

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN ACCELERATING BEHAVIOR CHANGE IN HANDLING COVID-19

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**Abstract.** Community participation is essential for the sustainability of a policy or program. The World Health Organization (WHO) suggested the importance of community participation in handling the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic. Behavioural change by implementing health protocol is believed to be a crucial step to control the pandemic. By involving community participation, the effort to accelerate behavioral change will be more sustainable. This paper is a literature review that explains the concept of community participation. This piece is also pointed out determinants that need to be considered in increasing community participation. The determinants are effective government, proper definition regarding the related issues, and voluntary and access.

**Keywords:** government; community participation; pandemic; Covid-19

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic that has spread to entire the world is a challenge for leaders and governments all over the world. The pandemic not only gave problems to the health sector but also attacked other aspects of life. Millions of people which infected were unable to survive and passed away from it while many others are affected economically and socially. The government of the Republic of Indonesia response to the Covid-19 pandemic by issued some policies, one of them was establishing the Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) through Presidential Decree 7/2020. This task force then turned into the Covid-19 Handling Task Force under the Covid-19 Handling and Economic Recovery Committee. Through Letter Number 440/5184/SJ issued by the Minister of Home Affairs, the handling of Covid-19 at the regional level is carried out by establishing a Covid-19 Handling Task Force at the regional level (covid19.go.id, [1]) Handling this pandemic at the regional level is a crucial effort in fighting the pandemic.

The task force which mentioned above has some division including the Behavior Change Division that was formed in October 2020 to deal with the problem of Covid-19 transmission upstream. Behavior change in the community is considered as one of the important steps in handling the pandemic. This division has the task of increasing public awareness and compliance with the Covid-19 prevention health protocol which is wearing masks, keeping the distance and avoiding the crowds, and washing hands with the soap. According to international research, these three can reduce the risk of transmitting Covid-19. Using a cloth mask can reduce transmission by up to 45% while using a surgical mask can reduce transmission by 70%. Keeping distance and avoiding crowds can reduce the

risk of transmission by up to 85%. Washing hands with soap or antiseptic if done properly for 20-30 seconds can reduce the risk of transmission by up to 35 percent (tirto.id [2]) On the other hand, the Covid-19 pandemic has risen people initiatives. The community participates together to overcome the pandemic caused by the virus which was first discovered in Wuhan, China. Sitohang [3] in their writings mention that there are two groups of the initiative. First, a group of efforts to prevent the spread of the viruses such as regional quarantine by closing residential areas, implementing health protocol and providing personal protective equipment which delivered to hospitals. Second, a group of efforts to reduce the impact of the Covid-19 such as fundraising for affected people.

Community participation is one of the central strategies of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in the Health for All campaign (Rifkin [4]). The WHO also recommends community participation in overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the WHO, with community participation in Covid-19 preparedness and response, the health sector can prevent the pandemic from getting worse. There are some studies regarding community participation in handling the Covid-19 pandemic. Sitohang [3] mentioned that the challenge in participation is sustainability. They also highlighted the need for coordination between the central government, regional government, and the community for more effective and efficient handling. Another researcher recommends improving the policy framework related to regulations, institutions, financing for participatory prevention by optimizing local communities to build resilience (Hadi [5]). Meanwhile, Azhar [6] highlighted the need for a good communication approach so that the public understands what to do. This approach is important to strengthen the cooperation between the government and the community.

Sururi & Pasciana [7] recommends a dynamic governance approach to make participation stronger, more effective, and sustainable. According to Mahardika [8], the government and society need to unite based on gotong royong (cooperation). This paper aims to discuss community participation in accelerating behavior change which is one of the focuses of the government's efforts to overcome the Covid-19 Pandemic. This paper will also describe the determinants of this participation.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

In presenting this paper, the author conducted a literature review, namely by collecting literature and summarizing studies related to a topic (Creswell [9]). The author uses references related to the theme of public participation and public policy as well as references to Covid-19. The types of references used are books, scientific articles from various journals as well as a number of regulations issued by the government as well as news articles in the mass media. The steps taken by the author after knowing the keywords are to search for related references, then from the collected references, a mapping is carried out in order to facilitate the writing to be carried out. Then the writer summarizes the most relevant things from what is read. After that, the author compiles important concepts related to the study conducted. An easy way to comply with the conference paper formatting requirements is to use this document as a template and simply type your text into it.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *The Concept of Community Participation*

Along with democratization, the government in some countries increases the opportunity for citizens to be involved in policy. Participation is a prerequisite in a democratic government. In democratic countries, it is generally assumed that the more public participation, the better. The high level of participation shows that residents follow and understand the problem and want to be involved in these activities. On the other hand, a low level of participation is considered a bad sign because many residents do not pay attention to the problems that exist in their environment (Budiardjo [10]).

Creighton [11] states that public participation is a process when public concerns, needs, and values are incorporated in policy-making in government or corporations. In his opinion, there is a two-way communication aimed at forming better decisions that are supported by the public in this process. He added that the community not only obtains information, there is also an organized process to involve the public and the public has influence in decision-making.

