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Balancing Interests in Responding Covid-19 Pandemic in Palembang: The Policy Networks Analysis

Eti Yusnita

Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang

Email: etiyusnita_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

Siti Anisyah

Faculty of Dakwah and Communication, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang

Email: sitianisyah_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

Abstract

This research examines the political economy of policies and policy networks in Palembang policies to handle pandemic. So far, policy studies with a political nature have always placed policy products as the result of the compromise based on "profit and loss" between stakeholders. Therefore, policy products always prioritize rationality. The significance of our research is trying to analyze rational and non-rational factors in policy studies with a political character. Our research focus is pandemic policy in Palembang City. We use a political economy approach to analyze policy network which assumes that every policy always involves networks -state and non-state - having an interest in the policy. The method we use is a case study-based qualitative method with a data collection strategy through in-depth interviews for primary data and documentation studies to collect secondary data. The study found that the character of policy network for dealing the pandemic in Palembang was a bureaucratic network in which the stakeholders were dominated by the bureaucracy. Then, we also find that in policy studies in crisis situations, the "humanity" factor appears as the interests of the stakeholders, who generally prioritize the factor of rationality.

Keywords: Political Economy, Policy Network, Covid-19, Palembang City

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji tentang politik ekonomi kebijakan dan jejaring kebijakan dalam kebijakan penanggulangan pandemi Covid-19 di Kota Palembang. Selama ini, studi kebijakan yang berwatak politik selalu menempatkan produk kebijakan sebagai hasil dari kompromi "untung rugi" para pemangku kepentingan. Oleh karena itu, produk kebijakan selalu

mengedepankan sifat rasionalitas. Signifikansi penelitian kami mencoba menganalisis faktor rasional dan non-rasional dalam studi kebijakan yang berwatak politik. Lokus penelitian kami adalah kebijakan pandemi di Kota Palembang. Kami menggunakan pendekatan politik ekonomi dalam memandang kebijakan serta teori jejaring kebijakan yang berasumsi bahwa setiap kebijakan selalu melibatkan jejaring-jejaring -negara dan non negara- yang berkepentingan dalam kebijakan tersebut. Metode yang kami gunakan adalah metode kualitatif berbasis studi kasus dengan strategi penggalan data melalui wawancara mendalam untuk data primer dan studi dokumentasi untuk mengumpulkan data sekunder. Penelitian menemukan bahwa karakter jejaring kebijakan penanggulangan pandemi di kota Palembang adalah bureaucratic network di mana pemangku kepentingan didominasi oleh birokrasi. Kemudian, kami juga menemukan bahwa dalam studi kebijakan pada situasi krisis, factor “humanity” muncul sebagai kepentingan para pemangku kepentingan, yang pada umumnya mengedepankan faktor rasionalitas.

Kata Kunci: Politik Ekonomi, Jejaring Kebijakan, Covid-19, Kota Palembang

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of two years since the outbreak of the pandemic (Worldmeters, 2021), the government has implemented various policies to combat the spread of Covid-19 and influence people's behaviour, through the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) policy (Peraturan Pemerintah, 2020), the New Normal Adaptation policy, and the Imposing Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM) policy (Peraturan Pemerintah, 2020). Unlike complete lockdowns, these policies allow for economic activities to continue by implementing health protocols recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) to prevent the transmission of the virus. This approach is seen as a suitable option to manage the ongoing presence of Covid-19 (Herdiana, 2020). The top-down approach to handling the pandemic requires regional governments to adhere to the policies set by the central government, as was done by the Palembang City Government.

