

# The Value of Leadership amidst Surabaya's COVID-19 Catastrophe: Policy Stringency, Public Trust Realignment, and Governance Accountability

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## Abstract

The global upsurge in COVID-19 mortality and the emergence of the Omicron form poses a threat to health security, no exception, particularly in urban places such as Surabaya. This research aims to examine thoroughly the role of leadership in addressing the COVID-19 situation in Surabaya. The data were collected through a questionnaire survey and direct interviews with the stakeholders. This study concludes that: (1) Surabaya's leadership utilized coercive strategies to manage the crisis, and (2) the realignment of public trust may be determined by the degree of compliance to do what the government mandates. By using the Path-goal theory, this research resulted that the leadership style conducted in Surabaya is directive leadership; where attempts to reduce role ambiguity among subordinates and to clarify their perceptions through Kampung Tangguh "Jogo Suroboyo" and Lawan COVID-19 website. Nevertheless, the distinctive findings of this study are: (1) the value of *Gotong Royong* has always been a hallmark of the government's collective handling effort, and (2) that greater transparency and accountability on the part of Surabaya's governance is necessary for its officials to efficiently manage the ongoing COVID-19 situation.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Leadership, Surabaya, Path-Goal Theory, Governance

## Introduction

As the capital city of East Java province in Indonesia, Surabaya has the third largest population in Indonesia with a total of 2.887.223 inhabitants by 2022 (BPS Jawa Timur, 2022, p. 3). With a sizeable population, the type of leadership determines which strategy for handling COVID-19 is adopted. As the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the new COVID-19 variant, Omicron (B.1.1.529), on November 26, 2021, the number of COVID-19-positive cases in numerous nations is expected to increase (Sakay, 2021). Referring to the Gisaid data, in Southeast Asia, Indonesia documented 1,755 cases of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 (B.1.1.529), followed by Singapore with 1,312 cases (Mutia, 2022). The presence of the Omicron variant also caused a spike in cases to occur again in Indonesia, which had been

sloping in 2021. At the beginning of 2022, the total number of positive cases of COVID-19 was 4,301,193 cases, becoming the fourth highest in Asia after India, Turkey, and Iran (Mutia, 2022).

Surabaya is also inseparable from the Omicron variant. As of January 2, 2022, two active cases of the OMICRON variant were confirmed by the Mayor of Surabaya, Eri Cahyadi (Suminar, 2022). Cahyadi instructed them to carry out tracing and a swab to their relatives. In addition, Cahyadi urged the public not to underestimate the Omicron variant, as its transmissible speed is so much faster than prior variants, although it tends to be less lethal.

At the national level, COVID-19's handling management is implemented by doing the Enforcement of Restrictions on Community Activities, hereinafter written as *Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat* (or PPKM). The lower the PPKM level means the looser and better the handling of the area, and vice versa. At the province level, based on the results of the assessment of the COVID-19 situation released by the Indonesian Ministry of Health as of January 21, 2022, which displays 8 determining indicators, East Java is in the adequate category and is the best province in Indonesia, with the highest proportion of Regencies and Cities entering Level 1 of PPKM. According to Instruction of the Minister of Home Affairs No. 5 of 2022, there are 26 Level 1 Regencies/Cities in East Java. Followed by 11 regencies/cities in Level 2 and one in Level 3, respectively. Dr. Makhyhan Jibril, a spokesperson for the East Java COVID-19 Task Force, observed that the number of Covid-19 cases in East Java was still stagnant and tended to decline. Despite an increase in instances around the country, he claims that East Java is still largely under control (KOMINFO JAWA TIMUR, 2022).

