

## THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN TACKLING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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### **Abstract**

*The existence of an emergency caused by Covid-19 has made the Government declare Covid-19 a national disaster. However, because the Central Government was not fast in issuing Government Regulation No. 21 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) in the context of Accelerating Covid-19 Handling on March 31, 2020, resulting in Regional Governments taking steps earlier than the Central Government in handling Covid-19. This research uses normative legal research methods using literature research, namely conducting research on library materials and secondary data in the form of journals, articles, and laws related to the Role of Local Governments in Overcoming the Covid-19 Pandemic. The results showed that based on Law No. 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government, to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic, the Regional Government has the authority to determine a policy. Such as the policy of the Regional Government in implementing the lockdown mechanism. In addition, the Regional Government has also taken several steps to overcome Covid-19. Such as suppressing the acceleration of the spread of Covid-19 by means of 3M discipline (washing hands, maintaining distance, and using masks), accelerating vaccination in the regions, creating many labor-intensive programs in their respective regions, and also distributing social assistance to people affected by Covid-19.*

**Keywords:** *Pandemic Handling, Covid-19, Local Government Policy.*

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

From March 2020 until now, the Indonesian people are faced with a very prolonged pandemic caused by the emergence of a new infectious disease, namely Corona Virus Disease. On Monday 2 March 2020, the beginning of the entry of Covid-19 into Indonesia, President Joko Widodo confirmed that the virus attacked 2 Indonesian citizens. Corona virus causes illnesses ranging from mild to severe symptoms, such as cough, fever, shortness of breath and runny nose. This dangerous virus is very easily transmitted so that it can spread very quickly and can cause death if not handled properly.

With the issuance of Presidential Decree No. 12 of 2020 concerning the Determination of Non-Natural Disasters, the Spread of Covid-19 as a National Disaster indicates an emergency caused by Covid-19, so the Government declares Covid-19 a national disaster. Prior to that, the President had also established several policies and regulations, including PP No. 21 of 2020 concerning PSBB in the Framework of Accelerating Covid-19 Handling, PP in Lieu of Law No. 1 of 2020 concerning State Financial Policy and Financial System Stability for Handling the Covid-19 Pandemic and/or in order to Face Threats that Endanger the National Economy and/or Financial System Stability, Presidential Decree No. 11 of 2020 concerning PPKM, Presidential Decree No. 12 of 2020 concerning the Determination of Covid-19 as a National Disaster, Minister

of Health Regulation No. 9 of 2020 concerning PSBB Guidelines in the Framework of Accelerating Covid-19 Handling (Pratiwi, 2021).

However, as a result of the Central Government's untimely action in issuing PP No. 21 of 2020 concerning PSBB in the Framework of Accelerating Covid-19 Handling on March 31, 2020, resulted in the Regional Government taking steps earlier than the Central Government in handling Covid-19, even though it has been confirmed that 1200 people have been positive. This Government Regulation on PSBB was issued to ensure that Regional Governments do not run individually and in line with the Central Government, so that in dealing with Covid19 they can be in harmony with the Central Government. Overall, the Government Regulation on PSBB regulates restrictions on religious activities, holidays for teaching and learning activities in schools and workplaces, and also restricts the public from crowding in public places.

Which directly these things have been determined by several Regional Governments. For example, the policy of the Governor of Papua since March 26, 2020 began to close access in and out of airports, ports, land, and also State Cross Border Post, then the local lockdown policy that has been carried out by the Regent of Tegal by closing access roads to the city using movable concrete barriers (MBC) since March 23, 2020, as well as the policy of the Governor of Bali which appealed to the public not to crowd, and also study, worship, work from home since March 27, 2020. Similarly, what is done by several other regions, of course, the main purpose of this is to protect the community and also prevent the spread of Covid-19 (Mandasari, 2020). Based on this background, to understand more about the Role of Local Governments in Overcoming the Covid-19 Pandemic, further will be discussed in more detail in this paper.

## **II. PROBLEM FORMULATION**

Through the Introduction and Problems above, the following is the formulation of the problems to be raised:

1. What is the role of local governments in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. What are the steps taken by the Regional Government to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic?

## **III. RESEARCH METHODS**

In this study using normative legal research methods using literature research. It is a legal research by conducting research on library materials and secondary data (Sonata, 2014) in the form of journals, articles, and laws related to the Role of Local Governments in Overcoming the Covid-19 Pandemic.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

##### 1. The Role of Local Government in Combating the Covid-19 Pandemic

In combating Covid-19, local governments play a crucial role as the closest administrative entities to the public compared to the central government. The local government's role is highly significant in controlling the spread of the Covid-19 virus, especially when considering regional authorities. According to legal norms that determine regional authority, regions are empowered to exercise their authority to the fullest extent, subject to regulations that remain the responsibility of the central government, except matters related to executive tasks. This implies that policies implemented at the regional level must be based on central government policies (Ginanjari, 2020).

