



The Analysis of the Effectiveness of Covid-19 Mitigation Policies: A Case Study of Palu City

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ABSTRACT

Conducted with the aim of assessing the effectiveness of Covid-19 handling policies in Palu City, this study sought to describe and analyze the factors hindering their implementation. Utilizing a qualitative research method, the research focused on understanding the phenomena and symptoms observed in the field. The findings suggest that while the implementation of Covid-19 handling policies in Palu City is moderately effective, it is not optimal due to economic pressures leading many individuals to continue their usual activities without adhering to the policies. Inhibiting factors include the prevalence of Covid-19-related misinformation, disagreements in zone determination, low public awareness of their vulnerability to the virus, insufficient understanding of the benefits of health protocols, and a lack of information and guidance to encourage adherence to health protocols. Additionally, limited access to essential items for implementing health protocols, such as masks, soap, and hand sanitizer, contributes to the suboptimal effectiveness of the policies.



INTRODUCTION

The concept of measuring effectiveness is explored in various contexts in the literature. Dwyer (2009) emphasizes the importance of understanding the differences between input, output, outcome, and indicators in program evaluation. Walker (1991) introduces the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency, with the former being related to goal achievement and the latter concerning the comparison of output results with inputs. Finally, Carmichael (2002) further discusses the use of metrics in evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of education, highlighting the role of qualitative criteria in defining effectiveness. These studies collectively underscore the diverse nature of measuring effectiveness, which includes both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Measuring effectiveness can also be interpreted as evaluating the performance outcomes of an organization, measured through the achievement of predefined goals. The success of an organization in attaining these goals becomes the primary indicator of its effectiveness, regardless of the costs incurred in achieving them. In this perspective, effectiveness reflects how well a program or activity has successfully achieved its established objectives.

Steers (1984) and Duncan (1979) propose a comprehensive framework for evaluating organizational effectiveness, encompassing goal achievement, integration, and adaptation. This framework is further developed by Krakower (1985), who identifies specific criteria and measures for each dimension, including goal achievement, managerial functions, organizational climate, and environmental adaptation. Popkova (2015) emphasizes the role of strategic planning and management in achieving organizational effectiveness, highlighting the importance of teamwork, employee potential, and real-time implementation. Rogers (1995) underscores the need for evaluation approaches to align with realistic assumptions about organizational functioning, and Strasser (1981) calls for comparative evaluation research to further refine and validate these models.

The effectiveness of lockdown policies in developing countries varies, with some regions experiencing positive outcomes while others do not (Umer and Khan 2020). In Indonesia, the implementation of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (LSSR) has been a strategic move to control the spread of Covid-19, but its effectiveness is yet to be fully determined (Thorik 2020). The economic impact of lockdowns is a significant concern, particularly in low and middle-income countries, where vulnerable communities and limited resources pose additional challenges (Panneer et al. 2022). Therefore, the provision of social assistance by the government is crucial to mitigate the negative effects of lockdowns on economic activity and people's purchasing power.

The Indonesian government has implemented various strategies to address the surge in Covid-19 cases, including the 5M health protocols: wearing masks, maintaining distance, washing hands with soap, avoiding crowds, and reducing mobility (Kahar et al. 2020). These strategies are realized through government policies, such as health protocols, Large-Scale Social Restrictions, and vaccination programs (Anggraini 2021). The implementation of these policies, particularly the level 1-4 CAR (Community Activity Restrictions), has proven effective in reducing the number of cases (Saraswati et al. 2021). However, there are challenges in the implementation of these policies, such as the need for better communication and resource allocation (Sukmana 2021).

Effectively managing the Covid-19 pandemic during periods of increased community activities must be accompanied by discipline in implementing health protocols and widespread vaccination coverage. Improved handling of the Covid-19 pandemic ensures the resumption of social and economic activities within the community. Efforts to address the surge in Covid-19 cases include the implementation of Emergency Community Activity Restrictions (ECAR). While the implementation of ECAR temporarily limits activities, it has proven effective in suppressing the sharp rise in Covid-19 cases observed from June to July. The impact of ECAR has led to a reduction in overall mobility, serving the crucial function of controlling Covid-19 while enabling continued activities. The surge in Covid-19 cases in Indonesia in late June 2021 was attributed to the spread of a new variant of the virus. This surge prompted the government to implement Emergency ECAR, including in the city of Palu. According to data from the Central Sulawesi Covid-19 Response as of February 9, 2022, Palu has recorded 226 deaths and 9,369 positive cases.



