Religious Coping of Farming Communities in Dealing with COVID-19 Pandemic in Pakkabba Village, Takalar District

Jumadi Sahabuddin*, Nurlela Salim, Abdul Rahman
Universitas Negeri Makassar (Makassar, Indonesia)

Abstract.
In late December 2019, the global population was shocked by the discovery of the coronavirus originating in Wuhan Province, China. On February 12, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the virus highly deadly and named it coronavirus 2019. The virus rapidly spreads to various parts of the world. It is almost certain that the outbreak has affected every country, including Indonesia. The Indonesian government subsequently declared the COVID-19 outbreak a national disaster. To ensure life safety and curb the spread of COVID-19, a policy was implemented, limiting the movement and activities of people outside their homes. This decision was based on considerations from various parties, particularly health experts and scholars. This policy certainly has an impact on the economic activities of the community, including those in rural areas. Research conducted in Pakkabba Village revealed that restrictions on activities outside the home led to decreased incomes and economic challenges. However, the community’s strong optimism to make a living can overcome these difficulties. Facing COVID-19 involves adhering to health protocols and strengthening solidarity through mutual assistance to alleviate the economic burden. In addition, a religious approach (religious coping) was also carried out in fostering work spirit despite being in a COVID-19 situation.

Keywords: COVID-19, religious coping, social solidarity, optimism

1. Introduction

If the life of a village community is seen at a glance, the dynamism and uniqueness of the people who live in it can be seen. This uniqueness, at first glance, would appear to be cool, peaceful, friendly and guaranteed happiness. However, if examined more deeply, of course this view can be refuted if it is understood and known with certainty about the lives of rural communities who are struggling with daily life which has not been completely free from the shadow of the covid-19 plague. It is widely understood that the covid-19 outbreak has an effect on people's lives on all fronts [1]. This outbreak has caused several local governments in Indonesia to be forced to adopt policies in
the form of restrictions on community activities outside the home in the hope that this outbreak can be reduced and stopped its spread.

Restrictions on people’s activities outside the home are a challenge for the community, especially for those who rely heavily on daily work [2] The risk is that when they do not go to work, the income to meet household needs will be constrained. The limitation of movement outside the home also creates a psychological burden. The covid-19 outbreak has created people’s lives in a situation of anxiety that continues to increase[3] Some villagers who do not have a fixed income will experience relatively long mental problems. The issue of mental health is an unending opinion in the midst of the covid-19 outbreak. The disruption of mental health due to the covid-19 outbreak has led to anxiety, depression, and trauma for most people[4] Symptoms of anxiety include worrying about death at any time, difficulty controlling anger, and always being tense. In addition, the covid-19 outbreak brings depression in the form of not being able to sleep well, pessimism, fatigue, and loss of work enthusiasm. Thus, covid-19 has more impact on psychological health than physical health.

The outbreak of covid-19 does not mean that humans must dissolve in sorrow and sadness. The struggle to continue to maintain life must continue. There needs to be synergy between the community, government, scholars and religious leaders in overcoming the various kinds of life problems caused by covid-19. Building optimism in the midst of the Covid-19 outbreak is not an easy thing. Therefore, it is necessary to instill deep awareness and understanding in dealing with complex problems that can occur at any time. The situation of people who are hit by confusion and anxiety is further exacerbated by the spread of various kinds of news that are not certain of the truth[5] The presence of people who do not have human emancipation but seem to have expertise in covid-19, immediately spreads opinions in the midst of public life which in the end creates unrest.[6]

In order for the community not to dissolve into unrest, the government invites all elements of society, especially health workers, to provide the best service to the community[7] In terms of enlightening the community, the government also asked for the willingness of religious scholars and religious leaders. The public is urged to comply with established health protocols, while strengthening their religious beliefs. The role of religion is maximized to provide awareness to the public to comply with the government’s appeal, especially from health experts, public policy and security experts, and authorities authorized to maintain public security and safety from the threat of covid-19.
The frenzy caused by COVID-19 in various regions in Indonesia is quite different from the people in Pakkabba Village, a village located in Taalar Regency and directly adjacent to Makassar City, South Sulawesi. The people in this village are not immersed in excessive worry. Activities to make a living that rely on the agricultural sector continue as usual. The covid-19 outbreak is faced by complying with all recommendations from the government. In addition, many people take advantage of this situation to increase ritual and social worship. The covid-19 effect in the form of unstable income due to Makassar City and Gowa Regency implementing Large-Scale Social Restrictions did not dampen the enthusiasm of the people in Pakkabba Village. It is known that Makassar City and Gowa Regency have an important role in the economy of the people in this village, because these two areas are marketing places for agricultural products from Pakkabba Village. The living conditions of the Pakkabba Village community, which remain optimistic in the midst of Covid-19, are strongly supported by their awareness in utilizing religious teachings as a way out in overcoming life's problems. This paper seeks to elaborate more deeply through observations, interviews, and analysis of the use of religious teachings for the people of Pakkaba Village in facing covid-19.