Arnstein [12] which famous for his concept of participation argued that participation is a term that belongs to the category of community power. In community

participation, according to him, there is a redistribution of power that allows people who do not have the power to be involved. On the other hand, Taylor [13] mentions that most social scientists agree that it is difficult for governments to carry out their duties without involving other actors in an increasingly globalized world and increasingly complex society.

In more complicated situations like today, officials or politicians often use policy participation as a mechanism to broaden voices in the decision-making process. Participation also provides opportunities to examine particular issues and legitimize voices (Bishop & Davis, [14]). However, Bishop & Davis [14] also argue that policy participation is best understood as a discontinuous set of techniques, selected according to the issues at hand and the political interests of the time.

Bishop and Davis categorize [14] five characteristics of contemporary participation that are developed from what has been done by Thomas, Shand, and Arnberg. The five types are as follows

- a) Participation as consultation, using interest group meetings, key contacts, discussion papers, public meetings, and other tools to promote interest in policy proposals. Participants understand that the views of the public can influence the development of policies even though it is the government that decides.
- b) Participation as cooperation, involving communities and organizations in policy recommendations through advisory bodies and in the form of co-production.
- c) Participation as a position that allows the public and interest groups to enter the policy process through the courts, either as direct participants or through third parties.
- d) Participation as a consumer choice, found in service delivery mechanisms that enable communities to make choices that shape policy products and service providers.
- e) Participation as a control that allows people to vote through a referendum or other form of direct control.

In modern countries, policy-making is a process carried out by various interested parties. Rhodes (in Bishop and Davis [14]) pointed out that there has been a development in which the government becomes a mediator between competing interests. Policy-making is made in a community in which a participatory relationship takes the form of cooperation or partnership. In these communities, the government cooperates with interests outside the country to determine policy directions. Usually, there is formal support in the form of the formation of a body or organization that brings together stakeholders. However, this form is not the only form of partnership.

Sturgess (in Bishop and Davis [14]) identified at least four models of partnership participation.

- a) Co-production, government, and society cooperate in developing and producing a product.
- b) Co-regulation, where the government and industry agree on a set of regulations that can lead to co-management.
- c) Co-management, government, and producers give formal positions to informal rules that make producer

organizations responsible for regulating a sector. Various literature usually exemplifies strategies in natural resource management with agreements between local fishermen not to deplete fragile stocks.

- d) Community-based management, for example initiatives to involve farmers and local communities in soil conservation. The community is empowered to address a problem through an institution bringing together common interests, assisting in overall policy development, and being responsible for conveying state principles at the local level.

Co-production was well known in public administration discussions in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Brudney and England as quoted by Nabatchi mention that co-production is used to explain emerging concepts in service delivery that embody community involvement in the design and delivery of services with professional service agents. However, Malesky & Hutchinson itself views co-production as an umbrella concept that describes a variety of activities that can occur at any stage of public service delivery where state actors and lay actors work together for profit. Whitaker [15] mentions that community participation in service delivery is important for program success, especially in programs that make behavior change as a 'product'. In the co-production model, the experience and knowledge of service users are placed at the center of the design of public services to be provided. The acceleration of behavior change in handling the Covid-19 pandemic is one of the policies that in its implementation can use the co-production model. With the involvement of the community in this effort, behavioral changes for handling Covid-19 upstream should be more likely to be achieved.

### *Determinants in Participation*

Community participation in a policy or program can provide benefits if several things can be met. The author identifies several determinant factors in participation, as follows.

#### 1. Effective Governance

Effective governance is one of the determinants in encouraging public participation. The environment of a government plays an important role in shaping public participation. Effective governance can be realized when there is democracy at the local level and competent government (Bevir [16]). Decentralization applied in a government does not necessarily make the government effective and responsive to the needs of local communities even according to Bannink & Ossewaarde [17], decentralization can increase local government commitment in solving local problems.

One of the necessary conditions for the benefits of decentralization to be achieved is the delegation of functions to lower levels of government (Kahkonen, Satu & Lanyi, Anthony [18]). In addition to delegating power to lower levels of government, power also needs to be distributed to other parties which are involved in a policy or program. According to Arnstein [12], participation without redistribution of power is a frustrating and empty action for

people who do not have power. This redistribution of power allows those who do not have power and are outside the economic or political process to get involved.

Furthermore, according to Arnstein [12], in the model of cooperation between government and society, power is distributed through negotiations, agreeing to share responsibilities in planning and decision making. This collaboration will be effective when there are leaders who have the capacity and are accountable. According to the categorization from Arnstein [12], this kind of participation is categorized in the highest level of participation where society has control.

