keywords: Rain Handler; Culture; Local Wisdom; Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Tradition, behaviour, or knowledge about an item develops in human existence in response to the proximity of humans to their natural environment and the obstacles they confront. The proximity of human understanding of nature and the shape of human behaviour is owing to its proximity to the community's local wisdom. Local knowledge, according to Wibowo and Gunawan (2015), is a nation's identity or cultural personality that enables the nation to absorb, even nurture, culture from outside or other nations into its own character and talents. According to Lestariningsih (2011) and Njatrijani (2018), local wisdom is a cultural product of the past with local value that is regarded as highly universal and should be utilised as a guide for living on a constant basis. The community's local knowledge is the outcome of changes made to the natural environment in which they live over a lengthy period of time. These modifications were passed down from generation to generation.

According to Haryanto (2014) and Mazid *et al.* (2020), types of local knowledge are different forms of harmony in the form of social practise based on cultural wisdom. Local wisdom in society can take the shape of culture (values, norms, ethics, beliefs, customs, customary laws, and special rules). A society's values, customs, and culture are commonly used as a way of life. They develop into a type of wisdom that is unique to each place, known as local wisdom. Over the course of their history, the Indonesian people, like other early societies, had a belief in spirits or supernatural powers that pervaded all life, both individual human life and the life of society as a whole (Sasmanda, 2016; Utama *et al.*, 2017). People's views about their past have often developed at various rates in different areas, such as islands and locations. Trust also plays a role in whether or not a ritual is effective.

People's beliefs in ghosts and the supernatural realm are ingrained in their thoughts. This notion has been passed down from generation to generation, despite the fact that it has been impacted by numerous cultural factors throughout the history of Indonesian culture, particularly in terms of religion. However, even if they have been impacted by multiple cultures, the original cultural aspects, particularly in rural regions, will continue to inherit the original culture, or at least will not mix it up. As we can see, the inhabitants of Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, continue to believe in the existence of a rain handler occupation. A rain handler's function, according to Alfaginda, (2021), Kurnia & Marnelly, (2017), and Nurfitriyanti, (2012), is to move or halt rain that is expected to fall at a specific moment. Christy (2017) also said that rain handlers in Indonesia often perform the *Turun Taun* rite before the planting season starts.

In addition to the people's beliefs, which are still passed down from generation to generation in the modern period, West Nusa Tenggara is known for its immense natural beauty, as well as being one of the key tourist attractions and having a potential creative economy. Furthermore, the Mandalika MotoGP International Circuit, which was inaugurated on Friday, November 12, 2021, by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, namely, President Joko Widodo, has lately gained prominence. It will be used to compete or race in the MotoGP class on Friday, March 18, 2022, through Sunday, March 20, 2022. It is also a historical witness to the return of the international motorcycle racing championship event to Indonesia.

The Mandalika Circuit has also held a number of world-class events, including the Asia Talent Cup and Superbike, and is currently one of the venues for the 2022 MotoGP race. Indonesia previously held the 1997 MotoGP race at the Sentul Circuit in

West Java. After a 25-year hiatus, Indonesia will once again hold the MotoGP race at the Mandalika International Track in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, which is regarded as the most picturesque circuit in the world. This is what attracts a lot of attention from both local and foreign tourists. Because Mandalika's international circuit is flanked by vistas of the south coast's pristine beaches and lush green hills. The MotoGP race will be held at the Mandalika International Track in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, which has been dubbed "the most beautiful circuit in the world. This is what attracts a lot of attention from both local and foreign tourists. Because Mandalika's international circuit is flanked by vistas of the south coast's pristine beaches and lush green hills. The MotoGP race will be held at the Mandalika International Track in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, which has been dubbed the most beautiful circuit in the world." This is what attracts a lot of attention from both local and foreign tourists. Because Mandalika's international circuit is flanked by vistas of the south coast's pristine beaches and lush green hills.

Behind the success of the 2022 Mandalika MotoGP is local wisdom that is gaining international attention. Rara Isti Wulandari, often known as Mbak Rara, is presently trending because of her performance as a rain handler at the 2022 Mandalika MotoGP. This move has piqued the interest of numerous parties, both locally and internationally. As a result, the world media commented on Mbak Rara's figure and the peculiar mood that transpired in Mandalika when it poured. Like the lives of Indonesians, who have yet to abandon their belief in the rain god. Carrying a golden bowl and doing particular moves in the circuit area to calm the rain. The crowd, team staff, and MotoGP racers, who may have seen something like this for the first time, were all taken away.