2. Method

The research method used in this study adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because the main objective of this study is to explore the understanding of the adaptation strategies of communities in rural areas, particularly Pakkabba Village, in facing the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The case study design was chosen to enable researchers to gain in-depth and contextualized insights into people's experiences within their social environment.

Data collection will be conducted through two main methods, namely in-depth interviews and participatory observation. In-depth interviews will be conducted with Pakkabba villagers from different walks of life, including those affected by the economic impact of the pandemic. Interviews will focus on personal experiences, adaptation strategies used, and the role of religious coping, social solidarity, and optimism in overcoming economic challenges. Participatory observation will allow researchers to directly observe the daily activities of the community, especially in the context of social solidarity activities and economic adaptation efforts.

Data collected from interviews and observations will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The first step is data coding, where units of information will be labeled according to relevant themes or concepts, such as adaptation strategies, religious
coping, social solidarity, and optimism. Next, these themes will be analyzed in more depth to identify common patterns and variations in people's responses to the economic impact of the pandemic.

The results of the analysis will be used to comprehensively illustrate the most effective adaptation strategies, the role of religious coping and social solidarity in overcoming economic impacts, and the level of optimism that contributes to people's efforts to maintain morale and well-being amidst the pandemic situation. Findings will be discussed in the context of relevant literature and their implications for policy development and further efforts to support rural communities facing the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Community optimism in the midst of Covid-19

In one of the night visits made by the Head of the Hamlet to his citizens who were sitting relaxed together at the ronda post, a word quoted from Khalil Gibran was said that optimists see roses and ignore the thorns, while pessimists only focus on thorns and ignore the roses. Likewise, the attitude that must be put forward in the face of covid-19 is to remain optimistic. Humans should not surrender to circumstances, let alone despair. Humans since birth have been equipped with various traits and characteristics by God the Almighty Creator as a complement to carry out their life duties on earth[8] It is this curiosity that leads humans to look for ways to overcome life crises, including the crisis caused by covid-19.

The Pakkabba Village community is known as a religious community. This can be seen from the five daily prayers at the mosque. They always take the time to pray in congregation when it is prayer time. In social life, there is rarely any conflict between residents. As a religious community, they believe that God would not send a burden to humans, when humans do not have the ability to overcome it. They also believe in the Islamic doctrine that after hardship, there will definitely be ease. Humans are only required to be patient and keep trying to be free from all the difficulties.

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As ordinary people with limited abilities in terms of pharmacy and medicine, they only pray as much as possible for God’s help to be free from covid-19. The people of Pakkabba Village put their trust in the government with all the resources it has to overcome the covid-19 outbreak. They understand that it is impossible for the government to stand idly by and watch the people’s difficulties, because no government wants to see its people harmed. The obligation as a people is to obey all government recommendations related to preventing the spread of covid-19. They realize that someone who has religious beliefs will be responsible for the backwardness or difficulties experienced, and there is no need to blame anyone for covid-19 that has hit this country. If something goes wrong, for example there are citizens infected with the covid-19 virus, there is no need to find fault with any party. Instead, this must be used as a lesson as well as a muhasabah for oneself, that do not let the covid-19 virus be infected because of negligence and ignorance of the health protocols that have been conveyed by the government. Of course, this kind of feeling when it is embedded in oneself, will ultimately raise self-esteem and motivate one to look optimistically at the future.

The spirit of living life in the midst of the covid-19 outbreak remains imprinted on the people of Pakkabba Village. As a community that relies more on the agricultural sector, it is impossible for them to lose their work ethic. For the people of Pakkabba Village, appeals from the village government to remain productive must be implemented in their daily lives. The agricultural extension officer in charge of Pakkabba Village conveyed a message from the Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Indonesia that the main fortress of defense in the face of covid-19 is food security. When farmers in rural areas ignore health protocols and stop their work activities in the fields or in the garden, it is a serious threat to Indonesian society because it is feared that a food crisis will hit.

