

**RESEARCH**

## Global/Local Everyday Life after COVID-19: Social Disruptions, Transformation, and Religion in the Digital Age and New Communication Technologies

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**ABSTRACT**

**PURPOSE:** This article explores how disruption during COVID-19 drove community transformation through religion, digitalisation, and grassroots social protection.

**DESIGN/METHODOLOGY/APPROACH:** This research utilised a qualitative approach that explores grassroots movement development and community adaptation to pandemic-driven disruption.

**FINDINGS:** The findings show that disruption drives innovation in tackling COVID-19. Grassroots movements leverage digital literacy, religious teachings, and new communication technologies to foster empathy and support vulnerable communities. Social media transforms interaction patterns, enabling digital platforms for economic recovery and poverty reduction through collaborative efforts. By utilising social capital, grassroots communities strengthen solidarity and social awareness. Digital communication enhances outreach, making grassroots initiatives more effective and efficient in social protection.

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**ORIGINALITY/VALUE:** This study highlights community-led solutions to social issues and the role of digital technology in fostering solidarity, information sharing, and empowerment.

**RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS:** Digital-driven grassroots movements offer innovative social protection, providing lessons for stronger government safety nets.

**KEYWORDS:** *Social Protection; Digital Religion; Informal Programme; Grassroots Movement; Pandemic*

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## INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 caused significant health and economic disruptions. While some countries focused on recovery through mass vaccination, health monitoring, and economic recovery programmes, others faced compounded challenges caused by the pandemic, including pre-existing issues such as domestic violence and household economic vulnerability (Appiah, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic led to layoffs, bankruptcies, and increased poverty. In Indonesia, a social protection system provides cash and household assistance. The debate centres on whether informal innovations should be recognised as social protection and how to design an effective monitoring and evaluation system, either using national standards or a separate approach.

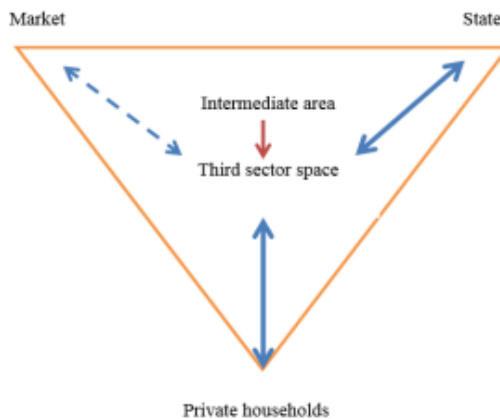
This research explores post-pandemic social disruption and transformation, where physical distancing spurred adaptation. Informal movements innovated solutions, while rapid digital growth increased Internet reliance. Religion-based communities used social media for support, aligning with religious mediatisation theory. Furthermore, as a virtual religious community, the environment is also utilised as a place for gatherings and participating in events via live-streaming social media (Singarimbun, 2021). Several social media utilise online worship to build spiritual connections (Tari *et al.*, 2021). While many studies discuss post-COVID-19 life, this research focuses on how the pandemic drove societal transformation through religious teachings, digitalisation, and grassroots-led social protection.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Digitalisation of religion expands its teachings by adapting to the evolving relationship between religion and technology. As digitalisation alters society's everyday life, it shapes the way religious values are learned. Online religion, particularly within traditional groups, adapts to the Internet to maintain control and connect members (Campbell, 2023). Social media facilitates participation in religious communities, discussions, and access to teachings (Almobarraz, 2016). Four types of relationships emerge in online religious communities: Bounding, Bridging, Blending, and Blurring

(Campbell, 2023). Online and offline communities merge, enhancing communication rather than replacing traditional forms (Foltz and Foltz 2003).

