***Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*: Building Solidarity During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

# Abstract

The Covid-19 Pandemic has many impacts on people's lives. People are required to keep social distancing in any circumstances. The governments of the world strongly encouraged people to stay at home, including especially for religious observances. Religious followers were even prohibited from observing religions in houses of worship or celebrating religious holidays. In response, religious groups modified several practices of religious rituals and adjusted them to those restrictions. During the Pandemic, social structures were shaken, social solidarity was in need but surely challenged. Religious followers were challenged to building solidarity during the Pandemic. This article discusses *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* which traditionally involved two religious groups: Muslims and Christians, how they were challenged and adjusted to the Pandemic in order to reproduce solidarity. This article was based on in-depth interviews with *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* practitioners of Muslims and Christians. Findings demonstrated that *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* had not only produced and reproduced interreligious solidarity, but their modifications during the Pandemic had also become a local resilient mechanism in dealing with situations affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Muslims celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* by bringing food to the mosque and eating together but refrained from visiting their families to prevent the transmission of the Covid-19. Meanwhile, the Christians celebrated *Pengucapan Syukur* by using their harvests as offerings to people of different religious backgrounds in need. Even though the time of *Pengucapan Syukur* ended, they continued to distribute their harvests. Their abilities to modify *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* enabled Muslims and Christians to reproduce their traditional solidarity of “*torang semua basudara*” (we all are brothers/sisters), both in ideas and practices.

**Key words**:ritual, *basudara,* solidarity, Pandemic

# Intisari

Pandemi Covid-19 memiliki banyak dampak terhadap kehidupan masyarakat. Mereka diwajibkan untuk melakukan *social distancing*. Pemerintah juga mendorong masyarakat untuk tetap berada di rumah termasuk ketika mereka melakukan ibadah keagamaan. Umat beragama tidak diperbolehkan untuk melaksanakan ibadah keagamaan di tempat-tempat ibadah ataupun merayakan hari raya keagamaan. Maka dari itu, kelompok-kelompok keagamaan memodifikasi beberapa praktik ritual keagamaan dan menyesuaikannya dengan aturan pembatasan tersebut. Selama pandemi, struktur social berubah. Solidaritas yang sangat dibutuhkan oleh masyarakat selama pandemi juga terancam. Dalam kondisi seperti ini, umat beragama memiliki tantangan untuk membangun solidaritas di masa pandemi. Tesis ini membahas tentang *Lebaran Ketupat* dan *Pengucapan Syukur* yang mana secara tradisional melibatkan dua kelompok keagamaan: Masyarakat Muslim dan Kristen, bagaimana mereka ditantang untuk menyesuaikan perayaan ke duanya di masa Pandemic agar bisa menciptakan solidaritas. Artikel ini didasarkan dari hasil wawancara mendalam dengan masyarakat yang melaksanakan *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*, baik masyarakat Muslim maupun Kristen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keduanya tidak hanya menciptakan solidaritas antar agama, akan tetapi modifikasi ke duanya di masa Pandemic juga menjadi local resilience dalam menghadapi dampak akibat pandemi Covid-19. Masyarakat Muslim merayakan *Lebaran Ketupat* dengan membawa makanan ke Masjid dan makan bersama akan tetapi mereka juga menahan diri untuk mengunjungi keluarga mereka untuk mencegah penyebaran Covid-19. Sementara itu, masyarakat Kristen merayakan *Pengucapan Syukur* dengan menggunakan hasil panen mereka sebagai persembahan yang kemudian dibagikan kepada orang-orang yang membutuhkan dari latar belakang agama yang berbeda. Meskipun waktu perayaan *Pengucapan Syukur* telah selesai, mereka tetap membagikan hasil panen mereka. Kemampuan mereka untuk memodifikasi keduanya memungkinkan masyarakat Muslim dan Kristen untuk menciptakan solidaritas mereka sebagai *“torang samua basudara”* (kita semua bersaudara), baik dalam ide maupun praktik.

Kata kunci:ritual, basudara, solidaritas, pandemi

A. Introduction

Pandemic Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) is the focus of global attention at this time. Its rapid and widespread transmission in the world has enormous impacts on human life, including health, economic, social, and religious lives. In religious lives, the Covid-19 has affected religious practices in various ways. The government urged people to stay at home and observe worship in their homes. Religious followers were prohibited from observing religions in houses of worship and from visiting each other during religious holidays. To prevent the spread of the Covid-19, religious groups modified several practices of religious rituals. They adjusted their religious rituals to those restrictions of social contacts.

