



Social, economic, cultural resilience, and discipline role of the North Sumatera Province Government in the COVID-19 management

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Abstract. *One of the efforts to tackle COVID-19 is through the social, economic, and cultural resilience approach and the discipline of the Government of North Sumatera Province. This study aimed to explore the experience of the North Sumatra Province in tackling the COVID-19 from the aspect of social, economic, and cultural resilience and the firmness of the government in coordinating with various parties in the management of COVID-19. The qualitative study conducted an in-depth interview with the BPBD and Provincial Health Office of North Sumatera Province. The study showed that North Sumatera had developed the regional potential to improve the economy and small-medium enterprises during the pandemic. Several activities include a budget allocation for labor-intensive business and industrial programs, strengthening the real sector and small medium enterprises, and developing the Budikdamber program and Kampung Paten to strengthen food security, support economic growth, and reduce inflation. Discipline and firmness in coordination between parties such as inter-provincial border closure; assistance in social and health sector; control and enforcement of discipline on health protocols; socialization, simulation, and education on COVID-19. Synergy to build strength together to carry out health protocols and the spirit of revitalizing the local economy determine the success of North Sumatera Province in managing COVID-19.*

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INTRODUCTION

The first case of COVID-19 that was found in Wuhan, Hubei, China, on December 31, 2019 by WHO, pushed the determination of COVID-19 as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 (WHO, 2019). Indonesia also faced the problem of a high number of COVID-19 patients with a high mortality rate. Indonesia reached the highest mortality rate at 9.11% on April 4, 2020, and reduced to 7.5% on May 4, 2020. Data up to November 11, 2021, showed that 4 249 758 people confirmed positive COVID-19, with a mortality rate of 143 608 people (Fatimah, 2021).

One of the provinces affected by COVID-19 is North Sumatra. The management of COVID-19 in North Sumatra is considered complex because it has a wide area, a large population, and is ethnically diverse. North Sumatra has the most significant people after West Java, East Java, and Central Java, with 14.8

million inhabitants (BPS Sumatera Utara, 2020). North Sumatera consists of 4 regions, i.e., East Coast, Barisan Mountains, West Coast, and Nias Islands. Various ethnics found in North Sumatera include Batak, Malay, Javanese, Nias, Mandailing, Minang, Acehese, Chinese, Indian, Arab, and Banjar (Dwi, 2021; Ruben, 2020). The COVID-19 case found in North Sumatera in March 2020 was the first death by COVID-19.

Based on the incidence, North Sumatera Provincial Government formed the COVID-19 acceleration task force to deal with COVID-19 cases. To date, North Sumatera has experience as a relatively swift province in dealing with COVID-19 by setting an emergency alert status. It is also supported by discipline and firmness in collaboration between regencies/cities, such as drawing up mayoral regulations for Medan and Binjai and regent regulations for Deli Serdang Regency. The government also provides comprehensive and focused COVID-19 management. This study aimed to document the experience of the North Sumatera Provincial Government in managing COVID-19 from the aspect of economic, social, and cultural resilience and discipline and firmness in collaborating with all parties involved in managing COVID-19. The results of this study could be used as a reference for other provinces in Indonesia in managing COVID-19.

METHOD

A qualitative approach was used in this study in Medan, North Sumatera, in July 2020. The basis of choosing North Sumatera as the location of the study was because North Sumatera is one of the provinces that acts decisively and dares to take a series of COVID-19 prevention measures. This study used a cross-sectional design with a purposive sampling technique.

This study used a qualitative design because it observed the human element in understanding an event or phenomenon in more depth (Creswell, 2007; Busetto *et al.*, 2020). Primary data collection was carried out using the deep interview method in July 2020 on two informants from BPBD of North Sumatera and the Health Office of North Sumatera. A transcript made from the interview recording was analyzed using content analysis. The study also took a matrix according to all the components of the questions. The secondary data searching on the North Sumatera was also carried out to support the findings from in-depth interviews.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Firmness and Discipline of North Sumatera Provincial Government in the Management of COVID-19

North Sumatera Province has 72 981 km² with the fourth largest population in Indonesia after West Java, Central Java, and East Java (BPS Sumatera Utara, 2020). It is divided into four regions, East Coast, Barisan Mountains, West Coast, and Nias Islands. North Sumatera has diverse ethnicities, including Batak, Malay, Javanese, Nias, Mandailing, Minang, Acehese, Chinese, Indian, Arab, and Banjar (DPRD North Sumatera Province, 2021). The Batak tribe is one of the primary tribes in this province, which consists of Batak Karo, Batak Toba, Batak Angkola, Batak Simalungun, and Batak Pakpak (Dwi, 2021; BPKP)

The management of COVID-19 in North Sumatra is quite complex, considering the vast area, large population, and various ethnicities. The North Sumatera Government is fast enough to prepare for a pandemic. This province has already been on emergency alert status since January, even before this pandemic has not been named COVID-19. The Governor communicate and discuss the steps and socialize with the stakeholder to prepare for the pandemic. The pandemic, which is relatively new and shocked the world, troubled the North Sumatera Government because they were forced to face a unique and unmastered situation. Therefore, the North Sumatera Government carried out firm and brave efforts in managing COVID-19, including encouraging the regency/city government to collaborate in opening a particular hospital for COVID-19 in charge of doing testing.