The term “power regime” refers to institutional arrangements, policies, and traditions shaping society’s welfare and structure (Gough, 2004). In developed countries, it focuses on the state and society, while in developing nations, various actors and welfare systems emerge. The concept of an informal security regime highlights society’s role in individual welfare, particularly when the state falls short. Social protection, which overlaps with other social studies terms, addresses vulnerabilities caused by natural disasters, conflicts, and economic crises: it functions in protective, preventive, promotive, and transformative ways (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). Figure 1 shows a model of welfare actors in developed and developing countries.



**Figure 1: Developed Country Welfare Pattern**

Source: Evers and Laville, 2014

Figure 1 shows that the private household, market, and state interact, causing third-sector space. Evers and Laville (2014) analyse welfare regimes in developed countries, focusing on their evolution, structure, and outcomes. While insightful, their work lacks deeper discussion on how neoliberalism and globalisation impact welfare states. Additionally, more detail is needed on integrating civil society and NGOs into policy-making for greater inclusivity and adaptability.

However, the third sector space is an intermediate area of the three sectors. Regardless, the developing country has complex welfare patterns (Figure 2). Pestoff (2014) examines how the state, market, and civil society shape welfare in the Global South, emphasising reliance on NGOs, community organisations, and informal economies due to weaker state capacity. While highlighting historical, economic, and political influences, the framework lacks engagement with emerging global challenges affecting welfare systems.



**Figure 2: Developing Country Welfare Pattern**

Source: Pestoff, 2014

As a social protection provider in Indonesia, the government has not been capable of reaching all levels of society to implement social protection. Political shifts have impacted policies, and social protection programmes often fail to align with local conditions and practices. For example, the Family Hope Program was modelled after a system implemented in Brazil (McCarthy and Sumarto, 2018). Research shows that Indonesia's focus on economic development during COVID-19 led to limited health and social protection investment, prompting grassroots communities to support each other (Imelda *et al.*, 2023).

Actors' involvement from groups or non-governmental organisations forms informal innovations and these actors are then called grassroots actors. Grassroots is a network of activists and organisations that originated from the bottom up to produce new solutions for sustainable development and consumption by responding to local situations as well as society's needs and values (Leena and Arie, 2022). Innovations formed by grassroots groups are spontaneous, communal, and responsive. Grassroots actors, distinct from government or business entities, act as both creators and users of innovation. Their movement benefits from flexibility, networked communities, and member diversity (Lai, 2023). Innovations begin with funding, followed by programme design, technological support, and social work involvement.

## METHODOLOGY

This qualitative descriptive study explores informal social protection during the pandemic, addressing economic, health, food security, and education challenges. Findings are presented in a detailed narrative.

This research was conducted in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Yogyakarta was chosen due to its low minimum wage, dual policy paradigms, and strong grassroots COVID-19

response. Data were collected through purposive sampling from three major social protection movements, with interviews conducted with key stakeholders.

Data analysis was conducted utilising Miles *et al.*'s (2013) model. This model analysed data with the stages of data collection procedures, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion and verification. Data reduction simplifies and organises raw data by summarising and coding key themes. Data presentation visually represents information to identify patterns. Conclusion and verification analyse relationships, ensure reliability through triangulation, peer debriefing, and consistency checks. This research gathered social protection data in Yogyakarta through observation and interviews. Sorted data were presented narratively and in tables, with conclusions drawn from factual and theoretical perspectives.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Yogyakarta had the highest number of COVID-19 cases in Indonesia, straining healthcare and causing job losses. Economic stagnation disrupted livelihoods, impacting welfare. Adapting requires innovative social protection beyond government aid, leveraging technology and communication. In response to a series of events during the COVID-19 pandemic, several community-led innovations have emerged. These were intended as a social protection net for society itself, especially for those affected by COVID-19. Several actors organised this innovation:

*“Our movement is more about helping all kinds of issues arising. Initially, we determined our focus on the economy, health, and education. Then looking at the facts of the issues in the field, we specialised in basic education because elementary education at that time was more vulnerable than higher education. We build this movement with the values of transparency, integrity, empathy, and synergy.”* - Informant PO

Grassroots movements led Yogyakarta's social protection innovation, involving locals, NGOs, students, and COVID-19 observers; using their skills and networks, they developed support programmes. Several large-scale social protection innovations created by grassroot communities during the COVID-19 pandemic in Yogyakarta include:

1. Sambatan Jogja (SONJO);
2. Solidaritas Pangan Jogja (SPJ);
3. Panggungharjo Tanggap COVID (PTC).

Post-pandemic social protection faced challenges from distancing and limited access to aid. Technology became crucial, enabling new communication and community participation to improve outreach and support.