At the city level which will be analyzed deeper in this research, the Surabaya Government always coordinates with the Provincial Government and the Central Government and adheres to their policy guidelines, this can be seen from Cahyadi's efforts to continue to conduct assessments of the PPKM as the policy of restrictions. By February 2022, Surabaya comes close to the upper limit of PPKM Level 1 with 16.4% of positive cases. Surabaya will undoubtedly move to PPKM Level 2 if positive cases reach 20% per hundred thousand population. Dr. Windhu Purnomo, an epidemiologist from Airlangga University in Surabaya, stated that 90% of the positive numbers were the Omicron variant because the Delta variant will no longer be a severe hazard by 2022. Given that the Omicron variety spreads five times quicker than its predecessor, the increase in positive numbers might happen very quickly (Noorca, 2022). Mayor Cahyadi advised immediate mitigation in his public interview to avoid the number of Omicron cases from growing.

Based on those backgrounds, this research aims to answer, "How is the role of leadership in addressing the COVID-19 situation in Surabaya?"

## **Methods**

This research is qualitative-descriptive. Barbara Kawulich (2015, pp. 96-98) described qualitative research as the process that the researcher uses to reduce data to a story and its interpretation. The qualitative data analysis consists of three stages analysis. From data reduction, data presentation, and ended with conclusion. Moreover, descriptive research attempts to describe or define a particular phenomenon. A descriptive method is utilized to aim to represent a pattern. For instance, scholars frequently collect data to describe a topic for the benefit of the broader audience (Sheppard, 2020, p. 59). This research combines those two definitions as qualitative-descriptive because the data were collected from a questionnaire survey, direct interview, and secondary internet searches; where the

interpretation needed to portray the phenomenon (qualitative nature of research) and determine the pattern (descriptive method of research).

### Theoretical and Authors' Framework

To strengthen the reason why the qualitative-descriptive methods were chosen, the authors used Path-goal leadership theory. Some literature explained this theory is an extension of Vroom's expectation theory and specifies four styles of leadership: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented (Fabac et al., 2022, p. 350). Directive leadership is to lead subordinates by establishing objectives, providing explicit deadlines, and enforcing regulations; they do not tolerate ambiguity and still help the subordinates to reach the goals; all actions are geared toward goal achievement. Supportive leadership is to focus on subordinates' happiness by avoiding causing them hardship and frustration. Participative leadership allows for the influence of subordinates over the decisions of the leader. Lastly, achievement-oriented leadership involves setting ambitious goals, pursuing higher-quality outcomes, and then having faith that subordinates will reach those goals (House, 1996, pp. 326-327). Below are the basic ideas on how leadership can lead to achieving the goal(s).

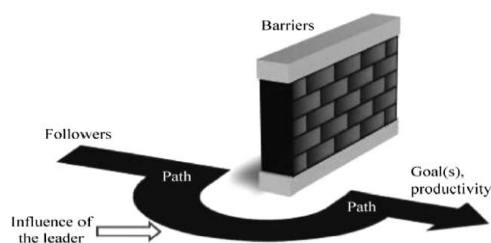


Figure 1. Path-goal Leadership Theory  
Source: (Mirčetić et al., 2021, p. 433)

Figure 1 showed how leaders take control or influence how the followers (society) can overcome obstacles. In terms of the COVID-19 pandemic, the path to goals describes the way that countries have to undertake to reach the new normal. The influence of the leader's significance on the strategic strategy adopted by leaders. The barriers showed many challenges occurred during the handling process. The barriers might be trust issues among the societies; lack of funding; lack of medical equipment, and so on (Mirčetić, Vukotić, & Karabašević, 2021, pp. 433-444).

From that theoretical framework, the authors argue that Surabaya's pattern of leadership is a directive leadership style. The narration to strengthen that are: (1) Surabaya's leadership utilized coercive strategies to manage the crisis, and (2) the realignment of public trust may be determined by the degree of compliance to do what the government mandates.

