

**Research article**

# Group Communication for Raising Public Awareness on COVID-19

Ana Kuswanti, Aan Setiadarma, and Siti Maryam

Veterans National Development University, Jakarta, Indonesia

**ORCID**

Ana Kuswanti: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2543-4596>

**Abstract.**

The growing pandemic of COVID-19 demands public awareness across the globe for people's health and safety. Accordingly, the government of Indonesia has implemented the PSBB, PPKM, and mandatory vaccination policies. The current study used a descriptive and quantitative approach employing surveys and questionnaires as the main data collection tools. The research was conducted on a group of traders at Pondok Labu Market, South Jakarta, which consisted of five trade groups – clothes, fruit, grocery, vegetables, and gold. Of them, 94 respondents were selected as the study sample. Freire's theory of consciousness and bona fide group theory were followed. The results indicated that by implementing health protocols, awareness continued to process, develop, and expand from the level of "naive awareness" and "critical awareness" to the highest level of "awareness." The limitations noted were the lack of handwashing facilities and hand sanitizers provided to the traders. Although the implementation of PSBB and PPKM has affected the overall business of the traders, they continue to comply with the government protocols.

**Keywords:** public awareness, group communication, spread of COVID-19

Corresponding Author: Ana  
 Kuswanti; email:  
[anakuswanti@upnvj.ac.id](mailto:anakuswanti@upnvj.ac.id)

**Published:** 01 August 2022

Publishing services provided by  
 Knowledge E

© Ana Kuswanti et al. This  
 article is distributed under the  
 terms of the [Creative Commons  
 Attribution License](#), which  
 permits unrestricted use and  
 redistribution provided that the  
 original author and source are  
 credited.

Selection and Peer-review under  
 the responsibility of the  
 VCOSPILED 2021 Conference  
 Committee.

## 1. Introduction

Human life is closely related to communication, and technology helps speed up the flow of information. The massive spread of information in the media in 2020 related to *the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)*. The Corona Virus, originated from the city of Wuhan, in mainland China, Covid-19 spreads a real threat to life. The implications of the Covid-19 pandemic are that it spreads quickly, causes respiratory infections in the lungs (pneumonia), and death of victims exposed to this virus. Its emergence forms a new civilization that forces with all changes in the order of life and behavior for the wider community. The Corona virus spreads quickly and has spread to other regions in China and to several countries in the world, including Indonesia.


**OPEN ACCESS**

The people of countries in the world began to feel panic. The unstoppable flood of information adds to the great concern. The Indonesian government is taking steps related to the Corona virus (COVID-19) case. The step with the issuance of Presidential Decree (Keppres) Number 7 of 2020 concerning the Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling the Corona Virus which is under and responsible to the president[1]. The formation of the Task Force is expected to assist the President in overcoming the transmission of COVID-19 in Indonesia, which requires fast, precise, focused, integrated, and synergistic handling between ministries/agencies and local governments. The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemkes) is one of the members of the Task Force who plays an important role in leading this task.

The global spread of COVID-19 has infected 216 countries around the world. Based on data from the WHO(World Health Organization), updated as of August 2, 2020 there were 17,660,523 people positively confirmed COVID-19 worldwide, and there are as many as 680 894 deaths of people. WHO officially on March 9, 2020 declared the Corona Virus (COVID-19) a pandemic. Conditions in Indonesia from the Covid19.go.id website, the total number of Covid-19 cases or positive corona cases in Indonesia as of Friday afternoon, January 22, 2021, reached 965,283 people.

Changes in the order of life require the central and regional governments to pay particular attention to economic, educational and social issues. Communication is used to overcome barriers to social change. Changes in environmental arrangements related to policies, namely the existence of health protocols, resources, regulations, in implementing social change. Availability of health systems and services. It is important for each individual to have adequate knowledge, related to changes in the order of life in society. The government has made an understanding to the public, regarding perceptions, attitudes towards risks, causes, symptoms, prevention of Covid-19 transmission.

