

# The Relationship of Tradition, Religion, and Politics Emergency Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic Implemented by Indonesia Government

*by* Siti Mahmudah

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# The Relationship of Tradition, Religion, and Politics Emergency Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic Im- plemented by Indonesia Government

Siti Mahmudah<sup>1</sup>, Alamsyah<sup>2</sup>

(Affiliation): Universitas 10 Negeri Raden Intan, Lampung Indonesia  
Email: sitimahmudah05@gmail.com

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## Abstract

This study analyzed the relationship of tradition, religion, and politics the government's efforts to overcome the COVID-19 Pandemic emergency in Indonesia. The relationship between contrasting tends to be the cause of Indonesia's failure to prevent COVID-19 pandemic. This study investigated why the relationship of tradi<sup>2</sup>n, religion, and politics is not in line with the government's program in handling the emergency response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia? And what<sup>6</sup> the solution? This article aimed to find successful solutions to government programs in handling the COVID-19 Pandemic emergency in Indonesia. This study used qualitative methods, Foucault's theory on power-relations and historical approaches to facilitating data collection and processing. Meanwhile, data analysis by referring these theories and approaches in stages and layers, gradually using the author's creative imagination. This study found that the Indonesian government made and<sup>7</sup> plemented the right programs following the Indonesian context but has not been able to break the chain of transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic as initially intended. The reason is that in Indonesia, some traditions, religious practices, and political grudges became obstacles to these government programs.

## Keywords

Tradition, Religion, Politics, COVID-19, in Indonesia

## 1. Introduction (Heading 1)

Indonesia failed to break the COVID-19 Pandemic transmission chain, which has begun to spread since March 2, 2020, partly because there is a relationship <sup>2</sup>tradition, religion, and politics that is not in line with the government's program as the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this case, first, Indonesia was proud of being able to detect COVID-19 patients. The government has not had the chance to consider that the COVID-19 transmission will be uncontrolled and deathly in Indonesia as today. As of August 16, 2020, in Indonesia, 137,468 patients were treated, reaching 6,071 deaths, and 91,321 recovered [1]. This trend shows an increase in the number of COVID-19 patients after the government announced a new standard policy. The public has interpreted it as a return to the traditional life era by ignoring health protocols[2].

The Indonesian government has begun to earnestly implement the program as an emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic since a state official, Budi Karya Sumadi, the Minister of Transportation, was early detected as a positive patient infected

in the 76<sup>th</sup> COVID-19 case on March 14, 2020[3]. Campuses and schools have been closed since March 16, 2020. Office employees have been encouraged to work from home (WFH), lecturers and teachers have been encouraged to teach online from home. Physical distancing and living at home extended for all individuals in Indonesia. However, at first, the government program continued to experience some obstacles. Traditional people believe the government's plan is related to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency response because people believe that the COVID-19 pandemic will only attack sinners; they call it "Pagebluk" [4], [5]. Some conservative Muslim groups believe that people should only fear God and not be afraid of COVID-19. So they still go to the mosque for prayer and study. This activity is related to religious practice in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, some people deny Joko Widodo as president of Indonesia as the last presidential election's sentiment in April 2019[6]. According to opposition groups that Joko Widodo became president due to fraud in the 2019 elections. It is, therefore, under no obligation to comply with all of its policies. As a result, these people tend to underestimate the government programs related to COVID-19 and create hoaxes that are quite disturbing publicly. Those are the problems related to tradition, religion, and politics that have thwarted the government programs in the emergency response to break the chain of the COVID-19 transmission in Indonesia.

The previous studies have analyzed public support and the contexts that support the government policies regarding the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia[7]–[10]. GAP in this study is the opposite. This article aims to find a successful solution for government programs in handling the COVID-19 Pandemic emergency in Indonesia. Does his research question investigate why traditional, religious, and political relations are not in line with the government's program in handling the COVID-19 Pandemic emergency response in Indonesia? And what's the solution? This research discusses actions that do not support government policies in anticipating the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has begun to penetrate Indonesian territory since March 2, 2020, until now.

