

Why do Preparedness and Response to Covid-19 Pandemic Need Community Development Approach: An Experience from Indonesia

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Abstract

This article examines strategies to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic using a community development approach, namely *Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat* (PPKM) mikro or Community Activity Restrictions at the micro level. This study was conducted in Malang City, East Java Province, Indonesia. This study found that this strategy has distributed greater authority to community members to participate in preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There are two mechanisms that have been established to implement PPKM, which are the zoning system and the establishment of COVID-19 headquarters at the RT/RW level. This study found that PPKM has succeeded in reducing positive cases and preventing transmission of the coronavirus. The strategy of PPKM has replaced the prior strategy, which employed a top-down approach and relied on dominant agent roles, such as government, medical experts, politicians, public health officials, and economists. This strategy could be problematic because, in some cases, it has provided an ideal setting for authoritarian practices.

Keywords

Community development, COVID-19, Pandemic, and PPKM.

1. Introduction

From the beginning of 2020 until now, the COVID-19 pandemic has still brought distress and anxiety to people's lives around the world. The coronavirus disease has risked public health and disrupted normal social life. Therefore, an appropriate and effective strategy is required to respond to this pandemic. In the beginning, a top-down approach or macro strategies have been conducted by central stakeholders including governments, medical experts, politicians, public health officials, and economists to construct policies and implement them without involving citizens or community participation (Kenny, 2020, Schutte 2020, Westoby and Harris 2020; Leach 2021). Included in these policies are lockdown, social isolation, social distancing, and other health protocol policies that restrict social interactions and movement of community members to prevent and control coronavirus transmissions.

The communities or citizens were required to comply with health protocol policies and put their trust in the central stakeholders. This regulation in some countries has provided an ideal setting for authoritarian practices (Kenny, "Covid-19 and Community Development"). This authoritarian practice has been demonstrated in several ways or strategies. First, under the pretext of controlling the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has diminished transparency based on important advice from health scientists (Kenny, "Covid-19 and Community Development"). Second, the government has expanded surveillance of citizens by launching numerous tracing mechanisms, including applications, in order to collect and store data from them (Westoby and Harris 2020). Under the fear and panic situation, as well as to ensure their safety, it is easier for citizens to "surrender" to the government regulations by downloading those applications. Third, the government has harnessed military power (Kenny, 2020). Kenny further explained that the most effective way to ensure the compliance of a community is by employing the fourth strategy, by which the state or government has constructed the role of self-righteous monitoring on individuals and self-surveillance agents at the community level, resulting in the involvement of communities as part of a repressive state. For instance, "authoritarian populists such as Orban in Hungary and Bolsonaro in Brazil have used the pandemic as a cover to extend their powers, by eliminating dissent and extending state surveillance" (Kenny, 2020).

The top-down or macro strategy has ignored community participation. This impacted on some crucial issues, one of which has been illustrated in the explanation above. Based on this issue, the World Health Organization (WHO) issues a recommendation to governments to implement a community engagement strategy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic by involving the community, such as local leaders and community members (WHO; World Health Organization). This strategy requires bottom-up and participation to make decisions from the community. This mechanism has been adopted by several countries and proven to be more effective in controlling the proliferation of pandemics. In South Africa, the government has successfully responded to the Ebola virus pandemic by involving local community members because they have the best information regarding their own regional needs and preferences (Anoko ; Marshall). In Italy and China, the local community has been involved in ensuring the distribution, availability, and accessibility of marginalized people toward public services during the lockdown (Miao ; Zollet). In Kenya, the government has included local leaders to establish a data base related to the food resilience of community members when they are in quarantine or self-isolation (Gerard 2020).

The change process involving community participation and communal life to respond to the pandemic requires appropriate methods and approaches, one of which is community development. Bottom-up, involvement in the decision-making process, and community empowerment are some of the principles and objectives of the community development approach (Kenny, 2020). The commitment to undertake this approach, however, would be challenged by several issues, including the uniqueness of all communities (Schutte 2020). As a result, there would be no single formula that is applicable to all communities across countries to prevent and control the COVID-19 pandemic (Schutte 2020).