The government has imposed Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB). Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) to the Enforcement of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM). The implementation of PPKM in Java-Bali, Micro PPKM, Emergency PPKM to PPKM level 4-3. Level 4-3 is the fifth change in terms during the COVID-19 pandemic. Enforcement starts from the term Work From Home (WFH), to Work at home (Bdr), to Work in the office (Bdk).

Mobility restrictions are carried out by the government in order to keep the spread of COVID-19 in a more structured manner accompanied by certain actions for those who violate it. *The new normal order is a government policy in an effort to sustain community activities that are safe from the spread of COVID-19, the community is required to comply with health protocols in carrying out social life. The implication is*

*the demand for the community to change the pattern of interaction in social life that has existed so far. This turned out to have an impact on the massive spread of COVID-19.*

These steps have not been able to stop the spread of COVID-19 so that the implementation of the Community Activity Restriction (PKM) is implemented for 14 days from 9 to 22 February 2021. Breakthrough strengthening by the government for the community by strengthening capacity with community involvement through Communication, Information, and Education (KIE). The health information system and control are facilitated by the government, with the hope that health protocols can prevent the expansion of the spread of COVID-19.

The realization of the regulations made by the government requires public awareness in the new order of life by wearing a mask (your mask protects me and my mask protects you), awareness *Stay at home* (don't leave the house unless there is an urgent need), Cough and sneeze etiquette (cover with elbows), keep a distance from others, worship at home, wash hands with soap and running water. Doing friendship by utilizing technology media (Chat using whatsapp, videocall). Awareness of the importance of maintaining nutrition by eating enough healthy food, getting enough exercise, getting enough rest (maintaining immunity, faith, and safety).

These conditions require a high level of awareness both from individuals, families, groups, and the wider social community to be able to take care of each other, refrain from actions that can trigger the spread of COVID-19. Anxiety is not enough just as a consumption of media coverage, but requires a solution. Giving sanctions to violators of health protocols is also not a *punishment* that can increase public awareness.

This condition has an impact on the group's activities at the Pondok Labu market, South Jakarta. cycle *Entrepreneurship* where traders practice buying and selling directly in interacting, and in normal circumstances conducting group interactions during social gathering with face-to-face communication, as well as group whatsapps. Of course, they cannot stop these activities immediately, because the practice of buying and selling is an attempt to earn income to meet their daily needs. Based on the description above, the researcher intends to study more deeply about group communication in increasing public awareness of the spread of covid-19 in the group of traders at Pondok Labu Market, South Jakarta.

## 2. Methods

This research uses a quantitative approach with descriptive research type. This type of research aims to describe systematically, factually and accurately about the facts and

characteristics of a particular population or object[2]. The population in this study was a group of traders at Pondok Labu Market from 5 groups of traders (traders of clothes, fruit, grocery, vegetables, gold), and a total of 94 respondents.

Sugiyono[3] states that: " *Sampling* technique is a sampling technique." The sampling method applied in this research is *Total Sampling*. The survey research design uses research methods by testing research hypotheses, in order to explain the relationship between variables. Information was collected from respondents by using a questionnaire. The researcher designed the research as a survey by combining *explanatory research* with *descriptive research*. The steps in data collection are questionnaires, field observations, and journal literature, as well as books.