The solution offered is that the government should take firm action in terms of sanctions, fines, or punishments for parties who are still violating the rules, which thwart the effort to break the chain of the COVID-19 transmission in Indonesia. The COVID-19 health protocol's implementation, maintaining cleanliness, using masks, social distancing, and physical distancing in new normal conditions in Indonesia is a better survival, living side by side with COVID-19 while remaining to be careful about the risk of transmission.

## 2. Literature Reviews

The COVID-19 Pandemic began to spread from Wuhan, Hubei province, China[11], [12] and has brought many new challenges to health in various countries including Indonesia. On March 2, 2020, President Joko Widodo reported the first two cases of COVID-19 infection in Indonesia. As of August 16, 2020, Indonesia has reached 137.468 treated patients, reaching 6.071 deaths, and 91.321 cured patients[1].

The Depok-Jakarta area is the first and foremost red spot for transmitting the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia. This incident occurred on March 2, 2020, in which there were guests from Japan who were tested positive for COVID-19 [13]. Tracing operators' results to positive patients obtained answers; she met a 64-year-old mother and her 31-year-old daughter, who later tested positive for COVID-19. [14]. President Joko

Widodo himself announced his news. These two people from Depok were the first two people to test positive for COVID-19 in Indonesia and were detected accurately on March 2, 2020. At first, the government was not worried about receiving this news and even felt proud that the Health Sector of the Republic of Indonesia was able to detect COVID-19. Successfully COVID-19 carriers from the beginning are the pride and progress of the health sector, according to President Joko Widodo. Even the president had confidence that COVID-19 would not enter Indonesia; therefore, the Indonesian government sent 3 million masks to China. Finally, when the COVID-19 Pandemic was rapidly increasing in Indonesia, people were confused because they could not find covers at drugstores at that time. However, knowing the Minister of Transportation - Budi Karya, tested positive for COVID-19 on March 14, 2020[15], the government spontaneously felt whipped. Practically, only since then did the authorities begin to move quickly, knowing that it was too late. Indonesia is not yet ready to prepare for the COVID-19 pandemic attack, spreading rapidly from person to person. Everyone was stressed, panicked, and confused about what to do to prevent the COVID-19 infection.

The Indonesian government has made a policy that everyone must comply with regulations related to the spread of COVID-19. It has been spreading in Indonesia and will transmit to anyone who does not abide by the rules. Immediately, the community has been urged not to organize events aimed at gathering people in one place. All activities that could be the crowd's cause are banned, such as discotheques, clubbing, cinemas, mosques, churches, offices, schools, and universities throughout Indonesia that have been simultaneously closed since March 16, 2020, until now. Instead, people should stay indoors, work, and study from home[16].

However, Indonesian people still do not comply with government recommendations that aim to break the COVID-19 transmission chain for various reasons. The number of COVID-19 positive patients is still increasing, from just two people on March 2, 2020, to 137,468 patients treated; 6,071 deaths and 91,321 patients recovered [17]

### 3. Method

This research uses an analytical method with a qualitative approach that explores policies and messages and gives meaning (Flick et al., 2000). Policy analysis is a method of analyzing policies both expressly (text) and implied (context) regarding the true meaning (White & Marsh, 2006). Policy analysis is intended to explore a written text content and classified based on focus and sub-focus and then interpreted to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the problem. This study's theoretical review approaches, data analysis, and discussion (Mayring, 2014).