Kenny (Kenny, 2020) stated that the benefit of conducting a community development approach is that there would be thousands of small-scale initiatives that prefigure very different ways of organizing communities. Moreover, based on those initiatives, it is possible to develop a set of examples that demonstrate the value of organizing using such principles as social and ecological justice, collaboration, and deliberative democracy. In fact, the methods and measures taken by different countries to respond to the pandemic could vary. However, they have been employed to achieve the same goal or objective, which is to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to demonstrate an instance of small-scale initiative in local communities in Malang, East Java Province, which has been organized to collaborate on preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic through the enforcement of *Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat* (PPKM), or Community Activities Restriction. The Community Activities Restriction is a partial lockdown in Indonesia which has been regulated under the regulations of the Ministry of Home Affairs No. 03 tahun 2021. The implementation of this partial lockdown has been distributed at various levels, starting from the village, *Rukun Tetangga* (Neighborhood Unit), and *Rukun Warga* (Community Unit). As a result, PPKM is also known as PPKM Mikro (micro PPKM), which means that PPKM is carried out at the lowest levels of Indonesian government, namely RW and RT (Rizal). This lockdown is limited to several cities or regencies based on some parameters, including active cases, death rates, cure rates, or hospital bed occupation rates.

2. Literature Review

Community development and the Covid-19 pandemic have a ‘contradictory’ relationship. This relationship can be traced back on since the first outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Kenny (Kenny, 2020), explained that this contradictory relationship in terms of how the community responds to the pandemic on a macro and micro level. At a macro level, the response to Covid-19 is dominated by central actors which are government, medical experts, economists and public health officials by employing top-down mechanism without the participation of community or citizens at large (Kenny, 2020, Nath 2021; Suharyanto 2021). Under the fear and panic situation, community members have made a commitment to comply with various regulations and policies regarding health protocols which have been set by the players. It can be said that community members have ceded their power to the government and other actors to control their mobility and social interactions in order to prevent the coronavirus transmission. The government’s mechanism for controlling, monitoring and tracing demonstrates what Foucault called biopolitic and biopower. Biopolitic can be understood as a political rationality which takes the administration of life and populations as its subject: ‘to ensure, sustain and multiply life, to put this life in order’ (Adams, 2017). Biopower thus names the way in which biopolitics is put to work in society, and involves what Foucault describes as ‘a very profound transformation of the mechanisms of power’ of the Western classic age (Adams 2017).

At the macro level strategy, community development practitioners and scientists have been forced to contribute to the community as welfare agents. They have to ensure that community members are able to cope with the various impacts emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, the members who are newly unemployed, sick, and homeless,

and the increasing need for intervention in situations of domestic violence (Kenny, 2020). Another activity that should be conducted by community development practitioners in response to the COVID-19 pandemic is ensuring social connectedness or community solidarity.

In contrast, the effectiveness of the macro level requires active community participation at the micro level. The commitment of community members to obey health protocols becomes a crucial factor in preventing the proliferation of coronavirus. The involvement of community members is also needed to overcome the impact of COVID-19. One of them is by taking responsibility for their own well-being and others'. For instance, doing all activities to shore up social connections to boost social solidarity, such as using social media to check on friends in isolation (Kenny, 2020). All initiatives which have been conducted by community members at the micro level are consistent with community development and other strategies which need the involvement of the community, such as community engagement, community participation, community-based approach, and others.

There are various definitions of community development. Whatever the different definitions of community development, most exponents agree that community development allows community members to take collective responsibility to undertake their own development process, which would have an impact on their lives by employing self-help and participation principles. This definition is based on the assumption that community members are in the best position to have appropriate knowledge about their condition (Korten and Carner, 1984). Moreover, community development approaches would put these members as subjects instead of objects and ensure the sustainability of community development programs.

