

The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Maritime Connectivity

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Abstract

Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) is a large family of viruses that can cause a wide range of illnesses, from the common cold to catastrophic conditions such as MERS and SARS. From the beginning of its spread, all aspects of human life have been affected by the pandemic that has spread around the world, including the global economic downturn and decreased manufacturing capacity. In addition, this circumstance has a new impact on the dimensions of global sea trade. This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, analyzing and obtaining conclusions is done by looking for theories from various sources of literature such as books, journals, articles or other media. The conclusions obtained from this study are Covid-19 has affected all forms of human activity, including trading activities by sea. The application of physical distancing on board merchant ships is one way to prevent the spread of Covid-19 during the voyage. After the Covid-19 pandemic, the trend of larger ship sizes and fewer ship companies has continued. The Covid-19 outbreak not only created a health emergency, but also shook the global economic sector. This has caused a sudden and dramatic reduction in global sea trade traffic and energy consumption.

Kata Kunci: Covid-19 Pandemic, Maritime Connectivity, Sea Trade



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INTRODUCTION

Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) is a large family of viruses that can cause a wide range of illnesses, from the common cold to catastrophic conditions such as MERS and SARS. Transmission from animals to humans is possible (zoonosis). It is almost unlikely that human-to-human transmission will occur. The transmission of Covid 19 has not been proven with absolute certainty. Due to the large number of cases that have surfaced in Wuhan, some viewpoints suggest that animals can transmit the disease to humans. To orchestrate the global response to this disease, the World Health Organization (WHO) has deemed it a public health emergency of international concern (Livana, 2020).

From the beginning of its spread, all aspects of human life have been affected by the pandemic that has spread around the world, including the global economic downturn and decreased manufacturing capacity. In addition, this circumstance has a new impact on the dimensions of global sea trade. All countries in the world are still trying to maintain their economic stability in the current climate, especially by engaging in shipping operations for global trade (Octavian, 2022).

Not limited to the economic and sea trade aspects, restrictions on pandemic diving activities have an impact on increasing maritime crimes such as illegal fishing activities. In addition, there are still many cases of illegal fishing which have not been resolved until now because the efforts made by Indonesia have not been maximized in dealing with the problem of illegal fishing in Indonesia's EEZ. Surveillance in all Indonesian waters carried out by the government still has deficiencies in terms of surveillance vessels, as well as the number of days of operation.

In the field of ship trade, efforts to implement physical distancing and provide isolation space on board certainly require larger ship space. Therefore, in order to be able to adjust the Covid-19 health protocol, it is necessary to change the size of merchant ships. Apart from being an effort to implement the protocol that has been called upon by the IMO (International Maritime Organization), it also increases the effectiveness of trade to limit activities without reducing the quantity of goods shipped.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research method. The instrument in this study is a researcher who acts as a human instrument. Through a descriptive qualitative approach, analyzing and obtaining conclusions is done by looking for theories from various sources of literature such as books, journals, articles or other media. Descriptive qualitative research begins by describing an object, phenomenon or social setting that will be written in a narrative text. Reports in qualitative research contain quotations of data (facts) revealed in the field to provide support for what is presented in the report (Anggito, 2018).

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ship Size Change Adjusts to Covid-19 Health Protocol

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected all aspects of human life, from health to the economy. One of the economic aspects that has been affected by the Covid-19 condition is trade by sea. Covid-19 has caused a decrease in trading activity at sea. Trading activities at sea, especially workers on ships, need to be regulated in such a way that they do not result in the spread of Covid-19. Ship operators must be able to apply strategies to prevent transmission of Covid-19 on board. The steps that can be taken are improving cleanliness on board, implementing physical distancing and providing isolation rooms for crew members suspected of being exposed to experiencing Covid-19 symptoms.

In an effort to implement physical distancing and provide isolation space on board, of course, a larger ship space is needed. Therefore, in order to be able to adjust the Covid-19 health protocol, it is necessary to change the size of merchant ships. Technically, the size of merchant ships is getting bigger to adjust to physical distancing requirements in accordance with the Covid-19 health protocol. The shipbuilding industry can also propose the concept of building a new ship with a special compartment for isolation rooms for crew members suffering from Covid-19 (Octavian, 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic requires ship operators to adapt so that service activities can run while minimizing the spread of Covid-19.