Based on the above, the procedures carried out in this study are as follows: First, identify policies' implementation. Second, analyze the data through a group discussion forum. Third, conclude the results of the study using a genetic structural approach. The research data consists of primary data derived from corpus data and government policies related to the research focus. While secondary data in the form of a collection of text quotations from various information media. Data analysis techniques in this study use inductive data analysis by Philip Marrying. All data units in the form of a data corpus are excerpts from government policy. Various other text excerpts are pioneered based on the analysis unit and described in advance to understand each analysis unit category. Abstract, define, interpret and find essential things following the focus / sub-focus of the research. Data

analysis using inductive analysis accumulates research problem categories into a data analysis unit based on focus / sub-focus of research. Then, analyzing and interpreting data units is studied based on the genetic structural approach.

The steps or procedures of data analysis in this study are as follows: First, analyze government policy to gain a clear understanding of the autonomous structure of the policy, Second, load and determine the data analysis units in the form of data corpus collection or collection of text excerpts from the policy and other groups of text quotations based on the categories of problems specified following the focus / sub-focus of the research. Third, analyze and abstract the corpus data from policies related to religiosity's dimensions reviewed from the relationship with tradition, religion, and politics. Fourth, Analyze and outline society's social structure that contributes to creating politics to find the dimension of religiosity and practice. Fifth, analyze and abstract ideas or ideas and life experiences to contribute to providing solutions. Sixth, re-examine the results of analysis and abstraction of each category and indicators studied to obtain better and credible research results based on the focus / sub-focus of research. Seventh, interpret and discuss the analysis results through discussion group forums to make conclusions and recommendations. Data validity requires data checking through credibility checks, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The examination through credibility focused on the conformity between researchers' concept and the concepts that existed in the previous researchers.

#### 4. Results and Discussions

The Indonesian Government's Program in the Context of the Emergency Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Table 1 lists the government's efforts in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia.

**Table 1.** The emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia

No	Policy Maker	Program	Field	Executor
1.	Government	Provision of more than 100 hospitals equipped with isolation rooms and adequate equipment according to international standards for COVID-19 care[18]	Health	Medical Team (Doctors, Nurses, and Staff)
2	Government	Closing offices, campuses, and schools in all Indonesia regions with the tolerance of Working From Home (WFH), and students learn through TVRI [16].	Employment and education	Office staff, lecturers, teachers, and students.
3	Government	Enforcement of physical distancing for all Indonesian people (Taher, 2020)	Health, Safety, and Sanitation	All Indonesian people
4.	Government	Recommendations for self-quarantine or isolation in hospitals for anyone who has been detected or suspected of exposure to	Health	COVID-19 patients

		COVID-19 [19]		
5.	Government	Providing basic food assistance for the lower middle class [20]	Officer / Volunteer	Indonesian society
6.	Government	Provision of free hotel rooms for nurses [21]	Health	Medical personnel
7.	Government	Providing free burial ground for COVID-19 patients who die, according to the COVID-19 standard health protocol[22]	Health	The COVID-19 Corps
8.	Government	Granting permission to Work From Home (WFH) for civil servants while still receiving full salaries [23]	Economy	Civil Servants
9.	Government	Exemption from electricity payments for middle and lower classes [3]	Civil Servants	Low economic level society
10.	Government	Providing ambulances and free health services for those exposed to COVID-19[24]	Health	COVID-19 patients
11.	Government	Providing a Roche Light-Cycler test kit from Switzerland that can detect 10,000 swab samples per day using the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) method, which has a high degree of accuracy for detecting COVID-19 [25]	Medical personnel	Indonesian People
12.	Government	Implementation of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB), starting in Jakarta on Friday, April 10, 2020 [26]	Officer / Volunteer	People in Jakarta
13.	Government	Closure of toll roads for private vehicles leaving Jakarta, boat trips, sea, and airtransportation, since April 24, 2020, in anticipation of the homecoming tradition celebrating the Eid al-Fitr of Muslims in Indonesia. [27]	Officer	Indonesian society
14.	Government	Enforcing the new normal with strict COVID-19 health protocols in Indonesia since June 1, 2020. [28]	Empowering the people's economic sector	Indonesian society

Some exceptions are permitted, such as inviting only ten people to pray in a public location. Other activities that are carried out such as meeting daily basic needs, exercising separately, circumcision in the health office, marriage at the Office of Religious Affairs

(KUA) or The Office of Civil Records, and burial (*takziah*) of victims who are not positive COVID-19 [29].

