

UGM Sociologist: The New Normal Primary Prerequisite Health Infrastructure Infrastructure

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Some areas in Indonesia are currently preparing to encounter The New Normal or a new phase of life after the coronavirus pandemic hit the world. In the new normal stage of life, people require to adapt to new habits where they must implement a protocol for preventing transmission of viruses in every activity that involves the crowd.

Although it has still been a polemic, it seems that Indonesia will experiment with The New Normal or a new phase of life in three cities, they are Yogyakarta, Bali, and the Riau Islands as a trial area. Some parties and observers still doubt this readiness because up to this moment, guidelines regarding health protocols in the era of the new phase of life have not yet existed.

Dr. Arie Setyaningrum, a UGM sociologist, said that the government needs to prepare supporting infrastructure before implementing The New Normal. Besides, the completeness of health protocols and socialization materials to the broader community is also crucial.

"I am not an epidemiologist. However, I agree with several epidemiologists that the first thing that must be prepared by the central and regional governments is to prioritize aspects of adequate health infrastructure. Have all these been calculated?" he said at the UGM Faculty of Social and Political Sciences on Wednesday (5/27).



Quoting from a sociologist colleague from Nanyang Tech University, Prof. Sulfikar Amir, Ph.D., who is also a master on Social Networks and Risk Society, agrees that health infrastructure and the like are the main prerequisites for doing new normal. This thing is important because the existing infrastructure so far has not yet fully reached the strata of society, such as mass testing for Yogyakarta.

The government should still have to be consistent in doing this. Also, a matter of socialization to the public is how public literacy media reach the broader community, not only the government, but many stakeholders also need to deal with this kind of situation.

"This includes a broad network of civil society," he explained.


According to Arie, there are many important questions to identify related to The New Normal socialization. For instance, what kind of protocol will be applied, where, when, and who. This question leads to the answer that these new normal practices must be carried out in any way. Instances when it comes to social interactions such as in a trading environment, such as markets, malls, shops, restaurants, tourism, service environments in schools, campuses, and others. or what about the industrial environment.

Besides, what kind of media will be used to disseminate health protocols in each sector of community activities. This question also becomes essential because the current level of public trust is the key to the successful implementation of the New Normal.

He stressed that if it were implemented, the government would begin to embrace various stakeholders such as civil society networks and community organizations that had a strong influence, such as Muhammadiyah and NU. Therefore, mobilization of human resources becomes important, Covid-19 Task Force needs to consider recruiting other volunteers in socializing practices that are in line with joint health and safety procedures in carrying out new normal.

"Those are the points that I submit, and we know that the community is moving fast. Solidarity and community initiatives to overcome the impact of this pandemic should also be appreciated. Therefore, it is necessary to collaborate with various layers of society across sectors if they are going to carry out new normal procedures," he said.

Therefore, Arie hopes that in making guidelines related to The New Normal, it should involve civil society that has moved faster. Instructions can be made in various forms, and socialization must also include ideas from those who will be directly affected.



These expectations are essential, especially now that the government's level of public confidence is declining, mainly because the response of the handling of Covid-19 is considered by the public to be a lot of inconsistencies. Hence, the government must be able to convince the public if it will implement The New Normal.

"If it is not, we will have sparse resistance. That is certainly not expected. Poor resistance, as demonstrated in the weeks leading up to the holiday, for example, crowds of people who were secretly shopping in department stores, and department stores also followed the PSBB regulations and others. "There was a village chief in Sulawesi, who was beaten by villagers for banning Eid prayer in the mosque," he explained.


Despite the inadequate response of the Indonesian government in handling Covid-19, other countries in some cases handling Covid-19 cases were far worse, such as in Brazil and the United States. Even so, the government's level of public trust has already skidded, and that's a fact. Therefore, the government needs to improve performance, especially on public services.

"Seeing the response to grassroots sounds, I am very concerned with ways of involving buzzers. This action harms the government and even harms democracy while harassing us. These buzzers should have moved on from political polarization because, at this time, our main concerns were to the nation's safety and the future together. The government should reduce images that are too self-centered. For example, in social media owned by state officials, should refrain and better function the channels of public knowledge. Also, involving intellectual performance and broad academic circles, I think it is much more effective at restoring public confidence. Moreover, coupled with inadequate government communication will complicate the implementation of a new normal," he explained.

Arie admitted that it was related to 3 Regions, namely Yogyakarta, Bali, and Riau Islands, used as the pilot project for The New Normal. It was still polemic because the reasons widely raised are related to the choice of the three regions because of the economic aspect.

This aspect, he said, became a critical issue in public at large, especially related to the readiness of safety networks. Many people feel confused and raise the question of what kind of procedure will be applied?

Arie was worried that the inclusion of public opinion might become a political issue, and this was certainly not good for many parties. According to him, Indonesia should be able to emulate Malaysia so that before implementing The New Normal, it has prepared a safety network.



"My impression is, how come we are like chicks losing a mother, told about groping ourselves. What needs to be a critical note, Indonesia is still low on its mass testing scale, puskesmas have not been deployed optimally to require every citizen to take a test. Thus, we have not been fully prepared even though we have very high social solidarity, and that should not be wasted," he explained.

Specifically for DIY, which will implement The New Normal in June 2020, Arie suggested that the Provincial Government of DIY improve the health protocol infrastructure first. Health centers must be prepared in advance, and start opening mass testing that can be reached by the wider community.

Therefore, he pointed out that Yogyakarta relies on economic activity, not on the large industrial sector and natural resources but also tourism and services and the education industry. For this reason, it is necessary to immediately make guidelines for New Normal practices by involving relevant stakeholders.

"It is necessary to effectively mobilize citizens' solidarity through the media and communities at the grassroots. Immediately and if not, there will only be chaos, chaos later if without preparation and risk calculation," he added.

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