

## COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MOVEMENT CONTROL ORDER (MCO) IN KOTA KINABALU CITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is related to the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO) in the city of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. The MCO was a preventive measure implemented by the Federal government of Malaysia against the spread of COVID-19 disease which came into force on 18 March 2020. However, the MCO had several levels and is implemented according to each state's operating procedures. Among the prohibitions involving the implementation of the MCO were the ban on movement and assembly throughout the country, travel restrictions within and outside the country, the closure of educational institutes, the closure of government and private premises, especially those that were not essential services or the necessary services sector. The implementation of MCO occurred not only in Sabah but also globally. MCOs which were too long and protracted caused the global community to experience problems. Therefore, this study wants to see how communities in Kota Kinabalu accepted the MCO and whether they were also affected by the MCO. The research method used in this study was a mix-method that included reference to several previous studies, newspaper clippings as well as, media reports and distribution of questionnaires. The questionnaire was randomly distributed to the community around the city of Kota Kinabalu. The findings of the study show that the acceptance of the Kota Kinabalu community regarding MCO was at a good level but some were less satisfied. This is because the implementation of MCO was too long and had disrupted the economic and social activities of the population. In addition, public opinion throughout the MCO was also affected.

**Keywords:** Community acceptance, MCO, Kota Kinabalu, Pandemic, COVID-19

### INTRODUCTION

Coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus to cause coronavirus disease is COVID-19. COVID-19 is the most recently discovered infectious disease caused by the coronavirus. These new viruses and diseases were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China in December 2019 (World Health Organization). The preventive measures implemented by the Malaysian government are by implementing the Movement Control Order (MCO) and the Enhanced Movement Control Order (EMCO)The Movement Control Order

(MCO) was announced by the then Prime Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin bin Haji Muhammad Yassin on 16 March 2020 and the order came into effect from 18 to 31 March 2020. When this first announcement was made, Malaysia had not recorded any deaths due to COVID -19. The period was then extended until April 14, 2020 as announced by the Prime Minister on March 25, 2020 (Sinar Harian Online).

The Movement Control Order (MCO) has been issued by the National Security Council (NSC). NSC is a leading agency that coordinates security-related policies since its inception in 1971. The source of authority to NSC is NSC Instruction No. 1 which is based on the Emergency (Essential Powers) Act 1979 which clarifies the formation and responsibilities of the National Security Council. Basically, the NSC is responsible for coordinating policies related to national security and the direction of security matters. These security structures and mechanisms are also applied at the state, district and village levels (National Security Council, History). The Movement Control Order is based on the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 and the Police Act 1967. This order was in force from 18 to 31 March 2020 which applied throughout Malaysia (Office of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Movement Control Order). It was extended until April 14, 2020 as announced by the Prime Minister on March 25, 2020 (Harian Metro). The then Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said, the extension of the period was decided due to new positive trends expected to continue (Sinar Harian Online). Part III of Prevention of Infectious Disease Entry, Section 6 (3) Declaration of Infectious Areas states:

"(3) The Minister may, by regulations made under this Act, prescribe the measures to be taken to prevent the entry of any infectious disease from an infected area"

The purpose of the Movement Control Order was to curb the spread of COVID-19 epidemic in Malaysia, by controlling the movement of the community to stop the spread of COVID-19 epidemic. This article will discuss the acceptance of the people of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah towards the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO).

## **OBJECTIVE**

The objectives of this study are:

- i. To examine the community's reaction to the implementation of COVID-19 MCO security measures in the city of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.
- ii. To identify the pattern of community reaction to the implementation of COVID-19 MCO security measures in the city of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used in this study was a mix-method method that included the library method and the distribution of questionnaires. A library method reviews a finding and method in a topic. The literature review involves the findings of secondary sources such as references to

previous studies, books, journal writing, newspaper clippings and media statements. In this study the library method is through the findings of articles, journals, media releases and official government websites. While the distribution of questionnaires was for obtaining quantitative data using 300 distributions of questionnaires in the city of Kota Kinabalu which uses closed questions, 'yes' and 'no' as well as a Likert scale.

