

Performance of Village Local Assistance Workers During the Crisis Facing the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Study in Cigandeng Village, Menes District, Pandeglang Regency

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Abstract

This study examines the performance of Village Local Facilitators (PLD) during the Covid-19 crisis in Cigandeng Village, Menes District, Pandeglang Regency. PLDs play a crucial role in supporting village governance as mandated by Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, particularly in planning, development implementation, and community empowerment. During the pandemic, PLDs were required to adapt to crisis conditions by conducting socialization of health protocols (5M) and assisting in the management of Village Funds allocated for mitigating the socioeconomic impacts of Covid-19. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method, collecting data through interviews with six informants, including village officials, PLDs, and community representatives. The findings reveal that PLDs generally performed their duties in accordance with governmental regulations, especially in educating the community and facilitating village development during the pandemic. However, there remain challenges in the area of participatory development planning, where the village government still tends to formulate plans independently with limited PLD involvement.

Keywords: *Village Local Facilitator, Village Governance Performance, Covid-19*

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I. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus has become a global crisis with far-reaching social and economic impacts. Since it was first discovered in Wuhan, China, at the end of 2019, this virus has spread rapidly around the world, including Indonesia. The World Health Organization (WHO) designated Covid-19 as a global pandemic in early 2020. In Indonesia, the pandemic has posed major challenges in various sectors, including the economy, health, and local government. National data shows that millions of citizens are affected, while people's economic activities have declined drastically, leading to economic contraction and a decline in social welfare.

In the context of village government, the Covid-19 pandemic has tested the ability of local institutions to maintain social stability and public services. Villages are at the forefront of handling the impact of the pandemic because they interact directly with the community. Based on Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, village governments have an important role in the implementation of government, development, community development, and community empowerment. One of the important elements in supporting this function is the Village Local Assistance Staff (PLD), which is tasked with assisting the village in planning, implementing, and evaluating community development and empowerment.

In times of crisis, the role of PLD has become increasingly strategic. They not only play a role as development facilitators, but also as communicators between the government and the community in socializing pandemic handling policies. In Pandeglang Regency, especially Cigandeng Village, Menes District, the village government together with PLD formed a task force to accelerate the handling of Covid-19 in accordance with the Pandeglang Regent Regulation Number 55 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Discipline and Law Enforcement of Health Protocols. PLD also plays a role in the implementation of the policy by providing education to the community about the implementation of the 5M health protocol, as well as assisting the process of using Village Funds for village economic prevention and recovery activities.

However, in the field, PLD's performance cannot be separated from various obstacles. Several obstacles arise in the implementation of mentoring, especially in the aspect of development planning which is still often carried out independently by the village government without the optimal involvement of PLD. This condition shows that there is a gap between the ideal role mandated by the regulations and the actual implementation at the village level. In addition, communication factors, cross-agency coordination, and limited resources are also challenges in supporting the effectiveness of assistance during crisis times.



This phenomenon is interesting to study because it illustrates the dynamics of village government in the midst of a global health emergency. The performance of PLD as an implementer of public policy at the local level is an important indicator in assessing the effectiveness of village governance in times of crisis. This research is focused on the performance analysis of Village Local Assistance Workers in Cigandeng Village, Menes District, Pandeglang Regency, during the Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose is to describe the extent to which PLD carries out its duties and functions in assisting the village government and the community, as well as identify factors that hinder the implementation of the assistance.

By understanding the performance of PLD in the context of a crisis, this research is expected to contribute to strengthening the capacity of village government and a local community resilience-based mentoring model. The results are expected to be a consideration for local governments in increasing the effectiveness of village assistance policies in future emergencies.

Literature Review

Village Government and Its Position

Village government is the lowest unit of government that directly interacts with people's lives. Based on Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, a village is a legal community unit that has territorial boundaries with the authority to regulate and manage the interests of its community based on the rights of origin and traditions recognized by the state. The village government consists of village heads and village officials assisted by the Village Consultative Body (BPD) as an institution that accommodates and channels the aspirations of the community.