In response to the central government's policies, the Palembang City Government issued derivative regulations to adapt to the situation. One such regulation is Mayor Regulation (Perwali) Number 27 of 2020, which focuses on promoting productive and safe activities amidst the pandemic. The regulation emphasizes the importance of wearing masks, practicing hand hygiene, maintaining physical distance, staying at home when experiencing fever symptoms, and avoiding crowded places. It also specifies which general and economic activities are allowed or prohibited. Violations of these rules may result in verbal or written warnings, confiscation of identity cards, social work assignments, or administrative fines of up to IDR 500,000 (Perwali kota Palembang, 2020). Following the replacement of the PSBB policy with the more dynamic PPKM policy by the central government, the Palembang City Government also adopted derivative policies to replace it. Unlike the PSBB and New Normal Adaptation policies, the PPKM policy varies in its implementation and duration across different regions (Peraturan Gubernur, 2020). Areas with high transmission rates enforce Level 4 PPKM, while areas with lower transmission rates implement Level 1 PPKM. The PPKM policies are generally valid for two weeks and are subject to renewal for another two weeks. However, the determination of the PPKM level for each region remains under the authority of the central government. Thus, the derivative regulations related to PPKM implemented by the Palembang

City Government align with the status assigned by the central government and are valid for two weeks.

Despite the efforts made to accommodate economic stability, both the PSBB and PPKM policies have implications that hinder daily economic and social activities. Nationally, Indonesia experienced a recession in the first quarter of 2021, with a negative economic growth of 0.74 percent (Ulya, 2021). The pandemic has also led to an increase of 2.7 million people living in poverty (Fitriani, 2021) and 2 million unemployed individuals (Herdiana, 2020). Urban areas have felt the brunt of the economic downturn, with most informal workers losing their sources of income (Onyishi et al., 2021). Data from the South Sumatra Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in February 2021 revealed nearly 60,000 new people living in poverty and 600,000 job losses (including the unemployed, those who are no longer in the labor force, and those temporarily unemployed) (Wulandari, 2021).

The simultaneous health and economic impacts of the pandemic involve numerous stakeholders, highlighting the importance of analysing the political and economic dimensions of pandemic policies. These stakeholders represent the health crisis recovery group and the economic stability group, while interested actors include formal political actors at the executive, legislative, and higher levels of government, business groups, civil society organizations, healthcare professionals, and the general public .

Considering the aforementioned policy dilemmas and the involvement of various stakeholders, it becomes interesting to analyze the dynamics of interests among these stakeholders in formulating and implementing pandemic policies. This analysis will utilize a political-economic approach and policy network theory to better understand the political economy of emergency policies and the policy networks at play. The following sections will delve into the theoretical framework and research methodology used in this study, followed by a review of pandemic policies in Palembang City. Finally, the article will examine the dynamics of the political economy and policy networks within the context of pandemic policies in Palembang City.

In order to do that, this article aims to address two key questions: firstly, how do political and economic interests interact and compete in the Covid-19 countermeasures policy in Palembang City? And secondly, what characterizes the policy network that emerges in the overall response to the pandemic in Palembang City? To explore these questions, the article will proceed with a comprehensive strategy, including analysing previous literature on the political economy of emergency policies and policy networks, proposing a research framework and methodology, reviewing the pandemic policy in Palembang City, and conducting an analysis of the political economy and policy networks within the pandemic response in Palembang City.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Broadly speaking, this study adopts a political-economic perspective and focuses on the analysis of pandemic policies at the local government level. To position this research clearly, it is essential to review two groups of empirical literature: literature on the political-economic perspective in analysing pandemic policies and literature on pandemic policies at the local government level. The following literature provides insights into the political-economic perspective in pandemic policies.

Mas'udi & Winanti (2020) examines the political-economic perspective in the Indonesian Government's pandemic communication policy. He finds that the Jokowi government prioritized economic stability over handling the health crisis (Masduki, 2020). The government's communication during the pandemic aimed to demonstrate power and maintain

investor confidence and market stability. Similarly, Omar et al. (2020) highlight state blunders in pandemic policies in Bangladesh. They reveal non-compliance with the lockdown policy due to the lack of promised social assistance. The government subsequently lifted the lockdown without effectively controlling the transmission rate. Urban areas, however, experienced subsequent crisis management through urban governance involving civil society participation (Omar et al., 2020).