The era of disruption and technology cannot be separated; the use of digital transformation in social protection is a form of adaptation in an era of rapid change. Digital transformation causes the

transformation of organisations, processes, and their capabilities in protection activities. The spread of humanitarian, religious, and social values is carried out by utilising technological developments (Kvarfordt and Herba, 2018). The community optimises opportunities to achieve social protection goals through technological assistance.

First, the social protection innovation programme Sambatan Jogja (SONJO). SONJO is a formless Out-of-the-Box (OTB) social protection. OTB uses innovative, adaptable, and inclusive approaches to address emerging challenges and ensure well-being cost-effectively. Sambatan, a Javanese term for community mutual assistance, is common in rural Central and East Java, as well as Yogyakarta, especially for house construction or renovation. It also acts as an informal social safety net, supporting communities when formal welfare is limited. During COVID-19, Sambatan helped provide food and healthcare, functioning in the same way as collective insurance to ensure no one was left without support. SONJO was founded on 24 March 2020 and is defined as a movement aiming to help vulnerable societies affected by the COVID-19 pandemic by gathering friendships according to the movement's name meaning, and conducting humanitarian activities. Word splice has often been utilised in the community, especially in rural areas, to translate collective activities for constructing public facilities and individual interests of the PKK or Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK empowers women and strengthens families in Indonesia through health, nutrition, education, sustainability, and entrepreneurship programmes). However, together with the development of SONJO, a co-ordinating team was formed to facilitate communication and information delivery so that SONJO could still intend and act to conduct its mission.

*“Initially, our coordination only started with one WhatsApp group, then developed into several WhatsApp groups to suit the community's needs. We utilise non-monetary resources. Therefore, it is important to hold a mission-driven organisation. Our only mission is to help vulnerable societies related to COVID-19 impact in Yogyakarta. That is what we do. If we focus there, the movement's sustainability will emerge.”* – Informant PO

Derived from the interview results, it is known that social protection is formed from how society utilises digital technology to form communities to help vulnerable societies. The protection movement is driven by the importance of integrity, empathy, and responsibility towards other humans; these values are driven by religious teachings (Mumtaz, 2022; Adji, 2021). Religion teaches to share in the community, provides consolation, eliminates fear and anxiety, and provides hope for its adherents (Tari *et al.*, 2021). Religious teachings provide moral doctrine to encourage their followers to engage in social involvement (Mettang and Euchner, 2023). Religion plays an essential role in social development, saving humanity and strengthening relationships with its members. Relationships with members are established to strengthen solidarity and spread religious teachings, namely humanity. Religious communities and institutions provide a spiritual religious foundation and teach at a practical level by helping others (Adji, 2021). Solidarity movements have emerged

through digital capital to become a social protection effort for society. Combined community builds group-based intellectualism and fosters discussion relationships with others. This was done to form a religious identity in the digitalisation era (Wahid and Wardatun, 2023).

This study highlights how post-pandemic social protection transformed communities. Technology and social media enhanced aid distribution, fostering social networks and remote collaboration. Digital innovation improves support but requires skilled human resources.

Second is Solidaritas Pangan Jogja (SPJ), or Jogja Food Solidarity, another social protection innovation programme. SPJ is managed by volunteers from many organisations in Yogyakarta as well as students studying in Yogyakarta, and initiated by the community. SPJ funding is done through fundraising and collective social entrepreneurship, such as shared kitchen catering. SPJ targets vulnerable groups such as pedicab drivers, labourers, and waste scavengers. Then it collaborated with the Social Movement Institute (SMI), WALHI, and volunteers who joined through open recruitment. The initial donation was around 50 million rupiahs (IDR) (US\$2,974.54), and it could produce 800 packs of rice every day.