The Covid-19 handling effort is a policy that has been decentralized to regions with the establishment of a Covid-19 Handling Task Force in the regions. This kind of decentralization will only work when the local government effectively distributes its authority or responsibilities and tasks. With this distribution, the work will be executed effectively. In a task force that consists of many elements, the authority can be distributed among the elements involved. In an effort to accelerate behavior change, the authority regarding socialization or education, as well as enforcement, can be distributed to stakeholders to carry out these tasks. The government can provide flexibility so that they can work according to the appropriate method as long as the desired goal, namely behavior change, can be achieved.

#### 2. Proper Definition

There are times when community participation in a policy or program does not run effectively and produces the goals to be achieved. According to Berner [19], the definition of the effectiveness of community participation will differ depending on the position of stakeholders, whether as officials, staff members, or the community. The elected officials see the effectiveness of re-election and the scarcity of complaints from the public. For staff, effective community participation means providing information to the public and encouraging them to act as a macro-level community, and making an informed community a resource to make other members of the community understand even if decisions by governments are controversial. Meanwhile, the community views effective participation as involving two-way communication among the three stakeholder groups and engaging in dialogue with staff and officials regarding the budget and their role in the process. In addition, the definition of a community or society is essential. Jewkes & Murcott [20] pointed out there are fundamental differences between constructions built by members and non-members so that many define participation in health projects as failures. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize the differences in these constructions.

Then regarding the approach to participation, according to Rifkin [4], there are two approaches, the approach with a target-oriented framework and the approach with an empowerment framework. However, Rifkin [4] argues that it is better not to look at community participation in a single framework between the two frameworks, so

regarding this framework, it is not necessary to define community participation in one of these frameworks.

Meanwhile, Bishop & Davis [14] highlighted the definition of the number involved, the commitment to see the views of those affected, the transfer of authority from the government to the community, and a transparent process. Finally, no less important is the definition of needs. In this case, the community's need for services must be the operational definition of service providers' work (Whitaker, [15]). In every policy, it is important to define the things mentioned above. Stakeholders need to understand these definitions so that they can determine interventions or steps that need to be taken, especially regarding needs. For example, in conducting education about behavior change and health protocols, all parties involved must understand who is the subject of the education, and understand the needs in the field. By knowing this, the educational activities carried out will be more appropriate to the conditions and more targeted.

### 3. Voluntarism and Access

Voluntarism is crucial in community participation. Research conducted by Miao [21] mentions the key role of experienced volunteers in dealing with crises. Volunteering can be a reinforcement in participation when collective volunteerism is satisfying. On the other hand, community participation will be weak when collective volunteerism is weak. Participation in society cannot be forced on a population but must arise from within and from the access that participation is given (Sathiadas [22])

Volunteerism that appears in the community to be involved in handling Covid-19 may need to be encouraged because not everyone has the same volunteerism. Authorities or community leaders can play a role in this effort to boost volunteerism. The leader of the community can do this by setting an example in the community. Furthermore, speaking of access, the intended route is the opportunity to participate. People will not always be present at every forum and debate every question. However, they want to have these rights to convey their rights at times of need or critical times. Access to policy-making is necessary for the community because it allows two-way communication between the government and the community. Full participation will take place when all members of a community or organization have equal access to power (Cunningham[23]).

People can also have more access when their bargaining position in front of the state is strong. This stronger bargaining position will make relations more balanced, including in the policy process. According to Mariana [17], increasing public understanding will strengthen their bargaining position. Developing this understanding can be done in two approaches. A first approach is a structural approach by advocating for various legal and institutional instruments that provide opportunities for participation, or through a sociocultural approach in the form of an educational process, organizing, mentoring. By these approaches, they can identify and articulate their aspirations.

However, sometimes such access can be granted by the authorities to the community, not only the people who

are trying to gain such access. Providing access to the community can be done by being open to input from the people. An open government will accept various inputs and use them as inputs in the policymaking process.

In attempts to accelerate behavior change regarding fighting the pandemic, this access can be provided by two-way communication between the government and the community through the provided forums. The government can hear inputs on what needs to be fulfilled through the forum. The inputs can be used for policy formulation. In these conditions, even though they do not directly establish policies, input from the community has a role in making policies that are appropriate to their circumstances and needs.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The trend of increasing public participation in policies or programs occurs in various parts of the world along with democratization in some countries. Community participation in health programs is not new and has become a principle in the WHO program, Health for All. In handling the Covid-19 pandemic, the WHO encourages the involvement of the community. Community participation in handling the Covid-19 pandemic makes the attempt more sustainable. This can conceive the health sector can prevent the occurrence of worsening due to the pandemic.

Implementing the health protocol as a part of behavior change is believed to be an important thing in handling the pandemic situation. To foster behavior change, there is a division in the Covid-19 Handling Task Force that focused on accelerating behavior change. It is not enough for government to provide directions on what the community should do. The government should cultivate community participation, including those who are affected by the policy.

There should be some determinants that appear in encouraging effective community participation. First, effective governance, which is also correlated to the capacity of the government. Second, a proper definition of some related issues such as the definition of the community itself and the definition of the needs. Third, an accessible way for the community to be involved in policy-making.

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