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Local Traditions, Infectious Disease Outbreaks and Health Quarantine Regulation: Examining Society’s Legal Awareness on Social Restriction During The Outbreaks of Covid-19 Pandemic

Marcella Elwina Simandjuntak
Soegijapranata Catholic University
marcella@unika.ac.id

1 ABSTRACT

“Mudik” is one of Indonesian society’s traditions during religious holidays. Whether during Eid al-Fitr (Eid), or Christmas and Easter, Indonesian people flock to return home or do ‘mudik’ to celebrate the moment with loved ones back home. Since the Covid-19 outbreak pandemic, a ‘mudik’ tradition has been banned and temporarily suspended by the Government. The purpose is to prevent and break the chain of spreading the Coronavirus (Covid-19). Even though national regulations regarding health quarantine and infectious disease outbreaks exist and a large-scale social restriction and community activities restriction rules/policies has been enforced, violations of these regulations/policies remain high. For ‘mudik’ during religious holidays, people take various ways to return to their original kampung, village or city, which ultimately impacts the increase of Covid-19 cases. This paper tries to talk about the increase in Covid-19 cases related to the tradition of ‘mudik’ during religious holidays and to discuss the regulation, policies and efforts that the government has issued and taken to lessen the local tradition of ‘mudik’ to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Keywords: Local Tradition, Covid-19 Pandemic, Health Quarantine, Social Restrictions

BACKGROUND

Indonesian society is a communal society that is full of local traditions. One of these traditions is the ‘mudik’ or homecoming tradition during religious holidays. Whether during Eid al-Fitr, followed by ‘halalbihalal’ – a typical practice of the Muslim Archipelago, or Christmas and Easter – which are Christian religious holidays, Indonesian people flock to return home to celebrate this day with beloved family in their hometown. Since the Covid-19 outbreaks, the tradition has been temporarily banned/suspended by the Government. The suspension is to prevent and break the chain of spreading the Coronavirus (Covid-19). Although prohibited, restricted, and sanctioned, in reality, the local tradition of ‘mudik’ on these holidays cannot dampen the people’s desire to meet their families in their hometowns, regardless of the dangers they will cause to their families and those closest to them.

As a communalistic society, it is pretty tricky for the Government to convince the community to eliminate or even temporarily postpone the tradition of ‘mudik,’ regardless of their own or their family’s health. Even though the Government has tried to stop the flow of this ‘mudik’ migration with various rules and methods, including sanctioning those who do it, millions of people still end up in their hometowns during

religious holidays. Although regulated both at the national and local levels, many violations of regulations and policies regarding large-scale social restrictions or the imposition of national and local restrictions on community activities occurred shortly before and during the celebrations of these religious holidays. As a result, after the phenomenon ended, the percentage of Covid-19 cases increased sharply.

PROBLEM

This paper tries to talk about the increase in Covid-19 cases related to the tradition of ‘mudik’ during religious holidays and to discuss the regulation, policies and efforts that the government has issued and taken to lessen the local tradition of ‘mudik’ to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

METHODS

The paper follows the qualitative approach or method. The data used are various regulations, policies and efforts issued and taken by the government both before and after the Covid-19 Pandemic to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 Pandemic in general and to lessen the ‘mudik’ phenomenon in particular.

Empirical data regarding total covid-19 cases before and after the ‘mudik’ phenomenon are collected by observing several online mass-media reports, especially data on 2020 and 2021 Eid al-Fitr and 2020 Christmas, to link the ‘mudik’ phenomenon with Covid-19 increasing cases. Data is analyzed qualitatively.

DISCUSSION

A. The Origin of ‘Mudik’ Tradition

‘Mudik’ is one of the interesting traditions of Indonesian society, especially for those who work outside their hometown. Towards the Eid al-Fitr or Lebaran, these local migrants return to their hometowns to visit their parents, families, and loved ones. The main purpose of ‘mudik’ is to meet their family and friends and relieve their homesickness. In addition to Eid, Indonesian people are also flocked to return to their ‘kampong’ or village or original hometown during Christmas and New Year or other religious holidays.

