



Challenges of The Indonesian Diaspora in The Netherlands During The Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: Diaspora is an asset and ambassador of the nation. Their numbers globally has reached 8 million people of which 1.8 million live in the Netherlands. They are potential assets who have adapted to their new living environment, but their inner attachment to Indonesia remains. This group is able to compete in the international arena. However, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, which until now has not subsided, they have their own experiences. Their inner connection with their brothers and sisters in Indonesia who share the same fate in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic encourages them to understand the state of the Indonesian nation fighting a pandemic period that frightens all parties in the world. The circumstances and experiences of the Indonesian Diaspora in the Netherlands warrants investigation with the aim of examining how they experienced the Pandemic, their social contributions, and how they have received news about the development of the Pandemic in Indonesia through various means of communication. The research method applied is qualitative research with a Narrative Inquiry methodology based on examining the experience of 10 Indonesian-Dutch Diaspora through respondents' answers to questionnaires via Google form. It is argued that the results of such a study can provide useful insights into the existence, contributions, and views of the Indonesian Diaspora in the Netherlands during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In addition, the results of the research could contribute to the development of human science and communication science related to the extraordinary circumstances during the Pandemic.

Keywords: Covid-19, diaspora, pandemic, humanity

INTRODUCTION

Globalization and rapid technological developments have made the migration of people from one country to another. The migration actors, called diaspora, are an interesting phenomenon to study, including the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands which occupies the first position in the number of 1,800,000 of the total number of Indonesian diasporas from various countries which amounted to 8 million people (www.goodnewsfromindonesia.id). Research examining the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands over the past three years includes the leading role of the Dutch Indonesian diaspora in gastrodiploacy entitled Frontline Messenger:

Preliminary Study on Indonesian "diaspora" in Gastrodiploacy (Tri Hartomo 2020), so that Indonesian cuisine as one of the cultural treasures can be widely known in the Netherlands. Previous research examined the public diplomacy relationship carried out by

the Indonesia Diaspora Network/IDN which has succeeded in being an agent of preservation of increased Indonesian-Dutch cooperation through task force, partnership, and sponsorship (Aritonang, 2017) considering that Indonesia was colonized by the Dutch for more than 3 centuries. Meanwhile, Fatgehipon (2021) in his article "The Exodus of KNIL Soldiers from Maluku to the Netherlands in 1950's" revealed that colonialism had broken and separated, and killed each other by former KNIL soldiers from Indonesia, especially Maluku which caused sadness for generations. The KNIL had been forced to become part of the Dutch nation. Nevertheless, they manifested their presence in the Netherlands by developing Indonesian education, health, and agriculture. The study of the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands has not examined the Dutch Indonesian diaspora during the Covid 19 Pandemic that is sweeping across the world.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The experience of being a Dutch Indonesian diaspora can refer to the theory of Robin Cohen (2008) who mentions that there are 6 things related to diaspora migrating to other countries, namely: [1] Ancestors who have moved from the original land which became the initial center came to a new/foreign place, [2] They keep or preserve the collective memory, vision, and belief about the land of origin, [3] They believe that they will never be fully accepted and feel left out in a new place, [4] The hope for the diaspora to be able to return to their ancestral lands, if possible in terms of ideology, politics, economy, social and culture, [5] Confidence for the diaspora to take responsibility for preserving and improving the condition of the land of origin. 6. Various and continuous efforts to establish relations with the country or place of origin.

While the efforts and activities of the diaspora, Hembing (2000) explains; humanity is a system of thought and action that pays attention to values and interests by devoting one's life only to the welfare of fellow human beings. The definition of humanity includes all the characteristics, views, ways of thinking and actions that because of their nature, humans must have them. Human feelings and actions are an inner impulse to give birth to an attitude or act of humanity. A person can act and think humanely or based on human principles if he has good morals. People who have bad morals are certainly not likely to have humanitarian attitudes and actions, because all human actions are of good value. In essence, humanity describes human tenderness, compassion and loving attitude towards others, the environment, animals even though they are in a state of suffering and misery

The view above implies that humanity shows good human dignity, because all traits, views, ways of thinking and actions are based on goodness and nobility. Its manifestation is revealed in the form of solidarity, empathy, sympathy, equality, tolerance, populist, social justice at the national and international levels based on the principle of non-discrimination, recognition of human dignity without distinction of gender, religion, skin color, cultural patterns, and social position (Priyono 2005)