The Covid-19 Pandemic has shaken social structures, and consequently, solidarity among people may decrease (Alwi, 2020: 33). Religious meetings like collective worships observed together arguably build social relationships that foster solidarity among (religious) people (Machendrawaty, 2020). Worship observed at homes due to the Pandemic causes less interaction among religious followers. Such restrictions may cause stress. Stress and anxiety due to the Pandemic can foster selfish behaviours. Therefore, during the Pandemic, solidarity is a significant ethical value for social relations and public health (Asghari, 2020: 1). Durkheim argues that emotional experience may strengthen solidarity among people. Through rituals, people may obtain the emotional experience (quoted from Johnson, 2008: 31). Ritual, or the social dimension of ritual, has an important role in strengthening cohesion and binding communities together (Funay, 2020: 113).

North Sulawesi is known for its plurality, and it is also known for its local cultures, including *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* (Thanks Giving). *Lebaran Ketupat* is a tradition practiced by Muslims as gratitude after carrying out fasting in the month of Ramadan and fasting in the month of Shawwal. In North Sulawesi, people started to hold *Lebaran Ketupat* on the seventh day of Shawwal or seven days after Eid al-Fitr. Every family in one village held an open house (prepared a lot of food in front of their house) and received anyone (Muslims and Christians) who visited their home. Thus, *Lebaran Ketupat* in North Sulawesi was one of the traditions where various religious people meet (Mantu, 2015: 8).

The Minahasa people have practiced *Pengucapan Syukur* since the time of their ancestors. The Minahasa ancestors initially performed this ritual to show their gratitude to God for the harvest they got. In the celebration of *Pengucapan Syukur*, Christians held an open house in their homes after carrying out worship at church. In addition, they also invited people whether they are Christians or Muslims to eat together. By holding an open house, people could together enjoy the blessings they received. *Pengucapan Syukur* as an identity for the Minahasa people was also a means of establishing relationships between people who have not seen each other for a long time (Zelika, 2017).

*Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* were chosen as the site of this research because the two rituals were carried out based on initiatives of two religious groups (Muslims and Christians) to interact and gather together for religious tolerance and mutual respect. During *Lebaran Ketupat*, Christians also came, did *silaturahmi*, and ate together and vice versa. During *Pengucapan Syukur*, Muslims could participate in open house. It was a form of mutual respect between religious communities. *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* that were open to all religious communities made everyone could participate regardless of their religious background. The culture of “*makan besar*”[[1]](#footnote-1) during the celebration of the two rituals strengthened the relationship between religious communities. Through *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*, religious communities could interact and build solidarity between them. Solidarity between communities is needed when they face the times of crisis such as the Covid-19 Pandemic.

During the Pandemic, people could use *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* as a moment to achieve solid solidarity. Furthermore, solidarity created in *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* could become local resilience and created a space for transformation in people's lives during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Therefore, this article aims to analyse how *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* produced and reproduced social solidarity during the Pandemic and how they adjusted to the Pandemic.

B. Methodology

This article is based on 2-month field work in the sub-district of Ratatotok, Southeast Minahasa and the sub-district of Poigar, Bolaang Mongondow, North Sulawesi where *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* were observed. The fieldwork involved mainly interviews with those who practiced and experienced *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. This fieldwork used a face to face interview method to get data. The author conducted in-depth interviews. Before conducting the interview, the author made a list of questions related to the research theme to obtain the required data. The author determined 12 informants consisting of people and religious leaders in the sub-district of Ratatotok, Southeast Minahasa and sub-district of Poigar, Bolaang Mongondow. The author chose these 12 informants because they participated in *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur.*

C. Theoretical Framework

In this article, the author uses Interaction Ritual theory by Randall Collins to analyze the process of building solidarity in *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* that are observed annually. The solidarity created in *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* then could become local resilience and created a space for transformation in people's lives during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Emile Durkheim and Erving Goffman define ritual as a mechanism that emphasizes the emotions and attention of practitioners who produce a shared reality, solidarity, and a symbol of group membership (Collins, 2004: 7). Randall Collins (2004) uses both Durkheim's theory on social solidarity cultivated through ritual observances and Goffman's analysis of strategies used in staging interactional performances to develop a theory called the Interaction Ritual (IR). Interaction Ritual is a meeting where people involved focus their attention on an object or activity. By communicating with each other, each person also realizes the focus of its attention (Collins, 2004: 92). Collins explains:

“an interaction ritual is an emotion transformer, taking some emotions as ritual ingredients, and turning them into other emotions as ritual outcomes” (Collins, 2004: xii).