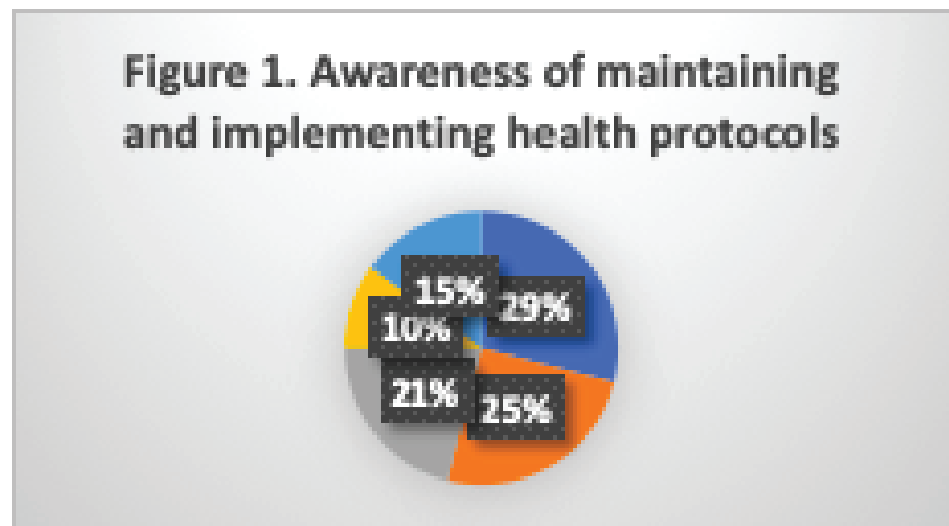
### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. The Role of Groups in Raising Awareness

Trader group communication is associated with market management officials, and administratively carried out by Pondok Labu Market management themselves. The head of the market provides motivation on how to act, and think appropriately so that traders personally have awareness in maintaining and implementing health protocols as enforced by local governments through policies and regulations.

The implementation of safe distancing, wearing masks, washing hands, and all the attributes that accompany the health protocols by some traders are carried out with full awareness. The market management has appealed and implemented it well, but this cannot be realized properly without the cooperation of all traders in the market. Therefore, through clear emphasis, market administrators continuously raise awareness of the reality that there is currently a COVID-19 pandemic that needs to be watched out for transmission.

Awareness of maintaining and implementing health protocols is shown in Figure 1. Awareness of wearing masks as much as 25%, washing hands 25%, using hand sanitizer 21%, maintaining a safe distance of 10%, and maintaining immunity by taking vitamins as much as 15%. Based on the survey in the field, it is related to information regarding the implementation of PSBB, PPKM, and mandatory vaccination, so that they are protected from COVID-19 transmission. They also stated that taking vitamins is enough to increase their immunity and stamina as a form of caring, but there are still some traders who use masks incorrectly (not covering their nose and mouth, some only covering their mouths, and some only covering their chins).



**Figure 1:** Awareness of maintaining and Implementing health protocols.

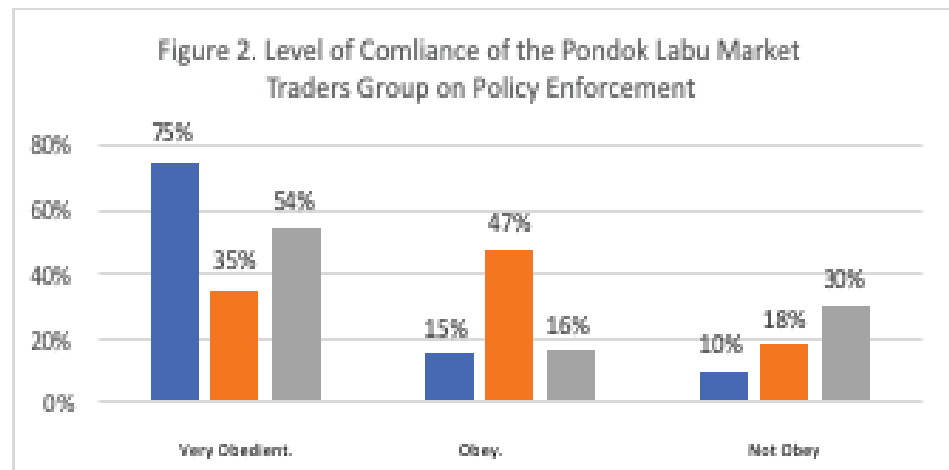
The problems that occur in the group of traders at Pondok Labu Market are relevant to the theory of the group *Bonafide*[4], where individuals, groups, and the environment are closely related, cannot be separated. The condition of individual traders is strongly influenced by the environmental conditions of the community in the market, where the government imposes PSBB, and PPKM, which has an impact on their daily activities as entrepreneurs. Overall, the economy of the merchant group at Pondok Labu Market almost paralyzed because they had to obey the regulations imposed by the government.