Ivan Lanin, a Director of Narabahasa and one of an Indonesian Wikipedias, said that the word ‘mudik’ dates back to 1390 and is written in the ancient Malay text ‘Hikayat Raja Pasai.’ The meaning of the word ‘mudik’ in this text is ‘go upstream.’ In its development, the sense of ‘mudik’ has changed. Nowadays, the meaning is more to ‘going back to the village’ or ‘going back to the place of origin.’ Though it has the meaning of returning home, ‘mudik’ is not limited only to returning to the original ‘village’ but also to the actual ‘city,’ considering that these ‘mudikers’ come from villages and cities scattered throughout Indonesia. The term ‘mudik’ itself according to Ivan Lanin has only been popular since the 1970s. This word became a designation for local migrants who returned to their hometowns. In Javanese, people interpret mudik as an acronym for ‘*mulih dhisik*,’ which means going home. Meanwhile, in the Betawi

language, 'udik' means remote area or village. Finally, this vocabulary has been absorbed in the Indonesian language, which means 'going home'.¹

If at first the word 'mudik' was only intended to release homesickness for parents and relatives during the holidays, this phenomenon has a different meaning now. According to Selviero Raden Lilik Aji Sampurno, now, in addition to releasing nostalgia, mudik is closer to a 'symbol' or 'event' or 'time' to show one's existence. When going home, people return to their villages with money, gifts, 'luxurious things' such as car, new motorbike, expensive clothes and jewelry, etc., as something to be proud of and something they could show off. They want to show their families and relatives their successful life².

A 'mudik' phenomenon as a 'meaningful symbol' is also mentioned by Donny Syofyan. In his article in the Jakarta Post, he noted that after having completed the fasting period and the holy month of Ramadhan, the Muslim community would celebrate a triumph Idul Fitri by making their traditional homecoming, or mudik, to spend this special day with their families. To Indonesian Muslims, 'mudik' is a cultural occasion closely loaded with symbols. According to Donny Syofyan, despite the difficulties for most people returning to their hometowns for the annual religious holiday because of traffic and poor infrastructure, Indonesians look forward to being united with their families, friends, and relatives to celebrate a joyous Idul Fitri (or Christmas). They are homo-semiotics, humans with the desire to make meaning with the homecoming custom. He also mentioned that the annual exodus of millions of urban people to their hometowns during Idul Fitri signifies primordial pride. Heedless of one's financial security, fame, rank, or status in the city, people consider themselves more to 'successful people of Padang, Medan, or Makassar,' who 'have made it' in Jakarta, rather than 'wealthy Jakartans.' For them, material triumph does not change cultural roots. Therefore, according to Donny Syofyan, 'mudik offers Muslims a golden moment of self-evaluation and self-assessment'³ and, off-course from my point of view, a symbol of self-pride. Not as much as during Eid al-Fitr, Indonesian Christians also often celebrate Christmas by returning to their hometowns. In addition to filling the closing-year holidays, they also celebrate it in their hometown to release longing with family and friends.

Given the Covid-19 Pandemic, since 2020, the 'mudik' tradition is prohibited/banned by the Government. The ban is to break the chain of the Covid-19 pandemic or the spread of the corona virus disease. However, considering that this tradition is an annual tradition full of meaning and symbols described above, it is challenging for the Government to stop or ban this phenomenon. Even though various regulations and policies exist, in multiple ways, people continue to force themselves to return home without thinking about their family's safety back home.

¹ Source: <https://www.kompas.com/tren/read/2021/05/11/072900865/asal-kata-dan-sejarah-mudik-tradisi-masyarakat-indonesia-saat-lebaran?page=all>

² Ibid

³ Donny Syofyan. 2015. *Lebaran and Local Pride in the Annual 'Mudik' Custom*. Available at <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/07/13/lebaran-and-local-pride-annual-mudik-custom.html>

Indonesia is not the only country that has a tradition of celebrating religious holidays. Many countries factually have the same custom, though with many different meanings. China, for example, also has the same local tradition, one of which is the tradition of celebrating the Chinese new year. Community mobility at this time also contributed to the increase in the number of Covid-19 in this country⁴. But one of the most shocking religious-traditional events that cause the highest Covid-19 cases in the world is the Kumbh Mela tradition. Kumbh Mela is a Hindu periodically religious gathering at India's river, Gangga. It witnessed the assembly of vast numbers of people and had amplified the COVID-19 tsunami pandemic in India⁵.

