

# Government Policies of Maluku Province on Covid-19 Prevention and Governance

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**Abstract.** The emergence of Covid-19 in Maluku Province has prompted local governments to carry out more appropriate handling and prevention. Three issues concern government policies, namely, health and safety issues, economic resilience issues, and the provision of social security networks. However, the various measures taken by the regional government have not been able to stem the escalation of the spread of Covid-19 throughout the province of Maluku. The purpose of this study is to find out why the policies adopted by the government could not reduce the escalation of Covid-19 transmission in Maluku Province. The question posed in this study is the extent to which provincial government policies can reduce the impact of the spread of Covid-19 in Maluku Province. This research uses an explanatory qualitative method. Our findings show that the Maluku government does not carry out stringent policies in preventing and tackling Covid-19. The implication is that many people affected by Covid-19 ignore government policies and choose to self-medicate using traditional medicine.

**Keywords:** Policy, Provincial Government, Prevention, Control, Covid-19

## 1 Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic that has hit the whole world, including Indonesia, requires faster and more effective government handling. For this reason, the government has taken various policies that can minimize the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic both at the national and local levels. At the national level, the government has adopted a policy of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB - Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar) and Restrictions on the Movement of Community Activities (PPKM - Pembatasan Kegiatan Pergerakan Masyarakat) which refers to Law Number 6 of 2018 concerning Health Quarantine. Based on the law, the Joko Widodo government has issued Government Regulation No. 21 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions and a Presidential Decree on Health Emergencies.

In dealing with the impact of the pandemic in the economic and social fields, the government has taken several policies, including; Regulation of the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia No.23/Pmk.03/2020 concerning Tax Intensiveness for Taxpayers Affected by the Corona Virus Outbreak, Regulation of the Financial Services Authority of the Republic of Indonesia No.11/Pojk.03/2020 concerning National Economic Stimulus and Presidential Instruction of the Republic of Indonesia Number 4 of 2020 concerning Refocusing on Budget Reallocation Activities and Procurement of Goods and Services in the Context of Accelerating

the Handling of the Covid-19 Virus through the 2020 State Budget as a form of assistance to the community [1].

While in Maluku Province, the local government has taken various policies to address three serious problems related to the Covid-19 pandemic, including; (1) Maluku Governor Regulation (PERGUB) concerning Restrictions on People Movement and Mode of Transportation in Handling Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on Ambon Island in 2020; (2) Governor's Decree Number 127 of 2020 concerning the Establishment of the Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19); (3) Decree of the Governor of Maluku Number 159 of 2020 concerning of the Establishment of a Quarantine Center for Travelers, People Under Monitoring, and Patients Under Supervision of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) in Maluku Province; (4) Governor's Decree Number 209 of 2020 concerning Determination of Alternative Health Service Facilities for Patients Confirmed Positive for Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) in Maluku Province; (5) Decree of the Governor of Maluku Number 158 of 2020 concerning the Designation of Referral Hospitals for the Management of Emerging Diseases (Covid-19) in Maluku Province; (6) Maluku Governor Regulation Number 39 of 2020 concerning Guidelines for Prevention and Control of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) in Maluku Province; (7) Decree of the Governor of Maluku Number 643 of 2020 concerning the Establishment of an Expert Team for Combating Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) of Maluku Province [2].

Maluku Province has taken these various policies as part of the local government's efforts to minimize the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in Maluku Province and to strengthen the economic and social resilience of the community. To realize and overcome these various problems, the government has imposed restrictions and tightened entry and exit for travelers to and from Maluku Province, increased community food security through the reallocation of the Covid-19 budget which was discussed together with the Regional People's Representative Assembly of Maluku Province (DPRD Propinsi Maluku), and provided a safety net social services by providing assistance as much as 40 percent or 103,239 heads of families affected by Covid 19, such as motorcycle taxi drivers, pedicab drivers, hawkers [3].

So far, the government has conducted many studies and taken many policies related to the spread of Covid-19. Studies that have been conducted by Huang et al. [4] show that the spread of COVID-19 occurs through the air. Patient care in health services is very necessary to prevent the COVID-19 infection from getting worse whereas the onset of fever and respiratory problems must be monitored closely by health workers. In addition, health workers need to quickly test specimens on patients suspected of being infected with Covid-19. Health workers must also be tested before and after interacting directly with patients infected with Covid-19 to identify if there is asymptomatic. The study published by WHO entitled "Global surveillance for covid-19 disease caused by human infection with coronavirus" describes all individuals who meet the criteria If you suspect or have been in contact with a patient who is positive for COVID-19, you should immediately seek treatment at a health facility. The study by Riedel et al. [5], explains that handwashing behavior must be applied by all health workers at five times, namely before touching a patient, before performing a procedure, after exposure to body fluids, after touching a patient and after touching the patient's environment. Water is often referred to as the universal solvent, but washing hands with water alone is not enough to eliminate coronavirus because it is an RNA virus with a lipid bilayer sheath.