With the rapid, massive, and deadly transmission of the COVID-19 virus, the Indonesian government and WHO issued regulations to prevent the transmission of the COVID-19 virus, known as 3M, namely [1] wearing masks, [2] washing hands as often as possible, [3] maintaining distance (www.klikdokter.com). By implementing 3M as a health protocol and habituation consistently, it is hoped that the COVID-19 virus will disappear. However, the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus has resulted in complex impacts on human life, not only in terms of health, but also social and economic as well as education. With the existence of social distance, all activities must be carried out at home to reduce contact between individuals and groups, as a result social, economic, and educational activities undergo drastic changes. Office and education, as well as shopping is done online. These social diversions and imprisonments have the impact of unemployment, increased crime, and poverty (<https://national.kontan.co.id>). These social problems become a humanitarian challenge for fellow people in seeing, understanding, and feeling the suffering and difficulties of fellow humans around them. This is also how the Dutch Indonesian diaspora felt in the face of Covid 19.

METHODS

This study examines the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands during the Covid19 pandemic in early 2020 through qualitative descriptive research for 10 respondents who have lived in the Netherlands for a span of 4 to 50 years. They volunteered to share their experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic in the Netherlands. Narrative Inquiry applied in this study analyzed the stories or narratives of the respondents via WhatsApp and online. To get a deeper story related to the experience dealing with Covid 19, beside telling their experiences in narrative form, the respondents were also interviewed in writing via email. Their experience was focused on three things, namely [1] Experience as a Dutch Indonesian diaspora, [2]The meaning of Indonesia for the diaspora, and [3] The role of communication for the diaspora

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The ups and downs of the experiences of the Indonesian Diaspora in the Netherlands during the Covid-19 pandemic.

As explained by Homi K. Bhabha's view that the diaspora process is a migration process caused by compulsion or voluntarily. Referring to this perspective, the Indonesian diaspora who were the respondents of this study were voluntary migrations. They migrated to the Netherlands voluntarily starting with further studies and then met their soul mate in the Netherlands and decided to stay in the country or met their Dutch soul mate in Indonesia and then migrated to follow their partner to the Netherlands. Nine out of ten respondents were born in Indonesia, while one respondent was born in the Netherlands to Indonesian parents who migrated to the Netherlands. However, the respondent was sent by his parents to Indonesia to understand and learn Indonesian culture by studying in Indonesia for 2 years when he was in junior high school level, after which he returned to the Netherlands for further studies and settled in the Netherlands.

The following description is the experience of the ups and downs of Indonesian diaspora respondents when the pandemic was spreading in the Netherlands. Generally, their experiences are almost the same, namely more at home and enjoying time with nuclear family members. Time with family is used to strengthen each other mentally in facing the pandemic. Office work or private business is run from home via the internet, and when it's time to break, they can meet up for lunch together. This is of course rare or even difficult to do under normal circumstances before the pandemic. Even more relaxed atmosphere is created with family at home during working hours which are usually more formal conditions in the office.

The togetherness of the nuclear family members is made more pleasant by the donation for the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands. Respondents as Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands received donation during the pandemic era, because the Dutch government realized that the lockdown policy resulted in a decrease in the income of its residents. This donation helps stabilize the economic needs. They are helped by the existence of these donations, so that they can continue to meet their primary needs. In addition, they feel that they receive the same attention and treatment as other Dutch residents regardless of differences in race, religion, and ethnic background. For the diaspora, businesspeople in the Netherlands also receive donations that are felt to help their financial situation, which is experiencing a decline in income from their business, especially in the tourism and design sectors. In addition to the government donations, the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands also has health insurance guaranteed by the Dutch government. Every Dutch occupation is required to have health insurance, including the Diaspora. With this health benefit, the diaspora will feel more secure, even though they still maintain their health strictly to avoid Covid-19 infection.

The grief experienced by all respondents in the era of the Covid-19 Pandemic is the state of Lockdown which prohibits the Indonesian diaspora from being able to visit

Indonesia, which is an annual routine trip for the Indonesian - Dutch diaspora. This routine trip to Indonesia for them has deep meaning and value related to the continuity of kinship ties of identity, preservation of mother land culture, success, and prosperity, and increasing awareness of defending the country.