Elements of the existence of the environment, groups, access to information are *inputs* in the activities of the Pondok Labu Market Traders group. Sustainability of activities cannot be separated from these elements. The form of trading activities, buying and selling, communication between traders and traders, traders and buyers, cannot be separated from the joint role (group members, market administrators, the roles of market heads, traders, and buyers) in the buying and selling process and communication with members of the Merchants group. Pumpkin Hut Market.

### 3.2. The role of the group in fostering compliance

The element of obedience is attempted by the components involved in the buying and selling process. Socialization of government regulations related to PSBB and PPKM is carried out by market officials, sometimes through loudspeakers. The group communication at Pondok Labu Market is quite good in every element, they synergistically carry out intense communication either through social gathering groups, or whatsapp

groups, as a unified group of traders. The results show that traders always try to obey the rules that have been socialized. The results are shown in Figure 2 as follows:



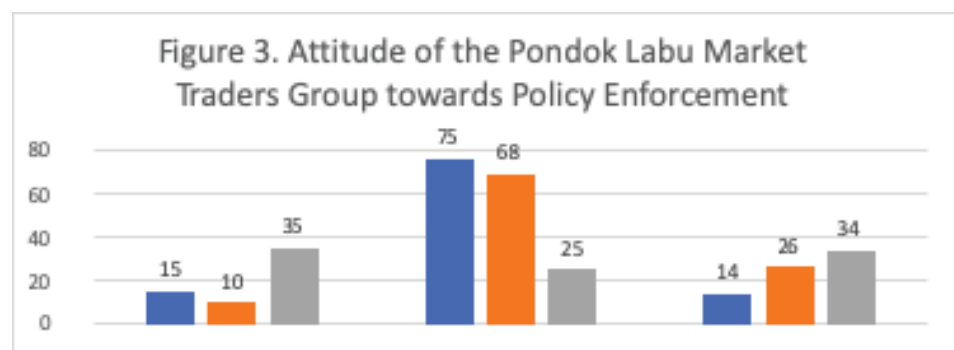
**Figure 2:** The level of compliance of the Pondok Labu market group with the implementation of the policy.

Based on the results of the data obtained, there are 75% of traders who strongly adhere to wearing masks, 47% obey by keeping a distance, and 30% do not comply with vaccination. The traders basically comply with the health protocols imposed by the government. Shows that the traders at Pondok Labu Market strongly agree to comply with the health protocols made by the government.

Based on the survey results of a group of traders at Pondok Labu Market, there are still 35% of traders who are very obedient to keeping their distance with a value of 35%. Obedient 47%, and disobedient keep a distance of 18%. The results also show that traders are very compliant with vaccination 54%, 16% obedient to vaccination, and 30% non-adherent. Based on the survey, there is non-compliance in using masks, for example, one fruit seller, he does use masks, but the method of using them is not appropriate. He wears a mask just under his chin and does not cover his mouth and nose. Indeed, some traders comply with the health protocols (prokes) well, but there are also some traders who still do not comply with the health protocols.

Based on Freire's[5] theory of awareness, to raise awareness requires a process in its implementation. Consciousness will continue to process, develop and expand, from one stage to the next, from the level of "naive consciousness" to "critical consciousness", until it finally reaches the highest and deepest level of consciousness, namely "consciousness". The reality is that at Pondok Labu Market, the awareness process in maintaining the health process goes better in daily life after the PSBB, and PPKM and zone treatment on environmental restrictions that are imposed, the traders have grown awareness to take care of the health program properly.