Community development and other "community-based approaches" are now considered crucial strategies for responding to pandemics, including COVID-19. This can be seen from the number of countries that have successfully responded to COVID-19 by employing community development strategies. Included in these countries are China (Wang 2020 ; Miao 2021); Italy (Zollet 2021 Nath 2021; Suharyanto 2021 ; Kembauw 2021); Vietnam (Ha 2020); Pakistan (Shahzad) ; and Oman (Al Siyabi). In these countries, community response is required to reach marginalised people and to support a fair, informed response, as well as to play important and active roles in the prevention and control of coronavirus transmission (Gilmore 2020). Moreover, a community-based approach is an effective strategy by which developing countries with poor economic conditions could stop the COVID-19 transmission instead of relying on modern health systems and the capability to test and trace the capabilities that have been employed by developed countries (Shahzad 2020). This article aims to demonstrate the implementation of a community development approach to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Although this case study is a small-scale initiative, as Kenny (Kenny, 2020) states, it could be useful to develop some principles, including collaboration and deliberative democracy.

3. Research Method

This study employs a single case study to capture comprehensive data in relation to the implementation of PPKM in Malang, East Java Province. Semi-structured interviews, document reviews, and observation were used to collect data. Table 1 below shows various data which were gathered from these data collection methods.

Table 1. Data Collection Methods

Data Collection Methods	Data
Semi-structured interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The role of informants/community members in conducting PPKM micro - the strategy of community members to undertake preparedness and response to the Covid-19 pandemic in their neighborhood (RT level) - knowledge of community members in relation to PPKM micro
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how Covid-19's pos komando (Posko) raises the flags in different colour (red, orange, yellow, green) depends on the numbers of community members confirmed with Covid-19 - other people's reaction when they want come to a neighborhood (RT) and see the flags, particularly the red and yellow ones
Document Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regulations of PPKM - journal articles - news related to pandemic Covid-19

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data from ten informants who were selected using a purposive method based on their involvement and responsibilities related to the implementation of PPKM. These informants are representatives of sub-districts (*Kecamatan*) and villages, health offices (*Dinas Kesehatan*), Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat (PUSKESMAS) or community health centers, and community members. Malang was chosen as a research location based on several reasons. **First**, East Java Province is the province in Java – Bali that was required to conduct PPKM (Rizal). **Second**, Malang has been assumed to have a good response to the COVID-19 pandemic. **Third**, Malang is a well-known tourist destination in East Java Province that could potentially become a new cluster of coronavirus transmission. Graphs 1 shows the number of positive case or confirmed positive covid-19 in Malang compared to other cities in East Java Province.