With the prohibition of traveling between countries, the Indonesian-Dutch diaspora cannot visit Indonesia on a regular basis and their priority is to meet their parents, siblings, extended family, childhood and school friends and fellow businessmen from Indonesia. For diaspora, whose parents and siblings live in Indonesia, visiting Indonesia is a return trip to the family to release the longing and declaration of devotion to physically distant parents. Be grateful for these diasporas that they live in an era of digital technology. They can still communicate with their parents and siblings and friends with communication tools and applications such as WhatsApp, but face-to-face and meeting in persons remain the main choice. The atmosphere of kinship and kinship when you meet cannot be replaced by technological sophistication. However, for the safety and health of all parties, the diaspora accepts this grief with full awareness, as well as family and relatives and friends in Indonesia understand this situation. It is a sad thing if there are families who have been exposed to Covid-19, the diaspora cannot visit like their relatives in Indonesia. They could only hear the news of sorrow and grief.

In addition to missing family moments with their parents and relatives, as well as friends in Indonesia, the Indonesian diaspora feels that they have lost a moment of enjoyment of the Indonesian culinary atmosphere that they could not possibly get in the Netherlands, such as traveling food vendors, street snacks, and traditional foods that are typical of Indonesian certain areas such as rujak cingur, botok, tofu Magelang, market snacks that can be purchased at traditional markets wrapped in banana leaves. The populist atmosphere related to culinary is something that is lost by not visiting Indonesia.

Some of these types of Indonesian food can be found in the Netherlands at the 'Indonesian Night Market' which is now known as the "Tong-Tong Fair". It is a festival in the summer to celebrate, preserve and develop Indonesian culture which was started in 1959. Not only Indonesian culinary and merchandise from Indonesia, but there are also art performances, workshops, short lectures on literature & architects as well as interviews with prominent figures specially invited from Indonesia. This night market is not limited to the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands but also known to the diaspora in Europe.

The Dutch and Europeans from neighboring countries also come, looking for this exotic entertainment. Apart from being an entertainment for the diaspora, this event also fulfills certain social needs of them. The festival offers diaspora a sense of having cultural roots and a place to unite a sense of nationality. With its capacity as a cultural platform as well as a forum to inform the wider community, this moment is the right tool to introduce the nation's traditions, transfer knowledge and skills to the next generation. However, with the pandemic, this event has been suspended for two years, due to the prohibition on public activities which can result in the transmission of Covid 19.

Regarding the characteristics of the diaspora respondents in this study based on Cohen's theory, they presented the characteristics of being "responsible for preserving and restoring the land of origin" by trying to establish a relationship with their land of origin, especially respondents who were born in their homeland. The description above indicates that the respondents have a responsibility to preserve Indonesian cultural values and establish relations with Indonesia, especially at the kinship level. This shows the cultural values of togetherness that are thick in Indonesian culture. Although some of the respondents have lived in the Netherlands for 50 years, he still regularly returns to Indonesia to establish family relations with his relatives in the country.

Some of the respondents stated that with the pandemic they were unable to visit Indonesia, it was a sadness because they could not experience the values of togetherness accompanied by a sense of brotherhood, hospitality, nostalgia, and a sense of sacredness with their nuclear family during their time in Indonesia before migrating to the Netherlands. The existence of the Tong-Tong Fair as an Indonesian night market is not even possible in the Netherlands in this pandemic atmosphere, causing an intense sense of homesickness.

Besides the value of togetherness in kinship, the application of Indonesian cultural values such as eating traditions, greetings, gathering with fellow Dutch Indonesian diaspora is carried out in the Netherlands to their next generation. In other words, the first generation of Indonesian diaspora passed on Indonesian cultural values to the second and third generations. This cultural preservation was implemented by one respondent who taught his grandchildren who were born in the Netherlands to eat with their hands, without forks and spoons. This third generation is used to calling respondents by the name of 'datuk' as grandfather according to the Minang tradition, or 'enin' and 'uti' for the Sundanese and Javanese. Respondents were not called 'Opa' as they usually call grandfather for Dutch grandchildren. Likewise, other respondents preserve Indonesian culture in a practical way through daily dishes with Indonesian cuisine known for its spices. Traditional Indonesian ingredients and spices are easy to find in the Netherlands.

Some of the respondents maintain Indonesian citizenship with the main reason to have their status as Indonesian citizens and also to ensure their identity both legally and formally. They still have Indonesian passports, so to visit Indonesia they get convenience from the local Embassy. They do not mind accepting the limited access to Indonesian passports which cannot be accessed from Eastern European and Commonwealth countries. They are also still planning to be able to one day return to Indonesia. In other words, they still have no plans to change their nationality, because they realize that Indonesia does not have dual citizenship.

