

Restrictions towards Community Activities (PPKM) to Overcome the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Eyes of STIAMI Students and Lecturers: A Mass Communication Study

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Abstract

To overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indonesian government decided to implement a regulation known as the Restrictions towards Community Activities (PPKM). Since its inception, PPKM has been extended fourteen times. Observing the trend, it is interesting to find out how higher education students and lecturers perceive the regulation after gaining information from varied mass communication channels. Therefore, this research is aimed to identify perceptions regarding PPKM among students and lecturers. It used qualitative research with a phenomenology approach, involving 104 STIAMI students and 26 lecturers based in Jakarta, Bekasi, and Depok. According to the results, more than a half of the students and lecturers found information to be sufficient from mass communication channels and decided to support the program if continued in the future. They are, however, urging the government to conduct significant changes that would ensure the social and economic lives of Indonesian citizens remain well.

Keywords

PPKM; COVID-19 pandemic; mass communication; students, phenomenology



I. Introduction

Since the first COVID-19 case was identified and announced by President Joko Widodo on March 2nd 2020, the Indonesian government has been in constant need of transferring information and enabling social change to ensure a healthy society can be preserved, undeterred by a raging deadly virus across the borders. The cabinet alongside the established COVID-19 Prevention and National Economy Recovery Committee (PC-PEN) put forward numerous public information campaigns that allow citizens to become aware of the issue in hand and gradually adapt their attitudes in accordance to enacted governmental regulations. One of these public information campaigns revolve around the Restrictions Towards Community Activities (PerMBERlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat, PPKM).

PPKM serves as a replacement of the Large Scale Social Restrictions (Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar, PSBB). According to the Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs and Chairman of PC-PEN Airlangga Hartarto, the shift was needed since PSBB heavily relied on initiatives coming from regional government officials (Sandi, 2021). It means that decisions related to COVID-19 prevention was autonomous, depending on each region's will and efforts that in some cases needed rigorous regulations because of severe COVID-19 cases. Hence, PPKM shifted public policy from bottom-up to top-down. It was officiated through the Minister of Home Affairs Instruction Number 1 of 2021, restricting community activities in selected cities and regencies with a high number of COVID-19 infections (Nurhanisah & Naufal, 2021). From its inception, PPKM has been conducted fourteen times. The first period was implemented from 11 to 25 January 2021 in seven provinces, involving

73 cities and regencies located on Java and Bali islands. After evaluation, PPKM was extended for the second time from 26 January to 8 February 2021. This is based on the following finding: 29 cities/regencies were still high-risk zones; 41 cities/regencies medium risk zones; only 3 cities/regencies were low risk zones (Arnani, 2021).

The third PPKM period lasted from 9 February to 22 March 2021, adding three provinces to the program, namely East Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, and North Sumatera. The cause of area expansion was a significant rise of COVID-19 cases. The COVID-19 prevention team used four parameters to determine target areas: 1) above the national average active cases; 2) under the national average healing cases; 3) above the national average death cases; and 4) bed occupancy rate in hospitals above 70% (Farisa & Erdianto, 2021).

Despite the positive outlook, the COVID-19 pandemic didn't subside, resulting in a prolongation of PPKM for the fourth time with five additional provinces (Nugraheny & Krisiandi, 2021), followed by another one in 20 provinces (Rohman & Kurniawan, 2021), then 25 provinces (Mudassir, 2021), until all provinces were involved (Dewi, 2021; Avisena, 2021; Candra & Sidebang, 2021; Nurdiana, 2021). PPKM Volume 3 to 10 were labeled Micro PPKM because the first two periods only targeted activities in large public spaces such as offices, malls, and airports, while the latter include activities in smaller public spaces such as neighborhood entities were also included.

Starting from July 2021, President Joko Widodo announced the implementation of Emergency PPKM (PPKM Darurat) because COVID-19 cases remained high.