A study by Susilawati et al. [6] at the Budapest International Research and Critics Institute (BIRCI-Journal) with the title "Impact of COVID-19's Pandemic on the Economy of Indonesia", which uses a literature study method with secondary data originating from the internet that valid. The results showed that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had an effect

on the Indonesian economy. Susilawati et al. [6] explained that the sectors affected during the COVID-19 pandemic were transportation, tourism, trade, health and other sectors. However, the most affected sector of the economy is the household sector. Indonesia monitors global and domestic economic developments by optimizing domestic potential. The question posed in this study is what is the policy of the Maluku Provincial government in tackling Covid-19? How to implement the policy? What are the impacts of this policy on people's lives? This study departs from two main theories of public policy, including the theory put forward by Carl. J. Federick was quoted by Agustino [7] which says that every public policy reflects the actions or steps taken by public officials in overcoming the problems that are happening. Every public policy is operationalized in the form of concrete actions taken by the government. James E. Anderson as quoted by Budi Winarno [8] said that every public policy is basically taken based on certain goals that the government wants to take to overcome certain problems. Ramdhani and Ramdhani [9] say that public policy is a series of decisions involving the public interest that are conscious, directed and measurable made by the government involving interested parties in certain fields that lead to certain goals. The implementation of the policy itself is understood as an activity, activity or program that is carried out related to public policy. The success of policy implementation is largely determined by several things, including; authority, resources, communication and disposition.

The public policy made by the Maluku Provincial government in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, of course, can be understood as a decision made by the regional government related to the Covid-19 response. Therefore, the focus of this study is; (1) Development of Covid-19 in Maluku Province; the forms of policies taken by the Maluku Provincial government; (2) government resources in implementing the policy; (3) problems resulting from government policies; (4) public attitudes towards government policies; (5) The impact of government policies on aspects of economic resilience; (6) the impact of the policy on aspects of the social safety net.

## **2 Method**

The method used in this study is an explanatory qualitative method where the data is obtained from in-depth interviews conducted using *google meet* with a purposive technique Katz [10]. In addition to interviews, we also collect data by observing and reviewing government policy documents. Data analysis used triangulation analysis technique, where data were analyzed based on observations, documents and interviews [11]. After the data is triangulated, the data is then interpreted using interpretive contextual analysis techniques. Interpretive contextual analysis is a data analysis model based on empirical facts presented through interviews, documents and observations [12].

## **3 Result**

Our findings in this study are; (1) local governments have a slow response in dealing with Covid-19 in Maluku Province; (2) local government resources in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic are very limited; (3) public trust in Covid-19 is very limited, due to the lack of knowledge and information they receive; (4) the public has an apathetic attitude towards government policies and they do not believe in Covid-19; (5) Covid-19 has a considerable

influence on the economic resilience of the community, so they rely on government assistance; (6) social assistance provided by the government is very limited. A complete description of these findings can be explained below.

### **3.1 Development of Covid-19 in Maluku Province**

The development of the Covid-19 pandemic from March 2020 to August 2021 shows that Maluku Province has a fairly high spike rate and even at same thing with the death rate. The emergence of Covid-19 in Maluku Province began when a guest from West Java was having activities at one of the hotels, suddenly surprised by the presence of one confirmed COVID-19 person, then the Maluku provincial capital (Ambon City) immediately alerted almost all government agencies, starting implementing temporary closures for government offices, while the Governor of Maluku had recently issued a striking statement saying that "covid-19 will not be possible to live in Maluku, because Maluku has a fairly hot climate, moreover covid-19 cannot survive in hot weather". The statement of the Governor of Maluku was the opposite when some state civil apparatus (ASN – Aparat Sipil Negara) in the Maluku Governor's Office were exposed to Covid-19, and at the same time, precisely on September 7, 2020, the Maluku Governor's Office was closed for 3 days which was then followed by Ambon City entering the red zone. The PSBB policy does not have a big impact on the development of COVID-19, in fact this policy is considered by some circles (the weak economic community) as a 'global-scale health project'.