In addition to a religious event, recently, new gathering or crowding to support religious (or political) figures have also emerged in the last few years. Even though health is at stake, these kinds of crowding also occur in this pandemic situation. The most exceptional cases that occurred recently were the ‘Petamburan and Megamendung crowd’ cases that finally brought one of the religious leaders to court. The ‘Petamburan and Megamendung crowd’ showed that people are willing to sacrifice their ‘health status’ to tribute their spiritual leader by holding a massive ‘welcome’ ceremony or other kinds of rituals. As a result, after the phenomenon, positive cases of Covid-19 increased quite sharply. Considering that Covid-19 is a type of contagious virus, the domino effect of this latest case of Covid-19 also spreads to family members and other community members.

B. Regulation and Policies Dealing with Disaster, Infectious Disease Outbreaks and Health Quarantine and Government Efforts to Lessen Covid-19 Outbreaks during Religious Holidays

In late December 2019, a previously unidentified virus, currently named the 2019 novel coronavirus, emerged from Wuhan, China⁶. It resulted in a formidable outbreak in many cities in China and further expanded globally. This mysterious pneumonia is characterized by fever, dry cough, and fatigue, and occasional gastrointestinal symptoms. Coronavirus, according to Wu et al., is an enveloped, positive single-strand RNA virus. The exact origin, location, and natural reservoir of the 2019-nCoV remain unclear, although it might come from a kind of wildlife in the Wuhan wet market. The virus belongs to the Orthocoronavirinae subfamily, as the name, with the characteristic ‘crown-like’ spikes on their surfaces⁷.

⁴ Chen S, Yang J, Yang W, Wang C, Bärnighausen T. COVID-19 control in China during mass population movements at New Year. *Lancet*. 2020;395(10226):764-6.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(20\)30421-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(20)30421-9) PMID:32105609

⁵ Sayed A. Quadri and Prasad R Padala, *An Aspect of Kumbh Mela Massive Gathering and COVID-19* *Curr Trop Med Rep*. 2021 Mar 29 : 1–6. doi: 10.1007/s40475-021-00238-1 [Epub ahead of print]. PMID: 33816058. PMID: 33816058

⁶ Yi-Chia Wu, Ching-Sunga Chen and Yu-Jiun Chan. 2020. The outbreak of COVID-19: An overview. *Journal of the Chinese Medical Association* March 2020 - Volume 83 - Issue 3. P. 217-220. Available at

https://journals.lww.com/jcma/fulltext/2020/03000/the_outbreak_of_covid_19__an_overview.3.aspx

⁷ Ibid

Initially the virus is called ‘novel coronavirus 2019’ (2019-nCoV) by the World Health Organization (WHO), but it was then renamed as ‘severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2’ (SARS-CoV-2) by the international committee of the Coronavirus Study Group (CSG), and the disease called ‘coronavirus disease 2019’ (COVID-19) by WHO⁸. Although it had been proposed that the COVID-19 patients in China might have utilized infected animals as a foodstuff, or might have visited the (Wuhan) seafood market, further investigation revealed that some patients had actually not visited the market. Therefore, the human-to-human transmission of this virus through coughing, sneezing, and the spread of respiratory droplets or aerosols was accepted. In addition, almost all countries in continents throughout the world reported disease spread caused by aerosol penetration into the upper the respiratory tract and lungs via inhalation⁹. Nowadays, more and more evidence came out with clusters of outbreaks among families, and this further confirmed the possibility of person-to-person transmission.

