

Public Distrust of Makassar City Government in Handling COVID-19

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyze how much public distrust of the Makassar City government in dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak. This research not only examines how the information exposure process occurs but also analyzes the perception and impact caused by the exposure process. We collected information through field interviews with 10 informants and literature studies such as journals, books, official websites, and reliable news portals. Data collected through observation includes information on the number of people infected, recovered, and died, as well as government operations related to COVID-19 (lockdown, rapid tests, and reporting of humanitarian aid affected by COVID-19). The results showed that at first the pandemic made the community obedient to government policies, but various incidents, such as forced pick-up of bodies suspected of being infected with the COVID-19 virus but health workers were unable to show the final results of the tests, and the lack of availability of health protective equipment for paramedics, also created source of distrust of society's government policies, so that people hold a resistance in the form of disobedience to government policies. Two approaches are recommended for the government to be able to restore public trust. The two components are openness and competence. This component can be used as a consideration for the government to restore public trust, which has already been disappointed with various confusing policies that seem not in favor of the community.*

Keywords: *Public Service, Trust, COVID-19.*

Introduction

In the span of civilization's history, health crises due to pandemics have become important factors that bring about changes in social, political, and economic governance (Mas'udi & Winanti, 2020). The end of 2019 was a shocking year for the world and everything in it. The world

was shocked by the emergence of a new virus called Coronavirus Disease 19, or COVID-19 (Syakira et al., 2022). Coronaviruses are a group of viruses from the subfamily Orthocoronavirinae in the Coronaviridae and the Order Nidovirales. This group of viruses can cause disease in birds and mammals, including humans. In

humans, the coronavirus generally causes mild respiratory infections, such as colds, and the most common symptoms at that time are fever, dry cough, and fatigue. However, it is known that everyone has a different response to the coronavirus. The country that first reported the existence of COVID-19 was China on December 31, 2019. Wuhan is one of the cities suspected of being the source of this worldwide viral pandemic (Prasetio & Khotijah, 2021; Sukmawati et al., 2021; Syamsuni HR et al., 2022).

Good political communication from political elites at the presidential and ministerial levels will greatly affect the success of a policy well-coordinated from the central to regional levels, especially policies to deal with pandemic situations such as COVID-19 (Sukarno & Saleh, 2021). The government's response in each country is different. Some are slow, and some are agile and responsive to the COVID-19 outbreak. Unfortunately, the government of Indonesia is relatively slow when compared to the governments of Taiwan and Vietnam. For example, the Taiwanese government quickly detected the COVID-19 case on January 20, 2020, and Vietnam on January 23, 2020, while Indonesia only detected the first Covid-19 case on March 2, 2020, or about two months after the virus spread in Wuhan (Aminah et al., 2021). The Indonesian government decided by assessing the COVID-19 outbreak as a non-natural disaster. Furthermore, the government assisted the COVID-19 Task Force led by the National Disaster Management Agency

(BNPb) in March 2020 (Radjab & Fuady, 2021).

The Indonesian government has issued guidelines for preventing the transmission of COVID-19 infection based on World Health Organization (WHO) standards. Prevention of COVID-19 transmission can be done simply by applying health protocols that have been widely disseminated as a form of evaluating participants' understanding after counselling (Thaslifa et al., 2022). There are three important messages conveyed in this appeal: work, study, and worship at home (Sukanto & Panca Parulian, 2021). The health protocol is a series of activities aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19 infection. The forms are routinely maintaining hand hygiene, maintaining distance, staying at home and leaving the house only for urgent needs, using a mask when outside the house, covering the nose and mouth when sneezing, maintaining food intake, physical activity, and managing stress (Raodhah et al., 2021). Pandemic audit tools, which include personal protective equipment, hand hygiene, and environmental audits, are conducted regularly to ensure consistency in hygiene practices (Muhammad Rosyidi et al., 2020).