Ritual ingredients in the interaction ritual theory are the materials or initiating conditions that make rituals happen. Ritual ingredients then transform into ritual outcomes such as totemic symbols, individual energy, and solidarity (Collins, 2004: 47).

Key elements of IR theory are ritual ingredients, ritual outcomes, and collective effervescence. When people perform a ritual, the following conditions are included (Collins, 2004: 48):

1. In a place, two or more people gather physically, and they mutually influence each other, consciously or not.
2. Participants have a sense of who is taking part and excluded. There are boundaries to outsiders.
3. Participants' attention focuses on common objects or activities. They realize the focus of their attention by communicating with each other.
4. They share moods or emotional experiences.

Ritual interaction produces four main outcomes such as group symbols, Emotional Energy (EE), feelings of morality, and solidarity. Successful ritual interactions will foster a spirit of togetherness and increase social solidarity. Successful rituals will also produce Emotional Energy (EE) which consists of a feeling of solidarity within the group, feeling enthusiastic, looking at themselves positively.

**D. Result and Discussion**

**1. *Lebaran Ketupat***

*Lebaran Ketupat* in North Sulawesi also called "*Hari Raya Ketupat"* is a tradition that Muslims practice as gratitude after fasting during the month of Ramadan and fasting for six days in the month of Shawwal, the tenth month of Islamic calendar. This tradition has involved not only Muslims, but also non-Muslims, especially Christians. *Lebaran Ketupat* has therefore functioned as a medium of encounter for diverse communities in North Sulawesi. *Lebaran Ketupat* that was open to everyone make it attracted more people to participate and provided opportunities for non-Muslims to join the celebration.

*Lebaran Ketupat* started on the seventh day of the month of Shawwal or one week after Eid al-Fitr. This ritual was carried out alternately from one village to another village. *Lebaran Ketupat* started after people performed *shalat* *dzuhur* (midday prayers) at the mosque. After performing *shalat* *dzuhur*, many guests came and were ready to participate in the celebration. Before the celebration began, the *Imam* of the mosque led a prayer before eating together. The prayer was recited loudly with loudspeakers in the mosque so that all residents and guests who came may hear it. After finishing the prayer, *Imam* opened the event and invited the guests to enter the arena where the celebration was held. This was a sign of the start of *Lebaran Ketupat*. Guests started visiting the homes of residents, be their family, friends, or people they just met. Each family in one village held an open house and welcomed anyone who visited their houses, whether they knew them or not, both Muslims and non-Muslims. They apologized to each other and then talked to one another while enjoying the food served by the host (personal interview with Jasman Patamat, Ratatotok Muara, December 6th, 2020).

In the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat,* the food always served by the host were *ketupat*, *nasi jaha* or *nasi bulu* and *dodol* which were special foods made by *Jawa Tondano / Jaton* people[[2]](#footnote-2). N*asi jaha* and *dodol* were also prepared as gifts for the guests. The hosts allowed their guests to pack the food and took it home. A lot of food served to guests made *Lebaran Ketupat* very attractive to the public's attention. The food was a kind of appreciation to the guests who were willing to come. The event of *makan besar* (eating together) in *Lebaran Ketupat* was a bridge for the community to interact with each other. *Lebaran Ketupat* was an event for all levels of society to meet and gather to strengthen relationships between people and foster a spirit of unity.

The people of North Sulawesi were open to show their proactive attitude in establishing good social communication. They established interactions between individuals and communities from various religious, ethnic and social class backgrounds. This ritual not only strengthened social relations between communities, but also created joy and peace for diverse communities. *Lebaran Ketupat* was a very important tradition in maintaining tolerance and togetherness between religious communities in North Sulawesi because it was held not only for Muslims but also for everyone.