The government's approach in formulating pandemic policies appears to prioritize a rational choice approach. Putranto et al. (2021) conducted research on the two pandemic management policies implemented by the Indonesian government: Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) and Imposition of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM). These policies led to a decline in Indonesia's macroeconomic conditions, including layoffs, decreased GDP, a recession in 2020, decreased foreign exchange reserves, and a devalued exchange rate. These macroeconomic conditions provide a rational reason for the central government to prioritize economic interests in pandemic policies. In Indonesia, economic interests seem to be the main determinant of pandemic policies. Kriswibowo & Utomo (2020) argues that the government's response, such as delayed actions at the start of the pandemic, criteria-based PSBB policies, communication policies aimed at maintaining market confidence, low testing and tracing capacity, and substantial subsidies to business institutions, all prioritize economic interests. While most political-economic analyses of pandemic policies focus on the national level, this study aims to examine the political economy of pandemic policies at the regional level (Kriswibowo & Utomo, 2020). Moving to the local government level, Korwa et al. (2020) studied the policy implementation of the Papua Provincial Government in halting the spread of Covid-19. The government implemented travel restrictions with local stakeholder support but faced challenges from the central government. This early lockdown policy effectively reduced local transmission and deaths from Covid-19 while facilitating the work of health workers (Korwa et al., 2020).

Contrary to that, Herdiana (2020) analysed the implementation of the New Habit Adaptation policy in West Java Province. Although this policy was based on WHO guidelines and had legal legitimacy, it faced challenges in implementation due to a lack of synergy between the provincial and district governments. Non-maximal community compliance was also observed due to uneven pandemic socialization and literacy. The outcome of the policy was not clearly visible due to biased and undetectable success measures (Herdiana, 2020). In Nigeria, Onyishi et al. (2021) highlights the role of civil society organizations in fighting Covid-19 at the urban-local level. Urban governance, involving cooperation between local governments, business leaders, and cultural leaders, plays a crucial role in handling the pandemic in urban areas (Onyishi et al., 2021).

We understand that many countries have a top-down character in terms of pandemic policies, so that the majority of political-economic analyzes use national units of analysis. Therefore, this study seeks to contribute to the literature on pandemic policies by adopting a political-economic perspective at the local government level. Despite the top-down nature of the PSBB and PPKM policies in Indonesia, their implementation is not simultaneous nationwide, and the scale of restrictions varies. This condition creates space for a new political-economic debate at the local level.

Based on the literature review, this study's significance lies in the researcher's effort to examine network relations in the political economy of policy formulation under critical conditions. Policy formulation during a pandemic must be analysed through the lens of critical conditions. Policy studies commonly use two lenses: one for normal situations and another for crisis situations (Alfirdaus & Yuwono, 2020). According to Alfirdaus & Yuwono (2020) that

critical conditions introduce uncertainty in terms of objectives, time frames, public involvement, political support, human resources, and budget. By adopting a critical conditions lens, this study aims to analyse policy formulation within the context of a pandemic (Craig, 2018).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs a policy network framework to analyse the actors and interests involved in pandemic management policies in Palembang City. Kickert et al. (1997) emphasizes the importance of networking and interdependence among actors. According to Kickert in Subhan (2015), *"Actors in networks are independent because they cannot achieve their goals by themselves, but need the resources of the actor to do so. Independence is based on the distribution of resources over various actors, the goals they pursue and perceptions of their recourse dependencies"*.

Mapping actor networks, analysing relations, coalitions, belief systems, subsystem configurations, actor strategies, and network translation are integral to comprehensively reformulating policy networks (Rhodes & Marsh, 1992). Policy network reform necessitates policy innovation to drive positive policy change. It also requires a policy-setting agenda, particularly to mobilize actors. In the context of political actors, networks thrive on equal positioning among multiple actors. These equal actors come together based on their respective limitations, creating a concept of "dependence." Policy networks encompass entities that seek to influence policies and interact during the formulation and implementation processes (Apriliyanti & Pramusinto, 2020; Bauroth, 2017; Scholz, 2010). These interacting entities represent various stakeholders with specific interests, typically including government, civil society, and business entities (Tressa, 2020).