Settlements face considerable challenges about COVID-19 control, but the developed strategies can mitigate the worst outbreaks as long as action is taken quickly. Preparedness and early action by local governments and communities are very important. Once an outbreak occurs, escalation can be rapid, leaving little room

for further planning. Vulnerability to pandemics is greatest in settlements, but act of control can risk further harm, so mitigation of both must begin by involving residents and their realities in planning (Resky et al., 2022).

However, the increasing perception of being infected with COVID-19 is still dominated by people living in urban areas. We speculate that this may be due to the increasing awareness of individuals in cities and the greater difficulty of social distancing in urban areas. Mass gatherings have been shown to correlate with an increased risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission, and mass gatherings are more likely to occur in urban areas, such as in offices, shopping malls, public transportation, and recreational facilities (Harapan et al., 2022). The results showed that the psychosocial state of the community during the COVID-19 pandemic was 58.6%, who stated that they felt anxious. Public anxiety also occurs in religious life (35.8%), although most feel normal (62.8%) during the pandemic. In addition, COVID-19 nurses are more stressed. This is due to excessive workloads when facing pandemic conditions, which are increasingly high in cases, and the lack of experience of nurses in dealing with pandemic situations, even though the working period as a nurse or health worker is long (Rusman et al., 2021; Salcha et al., 2021).

The government, through the COVID-19 Task Force, in handling and preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus, has issued several policies on the

use of virus detection tools, such as: 1) Rapid Test; 2) TCM (Molecular Rapid Test); and 3) RT PCR (Real-Time Polymerase Chain Reaction). Despite using various virus detection tools, this virus is very difficult to stop. This virus spreads through the air and various material media, such as touching, sneezing, and places infected with the virus. Of course, it carries the risk of transmission to someone and the risk of OTG (people without symptoms). The behavior of people who still do not understand health protocols carries more risks and wider impacts on exposure to the coronavirus. In 2021, the spread of the Corona virus (COVID-19) was almost evenly distributed across all islands in Indonesia (Sumantra et al., 2021).

The spread of COVID-19, which is quite devastating, requires serious and comprehensive handling. The COVID-19 outbreak in Indonesia, especially Makassar City, has shown the point of a multidimensional crisis of life both in the social, political, economic, cultural, and government fields (Tajuddin et al., 2021). The first positive case of COVID-19 was announced in South Sulawesi on March 19, 2020 by a spokesman for the handling of the coronavirus, Achmad Yurianto, who said that there were two people who were confirmed positive for COVID-19. After the announcement, the governor of South Sulawesi, Nurdin Abdullah, held a press conference to explain the first positive case of COVID-19 that occurred in South Sulawesi, which, in the end, the COVID-19 virus spread massively in the city of Makassar (Amalia & Agustang, 2022).

Method

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of citizens' perceptions of being infected and their resulting trust in the government on behavioral changes during the COVID-19 pandemic (Musa, 2022). This research begins with problem identification and formulation, data collection, data processing, and analysis, including data classification and reduction, conclusion drawing and verification, discussion of research results, and report preparation. Field data was found from interviews with people who were victims of government policies and were dissatisfied with the government's performance in the public service process during the pandemic. In addition, the bureaucratic apparatus as part of the government became one of the informants in this study. There were 10 informants with different backgrounds, ranging from health workers, government officials, and the general public as victims of the mishandling of public services by the Makassar city government.

Data analysis was carried out qualitatively not only by describing a fact or phenomenon but also, more importantly, explaining the meaning and describing the social phenomenon or social fact (Latief et al., 2021).

While conducting observations, the researcher documented several findings that were considered relevant to enriching the study in this study (Purwaningtyas, 2020). The methodological steps taken were to identify, map, and analyze (Prianto et al., 2021). To be more specific in data collection, during the observation stage,

we watched COVID-19 news on online media, for example, CNN Indonesia, popular news and television sites, Kompas.com (one of the national web portals, containing online news and articles in Indonesia) and covid19.go.id, the official website for information on the COVID-19 pandemic from the Indonesian government.