As we could see now, Corona Virus Disease 2019 has spread rapidly worldwide, affecting the global community and every aspect of life directly or indirectly. Recently, according to WHO, the pandemic has been affecting around 216 countries, areas or territories. On the 1st of June 2021, globally, confirmed cases are more than 169.6 million, and deaths are more than 3.5 million¹⁰. How individual country responds, including making strategies and policies, is critical in influencing the trajectory of this international pandemic. A strict public health and social measures have been done by all countries to slow down the spread of COVID-19. These include the limitations of domestic and international travel; social distancing or stay-at-home orders, closing of schools, offices, malls and shops, even religious centers. Some countries make verily rigid and strict policies and regulations, including lock down policy, but some have more loose policies.

Indonesia is one of the countries that has also been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Since firstly discovered in early 2020, national and local governments issue hundreds of regulations/rules to prevent the outbreak of this contagious virus. To deal with this phenomenon, at least 3 (three) national-level regulations at the statutory level existed before the pandemic. This regulation regulates the rights and obligations of the government and community in disaster situations, including infectious diseases outbreaks such as Covid-19. The existing laws are Law Number 24 of 2007 concerning Disaster Management; Law No. 4/1984 concerning Epidemic or Infectious Disease Outbreaks; and Law Number 6 of 2018 concerning Health Quarantine, discussed in the following paragraphs. Regulations and policies that are sectorally issued i.e., by the

⁸ Melika Lotfi, Michael R. Hamblin and Nima Rezaeif. 2020. COVID-19: Transmission, Prevention, and Potential Therapeutic Opportunities. PMCID: PMC7256510 PMID: 32474009. Free PMC Article. Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7256510/>

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ WHO. 2021. COVID-19 Weekly Epidemiological Update Edition 42, published 1 June 2021. Available on <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/weekly-epidemiological-update-on-covid-19--1-june-2021>

Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Transportation, and local governments such as provincial, mayor, and regent, are also made.

Firstly, in Indonesia, with so many cases and deaths, this Covid-19 pandemic condition can factually be categorized as a non-natural disaster. In what so ever disaster conditions, the Government has the mandate to protect the lives and livelihoods of everyone who has the potential to be infected with this disease outbreak. In Law Number 24 of 2007 concerning Disaster Management, it is stated that: ‘A disaster is a condition or series of conditions that threaten and disrupts people's lives and livelihoods caused, both by natural factors and/or non-natural factors and well as human factors, resulting in human casualties, environmental damage, property losses, and psychological impacts¹¹.’ In this Law, the Covid-19 Pandemic could be categorized as a non-natural disaster caused by a non-natural event or series of events in the form of an epidemic and disease outbreak. This Disaster Management Law was issued to reduce and eliminate disaster risks so the vulnerabilities of anyone threatened with the disasters can be cut off or at least reduced. Article 5 of this law states that government and local government has the responsibility in disaster management. The responsibilities include disaster risk reduction and the integration of disaster risk reduction, community protection from the impact of disasters, recovery of conditions from disaster impacts, allocation of disaster management budgets, and maintenance of authentic and credible archives/documents from disaster threats and effects¹².

Secondly, due to widespread outbreaks of these contagious diseases, the conditions made it possible for the government to determine the national epidemic situation. In Act Number 4 of 1984 concerning Outbreaks of Infectious Disease, it is stated that: ‘An epidemic of an infectious disease is an outbreak of an infectious disease in a community whose number of sufferers has significantly increased beyond the usual situation at a certain time and area and can cause havoc (or disaster)¹³.’ According to the act, the indication for determining an outbreak or an area declared as an epidemic area is by discovering a second patient of the same type of disease and the estimation that this disease can cause disaster. Furthermore, in Article 10 of the Infectious Disease Outbreak Law, it is stated that the responsibility for carrying out efforts to control the epidemic is the responsibility of the Government, both national and local. According to this act, to carry out its responsibilities, the government can issue more technical policies, rules or regulations, to avoid a bigger disaster. Besides issuing rules and policies, the government can also make various efforts and actual activities to reduce the risk of a greater catastrophe¹⁴.

