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**LABOR DISPUTES IN ENFORCING JUSTICE IN THE ERA OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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**ABSTRACT**

Various kinds of impacts have been received on the economic sector caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. First, many companies suffer heavy losses and decide to do massive layoffs of their jobs. This can be seen from the research data that there are 1.5 million workers working in companies. This study uses the method of literature review and data search techniques using documents. In addition, the omnibus law passed suddenly made major changes to workers' rights and environmental regulations. Unions say at least 2 million workers have taken to the streets to protest, while Reuters and the Associated Press reported that thousands of workers and students attended. The student union said they would join forces with the workers to express their aspirations in the form of upholding justice. The results showed that the workers rejected the entire contents of the omnibus law which was very detrimental to workers.

**Keywords:** Labor, Economy, Justice, Omnibus law, Pandemic.

**PRELIMINARY**

Hundreds of protesters have been detained after heated demonstrations swept across Indonesia in response to laws that undermine environmental protection and workers' rights.<sup>156</sup> Unions have vowed to continue their protests until the government overturns the law, despite police warning that demonstrations violate measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Clashes between police and protesters began in the evening and continued the next day with tear gas and water cannon used to disperse demonstrations. Six protesters are reported to be in critical condition in hospital. In the city of Semarang, Java, protesters tore down the fence of the local parliament complex. In Bandung, the group burned tires and threw stones and petrol bombs at

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<sup>156</sup> Adi, M., Niniek Karmini. (2020). *Thousands of students, workers protest Indonesia labor law*. Retrieved from

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.csmonitor.com/layout/set/amphtml/World/AsiaPacific/2020/1007/Thousands-of-students-workers-protest-Indonesia-labor-law>

police. Thousands of people tried to reach Bandung's parliament building but roads have been blocked.<sup>157</sup>

The law passed suddenly made major changes to workers' rights and environmental regulations. The government says it will make Indonesia more attractive to investors. However, the draft version of the law removed key protections such as compulsory maternity leave, increased overtime limits and cut severance pay. It also loosens barriers designed to protect the environment.

A spokesman for the National Confederation of Trade Unions (KSN) said that workers will either die from the coronavirus or die from the system.<sup>158</sup> Because, no one knows how the workers will die. But they can still change the system, so they will march until they win justice.

Unions say at least 2 million workers have taken to the streets to protest, while Reuters and the Associated Press reported that thousands of workers and students attended. The student union said they would join forces with the workers to express their aspirations in the form of upholding justice. Demonstrations took place in at least 12 places in Indonesia. This led to the arrest of the police who detained 183 people in South Sumatra and detained more than 200 protesters in the capital, Jakarta. The author is interested in discussing further about the disputes that occurred between workers and the government in the era of the covid-19 pandemic.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used is library research. The data taken to support this research uses primary data obtained through library research containing studies of labor disputes that occur in Indonesia as a form of justice enforcement efforts. The data collection technique used is the document technique, the data is obtained through a literature review in which there are relevant documents for the research material to be carried out in the form of journal documents, scientific articles, newspapers, and other literature that can support the data search process related to the paper to be created. The data obtained by the author will be collected and then re-selected to serve as the main data in the discussion.

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Economic Stability

Viewed through the main topic of conversation today that is very much discussed is related to the COVID-19 virus pandemic that has hit various countries in all parts of the world. The beginning

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<sup>157</sup>Febriana, F. (2020). *Indonesian Police Arrest Hundreds During Protests Against Labour Law*. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/07/indonesia-police-use-water-cannon-and-teargas-to-disperse-labour-law-protests>

<sup>158</sup>Febriana, F. (2020). *Indonesian Police Arrest Hundreds During Protests Against Labour Law*. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/07/indonesia-police-use-water-cannon-and-teargas-to-disperse-labour-law-protests>

of the presence of this virus was at the end of 2019 all countries were shocked by the news that in China there were several people who were indicated to be suspected of having cases of pneumonia. However, this case differs from the previous case because the etiology of the phenomenon is unknown. After being researched, Wuhan City was the first city to confirm that there were people who were affected by the virus. A few months later until January 7, 2020, a statement was issued that the virus of unknown etiology was named a new type of Corona virus.