Even though many of the guests who came to participate were not known by hosts, they were warmly welcomed and treated like their own relatives or friends. This attitude showed that people materialized the slogan *"Torang samua Basudara"* (we are all brothers/sisters) which is a jargon for the people of North Sulawesi. Regardless of the differences in their religious, ethnic, social and economic background, all the people of North Sulawesi are brothers/sisters.

**2. *Pengucapan Syukur***

The ritual of *Pengucapan Syukur* originates from *Foso Rummages* tradition. The word *foso* comes from old language of Minahasa people which means ritual while the word *rummages* comes from the word *rages* which means an offering given sincerely to *Empung Wailan Wangko* (God Almighty). For Minahasa people, *Foso Rummages* is a traditional way to communicate with God which aims to express their gratitude to God for always caring for and accompanying them in their daily life. Besides being an effort to get closer to God and a form of gratitude, this ritual also implies respect for the ancestors.

Christian communities made *nasi jaha / nasi bulu and dodol* before carrying out ritual of *Pengucapan Syukur*. These two foods were special foods that must be served duringthe ritual. People generally prepared their own meals because guests visited each house. Even though each family cooked their own food to be served for this ritual, there were some residents who asked Muslim for help to cook the food they served. They asked their Muslim neighbors for help to give confidence and dispel doubts to their Muslim guests that the food they served was *halal* food. Thus, Muslim guests did not hesitate to eat the food that they served.

Initially, *Pengucapan Syukur* was carried out during the harvest period. However, because people regularly hold *Pengucapan Syukur* every year, people still hold this ritual even though it is not harvest season. All districts in Minahasa carried out *Pengucapan Syukur* in July. Because people in this area regularly hold it in July, whether there was a harvest or not, they celebrated this ritual at that month. There were also several regions that carried out it in June or in August. People collected and brought their harvest as offerings or “*korban syukur*” to the church. According to the times, the harvest has been replaced with money that was put into envelope. Peoplegave *korban syukur* to express their gratitude to God.

*Pengucapan Syukur* started with worship in church in the morning. Christians did worship in the church exclusively. When worshiped at church, people brought offerings. The ceremony of *Pengucapan Syukur* at church ended at 12 noon. After that, people continued the celebration by holding open house. The guests started visiting the residents' houses to eat together. They came to the homes of their family, friends or acquaintances. Although *Pengucapan Syukur* was identical to the ritual performed by Christians, but in its practice, it was not only Christians who participated, Muslims also participated and came to visit Christians houses. *Pengucapan Syukur* becomes moment to do *silaturahmi* between people who come from different religious backgrounds. Christians and Muslims who have known each other for a long time invited each other to celebrate religious holidays as mutual respect. They did *silaturahmi* to foster a sense of togetherness.

**3. The Production of Solidarity**

To analyse the production of social solidarity in *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*, author use Interaction Ritual (IR) theory by Randall Collins. Collins defined interaction ritual as a meeting that makes all ritual actors focus their attention on a common object or activity. By communicating with each other, individual realizes the focus of his/her attention (Collins, 2004: 92). Collins stated that interaction ritual has a role in conceptualizing emotion as positive energy in its social appearance as an outcome of successful rituals (Collins, 2004: 125). He argued that a successful ritual produced ritual outcomes as follow:

**a. Symbols of Social Relationship**

*Lebaran Ketupat* was identical with *ketupat*. People must serve *ketupat* at the celebration of this ritual. *Ketupat* was a symbol of hope for Muslims to admit their mistakes that have been done. They were expected to forgive each other and forget each other's mistakes. The food that must be served during *Pengucapan Syukur* were *nasi jaha* (rice cooked using bamboo) and *dodol* wrapped in palm leaves. Both foods were made from glutinous rice. Glutinous rice is a harvest that is identical to worship of God. The food that should be served during *Pengucapan Syukur* were made from glutinous rice because this ritual aimed to express gratitude by serving the best food for the guests. *Nasi Jaha* and *dodol* which were used as offerings or *korban syukur* in church services were symbols of people's gratitude to God. Therefore, *nasi jaha* and *dodol* as symbols have a role in fostering individual emotions.