Based on Lestari's research (2021) on the KM Kelud passenger ship, it was found that the application of physical distancing on board for economy class passengers was carried out by reducing the capacity of each deck to 50%. In particular, the ship's crew (ABK), whose job is to interact a lot with passengers, always use medical standard PPE. Meanwhile several public spaces such as cafeterias, cinemas and canteens are not functioning. Furthermore, ship operators also pay attention to the condition of air circulation in the passenger cabin which is specially designed to be able to provide a sense of comfort for passengers.



Picture 1. Implementation of Health Protocols at KM Kelud
 (Source: Lestari, 2021)

Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Ship Crews

During the Covid-19 pandemic, seafarers around the world faced serious challenges in carrying out their work due to restrictions that made changing crew members and repatriating seafarers very difficult. Hundreds of thousands of seafarers are stuck on ships because routine crew changes cannot be carried out, while hundreds of thousands are stuck on land and prohibited from sailing (IMO, 2021).

The impact of this condition causes the crew members who are still on board to be more vulnerable to health threats due to the lack of health facilities on board. In addition, crew members are also prone to experiencing fatigue because they have to replace the work of other crew members who may be suffering from Covid-19 and must isolate on board. In the end, the after-effect of this condition is the decreased concentration of the crew in operating the ship so that it can potentially threaten the safety of the ship while sailing. The Secretary General of IMO informed that he had received a report regarding the impact caused by Covid-19 on the shipping industry. Responding to this situation, the Secretary General has issued guidance through a Circular Letter (Rosyada, 2020). The IMO Circular Letter regarding the Policy for Prevention and Handling of Covid-19 in the Port and Shipping Sector is as follows.

Table 1. IMO Circular Letter regarding the Policy for Prevention and Handling of Covid-19 in the Port and Shipping Sector

Number	Date	Letter
Circular Letter No. 4204/Add.7	April 3, 2020	Guidance regarding unforeseen delays in the delivery of vessels
Circular Letter No. 4202/Add.5/Rev.1	March 27, 2020	Preliminary list of recommendations for governments and relevant national authorities on facilitating maritime trade during the Covid-19 pandemic
Circular Letter No. 4204/Add.5/Rev.1	April 2, 2020	Guidelines relating to the certification of seafarers and fishing vessel personnel
Circular Letter No. 4204/Add.4	March 5, 2020	Guidelines for ship operators for the protection of seafarers' health
Circular Letter No. 4204/Add.3	March 2, 2020	Operational considerations for handling Covid-19 cases/outbreaks on board
Circular Letter No. 4204/Add.2	February 21, 2020	IMO-WHO Joint Statement on Response to the Covid-19 Outbreak and encourages Member States and

		international organizations to disseminate it as widely as possible. Available in the six official languages of the UN system
Circular Letter No. 4204/Add.1	February 19, 2020	Provide advice on Implementation and enforcement of relevant IMO instruments
Circular Letter No. 4203/Add.1	February 12, 2020	Provide information and guidance on precautions to be taken to minimize risks to delegates
Circular Letter No. 4204	January 31, 2020	Provides information and guidance, based on recommendations developed by the World Health Organization (WHO), on the precautions to be taken to minimize the risk to seafarers, passengers and other people on board ships from the coronavirus

Through this Circular Letter, IMO hopes that member country governments, port authorities and shipping companies can work together in controlling the Covid-19 outbreak so that the movement of people is safe, loading and unloading of goods continues and crew changes can be made on time.

Maritime Trade during the Covid-19 Pandemic

The figure below shows how international maritime trade data and the world's gross domestic product (GDP) are presented. The data shows that maritime trade fell by 3.8% in 2020. However, at the end of the year it had increased and is projected to increase by 4.3% in 2021. It is estimated that the annual growth in maritime trade between 2022 and 2026 will slow down to 2.4% (UNCTAD, 2021). For comparison that over the last two decades, annual growth of 2.9%. In addition, it can be seen that during the Covid-19 Pandemic, it has caused an increase in the cost of shipping containers.