The researcher used a questionnaire instrument by interviewing respondents from the community in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. In the questionnaire of this study will be divided into four parts, namely part (a) respondent information. Part (b) community reaction to the implementation of COVID-19 MCO security measures in Tawau city. Part (c) identifies the community's reaction to the level of effectiveness of information dissemination on the implementation of COVID-19 MCO security measures in the city of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. Upon completion of data collection, data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) software and displayed in percentage form using tables and graphs.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the article "COVID-19 Pandemic: Effectiveness of Information Dissemination by the Government and People's Compliance with Movement Control Order (MCO)" which was studied using quantitative methods through the distribution of questionnaires in the form of google forms distributed to 1211 members of the public throughout Malaysia found that the Malaysian government has been successful in disseminating and disseminating information related to the MCO. Similarly, this study also found that the level of public awareness about the importance of the implementation of MCO- Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) in controlling the spread of COVID-19 was at a good level. The government has implemented various strategies including through media dissemination and communication in an effort to the spread of this epidemic. Both media are used to deliver accurate and up-to-date information to increase the knowledge, understanding and confidence of the community to comply with every SOP outlined by the government. The findings of the study show that there were three questions related to the people's compliance with MCO raised, namely the level of public awareness on the importance of MCO implementation, the need to fully comply with MCO and punishments and fines imposed on MCO violators are appropriate. Of the three variables choose agree and strongly agree were the majority's choice.

Azlina and Nurhafizah (2020) in their study titled "Cashless purchase practices among the public during the COVID-19 MCO period". Stated the pandemic has implications in human life from the economic, political and social aspects. This global health issue is a concern in the public in carrying out the purchase of goods and services using cash. This is because cash is the easiest agent for the spread of the COVID-19 virus through contact. The practice of cashless purchases in the general public in Malaysia is one of the safest initiatives during the Movement Control Order

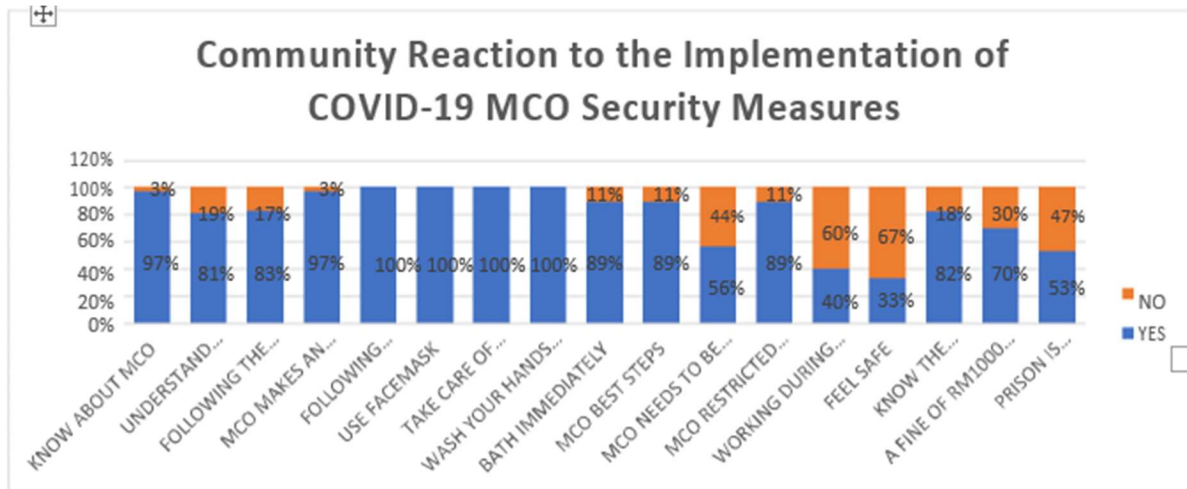
(MCO) period to procure goods and services. This change in purchasing practices led to the creation of new norms in ensuring that the spread of this pandemic could be curbed at an early stage. This study uses quantitative methods while the sampling used is was random sampling.

