

## Local Wisdom as a Pillar of Yogyakarta's Community Welfare During Covid-19

Andayani Listyawati<sup>1</sup>✉, Raden Roro Ilma Kusuma Wardani<sup>2</sup>  
Center for Social Welfare, Villages, and Connectivity Research, National Research and  
Innovation Agency<sup>1</sup>  
Graduate School, Sebelas Maret University<sup>2</sup>  
✉ [anda008@brin.go.id](mailto:anda008@brin.go.id)

### Abstract:

The Covid-19 pandemic became a major test of social resilience for Indonesian society, especially the people of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, as it triggered not only a health crisis but also significant social, economic, and psychological impacts. In this situation, local wisdom emerged as an important form of social capital in strengthening solidarity, social care, and the community's ability to cope with various social problems. This study aims to describe and illustrate the diversity of local wisdom in the Special Region of Yogyakarta in providing social welfare services for people affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies involving formal and informal officials as well as community leaders across the five administrative regions of Yogyakarta. The findings show that communities in Yogyakarta City and the four regencies of the Special Region of Yogyakarta continue to preserve and utilize various forms of local wisdom in addressing social problems during the pandemic. These forms of local wisdom include local knowledge in the form of community initiatives and local technology, local culture reflected in traditions, expressions, arts, and social norms, as well as local skills that demonstrate the community's ability to provide social welfare services. Values such as harmony, social care, mutual cooperation, and helping one another became the main characteristics that strengthened community solidarity, particularly in assisting neighbors affected by Covid-19. This study confirms that local wisdom has strong practical value as a foundation for community social resilience in facing social disasters and humanitarian crises.

**Keywords:** Local wisdom; Pillars of community well-being; Covid-19 pandemic

### Abstrak:

Pandemi Covid-19 menjadi ujian besar bagi ketahanan sosial masyarakat Indonesia, khususnya masyarakat Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, karena tidak hanya memicu krisis kesehatan, tetapi juga berdampak pada aspek sosial, ekonomi, dan psikologis masyarakat. Dalam situasi tersebut, kearifan lokal muncul sebagai modal sosial yang penting dalam memperkuat solidaritas, kepedulian, dan kemampuan masyarakat dalam menghadapi berbagai persoalan sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan dan menggambarkan keberagaman kearifan lokal masyarakat Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta dalam pelayanan kesejahteraan sosial bagi korban pandemi Covid-19. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam,

observasi, dan studi dokumentasi terhadap aparat formal maupun informal serta tokoh masyarakat di lima wilayah administrasi Yogyakarta. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa masyarakat di Kota Yogyakarta dan empat kabupaten di Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta masih melestarikan sekaligus mendayagunakan berbagai bentuk kearifan lokal dalam penanganan masalah sosial selama pandemi. Bentuk kearifan lokal tersebut meliputi pengetahuan lokal berupa inisiatif dan teknologi lokal, budaya lokal berupa tradisi, ungkapan, kesenian, dan norma sosial, serta keterampilan lokal yang mencerminkan kemampuan masyarakat dalam memberikan pelayanan kesejahteraan sosial. Nilai-nilai seperti kerukunan, kepedulian, gotong royong, dan tolong-menolong menjadi karakter utama yang menguatkan solidaritas masyarakat, terutama dalam membantu warga yang terdampak Covid-19 di lingkungan ketetangaan. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa kearifan lokal memiliki daya guna yang kuat sebagai fondasi ketahanan sosial masyarakat dalam menghadapi bencana sosial dan krisis kemanusiaan.