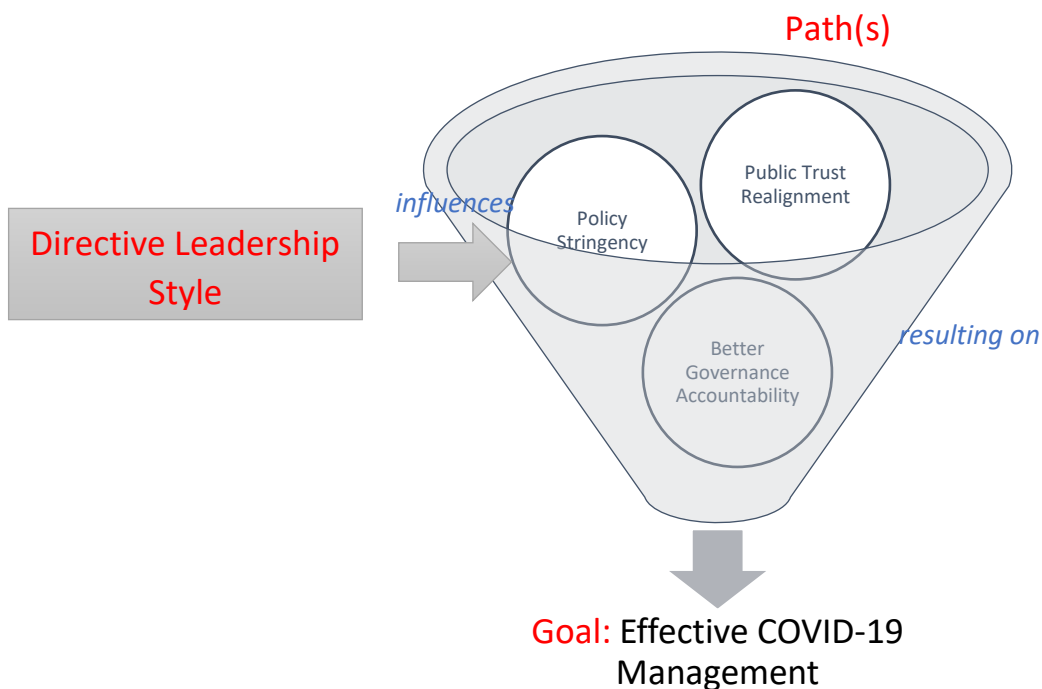


Figure 2. The Authors' Framework of Thinking  
Source: (Authors' Analysis)

Starting with the directive leadership style obtained by the Surabaya government (as the leader), those “influences” the paths are taken to overcome the barriers. The paths are consisting of policy stringency, meaning how the government implements coercive measures like mandatory vaccination and PPKM. Next, the realignment of public trust demonstrates how the government can maintain the quality of communication, leadership, service, and information accuracy. Moreover, the COVID-19 crisis sought better governance accountability. All those paths “resulting on” effective COVID-19 management as the end goal, only if the leader is capable of removing the barriers and challenges that arise in accomplishing the goal.

### The Scope of Research

The scope of this research focused on the Omicron variant peaked in Surabaya between February 1, 2022, and April 4, 2022. However, if further data is required, the scope of research can be expanded to meet the requirements of this study. As for the primary sources, the in-depth interviews were conducted with doctors, nurses, health workers, and members of the House of Representatives. Meanwhile, the questionnaire survey was answered by 67 respondents (explained in the Results section below). The secondary data collection can be gathered through the government’s official website and other scholarly sources available on the internet.

