

Woman and Covid-19 Pandemic

Editorial

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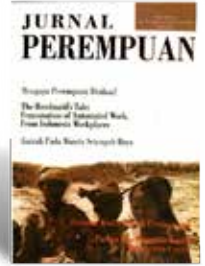
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Atnike Nova Sigiro, Abby Gina, Dewi Komalasari

Editorial: Women and the Covid-19 Pandemic

Gender inequality that persists in the society is considered to have worsened the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women. UN Women's Rapid Gender Assessment (RGA) in Europe and Central Asia found more than 15 percent of women have lost their jobs, 41 percent of women have experienced wage's cut, and found the increasing hour and workload of women in the family during the Covid-19 pandemic. Not only causing economic and social impacts, the Covid-19 pandemic has also caused increasing women's vulnerability to domestic violence. *Shadow pandemic* is a concept that explains the phenomenon of the increased prevalence of violence against women during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Family as a 'gendered institution' has become an important focus in feminism studies. Feminism views family in a patriarchal society as an embodiment of unequal gender relation, where women's gender role is constructed and placed in subordinate manner. In a patriarchal society, women are being attached to sex-affective production role, who are tasked to provide emotional caring function for her child(ren) and husband, as well fulfilling men's sexual satisfaction. Meanwhile, the works within family such as care work and household work, are often economically undervalued and being considered as unskilled works.

Since March 2020, the government of Indonesia has officially declared Covid-19 pandemic status. One of the policies to prevent the transmission of pandemic is the large-scale social restriction (*Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar - PSBB*). PSBB is a social distancing policy that require restrictions of activities in public spaces such as office, factory, entertainment facility, religious facility, restaurant, school, market, shopping center, and many others. The social distancing has created contraction to economic activities in Indonesia. As the consequence, the Covid-19 pandemic has been shadowed by the lay-offs to the workers, and job loss of many business entrepreneurs and/or informal sectors. The economic impacts of the pandemic do not only happen to the macro economy but also to the household economy.

Analysis on the unequal gender relation within family is important in order to understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic towards women. The application of social distancing has made most of activities in public space to be done from homes. Therefore, during the

pandemic, we witness the emergence of various form activities, such as: work from home, long-distance schooling, long-distance religious activities, including online shopping. The concentration of activities at home have increased women's responsibilities within the households. During the pandemic time, for instance, a working mother must be able to manage the load and time allocation between working-from-home and accompanying their children to do online schooling. During the pandemic, a housewife must also ensure the fulfilment of nutritional needs and the increased electricity bills, while family's income is declining.

The intersectional feminism is an important feminism concept in observing the different situation faced by women and marginalized groups during the Covid-19 pandemic. In general, the increasing households' burden in the time of the pandemic would certainly have effect on women. However, women are not homogenous entities. During the Covid-19 pandemic, domestic worker—who are mostly done by women—has become a profession that is vulnerable to exploitation. Although the work load of domestic workers is increased during the pandemic, but in general, the domestic workers do not receive extra wages. On the contrary, during the pandemic, the domestic workers are more vulnerable to lay-offs and stigma as transmitters of Corona virus. Migrant domestic workers also face similar vulnerabilities as the domestic workers, with additional vulnerability of being involuntarily repatriated.

The intersectional feminism could also disclose the multiple layers of marginalization experienced by the marginalized group, such as the LGBT or transgenders. Due to their gender identity, transgenders people usually have limited access to various employment sectors. During the implementation of PSBB, the common types of jobs that are done by transgender people, such as beauty salon, street musician, restaurant, are the ones that are being closed or restricted. In several cases, the transgenders also experience barriers in accessing social assistance, because of not having of identity cards. Meanwhile, due to their gender identity, families who commonly become the sanctuary during the pandemic, reversely has become vulnerable to violence against transgender people. The unequal socio, economic and political relation, have brought worse impacts of the pandemic to the groups who experience

multiple inequalities. These multiple vulnerabilities are experienced by groups such as transgenders, women with disability, domestic workers, fisherwomen, migrant workers, and others, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Though sit in subordinate positions, women do have agency to survive during the pandemic, including to provide support for their community. Women in Sumba, for instance, have developed education's initiative, providing information, and communication about the Covid-19 pandemic, for their communities. The other women's agency can be seen in the voluntarism done by *Solidaritas Pangan Jogja* (SPJ). SPJ has managed to transform the bias view on care work, such as cooking in the kitchen, into solidarity movement of soup kitchen (public kitchen) for the marginalized groups during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a restricted social space during the Covid-19 pandemic, women could drive collective actions, not only for survival purpose, but also to create space for public interest. The experience of women's organizations such as Rahima and 'Aisyiyah, have shown women's collective movement in assisting community through aid and educational solidarity movement. Meanwhile, KAPAL Perempuan has tried to develop solidarity's initiative while at the same time keep monitoring over the prevalent gender-based violence that persist during the pandemic, such as child marriage. Aside from overcoming the pressure from the 'gendered space' due to the pandemic, women also maintain their civic

politics in public space. Therefore, despite the decreasing public space during the Covid-19 pandemic, the women activists continue to guard civic politics, such as pushing for the deliberation of the draft bill on the Elimination of Sexual Violence, draft bill on Domestic Workers, as well as being involved in activism to criticize the draft bill of Omnibus Law on Job Creation.

Jurnal Perempuan 107 on Women and the Covid-19 Pandemic, reconfirms the findings and women's experiences in various countries, that in Indonesia, the Covid-19 pandemic also brings more burden and vulnerability to women. The intertwined inequalities of gender identify, class position, social status, and the Covid-19 pandemic, have caused multiple vulnerability to women and other marginalized groups. Therefore, substantial inclusion of women in the mitigation of the Covid-19 pandemic is required, not only because women are one of the groups that face enormous vulnerabilities, but also because women are the backbone of prevention and recovery processes of the pandemic. The experiences on women's agency have taught that the Covid-19 pandemic could not be overcome by domesticizing the emerged problems. Here, we are being reminded to one argument that was developed during the second wave of feminism, that women's personal experiences could not be detached from the existing political structure in the society. That is 'the personal is political'. Have a great reading!

(Atnike Nova Sigiro)

Abstracts Sheet

Gadis Arivia

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Feminist Theoretical Perspective: Intersectionality and Covid-19

Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 25 No. 4, November 2020, pages. 1-10, 2 pictures, 16 references

The author argues for using a new theoretical foundation and criticizes Gender Mainstreaming perspective in issues related to gender. The author proposes an intersectionality approach that can critically see the problem of Covid-19 and its implications to not only gender relations (men and women) but also race, ethnicity, class, LGBTQIA, and other minority groups. The author emphasizes the concept of critical praxis, which uses both critical questions and activism for total social change.