The village government has the functions of administering government, implementing development, community development, and community empowerment. In the implementation of development, villages become the center of local economic driving forces that play an important role in the equitable distribution of national development results. Villages as the lowest government base are also spearheading the implementation of public policies at the grassroots level, especially during crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, where public services, health, and community welfare are the main focus of local policies.

Village Local Companions (PLD) and Their Roles

Village Local Assistants (PLD) are professionals under the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration who are tasked with assisting village governments in the implementation of government, development, and community empowerment. The existence of PLD is regulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Villages, PDT, and Transmigration Number 18 of 2019 concerning General Guidelines for Village Community Assistance.

Substantively, PLD plays a role as a facilitator, motivator, and liaison between the village government and the community. They are responsible for ensuring that the use of Village Funds runs according to the principles of transparency, participation, and accountability. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, PLD also carries out an additional role as a public information agent who socializes health protocols, assists in budgeting Covid-19 mitigation activities, and assists villages in maintaining social and economic stability.

According to Wiryasaputra (2006), mentoring can be interpreted as a process of facilitating change that helps individuals or groups in facing their social problems. The village local companion is thus not only a technical implementer, but also an empowerment agent who seeks to build community awareness of their potential, rights, and responsibilities as villagers.

The Concept of Performance in Government

Performance is the result of work achieved by a person or group in carrying out tasks according to their responsibilities, both in terms of quality, quantity, and timeliness. According to T.R. Mitchell in Sedarmayanti (2007), performance can be measured through five main indicators: work quality, punctuality, initiative, ability, and communication. In the context of village government, the performance of PLD can be assessed from the effectiveness of the implementation of assistance to the planning, development, and empowerment of village communities.

Good performance reflects not only the success of the individual, but also the effectiveness of the institution in achieving the organization's goals. Simamora (2002) stated that performance is influenced by various factors, including motivation, ability, work environment, and leadership. Thus, PLDs who have good technical and social competence will be better able to improve the quality of public services at the village level.

Village Community Empowerment

Community empowerment is the core of village development. According to Siagian (2010), empowerment aims to improve the ability of people to control economic and social resources in their environment. In the village context, empowerment is realized through increasing the capacity of the community to actively participate in the planning and implementation of development.

Government Regulation Number 47 of 2015 emphasizes that assistance to village communities is carried out to ensure the implementation of participatory, fair, and sustainable development. Therefore, PLD plays an important role in organizing and mobilizing the community to be involved in village development activities, both in planning, implementation, and supervision.

PLD's Performance during the Pandemic Crisis

The Covid-19 pandemic requires PLD to adapt to emergency situations that cause significant changes in village governance. Based on the Pandeglang Regent Regulation Number 55 of 2020, the village government is obliged to establish a Covid-19 Handling Task Force at the village level. In its implementation, PLD is an important part in assisting the village government to ensure that this policy runs effectively.

The performance of PLD during the pandemic can be seen from several aspects: first, the quality of work, which includes the ability of PLD to provide education and socialization to the community; second, timeliness, namely the extent to which PLD is able to carry out assistance tasks according to the target; third, initiatives, in the form of PLD's ability to provide ideas in dealing with field obstacles; fourth, the ability to understand local regulations and contexts; and fifth, communication, namely the skill of interacting with village officials and the community.

Several previous studies have also emphasized the importance of the role of PLD in strengthening village social resilience. Irfan and Tahir (2018) found that village assistants play an important role in realizing independent villages through training, facilitation of village deliberations, and assistance of BUMDes. Meanwhile, Wildan (2019) showed that the effectiveness of PLD is highly determined by the ability to communicate and coordinate with village officials. In the context of the pandemic, these two aspects are key factors for the success of PLD's performance in the field.