Several studies have explored the effectiveness of Covid-19 policies in various regions of Indonesia. In their research, both Firdaus (2022) and Rusdiono (2021) concluded that effective communication, coordination, and support from human resources are key factors in the success of policy implementation. However, Rusliandy (2021) noted challenges faced by the Regional Technical Implementation Unit (RTIU) Puskesmas Tanah Baru, including resource limitations and a surge in Covid-19 cases. Additionally, Saraswati's findings (2021) underscored the importance of a multi-level Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions (ECAR) policy in reducing Covid-19 cases, where the involvement of various stakeholders is crucial. These research findings collectively indicate that, while effective policy implementation is feasible, it requires a strong foundation in the form of robust communication, coordination, and solid resource support, as well as the involvement of various stakeholders. Thus, the context of these findings is crucial in the research on the effectiveness of implementing Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions in Palu City, delving into the issues of how Covid-19 handling policies can be effectively implemented and the factors that may hinder their implementation.

METHOD

The qualitative research approach is a diverse and socially constructed tradition, lacking common characteristics shared by all methods (Allwood 2002). It encompasses various research traditions, including human ethology, ecological psychology, and symbolic interactionism (Jacob 1988). Despite their differences, these traditions share a similar worldview that distinguishes them from conventional natural science inquiries (Locke 1989). According to Denzin and Lincoln (in Moleong 2006), qualitative research is a study that employs a naturalistic setting, aiming to interpret occurring phenomena by engaging various existing methods. Meanwhile, Bogdan and Taylor (in Moleong 2006) define qualitative methodology as a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from individuals and observable behaviors. In line with this definition, Kirk and Miller (in Moleong 2006:4) define qualitative research as a specific tradition in social science that fundamentally relies on observing human behavior both in its context and language.

Descriptive research, characterized by its lack of strict hypotheses and focus on understanding and describing phenomena, is a valuable tool in various fields (Koh et al. 2000; de la Cuesta-Benjumea 2008). It is particularly useful in providing a comprehensive report of community participation in regional development planning (de la Cuesta-Benjumea 2008). This approach often involves a qualitative descriptive design, which emphasizes the extraction of information based on the researcher's and informants' perceptions (de la Cuesta-Benjumea 2008). The use of descriptive phenomenological interviews, as suggested by O'Halloran (2018), can further enhance the richness of the data collected. Descriptive research is also commonly conducted through surveys, personal interviews, and observational studies (Koh et al. 2000; Swatzell and Jennings 2007). These methods help to answer questions about the who, what, when, where, and how of a given phenomenon (Swatzell and Jennings 2007).

This research aims to delve into and analyze the effectiveness of Covid-19 mitigation policies in Palu City through a case study approach that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methods. By combining these two methods, the study seeks to present a comprehensive overview of the impact of the implemented mitigation policies. Data triangulation is the primary approach to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the obtained information. Data will be collected from various sources, including government reports, interviews with health officials, and public responses. The use of double-data methods will involve comparisons between data sources to ensure consistency and the validity of the findings. Research subjects include the Palu City government, with a focus on health officials and policy planners directly involved in policy implementation. Meanwhile, the people of Palu represent a diverse range of perspectives and experiences related to these policies. The research object is centered on the Covid-19 mitigation policies implemented in Palu City.