Apriliyanti & Pramusinto (2020) explains that these entities encompass bureaucracy, political parties, interest groups, civil society organizations, scientists, think tanks, and others. Their forms can vary depending on the policy context under discussion. These entities interact and compete to articulate and advance their interests on particular issues (Apriliyanti, 2020). Such relationships emerge due to interdependence between stakeholders, as actors cannot achieve their goals individually or due to the decentralization and democratization of policies mandated by the New Public Management (Tressa, 2020). Interactions among entities can give rise to different network forms, including bureaucratic networks (dominated by bureaucracy), clientelist networks (dominated by business entities as patrons), triadic networks (involving three entities), and pluralist networks (Tressa, 2020). The form of the network shapes the level of public acceptance, which, in turn, affects policy stability and effectiveness. Callon (1986) proposes the theory of translation, where an actor mobilizes resources or networks with other actors to form stable alliances .

In the context of pandemic response policies in Palembang City, this research aims to identify the entities comprising the pandemic response policy community, analyse interactions and contests of interests among these entities, and examine the form of the policy network that emerges once the policy is approved. The findings from these inquiries will shed light on the level of public acceptance, which significantly impacts the stability and effectiveness of pandemic management policies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach using the case study method to investigate the political economy of previous pandemic policies across various research locations. The case study method was selected to ensure a focused, detailed, and directed discussion of the research problem. The research focus of this study is the city of Palembang. Palembang City was

specifically chosen as it is one of the cities that implemented derivative regulations related to Adapting New Habits. Furthermore, being the second largest city in Sumatra, it represents an important context for examining the impacts of Covid-19 from both health and economic perspectives, as highlighted in Onyishi's research (2020). Urban areas have experienced significant effects due to the pandemic, making Palembang an appropriate location for this study. Moreover, urban areas typically encompass diverse stakeholders in the health and economic sectors.

To gather primary data, in-depth interviews were conducted with a network of actors involved in formulating pandemic management policies. In parallel, secondary data was collected by reviewing policy documents, media coverage, and relevant literature. The obtained data was then streamlined and organized to meet the analytical requirements of the study. Finally, the authors integrated the data within the framework of the policy network theory to derive meaningful insights from this research. By employing this comprehensive approach, the study aims to provide valuable findings and a deeper understanding of the political economy dynamics underlying pandemic policies in Palembang City.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Navigating the Health-Economy Dilemma: The Intersection of Pandemic Policy, Politics, and Economic Impact

The first two years of the Covid-19 pandemic witnessed a rapid spread of the virus, exacerbated by the absence of effective treatments and limited vaccination programs. Consequently, countries worldwide had to prioritize implementing "flattening the curve" policies through non-pharmaceutical interventions, including mass quarantine (lockdowns), restrictions on gatherings, closure of non-essential facilities such as workplaces, places of worship, and educational institutions. Additionally, travel bans, mask mandates, disinfection protocols, and other preventive measures were adopted. These measures reflect decision-makers' strong focus on protecting human life by reducing active cases and mortality rates.

Simultaneously, the global economy faced severe disruptions amid the high morbidity and mortality caused by the pandemic. The economic crisis triggered by the 2019 pandemic surpassed the impact of the 2008 financial crisis, leading to recessions in numerous countries. Global economic growth contracted by up to 3.5%, resulting in an increase in global poverty affecting approximately 580 million people. Moreover, restrictions on the mobility of goods and services severely hampered supply chains for agricultural and energy commodities worldwide (Ramadhan, 2012).