Result and Discussion

The occurrence of the COVID-19 virus disaster in various countries has raised pros and cons, both between government officials and between the community and the government. Disappointment in the disaster management process began to emerge from various community groups, business people, and even local governments in various regions, so that sometimes they forced the security forces to intervene in reducing conflicts that occurred. The increasing number of cases of people suffering from this virus has made people oppose various government policies.

One of the protests from community groups came from the Indonesian Doctors Association, in one of the results of an interview with a resource person as well as a member of the Makassar City IDI, saying that the proposed concentration of COVID-19 patients to Makassar City from various regions will cause other problems. The IDI party stated that this policy would actually result in the transmission of the virus being increasingly concentrated in the provincial capital. So that the transmission of the virus will continue to grow and

spread to many people. Considering the city of Makassar as the capital city with the largest and most populous population, this could be a time bomb for the spread of the virus.

According to the theory, the provincial government should prioritize prevention over treatment solutions. The option to continue to appoint regional hospitals as referrals in handling this outbreak is felt to be more appropriate than having to collect patients in the capital city with the risk of spreading faster. Because the population density in various areas of South Sulawesi is lower than in Makassar, the climate and environment are more conducive to healing and preventing the spread of the pandemic.

At the beginning of the outbreak of this pandemic, in March 2020, there were many narratives and voices of the public who doubted the performance of the Makassar city government. The policy of forcibly picking up corpses at funeral homes has become one of the highlights of the lives of the residents. Daeng Naik (not his real name) is a resident of the Tamalate sub-district. He felt very disappointed and angry with the city government, especially the Health Service. Because one of his family members who died with almost the same symptoms as COVID-19 was forcibly picked up from his family's residence, the officer who took the body did not show the results of the final examination of the victim. This increases the public's antipathy towards the government. Whereas previously, medical personnel were at the forefront of the process of

handling this outbreak. However, with this incident, some people were disappointed with the medical personnel.

The Center for Complaints for Corona Virus Victims has been established by the Makassar Legal Aid Institute. People often complain. Based on information from Mr. Azis as a member of LBH Makassar, there are dozens of complaints from the public who feel aggrieved by the reactive verdict by the medical team. Many people protested against the actions of the health apparatus with the burial procedures for handling COVID-19 victims on the grounds that the process of determining the patient's status was inaccurate, and several videos showed that the management of the bodies was not adjusted to the religious rituals of the adherents. This shows public distrust in the process of handling COVID-19 victims. In these cases and incidents, the community has become victims of the less than optimal handling of the pandemic. Plus the lack of accountability in the provision of health services, especially the handling of corpses. On another hand, the handling of the deceased is considered the prerogative of doctors and medical teams because it is the best preventive measure to avoid the possibility of transmitting the virus to the wider community.

According to the results of the update on April 30, 2020 (Alfian; Hasrul, 2020), it can be seen that the number of positive sufferers is high in the Tamalate and Panakkukang sub-districts. One of the indicators is that these two areas are the most densely populated areas in the city of Makassar. Another thing that made the city

of Makassar at the beginning of the pandemic the place with the most victims was that there were no strict restrictions on the community not to do activities outside the home.

Another aspect of the public's distrust in the government's handling of the COVID pandemic is that the government is considered to have shown its indifference at the beginning of the outbreak spreading to various regions in Indonesia. This can be seen in the comments of government officials who make baseless assumptions about the influence of the weather. Scientists also complained about the central government's indifference to the recommendations from the analysis to respond to various incidents. The central government in Jakarta is no longer able to stem public protests over the number of fatalities and the growing spread of the virus. It is recorded that the central government policy followed by the Makassar city government is the policy of easing PSBB since June 5, 2020. The government provides concessions for public transportation, which can be carried out on condition that it is only filled to 50%. Government and private office services have also started operating, although they are limited by conditions that must be met and continue to comply with established health protocols.