Mbak Rara's attendance as a rain handler for the Mandalika 2022 MotoGP is a direct request from the Minister of State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN), Mr. Erick Thohir, and is connected to Mbak Rara's own job as a rain handler. There are still numerous benefits and downsides to believing in the ability to move rain. People who believe in this sort of ritual feel it is normal to execute it, while those who do not believe in the ritual laugh at the attempt. This is what piques the attention of academics in conducting a study titled "Public Perception of the Rain Handler at the Mandalika International Circuit."

RARA ISTIANI WULANDARI (MBAK RARA) AND THE MANDALIKA MOTOGP EVENT

The Mandalika Circuit in Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) in Indonesia, had announced that it will host the world-class motor racing event from March 18 to March 20, 2022 (Dewi, 2022). Happu Harinto, Director of Strategy and Communication for the Mandalika Grand Prix Association (MGPA), was likewise pleased with the news. According to Harinto, this worldwide event has the potential to promote Indonesia's tourist industry. Pertamina Mandalika International Street Circuit will become a "world-class racing circuit," Harinto announced in a press statement received by Tempo on Thursday, October 7, 2021. Meanwhile, Carlos Ezpeleta, the Managing Director of Dorna Sports, has replied to the finalised timetable. He extended his thanks to the Indonesian government for allowing this event to take place (Nurmala & Setiawan, 2022).

Priandhi Satria, the Managing Director of the Mandalika Grand Prix Association (MGPA), offered information on the expected arrival of the riders prior to the

commencement of the Mandalika 2022 MotoGP series. The riders are due to arrive in Indonesia no later than Wednesday, March 16th, 2022, which is two days before the Mandalika MotoGP season begins in 2022. According to Satria's explanation, the motorcyclists' arrival routes would be separated into two groups: those destined for Lombok and those routed to Jakarta first. The racers that go to Jakarta are expected to participate in the procession by riding motorcycles beside President Joko Widodo. The racers' visas have been signed. According to Satria's statement, a number of Dorna Sports team members have already been active in the Mandalika Circuit region. The premier class racers will begin the first day with two free practise sessions (FP1 and FP2) on Friday, March 18th, 2022, according to the Mandalika 2022 MotoGP calendar. Then they will have the final two free practise sessions (FP3 and FP4) before the qualifying session on Saturday, March 19th, 2022, which is part of the second day series. The riders will compete in the main race on the last day, Sunday, March 20th, 2022.

Mbak Rara (whose full name is Radan Rare Istiati Wulandari) was not just there for the Mandalika 2022 MotoGP event on March 18th and 20th. Since March 1, Rara has been said to be in command of the Mandalika Circuit's weather. However, the hot race for the MotoGP world title in 2022 was about to commence on the faithful day of the 20th, Sunday afternoon. Just before the race was ready to start, it began to rain at the Mandalika Circuit. Rara was quickly observed aggressively attempting to keep the rain from falling onto the racing ring. Rara was seen going in circles and pounding on bronze equipment in the shape of a coconut shell.



Portrait of Rara Istiani Wulandari (Twitter/@MotoGP)

Mbak Rara was seen going around the motorbike racetrack, utilised ancient rites to ward off rain. Her efforts were rewarded with some meteorological success. Even though times have changed, the Indonesian people have not abandoned some mystical practises. A rain handler, for example, is someone who is said to have supernatural skills to “manage the weather.” In reality, the rain handler is frequently used and earns money for the person who owns it. Not long after the ritual at the Mandalika 2022 MotoGP event, Mbak Rara became famous on social media for her activities in attempting to stop the rain from falling on the Mandalika circuit.

Rara claimed she carried a lot of tools or requirements with her to the Mandalika Circuit to “tinker” with the weather. She brought the Semar puppet, tarot, to a statue of a bride and groom named Loro Blonyo.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative technique, with the goal of understanding the things experienced by the research participants descriptively in the form of words and language derived from field data and theories as support. According to Sugiyono (2017), the qualitative approach is a research method based on postpositivist philosophy that is used to analyse the state of natural things, in which the researcher is the primary instrument. While descriptive research is employed, this form of research is undertaken with the primary goal of presenting an objective account of a scenario (Sugiyono, 2018).