Their data analysis used descriptive techniques to determine the results of the study based on frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The results of the study found that 94.0% of the respondents admitted to having used the cashless purchase method during the period of the Covid-19 Movement Control Order (MCO). The implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO) has made the public more sensitive to the practice of cashless purchases due to safety, convenience, health, time and cost factors. Overall, the practice of cashless purchases also encourages society towards a cashless and digital society in the future. Despite the various challenges faced by respondents in cashless purchases yet the practice of cashless purchases is undeniably important and highly relevant during the Covid-19 Movement Control Order.

**FINDINGS**

**COMMUNITY REACTION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COVID-19 MCO SAFETY MEASURES**

**Figure 1: Community Reaction to the Implementation of COVID-19 MCO Security Measures**



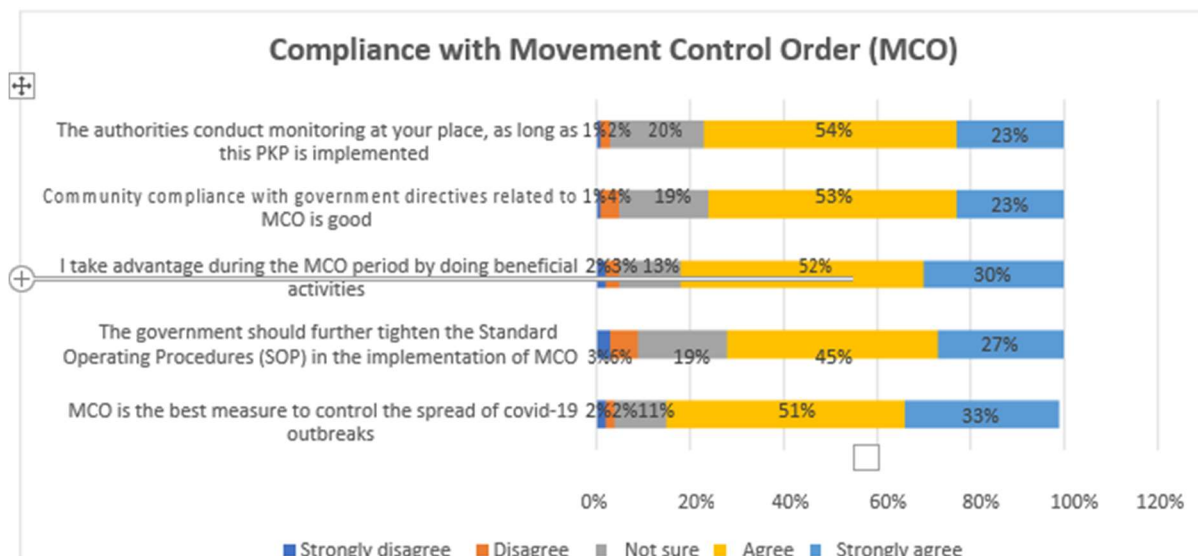
**Source: Field study grant SDK0219-2020**

Figure 1 is a diagram related to the community's reaction to the implementation of COVID-19 MCO security measures. On the part of knowledge on the security measures of the Movement Control Order (MCO) carried out by the government in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, showed that 97% of the respondents chose to know about the implementation of the MCO while only 3%

chose not to know. Second, it is related to the statement on the understanding of the form of