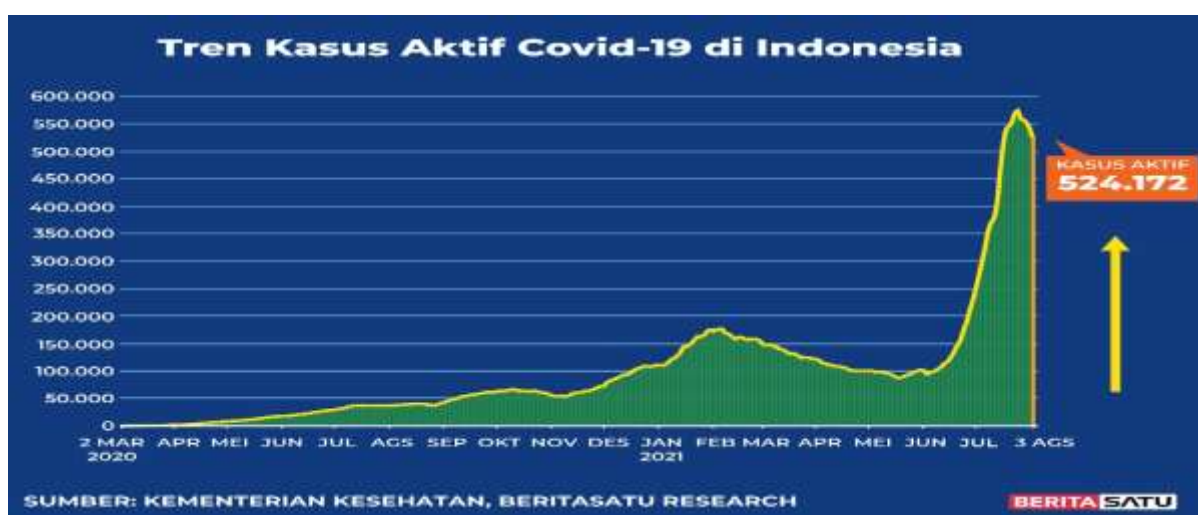


Figure 1. COVID-19 Cases in Indonesia from 2 March 2020 until 2 August 2021

Source: Muhammad Reza, Berita Satu (2 August 2021)

Based on the picture above, COVID-19 cases began to decrease in March, but spiked back up by the end of June 2021. The central government has utilized mass communication to share knowledge about PPKM. Mass communication is the process of imparting and exchanging information through mass media to large segments of the population (Wikipedia). In this context, mass communication comprises varied channels, from social media to online news portals.

Logically, all Indonesian citizens should be familiar with the public policy. Therefore, obey the rules attached to the program and as a result significantly reduce the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. But the numbers of new COVID-19 cases and deaths makes this logic disputable. Worldometers ranked Indonesia first place in terms of COVID-19 related mortality.

Continent	Country/Other	Total Cases	New Cases	Total Deaths	New Deaths	Total Recovered	New Recovered	Active Cases	Serious/Critical	Tot Cases/1M pop	Deaths/1M pop	Total Tests	Tests/1M pop	Population
World		200,410,709	+174,065	4,262,651	+3,873	180,648,314	+138,588	13,499,744	92,688	25,711	546			
1	Indonesia	3,532,567	+35,867	100,636	+1,747	2,907,920	+34,251	524,011		12,768	364	27,100,348	97,953	276,667,353
2	Russia	6,356,784	+22,589	161,715	+790	5,679,842	+20,096	515,227	2,300	43,539	1,108	166,900,000	1,143,130	146,002,605
3	Mexico	2,880,409	+18,911	241,936	+351	2,257,443	+15,575	381,030	4,798	22,088	1,855	8,549,081	65,558	130,405,138
4	Malaysia	1,183,110	+19,819	9,855	+257	962,733	+12,704	210,522	1,069	36,052	300	18,400,900	360,721	32,816,515
5	Thailand	672,385	+20,200	5,503	+188	455,806	+17,975	211,026	4,910	9,607	79	8,129,670	116,154	69,990,641
6	Kazakhstan	602,952	+7,519	6,277	+124	492,689	+3,554	103,986	221	31,700	330	11,575,012	608,546	19,020,753
7	Philippines	1,619,824	+7,342	28,231	+90	1,528,422	+7,285	63,171	2,026	14,571	254	16,861,421	351,670	111,165,423
8	Honduras	301,700	+1,128	7,962	+60	101,909	+265	191,829	678	29,944	790	890,327	88,364	10,075,630
9	Pakistan	1,047,999	+4,722	23,575	+46	945,829	+1,454	78,595	3,858	4,647	105	16,215,728	71,896	225,545,114
10	Ukraine	2,255,345	+984	53,024	+43	2,188,273	+570	14,048	177	51,910	1,220	11,446,663	263,461	43,447,356
11	Georgia	432,903	+4,233	5,948	+38	390,827	+1,934	36,128		108,747	1,494	8,923,094	1,739,110	3,980,825
12	Bolivia	475,265	+727	17,862	+23	410,833	+1,065	46,550	200	40,120	1,510	2,086,139	176,105	11,845,977
13	Cambodia	79,634	+583	1,488	+17	72,803	+658	5,343		4,693	88	1,823,198	107,435	16,970,283
14	Japan	956,407	+12,076	15,219	+15	852,607	+4,734	88,581	777	7,587	121	18,709,118	148,421	126,054,598