The success of a ritual depends on the interaction between participants and the strength of their commitment and belief in the symbols of the group. When a group arranges activities for religious practices that bond its members and makes symbolic symbols as the basis of activities that lead them to always obey their beliefs, their identity as a group will emerge. Muslims in North Sulawesi carried out *Lebaran Ketupat* by using *ketupat* as a symbol that had meaning. They realized the meaning of *ketupat* by doing *silaturahmi* and apologizing to each other. Christians performed *Pengucapan Syukur* by making *nasi jaha* and *dodol* as symbols of gratitude to God. They gave *nasi jaha* and *dodol* to their guests as a symbol of sharing blessings with others by giving the best food. These symbols then represented their identity as "*basudara*" (means brothers/sisters) that guide their behaviour and actions. Shared belief as "*basudara*" was created by visiting each other during the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. People did not consider religion, whether the guests who came are Muslims or Christians. Therefore, in the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*, people became aware of what they should do to others in their social life.

**b. Emotional Energy**

Collins argued that ritual gives a special energy to individual which is called emotional energy. For Durkheim, emotional energy is a feeling of confidence and the courage to take initiatives and actions (Collins, 2004: 38-39). Emotional energy then triggers individuals to interact with each other during rituals (Turner, 1998: 435). When the ritual produces high emotional energy, people's initiative to take action and practice the ritual is getting higher. Therefore, the emotional energy also affected people in North Sulawesi in doing activities during *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. In addition, this emotional energy created emotions that aroused the spirit of "*torang samua basudara*"[[3]](#footnote-3) among people who participated in this ritual. When they were involved in the two rituals, they felt that they were the members of “*basudara*”.

From the social aspect, *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* increased the relationship between religious communities. They became event to build new relationships. People felt that they were the part of "*basudara*" because they built relationships with new people. The guests also confidently visited the residents' houses which held an open house even though they did not know each other because the host happily welcomed anyone who came to visit. People also participated in the rituals with great enthusiasm, even though it need a lot of energy and money to hold an open house. Their tendency to repeat *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* is getting bigger because they felt they got emotional energy and the benefits. *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* which were open to everyone attracted other people to participate in this ritual and made them to be part of “*basudara*”.

*Torang Samua Basudara* is the motto which has become the belief system of the people of North Sulawesi. It is the result of a process of interaction between communities including interactions when people celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. This belief system then becomes a social system and moral values ​​that have a big influence in arousing the spirit of brotherhood in people's lives. Belief as "*basudara*" has become a social capital for the people in North Sulawesi which contains moral norms that create social trust among the people.

**c. Moral Order**

Durkheim stated that ritual is the source of a group's standard of morality. According to him, individual will feel that he/she is a moral person when he/she uses emotional energy from shared experiences as a guide in his/her actions. This standard of morality is an increase in emotional strength and intersubjectivity in a ritual performed by a group that creates the concept of what is good and what is bad. The morals that produced by a ritual impose limits on people's behaviour. Moral concept is transferred or moved into symbols that are considered sacred (Collins, 2004: 39-40) likewise *ketupat*, *nasi jaha* and *dodol* which are considered important objects in the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*.

*Ketupat, nasi jaha* and *dodol* in the celebration of *Pengucapan Syukur* had meanings that became moral order and gave guidelines and limits on people's behaviour as members of “*basudara*”. As the part of *“basudara”*, people are encouraged to give alms or share their sustenance to people in need when they get abundant sustenance and try to give the best things to others. People should give thanks to God for the blessings or sustenance that has been given.

**d. Social Solidarity**

Social solidarity is a condition of relationship between individuals or groups that exist in a community based on moral feelings and shared beliefs which is strengthened by shared emotional experiences ​​(Johnson, 2008: 30). The forms social solidarity created during the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* include *Mapalus* (Cooperation), Mutual Cooperation (*Gotong Royong*), and sharing with each other.

People carried out mutual cooperation to prepare the things needed for the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. Muslims helped Christians to make food such as *dodol* and *nasi jaha* which were served during *Pengucapan Syukur*. During *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*, people gave the best service for their guests, especially regarding the food. The essence of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* was eating together so the participants could sense the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* after they visited and ate together. They would remember and got an impression on their memories.By eating together, people build solidarity among them.