One of the primary contributors to the global economic downturn has been the implementation of non-pharmaceutical interventions, such as social restrictions. Economic activity heavily relies on the mobility of people, goods, and services, which were significantly curtailed during the pandemic. This created a dilemma known as the health-economy dilemma (Kaim, Gering, et al., 2021), where striking a balance between non-pharmaceutical interventions and safeguarding the world economy became challenging. However, the economic impact of implementing social restrictions cannot be viewed in isolation. Medical costs must also be taken into account. Research by Kaim, Siman-tov, et al. (2021) reveals that during the first wave of Covid-19 in the United States, dealing with the virus without lockdown measures incurred medical costs of 1 trillion dollars (5% of the US economy). In contrast, implementing lockdowns and social restrictions reduced costs to only 35 billion dollars. These findings demonstrate that economic costs are inevitable even in a non-lockdown scenario, as economic performance does not improve significantly while medical costs escalate. Conversely, a lockdown scenario does lead to economic downturn, but experts believe that the

costs incurred are far less than allowing business-as-usual activities, which would result in higher medical costs. Social restriction policies have proven effective in countries like China, Taiwan, and Singapore, as they not only offer cost savings but also expedite the process of flattening the curve.

These rational considerations influenced the policy choices made by the Indonesian government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the past three years (2020-2022), the Indonesian government has implemented two major non-pharmaceutical interventions through social restriction policies: Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) and the Imposition of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM). Social restrictions were adopted as a preventive strategy to slow down the transmission of the virus while awaiting the availability of vaccines. The formulation of these policies primarily relied on scientific knowledge from the fields of health, medicine, virology, and epidemiology. Experts in these fields played a significant role in shaping and regulating the policies, including determining the zones (green, yellow, red) in the PSBB and the levels in the PPKM policies. Nevertheless, the choice of social restrictions cannot be divorced from political aspects and the interests of various stakeholders. Purwanto & Emilia (2020) argue that social restriction policies represent a middle ground between addressing the health crisis and sustaining economic activities, albeit at a reduced level. They assert that economic and health considerations cannot be simplistically separated into pro-lockdown or pro-economy stances. Instead, the PSBB and PPKM policies serve as a negotiation of complex national interests, aiming to curb the virus's spread while accommodating the economic interests of various groups.

At the community level, support for total lockdown or social restrictions is divided into two groups. According to the SMRC survey (2020), support for social restrictions or lockdowns is influenced by factors such as economic status, employment, and education. Those who support a total lockdown tend to come from the upper middle class, as they can work remotely and have sufficient savings. On the other hand, the lower middle class, informal workers dependent on daily income, and individuals without the privilege of working from home tend to support social restriction policies (Buheji et al., 2020). The Indonesian government has taken a leading role in implementing these policies. For instance, in the PSBB policy, the severity of restrictions varies between the green, yellow, and red zones. Similarly, the PPKM policies differentiate between regions based on four levels. The central government retains the authority to modify these policies. Such differences indicate that the central government acts as the sole actor responsible for determining and setting the indicators for each zone and level, as well as the sole custodian of the data used as a reference for these indicators. Regional governments are required to comply with the central government's directives.

Pandemic policies not only tend to be top-down but are also considered less democratic. They are primarily executive products rather than legislative ones and often lack the participation of civil society in the formulation process. However, some literature suggests that in many comparative cases, pandemic management policies have been more effective in non-democratic systems. Such systems enable the formulation and amendment of policies within short timeframes, allowing for greater policy flexibility in the face of the uncertainties inherent to pandemic situations. Therefore, economic and political interests may appear subdued in the public sphere, with public narratives revolving around pandemic management and economic recovery. However, economic and political interests can still be discerned in pandemic-related policy choices. For example, in establishing the Covid-19 Task Force Team, the Indonesian government appointed an economist to lead the team. Additionally, the President replaced the Minister of Health, who had a medical background, with a Minister possessing an economics background. These actions suggest that the government aims to maintain a rational balance between pandemic response and economic considerations.