### **3.2 Government resources in implementing the policy**

The Maluku Provincial Government actually has all the resources needed to overcome Covid-19, including human resources and budgets. However, since the formation of the Covid-19 Task Force in Maluku Province in 2020, until August 2021, there has been a surge in Covid-19 cases in Maluku Province. On August 12, 2021, there was a spike or addition of 28 confirmed cases, a total of 14,065 cases. From a total of 14,065 cases with details: 2,898 temporarily treated patients, while 96 recovered patients increased. A total of 10,924 people and patients who died a total of 243 people. Of the 2,898 cases spread over several regencies/cities including, Ambon City 2,133 cases, Buru Regency 35 cases, South Buru 22 cases, Central Maluku 200 cases, West Seram 54 cases, Eastern Seram 24 cases and MBD Regency 34 cases, Tanimbar Islands Regency (KKT) 170 cases, Tual City 71 cases, Southeast Maluku district 57 cases and Aru Islands 98 cases.

### **3.3 Problems Due to Government Policy**

According to some people through the interviews we conducted, the people of Maluku no longer believe in the existence of covid-19, because almost all those who died suspected of being Covid-19 never had a death case that died at home, all patients who died of covid-19 always ended up in the hospital. This uncertainty then weakens public trust towards the government. The phenomenon of patients being infected with COVID-19 in purpose, has sparked the anger of residents throughout Maluku Province, even people who were ill, choose to seek traditional treatment or just buy medicine at a drug store instead of having to go to the hospital, for fear of being infected with COVID-19.

Many people who were affected and tested positive for COVID-19 and died at the Haulussy Ambon Hospital, were forcibly taken by the patient's family. This incident took place on June 26, 2020. The victim's initials were HK. The medical team carried out SWAB tests on all the patient's families and the results were without any of them having tested positive for COVID-19. The incident then repeated on July 7, 2020, the forced takeover of the bodies of Covid-19

patients at the Haulussy General Hospital in Ambon, and even a rebellion against the patient's family was blocked by members of the police. But the family managed to carry the body and it was buried as usual. Even on July 19, 2021, for the umpteenth time, Kudamati residents took away a deceased COVID-19 patient with the initials YAWHT, an ASN. The basic reason from the family is that the patient died not because of Covid-19 but there was a congenital disease that had been around for a long time. The last incident was the case of the death of the former Regent of West Seram, Maluku Province. After entering Leimena Hospital, Ambon City, on July 31, 2021, he was declared positive for Covid-19 based on the PCR results, but the family forced him to bring the Covid-19 patient home and died at home. The family is very unsure about Covid-19 because the former West Seram Regent has long suffered from congenital diseases such as heart and liver. As a result, an argument broke out between the Satpol PP and the Regent's extended family at the victim's house.

### **3.4 Public Attitude towards Government Policy**

Based on this experience, stereotypes emerged from the community, including; (1) People prefer to seek treatment at home with the help of traditional medicines or prefer to buy medicine at drugstores rather than going to the hospital, because there is a lot of stigma from the community, that if you have a fever, headache, and so on, when you enter the hospital, you will be immediately declared positive for Covid-19; (2) The public no longer cares about the government's policy on dealing with covid, because people prefer to survive by spending time outside and mingling with many people just to survive. Generally they say that, if it is true that in Maluku there is Covid-19, why do people who die of Covid always stay in the hospital, not at home? If it is true that in Maluku there is Covid-19, why is it that in traditional markets where there are so many people without even wearing masks, no one is reported to have Covid-19? They even think that Covid-19 is a disease of officials and only attacks state officials. One example, for example, the Mayor of Ambon and his family tested positive for Covid-19 even though the use of health protocols was very strict compared to the people in the market and terminals, without any distance and even without masks, there is no news until now there are traditional market traders who were affected by Covid19.

The policies taken by the government through PSBB stages 1-3 and even PPKM levels 1-4, are considered by some people to only cause noise for residents' safety due to the implementation of various requirements, both experienced by weak or low economy communities (mama catfish traders who depend on their lives by selling catfish in Ambon city). They are often confronted with rules; "You have to have a vaccine card if you want to trade to the market" and even the expulsion case carried out by some members of the Ambon City Satpol PP angered the residents, because the implementation of PPKM which was not humane and even tended to be arrogant carried out by Satpol PP and Police officers.