### Results

In this section, the authors describe the results obtained. Both primary and secondary data will be analyzed and interpreted right away in this section. Initially, the questionnaire survey contains 18 disagree-agree-strongly agree with questions; and two essay questions. Here is the list of questions:

- 1) The Indonesian government is very aggressive in the process of administering the COVID-19 vaccine. Have you gotten the vaccine, which doses?
- 2) In your opinion, whether vaccination has a positive impact on you. For example, even though you get COVID-19 after vaccination, only mild symptoms appear.
- 3) The government provides complete information on vaccination services to all levels of society.
- 4) You are satisfied with the ease of access to vaccinations in the health facility
- 5) You are satisfied with the system of services, procedures, and vaccination mechanisms in your area.
- 6) The Indonesian Government's COVID-19 vaccination program is one of the most successful vaccination programs when compared to other countries.
- 7) Turning to the policy of Enforcing Restrictions on Community Activities (hereinafter, called PPKM). In your opinion, the PPKM Policy made by the Indonesian Government is very effective in reducing the number of COVID-19 cases?
- 8) The Government's PPKM policy has considered the needs of all parties (the public and domestic and foreign business people).
- 9) Government policies related to PPKM are implemented at the right time, following the dynamics of the ups and downs of the number of COVID-19 cases.
- 10) Changes in the PPKM Policy affect the level of public trust in the Government.
- 11) The public believes and complies with the PPKM and Vaccination Policies implemented by the Government.
- 12) The Indonesian Government's PPKM policy is one of the most successful, when compared to other countries.
- 13) Turning to the leadership in overcoming COVID-19. According to you, the Government of Indonesia always follows the words of relevant experts, in this case following the advice of health experts, in making policies related to COVID-19.
- 14) The Indonesian government always provides information followed by health data and facts in order to avoid hoaxes and public fears.
- 15) According to you, the Government of Indonesia always informs and educates the public during COVID-19, especially during Omicron II.
- 16) The Indonesian government is always open to feedback, in this case accepting and giving room for criticism and suggestions related to the policies taken.
- 17) How is your satisfaction with the Indonesian Government's policy planning, especially vaccination and PPKM?
- 18) Government policies will be meaningless without compliance and trust from their people. You are an individual who is obedient and trusts the handling and policies carried out by the government from the central government to your local government; and
- 19) Can you explain about the professional role and your involvement in the implementation of health policies during the COVID-19 Pandemic, especially during Omicron II.
- 20) In your opinion, how important is trust needed so that leadership can run effectively, especially in the Omicron II crisis in Indonesia? Explain your opinion.

The total of respondents is 67, involving: 3 lecturers (4,48%); 5 teachers (7,46%); 7 doctors (10,45%); 8 health workers (11,945); 32 students (47,76%); and 12 others (17,91%).

### **Coercive Policy: Almost-mandatory Vaccination and PPKM**

The directive leadership style conducted by Surabaya's government can be seen in the answer to question number 1 about vaccination dose. From the 67 responses, approximately 55 (82,09%) received booster vaccine doses, 11 (16,42%) received only two doses of vaccines, and only 1 (1,49%) received the initial dose. Aside from the disadvantages of anti-vaccines, these numbers show how, in the face of a health crisis, the government as a leader was able to ensure and push the people of Surabaya to be vaccinated up to three times or booster doses.

The authors argue that the vaccination program was almost-mandatory policy, why? Because the number of vaccine doses is a travel prerequisite. The Surabaya government is classified as directive leadership since it not only focuses on long-term goals but also develops policies to attain them. The "sounding" attempt with the Peduli Lindungi application is an empirical example. This is also supported by one doctor's response in Surabaya:

"Of the many patients I have encountered, leadership in Surabaya was used with government programs that tended to be coercive, especially with vaccinations so they could travel out of town." (in-depth interview with dr. Nafilahsari on, 2022)

Another empirical calculation of coercive policy is enacted through the PPKM policy. Surabaya's government comply with the Central Government policies in term of PPKM enforcement, which also means inevitably forcing the people of Surabaya to comply with the regulations of the Central Government. The data through the survey, to question number 7 demonstrated 7 respondents (10,44%) chose strongly agree; 41 respondents (61,19%) chose to agree; and only 19 respondents (28,35%) chose to disagree. That shows how the people of Surabaya consider PPKM to be effective in reducing the positive rates of COVID-19.

