

SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP AWARENESS AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY-BASED PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTIONS IN THE NEW NORMAL

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A. Introduction

Today's community-based public health organization has become an increasingly developed idea globally in maintaining public safety and health. Learning from the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic for the past three years, conventional health infrastructure has proven unable to work optimally in the face of waves of patients exposed in almost all countries, even in Western European and North American countries known for having the best health facilities in the world. The experience gives importance to organizing community-based health services in addition to strengthening conventional health infrastructure. The need to strengthen community-based health organizations has been recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as specifically recommending the strengthening of health workers at the community level in carrying out mass vaccinations during the Covid-19 pandemic (WHO, 2021).

In the perspective of WHO, rather than relying on conventional institutions in accelerating vaccination, the involvement of community-based health workers has proven to be more effective in the planning process, identifying community groups in need of vaccination, health services and tracking the spread of the virus in the living environment. The advantages of this community-based health worker according to WHO are "detailed knowledge from the community about the surrounding parties" and the ease of gaining the "trust" of each community group receiving the vaccine. A study conducted by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States (August 2021) stated that the use of community-based health services is also a profitable step for low-income countries in anticipating a surge in patients when an outbreak occurs.

In Indonesia, this kind of experience has been demonstrated in some cases, such as the *Jogo Tonggo* initiative (literally guarding the neighbours) in Central Java. Erisandi Arditama and Puji Lestari (2020) in their study showed

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how the movement succeeded in building the social awareness of each individual community, community's obedience to the rule of law, and sensitivity to human values collectively. Beyond its preventive nature, this movement has also succeeded in awakening and strengthening the social capital that already exists in society for togetherness, establishing mutual trust and benefit to maintain common security and health. In fact, this movement has also succeeded not only in building obedience and solidarity, but also in becoming an economic safety net for community, especially underprivileged community, through various activities such as independent data collection by community members about their basic needs, collecting data on community who are unable to provide basic needs, ensuring that assistance is right on target, and helping community who are self-quarantining to ensure their adequacy of food. (Ardiata & Lestari, 2020).

The question is, why is community important in this context? Why community can be the most likely alternative force when governments in various countries face difficulties in dealing with major issues including the Covid-19 pandemic. Since WHO designated Covid-19 as a global pandemic almost 3 years ago, social scientists have tried to understand the impact of the pandemic on people's lives and resilience, including problems that arise in the relationship between countries and communities in dealing with the symptoms of this pandemic. To understand how social impacts are, Deborah Lupton and Karen Willis (2021) have brought together scientists who have long devoted their attention to health and treatment studies in society to provide a systematic review of those impacts and the community's response to the outbreak under the title *The Covid-19 Crisis: Social Perspectives (2021)*.

In accordance with the title shown, the authors from different countries in Europe, Asia, America, and Australia who contributed their work gave an overview not only of experiences related to health problems, but also their impact on family life, work, social life, and even in their leisure time. The important point of the description of the study is about how social relations and social institutions are suspended, to be re-invented and transformed into something new in people's lives. Although the final theoretical formulation of the phenomenon presented has not yet concluded, this study has provided a cross-cultural and cross-border footing framework related to the impacts and social responses that arise in society in the face of outbreaks. It became the basic guide to see how

the “new normal” works and can be directed in people’s lives throughout the pandemic and pandemic ahead.

Here, the new normal works requiring a strong agent to make it happen. The main agent in the resilience is given by members of the community who work together for the common goods as shown by Matteo Bonotti and Steven T. Zech (2021) pointing out about the social, political, and economic costs arising in the process of politicizing Covid-19. There is a breakdown of civility in society in the process. Both propose the importance of re-cultivating “norms of civility” that are disrupted in the outbreak situation and offer a framework for citizens and policymakers to better understand the causes and consequences of the fading of civility (incivility), and a way out of improving the situation to improve civility in the social and political life of society.

Starting out of these studies, this research is an effort to offer a way out of what Bonotti and Zech (2021) called as incivility that results in the freeze of institutions and social relations in society by focusing on the idea of fostering active citizenship as a way to deal with the crisis caused by the pandemic in Indonesia. Community in this connection becomes an important sphere of fostering bonds of citizenship and participation of community members for the common good.

B. Posyandu as a foundation for community-based health

The above background confirms the importance of organizing health at the community level—which has a high level of face-to-face social relationships—as a strategic form in preventing and strengthening communities facing the threat of the spread of outbreaks, as well as social and economic impacts on the lives of community members. The question is what kind of institutional forms can be developed in Indonesia that can meet these strategic proposals? How can the initiatives that are built run continuously and sustainably?

A brief study of community life (community rapid appraisal) conducted by the research team showed findings about the importance of Posyandu (Integrated Health Service Post) institutions that can meet the ideal framework as described by WHO and CDCP in the United States. This is based on several reasons: *First*, institutions launched since 1986 in Indonesia have proven to play an effective role in improving the quality of life and public health in Indonesia.

