

THE INFLUENCE OF NGAYAH TRADITION AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN BALINESE SOCIETY

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted Balinese social interactions, particularly the Ngayah tradition of mutual cooperation, while reducing emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships. This study aimed to analyze the influence of Ngayah tradition and emotional intelligence on interpersonal relationships among Balinese people during and post-pandemic. Using an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach, the population comprised 2,000 active Ngayah participants, with 123 purposively sampled respondents. Instruments included Likert-scale questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and non-participant observation, analyzed via SPSS multiple regression and NVivo thematic analysis. Results showed emotional intelligence ($\beta=0.527$, $p<0.001$) had stronger influence than Ngayah ($\beta=0.231$, $p=0.026$), explaining 47% of the variance ($R^2=0.470$, $F=32.129$, $p<0.001$). Qualitative findings confirmed intensive Ngayah involvement enhances empathy through structured community activities. In conclusion, emotional intelligence primarily sustains relationships while Ngayah reinforces cultural solidarity, recommending emotion training integrated with local traditions for post-pandemic recovery.

Keywords: Balinese Society, Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonal Relationships, Ngayah Tradition, Social Solidarity.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in early 2020, shook the world, including Indonesia, with strict social restrictions that abruptly changed daily interactions. Bans on gatherings and restrictions on crowds reduced face-to-face contact, which is central to Indonesian society, forcing a shift to online communication, despite its lack of the emotional closeness of in-person interactions (Kaufman et al., 2020; Savitsky et al., 2021). In Bali, the Ngayah tradition, a form of voluntary mutual cooperation (gotong royong) in social and religious activities, was among those affected, as these restrictions disrupted the social bonds built through communal cooperation (Awais et al., 2024). This phenomenon is becoming increasingly prominent as Balinese culture, which emphasizes togetherness, faces the challenge of excessive digitalization, where interpersonal relationships are fading due to emotional distance (Dieni et al., 2022).

During and after the pandemic, Balinese people experienced a decline in participation in Ngayah, which typically strengthens solidarity through selfless contributions, while facing psychological stress that suppresses individual emotional intelligence. Studies show that social isolation impairs the ability to manage emotions and empathy, thereby reducing the quality of interpersonal relationships, especially in collective societies like Bali (Peng et al., 2023; Wijayanti et al., 2022). Intense digitalization, despite facilitating connection, creates emotional distance, making people tend to interact only with familiar groups and avoid new relationships (Wijayanti, 2022).

While numerous studies have addressed the pandemic's impact on emotional intelligence and social interactions, few have integrated local traditions like Ngayah into analyses of interpersonal relationships in Bali. The pandemic has altered the dynamics of this mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), with participation declining due to restrictions, weakening the social bonds that underpin Balinese culture (Savitsky et al., 2021; Goleman, 2023). Furthermore, the psychological stress of isolation exacerbates emotional management, making it difficult for individuals to develop empathy and communicate effectively, which are crucial in the Balinese context of togetherness (Awais et al., 2024).

The problem is further complicated by post-pandemic digitalization, which has created a preference for limited interactions, with people avoiding new relationships and feeling limited in building empathy, influenced by economic uncertainty and a lack of social support. This contradicts the Ngayah values of facilitating cooperation and emotional closeness through direct interaction (Dieni et al., 2022; Wijayanti et al., 2022). This decline in relationship quality is also related to internal factors such as decreased emotional intelligence and external factors such as restrictive policies, which have not been widely explored within the Balinese cultural framework (Peng et al., 2023).

Previous studies have focused on the pandemic's general impact on emotions and relationships but overlooked the role of collective traditions like Ngayah in mitigating this decline, particularly in communities with strong values of mutual cooperation. In Bali, this shift in communication patterns poses a risk of loss of social solidarity, with emotional intelligence failing to compensate for the absence of communal activities (Kaufman et al., 2020; Zeidan, 2020). This lack of integration between local cultural factors and individual emotional capacities leaves a gap in knowledge about post-pandemic relationship recovery (Wijayanti, 2022).