Movement Control Order (MCO) that has been outlined by the government showed that 81% of respondents chose ‘yes’ while only 19% chose ‘no’. 83% chose ‘yes’ followed by 17% chose ‘no’ of respondents who chose to follow the development of information on the movement control orders (MCO). Next on the statement related to whether the Movement Control Order (MCO) directly affects the respondents showed that 97% chose ‘yes’ that they were also affected and only in a small quantity were not directly affected which is only 3%. While for the four variables, namely following the instructions issued by the government related to the Movement Control Order (MCO), using a facemask, maintaining social or physical imprisonment during COVID-19 hit the country and frequent hand washing as recommended by the respective governments is 100% the respondent stated ‘yes’ to the statement. Then, on the part of whether the respondents will take a shower immediately after returning from the city or leaving the house, 89% respondents chose ‘yes’ and 11% chose ‘no’. While the statement section on whether MCO was the best measure to reduce COVID-19, again 89% chose ‘yes’ while the remaining 11% chose ‘no’. Interestingly, the 89% respondents felt that the Movement Control Order made it difficult for the people in terms of freedom to carry out daily activities and also find a source of livelihood chose ‘yes’ by 89% and chose ‘no’ only 11%. Next, the respondents who worked during MCO were 40% while 60% chose not to work. Respondents who felt safe from the threat of covid-19 to go to work voted 33% for ‘yes’ and the remaining 67% voted ‘no’ safe. While the statement about the respondents knowing about the action for those who violated the movement control order showed that 82% marked ‘yes’ while only 18% marked ‘no’. Apart from that, the statement on whether the respondents felt that the RM1000 fine imposed commensurate with the offense of violating the MCO showed that 70% voted yes while 30% voted ‘no’. Finally, the statement regarding the imprisonment imposed on offenders was appropriate, with 53% voting yes and 47% feeling inappropriate.

**PATTERN OF COMMUNITY REACTION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION COVID-19 MCO SAFETY MEASURES**



**Figure 2: Compliance with Movement Control Order (MCO)**

Source: Field study grant SDK0219-2020

Figure 2 above shows the community reaction pattern in terms of compliance with the implementation COVID-19 MCO safety measures. For the questionnaire item, MCO is the best measure to control the spread of COVID-19 epidemic showed the highest choice of respondents is 'agree' which is 51%, the second 'strongly agree' which is 33%, followed by 'not sure' 11%, 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' at 2%, respectively. This is because the respondents feel that MCO is the best step in controlling the spread of COVID-19 if seen during the implementation of MCO in the initial phase there is still spread control but only after the SOP is relaxed then there is an increase.

Next, the government should tighten the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) in the implementation of PKP, as many as 45% of respondents chose 'agree', 27% in the 'strongly agree', 'not sure' 19%, followed by 'disagree' 6% and 'strongly disagree' only 3%. Therefore, this proves that the community still hopes that the SOP will be tightened again to control the spread of COVID-19 disease.

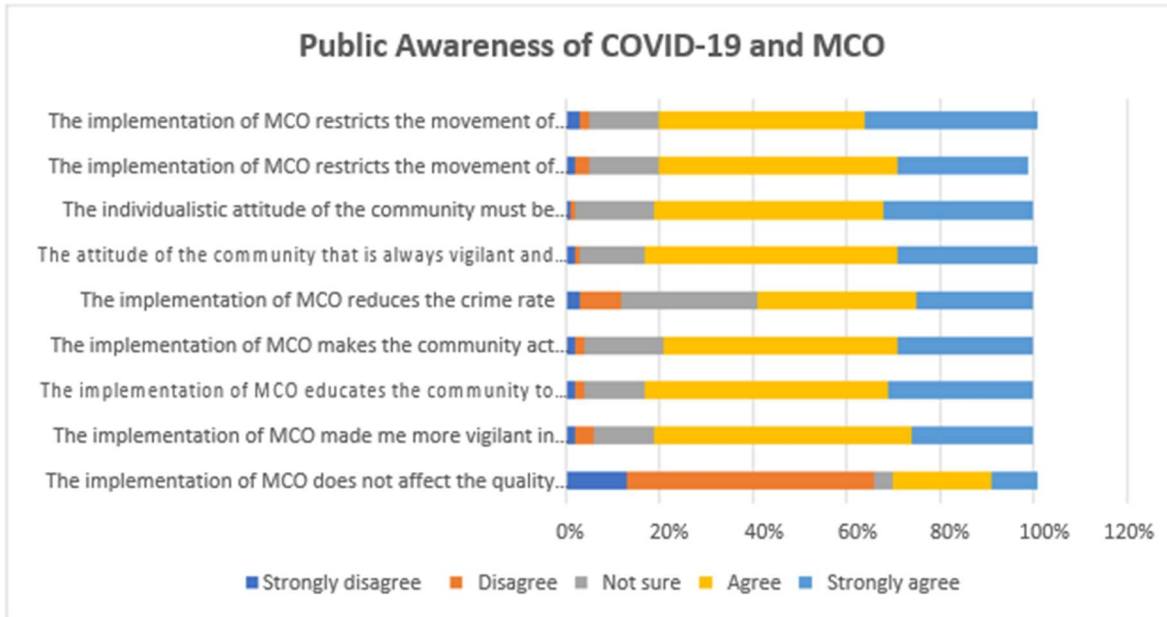
In addition, the statement about respondents benefiting during the implementation of MCO that is by doing beneficial activities showed the highest choice of 'agree' 52%, the second 'strongly agree' 27% and followed by 'not sure' 13%, the least 'strongly disagree' 2% and 'disagree' 3%. Therefore, this proves that the community still performs beneficial activities during the MCO