The 2007 Indonesian Demographic and Health Survey mentioned the importance of Posyandu in reducing maternal and child mortality rates in Indonesia. This success has made Posyandu a model for community-based health implementation implemented in Honduras. *Second*, the seven main activities of posyandu consisting of Maternal and Child Health (MCH), Family Planning, Immunization, Nutrition Improvement, diarrhea management, basic sanitation, and provision of essential medicines intersect with agendas to improve public health during the Covid-19 pandemic. Its increase to serve public health security in the new normal situation during the Covid-19 pandemic period is no longer a new problem for implementers in the field. *Third*, the operational scope of Posyandu at the Community Association (RW) level under the guidance of the village allows face-to-face contact and social relations between Posyandu activists and members of their communities. Thus, its preventive function becomes strategic in an effort to monitor the health of community members.

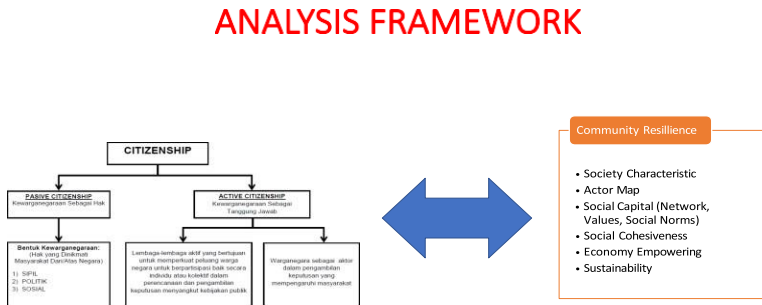
The three reasons above are some illustrations of the importance of the institution in carrying out the roles launched by WHO to strengthen public health in the face of this global pandemic. The specificity of Posyandu's task in building prosperous families in Indonesia, family planning and the prevention of maternal and child mortality rates, can be a strategic footing in developing a model of increasing health resilience and socio-economic strength of the community facing the new situation under the current pandemic.

C. Posyandu and Community-Based Health Strengthening Strategies

What can Posyandu do to develop its institutional function in helping community members face the threat of Covid-19 transmission? *First* is its importance as an educational institution that provides important information for community members in dealing with the transmission of Covid-19. It can play a strategic role in counteracting false information (hoaxes) about the transmission of Covid-19 and how to prevent it, as well as a healthy lifestyle that needs to be maintained during the pandemic period. *Second* is its role as a referral system at the lowest level that connects community members with larger institutions in the prevention and treatment of Covid-19 transmission. *Third* is the important role of Posyandu as a source of data and a trusted provider of information about the number of people exposed to Covid-19 in an area. *Fourth*, as an institution

known as community members, Posyandu can be an institution that monitors and provides support through home visits and aids with basic needs (food, medicine, health checks) for community members who are exposed; *Fifth*, carrying out a preventive agenda through environmental cleanliness, building new habits and values of Covid-19 prevention which became important elements in dealing with the prolonged pandemic in Indonesia.

D. Theoretical Framework



Research Methods and Preliminary Findings

This research uses the quasi-experimental method, which is a method that combines qualitative and quantitative. Qualitatively, the research has extracted from informants who are directly involved in posyandu activities, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic to be able to find out what the role of Posyandu is as a community-based health institution in facing and overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic amid a situation of limited conventional health institutions that exist. Quantitatively, this research has distributed questions using online media so that it is possible to access respondents in predetermined areas by utilizing identity data from the community.

The results of this preliminary research show that the Covid-19 pandemic has succeeded in encouraging various forms of initiatives, innovations, and cooperation at the community level to overcome the spread of Covid-19 which is increasingly widespread and dangerous. Social dynamics at the community level strengthen the Indonesian government’s policies in overcoming Covid-19.

This success can be seen from the sharp decline in the spread and mortality rate of Covid-19, followed by the success of the vaccination program in Indonesia, cooperation between the government, the community and social institutions at the community level is going very well. Posyandu as a public health institution is one of the effective institutions in distributing aid and resources. Posyandu as a social institution has also been able to build bonds of social solidarity and social cohesiveness at the community level. In this context, solidarity and social cohesiveness become factors that accelerate economic recovery at the community level. The dynamics of posyandu during the Covid-19 pandemic have provided an overview of the high social participation of the community in overcoming Covid-19. Such realities indicate the existence of active citizenship at the community level. This finding also illustrates the existence of community strengths that can be utilized for the needs of handling broad problems such as the Covid-19 pandemic, which is currently still ongoing. Community-based strength in health services is expected to be supported by policies that can support existing efforts to be replicated as part of the anticipation of handling the upcoming Covid-19 wave or other non-natural disaster situations in the future.