This study aims to analyze the influence of the Ngayah tradition and emotional intelligence on interpersonal relationships in Balinese communities during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on local cultural dynamics and the role of empathy in building healthy relationships. The urgency lies in the urgent need to restore social bonds amidst modernization and digitalization that threaten Balinese solidarity, thereby helping communities maintain the value of mutual cooperation while enhancing emotional skills for future challenges (Goleman, 2023; Awais et al., 2024). Its novelty lies in the integration of a mixed-method approach with indigenous psychology to fill the gap in previous studies that neglected the Ngayah tradition, providing unique insights into how cultural and emotional factors complement each other in the post-pandemic Balinese context (Savitsky et al., 2021).

METHOD

This study adopted a mixed methods approach with an exploratory sequential design, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively understand the influence of the Ngayah tradition and emotional intelligence on interpersonal relationships in Balinese society. This approach begins with qualitative data collection through interviews and observations to explore social phenomena in depth, followed by quantitative analysis to

statistically test the findings, resulting in a stronger understanding of local cultural dynamics (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021, Sugiyono, 2023, In addition, an indigenous psychology approach is applied to analyze the behavior of Balinese people in the context of local values such as gotong royong Ngayah, which reflects the spirit of togetherness without reward in social and religious activities (Sudaryono et al., 2022, Emzir, 2021).

This mixed methods design is ideal for capturing the complex relationship between cultural traditions and individual psychological factors, where qualitative data provides interpretive depth while quantitative data offers testable generalizations. The sequential approach ensures that qualitative findings form the basis of quantitative hypotheses, thereby enhancing the overall validity of the study in measuring the impact of the pandemic on Balinese social solidarity (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021; Sugiyono, 2023).

The main instruments included a five-point Likert scale questionnaire for the variables Ngayah (X1), emotional intelligence (X2), and interpersonal relationships (Y), which had been tested for construct validity and a minimum Cronbach's Alpha reliability of 0.70, as well as semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation for qualitative data. The questionnaire was designed to measure respondents' involvement in Ngayah, their level of emotional intelligence, and the quality of their social relationships, while the open-ended interview guide explored subjective experiences of the activity (Emzir, 2021; Gergen et al., 2001, Non-participant observation records interactions and emotional expressions during Ngayah activities without researcher intervention, providing an objective perspective that complements other primary data (Sudaryono et al., 2022).

Quantitative data analysis used SPSS for multiple linear regression, t-test, F-test, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk normality, and VIF multicollinearity to test the simultaneous and partial effects of independent variables on the dependent variable. Meanwhile, qualitative analysis using NVivo identified themes from interview transcripts and observation notes, ensuring data triangulation for the reliability of the findings (Sugiyono, 2023; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021). This technique ensures the instrument accurately measures the Balinese cultural context, with external validity tested through comparison with previous studies (Emzir, 2021).

The study population consisted of approximately 2,000 Balinese who are active in the Ngayah tradition in a specific area, namely those who voluntarily participate in the preparation of religious ceremonies at temples and in the banjar community activities, reflecting a spirit of togetherness and high emotional intelligence. The minimum sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with a margin of error of 10%: , however, 123 respondents were selected through purposive sampling to ensure the relevance of characteristics, such as active involvement in Ngayah, thereby increasing data variation and external validity (Sugiyono, 2023; Sudaryono et al., 2022).
$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} = \frac{2000}{1 + 2000 \times 0.1^2} = 95,24$$

This purposive sampling technique targeted subjects representative of Bali's post-pandemic social dynamics, ensuring the sample exceeded the minimum threshold for regression analysis accuracy and qualitative data richness. This approach aligns with mixed

methods principles that emphasize contextual representation in indigenous cultural studies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021; Emzir, 2021).

The procedure began with ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, before data collection through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and non-participant observation, sequentially. Qualitative data were collected first to build an understanding of the phenomenon, followed by a tailored quantitative questionnaire, with regression assumptions such as normality and multicollinearity tested before final analysis using SPSS and NVivo (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021; Gergen et al., 2001). Each stage was documented for triangulation, ensuring the qualitative findings were statistically validated (Sugiyono, 2023).