This encompasses various policies such as social restrictions, contact tracing, vaccination campaigns, and other measures. Evaluation is focused on the effectiveness of the policies, covering their impact on virus spread, hospital burdens, public compliance levels, and other aspects of public health. Data collection



procedures include in-depth interviews with various stakeholders, analysis of official documents such as policies and health reports, and conducting surveys to measure public perceptions of the policies and mitigation measures taken. Data analysis involves a thematic approach for qualitative data obtained from interviews and document analysis, while quantitative data will be processed through statistical analysis. This will provide a comprehensive understanding of how mitigation policies contribute to the public health conditions in Palu City. In the final conclusion, the research will summarize its findings and provide a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of Covid-19 mitigation policies in Palu City. Additionally, recommendations will be given, if applicable, to enhance policies in the future, concluding the study with a positive contribution to the understanding and development of pandemic mitigation strategies at the local level.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Community Activity Restrictions (CAR) in Java-Bali Island as of October 11, 2021, has shown a decrease in active cases from its peak on July 15, 2021. As conveyed by Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan from the Presidential Office's Bureau of Press, Media, and Secretariat, on Kompas TV's YouTube channel, the reduction of the ECAR level from level III to level I consecutively has significantly boosted the vaccination rate for the elderly in Java-Bali Island. However, the implementation of the ECAR policy in Palu City did not affect the Covid-19 cases in Palu City. Therefore, in this study, the researcher analyzes the issue using Richards M. Steers' theory, focusing on three indicators: Goal Achievement, Integration, and Adaptation.

a. Goal Achievement

When a public policy is formulated effectively, the expectation is to provide benefits to the community in line with its objectives. This underscores the importance of public policy in the context of a country. In general, public policy can be interpreted as part of the government's efforts or actions in the form of regulations or decisions made to carry out its governance duties. In practice, public policy is the result of a political process that occurs within a national governance system, encompassing the steps taken by the government in administering the country through government apparatus or bureaucracy.

The Palu City government, through the issuance of a circular on the Implementation of Community Activity Restriction, aims to suppress or halt the spread of Covid-19 in Palu City. To achieve this goal, cooperation from the community is needed so that Covid-19 in Palu City can be minimized or even transition from pandemic to endemic. The objective of creating public policies, such as the circular from the Mayor of Palu regarding ECAR, is essentially to establish order, protect the rights of the community, achieve peace and tranquility in society, and realize the well-being of the people. Public values should be the primary indicator for every policy, such as the right to decent employment and livelihood, which can be used as an assessment of policies in poverty alleviation programs and reducing unemployment. The diligent efforts are made to suppress and prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus in Palu City, with the effectiveness goal of the circular being to prevent and suppress the spread of the virus. Thus, the circular is not merely a recommendation but also has specific goals to be achieved. One of the reasons for the lack of public value content in public policies, especially at the local government level, is the lack of knowledge, understanding, awareness, and concern about the concept of public value and its significance in every public policy issued.

Socialization, training, seminars, and discussions on the circular from the Mayor of Palu regarding ECAR have apparently not brought about significant changes in the quality of public policies produced. The best and more effective effort is to require mastery of Public Management Competence and an understanding of Public Values for every prospective Public Official to be selected or appointed. This can be considered as a prerequisite competency for the individual in the Fit and Proper Test and in the Public Office Position Auction.



Constraints originating from the government, based on several experiences in policy formulation, include:

- a) Limited openness of public space for societal debates on policy issues hinders public discussions and the emergence of public opinions. The opening of public space allows public discourse and the emergence of public opinions, which assist policymakers in prioritizing policy alternatives.
- b) Time constraints in the policy formulation process result in limited time to accurately gather public aspirations, potentially leading to the aggregation of interests with insufficient data.
- c) Financial issues are often cited as a reason for not involving the public intensively in the policy formulation process.
- d) Failure to identify problems may lead to difficulties in finding the best solutions for public issues.
- e) Involvement of non-experts in public policy, such as legal and political experts, often results in training related to legal drafting rather than enhancing public policy skills, with only approximately 20% improvement.
- f) Policies with language misuse, due to the lack of involvement of language experts, may result in ineffective communication.
- g) Sponsorship from entities not aligned with the policy's target, such as foreign NGOs, may impact policy integrity.
- h) Political participation thrives in open and free public spaces; without such spaces, political participation is stifled, as civil society struggles in an authoritarian system.
- i) Limited public access to the government for participation.
- j) Insufficient empowerment of political participation by the government and political parties, such as infrequent political education and political socialization activities, hampers public awareness of their political rights.
- k) Closed policy formulation processes often lead to communities affected by policies accepting impacts that may not align with their needs.