Keywords: Covid-19, Intersectionality, Critical Praxis, Gender Mainstreaming, Male Crisis

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From Loss to Survival: A study on the Sumbanese Women's Experiences during Covid-19 Mitigation

Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 25 No. 4, November 2020, pages. 11-23, 37 references

This article describes the capacity of Sumbanese women to survive and adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic. Pandemic response creates problems due to changes in various aspects of life, such as health access patterns, social interaction and relationships, work patterns and employment status, religious practice, and school education system. To overcome the impact of pandemic response, they change their behavior and lifestyle, such as utilizing strategic partners in Covid-19-related education, participating as community volunteers, switching professions, and building social support among fellow community members. This study used a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, online focus group discussions, and online surveys.

Keywords: resilience, social relation, stigmatization, Sumbanese women, Covid-19.

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Indonesian Women's Experiences in Dealing with the Impacts of Pandemic Covid-19

Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 25 No. 4, November 2020, pages. 25-35, 2 tables, 32 references

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought serious impact due to its massive scale, that occur all over the world, at all levels of groups within society. This disaster has a strong social dimension because its vulnerabilities often intersects with the existing social stratification. In various disasters, women often become one of the most vulnerable to be affected,

especially in the context of culture of patriarchy, that intertwine with misogynistic interpretations of religion, and the unfriendly economic and political system towards women. This article aims to identify the forms of the impacts Covid-19 pandemic on women, government's regulations that deal with these impacts, as well as women's efforts both as individual and in groups in dealing those impacts. This research was conducted through literature study over various researches by several institutions, also through observation and interviews with several women groups. The results of this study found that women are one of the most vulnerable and the most affected groups of Covid-19 Pandemic. Although rather delayed, government has included women in the decision-making in handling the situation of women, children and vulnerable groups during the pandemic. Women's experiences both as individual and groups in responding to the impact of pandemic also deserve some appreciation. This research found that during the pandemic, women have shown their resilience, creativity, and put forward women's collaboration.

Keywords: women and pandemic, Covid-19 pandemic, women resilience

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Maintaining Civic Space: Women Activist and Spatial Politics During Pandemic Covid-19 in Indonesia

Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 25 No. 4, November 2020, pages. 37-46, 1 table, 27 references

The Covid19 pandemic has changed society's spatial practices substantially. Large-scale social restrictions, lockdowns, and the obligation to wear masks have changed the way humans relates to each other personally and politically. This article discusses how the pandemic has shaped civic space of women activists and how women activists maintain and create citizenship space amid the pandemic and democratic regression. The data source of the article is collected through online survey of 20 female activists and in-depth online interviews. The results show that civil society organizations in Indonesia are under immense pressure due to pandemic and democratic regression. For civil society organizations, their space is limited by various legal regulations and various violence and stigma aimed at civil society activists. More than that, for women activists the pandemic also provides additional domestic burdens which make the space for women activists increasingly limited. In the midst of these obstacles, our research shows that women and civil society activists do not reduce their intensity in maintaining the civic space.

Key words: pandemic, civic space, spatial politics, democracy.

Misiyah

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The Urgency of Gender Perspectives in the Covid-19 Pandemic's Mitigation

Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 25 No. 4, November 2020, pages. 47-57, 18 references

This paper looks at the urgency of gender perspective in Covid-19 pandemic's mitigation in Indonesia. This is crucial given the lack of gender perspective in measures to handle the pandemic in Indonesia and therefore deepening the existing gender inequality. This situation can be seen in the mitigation of the pandemic's impacts, particularly the specific impact of the pandemic on women within the gender cross-sectoral issues (economy, health, and education), and women's participation in the decision-making processes. Data during the pandemic show that the pandemic has caused serious impacts on women. Therefore, data and gender analysis are needed in order to ensure that measures in handling the pandemic would address the problems that are faced by women and vulnerable groups. This paper will present data from global and national, as well as data from KAPAL Perempuan's field experiences in its collaboration with its local partner organizations in 6 (six) provinces. The paper also draws from documentation from the experiences of other organizations in integrating gender perspective from the past natural disasters' mitigations that ever occurred in Yogyakarta, West Sumatra, Palu, and Lombok.

Keywords: gender and pandemic, women's leadership, pandemic and violence against women, grassroots women

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Women Ulema's Action Responding to Covid-19 Pandemic in their Communities: The Experience of 'Simpul Rahima'

Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 25 No. 4, November 2020, pages. 59-69, 1 table, 1 picture, 19 references

This article raises the experience of female ulema's autonomy and strength in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic in their communities. The female ulema that is represented by Simpul Rahima in this article, refers to the female ulemas who have attended series of Female Ulema School, that are based in community, with gender equality perspective about Islam. Data collection is conducted through focused group discussion (FGD) and online observation. This study reveals that self-autonomy of the female ulema has distinct characteristic from those of male ulema. The female ulema's preach is based on women's real experience. Female ulema also utilize their authority politically to

disseminate a peaceful, full of compassion and just Islamic teaching amidst religious interpretation which often marginalizes the position of women. In related with strength, female ulema utilize majelis taklim to preach a gender-just Islam as well as organize women's collective strength.

Keywords: female ulema, Covid-19 pandemic, women's autonomy

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Portrait of the Impact of the Implementation of Large-Scale Social Distancing during Covid-19 Pandemic towards Women and Marginalized Groups through the Perspective of Intersectional Feminism

Jurnal Perempuan, Vol. 25 No. 4, November 2020, pages. 71-84, 1 table, 37 references

Social distancing has been used as one of the methods to prevent the spreading of Corona virus during the Covid-19 pandemic. This method has been applied in many countries. In Indonesia, the social distancing method is implemented based on the Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar (PSBB), a large-scale social distancing policy. Through PSBB policy, a large number of activities in public domain must be closed and/or be restricted. Meanwhile, many of societal activities, such as schooling and working, must be held through long distance or being conducted at home. The application of social distancing has caused increasing of women's responsibilities on care work and house work in domestic domain. Through intersectional feminism's perspective, this article tries to elaborate the impact of the application of social distancing towards women and marginalized groups. This article found that the existing inequalities namely gender inequality, class inequality, and other forms of social inequality that have been experienced by women and the marginalized groups, have worsened their situations during the application of social distancing policy in Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, intersectional feminism, social distancing, care work

From Loss to Survival: A study on the Sumbanese Women's Experiences during Covid-19 Mitigation

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Abstract

This article describes the capacity of the Sumbanese women to survive and adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic. Pandemic response creates problems due to changes in various aspects of life, such as health access patterns, social interaction and relationships, work patterns and employment status, religious practice, as well as school education system. To overcome the impact of pandemic response, they change their behavior and lifestyle, such as utilizing strategic partners in Covid-19-related education, participating as community volunteers, switching professions, and building social support among fellow community members. This study uses a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, online focus group discussions, and online surveys.