Figure 2. The Number of New COVID-19 Cases and New Related Deaths Worldwide
Source: Worldometers

Indonesia experienced 35,867 new cases and 1,747 new deaths per 4 August 2021, exceeding all other countries globally. Higher education students and lecturers are no exceptions. As part of the community, there have been reports of COVID-19 cases and deaths related to higher education students and lecturers living in numerous cities and regencies, among them in Jakarta, Bekasi, and Depok.

There are a small number of scientific articles about PPKM. Krisdiyanto (2021) found that 98% of the total sample had positive views in relation to PPKM. Rizal et al. (2021) focused on coffee shop owners. Sihombing (2020) state that Covid-19 pandemic caused everyone to behave beyond normal limits as usual. The outbreak of this virus has an impact especially on the economy of a nation and Globally (Ningrum, 2020). The problems posed by the Covid-19 pandemic which have become a global problem have the potential to trigger a new social order or reconstruction (Bara, 2021). These culinary business entrepreneurs were affected by PPKM, which could be seen from reduced sales turnover and difficulties in distribution. Other than that, Yunia et al. (2021) identified an increase of COVID-19 awareness after PPKM that has improved the discipline rate in applying health protocols and a decrease in the level of bed occupancy ratio. In addition, Darmalaksana (2021) established how important family channels are in healing people exposed to COVID-19 during PPKM.

1.1 Problem Formulation

Taking into consideration public information campaign about PPKM via mass communication channels by the government, the following questions arise regarding higher education students and lecturers:

- Have higher education students and lecturers received information related to PPKM via mass communication channels?
- Does the government provide enough information via mass communication that enables students and lecturers to grasp the concept of PPKM?
- What kind of perceptions circulate around higher education students and lecturers regarding PPKM after receiving information from mass communication channels?
- Is PPKM considered the best solution to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic in the eyes of higher education students and lecturers?

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows:

- a. To identify popular mass communication channels among STIAMI students and lecturers that have developed knowledge and awareness about PPKM.
- b. To know the sufficiency level of PPKM exposure from the government via mass communication.
- c. To summarize perceptions related to PPKM among students and lecturers after gaining information via mass communication channels.
- d. To understand the position of PPKM as a solution alternative in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic from students and lecturers perspectives.

II. Research Methods

This research used a qualitative method with a phenomenology approach. Qualitative research provides a mean to understand in-depth meaning of complex phenomenon and its process within social live practices. The research does not use statistic procedure or any other calculation forms (Strauss and Corbin, 2013). It tests and answers questions about how, when, what, where, and why someone is acting a certain way towards a certain issue (Oun and Bach, 2014).

Phenomenology emphasizes a thorough understanding of human experiences. It identifies the essence of experiences within the human's consciousness. As researchers, the study object is examined through constructive observation (Suprayogo, Imam & Tobroni, 2003). Knowledge origins from awareness about a certain object or event (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005); from society, where people have subjective experiences regarding their daily lives.