**Kata kunci:** Kearifan lokal; Pilar Kesejahteraan Masyarakat; Pandemi Covid-19

### ملخص البحث:

Special Region of Yogyakarta شكّلت جائحة كوفيد-19 اختباراً كبيراً لقدرة المجتمع الإندونيسي، وخاصة مجتمع على الصمود الاجتماعي، إذ لم تقتصر آثارها على الأزمة الصحية فحسب، بل امتدت، إلى تأثيرات اجتماعية واقتصادية ونفسية كبيرة. وفي ظل هذه الظروف، برزت الحكمة المحلية بوصفها شكلاً مهماً من أشكال رأس المال الاجتماعي في تعزيز التضامن والرعاية الاجتماعية وقدرة المجتمع على مواجهة مختلف المشكلات الاجتماعية. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى وصف وتوضيح تنوع الحكمة المحلية في إقليم يوجياكارتا الخاص في تقديم خدمات الرعاية الاجتماعية للأشخاص المتضررين من جائحة كوفيد-19. وقد اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الوصفي النوعي، حيث جمعت البيانات من خلال المقابلات المتعمقة، والملاحظة، ودراسة الوثائق، بمشاركة مسؤولين رسميين وغير رسميين وقادة المجتمع في المناطق الإدارية الخمس في يوجياكارتا. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن المجتمعات في مدينة يوجياكارتا والأقاليم الأربعة التابعة للإقليم ما زالت تحافظ على أشكال متعددة من الحكمة المحلية وتوظيفها في معالجة المشكلات الاجتماعية خلال فترة الجائحة. وتشمل هذه الأشكال المعرفة المحلية المتمثلة في المبادرات المجتمعية والتكنولوجيا المحلية، والثقافة المحلية التي تنعكس في التقاليد والتعبيرات والفنون والأعراف الاجتماعية، إضافة إلى المهارات المحلية التي تُظهر قدرة المجتمع على تقديم خدمات الرعاية الاجتماعية. كما أصبحت قيم الانسجام، والرعاية الاجتماعية، والتعاون المتبادل، ومساعدة الآخرين من السمات الأساسية التي عززت التضامن المجتمعي، خاصة في مساعدة الجيران المتضررين من كوفيد-19. وتؤكد هذه الدراسة أن الحكمة المحلية تمتلك قيمة عملية قوية بوصفها أساساً للصمود الاجتماعي للمجتمع في مواجهة الكوارث الاجتماعية والأزمات الإنسانية.

### INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic is not only a health crisis but has also become a crisis affecting the social, economic, and psychological aspects of society in Indonesia. The impacts of this pandemic are far-reaching and complex (Nurhayati, 2020). They are not limited to health issues but also affect many aspects of daily life. The government's efforts to control the spread of the virus through social restrictions have impacted social activities, economic activities, and the overall lifestyle of the community. This is evident in the decline in social mobility as well as drastic changes in consumption patterns and social interactions among the Indonesian people.

Indonesian society, with its cultural diversity and complex social conditions, faces very unique challenges in addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. A study conducted by Pratama (2020) suggests that Indonesia's cultural diversity has been a factor complicating efforts to manage this crisis. This cultural diversity influences the behavioral patterns, beliefs, and actions taken by the public in response to the pandemic, necessitating an approach that is highly sensitive and tailored to specific contexts. Complex social conditions also represent a factor that must be considered when addressing the pandemic's impact. These groups require social welfare services.

These services not only provide medical support but also involve efforts to understand and address the social and economic needs of the affected communities. In this context, it is important to recognize that disasters not only cause physical harm but also create social and economic instability that requires a holistic response grounded in local wisdom.

Local wisdom encompassing values, norms, and practices derived from the experiences of multiple generations is an invaluable resource. In disaster management, local wisdom can provide valuable guidance for identifying challenges, needs, and solutions that align with the cultural and social context of affected communities. As a concrete example, Indonesia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic reflects the importance of local wisdom. Indonesian communities have demonstrated creativity and adaptability in applying traditional hygiene practices, such as regular handwashing and mask-wearing. Furthermore, the values of mutual

aid and social solidarity have served as a foundation for supporting one another during this crisis.

According to A. Rahman (2014), a social anthropologist, local wisdom not only reflects traditions but also represents a form of community adaptation to its environment. In the context of disasters, such adaptation can include a deep understanding of risks, survival strategies, and ways to adapt to change. S. F. Dasman (2018), a researcher in sociology, emphasizes that local wisdom can serve as a bridge between scientific knowledge and community needs during a crisis.