Keywords: resilience, social relations, stigmatization, Sumbanese women, Covid-19.

Introduction

Since the first case of Covid-19 in Indonesia was announced by the government on March 2, 2020, until the time this article was written, the pandemic situation in Indonesia is still worrisome. According to the report issued by Committee for Covid-19 Response and National Economic Recovery (2020) up to October 26, 2020, the number of confirmed cases has reached 390,000, with number of recovering patients of 314,000, and overall death toll of 13,299. The Lokataru Foundation considered the government, especially President Joko Widodo and his ministers, are not serious in communicating prevention and mitigation efforts to the public (Alaydrus 2020, p.5). To control the spread of the virus, which requires population restrictions movement, the government mainly issued a social restriction policy through Government Regulation No. 21 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions. Unlike the neighboring ASEAN countries, the Indonesian government did not implement a lockdown policy to start with. This policy was aimed to save the country's economy as expressed by President Jokowi: "Making public health a priority does not mean having to sacrifice economic aspects, especially if it is related to the life of the wider community" (Sekretariat Kabinet 2020).

To date, according to the data from the Task Force of Covid-19 of NTT Province (2020), the number of cases in four districts of Sumba Island are the following: 1,482

close contacts, 561 suspects, 1 probable, 55 confirmed cases, and 2 deaths. This data is relatively low for NTT Province, where the overall cases now has reached 5,227 cases, with 2,421 suspects, 8 probable, and 652 confirmed cases, with positivity rate of 10.4%.

Banase (2020) mentioned in an article of Garda Indonesia newspaper that aside from the condition of patients with confirmed with Covid-19, the Head of the NTT Provincial Health Office also highlighted the importance of staying alert over the increased numbers of dengue fevers since the most recent data showed 56 deaths cases due to dengue fever. Apart from dengue fever, malaria remain to be endemic in Sumba. Data from the NTT Health Office recorded that until the end of 2018 there were 13,809 positive cases of malaria in Sumba which represented 76% of all positive cases in NTT with a tally of 18,503 cases (Kaha 2019).

Determining factors to the epidemiological of an area such as Sumba are related to climate, socio-cultural, political, health, and economy. One of the important dimensions of the Covid-19 pandemic that is received less attention from the public is the gender dimension. National Commission on Violence Against Women - Komnas Perempuan (2020) identified some serious impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on women in various aspects of life, such as the increase of domestic violence, the double work burden, and economic subordination,

which further show women's vulnerability. The testimony of the Sumbanese women that would be described below, would reveal their vulnerability when they were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, due to multiple burdens and the numbers of activities' restriction in public space. These would support the statement of Komnas Perempuan above.

It is important to explore the experiences of the Sumbanese women. How do they respond to government and community intervention in controlling the Covid-19 pandemic and what are the determining factors of their adaptiveness and resilience during the pandemic? Gender approach is required in order to understand the experiences of women as vulnerable group and to ensure that gender justice would be translated in any effort to stop and to address the Covid-19 pandemic.

The exploration towards the experiences of the Sumbanese women's resilience in this study would be addressed through two key questions. First, how the Sumbanese women survive and adapt to the new life patterns during the Covid-19 pandemic. Second, what factors that enable the Sumbanese women to adapt amidst the uncertain ending of the pandemic. In answering those questions, the following section of this article will explain the research method, and the theoretical framework that combines two point of views, namely the perspective of health communication and the perspective of gender equality. Then, the research methodology will be described in order to explain the validity of this research given the existing constraint of time and condition during the pandemic, before the next section where the findings of this research will be assessed. This article will be closed with the conclusion that will summarize the whole research.

Research Methodology

This study used a qualitative research method involving 18 Sumbanese women as informants. This method was employed by considering that this method provides tools to interpret epidemiological and statistical data (Liamputtong 2010, p. 16). It is in accordance to the method's intention of understanding what phenomena is experienced by the research subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, etc. holistically and descriptively using natural words and language by utilizing various natural methods (Moleong 2010, p. 8).

Initially, it was planned to collect data mainly by online in-depth interviews, but later it was developed into three stages of data collection. The first was an

online survey aimed to explore general information from the informants, then the next was an in-depth telephone interview. The last stage was conducted through an online focused-group discussions (FGD) with 18 informants with diverse information.

Time limitations and pandemic conditions are the reasons for adjusting the ethnographic studies. Thus, instead of conducting face-to-face interviews, field observations, and field visits, the research team has chosen to use online media for collecting data process. This was taken due to the health protocols that restrict group meetings.

Interview was used as data collection method in order to find the research problems, and also to explore further information from the respondents (Soegiyono 2016, p. 194). Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as one of the research techniques was carried out in order to gather further data in addition to data gather from the questionnaire. FGD is an exploration of specific issue/ phenomenon from a group discussion that focusing on collective activities among the participants in order to achieve collective consent (Barbour & Kitzinger 1999, p. 139). During the FGD, the informants shared many things related to impact of the pandemic on their daily lives and how they have addressed the change of lifestyles during the pandemic.

Using online survey, the researcher gathered an overview that would become the basis for the next step. Data collection was begun with the distribution questionnaire, as the research instrument, using *google form* application on September 22, 2020; which were received response by 17 out of 18 informants. The time frame to fill in the questionnaire was carried out between September 23 to October 7, 2020. Nine of the informants were health workers from the district of Southwest Sumba that consisted of two nurses, three midwives and retired midwives, three instructors from the Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection Officer, Population Control and Family Planning or DP3AP2KB of the district of Southwest Sumba, as well as one general practitioner who works at the Walandimu Kodi Community Health Center. This study involved the health workers as informants in order to assess the public health situation, services and the barriers that have been experienced by the community during the pandemic.

To gain information regarding the impact of the pandemic and the direct experiences of the community in preventing and addressing Covid-19, this study interviewed 12 women of the non-medical officers to become informants who have voluntarily filled out the

questionnaires. They consisted of 2 female students, 2 social workers, 2 private employees, 1 housewife, 1 farmer, 2 nurses, 1 civil servant, and 1 tour guide.

Each informant answered two questionnaires, one of them was prepared for the health workers, and the other one was for the Sumbanese women. The two questionnaires were provided through online link and were distributed openly through chain message using WhatsApp. The respondents' answers were automatically recorded in *google form* application.

Initially, when the questionnaire for the Sumbanese women were analyzed, there were a lack of data of information from women who work in agriculture. Therefore, the researcher received one additional woman as an informant, a 58-year-old woman who work as local horticulture farmer, and also the chairperson of one farmer group in district of Southwest Sumba. The data collected from this informant was carried out through in-depth telephone interview on October 8 and 25, 2020, including a visit by one of the researchers to the informant's residence on October 25, 2020.