Hence, this research focused on collecting information about perceptions on Restrictions towards Community Activities (PPKM) from students and lecturers of STIAMI Management and Social Science Institute as part of the academic society who receive public information through mass communication channels. Participants were determined based on purposive sampling.

From a population of 10.000 students and 400 lecturers, 104 students and 26 lecturers aged below 19 to 60 participated as informants. They represent the department of Communication Management, Public Administration, Business Administration, Hospitality and Tourism, and the Logistic Management Department of STIAMI Jakarta, Bekasi, and Depok. Based on occupation, 51.9% of the students are solely studying without involvement in any job, 19.2% of them work in the critical sector (health, security, transportation, distribution etc), 12.5% in essential sector (finance, communication and technology etc), and 16.3% in non essential sector. In terms of lecturers, 38.5% solely work as educators, 3.8% combined their occupation with jobs in the critical sector, 15.4% in the essential sector, and 42.3% in non essential sector.

Moustaka (1994) identified five steps to analyze phenomenology data, namely: 1) Creating a list of answers from participants. Every life experience is treated equally. 2) Informants' expressions are divided into themes. Repetitive and unclear expressions will be reduced and or erased. 3) Creating clusters for consistent themes. 4) Validation of expressions, labeling, and themes. When an information is found to be incompatible with informants' experiences, the expression will be eliminated. 5) Making an Individual Textural Description (ITD) with validated expressions in accordance to themes.

III. Discussion

Based on the research involving students and lecturers from STIAM I Jakarta, Bekasi, and Depok, the results can be read below:

PPKM Information

Questions regarding informants' knowledge about PPKM included: 1) reception of information via mass communication; 2) types of received information; 3) main source of information; 4) selection of mass communication channel as information source; and 5) combination of information. Perceptions of students and lecturers were then clustered in accordance to: 1) positive or negative mindsets about PPKM; 2) information sufficiency via mass communication channels; 3) and PPKM extension.

Classified based on themes, STIAM I students and lecturers expressed the following point of views:

Table 1. Information Reception from Mass Communication

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme	Description
Information reception from mass communication	Received information	Students: Yes (101 expressions, 97.1%) No (3 expressions, 2.9%)
	Never received any information	Lecturers: Yes (25 expressions, 96.2%) No (1 expression, 3.8%)

The majority of STIAM I students and lecturers involved in the research have received some information about PPKM from mass communication channels.

Table 2. Information Content from Mass Communication

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme	Description
Content of information from mass communication	Regulation	Mobility and activity restrictions
	Definition	Meaning behind the term
	Background	Reason and aim
	Work from Home	All sectors, except essentials
	Time	Extended; schedule
	Effectiveness	Questionable result
	Source	President, the government
	Impact	Disadvantage for SMEs
	Name	Constant switch of name

The information revolves around nine subordinate themes, namely regulation, definition, background, work from home, time, effectiveness, source, impact, and switch of names.

Table 3. Mass Communication Channels

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme	Description
Mass communication channels	Main source	Students: Social media: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Youtube (93 expressions, 89.4%)

		Television (6 expressions, 5.8%) Online news portals (5 expressions, 4.8% + additional in others: detik, tempo, folkative, infobekasi, lambe turah, beritabekasi, kompas, kumparan)
		Lecturers: Social media (16 expressions, 61.5%) Television (5 expressions, 19.2%) Online news portals (5 expressions, 19.2%) + additional in others: Babe, kompas, Telegram

Although there are numerous channels available, social media holds the number one spot in terms of knowledge about PPKM, both among students and lecturers.

Television and online news portals are part of the mentioned means, but less significant compared to social media.

Table 4. Social Media Rank

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme	Description
Mass communication channels	Social media rank when considered as main source of information	Students: Rank 1: Instagram (63 exp., 63%) Rank 2: Twitter (22 expressions, 22%) Rank 3: Tiktok (6 expressions, 6%) Rank 4: Youtube (5 expressions, 5%) Rank 5: Facebook (3 expressions, 3%) Rank 6: Whatsapp (1 expression, 1%)
		Lecturers: Rank 1: WA (12 expressions, 54.4%) Rank 2: Instagram (5 exp., 22.7%) Rank 3: Youtube (4 exp., 18.2%) Rank 4: Twitter (1 exp. 4.5%)
	Selection background	Practicality, up-to-date, reliable, comprehensive, familiarity, preference, communication options with others

When social media is ranked based on usage frequency, it becomes interesting to observe how students and lecturers have a slightly different preference. While 63% of students selected Instagram as their main source of information, 54.5% of lecturers chose Whatsapp as their favourite source instead. In this regard, only one student mentioned Whatsapp as the number one social media that provided knowledge about PPKM.