But a different perspective emerges through the interview with two nurses from Universitas Airlangga Hospital:

"Enough, it was successful when there were many occurrences in the past, during the Delta variant in mid-2021. If the Omicron variant is no longer deemed required, the community has also grown tired of PPKM. The number of cases is also lower than it once was." (in-depth interview with Siti Nur Imamah, S.Kep.Ns and Sri Purwati, S.Kep., Ns., M.Kep. on August 6 and 11, 2022)

That statement showed that during the Omicron phase, the positive rates were under control. The authors see how policy stringency through the vaccination program and the implementation of PPKM was carried out by Surabaya's government as the path to achieving effective crisis management as the end goal (see Figure 2).

### **The Realignment of Public Trust: Mobilizing Collective Efforts**

The next path is the existence of a public trust. Suze Wilson (2020, pp. 7-8) stated that one of the keys to crisis leadership is mobilizing collective actions to get trust. The Surabaya government has implemented a variety of techniques to mobilize the community to adopt the same goal of having effective COVID-19 handling. A major priority has been placed on informing and educating the citizens about the coronavirus. A website addressed at <https://lawancovid-19.surabaya.go.id> is launched to give the real-time update due to the positive numbers indicating the infected one based on the radius. The landing page's question

on the Surabaya Lawan COVID-19 site is "Apakah Anda ingin melakukan deteksi dini COVID-19?", meaning "Do you wish to conduct early COVID-19 detection?". It indicates how the government also expects citizens to be at the forefront of COVID-19 management, beginning with the self-awareness to do the early measurement test. Furthermore, the Instagram page <https://www.instagram.com/sehatsurabayaku/>, which is managed by the Surabaya Health Office, always provides information on the most recent data, and the availability of vaccines that can be obtained by the public has increased through the nearest health center or regional general hospital. According to the results of our survey, questions 14 and 15 revealed the public's perception of the Surabaya Government's "informing and educating" efforts. Below are the results:

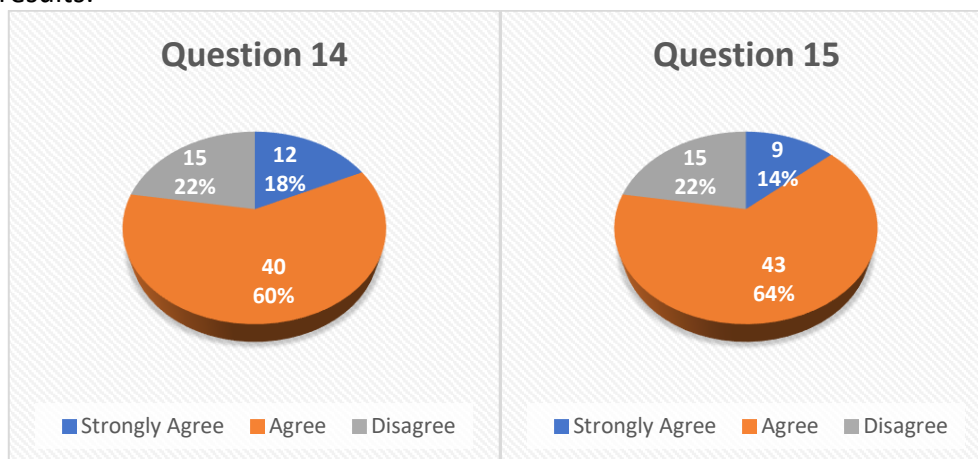


Figure 3. Public opinion on the Surabaya government's informing and educating effort  
Source: (Authors' data)

The figure above depicts the responses to question 14 that agree that its government always offers information followed by health data and facts to avoid hoaxes and public anxieties. The majority of responders (40%) agreed, whereas 12 (18%) strongly agreed and 15 (22%) did not. The respondents also agree in question 15 that the government always informs and educates the public during COVID-19, particularly during Omicron II. This is evident from the respondents' responses, which are not dissimilar to the answer in number 14, where 43 (64%) agree, 9 (14%) strongly agree, and only 15 (22%) disagree.