Frame of Mind

Based on the above theoretical study, it can be concluded that the performance of PLD is greatly influenced by technical and social capabilities in carrying out assistance functions, as well as by the institutional support of the village government. In crisis situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic, PLD is required to play a role not only as a policy implementer, but also as an innovator who is able to move the community to remain productive and resilient in the face of change. Therefore, measuring the performance of PLD is important to assess the extent to which village assistance policies have succeeded in contributing to stability and sustainable development at the local level.

II. Research Methods

Types and Approaches to Research

This study uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. The descriptive method is used to describe and analyze social phenomena as they are without manipulating the variables being studied. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on the meaning, understanding, and interpretation of the performance of Village Local Assistance Workers (PLD) in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic crisis in Cigandeng Village, Menes District, Pandeglang Regency.

According to Sugiyono (2017), qualitative research emphasizes on a deep understanding of a phenomenon, with researchers as the main instrument that plays a direct role in the process of data collection and analysis. This approach is relevant to assess the performance of PLD because it involves social, behavioral, and interaction aspects between village assistants and the government and the community.

This research seeks to photograph how PLD carries out its functions and responsibilities in crisis situations, as well as identify supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of assistance at the village level.

Research Location and Time

The research was carried out in Cigandeng Village, Menes District, Pandeglang Regency, Banten Province, which was selected purposively. This village was chosen because it is one of the areas affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and has interesting dynamics in the implementation of village assistance to be studied. In

addition, in this village there is one PLD person who is actively carrying out assistance duties during the pandemic.

The research activities were carried out for four months, starting from the proposal preparation stage to the data collection and analysis process, namely from February to May 2022.

Data Source

The data sources in this study consist of two types, namely primary data and secondary data.

Primary data was obtained directly from informants through in-depth interviews and observations in the field. Informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques, which are deliberate selection of informants based on certain criteria, such as direct involvement with village assistance activities during the pandemic.

The informants in this study amounted to six people consisting of:

- 1) One Village Local Companion (PLD),
- 2) One Head of Cigandeng Village,
- 3) One person is the Head of Village Finance,
- 4) Three local community leaders.

Secondary data was obtained through official documents, laws and regulations, village activity reports, local government archives, and related literature that supported the research analysis.

A combined approach between primary and secondary data is expected to provide a complete picture of the performance of PLD and the social context surrounding it.

Data Collection Techniques

To obtain relevant data, researchers used three main techniques:

- 1) In-depth *interviews* were conducted with key informants and supporters to explore their views, experiences, and assessments of PLD's performance during the pandemic. Interview guidelines are prepared openly so that informants can provide as much information as possible.
- 2) Direct *observation* is carried out to observe the activities of PLD and village governments in the implementation of assistance, including socialization, coordination, and reporting activities on the use of Village Funds. Observations also help researchers understand the social context and dynamics of relationships between PLD, village officials, and the community.
- 3) Documentation, namely the collection of written documents such as activity reports, meeting minutes, photos of activities, and policy archives related to the implementation of village assistance during the pandemic. This technique is used to complete and verify the data from interviews and observations.

The three techniques are used triangulatively to ensure the validity of the data and avoid researcher bias.

Research Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher is the main instrument (key instrument). This means that the researcher himself determines the focus, chooses informants, collects data, analyzes, and draws conclusions. The researcher is equipped with tools such as interview guidelines, field notes, and documentation devices (cameras, recording devices, and village administrative documents).

The interview instrument contained a number of open-ended questions regarding the implementation of PLD's duties, functions, and obstacles during the pandemic. During the study, the researcher also noted field findings that emerged spontaneously as part of a reflection on empirical data.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive analysis technique of Miles and Huberman (1994), which included three main stages:

- *Data reduction*, which is the process of selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data obtained from the field to match the research focus.
- *Data display*, which is compiling findings in the form of a descriptive narrative to facilitate understanding and interpretation of the relationship between social variables.