Regarding the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, based on Article 12 Paragraph (1) b of Law No. 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government, health matters at the provincial level are mandatory affairs falling under Concurrent Authority as per Article 11 Paragraph (1). Article 9 Paragraph (3) explains that Concurrent Authority refers to governance matters divided among the Central Government, Provincial Government, and City/Regency Government. Based on this law, the relationship between local and central governments regarding the delegation of responsibilities and authorities in handling the Covid-19 pandemic has been clearly defined. Local city or regency governments are responsible and authorized for handling the pandemic at their respective levels. If the pandemic escalates, provincial governments take over, and if it further escalates to a national level, the central government assumes responsibility and authority for its handling (Ismail, 2021).

Therefore, based on Law No. 23 of 2014, local governments have the authority to establish policies in their respective regions. For example, the implementation of lockdown mechanisms to address Covid-19 aligns with the perspective of regional autonomy and the constitution. Despite quarantine measures being fundamentally within the purview of the central government, this is done to address legal uncertainties caused by the central government's imposition of civil emergency policies, also aiming to uphold human rights (Wadi, 2020).

In Article 18 Paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution, it states:

*"The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is divided into provinces and each province is divided into regencies and cities, each of which has regional governments regulated by law."*

This acknowledges regional governance in the constitution. In reality, local governments are essential for the central government to convey policies to the public transparently. It implies that information shared between the central and local governments should be aligned, fostering a good relationship to effectively combat the Covid-19 pandemic (Jospriady, 2020).

## 2. Steps Taken by Local Governments to Combat the Covid-19 Pandemic

Given the significant role and authority of local governments in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic, several steps must be taken. In the 6th National Deliberation of the Association of All Indonesian City Governments (Apeksi) on February 11, 2021, held at the Presidential Palace, Jakarta, President Joko Widodo urged city governments to implement specific measures in handling the pandemic. President Jokowi outlined four steps to be implemented collaboratively by local governments and the central government to effectively address the Covid-19 pandemic.

Firstly, to curb the acceleration of Covid-19 spread, disciplined adherence to the 3M measures (washing hands, maintaining distance, and wearing masks) must be emphasized to the public. President Jokowi stressed that 3M discipline should be accompanied by government examples and the provision of supporting facilities to the public. Additionally, local governments should consider the region's capacity to provide care for Covid-19 patients, including hospital equipment, readiness of medical personnel, and detailed zoning mapping if certain areas require micro-level restrictions.

Secondly, local governments should expedite vaccination in their respective areas. Mass vaccination, initiated on January 13, 2021, prioritizes healthcare workers, followed by the broader population. Frontline workers in crowded places, such as market traders, are vaccinated in groups or en masse. Local governments are obligated to plan prioritization strategies for vaccination recipients.

The third step involves creating labor-intensive programs in each region. These programs aim to provide employment opportunities, particularly for those who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic, thereby boosting the local economy. The final step emphasizes the continuous provision of social assistance to Covid-19-affected communities, the economically disadvantaged, and those not benefiting from labor-intensive programs (KOMINFO, 2021).

In handling the surge in Covid-19 cases, President Jokowi assigned regional leaders to monitor their respective areas, consult with medical experts, and assess the conditions for determining whether a region should be in a state of emergency or disaster response. This requires coordination between regional leaders and the National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB). Considering Indonesia's vast archipelagic nature, the spread of Covid-19 varies between regions. Local governments, taking into account their region's status, can enhance Covid-19 testing, implement policies to restrict or postpone activities involving large crowds, maximize treatment using local hospitals, and collaborate with private hospitals and research institutions recommended by the Ministry of Health (KEMENSETNEG, 2020).

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on Law No. 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Governments, in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic, Regional Governments have the authority to establish policies within their regions. The implementation of lockdown mechanisms by Regional Governments in handling Covid-19 is deemed consistent with the principles of regional autonomy and the constitution. Despite the fundamental authority for health quarantine lying with the Central Government.

Regional Governments have also taken several steps to combat Covid-19. Firstly, by suppressing the acceleration of Covid-19 spread through the disciplined practice of the 3M (washing hands, maintaining distance, and using masks), expediting vaccination efforts in their respective regions, creating employment programs in each region, and providing social assistance to communities affected by Covid-19.

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