Furthermore, the mandate given by the Mayor of Surabaya, Eri Cahyadi, as outlined in the Mayor's Circular Letter number 001.1/1616/436.7.2/2022 regarding the spread of the Omicron variant, demonstrates the directive leadership. Cahyadi urged his subordinates and the entire community to conduct massive testing in the Circular Letter. If a resident tests positive, they must report to the local health center and undergo Centralized Isolation. Cahyadi also instructed that 5M be continued by wearing a mask, washing hands, keeping a minimum distance of 1.5 meters, reducing mobility, and avoiding crowds (Surabaya Government, 2022). That Circular Letter provides the authors' argument that the Surabaya Government's leadership style is directive because it continues to give instructions to its subordinates while not completely delegating authority to the community.

## Discussions

This research explored that the role of leadership in Surabaya is directive style yet there are two distinctive findings: (1) the collective effort has always been essential with always

involving the value of Gotong Royong, and (2) the architecture of Surabaya's governance still need to improve the transparency and accountability.

### **Synergy and the value of "Gotong Royong"**

As far as the flow of COVID-19's handling effort is concerned, it always takes the form of collective action. The "Kampung Tangguh Jogo Suroboyo" program is well-known in Surabaya. It is a collaborative effort to address various aspects of society, beginning at the neighborhood unit (RT) or community unit (RW) level and extending to the village (kampung) level. This program has been continuously updated since its founding in 2020 under the direction of Mayor Tri Risma. The COVID-19 Task Force collaborates closely with the community and city government to conduct tracing, and mass swabs, accelerate the course of vaccination, and ensure that proper quarantine and self-isolation facilities are implemented. In addition, several RWs, such as RW 5 Kedung Asem Indah in Rungkut Surabaya, have created specially designed areas of isolation. The Task Force meticulously maintains the cleanliness of the Command Post (Posko), spraying it with disinfectant every two hours and ensuring that medical supplies and oxygen cylinders are always stocked (Roosa, 2021).

All of these collective efforts, according to the authors, demonstrate that the value of Gotong Royong is intrinsically tied from the grassroots to the government level. According to a study by Fawait Rahman and Yatno Isworo (2021, pp. 166-167), since COVID-19 has been declared a global health emergency by the World Health Organization, people are becoming increasingly anxious and cautious to avoid exposure to the virus. Everyone cooperates to complete Gotong Royong and adheres to the government's directives. To combat any hoaxes and misinformation, the value of Gotong Royong is demonstrated by several indicators, including togetherness, union, willingness to sacrifice, help each other, and socialization (Rahman & Isworo, 2021, pp. 168-169). Most of the people in Surabaya have implemented and complied with all of these indicators, as can be seen from the respondents' answers to question number 18. The question asked whether the respondent is the individual who is obedient and trusts the handling and policies carried out by the government from the central government to your local government or not. From the 67 responses, 23 (34,32%) strongly agreed, 38 (56,71%) agreed, and only 6 (0,08%) disagreed to trust, complying with the government, and doing the Gotong Royong's value.

### **Novelty: The need for further transparency and accountability in Surabaya's Governance**

Referred to Figure 2, the last path is about better governance accountability. Governance is the interaction of government and non-government parties to achieve a common objective. Good governance is characterized by a balance among all participants, which is neither politicized nor unmanageable by the government (Davis & Keating, 2000). In terms of collaboration, the Surabaya government has excelled at creating synergies between the Government; Private Sector; and Civil Society through many collective efforts mentioned earlier. Cahyadi proved his leadership through one of his invention programs, Surabaya Memanggil. Cahyadi declared the program in July 2021, and in the context of his statement, Cahyadi stated that 2,000 volunteers gathered in Surabaya Memanggil. Volunteers are organized into oxygen task force divisions, which include private actors that provide oxygen cylinders, distribution staff, independent isolation assurance personnel, and reserve medical personnel. This demonstrates that the value of Gotong Royong is maintained and that there is synergy among the actors engaged (KOMPAS, 2021).