Constraints from the public include limited understanding of the public policy formulation process, a lack of awareness regarding political participation, including methods and mediums for engagement, insufficient recognition of their political rights, leading to a sense of incapacity in advocating for their rights. Additionally, the focus of political representation institutions and political parties prioritizing party and group interests often results in the public feeling disillusioned when participating in political activities, diminishing their motivation for engagement that was initially anticipated to bring positive impacts or benefits to their lives.

b. Integration

The implementation of policies has rapidly evolved over the past decade, involving various institutions and organizations such as government offices, hospitals, campuses, and companies, which are increasingly adopting digital systems to enhance efficiency and productivity. However, not all institutions have implemented system integration, which is essentially the key to realizing a comprehensive information system. Integrated systems are fundamentally aimed at improving work efficiency and effectiveness, especially considering the increasing complexity of coordination needs among units in an institution or organization. In societal integration, cooperation from all layers of society is required, ranging from families, individuals, institutions, to the community as a whole, to achieve consensus on shared values.

In principle, the government policy of Palu City regarding Covid-19 has been issued through circular letters, involving all Regional Apparatus Organizations (RAO) to ensure integrated policies. Based on interview results, almost all RAOs are involved in the implementation of the ECAR Policy when Covid-19 cases increase in Palu City. The roles and responsibilities assigned to each RAO aim to integrate cooperation among them to suppress the spread of Covid-19. However, social integrity is not solely measured by the physical unity of all community members. It also encompasses the development of solidarity attitudes and humane feelings, forming the basis for the harmony of an institution in society.



Every agency, institution, or individual has unique and different needs, and as a cohesive society, mutual interdependence and complementarity are essential. This aims to ensure that needs are well met, and this interdependence becomes a driving factor for robust social relationships. Therefore, the implementation of the ECAR policy can be effective in suppressing the spread of the Covid-19 virus in Palu City. Alongside this, collaboration between agencies becomes a necessity in policy implementation.

One crucial requirement for the formation of integration in policy implementation is the awareness of each agency, institution, and individual as part of an organization. All activities undertaken must have the goal of achieving collective good. In joining social groups, self-awareness as part of the organization is key to enhancing the effectiveness of a policy. This awareness facilitates integration with other communities, as it is a fundamental attitude that all agencies must possess. Another condition for integration in policy implementation is having the same vision and mission. Like in social institutions, the general public also needs to share common goals, visions, and missions, resulting from mutual agreement. Effective communication is the key to realizing these shared visions and missions as a form of social integration, even when involving community members with different backgrounds. As for the detailed reasons for the importance of system integration, they are as follows:

a) Improving Collaboration Among Departments

An organization cannot stand alone, and its various departments are interconnected. For instance, when processing the salary of a marketing employee, the HR department requires supporting data from the marketing division regarding achieved targets, personnel division regarding attendance, and so forth.

b) Accelerating Communication Processes Between Units

System integration facilitates data exchange between different departments within an organization or institution. For example, in a hospital, a cashier can promptly compile the total bill for a patient spanning emergency care, inpatient services, and pharmacy within minutes. Similarly, in government institutions, communication between different office branches becomes more accessible. For instance, a regional health office may require information on new patients. By entering the patient's ID number, population data (as needed) from the Population Registry can be automatically recorded in the hospital system in a short time.

c) Real-Time Data Access

Information systems are designed to allow users to access data in real time. For example, transportation department personnel can directly monitor road conditions from their office's command center by integrating CCTV cameras on the road with the monitoring system in the office.

d) Facilitating Policy Decision-Making

This is crucial for management or decision-makers. For example, a restaurant owner can easily determine which menu items are customer favorites, enabling coordination with the kitchen and logistics teams. Information such as peak visiting hours, net profits, and more can be accessed through a single platform.

e) Resource Optimization

Every technology is fundamentally designed to assist human work, not to replace it entirely. For example, a payroll system aids HR in faster and easier payroll processing. As a result, five HR staff who previously had to work overtime for manual payroll calculations for 150 employees can now allocate their time and energy to focus more on improving human resources, such as training programs, consultations, and more.