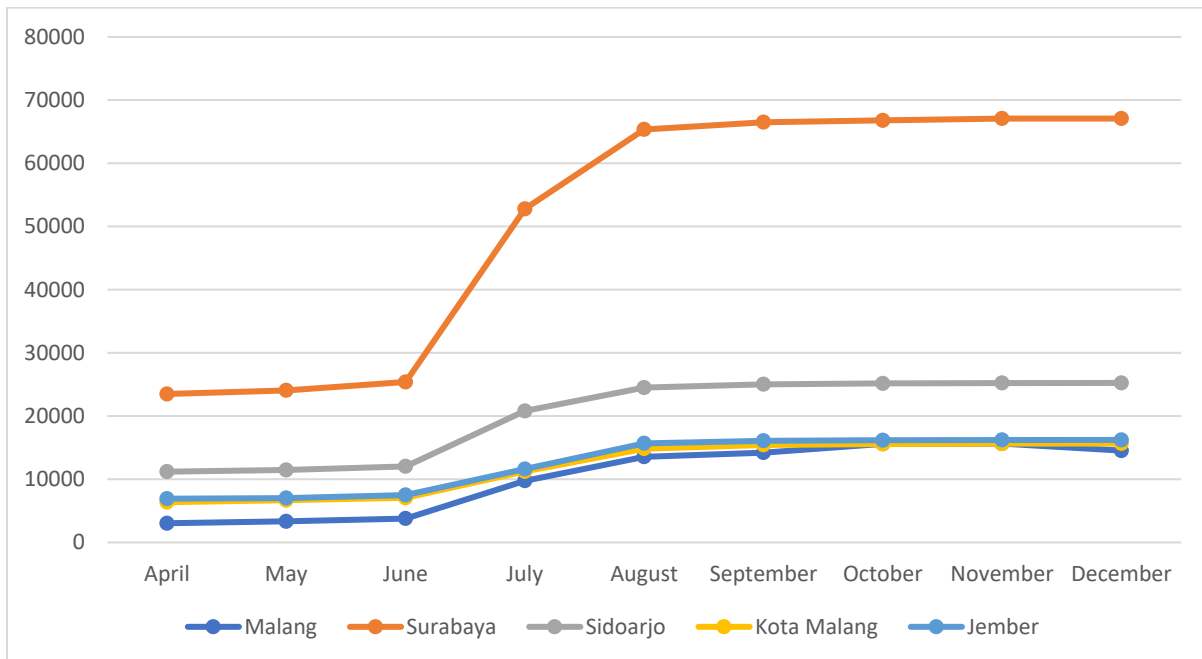


Figure 1. Five cities with the highest number of positive cases in East Java Province at April-December 2021.

Figure 1 illustrates that Malang was always included to five cities with the highest number of positive cases in East Java Province at April-December 2021.

4. Result and Discussion

The partial lockdown or PPKM micro has been conducted at the lowest level of administration in the Indonesian government structure, which are RW and RT (Vannie). The main objective of PPKM is to give opportunity for community members in RT and RW to participate in preparedness and response to the Covid-19 pandemic. There are various community members that have been involved in this PPKM micro which are RT/RW, the head of villages, youth organizations (Karang Taruna), women representatives (PKK), medical experts, mosque representatives, cultural leaders, village elders, village council members and other community representatives. Furthermore, there are some mechanisms or strategies which have been established to conduct PPKM micro in preparedness and response to the Covid-19.

4.1 The establishment of Zoning System

The zoning system is a strategy or mechanism to show the number of community members who have been confirmed positive for COVID-19 in a RT. This system has given greater authority to the community members to establish various ways by which they could inform other people regarding the number of COVID-19 positive cases in their RT or area, for instance by raising flags with different colors. An informant explained that there is an agreement that has been established by all RTs in Malang to raise the flags with different colors to indicate the number of positive cases, which are green for the first stage, yellow for the second stage, orange for the third stage, and red for the fourth stage. The higher the level, the more community members confirmed with Covid-19. The zoning system authorizes community members at the RT level to inform other people of the number of positive cases in their RT by raising zoning system flags. Furthermore, by seeing the color of the flags, other people will be alerted when they want to go to a RT or an area in Malang. Table 1 below illustrates the zoning system which employs different colors of the flags to indicate the stage of coronavirus transmission as follows in Table 2:

Table 2. The Color of the Flags Which Indicate the Stage of Corona Virus Transmission

The Color of the Flag	The Stage	The Number of Households Who Are Confirmed Positive for Covid-19	Respond of Community Members
Green	First stage	No or zero positive case	Community members should undertake an active self-surveillance by testing the members who are suspected with Covid-19.
Yellow	Second stage	One up to 5 (five) households who are confirmed positive for covid-19	Community members in this area/RT start to do tracing, finding, and isolating people who are suffered and suspected for Covid-19.
Orange	Third stage	At least 6 (six) to 10 (ten) households in a RT are confirmed positive for Covid-19	Community members of this RT should restrict their interaction and mobilization by closing public services in this area including mosque, playground and meeting hall.
Red	Fourth or highest level	More than 10 (ten) households in a RT confirmed positive for Covid-19	Community members should undertake very tight restriction including closing all public services, prohibiting the crowd with more than 3 (three) people and all social activities, as well as forbidding community members and outsiders to go in and out of in this RT by 08.00 PM