- Conclusion drawing and verification, *which is the process of data interpretation that continues to be carried out throughout the research to ensure valid and consistent findings.*

All stages of analysis are carried out inductively, meaning that conclusions are built based on patterns and meanings that emerge from empirical data, not from initial hypotheses.

Data Validity

To ensure the validity of the findings, this study uses source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of interviews between the main informant and supporters. Meanwhile, the triangulation method was carried out by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation.

In addition, the researcher also conducted a *member check*, which is asking for confirmation from the informant about the provisional results of the research so that it matches the reality they are experiencing. This procedure aims to maintain objectivity and increase the credibility of research results.

III. Results and Discussion

Overview of Research Locations

Cigandeng Village is one of the villages in Menes District, Pandeglang Regency, Banten Province, with an area of about 216 hectares and a population of 3,035 people. This village is divided into three hamlets and has a social structure dominated by the agrarian community. Most of the population works in the agricultural and labor sectors, while a small number work as traders and civil servants. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Cigandeng Village was an area that was economically affected, especially because many residents lost their jobs due to termination of employment and a decline in trade activities outside the region.

The Cigandeng Village Government, in collaboration with the Village Local Assistance (PLD), formed a Covid-19 Handling Task Force and Covid-19 Safe Village Volunteers as mandated by the Pandeglang Regent Regulation Number 55 of 2020. PLD plays an active role in providing education to the community regarding the implementation of health protocols, assistance in the distribution of Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) for Village Funds, as well as in monitoring village development during crisis periods.

Performance of Village Local Assistants during the Pandemic

The results of the study show that PLD in Cigandeng Village has generally carried out its duties and functions in accordance with the provisions of regulations, although there are still some obstacles in the field. Based on the results of interviews with village heads, village officials, and community leaders, the performance of PLD is considered quite good in terms of coordination, communication, and implementation of socialization tasks during the pandemic.

a. Quality of Work

The quality of PLD's work is measured by its ability to provide assistance to the village government and the community. PLD in Cigandeng Village is actively conducting socialization about the dangers of Covid-19, the implementation of health protocols, and the distribution of social assistance. The companions are also involved in supervising the use of Village Funds to remain in line with pandemic handling priorities.

However, some aspects of the work are still considered not optimal, especially in assisting village development planning. According to village officials, the annual planning is still prepared independently by the village government, without the intensive involvement of PLD. This shows the need to improve coordination and the presence of PLD in the planning stage so that the assistance function is maximized.

b. Punctuality

In carrying out their duties, PLD shows a fairly high level of discipline. Based on the results of the interviews, PLD routinely visits villages twice a week to monitor activities and report on the progress of budget use. Communication is also carried out online through WhatsApp groups to ensure that all stages of activities run according to schedule.

This discipline is an indicator that PLD has a commitment to its work responsibilities. However, the timeliness of the completion of activity reporting still faces obstacles due to the limitations of the internet network and the slow flow of administration at the district level.

c. Initiative and Capabilities

PLD shows good initiative in providing ideas and solutions to problems that arise in the field. For example, in the face of low public awareness of the dangers of Covid-19, PLD initiated educational activities directly to residents' homes and helped prepare personal protective equipment such as masks and disinfectant liquids from the Village Fund.

In addition, PLD also assists the village government in adjusting the allocation of Village Funds for new priority programs, such as Direct Cash Assistance (BLT-DD) and Community Economic Empowerment activities during the pandemic. This adaptive ability shows that PLD is able to adapt to emergency situations and understand applicable regulations.

d. Communication and Coordination

Communication between PLD and village officials went well, especially with the village head and financial apparatus. However, the relationship with the Village Consultative Body (BPD) and the management of BUMDes has not been fully effective. The lack of inter-agency communication has caused some village activities not to involve PLD optimally.