such as gathering with family members who live in the same house even though the MCO restricts the movement of people.

The reaction pattern on the community's compliance with government directives related to MCO is good. Respondents 'agree' chose this statement which is 52%, followed by 'strongly agree' 23%, while 'not sure' 19% while 'disagree' 4% and only 1% chose 'strongly disagree'. This situation shows that the people of Kota Kinabalu are still obedient to the government's instructions even though there are still those who violate the instructions to be imposed certain compounds for disobeying the government's instructions.

Furthermore, the statement on the community's reaction to the role of the authorities in monitoring the respondents' residence during the MCO showed the highest 'agree' result of 54%, followed by 'strongly agree' 23%, while respondents who chose 'not sure' 20% and the remaining 5% 'disagree' and only 1% 'strongly disagree'.

### **Figure 3: Public Awareness of COVID-19 and MCO**



Source: Field study grant SDK0219-2020

Figure 3 above is related to the community pattern of community awareness of COVID-19 and MCO. First, the implementation of MCO did not affect the quality of life of the community, respondents chose 'disagree' with this statement which is 53%, followed by 'agree' 21%, 'strongly agree' 10%, while 'not sure' 4% and only 1 % 'strongly disagree'. MCO had indeed affected the quality of life of the community so that the level of unemployment increases as a result of layoffs and the dumping of graduates who are unable to work due to the emergence of the COVID-19 epidemic (Berita Harian Online, 27 June 2020)

Second, on the implementation of MCO makes respondents more vigilant in maintaining health. The highest choice showed respondents agree by 55%, the second 'strongly agree' 26%, while "not sure" 13% followed by 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' at 4% and 2% respectively. Respondents agreed that MCO did cause them to always take care of their health to avoid infection.

Third is the implementation of MCO to educate the community to be more disciplined, respondents chose 'agree' by 52%, followed by 'strongly agree' 31%, 'not sure' 13% while 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' 2% respectively.

The fourth implementation of MCO makes the community act in accordance with the law outlined showing as many as 50% of respondents agree, the second strongly agree 31%, followed by uncertain 13%, and disagree, strongly disagree each at a rate of only 2%.

Then, the implementation of MCO reduced the crime rate, the data showed 34% 'agree',

'strongly agree' 25%, followed by 'not sure' 17% while 2% on 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' options. This situation shows that the respondents felt that throughout the MCO, criminal cases were successfully reduced due to the presence of authorities on duty which caused criminals not to dare to commit crimes. Suhaila and Ishak (2021) in their study discussed that MCO caused the crime index rate to decrease significantly by 50%.

A pattern of community attitudes that are always vigilant and careful in any situation can reduce the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic. A total of 54% of respondents chose 'agree', followed by 'strongly agree' 30%, while 'not sure' 14%, 'strongly disagree' option 2% and only 1% 'disagree' with this.