Table 2 illustrates the zoning system that has been conducted in PPKM mikro. The different colors of flags have been utilized to indicate the numbers of households that are confirmed positive for COVID-19 at the RT level. Moreover, this zoning system can be used for two purposes, which are internal and external. First, for external purposes, this system will alert other people when they want to go to a RT or an area in Malang regarding the number of people who are confirmed positive for COVID-19. Based on this information, these people could decide whether they will or will not go to a RT or an area. Second, for internal purposes, this system informs community members as to the kind of response they should undertake to respond to the impact of pandemic COVID-19.

4.2 The Establishment of *Pos Komando (Posko)* or Covid-19 Headquarter at RT Level

Another mechanism that has been conducted in PPKM mikro is the establishment of COVID-19 headquarters at the RT level to respond to COVID-19. Through this mechanism, the Indonesian government has also given greater authority to the community members regarding preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. An informant explained that RT's headquarters had some responsibilities to respond to COVID-19. The first responsibility is that this headquarters has to identify community members who are confirmed positive for COVID-19. Second, this identification will be communicated to higher COVID-19 headquarters, including RW, Village, and PUSKESMAS. Responsibilities are related to social and economic aspects. Community members have a responsibility to support their neighbors who are confirmed positive for COVID-19 to fulfill their food needs and all facilities needed during self-isolation. Third, COVID-19 headquarters at the RT level has the responsibility to support its members to overcome the psychological issues they face. For instance, by providing motivation to members who are confirmed positive for COVID-19 as well as ensuring that there is no stigma and exclusion from other members. Moreover, COVID-19 headquarters at the RT level also has the responsibility to increase public knowledge related to the COVID-19 pandemic by delivering information about this pandemic's health protocols (wearing masks, washing hands, avoiding crowds), vaccinations, tracing, and so on. The headquarters could also establish regulations at the RT level to give rewards and punishment to community members for compliance with health protocols.

From the explanation above, this study found that PPKM mikro has been conducted based on a community development approach. This approach has distributed greater authority to the community members to undertake preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic based on their own ideas and creativity. This strategy would be effective to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic because the community members are in the best position to have the appropriate knowledge, cultural, and social understanding as well as what their needs are in responding to COVID-19. This study shows that PPKM mikro strategy has put community members as the subject instead of objects in preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the involvement of community participation will ensure the sustainability of this strategy. It can be shown that by employing the PPKM mikro strategy, the Indonesian government has succeeded in preventing the transmission of coronavirus and addressed various issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is evident from the fact that Indonesia has the best COVID-19 Recovery Index in ASEAN (Setkab).

5. Conclusion

This study shows that a community development approach is required to prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach has been adopted to the Indonesian partial lockdown, namely the *Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat* (PPKM) mikro or Community Activities Restriction at the mikro level. This strategy has involved many community members from the lowest level of government in Indonesia, which is RT/RW. This strategy also gives greater authority to the members to undertake some mechanisms or strategies, including the establishment of a zoning system and COVID-19 headquarters. In Malang, East Java Province, there is a unique strategy for conducting the zoning system. This strategy has utilized different colors of flags to inform people regarding the number of people who are confirmed positive for COVID-19 in each RT. From the lowest until the highest level of case, each flag informs the stage of positive cases, from the green flag for the first stage (zero cases), yellow for the second stage (1–5 cases), orange for the third stage (6–10 cases) and red for the fourth stage (more than 10 cases). Another strategy is to establish Covid-19 headquarters in each RT. This headquarters is required to undertake several responsibilities, which include not only responding to the positive case of COVID-19 and its impact, but also conducting preparedness to prevent the transmission of coronavirus. This study demonstrates that PPKM mikro, which adopts a community development approach, has become an effective way to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. From the evidence, it can be shown that Indonesia has the best COVID-19 Recovery Index in ASEAN.

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