In the local context of Palembang City, our research reveals that the contestation of interests in the formulation of pandemic management policies does not occur at the local level. Instead, all policies related to pandemic management are issued in the form of Mayor Regulations or Mayor Circulars, without the involvement of the local legislative body. This top-down approach limits the democratic participation of civil society in the policy-making process. We have identified two factors that contribute to this situation.

1. Top-down Policy Character

The top-down policy character plays a significant role. Our interviews with members of the Palembang City DPRD (Regional People's Representative Council) indicate that political and economic contestation in pandemic policies is absent at the local government level. The city government mainly follows instructions from the central government, issuing regulations in accordance with the guidelines set by higher authorities. As a result, the DPRD is not actively involved in the formulation of these policies but rather focuses on monitoring their implementation. This lack of contestation reflects the centralized nature of decision-making in Palembang City during the pandemic. Similarly, local business organizations such as HIPMI (Young Indonesian Entrepreneurs Association) and KADIN (Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry) revealed that they have not been involved in the formulation of pandemic policies, despite the direct impact on the local economy. However, they understand the necessity of these measures and support the city government's actions in the belief that controlling the pandemic is crucial for the recovery of the economy. While they convey the aspirations of entrepreneurs, MSMEs, and informal workers to their respective national-level organizations, the lack of direct involvement in local policy-making indicates a limited role in shaping local pandemic policies.

2. Prioritizing Humanity

The second factor that contributes to the absence of contestation at the local level is the prioritization of humanity. Interviews with DPRD members and the City Government of Palembang highlight that the crisis conditions caused by the pandemic have affected their incomes. Budget reallocations and cost-cutting measures have been implemented, leading to reduced benefits and income for bureaucrats and legislators. However, despite the financial impact, these individuals recognize the gravity of the situation and prioritize the humanitarian aspect. They willingly make personal sacrifices, understanding that the sooner the pandemic is controlled, the quicker the economic recovery will be. Their willingness to cut expenses and facilities demonstrates a collective focus on humanity as the guiding principle in dealing with the pandemic.

It is important to note that while contestation of economic and political interests in pandemic policies may be absent at the local level, it does not imply the absence of such contestation overall. The top-down policy approach ensures that contestation continues to take place at the national level. Local actors participate indirectly by conveying their aspirations through their respective organizations or political parties at the national level. This allows for some level of representation and expression of local interests, even though the decision-making process remains largely centralized and less democratic. Therefore, the absence of contestation of economic and political interests in pandemic policies at the local level is attributed to the top-down policy character and the prioritization of humanity. The centralization of decision-making and the willingness of local actors to prioritize the greater good contribute to the limited resistance observed. However, it is essential to recognize that contestation continues to occur

at the national level, where local actors voice their aspirations through their representative institutions and organizations.

Policy Network in Palembang's Pandemic Policy: Bureaucratic Network

Changes in governance in the contemporary era have transformed the structures and actors involved in policymaking. Nowadays, the state is no longer the sole entity responsible for formulating and implementing policies. Instead, policies always entail the participation of stakeholders representing both public and private sector interests. This collaborative approach to policy-making, involving various stakeholders, is commonly referred to as a policy network. Policy networks are essential because they foster interdependencies among actors in terms of knowledge, authority, and capital. In this research, the authors have conducted a mapping of the stakeholders who comprise the policy network for managing the Covid-19 pandemic in Palembang City. The following is the table:

Table.1 Actor Mapping Pandemic's Policy Network

Actor	Resource	Interest	Strategy
Palembang City's Government	• Budget • Regulation • Reseptive of central government	• Stopping the outbreak of Covid-19 • Maintaining economic stability • Humanity	• Following up on central government policies through derivative regulations • City government policy initiative
Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) of Palembang City	• Legislative, budgeting and oversight rights • Political parties	• Political interests (aspirations of electoral district voters) • Humanity	• Agenda setting and controlling in every municipal government policy • Support to City Government Policy • Delivering Aspirations through Political Party colleagues in the DPR RI
Association of Medical Personnel	• Organization of doctors and medical personnel	• Policies that prioritize stopping the spread of the virus (lock	• Aspirations through related agencies • Aspirations through