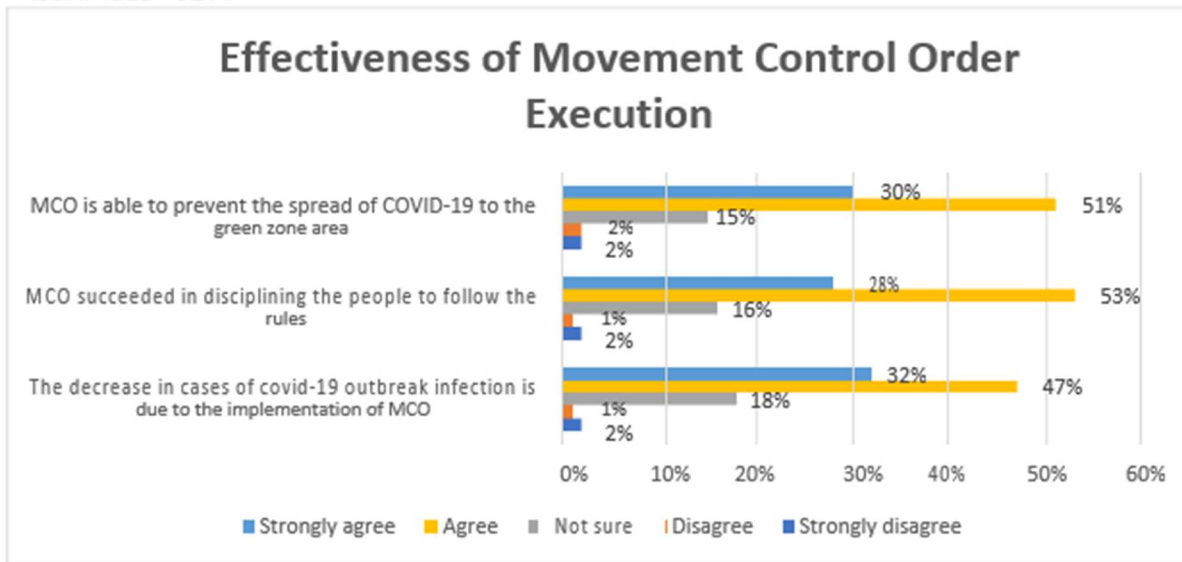
Then, the individualistic attitude of the community must be eradicated to deal with the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic. A total of 49% of respondents agreed with this statement, followed by 'strongly agree' at 32%, followed by 'not sure' 17% and also 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' only 1%. During the implementation of the MCO, many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) went to the field to help the community to reduce the burden. (My Metro, July 7, 2021)

Statement on the implementation of MCO restricts the movement of people to carry out daily activities, respondents chose 51% to 'agree' with this statement, followed by 'strongly agree' 28%, then 'not sure' 15% while 'disagree' 3% and 'strongly disagree' agree '2% only. This situation proves that the MCO had indeed restricted the movement of the people.

Finally, the questionnaire item the implementation of MCO restricts the movement of the people to find sources of livelihood received 44% 'agree' followed by 37% 'strongly agree', 15% 'not sure', 2% 'disagree' and 3% 'strongly disagree'. The majority response of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' could be understood as during the implementation of MCO, residents were prevented from going to work.

#### **Figure 4: Effectiveness of Movement Control Order Execution**





Source: Field study grant SDK0219-2020

Figure 4 above is an evaluation of the reaction pattern of effectiveness to the implementation of MCO. The first part describes the decrease in cases of COVID-19 outbreak infection is due to the implementation of the MCO. The results showed that 47% of the respondents chose 'agree', followed by 'strongly agree' at 32%, while 'not sure' 18%, 'disagree' 2% and 'strongly disagree' only 3%.

We can see that MCO was able to disciplined the people to follow the rules, showing that 53% voted 'agree', the second 'strongly agree' 28% followed by 'not sure' 16% while 'disagree' 1% and 'strongly disagree' at 2% only.

Finally, for the item MCO statement is able to prevent the spread of COVID-19 from the green zone received 51% 'agree', followed by 30% 'strongly agree', 15% 'not sure', and 2% each for the the options 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' each.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the government's action in implementing the Movement Control Order (MCO) was a step that could be accepted by the public. However, there is no denying that there were cases where there were individuals who violated the instructions of the authorities so fines are imposed. In addition, viewed from the chronology of the implementation of the MCO the Malaysia, there are both positive and negative effects on the public and the country. This is because in the initial phase of the implementation of the MCO, infection cases showed a decrease on the number of cases. However, when the MCO was relaxed, the number of positive cases increased. Therefore, the role of the public is also important in providing cooperation to the government to control the spread of the disease.

## APPRECIATION

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