**4. The Pandemic, Ritual Modification for Solidarity**

**a.** The Modification of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*

The Covid-19 Pandemic had great impacts on the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat.* In previous years this ritual was held hilariously by people in North Sulawesi, but during the Pandemic people in some villages held it simply in the mosques. In some areas, where people usually celebrate *Lebaran Ketupat* every year, they even postponed it this year. In Ratatotok Muara and Ratatotok Timur village, people only celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* by eating together at the mosques. People gathered in the mosques. They brought food and ate together. It was because residents were only allowed to interact with people in this village. Djan Adabo, a resident in Nonapan Satu village explained:

"During the Pandemic we felt not free because we had to wear masks. If we wanted to leave this village, we had to get permission. So, we prevented the spread of the virus. We did not want to get sick. So, we only communicated with our family members by phone, my relatives asked “Why did not we meet?” I answered “we had to be patient”. If the Pandemic period ends, we would hold the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat*" (personal interview, Nonapan Satu village, December 11st, 2020).

During the Pandemic, people had restrained their desires to meet their family and friends during the time of *Lebaran Ketupat*. Even though the communication during the Pandemic was limited and people were not allowed to hold open houses, they celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* in limited conditions. Based on the results of the interview, some informants said that if the Pandemic period was over, they would celebrate *Lebaran Ketupat* as usual.

*Pengucapan Syukur* celebrations also changed during the Pandemic. The celebrations of this ritual were varied. There were people in some areas that only celebrated it in churches. There were also people who celebrated it with residents in their village. It was because the government prohibited guests from outside the village to visit. Those conditions caused the celebration of *Pengucapan Syukur* was not as crowded as previous years. Not all regions celebrated *Pengucapan Syukur*. Jane Tantohe, a resident in Ratatotok Dua village said:

“Covid-19 had great impacts because we could not worship at church. We could not go to other's houses. We could not go to the neighbours’ houses” (personal interview, Ratatotok Dua village, December 5th, 2020).

When the author asked "what did you feel when people did not celebrate *Pengucapan Syukur* for this year?" She answered "there was no togetherness". Santy Seidyregar, a resident in Ratatotok Dua village also said:

"We could not get together. Usually we gathered to chat. We felt stressed. We wanted to gather and tell our stories but we were forbidden to do it” (personal interview, Ratatotok Dua village, December 5th, 2020).

When people could not celebrate *Pengucapan Syukur* they felt something was missing. Because they could not meet and gather like the previous years, they could not feel togetherness created during the celebrations of the two rituals. There were also people who felt stress because they could not gather together and chat with others as usual. The statements above show how important *Pengucapan Syukur* is in people's lives. Because people feel that *Pengucapan Syukur* is an important event in their lives.

People in Wineru village also changed their activities to celebrate *Pengucapan Syukur*. Before the Pandemic, Christians usually brought food as offerings or sacrifices to the church and ate them together. However, during Pandemic they collected offerings and harvests such as rice to be distributed to people in need. Pastors and church administrators also helped to distribute them. Jefta Makapela, a religious counselor in Wineru village said that before the Pandemic, they did not think about this activity during *Pengucapan Syukur*. Finally, even though the time for the ritual celebration had ended, church administrators and the people continued to distribute the harvests they had to people in need. What people in Wineru village did in celebrating *Pengucapan Syukur* showed that *Pengucapan Syukur* could give contribution for the people in facing the Pandemic.

b. Ritual, Solidarity and Pandemic

Catherine Bell in her book entitled *Ritual Theory Ritual Practice* states that ritual is a strategy or the way of acting that is different from one’s daily life. This way of acting is created because of the construction made by the community to deal with problems that exist in their life (Bell, 1997: 70-76). Sense of ritual that exists in people's lives also produces this way of acting. Sense of ritual that exists when people face special social situations and conditions creates some actions that are different from the usual actions. Ritual is seen as an activity that is unique and different from other activities. Therefore, ritual is more than a strategy on how people act in special social situations.

Bell argues that if society undergoes social changes, organizations, economic activities, and other ideas, then people will see changes along with changes to the ritual system and its meaning. The phenomenon of changes or modifications of religious rituals in several areas, including changes in the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* supports Bell’s statement. During Covid-19 Pandemic, people could use the modification of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* as a local resilience during the Pandemic.

1. The Role of Ritual and Solidarity during the Covid-19 Pandemic

During Covid-19 Pandemic, people practiced religious rituals in limited conditions. They have to implement health protocols. Therefore, Muslims and Christians in North Sulawesi chose to change or modify the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. Muslims held *Lebaran Ketupat* in a different way. Christians also changed their activities during the celebration of *Pengucapan Syukur*. They modified the implementation of the two rituals in order to carry out *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* without breaking the government's instructions. The modifications of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* during the Covid-19 Pandemic then could be collaborated with social solidarity to achieve common interests. This collaboration also could be used as local resilience in facing Covid-19 Pandemic.