The third is the Panggungharjo Tanggap COVID (PTC), or Panggungharjo Response to COVID-19, social protection innovation programme. PTC is a programme initiated by the village government of Panggungharjo, Bantul. It is run entirely by the villagers, with various divisions according to programme and community expertise type. Activities conducted by PTC provide a digital platform for monitoring and handling COVID-19 patients at Panggungharjo.

*“In establishing the social protection movement, there needs to be a clear framework so that actors’ involvement and map of movement direction are clear. One system and another must be able to support each other. There needs to be a good leader and organisational management. This framework must also be adaptive and responsive. Therefore, every framework has its time. The only thing that remains in keeping with movement is the value. PTC is present as a form of social empowerment for a just country. By village bureaucracy role, the state is still present as the prime mover, but society is the main supporter of its movement.”* – Informant HD.

The transformation of society after the pandemic has made digitalisation a necessity. Society is required to be able to adapt to technological developments. Community activities utilising technological transformation have become a new style of communication that has emerged due to the pandemic. Community activity is facilitated through the establishment of online platforms. However, the problem that may be faced is the digital literacy gap. Table 1 is an analysis of origin grouping, actor functions, and social protection scope.

**Table 1: Brief Description of the Programmes**

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Actor</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Type of Activity</i>
Sambatan Jogja (SONJO)	Practitioner	Programme innovation, Policy review formulator	Social
	Stakeholders	Patient referrals co-ordination, co-ordination between OPD and villages, optimising Family Welfare Empowerment's (PKK) role in handling COVID-19	Social, Law, Health
	MSME actors	Co-ordinate MSMEs activation with food security aims and make breakthroughs for MSMEs in the wedding and tourism sectors which COVID-19 constraints.	Economy, Food
	IT Expert	COVID-19 patient database	Technology
	Mass Media Activist	Public reports submission	Social
	Teachers	Obstacles to co-ordination to primary education implementation in Yogyakarta	Education
	Academics and Students	Quality assurance on existing programmes implementation at SONJO	Education
Solidaritas Pangan Jogja (SPJ)	Activists and NGOs	Programme initiators as well as formulations include fundraising, soup kitchens, and soup kitchen gardens.	Social, Food, Economy
	Volunteer	Cooking assistance in public kitchens and rice package distribution	Social
	Mass Media Activist	Public reports submission	Social
Panggunharjo Tanggap COVID (PTC)	Village apparatus	Programme initiation, mapping of potentials and vulnerabilities	Social
	IT Expert	Creating a digital platform for COVID-19 reporting and e-commerce development	Technology
	MSME actors	Co-ordination of MSME activation and MSME products	Business
	Health workers	Respond quickly to handling COVID-19	Health

*Source:* Constructed by Authors

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that social protection innovation is a multi-actor and multi-disciplinary collaboration. When viewed from its scope, the SONJO programme has a wide range of disciplines and work areas; SONJO is more engaged at the policy level. Meanwhile, SPJ and PTC are more inclined to a multi-disciplinary and practical realm. SPJ and PTC are more in direct contact with society, while SONJO is more about co-ordinating each co-ordinator or stakeholder.

The pandemic-driven disruption accelerated digital transformation, enabling quick community responses and remote interaction. Online platforms emerged for shopping, aid distribution, and healthcare access. Education also adapted digitally, making support more flexible. COVID-19 forced widespread reliance on digital media across all sectors.

The formation of online communities influences social media use, expanding networks and reach within society. Religious and community leaders influence others to follow teachings and



work together, shaping identity and socialisation (Golan, 2023). This community is a link in disseminating information; it is also a link in assisting society, posing as an effort to fill the gaps left by formal institutions (Jackson *et al.*, 2023). Individual motivators engaged in social activities are driven by belief and spirituality (Pentaris, 2023).