Thirdly, the immediate law closely related to pandemic conditions is Law Number 6 of 2018 concerning Health Quarantine. The law states that: ‘Quarantine is the limitation of activities and/or separation of a person who is exposed to an infectious disease even though they have not shown any symptoms or is in the incubation period,

¹¹ Law Number 24 of 2007 on Disaster Management

¹² Ibid

¹³ Law Number 4 of 1984 on Infectious Disease Outbreak

¹⁴ Ibid

and/or the separation of containers, transportation means, or any goods suspected of being contaminated from persons and/or goods containing causes of disease or other sources of contamination to prevent possible spread to people and/or any commodity in the neighborhood¹⁵.’ In article 4, it is stated that the responsibilities to protect public health from disease and its risk factors, including other potential emergency health, are at central and local government hands. To fulfill its obligations, the government could implement quarantine health. Further, article 8 states that the government is also responsible for the necessary resources, including making policies, to implement this quarantine¹⁶.

Of the three regulations, the government's responsibility is obvious. But apparently, these responsibilities will not be carried out properly by the government without the support of the whole community. Article 6 of the infectious disease outbreak law states that efforts to control the epidemic should actively involve the community and Government Regulation regulates the procedures and conditions for this community participation. Article 9 of the Health Quarantine Law also states that everyone is obliged to comply with the health quarantine implementation and participate actively in this implementation. Under the normal conditions, the possibility of people complying with government policies of health quarantine or social restrictions could be pretty high. However, in reality, during a religious holiday, this obedience will be challenging to implement. Following the principle of *Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto*, or the safety of the people should be the highest law, are people not aware of this dangerous pandemic condition or their family's safety? Or is it just because of their minimum legal awareness?

Since the first Covid-19 case was discovered, the Indonesian government has tried to prepare various measures and policies to handle and prevent the spread of this disease. The Ministry of Health ie. has prepared 132 referral hospitals nationally with a capacity of 40,829 beds. Forty thousand three hundred twenty specialist doctors were also alerted in 2,877 government and private hospitals. Encouraged also by the increase in cases of this virus in the country, the President immediately issued Presidential Decree No. 11 of 2020 on Establishing a National Public Health Emergency. On April 13, 2020, the President then designated the Covid-19 Pandemic as a National Disaster with Presidential Decree No. 2 of 2020. In this Presidential Decree, a Task Force for handling Covid-19 acceleration was established at the national and regional levels. Not long after, the government then issued Government Regulation Number 21 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions in accelerating the handling of Covid-19. This regulation was immediately followed by the guidelines, namely in the Regulation of the Minister of Health Number 9 of 2020. Nationally and locally, the Large-Scale Social Restrictions policy was announced. This policy is carried out by closing malls, shops, schools, and workplaces and establishing guidelines for work from home, making restrictions on various religious and social activities at public places such as weddings, birthdays etc. There are also limitations and restrictions of passengers using public

¹⁵ Law Number 6 of 2018 on Health Quarantine

¹⁶ Ibid

transportation and prohibition for online transportation modes to carry passengers. This online motorbike transportation could only serve goods delivery.

Picture 1. Large-Scale Social Restrictions compare to Normal Traffic Condition in Jakarta



Source: <https://google.com>¹⁷

The established Task Force made at least 4 (four) strategies to suppress the spread of this virus. The first strategy is the campaign to use masks. Everybody going to public places is obliged to use mask or face covers. The second strategy is tracing patients' contact with healthy people by providing free antigens rapid-test and PCR. The third strategy is to educate those infected by Covid-19, especially their family, on personal or family isolation. The government also prepares isolation places for those infected by the coronavirus and should be separated from their family. The fourth strategy is the provision of particular hospitals for those who definitively need hospital services.

Indeed, related to a religious holiday, the central government has issued a prohibition policy on 'mudik' to control people's mobility. During this period, even those who want to go in and out of Capital City, Jakarta, have to have an exit and re-entry permit, namely Surat Ijin Keluar Masuk (SIKM).