At the beginning of the Pandemic, many people were worried. They thought about their life in the future during the Pandemic. They worried about not being able to fulfill their daily needs during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Because of feeling worried, people in Wineru village, sub-district of Poigar, Bolaang Mongondow had the initiative to save or store the harvests they got. When they wanted to grind the rice, they were worried that they could not fulfil their needs during the Pandemic. Therefore, they stored the rice until the next harvest period. They grind the rice sufficiently for their daily meals. People then used their harvests as offerings (*korban syukur*) when they celebrated *Pengucapan Syukur* during the Pandemic.

Before the Pandemic, Christians usually brought offerings or *korban syukur* to the churches when they celebrated *Pengucapan Syukur*. However, in the Pandemic period, they collected offerings and harvests they saved, then they distributed them to people in need. Pastors and church administrators also helped distribute the offerings. Heski Gosal, a pastor in Wineru village said:

“The sense of caring for one another became stronger during the Pandemic. Before the Pandemic, the congregation usually brought *korban syukur* to the church. For this year, we brought offerings and shared them with people in need. Pastors also helped to distribute them. Other churches in this village also did this activity" (personal interview, Wineru village, December 12th, 2020).

People modified the celebration of *Pengucapan Syukur* by distributing the offerings to the people in need and the children in the Child Development Centre (*Pusat Pengembangan Anak*) in their village. They also did not hold an open house as usual because they were prohibited from gathering. Jefta Makapela, a religious counselor in Wineru village said:

"I did not think it would become like this (share the offerings), next time when we had harvests such as rice, priests and people in this village distributed them to the people in need" (personal interview, Wineru village, December 12nd, 2020).

The collaboration between *Pengucapan Syukur* and the solidarity movement by sharing the offerings and changing the way of life of the people by saving their harvests during the Pandemic could be a local resilience. This modification also created a space for transformation in people's lives during the Pandemic. Jefta Makapela said that church administrators and the people still shared the crops they had with people in need, such as older people and widows, even though the time of the celebration of *Pengucapan Syukur* ended.

People in Ratatotok Muara and Ratatotok Timur also changed the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat* during the Pandemic. People celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* at the mosques with limited access. They brought food to the mosque and then ate them together. Even though they celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* in limited access, the spirit of building togetherness remained. They celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* without breaking government regulations by not having open houses and inviting people outside their villages. The obedience of the Muslims in following government instructions was a form of their solidarity during the Pandemic. Djan Adabo, a resident in Nonapan Satu village said that during the Pandemic, Muslims in his village did not hold an open house because they prevented the spread of the virus. Therefore, they only communicated with their family members by phone. They also encouraged each other to be patient in facing the Pandemic (personal interview, Nonapan Satu village, December 11st, 2020).

Their obedience to following the instructions was a form of collective consciousness. For the common good, they refrained their desire to gather with their family and friends at the time of *Lebaran Ketupat*. Solidarity of the people, both Muslims and Christians, could eliminate individualism during the Pandemic. Muslims decided not to do *silaturahmi* with their families to prevent the spread of the virus. They did not want their family members to get infected by the virus. Meanwhile, Christians distributed the harvests to people in need. Their moral feeling and shared belief as the members of “*basudara*” encouraged them to do those activities during the Pandemic. Solidarity united them by a sense of kinship. The emotional energy as "*basudara*" made them care for each other and shared their sustenance.

2. Facing the Pandemic Positively through *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*

Almost everyone in the world feels stress during the Covid-19 Pandemic. As a result of the changes that occur suddenly, people feel frustrated, anxious, and afraid. This condition requires people to be able to adapt to the changes around them. Through *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*, people can help each other in reducing the negative impacts caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Therefore, community solidarity is urgently needed to reduce the Pandemic’s negative impact by giving moral or material support. Heski Gosal, a pastor of Immanuel Church, Wineru village said:

"During the Pandemic, people could feel community solidarity. At the beginning of the Pandemic, people could not leave the village. Some people found it difficult to get a job, so we helped them. There were many ways to help each other. There was a high level of solidarity here” (personal interview, Wineru village, December 12th, 2020).