In the context of social welfare services, the role of local wisdom is becoming increasingly important. Book *Community Development and Civil Society: Theories, Practices, and Prospects* by Edwards dan Hulme (2021) provide an in-depth perspective on how welfare services rooted in local wisdom can help strengthen community resilience. They emphasize that this approach is not merely about providing aid, but also about understanding and strengthening communities' capacity to overcome the challenges they face. Tawaf (2019) highlights the role of local wisdom in building social resilience in the face of a crisis.<sup>11</sup> Her research underscores that local wisdom has great potential to provide innovative solutions in difficult situations such as a pandemic.

Yogyakarta is an intriguing location for study, given its unique cultural diversity and a community deeply rooted in traditional values. Yogyakarta reflects the richness and diversity of local wisdom that can serve as a model for sustainable social welfare development. This local wisdom is manifested in the arts, traditions, and way of life of the community. Each regency in the Special Region of Yogyakarta has its own distinct characteristics and cultural traits reflected in its local wisdom. Community resilience—which encompasses the community's capacity for adaptation and responsiveness to crises—has become increasingly crucial in the era of the pandemic. Local wisdom, rooted in collective wisdom and solidarity, is key to building community resilience

## METHOD

This study does not merely describe the forms of social welfare services provided during the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of the research is to present and illustrate the diversity of local wisdom in each city and regency within the Special Region of Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta,

with its five administrative regions—each possessing unique characteristics—forms a mosaic of local wisdom that reflects the cultural diversity and values of its communities. Figure 1. Shows the research locations Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study examines community-based social services provided to those affected by COVID-19, grounded in local wisdom, across each district within the city of Yogyakarta. Data was collected and analyzed through formal and informal local government officials at the kelurahan or village level, as well as community leaders. Data collection methods included in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. The findings were then analyzed qualitatively, following the methods of Milles and Huberman.



**Figure 1: Research Flow Diagram**

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In general, the communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic are vulnerable groups, including the elderly and those with chronic illnesses, informal and daily wage workers, children in need of education, women at risk of domestic violence, and migrant workers. As a result, they require social welfare services. Through social services rooted in local wisdom, we strive to provide innovative and adaptive solutions to the challenges faced by the community, especially in uncertain times such as the current pandemic. In their daily lives, the people of Yogyakarta adhere to the concept of Tri Hita Karana, which teaches that we must live in harmony with nature, respect the existence of every element, and maintain balance to ensure the sustainability of life. They utilize natural resources wisely while also striving to maintain a balanced ecosystem and preserve biodiversity. This is evident in environmental activities such as river cleanups, waste management, and nature conservation campaigns. Community

participation in environmental conservation, as guided by the Tri Hita Karana concept, encourages concrete actions by the community to preserve the environment, as reflected in various initiatives and activities undertaken by the community (Prasetyo, 2019).

According to Santosa (2017) on the preservation of local wisdom in the era of globalization, the people of Yogyakarta view local wisdom as social capital that must be carefully preserved, as they recognize that traditional values serve as a distinguishing identity within the ever-changing global current. The people of Yogyakarta strive to maintain a balance between local identity and global exposure. The components of local wisdom referred to in this study, as outlined by Jim Ife (2008), include local knowledge, local culture, local skills, local resources, local social processes, and social solidarity.