Private motor vehicle transportation is permitted to meet basic needs. Public transport continues to operate at a limit of 50% of the average capacity. Meanwhile, online motorcycle taxis are also limited to transporting goods only. All those excluded, of course, remain following the provisions of the COVID-19 health protocol and social and physical distancing restrictions socialized by the central government[30].

### **Tradition, Religion, and Politics**

#### *Maintained Traditions in Indonesia*

Indonesian society highly upholds the traditions of their ancestors in the practice of their daily lives. The government realizes that its relationship with the community[31] by preserving the cultural heritage of the Indonesian nation. This kind of approach is still happening today, especially in Java Island. They regard epidemics such as COVID-19 as stigma, which is a negative trait associated with sinful acts. Pain is a punishment for sinners. For Javanese people, dying caused by COVID-19 and no one visiting and escorting his body to the funeral is a disgrace that is very embarrassing to the extended family. As a result, people infected with the COVID-19 virus avoid seeing a doctor or hospital because they cannot bear the shame that embarrasses their extended family [32]. One of the government's constraints to split the COVID-19 transmission chain in Indonesia is the tradition of the people in Java and its surroundings. As of August 16, 2020, 137,468 patients treated, 6,071 patients died, and 91,321 patients recovered[33].

The form of advice in Javanese tradition in dealing with calamities, including COVID-19, is "*Eling lan Waspodo*" [34]. *Eling* means not leaving one's identity as a creature, a servant who follows the Creator's provisions. *Waspodo* means alert of COVID-19 by following the government recommendations such as not crowding or leaving home if it is not necessary, and washing hands frequently. It is enough with this language because this is the only language they understand.

The Javanese believe that the "*empon-empon*" can prevent COVID-19, but the "*empon-empon*" traders in the Brinjarharjo-Yogyakarta market do not understand why their products are always sold out[35]. These traders feel good because their merchandise sold out, and they get a lot of money to take home. Javanese call the COVID-19 pandemic "Pageblug," which means an outbreak or disaster that has claimed countless lives. [4], [5].

Another obstacle is that ordinary people in Indonesia do not understand the terms associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the general public is rugged with social distancing, physical distancing, lockdown, and new regular policies. These terms must be socialized in detail to the community down to villages in Indonesia either by medical personnel or COVID-19 volunteers. [36]–[38]

Then there are the terms going home, new clothes, and big cooking. The traditions carried out every time *Eid al-Fitr* in Indonesia comes the COVID-19 pandemic coincides with Ramadhan and *Eid al-Fitr*, which is a time to gather with family for the people of Indonesia. The tradition of wearing new clothes and providing unique dishes to welcome the moon's coming has always been very glorified for Muslims in Indonesia. The government prohibits its citizens from carrying out such activities to maintain the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak more widely. The three incidents were very unsafe against the transmission of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia. However, President Joko Widodo

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and his staff have been trying to prohibit homecoming residents in Jakarta and its surroundings [39].

#### *Religious Practices in Indonesia*

Islam is a religion that is followed and recognized by most Indonesians, in which nearly 90% of the faith of Indonesia's population is Islam[40]. The adherents of this religion are called Muslims. They adhere to sharia, which comes from revelation, namely the al-Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims in the understanding of sharia derived from one source, namely the Qur'an and hadith of the Prophet Muhammad have different views. Sharia problems in Indonesia have caused Muslim groups to have different understandings of sharia as a religious law source. A further interpretation of sharia has led to moderate, conservative or radical Muslim groups in Indonesia[41].