The existence of COVID-19 threatens all humans in the world, including Indonesia. This is due to its very rapid and significant spread causing very high vigilance. The medical authorities stated that the coronavirus caused a fairly high death toll in various countries. So that on January 30, 2020 the WHO firmly stated that the coronavirus was part of a public health emergency that caused serious unrest for the community. So the pandemic is declared a global pandemic.<sup>159</sup>

With the rapid spread of the coronavirus, it creates anxiety for all people around the world. The Indonesian state enforces various regulations created by the Indonesian government in an effort to emphasize the spread of COVID-19. One of the regulations issued by the Indonesian government is the implementation of social distancing and physical distancing for all Indonesian citizens.<sup>160</sup>

The Indonesian government advised all its people to always follow the health protocols. With the enactment of the PSBB system, it will have a huge impact on all aspects of the life of the Indonesian people. One of them is the disruption of the economy in Indonesia caused by limited activities, causing disruption of economic activity.

## 2. The Relationship Between Economic Instability and Labor

In dealing with COVID-19 cases related to the economy, the government has created various policies. Policies created by the government need to have the nature of a two-way route in order to be a good treatment for COVID-19 cases. Furthermore, the Government needs to first evaluate the policy to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia, then after that it needs to focus on invitations that will rebuild the Indonesian economy properly.<sup>161</sup> If both are carried out well based on the draft policy that has been created, it is likely to be successful, however, the two policies that have been designed are carried out simultaneously, resulting in ineffectiveness in implementing the policy. With ineffective results related to the implementation of government policies that have been created, these policies also make management originating from the central government and local governments not run according to plan.

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<sup>159</sup> Hanoatubun, S. (2020). Dampak Covid-19 Terhadap Perekonomian Indonesia. *Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, 2(1), 146-153

<sup>160</sup> Nurhidayati, S. (2020). Konsep Kebijakan Strategis dalam Menangani Eksternalitas Ekonomi dari Covid-19 Pada Masyarakat Rentan di Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(2), 130-139

<sup>161</sup> Eddyono, Suzanna. (2020). *Pandemi dan Yang Tersingkir: Menakar Urgensi Kebijakan Inklusif Penanganan Covid-19*. Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik UGM: UGM Press.

Discussing about policies, of course there are goals to be achieved in the selection of these policies. The aim is to contribute to efforts to break the chain of spread of the covid-19 virus so that more people are not indicated by the virus and efforts are being made to restore the economy of the country of Indonesia, which is currently declining from time to time even very badly due to this pandemic.

There are nine regulations that have been chosen by the government to be used as the basis for the allocation, distribution, and stabilization policies that can be implemented. As a real main step, the government needs to locate inputs and resources for the regulations that have been set so that these regulations can run effectively by knowing their benefits and functions. Resources carried out by the government can be carried out on groups that are directly affected by the current Covid-19 condition in Indonesia, street vendors, workers who have been laid off due to the COVID-19 condition, casual daily workers and others.

The existence of covid-19 has had a major impact on the Indonesian people, especially for people who have jobs as traders because the presence of the covid-19 virus has weakened their opportunities to earn daily income. In addition, many companies are starting to lose money and decide to massively lay off their workers.<sup>162</sup> Even after researching the massive layoffs carried out by companies in Indonesia with a total of 1,943,916 people, this figure is not a small number. It is estimated that massive layoffs will always increase if the COVID-19 pandemic persists in Indonesia without a policy that can help this problem.<sup>163</sup>

The government issued a policy for the community to always stay at home and not ignore health protocols so that it is very influential on the income of traders, because activities related to the economy will be limited and other factors can make traders lose money.<sup>164</sup>

Therefore, effective regulations are needed to deal with this pandemic in order to suppress the number of indications of COVID-19 and rebuild the economy for the welfare of the Indonesian people. If the government does not make decisions on good regulations and continues to carry out the previous regulations, then this will have a major impact on the tendency of social disasters where it can lead to major conflicts that are difficult to resolve so that there will be divisions. However, it is necessary to pay attention to the regulations that will be applied because this will have a large impact on other aspects, especially in the economic field.