Derived from the social protection framework by Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004), social protection innovation functions include protective, preventive, promotive, and transformative innovations. Therefore, this research has succeeded in analysing those social protection functions. Several social protection innovations in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, including SONJO, SPJ, and PTC, protect basic needs fulfilment, especially for those vulnerable due to the COVID-19 pandemic. SONJO protects by ensuring communication and co-ordination in several sectors, and every region in Yogyakarta can help each other overcome these vulnerabilities. In the SONJO programme, periodic quality assurance is also conducted as a protection for programme quality and success. In the SPJ protection programme, what was done to fulfil basic needs for those with vulnerabilities in work included pedicab drivers, conducting labourers, and scavengers who find it challenging to conduct their job due to restrictions on physical activity.

*“Whenever there is a disaster, each region or group will be busy with their affairs. This is where there is a need for awareness of initiating movement and exchanging owned capital importance. There is no need to wait for a national decision. Just go straight to help from those closest to you. For example, those who lack food, need medicine, can be exchanged with those with the stock of selling staples and medicines forced to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic.”* – Informant HD

The SONJO programme innovation provides vulnerability prevention by mapping MSME’s potential and conditions throughout the Special Region of Yogyakarta. SONJO encourages MSMEs throughout Yogyakarta to co-ordinate and market their products through digital devices so that the economic process in MSMEs does not stop. PTC has also initiated digitisation in the agricultural, livestock, and stalls sectors, which usually conduct direct transactions. This is an adaptation of prevention to minimise physical contact as a potential for COVID-19 transmission and to revive MSME businesses so that they do not stop due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

*“We continue coordinating with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Cooperatives and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This pandemic impact will be long. Diabetes potential waves and MSMEs’ sluggishness will greatly impact health and the economy. Therefore, while solving the COVID-19 issue, we are also preparing in terms of knowledge and coordination for future issues”* - Informant PO

Promotive social protection should promote increased income as an effort regardless of vulnerability. Activities conducted by SONJO and PTC encourage increased revenue by supporting MSMEs. Digitisation and co-ordination conducted by SONJO and PTC meant that MSMEs, which

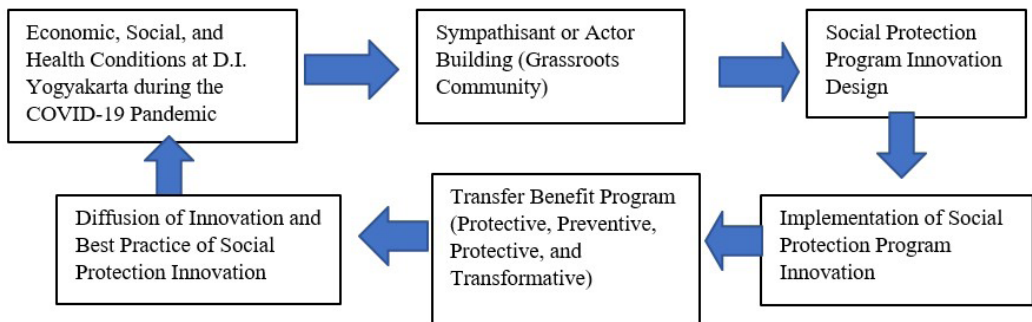
initially declined in performance due to physical restrictions to prevent COVID-19, were still able to conduct their transaction activities by changing transaction activity patterns. Therefore, MSME actors could increase their income even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*“Pasardesa.id is a milestone in efforts to activate the village economy, which was dead due to COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone can participate in the platform as a seller, buyer, or reseller. This is an effort to mitigate the economic sector so that the COVID-19 disaster does not make us dependent on aid.” – Informant HD.*

Based on the data, the pandemic has caused disruption and transformation in society. Adaptation and innovation are carried out by the community to get out of the pandemic problem by utilising digital transformation. Social media supports the community by enabling recovery after vulnerability occurs. Digital literacy gap means that society cannot access social assistance. Social media utilisation must be balanced with adequate digital literacy and the digital gap results in less-than-optimal access to online platforms (Foltz and Foltz, 2003). The digital divide that is still high in society needs to be addressed immediately since we have entered the digital era where information is obtained through social media and the Internet.