The people of Pakkabba Village who work as farmers are not too worried about covid-19, but that does not mean that they ignore the health protocols set by the government. If the spread of covid-19 is mostly caused by contact with other people, too much being outside the home in this case traveling or wandering, then it can be prevented and overcome. Their activities outside the home are only spent working in the rice fields from around 6am to 10am, and have no contact with other people. For them, activities in rice fields in the morning are also useful in maintaining fitness and endurance, as recommended by the government in the face of covid-19. In simple terms, they think that how could someone be infected with covid-19 if their activities are only in the rice fields and never travel or contact with other people.
The Pakkabba Village community’s optimism in cultivating agricultural crops, especially vegetables, remains strong. When the vegetable harvest season arrives, they never experience losses, because their vegetables continue to sell. Intermediary traders (pagandeng) always come to this village every afternoon to buy vegetables from farmers to sell to various traditional markets in Kabupaten Gowa and Kota Makassar. Their income from vegetable farming has never decreased.

The survival of an optimistic attitude amid the covid-19 outbreak for the people of Pakkabba Village cannot be separated from the role of religious leaders. Those who have religious knowledge always communicate with the general public to comply with the government’s appeal. The Pakkabba Village Head invites religious leaders to provide enlightenment to the community. Religious leaders are asked for their participation to break the chain of spreading COVID-19 while fostering an optimistic attitude in the community. Religious leaders in Pakkabba Village still have a respected position in the community. They have an effective role and influence in organizing the social actions of the community, and are even still able to change community actions for the better in their view. The social structure of Pakkabba Village community places religious leaders as the center of authority in providing interpretations related to religious teachings. Religious leaders always give warnings to the community to stay away from fatalistic attitudes. The warning was conveyed because there are still people who often say “covid-19 is not what determines a person’s age, but all depends on the power of God”. The remarks were responded to that “it is true that death is God’s provision, but do not challenge death by refusing to comply with health protocols. Do not also sacrifice family happiness by always being pessimistic.

3.2. Community solidarity in the face of Covid-19

Islam, which has a peaceful face, always presents sincerity for its adherents in all daily activities. In human civilization, sincerity has the same real meaning. Religion then emphasizes and transcends the meaning of the content of the word sincerity. Sincerity is practiced by giving something to others and not expecting anything in return, except the pleasure of Allah, not praise from humans. Sincerity is built on the basis of togetherness. Humans have always existed in a collective. Humans always interact with other humans in the family, friendship, work environment, community and neighborhood. As a form of human interaction, humans will be influenced by the surrounding environment. On the other hand, humans can also organize the surrounding environment. The ability of humans to interact and organize the surrounding environment is because they are
equipped with creativity, taste, creativity, norms, ideals, and conscience as their human character.[9]

In the context of the Pakkabba Village community, the atmosphere of life in the midst of the Covid-19 outbreak has built sincerity among the community on the basis of solidarity. Theoretically, community solidarity in Pakkabba Village is still in the category of mechanical solidarity, namely social solidarity that is built on the basis of empathy, especially for those who are in distress. The reality in Pakkabba Village shows that some households are experiencing economic difficulties because the head of the family, as the backbone of the economy, does not earn any money. Their work as construction workers has been hampered by the fact that Makassar City and Gowa Regency, where they work, have repeatedly implemented PSBB.

The solidarity of the Pakkabba Village community in the midst of Covid-19 can be seen in simple things. They remind each other about the importance of wearing masks when leaving the house. When one of the residents, both children and adults, leaves the house but does not wear a mask, it is common and acceptable to them without feeling offended when reprimanded by other residents. The advice to wear a mask, especially when outside the home, is always conveyed by the task force team that visits residential areas every Monday. The team consists of health workers, village officials, security forces from the police, and religious leaders.

Efforts to increase community immunity in Pakkabba Village are also carried out together on the basis of social solidarity. Based on information provided by health educators, one of the causes of a person’s susceptibility to the covid-19 virus is when the surrounding environment is unhealthy. As an effort to maintain the health and cleanliness of the environment, every morning there is an announcement from the mosque officer, reminding the community to move together to clean the environment around the house. In addition to maintaining environmental cleanliness, attention to body health is also increasingly being improved. One way to maintain good health is by consuming a simple herbal medicine made from ginger stew mixed with brown sugar and coconut milk (sarabba). When a household has time to make sarabba, it is shared with neighbors. Similarly, for residents who work as health workers, they voluntarily distribute masks and multivitamins to the closest residents near their residence.