One of the strategies carried out by the Makassar city government to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB), which are enforced throughout the Makassar area in accordance with the Decree of the Minister

of Health of the Republic of Indonesia Number HK.01.07/Menkes/257/2020. The Makassar City government has also formed a COVID-19 Handling Task Force (Satgas) in Makassar City following the end of the local COVID-19 Handling Acceleration Task Force, which has been working since April 2020. This COVID-19 Task Force was officially formed by the Acting Mayor of Makassar for the handling of COVID-19 in Makassar City on October 26, 2020 (Faradillah et al., 2022). On March 18, 2020, the government launched the www.covid19.go.id portal as an official source of information on the prevention of the COVID-19 virus. The Makassar City Government also created a website portal, www.infocorona.makassar.go.id (Amin & Hadiyat, 2020).

Since the emergence of the first case of COVID-19 in Indonesia until 2021, the public's response to COVID-19 has been very diverse. Public attitudes are pro and contra towards government policies related to handling COVID-19. This constrained society becomes a challenge for implementing government policies (Sugara & Ulfa, 2021). The lack of communication and the absence of openness made the public more confused in receiving data on COVID-19, resulting in distrust from the public towards the government because the government was considered not solid in handling COVID-19 cases in Indonesia (Setiawan et al., 2021). In addition, the compliance of respondents in the Java-Bali region is higher than outside Java-Bali in implementing health protocols. There are still quite a number of respondents outside Java-Bali who have

not complied with avoiding crowds (34%), maintaining a minimum distance of 2 meters (36%), and reducing mobility (36%)(BPS Kota Malang, 2021).

Unpredictable global outbreaks, uncoordinated strategic communication by policymakers, and experimentation of actions by non-governmental institutions are three key aspects of the COVID-19 situation in Indonesia that need to be studied further (Adnan et al., 2021). The success or failure of the implementation of the policy to accelerate the handling of COVID-19 is determined by the bureaucracy. Bureaucracy in handling COVID-19 is felt like the 'backbone', which supports all efforts to handle COVID-19. The bureaucracy must jointly realize that this pandemic must be handled immediately because it is no longer talking about numbers but lives (Amrynudin & Katharina, 2020).

Low trust in the government makes people disobedient. To achieve this, it is not enough to only involve external factors such as trust in the government. This study succeeded in finding that internal factors in the form of awareness of COVID-19 can make people obey. Awareness of COVID-19 makes people take preventive actions by complying with health protocols, one of which is social distancing compliance (Mukhlis et al., 2022). Therefore, the government's capacity in health security to reduce the threat of a crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic needs to be increased. The main focus of the activity is to improve preparedness, particularly the integrated surveillance system and data management with competent human

resources, including the development of human resources for reference laboratories, supported by strengthening local governments in policy making (Bappenas, 2021).

The Increased Public Distrust

One form of health policy management that occurs in the city of Makassar is the shortage of health equipment such as PCR test kits, the availability of standard medical masks, and oxygen cylinders for dying patients. To be able to increase the level of public trust in the government during the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic can be done by implementing the main components of public policy, namely, openness and competence. This component can be used as a consideration for the government to restore public trust, which has already been disappointed with various confusing policies that seem not in favor of the community. The description of the components is as follows:

a. Openness

Every Indonesian citizen, including Makassar residents, has the right to obtain information from the government about the latest developments in the COVID-19 pandemic. The role of the Makassar city government in providing information on the number of fatalities as well as the location of hospitals and quarantine locations for patients is considered to have fulfilled the aspect of information disclosure. However, on the open side of the diagnosis for the deceased, it becomes

the main obstacle in the communication aspect of the city government. Meanwhile, the right to public information is very important so that the community feels involved in the decision-making process, governance, development, and public services for the realization of the principles of good governance.