The data collection was also improved through online FGDs using *zoom meeting* application. This FGD involved 4 selected informants who possessed diverse information and living near the city center of Weetebula, with consideration to availability of a better internet connection. The research excluded women living in remote areas due to limited electricity, the unavailable strong internet connection, and also their limited skill to access technology. Moreover, an online FGDs would be more effective since one of the researchers' mobility was restricted due to pandemic. The three stages of data collection were also complemented with the close range of location and social network between one of the researchers with the informant. This proximity was useful in doing validation over the findings and also in clarifying any biased information.

Thematic analysis was used for data analysis. By identifying issues and topics that were repeatedly conveyed by informants (Liamputtong & Serry, 2010, p. 383), the researchers can conclude that those are the core of the Sumbanese women's resilience in addressing the impact of the pandemic.

The Concept of Health and Equality

In analyzing the field's findings, the research team used the concept of health equity by Helen Keleher and Berni Murphy. According to Keleher and Murphy (2004, p.5), "Health equality is the equal provision of access

to services for everyone based on needs. Equality is understood as a resource, capacity, and strength needed in order to behave based on the living conditions that determine their health."

This means that the justice and equality approach become a key component that determines the degree or the quality of public health. Without understanding and acknowledging the existence the existing health's gap, the targeted option of intervention may not happen to the vulnerable groups such as women. According to Kawachi as quoted by Helen Keleher in the book of *Understanding Health: A Determinants Approach* (2004, p.101) "Equality in health refers to the inequalities in health that are considered unfair or caused by a form of injustice." Therefore, the concept of "*inequity and equity*" explore the complexities of the equal and unequal power relations in term of economy, politics, and social, as well as the dimensions of social justice and injustice relations that encourage the need for public policy as an alternative plan for solution.

In relation to gender equality, this concept would sharpen health equality as it more closely observes the disparities of healthcare access for men and women. In the context of Covid-19 pandemic, this should become a means for reflection upon the health status and the health system. To what extent are the impacts of Covid-19 and the mitigation of Covid-19 have affecting the people living in low socio-economic status and vulnerable groups such as women? What kind of social supports are available for poor women who have lost their source of income, socially being cut off, and have experienced prolonged anxiety (mental health) during the pandemic? It would be difficult for the policies to handle the Covid-19 pandemic to answer these questions if women's experiences and voices are not known, acknowledged, understood, and addressed.

The Gender Dimensions of Covid-19

According to Mohan J. Dutta (2008) - an expert on media and health who focuses on cultural approach in assessing health communication, the meaning of health and illness are dominated by biomedical models, which are the result of social construction of a patriarchal framework. Patriarchy that was meant here is the hierarchical rules of the social order that privileges masculine norms and ideals and view highly the masculinity's values (Dutta 2008, p.xi).

In the women's health daily experiences, women encounter limitation in accessing health services system

that are dominated, funded, and supported by the health industry and also regulated by policymakers that barely recognizes gender-justice perspective (Dutta 2008, p. 183). The structure that are not accessible to women include the material aspects due to financial constraints; time constraints – due to housework's load; biomedical constraints that are not responsive to women's personal experiences, and gap of communication's expectation between health instructors and the service's users. In other words, the construction contains domination of one party over the other. This reminds us on how domination processes continuously occur through the patriarchal structure and culture that reproduce the old repressive pattern of power into the new context.

With this perspective, the researcher team have explored the daily experiences of the Sumbanese women in responding to the mitigation of Covid-19 outbreak, in order to observe the extent to which the Sumbanese women have access and resilient over things that happen to their lives, their families, and the society where they live. These women's knowledge could serve as a source of knowledge and this will be elaborated further in next part of the analysis. To have a better understanding of the Sumbanese women's resilience, this article must describe the geographical, social, and cultural context of Sumba. Understanding on those aspects would be required in order to put the research findings with suitable framework of interpretation.

Identity, culture and health

Sumba is one of the islands in eastern Indonesia under the province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). Sumba Island consists of 4 districts, namely East Sumba, Central Sumba, West Sumba, and Southwest Sumba. According to data from Bureau of Statistic Centre - BPS NTT (2020), the population of island of Sumba is 817,846 lives, with composition of population of women as of 398,454, the population of men as of 419,392. This ratio shows a slight gap between the numbers of women and men, therefore any impacts that happened to women will eventually affecting the entire population of Sumba, including a situation like the current pandemic.

The Sumbanese holds three main principles regarding their cultural identity, those are the order based on religious beliefs (*Marapu*), the order based on residential place (*Paraingu*), and the order based on kinship's ties (*Kabihu*). These three types of orders serve as lives' guidelines, values, or as rules within the lives of the Sumbanese's community. Among the three orders, the Marapu serves as the most important

symbol of identity. This religious identification is a construction that emphasize the distinguishing that mark "this is our religion" where the Sumbanese actively labelled themselves through various religious activities (Soeriadiredja 2013, p. 60).

The strong existence of Marapu in the Sumbanese's lives serve as the foundation of the local ritual tradition of the local culture, although majority of the local community have followed Christianity. The 2019 data by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2019) recorded that in Sumba there were 538,087 Protestants and 233,583 Catholics. Meanwhile, there were 41,550 Moslems, 1,117 Hindus, and there 43 Buddhists.

Ethnographically, the Sumbanese society consist of many clans that according to local term is called *Kabihu*. *Kabihu* is a family's lineage based on the father (patrilineal). In the past, the Sumbanes were divided into three divisions, those were the aristocrats (*marimba*), the commoners (*kabihu*), and the slave (*ata*) (Handini et.al 2016, p.5).

Although none of the informants in this research belong to the Marapu's community, but the context of Sumba's culture is important to be described in order to help in comprehending the field's findings regarding the practice of faith. The Sumbanese's ritual and tradition were originated the practice of animism towards the ancestors that is called the Marapu. This is an old belief system of the Sumbanese in by worshipping the spirits of the ancestors. Marapu's belief is reflected in the various forms of religious' manifestation, one of them is the belief that the ancestral spirits carry certain power beyond a human's soul (Maria & Limbeng 2007, p. 118). This belief has influenced the society's understanding when facing the pandemic or other health conditions. One of the examples is the belief of Marapu community that tuberculosis (TBC) is a disease that happened because of a punishment from the Marapu's ancestral spirits.