Economics can be understood as a major factor that has an important position to support human life. In fact, in carrying out the activities of daily life, humans need an economic factor called economic needs. These economic needs include the need for food, clothing, and shelter as well as

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<sup>162</sup> Hanoatubun, S. (2020). Dampak Covid-19 Terhadap Perekonomian Indonesia. *Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, 2(1), 146-153.

<sup>163</sup> Fakhrol Rozi Yamali, Ririn Noviyanti Putri. (2020). Dampak Covid-19 Terhadap Ekonomi Indonesia. *Ekonomis: Journal of Economics and Business*, 4(2), 384-388.

<sup>164</sup> Budi, Arya, Irham Nur Anshari. (2020). *Administration Distancing, Pemerintah Daerah Dalam Pandemi Covid-19*. Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik UGM: UGM Press.

other things that can be used to support daily needs. The government has a function to regulate the existence of regulations related to the existing economic conditions in Indonesia. In addition, the government also needs to ensure the stability of the economy in Indonesia because it has an important position as a factor of economic needs.<sup>165</sup>

Other functions possessed by the economy are not only important in human life, but economic factors are factors that are believed to be the main supporting components in national development. The explanation can be believed through understanding that the economic growth of the Indonesian state has a major impact on improving a national development so that it can be stated that the two have a very close relationship.

Economic stability in Asia Pacific has experienced a drastic decline and is believed to be for a long period of time due to a very threatening pandemic that has spread to various parts of the world. Not only Indonesia is threatened, but also Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, South Korea and Thailand are threatened with weakness and economic decline as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Talking about the economy, of course, it has a relationship with gross GDP which will have a direct impact. The World Bank Director has predicted that Indonesia's economic weakness will reach up to 5% in the first quarter of 2020. Various kinds of impacts received on the economic sector caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. First, many companies suffer heavy losses and decide to do massive layoffs of their jobs. This can be seen from the research data that there are 1.5 million workers working in companies.<sup>166</sup>

Reported by research that has been done there are 90% of workers who need to be laid off, and 10% are clearly laid off. Second, the impact experienced on the decline in Indonesia's Manufacturing PMI in March 2020 resulted in a very high percentage of 45.3%, where it overall experienced a decline. Third, when talking about the impact experienced by the economic aspect, this is of course related to the existing inflation. The Indonesian state experienced inflation of 2.96%, this was obtained through the decline in the price of gold and food commodities in March 2020.

Regarding the real form that can be seen in the Indonesian economy caused by the covid-19 pandemic, it can be seen through the number of workers who have been laid off and even laid off. This is influenced because various companies in any field experience a decrease in income so that it is not uncommon for many companies to be threatened with bankruptcy. If the COVID-19 virus pandemic continues to exist for a long period of time, this will cause the Indonesian economy to continue to decline, so that it will also have an impact on other aspects that are related to the Indonesian economy. One of them is for workers with casual daily workers, MSME implementers, and businesses that involve many people.

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<sup>165</sup> Fakhru Rozi Yamali, Ririn Noviyanti Putri. (2020). Dampak Covid-19 Terhadap Ekonomi Indonesia. *Ekonomis: Journal of Economics and Business*, 4(2), 384-388.

<sup>166</sup> Fakhru Rozi Yamali, Ririn Noviyanti Putri. (2020). Dampak Covid-19 Terhadap Ekonomi Indonesia. *Ekonomis: Journal of Economics and Business*, 4(2), 384-388.

The COVID-19 pandemic threatens the economy in Indonesia, this affects the decline in people's purchasing power for goods that were usually purchased before the pandemic.<sup>167</sup> If purchasing power decreases, the financial cycle will be very long and this can reduce the percentage of the Indonesian economy again. Production can be said to be very limited if the demand for it experiences a very drastic decline so that it can have an impact such as a deficit trading.