To control transportation, for the 2020 'mudik' ban, the Ministry of Transportation issued Regulation Number PM 25 of 2020, namely Regulation of Transportation Control During the Eid Al-Fitr Homecoming Period of 1441 Hijriah in the context of preventing the spread of Covid-19. In 2021, the Ministry of Transportation brought out a similar regulation: Regulation Number PM 13 of 2021 regarding Transportation Control During the Eid Al-Fitr Period of 1442 Hijri. The temporary prohibition applied to all kinds of transportation facilities, i.e., personal cars, buses, motorbikes, sea, and air transportations. The ban includes entering large-scale social restrictions zone/areas, red zones areas, and agglomeration areas designated as a large-scale social restriction area. Airports and ports are even closed to transportation during certain times. As for the Christmas and New Year holidays, the Ministry of Transportation issued at least 5 (five) Circulars regarding the implementation instructions or travel protocols for people using land, train, sea, and air transportation

¹⁷ Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=gambar+suasana+PSBB+di+kota+Jakarta>

¹⁸ to prevent the spread of Covid-19. In addition to the Decree of the Ministry of Transportation, during Eid al-Fitr, i.e., the Covid-19 Task Force Team also issued Circular Letter (Surat Edaran) Number 13 of 2021. This Circular regulates the prohibition of going home during the Eid 1442 H holiday period or May 6 to 17, 2021. Referring to the Circular, factually, the ‘mudik’ ban touches all modes of transportation. The prohibition applies to buses, cars, motorcycles, trains, to sea and air transportations. For land transportation, at the time of ‘mudik’, the government even blocked streets and roads, and placed many law enforcement personnel, including military personnel and the police.

Picture 2. Street Blocked during Religious Holiday



Source: <https://Liputan6.com> - <https://jatimtribunnews.com> - <https://newssetup.kontan.co.id>

The first sampling of the long religious holidays that increased Covid-19 cases is the Eid al-Fitr holiday in June 2020. If previously the figure was only around 400-600 cases per day, after Eid al-Fitr 2020, the number suddenly rose to more than 1,100 per day¹⁸. The Head of Data and Information Technology of the Covid-19 Task Force said that the long holiday of Eid al-Fitr 2020 had caused an increase in positive Covid-19 cases of 70% to 90%. This long holiday moment also increased the cumulative number of weekly Covid-19 cases by 69% - 93%¹⁹. In fact, on weekdays (non-long holidays), as of May 5, 2020, the addition of positive cases of Covid-19 in the last 24 hours was only 484 people. Previously, the highest addition was on April 24, 2020, with 436 new cases, and on May 1, 2020, with 433 new cases²⁰.

¹⁸Source: <https://megapolitan.kompas.com/read/2020/12/28/12001581/ketika-angka-covid-19-selalu-naik-pasca-libur-panjang?page=all>

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Source: <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2020/05/06/06582971/5-mei-2020-indonesia-catat-penambahan-kasus-positif-covid-19-dan-sembuh?page=all>

The increase in the percentage and number of Covid-19 patients after the 2020 Christmas and New Year 2021 holidays is also very significant. Cumulatively, the addition of new cases in the six weeks of the extended Christmas and New Year holidays was 448,792, or an average of 74,798 per week. In the first week of January, there were 54,525 new cases, the second week 71,877 new cases, the third week 82,051 cases, the fourth week 86,342 cases, the fifth week 85,112 cases, and the sixth week 68,885 new cases²¹. Having a closer look at this data, even after Christmas and New Year 2021, it can be seen that there has been a very high spike in the addition of positive Covid-19 cases within 4 (four) weeks. The data series shows that positive patients of Covid-19 always experience a significant increase after the holiday.

As reported online by the online national daily *kompas.com*, the number of Covid-19 cases in Indonesia as of June 1, 2021, reached 1,826,527 people. This number is the total number of cases since March 2, 2020, the announcement of the first Covid-19 patient. Considering that the virus's incubation period is to be approximately five days to 2 weeks after transmission from infected patients to healthy humans, at the beginning of June 2021, the increase in the number of patients was 4,824 people a day²². However, the peak number was dated near to the end of June 2021. From 20 to June 23, 2020, the number extended from 13,737 to 15,308 cases per day. Thus, as health experts have already predicted, in June 2020, there will indeed be a spike in positive cases of Covid-19. One of them is caused by social mobility during the long Eid holiday.