The form of belief and worship to the ancestral spirits are shown in the architectural of the traditional houses, where in each of the houses are installed with many of buffalo horns on the outer walls of the house, and also on the gravestone walls that are built in front of the houses. Stone sarcophagi (*rati, hondi, odi, watu odi*) is mostly placed close to the house, symbolizing the inseparability of humans from their ancestors (Handini et.al 2016, p. 16). Apart from graves, the death's ceremony requires many steps of Marapu rituals. Similar to the death's ceremony, the traditional Sumbanese's wedding ceremony is also filled with the unique rituals of the Marapu. One

of the main steps of the wedding is *pembelisan*. *Belis* is a form of marriage's dowry that would be received by the bride's family, usually in the form of livestock such as buffalos, horses, and pigs. For the Sumbanese and NTT people in general, *belis* is a sign of honor, prestige, and status (Kleden 2017, p. 33). The uniqueness of the Marapu's ritual as the Sumbanese cultural identity is still well preserved until today and it becomes the local community's identity. Cultural identity is a characteristic shown someone because she/he belongs to a certain ethnic group and has underwent the learning process upon the traditions, customs, language, values, belief system, and other things within the community's culture. (Soeriadiredja 2016, p. 8).

The unique Marapu cultural identity that is thickly embedded in the daily lives of the Sumbanese, often become economic burden. Many families have to take loan in order to fulfill traditional demands, such as purchasing animals for offerings for the ancestors. The high demand from the Marapu's tradition, are known as one of the factors of economic hardship for families' economy in Sumba. This situation was recorded by Nasikun as quoted by Suryawati (2005, p.123) that cultural and ethnic factors reproduce the cycle of poverty. Some of the examples are: the consumptive lifestyle of farmers and fisherfolks during the harvest time, as well as the consumptive traditional and religious ceremonies. These traditional activities have become a big challenge during the pandemic, as they bring together a large crowd, as experienced by our informants.

Apart from becoming one of the factors that causing poverty, tradition has also becoming a barrier in reducing the risk of Covid-19 transmission, as mentioned by informant 5 (Health worker at DP3AP2KB, Northwest Sumba) said that "*tradition has becoming barrier*", informant 7 (Midwife of Yayasan Dompot Dhuafa Sumba) also said "*(the society) still hold activities that bring crowds together such as parties*". Furthermore, informant 8 (Nurse of the Office of Health in District of Northwest Sumba) who mentioned "Sumba is an island with millions of traditions and diversity that are still attached. Socialization has been carried out by the health workers and the Task Force of Covid-19. Despite the ongoing socialization are being given and heard by the community, traditional parties that brought large groups continue being held, where people giving each other Sumbanese hug and kiss."

Identity is a major component of a cultural community in responding to health messages, adopting preventive behaviors, effort for seeking treatment, and experience in accessing health care system. The relation between

identity, culture, and community health can be found in the stories shared by informants about their experiences in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, in order to study about health communication' experiences of the Sumbanese women in comprehending basic information regarding prevention of Covid-19 and how the community applied it into daily practices, we need to assess them through the perspective of health communication.

Dutta (2008, pp. 169-171) mentioned two perspectives in the health communication study, namely message-centered and process-centered. The application of these two perspectives carries different consequences. The process-based put focus more on dismantling the power structure that control material space and dialogue. For example, the absence of resource access and economic structures will affect community's involvement in the health communication's platform. Meanwhile, the message-process give more emphasize on the dissemination of health messages to the targeted audiences that are designed with an effective standard of communication by the message designer. A gap of communication expectation between the message designer and the recipients happen quite often. For example, a process-centered approach emphasizing the usage of local language (*mother tongue*) in disseminating information on the Covid-19 preventive measures is regarded as a right of the citizens.

The Context of Health and Poverty in Sumba in the situation of the Covid-19 pandemic

Living in poverty is not only a life with lack of money and low-income level, but also about many other things such as: health's level, poor education, legal injustice treatment, vulnerability to criminal action, helplessness in confronting power, and helplessness in deciding one's own life (Nasikun 2001 quoted in Suryawati 2005, p. 122).

According to the data from the BPS of East Nusa Tenggara province (2020, p. 160) in September 2019, there were 20.62% of the population living in poverty. Poverty rate in NTT is much higher than the national rate of 9.22% in the year of 2019. The four districts of Sumba contributed to the highest percentage of poverty in NTT as shown in the following breakdown: Central Sumba District 34.62%, East Sumba District 30, 02%, West Sumba District 28.29%, and Southwest Sumba District 28.06%. A study conducted by the LIPI research team (2018) found that the practice of donating livestock during death ceremonies is still widely practiced. Borrowing money for the donation of livestock were obtained from money

lender, therefore many people in the community are being trap with the circle of poverty.

Poverty due to various causes have affected the health's level of the Sumbanese community, especially those living in traditional villages. Chronic diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria endemic, malnutrition, and stunting children, are still not sufficiently addressed. Banase (2019) in Garda Indonesia has reported that TBC is ranked as the 3rd contributor to the rate of death in NTT in 2017. Sulistyawati (2017) wrote about a research by Setia Pradana, a researcher from the Health Research and Development Agency (Balitbangkes) of the Ministry of Health (Kemenkes), who found that *ngilu apung* or TBC in East Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), is believed as a 'punishment'. The person who suffer from this illness was considered to be punished by the ancestral spirit of Marapu because of forgetting to worship and pray for protection to the ancestors.

The cases of malnutrition and stunting in NTT, especially in Sumba, have become the concern of the central government. The Head of Southwest Sumba District, dr. Kornelius Kodi Mete, as reported in waingapu.com (2019) stated the prevalence of stunting in Southwest Sumba Regency in May 2019 was 39.9%; and 1,709 out of 32,544 toddlers were very undersized, while 1,768 were undersized. The Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia (KPPPA RI 2020) emphasized that stunting in East Nusa Tenggara is not merely a problem of health and malnutrition, but also a problem of access to healthcare centers. Factors such as poverty, low levels of education, and incorrect parenting model, have also contributed to the high prevalence of stunting in East Nusa Tenggara.

The other health problem reported by the NTT Provincial Health Office (2019) was the maternal mortality rate in this province in 2019 with 98 cases, which showed a decrease of 44 cases from the previous year of 142 cases. However, the maternal deaths in the island of in Sumba has actually increased from 16 cases in 2018 to 22 cases in 2019.

Condition of poverty, limitation and threats of chronic and endemic diseases, and the emergence of the Covid-19 outbreak have increasingly triggered injustice against women and children from the poor families in Sumba. Women and children become the most vulnerable groups during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Sumbanese women become the most vulnerable group affected by the Covid-19 pandemic as conveyed by informants no 5: "Because (women) much involved in public areas such as *puskesmas* (community health center), *posyandu*

(community service unit), and markets". Informant no 1 expressed similar opinion about women's vulnerability by saying "because of the professional burden and house chores, for example working from home while doing household chores". Informant no 2 added, "Mothers have more important role than fathers, because of what, for example, mothers to go to *posyandu*, listened to the information dissemination, mothers to collect social assistance, to collect children's school report, to go to the village office, mothers have more interactions outside homes".