The concept of system integration illustrates the idea of a unified system composed of various interconnected subsystems. This concept promotes increased collaboration between different work units, accelerates the flow of information and data exchange between units, enables real-time data access, simplifies policy decision-making, and optimizes resource utilization. Thus, ultimately, an integrated system achieves the primary goal of an information system, which is to provide accurate information at the right time.



c. Adaptive

Adaptive behavior not only means being able to face modernization or even benefit from it. An adaptive individual is also reflected in how they behave and respond to various attitudes of others. One's response when meeting and socializing with someone new can illustrate their ability to adapt to changes in social relationships. This ability is crucial in maintaining optimal performance while working in any institution.

In everyday work, especially as a Civil Servant in the Ministry of Finance, the process of information exchange occurs massively and seamlessly. Learning is not solely about formal education and training, whether conventional or online. Efforts to delve deeper into the technical aspects of work can happen not only through technical training or short courses but also through social interactions among colleagues in a workplace. An employee might gain valuable information from a colleague through casual conversations during lunch breaks. Direct superiors can implement the concept of knowing your employee by engaging in weekend exercises, among many other activities facilitating information exchange.

So, what role does adaptation play in the process of obtaining information? It's not easy for someone to share information or experiences with everyone they know. This is where adaptive behavior plays a crucial role. To acquire knowledge about something unknown, one needs to gain trust from those who possess that information. Trust is not built solely through introductions and joint activities in the office but requires an adaptation process to get to know each other. Adaptive skills are also necessary in building effective communication. This includes adjusting one's language style in communication. Everyone has preferences and interests in specific ways of speaking and language styles. Therefore, it is crucial to understand someone's communication style with the hope of establishing smooth and engaging communication. With this, the process of exchanging information becomes more manageable between two interacting individuals. It is expected that with the issuance of the circular from the Mayor of Palu regarding ECAR level 1, the people of Palu can adapt to the presence of Covid-19. As the virus still exists, the local government of Palu will not indefinitely enforce ECAR due to economic considerations for the community, which needs to earn a living for their families.

From the conducted interviews, it can be understood that the reason someone adapts to their environment, especially with COVID-19, is because socially, humans want to be accepted by others and avoid criticism as much as possible. The drive to be accepted in a new environment arises from the natural instinct of humans as social beings. For instance, in an office, a new employee or someone who has just been transferred must strive to adapt to their office environment. This is not only aimed at building good social relationships but also for the smooth operation of their work in that office. Undeniably, civil servants no longer work in isolation without collaborating with other employees. Although each employee has different tasks, in their effort to achieve the set targets, they still need to synergize with their colleagues.

An adaptive organization is one that has the ability to respond to changes in the environment and quickly adapt to stakeholders' expectations with flexibility. An adaptive organization is a process of growth, development, climax, and anti-climax in a life cycle. An organization that can manage evolution is adaptive to change (Siswanto and Sucipto 2008). Therefore, an organization must direct all its resources to meet the expectations of its environment. An adaptive organization can design and accommodate changes quickly and easily. The concept of Adaptive Organization emerges not by chance but as a demand for organizations to make changes in five areas: People, Processes, Strategies, Organizational Structure, and Technology. The changes that occur are natural.

An adaptive organization is an organization's ability to succeed in adapting to a rapidly changing business environment. In essence, adaptive behavior requires several continuously trained skills. One of them is communication skills, which demand not only proficiency in speaking but also the ability to read the interests of others and be a good listener. Furthermore, adaptive behavior is closely related to creative thinking in problem-solving. The development of time causes differences in human



perspectives on various things. Assisted by technology, high creativity can certainly help solve increasingly complex problems. These abilities are very useful to provide optimal performance.

In the end, adaptive behavior is not an instantly acquired skill. Instead, it requires continuous training and experience in social interaction. The more someone interacts socially with many people, the more honed their ability to adapt to new environments. Take advantage of the ease of learning and obtaining information in today's era to develop adaptive and creative skills. Set aside feelings of embarrassment or shame when wanting to ask and learn from colleagues. Stop complaining about the progress of time and the changes that occur. Practice continuously and let experiences be a coach that teaches how to face problems and challenges in the future. Because, truly, we are shaped by what we repeatedly do.