Although the majority of respondents agreed with the concept of good governance, our in-depth interviews revealed areas that are frequently overlooked and must be improved. The following is a statement made by the Chairman of the Surabaya Regional Representative Council:

“A government must first be accountable in order to be supported by the (broader) community. Accountability leads to transparency. Then comes openness, which leads to public trust, which leads to participation. As a result, it is hard for the Surabaya citizens to actively participate (in government policy) if they do not trust the government. It is impossible to trust the government if there is no accountability or openness on the part of the administration.” (in-depth interview with Adi Sutarwijono, Chairman of the Regional Representative Council of Surabaya on, 2022)

The statement from Sutarwijono qualifies as a primary source because it represents government actors. The Regional Representative Council is one of Indonesia's two parliamentary chambers, and its policies coincide with those of the Surabaya City Government. This is also a finding and recommendation of this study: accountability and transparency are always required to improve the efficacy of COVID-19 management. It is also obvious from the responses to question 16 of our survey, that 23 (34,32%) respondents disagree with the statement that the government is not receptive to feedback, in this case embracing and making a place for criticism and suggestions regarding the adopted policies.

## **Conclusion**

It is possible to conclude that the Omicron II variant represents a difficulty in and of itself in the context of the global health catastrophe, COVID-19. This is since when the world began to loosen various restrictions and mask use, it was discovered that when the Omicron variety came, the spread rate accelerated up to 5 times faster. Surabaya, a city of roughly 3 million people, faces additional obstacles. As mayor, Eri Cahyadi is always looking for a swift mitigation effort.

Using the path-goal theory, this study indicates that the author's argument is demonstrated that the Surabaya Government's leadership style in dealing with COVID-19 is directive. Cahyadi, as a leader, does not always follow all recommendations from the province and central governments, but he continues to make other attempts to minimize barriers to existing problems that can be utilized as a "feature" of Surabaya-style handling. Eri Cahyadi's directive leadership style can be classified into three broad paths taken: Policy Stringency, Public Trust Realignment, and Governance Accountability.

First, policy stringency, Mayor Cahyadi is quite assertive in mitigating and providing nearly-mandatory policies. Vaccination initiatives are the main focus. Second, public trust realignment, in order to maintain public trust and compliance, the Surabaya government continues to give information and education efforts through the Surabaya Lawan COVID-19 website and Instagram *Sehatsurabayaku*, which is maintained by the Surabaya Health Office. Third, governance accountability, The Surabaya government also undertakes regional-specific initiatives, like the "Kampung Tangguh Jogo Suroboyo" program, which involves all actors from the grassroots to the village level. It shows "good governance" where collaboration and synergy are made between civil society – the private sector – and the government.

In the end, this study makes recommendations to the Surabaya City Government to improve the effectiveness of handling COVID-19, namely by continuing to laud and cultivate a

distinctive Indonesian sense, namely “Gotong Royong”; and then improving transparency and accountability in government. This can be accomplished by giving a place for the public to submit grievances and then really dealing with them rather than just accommodating them. This Directive Leadership deserves to be appreciated since leadership in crises is essential for society to rise together. Everyone must collaborate since synergy, trust, and compliance are the only cures for COVID-19.

This study can provide a number of contributions, including the following: for general readers, a better understanding of the unique handling of COVID-19 in Surabaya; for the government of Surabaya, an evaluation point that can be used to improve handling methods and increase effectiveness in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. This study can contribute to the improvement of policies at the city level in Surabaya. In addition, the rationale for this study is its ability to fill in gaps and expand the literature evaluation on leadership patterns in addressing COVID-19.

### **Acknowledgements**

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