This obstacle is influenced by structural factors, such as the unclear division of roles between PLD and village apparatus. In fact, effective communication is the key to the successful implementation of mentoring programs, especially in times of crisis that require fast and precise coordination.

Factors Inhibiting PLD Performance

Some of the main factors that hinder the performance of PLD in Cigandeng Village include:

- 1) Lack of public awareness of health protocols. Some residents still consider the pandemic to be harmless, so they reject the implementation of restrictions on community activities.
- 2) The lack of community participation in village deliberations during the pandemic was due to social restrictions and fear of transmission.
- 3) The implementation of physical development is hampered because most of the Village Funds are allocated for the BLT-DD program and Covid-19 handling activities.
- 4) Limited capacity of PLDs, especially in terms of information technology and online administrative reporting.

These factors show that the role of PLD does not only depend on individual abilities, but also on village institutional support and community participation.

Discussion

The results of this study strengthen the performance theory put forward by T.R. Mitchell in Sedarmayanti (2007), that a person's performance is influenced by the quality of work, punctuality, initiative, ability, and communication. All of these indicators can be seen in the performance of PLD in Cigandeng Village, although some aspects still need to be improved.

The findings are also in line with the research results of Irfan and Tahir (2018) and Wildan (2019), which emphasized that the effectiveness of the role of village assistants is determined by the ability to communicate, coordinate, and take initiative in dealing with changing situations. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, PLD's adaptive capabilities are an important factor in ensuring the continuity of public services at the village level.

Overall, the performance of PLD in Cigandeng Village has shown a positive direction and contributed to the social resilience of the village during the pandemic. However, it is necessary to increase technical capacity, cross-agency coordination, and strengthen the role of PLD in the development planning process so that the assistance function can run more effectively and sustainably.

IV. Conclusions and Suggestions

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research on the Performance of Village Local Assistance Workers (PLD) during the Crisis Period Facing the Covid-19 Pandemic in Cigandeng Village, Menes District, Pandeglang Regency,

it can be concluded that PLD has carried out its role quite well in assisting the village government and the community during the pandemic, although there are still several obstacles in the field.

In general, PLD has carried out its duties and functions in accordance with the mandate of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages and its derivative regulations. PLD's performance is reflected in the implementation of mentoring activities in the field of socialization of health protocols, supervision of the use of Village Funds, and public education on the importance of maintaining economic and social resilience during the pandemic.

From the aspect of work quality, PLD shows high responsibility and dedication in helping the village government adjust development programs to the needs of the crisis period. In terms of timeliness, PLD consistently carries out tasks according to schedule and submits activity reports regularly. Meanwhile, in terms of initiative and capabilities, PLD is able to provide innovative solutions such as the preparation of community-based socialization programs and assistance in the use of funds for productive activities.

However, there are several limitations, including the lack of optimal involvement of PLD in the village development planning process, low community participation during the pandemic, and technical obstacles in digital reporting and cross-agency coordination. This shows the need to increase institutional capacity and structural support for PLDs to make their role more effective and sustainable.

Overall, the performance of PLD in Cigandeng Village can be categorized as good, although it still needs to be strengthened in terms of coordination, communication, and program innovation in dealing with crisis situations.

Suggestions

Based on the findings, some recommendations that can be given are as follows:

- 1) Local governments need to increase coaching and training for PLDs, especially in the fields of information technology, digital reporting, and crisis management, so that assistance is more adaptive to changing situations.
- 2) The village government is advised to involve PLD more in all stages of development planning and evaluation in order to create synergy between assistants and village officials.
- 3) PLD itself needs to strengthen communication capacity and participatory approach to the community to foster collective awareness and village independence in dealing with emergency conditions.
- 4) Village communities are expected to participate more actively in development and socialization activities so that the mentoring process can achieve sustainable results.

With the implementation of these suggestions, it is hoped that the performance of the Village Local Assistants can be more optimal in strengthening village governance and realizing community resilience in times of crisis and post-crisis.

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