This process followed a systematic exploratory flow: exploration of the Ngayah theme through observation and interviews, hypothesis testing via regression, and integrated interpretation to confirm the influence of variables on interpersonal relationships. This approach ensured the reliability and generalizability of the findings within the Balinese cultural context (Sudaryono et al., 2022; Emzir, 2021).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to examine the simultaneous influence of Ngayah tradition and emotional intelligence on interpersonal relationships among Balinese people. Using multiple linear regression, we analyzed the data to measure the extent to which these two independent variables influence the dependent variable. The results of the regression test show that both variables contribute significantly to influencing social and interpersonal relationships in Balinese society.

Multiple Linear Regression Results

The R^2 obtained was 0.470, indicating that 47% of the variation in interpersonal relationships can be explained by the Ngayah tradition and emotional intelligence. This figure shows that these two variables have a significant influence in shaping the quality of interpersonal relationships in Balinese society, which is based on a collective culture. The remaining 53% of interpersonal relationship variation is likely explained by other factors not covered in this model, such as other cultural factors that influence social communication in Bali, changes in social values due to the impact of globalization, and the role of the education system in shaping the social skills of the community.

In this context, external factors such as social restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and socio-economic changes in Balinese society have exacerbated or improved social interactions. For example, communities that previously relied heavily on face-to-face interactions in various social activities, including Ngayah, have had to adapt to new forms of interaction such as virtual communication, which has inevitably had an impact on the depth of interpersonal relationships.

Table 1. Multiple Linear Regression Test Results (Simultaneous)

Variable	Regression Coefficient (B)	t-value	p-value	Significant
Constant (Intercept)	2,154	-	0.000	Significant
Ngayah Tradition (X1)	0.231	2,182	0.026	Significant
Emotional Intelligence (X2)	0.527	6,019	0.000	Significant

Interpretation of Multiple Linear Regression Results:

1. Ngayah Tradition (X1): Each one-unit increase in involvement in the Ngayah Tradition will increase interpersonal relationships by 0.231 units. This indicates that active participation in social activities such as Ngayah plays a role in strengthening interpersonal relationships, which is highly relevant to the concept of collectivism in Balinese culture (Hofstede, 2001). In Balinese culture, Ngayah not only facilitates mutual cooperation, but also strengthens the sense of togetherness and deep social bonds between community members. In addition, mutual cooperation activities such as Ngayah often serve as a platform for building social solidarity within the community, which in turn improves the quality of relationships between individuals.
2. Emotional Intelligence (X2): Each one-unit increase in emotional intelligence will increase interpersonal relationships by 0.527 units. This finding is consistent with Goleman's (1995) theory, which emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence in building and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships. Emotional intelligence enables individuals to understand and manage their own feelings, as well as empathize with the feelings of others, which makes social interactions more effective and harmonious. In Balinese society, which places a high priority on close interpersonal relationships, emotional intelligence is a very important skill in maintaining good relationships between individuals and groups.

Simultaneous Test (F Test)

The F test was conducted to examine the simultaneous effect of both independent variables on interpersonal relationships. The F test result was 32.129 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating that both variables, Ngayah Tradition and Emotional Intelligence, simultaneously had a significant effect on interpersonal relationships. These results confirm that these two variables play a role in strengthening social relationships in Balinese society, reflecting the importance of both traditional values and individual emotional abilities in interacting with others. This F test shows that the simultaneous influence of these two variables is much stronger than if only one variable were taken into account in the model.

More deeply, these two variables can also be understood as two forces that work complementarily in maintaining harmony in interpersonal relationships in Bali. The Ngayah tradition acts as a social glue at the community level, while Emotional Intelligence becomes an individual force that facilitates more effective communication, creates more empathetic relationships, and builds emotional closeness between individuals in the wider community.

Normality Test

To test the normality of the data, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Shapiro-Wilk test were conducted. The results of the normality test showed that the p-value for all variables (Interpersonal Relationships, Ngayah Tradition, and Emotional Intelligence) was greater than 0.05, which means that the data was normally distributed and met the normality assumption for multiple linear regression. This strengthens the validity of the statistical analysis used in this study. In this case, data normality is important because normally distributed data ensures that the results of linear regression analysis are reliable.

Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity testing was conducted to ensure that there was no high correlation between independent variables. The test results showed that the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for Ngayah Tradition and Emotional Intelligence were 1.432 and 1.588, respectively, which means that there was no multicollinearity between the two independent variables. The Tolerance values for these two variables are 0.637, indicating that the data does not experience significant multicollinearity. High multicollinearity can affect the accuracy of regression results, and these findings indicate that the regression model used is reliable.

Table 2. Normality and Multicollinearity Test Results

Test	Variable	Statistics	P-value	Interpretation
Normality Test	Interpersonal Relationships	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.128	Data is normally distributed
		Shapiro-Wilk	0.091	Data is normally distributed
Multicollinearity test	The Ngayah Tradition (X1)	VIF	1,432	No multicollinearity
		Tolerance	0.637	No multicollinearity
	Emotional Intelligence (X2)	VIF	1,588	No multicollinearity
		Tolerance	0.637	No multicollinearity

Qualitative Analysis Results

The results of semi-structured interviews and non-participatory observations show that the Ngayah tradition plays a significant role in strengthening interpersonal relationships in Balinese society. Subject 1, who is involved in the STT organization, explained that involvement in Ngayah increases empathy, the ability to manage emotions, and strengthens their social skills, which leads to more harmonious relationships. They feel that through social cooperation in Ngayah activities, they can get to know each other better, which facilitates the creation of emotional closeness and empathy. In addition, an active role in Ngayah allows individuals to hone social skills that help them adapt in various social interactions.

In contrast, Subject 2, who was personally involved in Ngayah activities without involvement in the organization, reported a more limited influence. Although they felt closer to the people in their group, the significant impact on interpersonal relationships was not very noticeable. This shows that the intensity of involvement in Ngayah affects how much influence it has on interpersonal relationships. The more individuals are involved in social activities, the greater the impact on the development of their emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships.

Non-participatory observation reinforces these findings, showing that individuals involved in Ngayah interacts more frequently in broader social contexts and demonstrates higher levels of empathy when communicating with others. This is in line with Putnam's (2000) Social Capital theory, which states that social capital built through participation in social activities contributes to healthier and stronger relationships.

Based on the results of quantitative and qualitative analysis conducted in this study, it can be concluded that both the Ngayah tradition and emotional intelligence play an important role in improving and strengthening interpersonal relationships among the Balinese people. The results of multiple linear regression show that Emotional Intelligence has a greater influence in shaping interpersonal relationships than the Ngayah Tradition. This finding is in line with Goleman's (1995) theory, which emphasizes that emotional intelligence, which includes the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions as well as empathize with others, is an important skill for building healthy and effective social relationships.

Emotional intelligence helps individuals navigate more complex social relationships, especially in vulnerable situations with tension and stress. In Balinese society, which places great importance on togetherness, the ability to manage and respond to feelings wisely greatly supports the creation of harmonious relationships. This increase in emotional intelligence facilitates more honest and empathetic communication, which in turn enhances the depth and quality of social interactions.

However, even though Emotional Intelligence makes a greater contribution, the results of qualitative interviews show that the influence of the Ngayah tradition on interpersonal relationships is highly dependent on the level of individual involvement in these activities. Subjects who were more actively involved in organizations or structured activities, such as Subject 1 who participated in the STT organization, reported a greater influence on their interpersonal relationships. They felt that involvement in these structured social activities strengthened relationships due to more frequent and deeper interactions with community members.

In contrast, Subject 2, who was only personally involved in Ngayah activities without any organizational structure, did not feel a significant impact on their interpersonal relationships. This finding is relevant to Putnam's (2000) theory of Social Capital, which states that participation in social activities increases social capital, namely the social networks that bind individuals within a community. In the context of Bali, involvement in

activities such as Ngayah serves to build broader social networks, strengthen a sense of belonging and solidarity, which in turn deepens relationships between individuals.

Greater involvement in Ngayah allows individuals to strengthen the emotional bonds formed through face-to-face interactions. This is in line with the interpersonal communication theory developed by Knapp and Vangelisti (2009), which states that face-to-face communication is at the core of healthy emotional relationships. In Balinese society, which prioritizes face-to-face social relationships, activities such as Ngayah provide opportunities for direct interaction that facilitate deeper understanding among community members.