Testimonies from these informants above illustrate women's vulnerability when they have to interact with other people, as interaction would expose them more to the risk of getting infected by Covid-19.

The Impacts of Covid-19 Pandemic's Response

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced the Sumbanese women to change their perspective and shift their lives; patterns in various dimensions such as health, spirituality, education, economy, and social relations. In other words, the pandemic has indeed changed the rhythm and the order of lives of the society.

During a press release, the Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment, Luhut B Pandjaitan (2020) explained the Indonesian government focused on two aspects in order to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, those are the curative, and preventive and promotion. The curative aspect includes the constructing of emergency hospitals, budget allocation of the central and local government, and personal protective equipment. Meanwhile, the preventive and promotive aspects include the dissemination of information related to health's promotion through social media and mass media.

The preventive and promotive aspects such as instruction about the application of clean and healthy living behaviors (PHBS) with the 3M campaign (washing hands, social distancing, and wearing masks) and limiting social interaction to avoid close contact with other people by staying home, and avoiding crowds (includes gathering for religious or traditional rites purposes).

However, the government's narrative and reality on the ground are not always in harmony as experienced by informants. The following are the data findings that discuss the six components of change that have been experienced by the Sumbanese women due to the Covid-19 pandemic's response. These changes affect the equality level of health access they encounter.

Change of the health service condition during the pandemic

Health workers in Weetebula have routinely delivered socialization regarding the Covid-19 virus and its causes. The people in Sumba have understood the information and took the virus-related issue seriously. However, there have been various changes and challenges in public health services that were told by the health workers in providing health services for the community during the pandemic.

Informant no 1 who works as a nurse conveyed the obstacles that she faced in conducting health education to the community "Limited PPE, fear of being in a crowd, limited guidance for living a clean and healthy lives, and the low level of knowledge of the society in receiving information" (Informant 1, 2020, Interview)

Changes in behavior's patterns of the health workers also occurred during the pandemic, as conveyed by Informant no 2 who works as a family planning instructor "After the pandemic occurred, people become more discipline to follow health protocols, particularly the health workers. In the past, gloves were the only health services protection being used, while now it is equipped better. However, health services are being restricted for fear of being too crowded. For example, the registration counter closes earlier than before ". Similar to the informant 2, informant 3 also stated that "The examination's time was shortened, before the pandemic the medical personnel were not required to use PPE when giving treatment to patients" (Informant 2 2020, Interview, 8 October)

Moreover, Informant 6 also emphasized the change of the society in accessing health services "Before the pandemic, patient visits were high, but after the pandemic occurred, patient visits to the community health center were decreased, since many people were afraid of the corona virus' transmission". As a doctor, Informant 4 described about the change in work patterns during the pandemic "The number of outpatients is slightly reduced, communication between doctors and patients have become limited... and some physical examinations could not be carried out in a detailed manner". In an interview the Informant 9 stated:

"Home visits by midwives to postpartum mothers are still carried out, meanwhile, exercises for pregnant women/class for expecting mothers who were usually held in the village by midwives every month were stopped, because these mothers' class would bring many expecting mothers together to get information. We suggested that the expecting mothers could get consultation through WA or

telephone to discuss matters, thus, they do not interact with the people around them." (Informant 9 2020, Interview, 8 October)

During the pandemic, the Sumbanese women also faced challenges over access to health services, particularly reproductive health services. Putting a halt on the exercise for pregnant women, the limited communication between doctors and patients, and incomplete physical examination, are some of the factors that determine the degree of women's health.

Changes in social interaction and relation

Before the pandemic occurred, gathering with relatives and friends was the most beautiful encounter among the Sumbanese. However, everything has changed completely since the Covid-19 outbreak, as stated by Informant 18. "During the pandemic, activities become lesser or totally stopped. Now, we only work in our own house's yards. Previously we worked in groups. It is as if we feel that we have lost our kinship and love". The routine activities that used to be carried out by this farmer groups of 30 women are *arisan* (group lottery) and cultivating the farms together with the group members. However, their activities have stopped due to water scarcity and the pandemic.

The statement about *losing of kinship and love* is the key expression of women in describing the distant social relation in the situation of the pandemic. Informant 18 also described her story as a farmer and the head of a farmer group in Southwest Sumba. Before the pandemic occurred, the informant was active in various activities in her neighborhood, attending mass at church and prayer groups, and also organized farmer groups. On daily basis, the informant also weaving, raise pigs for livestock, and manages a kiosk that sells groceries. In line with the situation of Informant 18, the Informant 15 also conveyed the limited space to move and the disrupted mobility of her daily life. For example, being unable to do outside activities freely, many of her group activities have been postponed due to reallocation of funds for Covid-19 responses.

The eighteen informants have experienced shifting of work from group into individual, the stoppage of group prayer activities and church services. Moreover, the frequency of activities has also decreased during the pandemic.

In relation to the dissemination of Covid-19 related information, several informants expressed their views that social distancing policy as recommended by the

government was not fully implemented in some areas, such as in Sumba. Traditional parties that gather people in large numbers are still being held. Informant 11 recounted:

“The referred traditional parties are those related to death or transferring woman (wedding). The society knows that Corona is life-threatening, but they still hold parties with health protocol, but in reality, there would be some people who did not wear masks. During party, it is also hard to resist attraction for hugging and kissing the nose. This kind of situation poses a high risk of viruses’ transmission.” (Informant 1, 2020, Interview)

Loss of Job and Decreasing Income

Informant 17 shared her experience of losing a job as a tour guide. According to her, when the pandemic occurred, guests were no longer visit Sumba. Whilst before the pandemic, there were many foreign guests came to visit Sumba. The impact of the outbreak experienced by Informant 17, financially was also experienced the farmers group in Northwest Sumba area.

The eighteen informants who work as farmers and head of farmers groups explained how the corn yields had not declined, but vegetable crops had declined due to water scarcity. Water for watering the vegetables is purchased from a water tank provider. Informant 18 described as follow:

“my farmer group experienced water deficit, Mam, there is no artesian wells. We have asked the local office (Office of Agriculture) recently (however) we have not received anything. So, all this time we purchase tank water (water tank truck that sell water), Rp 100,000. - per tank and those who do not have a storage tank would purchase it for Rp 10,000. - per drum”. (Informant 18, 2020, Interview, 25 October)

Before the pandemic occurred, the problem of access to clean water has been experienced by the informant. However, purchasing water when they have lesser income due to the pandemic have created additional burdens for the farmer groups. Informant 18 keep repeating her statements regarding the pressure and inquiries from the 30 members of the farmer group, which all of whom were women, questioning the results of her communication with the government requesting for water support. As they have yet to receive water support, then the community have to initiate an independent effort to find springs and to make artesian well. Water is needed not only for agricultural purpose, but also for other businesses such as raising pigs and the farmers’ home gardening.