Moderate Muslim groups tend to be consistent, obedient, and loyal to the existing power, that is, President Joko Widodo at this time. Meanwhile, conservative or radical Muslim groups have taken the opposite attitude to be inconsistent and disobedient to the existing government. This second group of Muslims often brings Islam to the political stage, which is religiously violent, extreme, and fanatical. They did not want to heed the government's advice regarding the COVID-19 pandemic by praying in congregation at the mosque and holding recitation. In the end, many of them have been exposed and tested positive for COVID-19.

Conservative or radical Muslim groups have a motto that, as servants of Allah, they can only fear Allah, must not be afraid of COVID-19. They prioritize praying at the mosque rather than praying at home. Believers continue praying in mosques, while non-believers are frightened of COVID-19 and leave the mosques. That is the belief that prevents them from understanding physical distancing and its benefits for many people and can save many people. As happened at the Baiturrahman Aceh mosque, people continue to hold Friday prayers in congregation during the COVID-19 pandemic can be seen in figure 1.

Other terms commonly used in Indonesia include conservative Muslims (1) Fear of doing Friday prayers in mosques because Covid is considered disbelief. Continuing to perform Friday prayers in the mosque during COVID-19 is a sign of a believer; (2) Death, sickness, or life are God's business; (3) We should not fear COVID-19, only fear Allah. Conservative or radical Muslim groups in Indonesia have always rejected the regime. There is an element of dislike for the rule because the elected government, such as President Joko Widodo, is not coming from his group; (4) This life belongs only to Allah; and they continue to hold religious activities in the congregation, namely Friday prayers and recitation. As happened in the Kemang sub-district, Bogor district, on Friday, April 17, 2020, two people died because of praying on Friday in the mosque[42].





**Figure 1.** Prayer at the Aceh Baiturrahman Mosque during the COVID-19.

The religious practices that are understood and applied by conservative or radical Muslim groups, as mentioned above, are the obstacles that have caused the government's failure to break the chain of COVID-19 transmission in Indonesia. As evidence, COVID-19 patients have been increasing from day to day since March 2, 2020, until now.

#### *Politics during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia*

Indonesian society is predominantly Muslim, 90% of the current 268,583,016 Indonesian population[43]. The Muslim community in Indonesia reaches 223 million people. However, Indonesia is not an Islamic country. Indonesia is a secular democracy strongly influenced by the growing power relationship of Muslim groups in Indonesia. Table 2 describes the presence of Muslim groups in Indonesia.

**Table 1.** Illustrates the existence of Muslim groups in Indonesia[44], [45]

No	Muslim group	Total	Category
1	Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)	50% of the total of 223 million Indonesian Muslims (111,500,000 people)	Moderate
2	Muhammadiyah	14.9% of the total of 223 million Indonesian Muslims (31,220,000)	Moderate
3	Islamic Union (PERSIS)	1% of the total of 223 million Indonesian Muslims (2,230,000)	Moderate
4	Islamism	17.1% of the total of 223 million Indonesian Muslims (38,042,000)	Conservative/Radical
5	Novice	17% of the total of 223 million Indonesian Muslims 38,041,000	Neutral

