



TRUST AND POWER-SHARING DURING COVID-19: Case Study of Collaborative Governance in Trenggalek East Java Indonesia during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Trust is one of the basic principles that ensure the success of collaborative governance, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic periods. However, trust will not address the challenges and negative impact that arise during and post-pandemic because collaborative governance requires cooperation and power-sharing with other actors outside the government. This study investigates how collaborative governance has helped the Trenggalek Regency Government to overcome the impacts of the pandemic and accountability issues of the COVID-19 budget planning. The results of this study contribute to the quick decision-making process required amid a crisis that has so far been assumed to be unsuitable for the collaborative governance approach.

Keywords: Collaborative Governance, COVID19, Pandemic, Trust, Power Sharing,

1. INTRODUCTION

The Corona Virus 2019 (COVID-19) was declared by the World Health Organization as a global pandemic. Many countries struggled with their response to the pandemic, including Indonesia, as seen from the government's response to COVID19. *The Airlangga Center for Health Policy* (ACeHAP), stated that the Indonesian government has failed to act during the first critical six months of the pandemic. This failure is caused by the government's lack of coordination in communicating policies and incompetence in translating scientific findings to the public in concrete and coordinated measures[1].

To address this issue, collaborative governance that is based on the mutual agreement of stakeholders is required to unify the visions, goals, strategies, and activities of all stakeholders. Collaborative governance is important for creating greater public value as the government would be able to depend on more than their internal resources to implement policies and programs. Based on Ansell and Gash (2007, as cited in Bianchi, 2021) by applying this approach, other stakeholders would be involved in implementing strategic learning processes that aim to improve public value, their drivers,

and necessary strategic resources to make an impact and benefit society[2].

According to Emerson (2017:6 [1]), the structure of collaborative government is compatible with a dynamic environment as it is more responsive and adaptable compared to formal organizational structures. Nevertheless, specific prerequisites are required, such as a leading party or organizer, funders, as well as the patience and flexibility to balance and integrate, and manage these moving parts over time. For the COVID-19 case, these prerequisites can be implemented when the government can gain the public's trust. Trust is a basic element required for collaboration.

Nevertheless, according to Dalton and Welzel (2014), Esser and Svettel (2014), Neblo et al. (2010), and Norris (2011) as cited in Bianchi, 2021, accountability is a potential issue in collaborative governance as it does not allow the public to evaluate or assess the effectiveness of the collaboration. When in fact, along with the development of society with increased levels of education and the existence of social media trends, the level of accountability that the government has shared so far has not been able to satisfy citizens[2].

Therefore, Sørensen and Torfing suggested that the route to strengthening accountability in the public sector is to not create more mechanisms for transparency, supervision, and sanctions, but that increased interactions among the public sector and relevant social and economic actors is what is needed the most. Thus, this study discusses how this interaction process is built by the aspect of power-sharing and trust built by the Government of Trenggalek Regency as the facilitative leaders in the collaborative governance process applied for the handling of COVID-19 in Trenggalek, East Java[3].

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the province of East Java has amassed over 10,092 COVID-19 cases. Trenggalek was chosen as the subject of this study as it is one of the regencies in East Java with the lowest spread of COVID-19[4]. Moreover, this regency is also one of the participants of the KOMPAK program¹. The KOMPAK program provides technical assistance and protection strategies to minimize the spread of COVID-19. For example, the program would assist by incorporating minimum service requirements for health and education into planning and budgeting documents, as well as in utilizing poverty analysis methods to more effectively target social protection programs (KOMPAK - <https://kompak.or.id/en/about-us/working-area/jawa-timur>).

Data were collected in this study through a qualitative approach by conducting Focus Group Discussions and interviews with the Regent of Trenggalek and their staff. This study's findings challenge Ansell and Gash's research which stated that collaborative governance is not the best approach for resolving problems that require quick decision-making[5]. The opposite results were found in Trenggalek as the regency was able to handle COVID-19-related issues through social movements and by integrating local wisdom into the process by having religious leaders communicate the importance of wearing masks to all residents of Trenggalek Regency.