The reason behind the popularity of social media lies in the fact that people found the channel to be practical, easy to access, up-to-date, accurate, comprehensive, familiar, and enables many communication options that other channels do not provide.

Table 5. Amount of Sources

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme	Description
Mass communication channels	Single or multiple sources	Students: Single (8 expressions, 7.7%) Multiple (95 expressions, 92.3%)
		Lecturers: Single (2 expressions, 7.7%) Multiple (24 expressions, 92.3%)

Simply relying on one source of information from mass communication channels is not enough. Students and lecturers had the same amount of percentage (92.3%) when it comes to mass media consumption. They had at least two sources instead of one, where they gained knowledge about PPKM.

Table 6. Amount of Sources

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme	Description
Mass communication channels	Combinations	Combinations of mass communication channels among students: Social media (81 exp., 85.3%), TV (69 exp., 72.6%), Online newsportal (29 exp., 30.5%), podcast (25 expr. 26.3%), radio (4 exp., 4.2%), magazine & newspaper (each 3 exp., 3.2%), film (1 exp., 1.1%); others (4 exp., 4.2%)
		Combination of mass communication channels among lecturers: Social media (20 exp. 76.9%), TV (15 exp., 57.7%), online news portal (11 exp., 42.3%), podcast (4 exp., 15.4%), magazine, newspaper, film (each 1 exp., 3.8%), others (5 exp. 19.2%)
		Combinations of social media among students: Instagram (88, 91.7%), Twitter (54, 56.3%), Youtube (45, 46.9%), Tiktok (34, 35.4%), Facebook (23, 24%), Kaskus (2, 2.1%), Snapchat (1, 1%)
		Combination of social media among lecturers: Whatsapp (80.8%), Facebook (61.5%), Instagram (57.7%), Youtube (53.8%), Twitter (11.5%), Tiktok (3.8%)

More than a half of students and lecturers combined mass communication channels between social media and television. Instagram became the main part of mixture among students, while lecturers preferred to integrate Whatsapp.

Regarding perceptions about PPKM, around 59% of the students considered PPKM positive at first, but then gradually shifted to negative. Half of STIAM I lecturers maintained a positive impression from the beginning until the current PPKM. Only circa 27% of the lecturers turned their point of view into negative. This notion can be observed from the following table:

Table 7. Perceptions about PPKM

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme	Description
Perceptions	Positive or negative	Students: (+ → -) At first positive, but gradually turned negative (59 exp., 59.7%) (+) Always positive (26 exp., 25%) (-) Always negatif (13 exp., 12.5%) (- → +) At first negative, but gradually turned positive (6 expressions, 5.8%)
		Lecturers: (+) 13 expressions, 50% (+ → -) 7 expressions, 26.9% (-) 5 expressions, 19.2% (- → +) 1 expression, 3.8%
	Reasons	Positive reasons: Decrease of COVID-19 cases; well calculated policies; less traffic jams and pollutions; sufficient information; good intent from the government; positive thinking; disciplinary action
		Negative reasons: Economic loss; poverty; sympathy and or emphaty towards others; insignificant positive outcomes or change; rise of new COVID-19 cases; weak implementation; punishment execution; policy confusion, inconsistency; misuse of power; covert interest; personal gains; discrimination; complicated; inconvenience; severe immobility; psychological issues leading to health issues; lack of medicine; lack of synergy between parties; impression of reactive based action; domestic borders strict or shut, while international borders remain open

Students and lecturers shared the same mindset when it comes to the reasons behind their opinions. They found an abundance of negative contributors. Students became skeptical when they didn't see any immediate change after PPKM, whereas half of the lecturers kept a general positive outlook despite voicing concerns and dissatisfaction about the program.