The Mandalika International Circuit in Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, is the site of this research, and the informants are members of the general public, particularly in South Sulawesi. This study's data collection methods included observation, interviews, and documentation. Data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and data verification or conclusions are the data analysis methodologies used in this study.

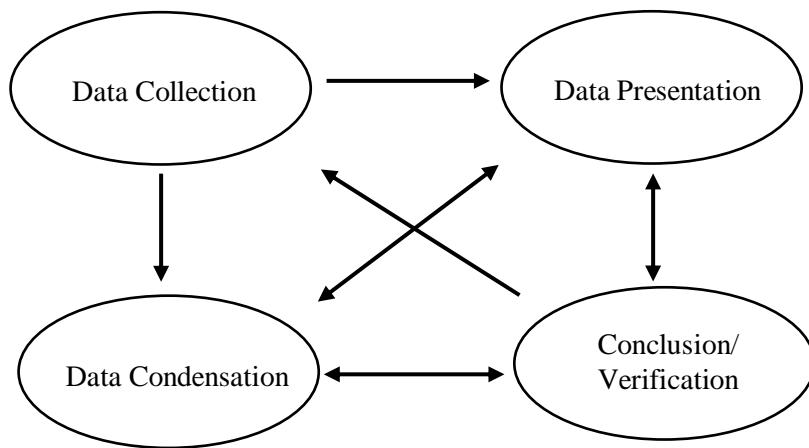


Figure. 1 Data Analysis Techniques according to (Miles et al., 2014)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Description of the public perception of the rain handler at the Mandalika MotoGP Circuit.

The majority of the public's perception of a rain handler at the Mandalika MotoGP Circuit in 2022 is based on cultural, tradition, custom, and religious backgrounds, with the majority of people believing in the existence of a rain handler profession. This notion, however, is not without flaws. Even while viral dark clouds in the Mandalika Circuit were recently relocated to various Indonesian islands, some people believe in the existence of a rain handler profession but do not think that someone can move rain from one location to another. Furthermore, some individuals believe that rain handling is a long-standing cultural and religious practise and that believing in spirits and the supernatural realm cannot be eradicated from people's beliefs.

Mrs. Niswatu Syakirah stated, "the rain handler profession is legal. Everyone has their own beliefs. Those who have such abilities also pray and expect guidance and will from the Almighty, so that the rain can be moved as he wishes" (N. Syakirah, personal communication, March, 20, 2022).

Based on the results of the interview, Mrs. Nur Mauliani conveyed the same thing, saying that "the rain handler does exist and is real" (N. Mauliani, personal communication, March, 20, 2022). It is a culture that has been passed down from generation to generation in some areas for people who believe in it. The rain handler at the Mandalika Circuit is also one of the local wisdoms that has been around since our ancestors. He or she could also be one of Indonesia's cultural capitals to help promote this country even more to the outside world as well.

Many people make fun of it, even making a comedy out of it. With the performance of the ritual to remove the rain, Mbak Rara, the Mandalika MotoGP Circuit's rain handler, earned the world's focus for her activities to execute rituals at the Mandalika International Circuit. Mr. Ikbal Sugandi further averred that "the rain handler at the Mandalika MotoGP Circuit, commonly called Mbak Rara, must have considered the consequences related to his courage to perform the ritual, because as we often see, the rain handler only performs rituals in a room while praying and praying. Istigfar, or some people from other regions, only practise unusual traditions, such as not bathing" (I. Sugandi, personal communication, March, 20, 2022).

Many think that by showing a rain handler ritual, it is only a marketing technique to attract the world's attention to the Mandalika MotoGP Circuit. And this was successfully covered by Dorna TV and the official MotoGP Twitter account, which gave feedback regarding the performance of the rain handler at the Mandalika Circuit. In addition, there are also some people who do not believe in the profession of rain handler. As the results of interviews with Mr. Iham showed, "rain handler" is only a profession, related to its ability to stop rain or shift rain to other areas, which is a difficult thing to understand. He said it was possible that the rain handler involved spirits or supernatural beings to help him, and that could be said to be "shirk" (Iham, personal communication, March, 20, 2022).