The purchased water has become another problem of the farmer group. Farming, which was previously could be handled as group with profit-sharing among the group members, could no longer be done during the pandemic. Therefore, each member of the farmer groups’ member must do their own farming. The inter relation among women and the Covid-19 has caused limited labor market.

Faith and Tradition

Another challenge during the pandemic is the change religious practice, cultural and arts. The halt of prayer group events and activities in the church were experienced by Informant 18.

“I feel some kind of feeling regarding my faith eh... We no longer pray in groups and no longer go to the church.” (Informant 18, 2020, Interview, 8 October)

Informant 18 stated how practicing faith became important in the pandemic situation.

The social distancing policy has carried effect to the society in practicing religious rituals and culture that represent the collective identity. The neglected ritual could create impact, for example the Sumbanese society would still follow the traditional demand in order to avoid social stigma. When a family does not hold a ritual party, they will be considered as poor, and this could disturb the family’s confidence and their ego/ status. For example, a woman who is released by her family without *belis* (dowry) or customary processes would be considered to lower her self-worth and the community will belittle her dignity and prestige (Steven & Yunanto 2019, p. 207). They also have to obey all of the laws and regulations set by the *marapu* in order to live safe and long. Those who are disobedient will receive sanctions or punishment. When violation occurred, therefore humans must present offerings as sacrifices, in the form of chickens, pigs, buffalo, cows, and others (Maria & Limbeng 2007, p. 135). Based on a research conducted by Maria and Limbeng (2007, p. 3), local wisdoms when they are understood and interpreted as values that should be treated well, then it could foster cultural resilience of the society.

Concerns over Children’s Education

The other change that has occurred during the pandemic is the rhythm of the children’s school. The social distancing policy also has consequences to the education sector. With the implementation of teaching and learning activities from home during the pandemic,

the parents and children then have experienced various challenges. Informants 18 and 2 have experienced disturbed studying activities of the children during the pandemic. They have been worrying about their children's education as described in the following.

"We are concerned, children have only studied at home, and my children who are teachers were also stay at home because school is off. Even though I feel helped (lucky) because the children could help with household chores. But somehow, I still feel that there is a lack with my child who has to learn online. What will their future hold? In the future they will be disadvantaged. This is my complaint as a mother". (Informant 2, 2020, Interview, October 8)

Informant 2 mentioned that their children could not study well because schools were closed and as a result their children were mostly playing. Participant 11 who is currently pursuing higher education in Sumba talked about her experiences of taking the course online.

"As a student I have felt the overload burden of learning, so I have completed my assignments just to get grades without receiving any learning experience" (Participant 11, 2020, Interview, 24 September)

Participant 11 shared how challenging it was to take the course online. College assignments have actually been piling up since studying was done online, while internet access often disrupted. Not to mention the additional expenses to purchase internet data while parents question the quality of their children's education as the outcome of the online learning.

The gap between the narrative of health protocol policy with the availability of facilities in the field

The traditional Sumbanese people actually understand and believe that Corona virus that causes Covid-19 is real. Participants 1 and 9 talked about the people who still believe that several medicinal plants could prevent Corona virus, such as boiled papaya leaves as well as consuming ginger, turmeric, Javanese ginger, and lemongrass in order to keep stamina of the body.

Various preventive measures have been taken by the community as informed by the government, that is to follow the health protocols such as maintaining distance, wearing masks, and washing hands. However, there are some obstacles that they have experienced such as limited clean water, masks, and soap, to follow the health protocols.

The dry soil condition requires people to purchase water. With the limited income, not all families in the

villages could afford to purchase water, therefore, hygiene factor is being neglected, as told by Informant 4, "currently there is limitation of facilities, especially clean water". Informant 2 (Health Workers in DP3AP2KB) reinforced the previous statement:

"In public facilities too, such as in the bank, they provide water, but no soap, or they provide soap but no water. Those are in public facilities, what about in our marginalized society, where water must be purchased, while the price of water is calculated based on distance, the farther thus the price would be different (more expensive)" the place the more expensive the price is". (Informant 2, 2020, Interview, 8 October)

Aside from the limited and purchased soap and water, Informant 2 and 4 also explained how the community would wear masks for days without being washed, due to water scarcity.

The other problem is the barrier to access adequate information about Covid-19 due to language problems. The language used by the Sumbanes is the Sumbanese language, yet each area has its own dialect. The Sumbanese dialects come from similar root, but it can be classified into three groups, those are the eastern, the western, and the middle. The eastern group is the dialect used in the kingdoms of East, Central, and West Sumba (Anakalang, Mamboro, Wanokaka). The western group is the dialect spoken in Waijewa (now Wewewa), Laura, Lauli, Camboya (now Lamboya). While the middle group is the Kodi's dialect (Maria & Limbeng 2007)

However, the information and education materials for Covid-19 that are disseminated to the public have only used Indonesian language. According to participants 1, 3, and 9, who work in the health sector, most of the people living in remote areas of Sumba (hinterland) were never go to school and do not understand Indonesian language. This is one of their main problems in carrying out the socialization of the Covid-19 pandemic's prevention. As conveyed by Informant 1:

"The problem of low education level has made it difficult to immediately absorbing information. The other matter is the language. We convey information using Indonesian language, but the people may understand it better if using local languages". (Informant 1, 2020, Interview)

In line with Informant 1, Informant 3 also explained:

"Only a few people would follow, most of them are apathetic, maybe also because do not fully understand. I have barrier that I cannot speak the local language, and many of the community do not understand Indonesian language". (Informant 3, 2020, Interview)

FGD participants also conveyed the absence of material for communication, information, and education about Covid-19 that include and discuss the local context. Informant 9 for example, emphasized that the 3M messages (washing hands, wearing masks, and maintaining distance) is not enough, another kind of message such as “forbidden to do nose kiss and hug” during traditional parties would become an important message and relevant to be informed to the Sumbanese society.

Ignoring the problem of access to clean water and soap as determinant factor that would influence the practice and behavior to washing hands and wearing clean masks in the prevention of Covid-19, would marginalize the society. Without understanding to the factors above, the stigma over the people who do not follow health protocols will be even greater. Blaming the lower classes for not adhering to health protocols without knowing these limitations reveal the existing gap between the health protocol’s narrative and the availability of means to practice the health protocols. Stigmatization would further close the access to health equality.