The impact on the economy with the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the termination of business for 24 million people in East Asia and the Pacific. Researched by the World Bank that there are approximately 35 million people will experience persistent poverty. In fact, the number will increase if not handled properly. The increase in poverty after being studied by the World Bank that it will become more extreme because of an increase of up to 922 million people will live in poverty on a world scale. Therefore, it is necessary to have regulations created to deal with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic so that it will affect the Indonesian economy.

The economic system in Indonesia is of course disrupted by the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic, this greatly affects the real economic fundamentals, even to the market mechanism. If it is stated that the market mechanism has been disrupted then this is a very serious influence because it can cause the disappearance of the economic surplus. In the economic system, the economic surplus plays an important role in the demand and supply of the economy so that, if the economic surplus has disappeared, then things

This is very influential on the demand and supply of the economy in Indonesia.

### **3. Labor Law in Indonesia**

Labor law mainly concerns the rights and responsibilities of unionized employees.<sup>168</sup> Some groups of employees find unions useful, because employees have more power when they negotiate as a group than individually. Unions can negotiate for better pay, more comfortable working hours, and increased safety in the workplace. However, unions do not have unlimited power. Leaders must treat all union members fairly and refrain from restricting union members' rights to speak, assemble, and vote. Employers must also follow special rules when dealing with union members. For example, employers may only negotiate with designated trade union representatives and must be careful in making agreements between trade unions and employers.

### **4. Labor and Community Disappointment over the Quality of Labor Laws in Indonesia**

More than 3,000 protesters, including workers and high school and university students, tried to reach the heavily fortified parliament building. Protesters burned tires near blocked roads and pelted police with stones and petrol bombs and broke down the gates of the parliament complex.

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<sup>167</sup>Nurhidayati, S. (2020). Konsep Kebijakan Strategis dalam Menangani Eksternalitas Ekonomi dari Covid-19 Pada Masyarakat Rentan di Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(2), 130-139.

<sup>168</sup>Findlaws. (2016). *Definition of Labor Law*. Retrieved from <https://www.findlaw.com/hirealawyer/choosing-the-right-lawyer/labor-law.html>

Police responded by firing tear gas and water cannon. Smaller protests also took place in other cities in Indonesia, including the Jakarta satellite cities of Tangerang and Bekasi where large factories are located, and many cities on the islands of Sumatra and Sulawesi.<sup>169</sup>

Police spokesman Argo Yuwono said police only used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the protesters. Police said authorities were still investigating the violence in Bekasi in which students and police were injured.

KSPI president Said Iqbal issued a statement saying the new law would harm workers, including by reducing severance pay, removing restrictions on manual labor by foreign workers, increasing the use of outsourcing, and converting monthly wages to hourly wages. Workers reject the entire contents of the omnibus law which is very detrimental to workers. Iqbal (2020), stated that the omnibus law must be immediately annulled. Workers are already suffering greatly from the COVID-19 crisis.

Several academics from top universities have also expressed disappointment at the law, which they say is problematic and is likely to lead to a review. Susi Dwi Harijanti from Padjadjaran University in Bandung said that the passage of the law surprised everyone because parliaments are usually slow in making regulations, including those that are clearly needed by the people.

## CONCLUSION

If the COVID-19 virus pandemic continues to exist for a long period of time, this will cause the Indonesian economy to continue to decline, so that it will also have an impact on other aspects that are related to the Indonesian economy. One of them is for workers with casual daily workers, MSME implementers, and workers who also feel the impact. Reported by research that has been done there are 90% of workers who need to be laid off, and 10% are clearly laid off. The impact experienced on the decline in Indonesia's Manufacturing PMI in March 2020 resulted in a very high percentage of 45.3%, this shows that the overall Indonesian economy has decreased. In addition, the workers were burdened by the ratification of the omnibus law. The disappointment continued, causing the workers to stage demonstrations to uphold justice. The union expressed its aspirations for better pay, more comfortable working hours, and increased safety in the workplace. However, unions do not have the unlimited power of government workers.

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