**First**, local knowledge—that is, the knowledge of local residents gained through interactions in community life and which has become part of local tradition—includes local customs and local technologies. In this study, for example, an initiative emerged from the community in Yogyakarta to consistently provide social services by offering isolation facilities and basic necessities to residents facing difficulties due to exposure to COVID-19, with the aim of minimizing the spread of the virus. Local technology refers to simple technologies created and utilized by local communities to address various social issues, such as modifying handwashing stations and equipment so that faucets can be turned on and off with the foot, thereby preventing hands from touching the faucet handle and reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission. These are appropriate traditional technologies being applied in efforts to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on an interview with IK (49), a resident of Dukuh Mertosanankulon, regarding this local technology, he stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the managers of the Community-Based Social Welfare Facility (WKSBM)—acting as the task force—used their personal cell phones to communicate while on duty. However, local residents, on the other hand, also utilized local technology by using a kenthongan while on duty at checkpoints to restrict the movement of residents. This local technology was used at midnight by striking the kenthongan with specific sound codes. According to the source, the kenthongan is used as a means of mass communication both under normal/safe conditions and during times of crisis or disaster. During the COVID-19 pandemic, if the situation was safe and under control at midnight, security post personnel would always notify the public by striking the kenthongan,

which local residents call *daramuluk*.

**Second**, local culture that is, the culture of a community that has long been established and forms the identity of local residents, thereby distinguishing them from other communities. This local culture encompasses traditions, language, art, and norms. Local cultural traditions, such as the Javanese village ritual known as “*merti dusun*,” which centers on prayers for the community to be spared from Covid-19 infection. Cultural expressions related to language, such as various local sayings that philosophically empower every member of the community to persevere in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, , For example, the saying “*jaga tangga*” means being ready to help residents and neighbors, because the neighbors on either side are our closest relatives *tangga teparo iku sedhulur sing paling cedhak*. Inspired by this local saying, residents in nine villages in the Umbulharjo district worked together during the COVID-19 pandemic to support one another and assist families affected by the virus.

They believe that in the face of a widespread pandemic like COVID-19, neighbors are the closest relatives who can immediately provide help and assistance. Furthermore, healthy lifestyle habits are believed to help prevent someone from contracting the virus. Regarding a clean environment, the local community health center, through formal and informal leaders, has urged the community to adopt clean and healthy habits by providing water in front of their homes. This practice serves as Efforts to anticipate and take preventive measures. This way of life is reflected in the traditions of our ancestors, namely digging a well in front of the house or at least placing *pengaron* or *padasan* (groundwater) basin of water in the yard, symbolizing the practice of washing one’s hands and feet before entering the house. Self-isolation is chosen when symptoms are not yet severe or because hospitals are at capacity. Health institutions continue to monitor the condition of residents undergoing self-isolation by providing vitamins and medication on a regular basis. Local residents work together to provide three meals a day on a rotating basis. In addition, some residents also provide assistance with raw materials for daily necessities

**Third**, local skills—that is, the abilities, expertise, and ingenuity of the local community to utilize and apply their knowledge as a result of social engineering—constitute a distinctive or unique characteristic. These local skills are distinctive and unique, setting them apart from the skills of communities in other regions. For example, the Yogyakarta region has a distinctive tradition featuring joglo-style buildings, which offer an open, airy design that aligns with the

new normal; meeting halls at the sub-district and village levels also reflect the unique Javanese culture.. During the COVID-19 pandemic, if a family chooses to self-isolate, neighbors help meet their needs. In reality, if a family or a family member is infected with COVID-19, that family undergoes self-isolation and is not permitted to freely engage in activities outside the home. To meet their daily needs, neighbors take the initiative to provide assistance even though the government, at both the sub-district and neighborhood (RT/RW) levels, has already provided social assistance drawn from social funds . The assistance provided by residents on a personal basis is a form of social service that demonstrates their compassion. Each resident provides different types of material assistance according to their means. During the COVID-19 pandemic, residents have been helping and supporting one another, especially when a family member has been infected. Local residents have also shown solidarity by assisting neighbors who have been infected, helping to provide essential supplies for families undergoing self-isolation.