On the other hand, some respondents let go of Indonesian citizens for practical and economic reasons, especially for businesspeople who frequently travel on business to several Eastern European and Commonwealth countries. By having a Dutch passport, they gain wider access to countries across Europe and the Commonwealth. Their hope is that Indonesia can have a dual citizenship policy that provides multiple benefits as described by May Lim Charity that dual citizenship provides seven benefits consisting of [1] Improving economic relations, [2] Expanding the economic base, [3] Encouraging the development of Indonesia's trade and investment with various countries. , [4] provide economic benefits, [5] upgrade for Indonesian experts, professionals, [6] support more advanced investment, and [7] promote Indonesian culture.

Another reason they give up Indonesian citizenship is to get better educational opportunities and established welfare for the next generation of those born in the Netherlands. It is undeniable that the Netherlands as an economically developed and well-established country and has a quality education that is recognized by the world, is the choice for the Indonesian diaspora. With the enactment of the citizenship regulation based on place of birth, the second generation of diaspora born in the Netherlands automatically becomes a Dutch citizen. Under these circumstances, Indonesian diaspora parents renounce Indonesian citizenship for reasons of convenience, practicality, and effectiveness in their old age and future generations.

Even though they give up their citizenship, they still love Indonesia as their homeland, kinship ties, and cultural identity. Giving up Indonesian citizenship is a choice that must be made as a result of Indonesia's policy of recognizing one citizenship without giving up the love and attachment of kinship and Indonesian culture. For them to become Dutch citizens is a decision based on the need for recognition of formal legal documents, but in terms of cultural identity, they remain part of the Indonesian nation. In fact, their stories show that the meaning of Indonesia for them is deeper because they cannot replace their cultural identity as Indonesians even though they are documented as Dutch citizens.

The humanitarian contribution of the Indonesian Diaspora during the pandemic Covid-19

In the philosophy of 'active citizenship', a citizen is required to contribute his abilities to the improvement of the community through economic participation, public services, volunteer work, and various similar activities to improve the livelihoods of his community. In this case, consciously or unconsciously, the Indonesian Diaspora who are the objects of research here have demonstrated their philosophy as 'active citizens' by contributing to voluntary donations

of funds to Indonesia for the manufacture of masks, making PPE, helping small artisans, or donating basic necessities. According to Prof. Hembing, this economic participation is the embodiment of a sense of humanity which because of human nature must have an inner urge to produce an act of humanity.

As stated by Prof. Hembing, the diaspora who have voluntarily made donations to the people of Indonesia during the pandemic show a sense of solidarity, tenderness, empathy, and help others. Diaspora understands and lives up to the problems faced by the Indonesian nation during the Covid 19 pandemic, which experienced a shortage of medical equipment, primary needs such as basic necessities, and income drastically and suddenly without certainty of the completion of the pandemic. The sense of humanity of the respondents brings them to donate some of their sustenance to help the Indonesian people who are in need more than the respondents who have been established through donations from the Dutch government during the pandemic. The activity of giving donations to Indonesia also shows their empathy and tenderness towards their fellow human beings, especially their part as an Indonesian nation. Prof. Hembing explained that with a sense of love for humanity that is poured through donations, it will create a sense of pleasure and joy which in the end will bring to positive thoughts which are of course very necessary for increasing our body's immunity in fighting the Covid-19 pandemic.

Humanitarian activities are carried out not only in the form of providing financial needs, but also in the form of spiritual assistance in the form of recitations in the Netherlands. To overcome the anxiety, loneliness, and boredom of Indonesian citizens in the Netherlands during the pandemic, one of the respondents sincerely held recitations and prayers together via Zoom regularly every week. The lockdown and social distancing imposed in the Netherlands did not become an obstacle for them to carry out recitations and prayers together to strengthen the mental and spirituality of the diaspora in facing the pandemic both in the Netherlands and also for the Indonesian people through prayer and recitation. In other words, this religious activity is a humanitarian activity that also applies togetherness in the bonds of not only the Indonesian nationality but also the values of solidarity, piety, and their inner strengthening in the face of a pandemic that has taken the human soul with tense conditions, uncertainty, and anxiety that can be overcome by prayer and Quran recitation.

The role of the media for the Indonesian Diaspora in following the news of the pandemic in Indonesia is a sign of concern for the land of their ancestors.