*“We submit public reports through social media because many people are involved in this movement. This is a movement for social production and emergency response initiatives by residents. That is about it. Therefore, Solidaritas Pangan Jogja moves to realise equal accessibility by managing resources and distributing them to anyone who needs them according to their portion.” - Informant SA*

Social protection innovation programme functions are interdependent, so for an innovation to be considered social protection, it must fulfil these four functions: protection, prevention, promotion, and transformation. After explaining the function, an analysis was conducted regarding social protection innovation programme production flow, its implementation, and how the innovation can be diffused into a new social protection innovation programme in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. An analysis of the flow of social protection innovations in Yogyakarta during the COVID-19 pandemic is described below.



**Figure 3: Social Innovation Process**

Source: Constructed by Authors

As can be seen in Figure 3, social protection innovation systems are continuously being produced. As the initiator and implementer, the grassroots community has a significant role in how this social protection programme design is formed, its implementation, and the programme benefits transfer that the community feels. Meanwhile, the argument that the grassroots community has a significant role in social protection programmes has been strengthened by the relationship between social movement and collective action, which has social networks and internal cohesion among movement members (Della Porta and Diani, 2005).

For successful innovation programmes involving multiple parties, building trust is essential. Social protection, linked to social cohesion, includes co-operation, trust, and inclusive identity (Burchi *et al.*, 2022). Social protection includes three main dimensions, risk and vulnerability, unacceptable deficiencies, and social response (Gassmann, 2021). Developing countries have high levels of social capital to form social networks and support social protection policies. Social responsibility encourages society to contribute to helping each other (Adji, 2022).

This research suggests that informal social protection can be more effective than formal protection in certain situations; therefore, combining informal protection with formal programmes ensures greater effectiveness (Mumtaz, 2022). Informal protection includes three components: assistance, labour market measures, and insurance (Mumtaz, 2022, p.394). Movement by grassroots has a relationship with collective action. However, Jacobsson and Korolczuk (2020) emphasises the relationship between collective action and movement from the grassroots by showing that social movement aims to reach collective goals. Informal movements often face financial and resource limitations; these must be addressed to ensure the sustainability of social protection innovation programmes (Figure 3).

## CONCLUSIONS

The pandemic disrupted all aspects of life, decreased welfare, and hindered aid distribution due to lockdowns and physical distancing. In response, communities have adapted by embracing digital transformation. The use of Internet technology has become key in addressing pandemic challenges, driving innovation in social protection. This transformation includes education, economy, technology, and social life, with communities leveraging social media platforms to achieve their goals.

Informal social protection always carries good values, namely solidarity. This consistent spirit can be implemented in developing a social protection system in Indonesia, especially since the state has yet to fully implement social protection. Best practices for SONJO, SPJ, and PTC are movements with concrete examples that can grow in overcoming crises (protective) and have projections (preventive). These movements will likely create promotive and transformative social protection conditions; nevertheless, the informal social protection programme still has diverse limitations that must be considered. For an innovation to be regarded as social protection, it must fulfil its core functions, including protection, prevention, promotion, and transformation.

The COVID-19 pandemic and rapid adoption of new communication technologies have reshaped society, requiring key policy responses.

- **Public Health & Social Protection:** Strengthen healthcare systems by integrating digital and community-based resources, ensuring digital inclusivity, and promoting ethical technology development, workforce reskilling, and data protection.
- **Interfaith & Religious Dialogue:** Encourage respectful digital discourse, counter online extremism, and protect religious groups from cyber threats and misinformation.
- **Grassroots Movements:** Support digital activism while balancing freedom of expression with efforts to combat misinformation and censorship.

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