**Fourth**, local resources, namely the availability of resources and potential in the local area with its unique characteristics, whether in terms of natural, human, or social resources The availability of resources in a particular region serves as a benchmark for the local community in addressing various social issues. In the context of this study, this refers to the provision of social welfare services for residents affected by and exposed to the Covid-19 virus through local wisdom. Natural resources include, for example, the availability of comfortable and safe places that can be used to foster togetherness and harmony; human resources encompass the capacity of the community (individuals) in terms of self-management; and social resources encompass the existence of institutions or social organizations dedicated to empowering communities affected by COVID-19. During the COVID-19 pandemic, local residents also demonstrated solidarity by helping neighbors who had been exposed to the virus, providing for the needs of families undergoing self-isolation. This assistance involved creating food storage containers made of bamboo and wood, including cabinet-shaped units where concerned neighbors could place food supplies for affected families. These containers can be used to store basic food supplies or as a food aid storage for affected residents. Another local skill involves creating tools for community activities, such as making “takir” vegetable containers and “kathokan” rice containers; these are local skills developed by residents based on the principle of utilizing locally available materials found in the surrounding environment.

**Fifth**, local social processes, which relate to the ability of local residents to fulfill their

social roles and functions, engage in social actions, establish social relationships, and exercise social control. In the context of this study, this refers to residents' ability to fulfill their roles and functions as members of the community. The ability to act quickly and appropriately in addressing social issues—for instance, residents' awareness to immediately self-isolate upon learning that they or their family members have been exposed to COVID-19. The community's understanding of how to respond to the pandemic is quite good. Another example is residents promptly providing food assistance to families undergoing self-isolation as part of social welfare services.

**Sixth**, group solidarity—a value that stems from the collaborative efforts of local communities to foster social solidarity. These values include deliberation, togetherness, harmony, mutual cooperation, compassion, mutual aid, and helping one another. These values essentially embody the spirit of social solidarity, which can also be harnessed in efforts to address social issues, including the provision of independent social welfare services to victims of COVID-19. In the Yogyakarta region, for example, many people still practice *sambatan* or working together to prepare a home as a place for self-isolation. Group solidarity is underpinned by the values of cooperation, mutual assistance, and compassion. These principles encompass the elements of living in harmony and mutual respect, which form the foundation of social life in Javanese society (Geertz Hildreed, 1983). The concept described by Geertz is also evident in the life of the Kulonprogo community, which is always grounded in living in harmony through mutual cooperation. The attitude of living in harmony practiced by the people of Kulonprogo is an effort to maintain harmony, peace, and security—that is, a life free from social conflict.



Figure 2: Components of Local Wisdom and Their Practices During The Covid-19 Pandemic in Yogyakarta

Source: results of researcher's data analysis

## CONCLUSION(S)

The people of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, comprising both the city and the regencies, continue to preserve various forms and values of local wisdom. They continue to apply these values in addressing various social issues, including in providing assistance to victims of social disasters. Covid-19 Local knowledge encompasses local initiatives and local technologies. Local culture includes traditional community expressions, local arts, and existing social norms. Local skills encompass the capabilities and expertise of local communities in providing social welfare services. The character and values of local wisdom in each of the four districts and the City of Yogyakarta can be observed in community activities during the COVID-19 pandemic .. The communities in these five districts and cities essentially share a common approach to providing social welfare services for victims of the COVID-19 pandemic. The values embedded in local

wisdom such as harmony, compassion, and mutual aid have become integral to community life and have driven community-led initiatives in mutual assistance, particularly within neighborhoods, especially in providing support to those affected by COVID-19.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The preservation and utilization of local wisdom in the Special Region of Yogyakarta can be achieved by promoting the diverse cultural forms and values of each regency and city, in accordance with their respective regional characteristics. Such promotion can be integrated into various activities or carried out through structured programs to help the public better understand the meaning and value of local wisdom. In addition, community leaders, traditional elders, and cultural institutions need to continue educating the younger generation so that the values of local wisdom can be passed down and applied in family life, schools, and the community. Local governments, through their Departments of Culture, Education, and Tourism, also need to collaborate with academics to integrate local wisdom with appropriate technology without compromising its authenticity and traditional characteristics. On the other hand, the central government must take local wisdom into account in every community empowerment program so that the programs implemented are in harmony with local culture and can support community self-reliance in addressing various social issues, including the impact of disasters such as COVID-19.