The households most affected by Covid-19 are those who rely heavily on daily income as builders and laborers. Household needs, especially rice, must be met every day. For those who experience this condition, it is certainly a concern for other residents. Residents who have difficulty meeting the basic needs of their households are invited by residents who work as vegetable farmers. Vegetables such as kale and long beans
that have been collected by the owner require labor in tying the vegetables in a certain size so that it is easier to take them to the market. The work of tying vegetables is left entirely to residents who have lost their jobs as builders or laborers. They are paid a wage of Rp.25,000-Rp.30,000. This wage is relatively sufficient to provide a simple healthy menu for one day.

Another effort made by residents in helping their neighbors affected by covid-19 is drying the unhulled rice until it is dry before being milled in a rice milling machine. Drying grain is a job that requires a lot of time and serious attention. The unhulled rice must be kept dry so that it is not disturbed by roaming chickens. In addition, the grain must be harrowed at all times so that the dryness is evenly distributed so that it can produce quality rice. The job of drying unhulled rice usually pays around Rp.50,000 or 7 liters of rice.

The community's concern for others who are experiencing difficulties in life stems from the cultural value of the Makassar tribe called pacce. Pacce is a form of solidarity with the difficulties experienced by others. The sense of pacce implies a serious desire to help others with sincerity in the hope that they will soon be free from the difficulties they experience. The Pakkabba Village community's habit of helping to overcome the difficulties of others is built spontaneously. Providing assistance could have been done directly, without telling others to work first. But this is not done, so that it can be a means of education for their children, that to get the necessities of life must be preceded by work. They do not want their children to be lazy and dependent on others. Likewise for those who receive help, there is a kind of taboo against accepting help from others for nothing without putting in some effort first.

Theoretically, as stated by George M.F Foster, it is an obligation for those who have to help the poor.[10] In rural areas, there is an idea inherent in the system of ideas of rural communities, that everything that exists in people's lives in the form of property and power, is limited in number. This condition gives rise to the understanding that those who have it have actually taken part of the common property for their own interests. For this reason, in order to maintain the quality of community life, those who have taken the limited community property in an excessive manner are expected to return to the community in various forms of social transactions in the form of donations or participation in overcoming various problems that exist in community life. In the context of the Pakkabba Village community, Foster's statement is not accurate. Ownership of property for people with wealth is not considered a form of greed, but the result of hard work that gets God's favor. The participation of the wealthy in alleviating the burdens of other people's lives is solely out of devotion to God.
The solidarity of the Pakkabba Village community during covid-19 was also manifested in night watch activities. Based on the initiative of residents who have received approval from the village government and security forces, the night watch was reactivated. Night watch activities were activated to maintain village security and order. The experience of people who had experienced life in the 70s, when the economy was difficult due to prolonged drought, the crime rate in the form of theft of livestock in the form of cows or buffaloes was so rampant. They are worried that this will happen again, because Covid-19 has brought economic hardship to some people. The revival of night ronda activities carried out by teenagers and adults was welcomed by the community. This welcome is evidenced by the willingness of residents to prepare consumption in the form of fried bananas or fried cassava and tea or coffee water. There were also residents who made cash donations to the night watch officers.

Social solidarity in a religious perspective can be categorized as a manifestation of social piety. As Muslims, there are two piety that must be combined in organizing life, namely ritual piety and social piety. Ritual piety relates to obedience in carrying out mandatory worship as has been emphasized in the pillars of Islam, namely saying the two creeds, praying, paying zakat, fasting Ramadan, and going on hajj for those who are able. Meanwhile, social piety relates to the implementation of ritual piety in community relations for the sake of the establishment of humanitarian emancipation. The Covid-19 outbreak is an arena for the people of Pakkabba Village to uphold social piety. Social piety can be realized when it is able to firmly instill awareness of the existence of others in personal life.

3.3. Religious coping in the midst of Covid-19 Situation

Data released by the Task Force for the Acceleration of Covid-19 Handling shows that as of April 13, 2020 there were 4,557 people infected with Covid-19, 399 people died and 380 people recovered[11] Based on this data, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia declared Covid-19 a national disaster as outlined in Presidential Decree Number 12 of 2020. The decision was followed up with the issuance of a policy that urged people in all regions of the Republic of Indonesia to reduce activities outside the home with the slogan at home only. Reduced activities outside the home caused most to feel economic difficulties, especially in terms of fulfilling basic household needs[12]

The results of research show that the emergence of economic difficulties in a household will lead to psychological pressure or stress[13] However, the reality in Pakkabba Village shows that people are still able to think stably, even though they recognize
economic difficulties in the household. Economic difficulties do not put them in a state of stress because strategies are carried out in fulfilling consumption as the main need that must be prioritized. To reduce rice consumption, complementary foods are prepared, such as boiled cassava, which is much more affordable. Expenditure on fish side dishes was replaced with cheaper side dishes such as tempeh, tofu and eggs and increased consumption of vegetables that are widely available in their environment.