In addition, the results of this study also support indigenous psychology, which argues that local values and culture greatly influence individuals behavior and interpersonal relationships. The Ngayah tradition, as part of Balinese culture, not only serves as a means of strengthening relationships between individuals but also as a social mechanism that enhances emotional intelligence and strengthens social bonds within Balinese society. The principles of *tat twam asi* (I am you) and *karma phala* (the law of cause and effect), which are upheld by Balinese society, reinforce the values of empathy, solidarity, and social responsibility in interpersonal relationships.

The results of this study also show that even though the world is increasingly influenced by globalization and modernization, Balinese society is still able to maintain the traditions and social values that shape their social bonds. Emotional intelligence is an important tool in facing the challenges of modernization, enabling individuals to maintain emotional balance and healthy relationships despite being exposed to rapid social change. This is in line with the theory of logotherapy developed by Viktor Frankl (1969), which emphasizes the importance of the search for meaning in life in overcoming social and cultural pressures.

Spirituality is also a profound component in maintaining the emotional balance of Balinese society. For example, in interviews and observations, most respondents reported that inner balance is one of the main ways they manage stress and life pressures. These results show that even though modernization and social change have altered some aspects of Balinese society, spiritual values remain a very important balancing factor in maintaining individual emotional stability. With inner balance, individuals feel calmer in facing social change and the tensions that arise, creating space to strengthen interpersonal relationships.

Adaptation to modernization and social change has influenced the way people interact, but traditions such as Ngayah and inherited emotional intelligence continue to play an important role in maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships. Technology, while facilitating long-distance communication, often creates emotional distance between individuals. Sherry Turkle (2011) in her book *Alone Together* states that although virtual communication allows us to stay connected, it is often not deep enough to build true emotional closeness. This shows that face-to-face communication remains more effective in building deeper relationships, which is an important value in Balinese society.

However, even though technology increasingly dominates daily life, Balinese people still strive to maintain direct social relationships through activities such as Ngayah. Ngayah not only connects individuals socially, but also creates emotional bonds that strengthen the quality of interpersonal relationships. The face-to-face communication in these activities allows individuals to better understand the feelings of others, which ultimately builds stronger emotional bonds.

Thus, despite the challenges that come with social change, the results of this study show that both Ngayah tradition and emotional intelligence play a significant role in maintaining the quality of interpersonal relationships among the Balinese people, especially in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period. During the period of social restrictions, even though many social activities were limited, activities such as Ngayah continued to play an important role in strengthening social relationships between individuals, reinforcing social networks, and developing deep emotional intelligence.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that emotional intelligence and social traditions such as Ngayah is integrated in strengthening the quality of interpersonal relationships in Balinese society. Both play a very important role in creating a more harmonious, supportive society that is able to withstand various social changes and global challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the Ngayah tradition and emotional intelligence significantly influence interpersonal relationships in Balinese society, with emotional intelligence showing a stronger influence (regression coefficient 0.527, $p < 0.001$) than Ngayah (0.231, $p = 0.026$), explaining 47% of the variation in social relations through multiple linear regression ($R^2 = 0.470$, $F = 32.129$, $p < 0.001$). Qualitative analysis confirmed that intensive involvement in Ngayah, especially through structured organizations, increases empathy and solidarity, while emotional intelligence mediates post-pandemic adaptation to digitalization that creates emotional distance. These findings emphasize the complementary role of local Balinese values and individual psychological abilities in maintaining togetherness amid the social disruption of COVID-19.

However, this study has limitations, such as a purposive sample of 123 respondents from specific regions of Bali, which limits generalizability, and a reliance on self-report measures, which are susceptible to social desirability bias. Suggestions for future research include longitudinal studies with a broader sample, neuropsychological measures of emotional intelligence, and cross-cultural comparisons of Indonesian gotong royong (mutual cooperation). Practical implications of the study recommend Ngayah-based emotional intelligence training programs in Balinese banjars and schools to restore social relations, as well as government policies that integrate local traditions into post-pandemic interventions to strengthen communal resilience.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54443/sibatik.v5i2.4241>