### **3.5 The Impact of Policies on the Aspect of Economic Resilience**

The Maluku Provincial government's policy by implementing aspects of local economic resilience in 2020 has a contraction in economic growth in the second quarter of 2020. From data released by the Central Statistics Agency on August 5, 2020, the economic growth rate of Maluku Province was recorded at negative 0.92 percent. (year on year) and in terms of the economic cycle, the growth contraction year on year in Maluku Province has only happened again in the last 19 years. Maluku's economic growth has been in the last contraction was in 2001, which was negative 0.03 percent. The condition of the economic decline in Maluku Province in the April-June 2020 period was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic where there were restrictions on community mobility by the government. This restriction is carried out to

avoid the spread of the Covid-19 virus which is worse in Maluku Province. Restrictions on social mobility which are the impact of the implementation of the PSBB and PPKM policies carried out by the central and provincial governments can be traced through the results of field research, including: (1) The people's economy tends to be sluggish due to government policies that impose a lot of prohibitions on traders and suppliers of food ingredients from outside the Maluku province, thus creating economic chaos that actually worsens people's income; (2) implementation of opening and closing for traders starting at 07 am to 17.00 WIT carried out by Pempus which was then followed up by the Regency/City Government, further worsening the situation of the community's economic growth; (3) Particularly for Ambon City, which applies a system of opening and closing at certain hours, it also worsens economic conditions. Field findings show that many stores that were forced during the pandemic are no longer operating; (4) At the same time, the Ambon City government carried out mass demolition for street vendors, which numbered in the thousands, thus adding to the chaotic economic governance; (5) For areas outside the district/city capital, it is assumed that the rural economic impact will not exist as much distortion as is the case in urban areas. This condition is almost the same when Indonesia was hit by the economic crisis, but in Maluku, especially in rural areas, not many people are affected by this condition. For example, regarding local food security, even for remote areas, Maluku's food security is very well maintained.

### **3.6 Impact on Social Safety Net Aspect**

The policy of the Maluku Provincial Government is to provide assistance as much as 40 percent or 103,239 heads of families affected by Covid 19, such as motorcycle taxi drivers, pedicab drivers, hawkers. The social safety net (JPS – Jaring Pengaman Sosial) budget through a labor-intensive program which later became one of the efforts made by the government in dealing with the spread of the corona virus 19, was suspected to be minimal budget. The policy which later caused many problems in the provision of social assistance, the Maluku provincial government delivered a budget of Rp. 23 billion with the distribution divided by 11 districts/cities in Maluku. Some field findings show: (1) The recipients of the JPS, which is a policy of the Maluku Provincial Government through the labor-intense (Padat Karya) program, are suspected of not being on target. The policy, which should be able to target all levels of society affected by COVID-19, is actually only part of the group who enjoys JPS funds. In fact, many JPS recipients are traders by profession but receive JPS. The basic question is whether the definition of being affected by COVID-19 only targets groups: motorcycle taxi drivers, pedicab drivers and hawkers? If the definition is used by the government, then the policy is very tendentious because those affected by Covid are all elements/ levels of society; (2) The labor-intensive program initiated by the Maluku provincial government together with the COVID-19 task force team, is not synergized with a solutive policy for a certain period so that the implementation of PSBB and PPKM policies can be resolved properly without having to create dependence on the government assistance; (3) The condition of Maluku is very different from that experienced by Java and its surroundings. But the provincial government seems to be imposing the policy with the consideration that the PSBB and PPKM policies apply nationally. This policy should be adjusted to the conditions of Maluku with a hot climate, with the support of community income based on seasonality for the main harvest.

## 4 Conclusion

This study concludes that; (1) government policies fail to control and reduce the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in Maluku Province. This is evidenced by the social problems caused by government policies, also associated with the continued increase in Covid-19 cases; (2) government resources are not used optimally in overcoming Covid-19, in addition to budget constraints, also because of the unclear focus of government policies; (3) the government finds it difficult to control and does not even educate people who have failed to understand about Covid-19; (4) the community responds to government policies by returning to the traditional treatment system, especially when they do not find satisfactory government answers related to the chain of spread of Covid-19; (5) the community has low economic resilience and is unable to survive in conditions of economic decline due to Covid-19; (6) The policy of restricting people's movements has forced the government to provide a social safety net program, where not all people can get government assistance. As a result, many people find it difficult to survive.

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