The Covid-19 outbreak does not really affect the fulfillment of basic household needs in Pakkabba Village. Instead, what concerns them is that as much as possible the covid-19 outbreak does not hit their village. The rise of news in the media about the ferocity of covid-19 is the main trigger for the community to comply with health protocols. Covid-19 as an invisible creature, is not only prevented by health protocols, but also accompanied by a religious approach. Humans wherever they are and however they live, both in times of trouble and pleasure, both in groups and individually are encouraged to act by demonstrating themselves in the form of devotion and self-approach to the Supreme Being.

The religious approach in dealing with life’s difficulties is better known as religious coping. Religious coping is carried out by the people of Pakkabba Village in the midst of the Covid-19 outbreak because it is religious beliefs that make life a spiritual field as well as a liberating force from psychological pressures. The importance of a religious approach in dealing with life’s difficulties is based on the view that good efforts will bring good results too. The result of an effort is determined by how serious human efforts are in struggling on the basis of truth, justice and integrity. This is based on Allah’s message in the Qur’an that whoever helps the religion of Allah, Allah will help him back. Maintaining the continuity of human life so that it is free from covid-19 is one way of helping the religion of Allah.

The application of religious coping for the people of Pakkabba Village so that they are not overwhelmed by excessive worry about the dangers of covid-19 is through religious practice and benevolent reappraisal approaches. This approach is in the form of performing ritual worship that is directly related to God, namely praying five times, praying, and reciting the Koran. Through this approach, they hope for protection and surrender themselves before God, then instill positive thoughts for themselves that everything revealed by God, both pleasure and sadness, must contain wisdom.

The religious practice that is routinely carried out as an effort to get closer to Allah is the five daily prayers. The implementation of the five daily prayers still takes place in the mosque by strictly adhering to health protocols, because in Pakkabba Village the mosque is still open. The opening of the mosque was carried out after
an agreement between government officials, community leaders, and religious leaders because specifically in the Pakkabba Village area it is still in the green zone category. This is a matter of gratitude for the community, so they are still eager to worship at the mosque, especially for men. In addition to the implementation of the five daily prayers, the community has begun to familiarize themselves with performing dhuha prayers of at least two rak’ahs in the hope that their affairs and sustenance will be facilitated during the covid-19 outbreak.

The new habit implemented as part of religious coping is reading the Qur’an before Maghrib prayer or after Isha prayer. Reading the Qur’an is done in order to get through the challenges of life during the covid-19 outbreak with full resilience and optimism. In addition, reading the Qur’an is expected to foster positive energy and reduce and even eliminate negative energy in themselves that arises due to psychological burdens. As for prayer activities, they are usually carried out alone after performing the five daily prayers. There are also religious rituals in the form of prayer activities carried out by inviting a shaman (sanro). The implementation of this kind of prayer aims to reject any disasters that are feared to be able to befall their households suddenly. The joint prayer event led by a sanro is known as suru maca while preparing food and drinks intended for those present. Religious rituals in society with their various variations are a way of instilling self-awareness and moral strength[18] in dealing with various life events.

After all efforts have been made both by implementing a healthy lifestyle, health protocols and approaching themselves to Allah through worship activities, then they consider their efforts to be maximum and the results are left to Allah. The covid-19 outbreak has made us realize that a healthy lifestyle is very important, as recommended in Islam. Likewise, togetherness within family members and in the wider community must be maintained for the sake of harmonious survival.

4. Conclusion

Religion in Pakkabba Village plays an important role in overcoming anxiety in the midst of the covid-19 outbreak. Religion is interpreted as a bridge to get closer to God through the implementation of worship. Belief in religion is a source of strength for the community. The covid-19 event, which was addressed using a religious approach, led to the consistency of enthusiasm and work ethic in earning a living to fulfill the needs of the family. On the other hand, covid-19 has tapped the hearts of people who are economically capable in providing assistance to families and neighbors who are affected by covid-19 socio-economically. The life experience during the outbreak of covid-19
has become a mental and spiritual strengthening for the people of Pakkabba Village. They really get inner strength, experience mental, moral and spiritual revitalization and get a new spirit of work that is increasingly tested and tempered in making a living. The religious teachings that are imprinted in the hearts and minds of the Pakkabba Village community prevent them from resigning themselves to their circumstances. They wholeheartedly work together to overcome difficulties in the midst of the Covid-19 outbreak and comply with all appeals from the government to implement health protocols and reduce activities outside the home.

References