Media is a communication tool/means used by communicators in exchanging information. As stated by Liliweri in chapter II, that is currently known as 'Direct Communication Through Media'. Advances in technology have led us to a state that is inseparable by distance. This sophistication was unimaginable a decade ago. The internet and cellphones have made the world smaller so that it can be seen from the ten respondents above, all of them use cellphones as a means of communicating with friends and family in the country. Diaspora use cellphone media as a communication tool to discuss, exchange news, make jokes or just exchange greetings.

In this era of the Covid-19 pandemic, cellphone facilities have become more prominent in their use for Diaspora. Movement restrictions (lockdown) for personal safety, make people have to stay at home and cannot communicate directly / face to face. This has an impact on the neglect of the need to communicate as the center of human activity in achieving the 'whole person'. With cellphones and the internet, this type of 'Media Direct Communication' has created a new breakthrough that can meet the most important communication needs, namely interpersonal communication. Gadgets, which are increasingly sophisticated with various features, are very beneficial for the diaspora because they can overcome the feeling of missing their family through video calls. Physical distance from two or more persons who are in different places even from different continents can talk to each other and appreciate the feelings of the other person. The diasporas have also used computers and the internet as a means of gathering to carry out religious activities together by holding virtual meetings at recitation, *takziah* and prayer together. Other diasporas use it as a tool to realize their social urge to help batik craftsmen in a village in Indonesia. His concern for the fate of batik

craftsmen brought him to smart ideas, by giving ideas and financial assistance to sew batik masks.

The TV, as a mass media in the Netherlands, does not provide detailed news about the state of the pandemic in Indonesia. Certain channels from Indonesia are the sources of news on how the Indonesian nation is fighting the Covid-19 pandemic. However, in its reporting, it still tends to sensational news rather than motivating news to increase awareness of the people.

More detailed and heartwarming news arrived in the hands of the diaspora through their cellphones. Humanitarian aid flows from the diaspora for their brothers and sisters in Indonesia. In addition to the positive impact news from the cellphone media, the Indonesian Diaspora were also surprised by the large number of minor and provocative news spread on Indonesian social media. Misleading news and hoax news that mislead the people are circulating. This is very unfortunate, considering the number of Indonesian people who do not understand with a low level of education far exceeds the number of intellectuals. It would be very dangerous if this untrue news were accepted. Information that is detrimental to the Indonesian government in tackling the pandemic should need to be handled specifically, coordinated across holistic policies for the people.

CONCLUSIONS

The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic provides a unique mixture of joyful and sorrow experiences for each individual in our study of the Indonesian diaspora in the Netherlands which we argue to be much like the common experiences of diaspora globally. All respondents expressed a longing for their homeland, Indonesia. The Covid-19 pandemic has become a paradoxical longing, because with the pandemic, they cannot visit Indonesia as they did almost every year before the pandemic. In fact, some of them can visit their homeland 3 times a year, related to their work as travel agency staff. Restrictions on traveling between countries as a precaution against the spread and expansion of the Covid-19 virus make this longing bordering on a tragedy, even though they can still communicate with their families using technological advances. Respondents still cling on their Indonesian cultural values as expressed in their daily lives in the Netherlands through the application of the kinship system, culinary arts, and their identity as Indonesians. In other words, they still preserve Indonesian culture.

All respondents stated that with the Covid-19 pandemic deepen their bond and love for Indonesia. As they are being prevented from visiting Indonesia, they miss Indonesia even more with all the moments and circumstances of kinship, culture, and psychological atmosphere that arose when they were in Indonesia. Regarding the sense of nationality based on citizenship, respondents anticipate that the Indonesian government will consider the possibility of a dual citizenship policy that provides multiple benefits for Indonesia and the Indonesian diaspora.

In the era of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Dutch Indonesian diaspora as respondents to this research have also shown their strong inner and outer connection to the Indonesian people particularly those who need assistance in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Given that Indonesia has been experiencing more complex problems than the Netherlands, the Indonesian Diaspora's efforts in supporting humanitarian activities in Indonesia have consolidated their values of solidarity, empathy, mutual cooperation with the Indonesian people at large during in these difficult times. As a consequence of their good deeds, the Diaspora community also became closer together and strengthen their community in fighting the Covid-19 virus in the Netherlands.

Given the sophisticated and rapidly growing digital technologies, the Diaspora community can carry out the existing now especially humanitarian activities with communication that is supported by. A significant contribution from the aspect of communication techniques has also contributed to preserving the nationalism and humanity of the respondents in the pandemic era in both the Netherlands and Indonesia.

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