Table 8. Information Sufficiency via Mass Communication

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme	Description
Information sufficiency via mass communication	Sufficient or insufficient	Students: Sufficient (55 exp., 52.9%) Less sufficient (46 exp., 44.2%) Insufficient (3 exp., 2.9%)
		Lecturers: Sufficient (16 exp., 61.5%) Insufficient (10 exp. 38.5%)
	Reasons	(+) Enough information from varied mass communication channels; the government uses multiple platforms; regular updates; faith towards the gov. (+/-) Sudden change of policy; unclear instructions; less educated officials; lack of telecommunication infrastructure; unwritten sanctions; gap between news and reality (-) Confusion regarding medication and policies; high number of hoax cases; conflicting information; many citizens are unaware of PPKM

Based on Table 8, more than a half of both students and lecturers at STIAM I believed that they have received sufficient information about PPKM via mass communication. Besides the variety of mass communication channels, the government was found proactive in using multiple platforms to keep Indonesian citizens everywhere up-to-date. The informants, however, saw a flaw in the policymaking process and execution. This was coupled by a lack of infrastructure, not to mention a gap between news and reality. As a result, hoax cases rose and people became confused by conflicting information.

Table 9. Information Sufficiency via Mass Communication

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme	Description
PPKM extension	Support or not support	Students: Support (62 expressions, 59.6%) Not support (42 expressions, 40.4%) Lecturers: Support (18 expressions, 62.9%) Not support (8 expressions, 30.8%)
	Reasons	(+) Support: < 50% are vaccinated; rise of COVID-19 cases; based on research and evaluations; positive results (+/-) Support / Not Support: Depending on COVID-19 cases (-) Not Support: Ineffective; burdensome, especially for underprivileged people and SMEs; paralyze the economy; long enough; insufficient support for people's daily

		lives; COVID-19 cases maintain high; imbalance with providing needed medical supplies; social aid corruption
	Continue or not in the future	(+) Continue: Best solution to deflate the pandemic Ongoing unstable condition; health threat; for the greater good
		(+/-) When continued, the government must guarantee economy and social aid for all citizens in need; appropriate funding; equality in front of the law; acceleration of public knowledge and obedience, including authorities; open alternative jobs; better tracking and evaluation system; different policies between regions; no power to reject, unheard aspirations
		(-) Economic and social crisis; possibility to trigger demonstrations, looting, and or chaos; separated from loved ones; proven ineffective. Instead of PPKM, accelerate the vaccination program, implement a certain period of total lockdown, execute strict regulations with firm health protocol and sanctions for all, including rules about the domestic and international borders.

In the end, 59.6% of the students and 62.9% of the lecturers stated that they will support the government if the government decided to extend PPKM. The main reasons are among others published researches, positive results from the program, and the opposite: a rise of COVID-19 cases. For the time being, PPKM was considered adequate to deflate the pandemic. But, there is a major side note: The government must guarantee the welfare of the people, implement equality in front of the law, and accelerate public awareness and obedience.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, the following conclusions can be obtained:

1. Most students and lecturers of STIAMI Jakarta, Bekasi, and Depok have received information about PPKM from mass communication channels.
2. The content of information regarding PPKM are multifold, from regulations, background, definition, work from home, time, effectiveness, source, impact, to switch of names.
3. The main source of information from mass communication channels based on rank origins from: 1) social media, 2) television, and 3) online news portals.
4. The reason behind the use of mass communication channel or channels: Practicality, easy access, up-to-date, reliability, comprehensiveness, and familiarity or preference.

5. Most students and lecturers combined their knowledge about PPKM from varied mass communication channels and varied social media.
6. More than half of STIAMI students and lecturers tend to have a positive point of view towards PPKM, but their perceptions gradually change into negative because of dissatisfaction towards the outcomes.
7. In terms of information sufficiency via mass communication, more than half believed the government has provided sufficient information.
8. Despite having doubts and criticism towards the outcomes, 60% and up will still support PPKM if the government decides to extend it in the future but with certain notes related to the Indonesian citizen's welfare.

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