Strategy of resilient during the Pandemic

The following three Sumbanese women shared the stories how have adapted and survived amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a midwife, Informant 9 shared stories about some of the obstacles in assisting pregnant women during the pandemic, that is the husband of pregnant wife who did not follow the health protocol. Participant 9, work together with other midwives to keep giving education and to ensure change of health’s behavior. Furthermore, the other initiative of the Informant 9 was to make report to the village officers and asked them to also convey message to the husbands with a stronger message “please do not harm pregnant women”. The midwife also reported to the village’s chief regarding the information of mothers who will give birth each of the months and inviting village officers to organize socialization on Covid-19 during the distribution of Direct Cash Assistance (Bantuan Langsung Tunai - BLT). The step to cooperate with local village officers was an initiative of the informant to reach the community.

The story of the Informant 9 story emphasized that protection for pregnant women requires men’s legitimacy over the women’s health quality. The involvement of the village’s chief in warning the husbands to follow the health protocols in order to protect their wives is also

related to structural power relations.

“During the Covid-19 pandemic, there are many village activities that are stopped, so we asked the village’s officers to use the village’s funds for activities of socialization about Covid-19. We also asked the village’s officers to help to disseminate information about Covid-19 during the delivery of direct cash assistance (BLT) to the poor families, usually the people would not listen when the health officers do the talk, but when the village’s officers do the talk when BLT is distributed, then it would be heard. If the community do not obey, do not give them rice (BLT)”. (Informant 9, 2020, FGD, October 8)

The public’s negligence towards the information provided by female health workers could be interpreted as ignorance towards women’s voices. Furthermore, the midwife’s request to socialize information about Covid-19 during the delivery of the BLT demonstrate the authority of the village’s officers to speak to the community members, although by using threats to keep the cash transfer assistance.

Language has become an obstacle in providing health’s information to the community. Informant 9 told about her difficulty in conducting counseling about Covid-19 in Kodi, as she cannot speak the local language. Informant 9 was then assisted by a health cadre who translate her explanation from Indonesian language to Kodi language, as shared by her in the following:

“We had activities in Kodi, in the village. So, when I explained about Covid-19 because I cannot speak Kodi language, then I asked someone. While I was speaking in Bahasa Indonesia, later I aksed one of the women, a cadre, to translate it into the local language like that. So, I use Indonesian language and later a woman would explain it in Kodi language”. (Informant 9, 2020, FGD, 8 October)

The Covid-19 pandemic has also hit the tourism sector in Sumba. Due to the pandemic, Informant 17 had lost her job as a tour guide. The following story of informant 17:

“During the pandemic, the profession as tourist guide has been much affected, automatically because there were no visitors from various countries from outside Sumba, there is no income. Then I looked for another job that could earn money. Now I have already had a job”. (Informant 17, 2020, Interview, 7 October)

The low level of public knowledge and awareness about the danger of Covid-19 has also encouraged the Informant 17 to become a volunteer. Informant 17 joined the Ked’de Sumba volunteer community who work to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic’s cases in Sumba, as described by her in the following:

"involved as a volunteer, because I have seen based on the information that we have received how dangerous this Covid-19 is, so to give more education to the society, that's how it is, sister, with our presence, we convey information to the society, to the people out there who do not understand and do not understand about Covid-19, yes, by myself becoming a volunteer". (Informant 17, 2020, FGD, October 8)

During the Covid-19 pandemic, farmers could no longer work together to cultivate the land. Informant 18, who is the head of a farmer group in Southwest Sumba, considered the biggest change within the farmer groups in the midst of the pandemic is that they could no longer work in groups, instead they have to work in their own respective house yards. The change in the collaboration's pattern of the farmer group cooperation was explained by Informant 18 as follows:

"This group has been here for quite a long time that it has become an intermediary level of farmer group. In the past, we worked as a group to make *bokasi*, spreading seeds, planting shallots, making local cakes, and so on. As we received seeds and polybags from the local office, then each of us received vegetable seed and polybags, therefore we work individually. Every month on the 16th we hold a meeting to share our activities and hold the *arisan SPP*". (Informant 18, 2020, Interview, October 25)

The farmer groups in this study has planted several types of food crops, such as rice, corn, guava, and vegetables. So far, sales of the harvest have been going well. Their emerging problem is water scarcity, which affects the vegetable crops badly. Informant 18 also do information sharing with the members of the farmer groups regarding Covid-19, such as information about Covid-19, and the prevention of transmission. Informant 18 also actively seeking for new information such as the requirements to hold self-isolation. She has been doing this since she heard some news about a nurse who was suspected of being infected but was only hold self-isolation at home.

Inequality of health status has occurred within the Sumbanese community even before the pandemic. However, the lack of access to clean water, while the health protocols require washing hands with running water, has exacerbated the health inequalities in the society. Basic needs to access clean water, information and communication in local languages, have affected the community's capacity to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. Access to water resources is not only related to public health behavior in following the recommended health protocols, but also has brought impact to the economic sector that is employed by women in the

agriculture and stockbreeding sector.

The involvement and the movement of the Sumbanese women in those various stories above reveal the women's strategies to adapt and to survive amidst the pandemic. Emerging initiatives such as volunteer work, local languages usage, and inserting relevant health's information based on the local context; collaboration with various partners such as women leaders, village officers, church leaders, and traditional elders; as well as self-initiative to search water sources; and effort of sharing resources (information and emotional/ psychological supports) to members of the farmers community; they all show the resilience adaptation of the Sumbanese women in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, as shown in this research.

The experience of the Sumbanese women in adapting and surviving reveal the ability of the Sumbanese women to surpass their position as passive recipients from the mitigation of Covid-19. The Sumbanese women in this study have acted as agents of change through their initiatives in the form of support of information, emotional, psychological, spiritual, and financial to the individuals, families, and community around them. The Sumbanese women in this study have become agents of change by acknowledging the existing vulnerabilities, health's inequalities, and later adapting to survive in the mitigation process of Covid-19.

Closing

The eighteen informants in this study represent some of the portraits of women in Sumba in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. The Sumbanese women in this study have adapted and survived in such uncertainty not only because of the unpredictability of when the pandemic will end, but also because of the gender inequality that they have been experiencing. They have experienced various challenges in controlling the pandemic, such as access to health services, social interactions and relationships, works, appreciation of faith, results of online education, and stigmatization over those who do not follow the Covid-19's health protocols.

In the midst of various limitations caused by the pandemic, the Sumbanese women have adapted using survival strategies through various initiatives such as building partnerships in education, information and communication regarding Covid-19, getting involved as volunteers, switching professions, and building social support for the community. Local initiatives for adaptation and survival done by the Sumbanese women

come as a form of individual and group's articulations that illustrate the dynamic relationship between agency and structure. As agents, the Sumbanese women do not easily give up to their given situation, but attempt to survive as a form action to preserve their existence.

Therefore, the response to the Covid-19 pandemic needs to listen and to understand the voices and the vulnerabilities of women. Without a gender-sensitive approach, the multiple vulnerabilities experienced by the Sumbanese women will prolong the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic within the society.

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