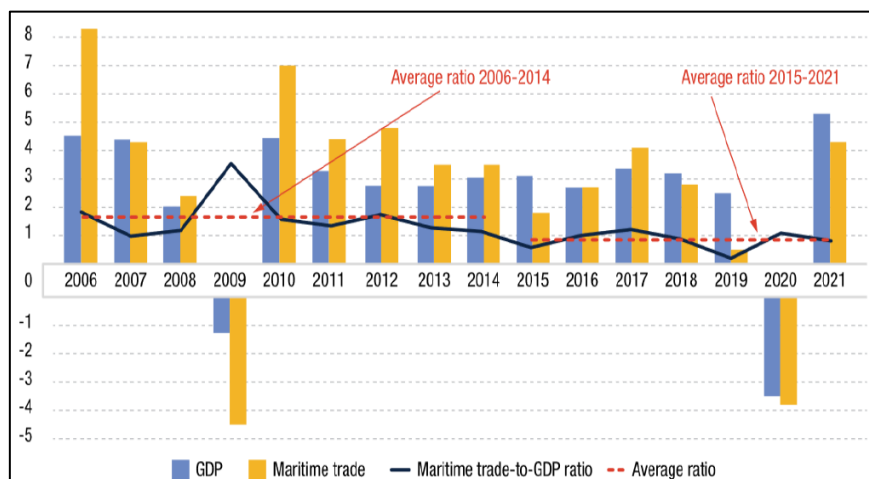


Chart 1. International Maritime Trade Data
 (Source: UNCTAD, 2021)

Post-Covid-19 Global Sea Trade Decline

Since the Chinese authorities confirmed that they had identified a new virus called novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) on January 7 2020. Until March 11 2020, WHO declared COVID-19 (Novel coronadisease) a pandemic, therefore it is necessary to be aware of the spread and impact caused by the corona virus. The Covid-19 pandemic has emerged as a global health and socioeconomic crisis, with many countries having implemented vulnerabilities to uncontrolled social mobility to control transmission of the virus (Sari, 2020). The outbreak of the Covid-19 outbreak and the issuance of regulations regarding PSBB (Large-Scale Social Restrictions) has

reduced people's activities outside the home, be it work, education or even transportation. The government appealed to the public to reduce activities outside the home. This appeal was strengthened by the enactment of RI Government Regulation No. 21 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) in the context of accelerating the handling of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19).

This has caused a sudden and dramatic reduction in global sea trade traffic and energy consumption. Ship-based activities are affected by strict restrictions on human mobility and changes in consumption trends. During the first semester of 2020, global sea traffic in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) fell to 70.2 percent. This trend reached its peak during April 2020, with a decrease in the frequency of shipping activities by 1.4 percent. In the same period, decreased production also occurred in 54.8 percent of commodities. Human activities at sea have changed radically due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Restrictions on port and shipping activities have an impact on various marine sectors, especially sectors that are highly dependent on the movement of people and goods such as fishing vessels, ferries and cruise.

The Covid-19 outbreak has not only created a health emergency, but has also rocked the global economic sector, one of which is the marine and fisheries sector. Quoted from McKinsey Data, 186 countries, it was found that China was the largest export destination for 33 countries and the largest source of imports for 65 countries, with a share of world commodity trade of 11.4% in 2017. So with these conditions, the presence of COVID-19 in China has a very large impact on the course of the world trade chain itself. Based on data from the International Chamber of Shipping, the shipping industry is responsible for transporting about 90% of the total world trade. Thus, the emergence of COVID-19 has had a major impact on the shipping industry at this time. COVID-19 resulted in a reduced volume of transportation and not optimal utilization of ships (Putri, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Covid-19 has affected all forms of human activity, including trading activities by sea. The application of physical distancing on board merchant ships is one way to prevent the spread of Covid-19 during the voyage. Efforts to implement physical distancing and provide isolation space on board require larger ship space. Therefore, in order to be able to adjust the Covid-19 health protocol, it is necessary to change the size of merchant ships. The Covid-19 pandemic has also had an impact on the safety of sailors. The crew members who are still on board are increasingly vulnerable to health threats due to the lack of health facilities on board.

After the Covid-19 pandemic, the trend of larger ship sizes and fewer ship companies has continued. This trend for 15 years from 2006 to 2020 indicates consolidation in the shipping business. The impact of "ships getting bigger" especially on ports. Ports should invest more in dredging, bigger cranes, expanding intermodal connections, and maintaining dwelling time. With the vulnerability of supply chains due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to build resilience in supply chains, especially the implementation of digitalization and automation issues for shipping efficiency.

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