This number has factually decreased in terms of percentage compared to the number of spikes in Covid-19 cases after Eid (Lebaran) 2020 but increased significantly in quantity/number. After Lebaran 2021, positive Covid-19 cases increased only to 56.6%, while after Lebaran 2020, positive Covid-19 cases increased to 65.55%. For cases of Covid-19 deaths, after Lebaran 2020, it grew to 66.34%, and in 2021, the Covid-19 death rate only increased by 3.52%. Specifically for positive cases of Covid-19, there are 5 (five) provinces that recorded the highest additions after Lebaran 2020, where Central Java rose 368%, South Sulawesi rose 280%, South Kalimantan rose 99%, East Java rose 45.36%, and DKI Jakarta rose 33.2%. In 2021, the five provinces with the highest addition of positive cases after Lebaran are Central Java up to 103%, Riau Islands up to 103%, Riau up to 69%, and DKI Jakarta 49.5%, and West Java up to 25%²³. It remains unclear why the death percentage was so contrasting during the same period of long Eid holidays last year. Could it be because of the given vaccination or other clinical consequences? But just for the record, during Eid 2021, a new variant of Covid-19 appeared, namely the Delta variant.

After comparing all the data during and on non-religious holidays, it is evident or apparent, or we could conclude that the percentage of Covid-19 cases always

²¹ Source: <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20210626114136-20-659730/perbandingan-data-covid-19-ri-usai-nataru-dan-lebaran-2021>

²² Source: <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2021/06/01/17234861/update-1-juni-kasus-covid-19-di-indonesia-capai-1826527-tambah-4824>

²³ Source: <https://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/membandingkan-penambahan-kasus-covid-19-usai-lebaran-idulfitri-2021-dengan-2020.html>

experiences a very sharp increase, particularly after the holiday. The above explanation can show that even though the government issued so many regulations to ban ‘mudik,’ the community’s mobility during religious holidays is still very high, which finally makes a significant impact on the spread of Covid-19.

In some kampong or villages, to protect their neighborhood and help the government deal with the pandemic situation, the community has also made various endeavors. The initiatives, among other things, are closing or blockading the area to outside guests, spraying disinfectant in certain places, and even ‘Jaga tangga,’ or taking care of neighbors by providing and sending meals and food for those infected by this virus. But during the prime ‘mudik’ time, the community’s sense somehow is lost. Without thinking about the health risks, without thinking about safety, without thinking about the difficulties they will face in the ‘mudik’ process, and without thinking that they could be sanctioned or punished or fined, or that they could simply be asked to turn around, the community continues to carry out this ‘mudik ritual.’

¹³ *Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto*, or the safety of the people, is the highest law. Though the health situation is at risk, though it is hazardous, the ‘mudik’ tradition is very tough to leave. Many people are not aware of the dangerousness of Covid-19 outbreaks, either because people’s awareness of the law is very minimum or because ‘mudik’ really does have a hidden symbol meaning. The meaning is not only to go home releasing homesickness, but it has a particular polished social symbol. Mudik is the symbol of success, a symbol of prosperity, and a symbol of wealth and establishment. The most appropriate time to show this symbol is at mudik’s times. Therefore, it seems ²¹ that breaking the chain of the spread of COVID-19 is still a formidable challenge for the government, as long as ‘mudik’ still signifies primordial social pride.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Long religious holidays had always had an impact on ⁸ the increasing number of Covid-19 cases in Indonesia. One of them is caused by the ‘mudik’ tradition. This tradition is difficult to eliminate because it has a particular primordial social meaning for the community. Society should be fully aware that nowadays, the pandemic has become hectic. They need to cooperate, be mindful and obey the rules to end the pandemic and prevent a more significant catastrophe.

Besides, the government needs to firmly impose sanctions on those who violate rules and government regulations issued during the pandemic. Only community discipline can reduce and ¹⁷ break the chain of the spread of Covid-19. One of them is to refrain ¹⁷ the community from traveling or doing ‘mudik’ during religious holidays because this can endanger themselves, their beloved family, and society. Society still needs education and socialization to understand ⁸ that the safety of the people is the highest law under the principle of *Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto*.

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