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact organizational leaders who must navigate uncertainty. Nevertheless, organizations must persist in operating alongside the challenges posed by Covid-19. In line with President Joko Widodo's statement on May 7, 2020, introducing the concept of "living in harmony" with Covid-19 through a new way of life, commonly known as the 'new normal.' The new normal concept was later transformed into the adaptation of new habits. This concept was prepared by the government to enable the community to carry out normal activities while adhering to health protocols.

The Adaptation of New Habits is a tangible manifestation that the world is currently in the VUCA era (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity). Leaders cannot employ old methods to address the developments of the times. They must endure and innovate in this VUCA world. Leaders need to possess sufficient capacity to confront change. This can be achieved by initiating internal organizational updates through transformational skills in every employee, not merely by seeking the latest technology. Furthermore, leaders must have the ability to provide an ecosystem of entrepreneurial and organizational networks. Managers need to integrate functions and processes within the company to create dynamic capabilities with faster cycles and sustainable innovation processes.

d. Factors hindering the handling policies of Covid-19 in Palu City

The spread of misinformation or hoaxes about Covid-19 is one of the inhibiting factors in the implementation of Micro ECAR in Satui District, Tanah Bumbu Regency. These hoaxes rapidly disseminate through various media, including mass and social media. The uncontrolled dissemination causes some people to doubt the existence of Covid-19, even considering it a mere setup. As a result, a small portion of the population becomes less concerned about health protocols.

Additionally, the lack of agreement on determining zones is another hindrance. The absence of consensus on uniform criteria for determining zones, especially those based on the number of Covid-19 cases at the NU (neighborhood unit) administrative level, poses a challenge. Some areas face difficulties in mapping daily Covid-19 cases, making it challenging to assess the zones. This issue is exacerbated by the limited time available to provide data on accumulated houses exposed to Covid-19, considering the precision and time required.

Apart from technical aspects, the lack of public understanding about their vulnerability to Covid-19, insufficient awareness of the benefits of health protocols, and the scarcity of information and guidance to encourage people to adhere to health protocols are also obstacles. Furthermore, the limited access to the implementation of health protocols, such as the availability of masks, soap, and hand sanitizer, adds to the difficulties in effectively implementing Micro ECAR.



CONCLUSION

Based on the research, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of the implementation of Covid-19 handling policies in Palu City is quite adequate but not yet optimal. This is because many people are still indifferent to the policies of the Palu City Local Government, as they need to meet the economic needs of their families, leading them to continue their activities as usual. This study refers to Richards M. Steers' theory, with a focus on goal achievement, integration, and adaptation as key indicators. In terms of goal achievement, the circular from the Mayor of Palu aims to control the spread of Covid-19 through community cooperation. However, challenges arise concerning the lack of public value content and ineffective socialization efforts. Government constraints, such as limited openness of public space and time constraints, hinder the formulation of comprehensive policies.

Integration plays a crucial role in policy success, and in Palu City, various Regional Apparatus Organizations (RAO) are involved in the implementation of Micro ECAR policies. Although roles are assigned to each organization, the study highlights the need for social integrity beyond physical unity. Constraints, such as limited community access, sponsorship mismatches, and closed policy formulation, affect social collaboration. Adaptation, crucial for individual and organizational success, requires continuous training. In the context of Covid-19, adaptation involves social acceptance and effective communication. The success of the circular depends on adaptive behavior, but challenges persist, including the spread of false information, disagreement on zones, and public awareness gaps.

Factors hindering the Covid-19 policy in Palu City include the rapid spread of hoaxes, disagreement on zone determination, public understanding issues, and limited access to health protocol resources. Overcoming these challenges requires collaborative efforts, effective communication, and adaptive strategies. In essence, addressing the complexity of policy implementation requires a holistic approach by integrating community perspectives, fostering collaboration, and promoting adaptive behavior. In the VUCA era, leaders and policymakers must continue to innovate and adapt to ensure an effective response to dynamic challenges.

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