2. RESULT

Trust Building and Power Sharing in Collaborative Governance Regarding the Handling of COVID-19 in the Regency Trenggalek East Java

In the context of countermeasures to the negative impacts of COVID-19 in Trenggalek, the Government of Trenggalek Regency initiated their collaborative governance process from the accountability aspect of budget planning. This was done because the government realized that COVID-19 is a natural disaster that occurred unpredictably, and they had no preparations for such an event. Such that it is almost certain that all local governments, especially regional governments, lack knowledge on which mechanism to use for their budgeting planning and implementation. The following is an excerpt from an interview:

“COVID19 is unpredictable, something new, and information regarding the disease keeps developing continuously. One, it was unpredictable. Then second, this is something new. Third, any information about it is still developing day by day. An example would be when the government first released an announcement stating that masks are only for those who are sick, and now masks are for everyone. We saw that when the pandemic hit Indonesia that the regency of Trenggalek was no exception. At that point, we were already aware that there is an institutional void. But the direct impact already was felt very quickly. Therefore, we had no other choice, this means that the base of actions should no longer be programs, but it must already be based on a movement.” (Interview with the Regent of Trenggalek, August 15, 2020).

The above-mentioned interview indicates that the starting condition for the collaborative governance process is to plan budgeting in the form of social movements. This social movement was done by fund-raising from the community to be managed by BAZNAS. BAZNAS is an institution that manages alms and zakat from the community and is given the mandate to manage fund-raising activities. This was done because the regional government did not have any plans or discussions regarding a specific budget for the handling of COVID-19. Therefore, to maintain accountability, the government of Trenggalek Regency shared its power with BAZNAS as a non-government actor to collect and distribute funds for the purchase of masks.

The Trenggalek Government also collaborated with private parties by cooperating with several workshops in Trenggalek Regency to help build disinfectant tools that were useful for the medical team. These workshops, which are generally small and medium in scale, received subsidized assistance from the government. The Trenggalek Regency Government itself also tried to obtain additional financial resources outside of the APBD

¹ KOMPAK (Governance for Growth) is an Australian-funded program that assists the Indonesian government in meeting its poverty reduction and inequality reduction aims. KOMPAK began in January 2015 and will run until June 2018. DFAT has approved a continuation phase for KOMPAK between 2019 and 2022. It currently has a maturity date of

30 June 2022 and a commitment of up to A\$178 million. KOMPAK is committed to working at all levels of government to address the most significant difficulties confronting the delivery of basic services and the promotion of livelihoods for the Indonesian people. KOMPAK's mission is to assist the disadvantaged and vulnerable in gaining access to improved basic services and economic opportunities.

through a regional innovation championship organized by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Due to the success of the Trenggalek Regency Government in winning the championship, the regency obtained a prize in the form of cash. This was used by the government to attract collaborators from State-Owned Enterprises, private corporations, and community groups.

This policy showed how the power asymmetry between collaborating actors is suppressed by the Government without compromising accountability. In this practical example, it can be seen that the Trenggalek Regency Government has implemented facilitative leadership in collaborative governance with an architectural leadership approach.

According to some experts, architectural leaders in the collaborative governance would build structures and bring stakeholders together while securing resources to support collaborative efforts, establishing clear ground rules for collaborative processes, facilitating consensus building, and promoting relational dynamics (Ansell and Gash 2007; Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh 2011; Heikkila and Gerlak 2005; Lasker and Weiss 2001; Ryan 2001; Vangen and Huxham 2003 in Sidiki et al., 2017:4 [1]).

Furthermore, according to Visser (2002:57 in Getha Taylor 2019:53), relational dynamics at the local government level are considered as part of "a dynamic interplay of interests that together produce "a critical attribute of cooperation: an orientation of mutual trust towards collaboration and sharing of power to solve common problems. While if it is linked to the context of accountability, building trust also contributes to increasing accountability among collaborating partners (Romzek, et al 2014 in Getha Taylor 2019:53 [2]).

This is because building trust requires facilitative behaviour, which can strengthen and develop trust in a direction that is beneficial for the collaborating parties (Klijn, Edelenbos, and Steijn 2010 in Romzek dkk 2014:823 [4]).