	• Main actor 3T (tracing, testing, treatment)	- down, PSBB, PPKM) • Decreasing cases, availability of health facilities, and safety of health workers	associations at the central level
BusinessE Association	• Business actors' organization and pressure • Economic contribution to the region	• Covid recovery as soon as possible so that the economy can run as usual • <i>Humanity</i>	• Aspiration through DPRD and City Government • Aspirations through the Association at the central level
Civil Society	• Mass pressure • Civil Society Organizations	• Availability of health workers and health facilities for 3T • The economy continues • Social assistance • <i>Humanity</i>	Aspiration through civil society organizations, professional associations and DPRD

Sources: Compiled by the Author (2022)

Based on the information provided, the policy network involved in the formulation of pandemic management policies in Palembang City encompasses various actors, including the Palembang City Government, related agencies, the Palembang City DPRD, civil society associations (especially medical personnel associations and business associations), and civil society at large. These actors have been mapped based on their resources, interests, and strategies. The Palembang City Government emerges as the actor with the largest resources, primarily in terms of budget and authority. Notably, our findings reveal that all actors within the pandemic policy network share a common humanitarian interest, which is to end the pandemic as quickly as possible while minimizing the number of victims. However, their roles and actions differ. Formal state actors such as the city government and DPRD implement strategies based on their respective duties, principles, functions, and authorities. On the other hand, civil society associations tend to convey their aspirations through their national-level associations, which are then forwarded to the DPR RI or the central government.

Drawing from the policy network theory discussed in the first chapter, it is evident that the type of policy network observed in Palembang City's Covid-19 response is a bureaucratic network, characterized by a dominance of bureaucratic actors and procedural mechanisms. This dominance of bureaucrats can be attributed to the top-down nature of the pandemic policy. As

a result, the local government acts as an extension of policies set by the central government, requiring the translation and implementation of these policies by bureaucratic officials at the city government level. This streamlined approach bypasses lengthy and potentially interest-driven political processes, contributing to the dynamic nature of the pandemic policies implemented in Palembang City thus far.

The bureaucratic nature of the policy network in Palembang City indicates a centralized decision-making process, with the central government setting the overarching policies that are then implemented at the local level. While this approach may facilitate swift action and efficient policy implementation, it also raises questions about the level of local autonomy and the extent of participation from diverse stakeholders. The top-down character of the pandemic policies limits the contestation of economic and political interests at the local level, as the focus remains on aligning with and executing the directives from the central government.

CONCLUSION

Policy Network theory categorizes policy networks into four types: bureaucratic network (dominated by bureaucracy), clientelist network (dominated by business entities as patrons), triadic network (spread across three entities), and pluralist network. Based on the mapping of actors involved in the pandemic policy network, the research findings indicate that the type of policy network observed is a bureaucratic network, characterized by the dominance of bureaucracy. This suggests that the space for contestation of agendas and political-economic interests is not as prominent in regional pandemic response policies, as these policies have a top-down structure originating from the central government. As a result, the majority of contestation occurs at the central government level.

Importantly, this research contributes to the recognition of the significance of "humanity" values in policy studies with a political character. Traditionally, policy studies with a political focus have primarily considered policies as outcomes driven by rational and profitable interests. Factors beyond profit and loss have received limited attention in policy considerations. However, in critical conditions such as the pandemic, the interests of humanity replace the usual profit-and-loss considerations within policy networks. This human factor, often overlooked in policy studies, assumes a political character and plays a significant role. By emphasizing the value of humanity in policy studies, this research highlights the importance of incorporating ethical and humanitarian considerations into policy-making processes. It encourages policymakers to not solely prioritize economic interests but also consider the well-being and welfare of individuals and communities affected by policies. Recognizing the political nature of human-centric factors in policy formulation can lead to more inclusive and responsive policies, particularly during times of crisis.

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