He also explained that from April to May, people were prohibited from going out of their villages. This condition made people unable to leave the village for work. However, by helping each other, the people’s economy in his village was relatively stable during the Pandemic. Their village, which is an agricultural area also supported the stability of people’s economy during the Pandemic. Pastor Heski Gosal said:

"Not only to be a disaster, but the Pandemic also caused people’s economy increased. It was because the Pandemic made people motivated. They were worried about their life in the future. So, they saved their harvests. When they got harvests, they were worried about grinding the rice, so they saved them until the next harvest time. They grind the rice only for their daily meals. They were also looking for side jobs” (personal interview, Wineru village, December 12nd, 2020).

The change in people’s way of life during the Pandemic in consuming the rice to fulfil their daily needs positively impacted their economy. During the Pandemic, people also showed their solidarity with others. They helped each other. Viali Tampi, a resident in Wineru village said:

"There is a Child Development Centre here, so we distributed the crops to them during the Pandemic and also for elderly people and widows. People from this village who have been successful outside this village also gave money to people in need” (personal interview, Wineru village, December 12nd, 2020).

Solidarity also can be realized by giving moral support. Through the moment of *Lebaran Ketupat*, people could ask each other about their condition and encouraged each other even though only by telephone. Caring for each other and giving encouragement is also part of solidarity. Thus, people can get positive emotional energy.

3. Create Resilience

The collaboration between *Pengucapan Syukur* and solidarity could be a local resilience in facing the negative impacts of the Pandemic. At the beginning of the Pandemic, people in Wineru village saved their crops and ground the rice sufficiently for their daily meal. This method made people became economical in consuming the rice they had. People got the inspiration to give the harvest they saved as offerings at the celebration of *Pengucapan Syukur*. They distributed the offerings to people in need. The activity of sharing the harvest kept going even though the time of *Pengucapan Syukur* had ended. Therefore, Heski Gosal, an informant in Wineru village said that the people’s economy in his village was relatively stable.

4. Manage Negative Emotions

Turner (1998) argues that ritual has several roles in people's lives, including building integrity in the community and becoming a source of motivation. Through the celebration of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*, people could motivate each other. Pastors could give motivation to their congregations when they held *Pengucapan Syukur* services at church. People could also use *Lebaran Ketupat* as a moment to do *silaturahmi* and gave motivation to each other by phone.

Family members could remind each other to be patient in facing the Pandemic. Thus, they could think positively and eliminated negative thinking that can cause stress during the Pandemic. Therefore, *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* had a role in making people think positively in facing the Covid-19 Pandemic. Through these two rituals, people could give moral support that could improve mental health. People also could manage negative emotions and minimize stress through the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* by praying or listening to religious lectures.

Conclusion

*Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* were events to communicate and do *silaturahmi*  for Muslims and Christians in North Sulawesi. Christians and Muslims not only met and interacted with family members and friends, but also built up relationships with people they just met regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds. People may create a peaceful and harmonious inter-religious life. Activities carried out in the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* also had produced and reproduced solidarity among people.

Covid-19 made people changed or modified the celebrations of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur*. Muslims did not hold open houses and celebrated *Lebaran Ketupat* with a limited access. Instead, they celebrated it by bringing food to the mosque and eating together. Because they were prohibited from visiting their families and friends, they suppress their desires to meet and gather with their families to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in their villages. These actions showed the solidarity of Muslim community in facing the Pandemic. Meanwhile, the Christians celebrated *Pengucapan Syukur* by sharing their harvests with people in need. This activity then continued even though the time of *Pengucapan Syukur* had ended.

The actions of the Muslims and Christians in celebrating *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* during the Pandemic showed that the modification of *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* and collaboration between the two rituals and social solidarity became local resilience in facing the negative impacts caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Solidarity made them care for others by sharing their harvest. This activity was inspired by the moment of *Pengucapan Syukur*. Therefore, *Lebaran Ketupat* and *Pengucapan Syukur* enabled people to respond to the crisis by changing their way of life for the better positively.

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1. *Makan besar* is an activity to eat together by serving a lot of food [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Jaton* is Javanese Community living in Tondano who were originally prisoners of war from Java who were sent to Tondano that led by Kyai Modjo. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *“Torang Samua Basudara”* means we are all brothers/sisters. It is a motto of the people in North Sulawesi to strengthen the relationship between religious communities. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)