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Table 2 shows that as many as 55.50% of the 192,866,254 participants in the April 2019 presidential election have chosen Joko Widodo. Where most of them come from moderate Muslim groups, both from the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and the Islamic Union (Persis) (Idris, May 29, 2019, 21.35 WIB). However, 44.50% did not elect Joko Widodo as President of Indonesia and even has rejected him before the April 2019 presidential election (Kompas.com, 2019). The difference between the two votes is 11% (Bayu, May 21, 2019, 01.36 WIB). This group has been against the government policies since the announcement of Joko Widodo's victory on May 21, 2019, as the President of Indonesia. The COVID-19 outbreak in Indonesia is a challenge for the elected president - Joko Widodo - to show his performance after the April 2019 presidential election. Nearly 44.50% of Indonesians have doubted President Joko Widodo's ability to lead Indonesia ahead of the next presidential election, namely in the year 2024. The reason is that there has been jihad propaganda as a form of rejection of power, which he deems fraudulent and unfair. This incident occurred and was practised by conservative Muslim groups in Indonesia after the announcement of President Joko Widodo's victory by the KPU on May 21, 2019, to reject Joko Widodo's success in the April 2019 presidential election [46]. This group has accused President Joko Widodo of winning by cheating. During the COVID-19 outbreak that has taken place since March 2, 2020, based on the observation and reading of the news circulating that President Joko Widodo, has been considered a leader who cares enough, acts quickly and wisely in making decisions related to COVID-19, which is also endemic in Indonesia. As proof, Prabowo, as one of the ministers in President Joko Widodo's Cabinet, admits it and appreciates him [47]. He spoke openly that President Joko Widodo's performance was outstanding, unlike what was alleged by the conservative Muslim group, his supporters (Prabowo). President Joko Widodo has worked earnestly to think about his people, especially during the COVID-19 era in Indonesia. Prabowo also asked all members of the Gerindra party in particular and society in general to end the political quarrels that have been happening so far. Prabowo is willing to join president Joko Widodo's government to end the political differences so far.

The government is good enough to deal with the COVID-19 emergency response that has occurred in Indonesia. However, certain groups do not accept President Joko Widodo. They do not heed the government's work and often make fun of and underestimate the Joko Widodo government's position, including handling the COVID-19 pandemic. These conservative or radical Muslim groups have obstructed the government programs in the context of the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. The reason is that they have rejected the existence of President Joko Widodo, who he considers to have won based on fraud in the last April 2019 presidential election. Prabowo Subianto, who was his choice, lost and returned to join the elected president's group. Consequently, they often reject the existing authorities by spreading hoaxes related to COVID-19, disturbing the public.

Some examples of the hoax news are as follows:

"On Sunday (15/3/2020), news circulated on social media stating that a woman suspected of contracting COVID-19 was sprawling in the mall in the [\*Indah Kapuk Beach\*](#) (PIK) area. The information shared by Twitter accounts @ArieSyakira.

"I don't know when this happened. Circulating information there are victims of coronavirus on the 3rd floor of PIK Cengkareng. Is this information valid, friends? Avoid crowds for now," he wrote.

However, can this information be trusted?

*Explanation:*

Based on an investigation by Turnbackhoax. Id - Suara.com network on Sunday (15/3/2020), The public should not trust the information because of that fake news or hoax. The reason was, the location of the incident was not at PIK but Clementi Mall in Singapore "[48].

## 5. Results and Discussions

The Indonesian government has created and implemented the right program following the Indonesian context but has still not been able to break the COVID-19 chain transmission as initially intended. COVID-19 in Indonesia predicted that would end in mid-May 2020. However, the number of positive patients for COVID-19 is still increasing today; as of August 16, 2020, 137,468 patients are treated, 6,071 patients died, and 91,321 patients have cured.

The answers are, first, there is a tradition that assumes that COVID-19 is a stigma. They do not want to see a doctor or a hospital for fear of getting embarrassed by themselves and their extended family. They have considered that Eid al-Fitr is a tradition they are very proud of since their ancestors' time. They cannot ban from going home. They cannot live simply during Eid al-Fitr in terms of staying away from the crowds in markets and malls to buy new clothes and the need for luxury dishes on Eid al-Fitr. Second, there is a rigid and literal understanding of religion. There are still conservative Muslim groups labelled as religious extremes who deliberately perform congregational prayers in mosques, holding recitations in mosques with the motto the believers can only fear Allah and must not be afraid COVID-19. Third, political grudges are still remnants of conservative Muslim groups with past political grievances that reject President Joko Widodo's victory. They often spread hoax news related to COVID-19 in Indonesia. There are traditions, literal religious practices, and political grudges that have become obstacles to the success of the government programs associated with the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, which tend to fail to break the chain of COVID-19 transmission and take a very long time to overcome.

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