In addition, imposing a border closure between provinces from March 2020, assistance in the health, social, and economic sectors; repatriation of Indonesian migrant workers; collaboration with the National Army, Police, BPKP, and the judiciary in distributing assistance and monitoring in the field; controlling and enforcing community discipline on health protocols; carrying out socializations, simulations, and educations on COVID-19; providing service on operation, logistics, and administration; and formulating an activity plan for the transition of a new custom order or new standard.

As a region led by the military, the principles of discipline, firmness, coordination, and collaboration become the choice of the North Sumatera Government in managing COVID-19. COVID-19 global pandemic is an emergency that requires fast and accurate management to ensure the safety and security of the public from the virus threat. The characteristics of Batak people, that are firm and disciplined, play a role in applying the principles of discipline and firmness to the management of COVID-19 in North Sumatera (Adi *et al.*, 2012).

Economic, Social, and Cultural Resilience

North Sumatra Government carried out an economic stimulus program to increase economic, social, and cultural resilience. The objective was to restore the financial sector from the COVID-19 pandemic. North Sumatera Provincial Government cannot only rely on the central government. Therefore, they simplify and translate significant government policies into local languages and carry out regional prevention practices. Economic sector improvement was carried out through three economic accelerations, i.e., budget allocation for labor-intensive businesses and industries, strengthening the real sector and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME), and strengthening food security to support economic growth and suppress inflation (Kementerian PPN/Bappenas, 2020). Other than that, efforts to boost agricultural, fishery, and plantation products in North Sumatera became the strategy for strengthening food security for the next two to three months, namely Budikdamber (Ismail, 2020).

Several innovative approaches from the North Sumatera Provincial Government to improve economic resilience include holding a “*Kampung Ramadan*” event during the fasting month that provides “*drive-thru*” service for street foods to revive the community’s economy while maintaining COVID-19 health protocols and holding a bazaar periodically in several places to stimulate the community’s economy through the sale of essential goods such as sugar and rice. The goal was to purchase basic goods at a low and affordable price with maintained quality. The food security of North Sumatra people was supported by carrying out the Budikdamber program, which is fish farming in a bucket to train the community’s independence to raise catfish and grow kale at home.

Food security is a condition of fulfilling household food needs reflected in the availability of food sufficiently, both in terms of quantity and quality, safe, equity, and affordable (UU No. 18 Tahun 2012). The Paten village, a COVID-19 disaster resilient village, will be a pilot village to conduct the new normal protocols that are also designed to increase the social and cultural resilience of the North Sumatra people. The Patent Village will establish a health post, a village-level Covid-19 post, a shared kitchen, and an isolation house for people exposed to COVID-19 (Lestari *et al.*, 2020). The post will be filled by Bhabinkamtibmas, health workers, and pickets from residents (Fatimah, 2021). The purpose of establishing Patent Village is to create a productive society and break the chain of the spread of the Corona virus (Rasyid, 2020).

The efforts to restore economic resilience by the North Sumatra Provincial Government became the primary strategy considering the COVID-19 pandemic highly affected the people's socioeconomic condition. The negative impact was felt by all economic actors, be it households, companies, and SME, government finance, financial sector, and the external sector. Therefore, there is a need for a series of programs through Social Safety Net (SSN) to improve the economy of people affected by COVID-19. Social safety net programs can reduce poverty during the COVID-19 pandemic in the national economic recovery (Handoyo,

2020). The pandemic brought a social-cultural impact because of adaptation to the new normal. Thus, efforts are needed to strengthen cultural resilience. Strengthening sociocultural resilience becomes an essential point in the effort to respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to reinforce solidarity, social harmony, cooperation, and collaboration between citizens.

Social capital, cultural values, and local wisdom are aspects that are also utilized in responding to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The culture of cooperation (*gotong royong*) is a form of social resilience that is needed to improve the performance of handling the COVID-19 pandemic, risk reduction based on the participation of local communities, taking into account the characteristics of the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, whose transmission is person-to-person, or very local, So it is necessary to prevent and reduce the level of information locally (Hadi, 2020). Social capital, as seen in cooperation and collective actions during the pandemic, is essential in the behavior adaptation of the public and collaboration in distributing aid to affected people. Other than that, cultural values, local wisdom, and traditional knowledge become inspirational sources that encourage creativity and innovation to improve health and food security during the pandemic. The central and regional governments play an essential role in the strengthening of this socio-cultural resilience.

CONCLUSION

North Sumatera is a region with good social capital. This is represented by the solidarity of the people, the culture of cooperation, and resilience. North Sumatera Government has the advantage in handling COVID-19, which is implementing discipline and firmness in creating policies to collaborate between regency/city governments and implementing several efforts to improve the economy to increase economic, social, and cultural resilience in managing COVID-19.

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