Due to the large-scale social restrictions (*Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat* or PPKM), the government of Trenggalek Regency collaborated with PT Pos Indonesia to distribute social aid to its residents. Moreover, the government enforced a policy where they provided top-up balances for a local Trenggalek online transportation application so that they can deliver the daily needs of people who are self-isolating. Here's an excerpt of the interview:

"We finally made a policy for everyone who is self-isolating at home, we provided top-up balance to our local online motorcycle taxi application that was made by high school students in Trenggalek Regency. And it's amazing when we see that online motorcycle taxis in Jakarta are

stranded, in Trenggalek the business grew ten times larger and its revenue also grew five times larger compared to normal days. But why? Previously in a small town like Trenggalek, the use of digital media has not become a lifestyle yet, it's different from people in the city. But when COVID hit, people are forced to change their behavior, and in the end, this created an opportunity." (Interview with the Regent of Trenggalek, August 15, 2020).

This effort to build public trust is in line with Ran and Qi's study (2018 as cited in Liu, 2021) as they stated that promoting a shared source of power and simultaneously building trust can help participants to save the time and costs related to collaboration[6]. In other words, the efforts conducted by the local government of Trenggalek Regency are in line with Ran and Qi's study which found that the distribution of power and trust in collaborative governance helped the collaborating actors to consider their strengths and create trusting relationships with each other while simultaneously helping them to explore several strategies that are useful in coordinating their interactions more effectively.

Furthermore, to educate the public to use masks when the new normal policy is enforced, the Regency Government implemented a strategy that involved local wisdom represented by "*Jogo Kyai*." The following is an excerpt from the interview:

"So first, we needed to identify the region's local figures. For example, in the Mataraman area, since there is still a strong client-patron relationship, there is still a strong culture of people listening to influential people. For Trenggalek, the most influential people here are religious leaders, such as the kyai. Therefore, the campaigns that we ran during the new normal focused on new habits, and we used language such as—not that we can't celebrate Eid, it doesn't mean we can't... can't celebrate Eid. But celebrating Eid with many people has the risk of transmitting the disease to the kyai. So, our movement encouraged the public to protect the kyai, to jogo the kyai." Interview with the Regent of Trenggalek, August 15, 2020).

Jogo Kyai followed what Ran and Qi stated regarding fostering a relationship of mutual trust in collaborative governance, as the level of interpersonal and inter-organizational trust must be taken into account because the individual is the point of contact between the organization and partner organizations represented by individuals. These individuals are important for building trust in collaborative governance. Influence-based trust consists of an emotional bond, in which genuine care and concern for the partner's well-being are invested[7].

In the context of COVID-19 management, "*jogo kyai*" was a form of interaction between the government and its residents and was part of the collaborative governance process that helped the local government to achieve its informal accountability. This is because the dynamics of multi-actor collaborations play an important

role in the development of collaborative governance based on repeated interactions (Ostrom, Gardner, dan Walker 1994), trust, and recognition of their interdependence in the pursuit of a common goal. From this dynamic, we can recognize that the existence of informal discretionary interactions can reduce uncertainty (Mandell dan Keast 2007; O'Toole 1997) and reduce transaction costs for future collaborations (Feiock 2008; Klijn, Edelenbos, dan Steijn 2010 in Romzek 2014:835)

3. CONCLUSION

This study examined the challenges faced by the local government of Trenggalek Regency in building public trust and dividing power among collaborating actors without neglecting accountability, especially in planning and budgeting. The results of the study showed that the limitation of collaborative government governance for cases that require rapid decision-making was refuted by the COVID-19 management case in Trenggalek Regency. This is because when a crisis occurs, all actors in the collaboration process have a common goal, namely, how to overcome the impact of this pandemic quickly and precisely by capturing the synergy and creativity of each actor involved in the collaboration process itself.

This case, on the management of COVID-19 in Trenggalek Regency, is a practical example that aligns with Weiss, Anderson, and Lasker's (2002) findings on the key factors influencing collaboration and synergy being leadership effectiveness, which includes behaviors and activities such as "taking" partnership responsibilities; inspiring and motivating partners; empowering partners; working to develop a common language within the partnership; fostering respect, trust, inclusiveness and openness in partnerships; creating an environment where differences of opinion can be voiced; resolving conflicts between partners and helping the collaborating partners to see different conditions and be creative" (Weiss, Anderson, and Lasker 2002, 688-9 in Sylvia 2011: 69 [5]).

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