Public participation will not be maximized when the Makassar city government does not guarantee wide disclosure of information to the public. The COVID-19 pandemic is a global disaster that threatens the survival of mankind, so all information and developments about this outbreak become public property without exception, even for the most sensitive things. So, if there is no participation and freedom to obtain information from the government as a source of information to the public, then the level of public trust in the government will decrease or even disappear. This will reduce the level of public compliance with the rules or policies of the government. So, in the end, it will be difficult for the government to achieve the objectives of the policies that have been made.

For example, the form of information disclosure from the Makassar city government to the community is to regularly provide updates on the number of patients who have been declared positive along with patients who have recovered and died. Another thing that the public has the right to know is information about

the procedures for preventing the spread of the coronavirus and information about the mitigation efforts taken (which can be in the form of information about policies taken by the government).

b. Competence

The bureaucratic apparatus of the city of Makassar and throughout Indonesia in general faced extraordinary challenges when the pandemic came. Conditions that were never imagined before; the loss of family members, offices, and public services came to a sudden halt, as well as stagnant economic conditions. In the end, it triggered various social reactions, including citizen protests against public services.

After the pandemic, bureaucrats are expected to be ready to face challenges in terms of professional public services. The pandemic has brought many changes to people's lives globally, one of which is public services from the government. The use of technology for approximately two years should be a momentum in improving the performance of servers to be more professional. With the use of technology, the competition for the apparatus will automatically increase, especially in the process of accepting new bureaucratic apparatus in the last two years, which has been dominated by generations. Millennials with competence in the use of technology tools are much better than senior bureaucrats. One of the directions from the Minister of State Apparatus

on an online news portal said that every bureaucratic apparatus, at least the smallest task force, must bring up new ideas and breakthroughs in terms of public service to the community. The service process to the community must be more focused on the online system because the pandemic has taught us how to survive and carry out daily activities by relying on online facilities without having to meet physically.

Utilizing technology networks in the public service process for the people of Makassar is not new. Mayor Dany Pomanto, at the beginning of his reign (before the pandemic), had made several breakthroughs in the online-based community service process. One of the Makassar city government programs is "*Makassar Tidak Rantasa*". In general, this program focuses on structuring the environment and cleaning the city. However, in its implementation, this program utilizes technology and information in its monitoring process. Placing operators who are ready to receive public complaints for 24 hours and CCTV in various corners of the city to monitor the real-time movement of city residents has become a new breakthrough for this city.

The development of Makassar city's government apparatus competence is not a significant challenge. Because during the pandemic period, government officials are familiar with the online service process for the public, it only takes

seriousness from the leadership element in terms of increasing the competence of the apparatus through a series of technical coaching and training based on technology. So it is hoped that the public's distrust of the government will decrease as the competence and performance of the public service apparatus increase. The challenge for bureaucratic leaders in the city of Makassar is how to develop competence and innovation and must be able to become a role model for their subordinates. The term "flexible learning" should be the right choice as a change in the pandemic era. Fast learning to adapt to a change that is also very fast is also expected to happen to the bureaucratic apparatus.

Conclusion

The pandemic incident has provided valuable lessons in various aspects. Especially in the aspect of public services, it was found that there was public disappointment and dissatisfaction in the public service process by the Makassar city government. The policy of forcibly taking the bodies of victims who are suspected of being infected with the COVID-19 virus without showing the final results of the examination and the amount of personal protective equipment for health workers that is not proportional to the needs are the two main problems in this study. This aspect finally makes the public react to dissatisfaction with government policies, causing a lot of rejection and even antipathy towards the government. The form of rejection from

the community to the government is by not complying with the next government policy, so this is a warning to the government. To be able to increase the level of public trust in the government during the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic can be done by implementing the main components of public policy, namely, openness and competence. This component can be used as a consideration for the government to restore public trust, which has already been disappointed with various confusing policies that seem not in favor of the community.

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