## REFERENCES

- Dasman, S. F. (2018). Kearifan lokal dalam perspektif sosiologi. *Jurnal Sosiologi*, 20(1), 45–58.
- Edwards, M., & Hulme, D. (2021). *Community development and civil society: Theories, practices, and prospects*. Cambridge University Press.
- Handayani, A. (2018). *Tradisi saling menghormati dalam masyarakat Yogyakarta*. Kencana.
- Haryono, B. (2010). *Kearifan lokal dalam seni tradisional Yogyakarta*. Penerbit Kecil.
- Kusumadewi, A. (2018). *Kearifan lokal sebagai identitas di era modern*. Kencana.
- Nurhayati. (2020). Socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Socioeconomic Studies*, 15(2), 189–205.
- Prabowo, A. (2018). *Semangat gotong royong dalam kegiatan kebersihan lingkungan*. Penerbit Sejahtera.
- Pradana, D. (2019). *Kearifan lokal dan keberlanjutan alam di Gunung Kidul*. Pustaka.

- Prakoso, C. (2019). Kearifan lokal sebagai perekat sosial di Yogyakarta. Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Pramudita, S. (2021). Kearifan lokal dan lingkungan di Kota Yogyakarta. Pustaka Alam. Prasetyo, A. (2021). Kearifan lokal dalam mengatasi krisis kesehatan di Yogyakarta. Gramedia.
- Prasetyo, B. (2019). Kearifan lokal dan partisipasi masyarakat dalam pelestarian lingkungan di Yogyakarta. Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Pratama, R. (2019). Peran pendidikan dalam menguatkan kearifan lokal di Yogyakarta. Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Pratama, R. (2020). Cultural diversity and crisis management. *Journal of Crisis Studies*, 7(2), 158–173.
- Purnomo, S. (2019). Pendidikan dan perkembangan intelektual di DIY: Studi kasus pada Universitas Gadjah Mada. Pustaka Ilmu.
- Santosa, A. (2017). Kearifan lokal dan pemertahanan identitas di era globalisasi. Pustaka Karsa.
- Santoso, B. (2015). Dampak globalisasi terhadap kearifan lokal di Yogyakarta. Pustaka Abadi.
- Santoso, B. (2016). Gotong royong dalam kehidupan masyarakat DIY. Pustaka Abadi.
- Setiawan, A. (2020). Kearifan sosial dalam kehidupan sehari-hari Kota Yogyakarta. Penerbit Serumpun. Sudibyo, A. (2012). *Harmony in diversity: Tri Hita Karana and the Balinese environmental ethic*. Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia.
- Suhartono, B. (2016). Kearifan lokal dalam keberagaman etnik Yogyakarta. Pustaka Abadi.
- Survei Literasi DIY. (2021). Laporan survei literasi Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 2021. Pusat Statistik DIY.
- Suryanto, A. (2015). Gotong royong dan kearifan lokal: Studi kasus di masyarakat Yogyakarta. Pustaka Utama.
- Susanto, C. (2018). Kearifan lokal dalam pendidikan di Kota Yogyakarta. Gama Pustaka.
- Tawaf, R. (2019). Local wisdom and social welfare. *Journal of Social Development*, 12(3), 211–225.
- Utomo, B. (2019a). Identitas budaya dan kearifan lokal di Kota Yogyakarta. Pustaka Kencana.
- Utomo, B. (2019b). Kearifan lokal sebagai identitas unik di tengah globalisasi. Penerbit Harmoni.
- Wibowo, A. (2017). Kearifan lokal dalam tradisi pertanian Bantul. Penerbit Agraris.
- Widodo, B. (2020). Kearifan lokal dan perubahan iklim di Yogyakarta. Pustaka Cendekia.
- Wijaya, S. (2018). Etika kearifan lokal dalam kehidupan sehari-hari di Yogyakarta. Gadjah Mada University Press.