Mr. Ahmad Amran mentioned the same thing in interviews in the field about the Mandalika MotoGP rain handler, he said:

most people in rural areas may still believe in a rain handler profession, but in the current era the government has established a non-ministerial government agency, namely Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency or commonly called BMKG which has the task of carrying out government duties in the fields of Meteorology, Climatology, Air Quality and Geophysics in accordance with the provisions of the applicable laws, as I know before the MotoGP event of the National Disaster Management Agency has submitted an application to the National Research and Innovation Agency with letter number: S-52/KA BNPB/PD.01/03/2022 dated March 12, 2022 regarding the application for support for weather modification technology operations in NTB and has sprinkled approximately 3 tons of salt around the Mandalika Circuit with the aim of preventing rain, so it is related to the reduction of rain before the MotoGP event at the 2022 Mandalika Circuit cannot be separated from the prayers and efforts of all parties involved (A. Amran, personal communication, March 20, 2022).

Based on the results of interviews in the field, it can be concluded that the public's perception of the rain handler at the Mandalika MotoGP Circuit is based on a belief and one of the cultures that exist in Indonesia. Everyone has the right to believe in their own culture as long as it does not harm others. In addition, the Mandalika MotoGP Circuit uses the rain handler job as a marketing tool to get the Mandalika MotoGP Circuit known around the world.

DISCUSSION

An overview of what the public thinks about the rain handler at the Mandalika MotoGP track.

Based on the findings of the data analysis, it can be concluded that the public perception of the rain handler at the Mandalika MotoGP International Circuit is that most Indonesians believe in the existence of a rain handler profession, which has been a part of the culture for generations and is one of the country's local wisdoms. The rain handling profession is a natural cultural heritage that has been passed down for generations by previous generations, as it is in many other civilizations. The rain handler utilises a metaphysical approach to carry out the ceremony, which might be difficult to comprehend with human common sense. The ritual at issue is a human notion that stems from a belief in ancestors and involves asking for blessings or prayers from ancestors who are seen to be strong and capable of protecting people from disasters. The same thing was also conveyed about Mbak Rara, a rain handler at the Mandalikan MotoGP Circuit, in a podcast with DeddyCorbuzier (Corbuzier & Wulandari, 2022), who said that "in carrying out his work as a rain handler, he also asked for help from other realms, which he called ancestors or gods for the Balinese people."

Rain handlers in different areas perform different rituals, such as Mbak Rara's rituals at the Mandalika MotoGP Circuit, which include preparing offerings and burning incense, stabbing onions and chilies into sticks and sticking them in the ground, and

walking around the circuit area with a golden bowl while doing special movements that he considers a symbol to calm the rain or clear the Mandalika sky. Some people think that what Mbak Rara is doing is just a marketing strategy that has already been reported by the outside media, such as on Dorna TV. They think it should not be shown.

Aside from the negative public view of rain handlers at the Mandalika MotoGP Circuit, the rain handler profession is one of the local wisdoms that is now held in numerous Indonesian locations, albeit the rituals and prayers are different. According to Kurnia & Marnelly (2017), the process of moving the rain includes a unique Islamic prayer that facilitates communication with the almighty, as well as numerous procedures that a rain handler must follow, such as not washing, eating, or drinking while in the event area. Furthermore, according to Christy (2017), conducting the ceremony is seen as a technique for strengthening the aim of postponing the rain. The rain handler will come to the event place to plant a pair of coconut leaves if the PasaMutih ritual is followed, which includes eating only rice without salt and drinking only water for three days apart from Pasa Mutih. Mbak Rara, the Mandalika MotoGP Circuit's rain manager, performed something unique by bathing and conducting rituals straight in the salty region in order to transfer the rain. In a collaborative podcast with DeddyCorbuzier, she said that she did the same rite in a holy state to aid the Basarnas crew and even avert aftershocks (Corbuzier & Wulandari, 2022).

CONCLUSION

From the findings obtained in this study, it can be concluded that the public's perception of the rain handler at the Mandalika MotoGP Circuit is based on culture and local wisdom that is legitimate to believe. This belief is a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation by ancestors to move rain or protect against rain. In the rituals, there are also those who use the language of Kejawen mantras, Gayatri Mantras, and some also use prayers in Islam. In addition, the government has also established a non-ministerial government agency, namely the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency, or commonly called BMKG, which has the task of carrying out government duties in the fields of meteorology, climatology, air quality, and geophysics in accordance with the provisions of the applicable legislation.

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