The results of the survey related to attitudes towards the implementation of PSBB, PPKM, and vaccination, the answers varied. Some traders do not agree with the implementation of the PSBB 75%, do not agree with PPKM 68%, and do not agree with 25% vaccination. The reason the answer is not agree is because they feel that this is very detrimental to them as traders, cannot sell, and automatically does not earn income. The attitude of agreeing to vaccination is 35%, PSBB is 15% and PPKM is 10%. The neutral opinion of the traders towards PSBB is 14%, PPKM is 26%, and vaccination is 34%. In principle, the traders obey the Prokes, and want to be vaccinated, although when asked about their attitude, many do not agree with the implementation of government policies. Presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** The attitude of the Pondok Labu market trader group towards the implementation of the policy.

Several regulations and policies made by the government have an economic impact on traders in traditional markets, especially traders at Pondok Labu Market, South Jakarta. Several restrictions on activities during the COVID-19 pandemic have implications for decreasing income for traders.

Traders complained about the implementation of PSBB and PPKM. They argue that by keeping Prokes done well, they reduce the chances of getting infected, without having to stop trading activities, which results in a decrease in income, as it is their only livelihood.

The policy of limiting crowds at Pondok Labu Market is a concern for traders, there is a decrease in the number of buyers, and if they do not sell, there will be no other income for their economy. Instead, they prefer to keep selling even though there are cases of COVID-19 at Pondok Labu Market, to continue to support their respective families. The reality is that when PSBB and PPKM were implemented, traders at Pondok Labu Market had to take a break from selling for several weeks and even almost a month when the COVID-19 pandemic hit this country.

Based on the existing realities, over time, the implementation of PSBB, PPKM, is not too strict, so that they can still carry out trading activities, and have income as income

to support their families. Worries about not getting income, can threaten to run out of business capital for daily living expenses, and can go out of business with the business they have.

## 4. Discussion

Efforts to increase awareness of maintaining and implementing health protocols carried out by Pondok Labu market administrators are carried out in synergy with traders. An appeal was also made to buyers to maintain their health to avoid the transmission of COVID-19. The reality is that it is not as easy as a string of words that are called out.

The application of health protocols to make it easier to realize, the basic thing is to start by getting used to living healthy from the smallest social element, namely in the family. If the family has properly implemented the health protocol by wearing a mask when leaving the house, washing hands using soap and running water, using a hand sanitizer when handling something public facilities, maintaining a safe distance in public places, and getting used to maintaining body immunity by drinking vitamin. According to Setyoningsih[6], one of the efforts to maintain the body's immunity by giving oral or intravenous Vitamin C, D, and Zinc can reduce the increased risk of complications, reduce severity, overcome symptoms, and increase body immunity.

This implementation is in line with the opinion tukan[7] that there are still "bad" people, those who are stubborn need to be given special understanding about COVID-19. Both from the method of transmission, how to avoid transmission, the impact and dangers caused, as well as the great risk that can lead to death. Providing understanding and awareness, especially for stubborn people who don't feel at home at home and still travel outside the house without wearing a mask, which poses a risk of infecting others. Postponing not leaving the house in order to reduce interaction with other people. If you are forced to leave the house, apply health protocols by maintaining distance, washing hands regularly, and using masks.

Implementation and the reality of implementing health protocols still need to be considered, the prevention phase, detection phase and response phase are in line with[8]. It was also explained by Buana[9] that health protocols must be applied during the pandemic. It is important to carry out naive and critical awareness for all members of the merchant group at the Pondok Labu market. Paulo Freire[5] places critical awareness as the pinnacle of human consciousness, above the other two consciousnesses, namely magical consciousness and naive consciousness.



Magical *consciousness*, which is a public awareness that is unable to know the relationship between one factor and another. Magical awareness sees factors outside of humans (natural and supernatural) as causes and helplessness. Humans simply do not have the power to make choices and make endeavors (efforts). Humans in their lives, have absolutely no choice, except to surrender to what is destined.

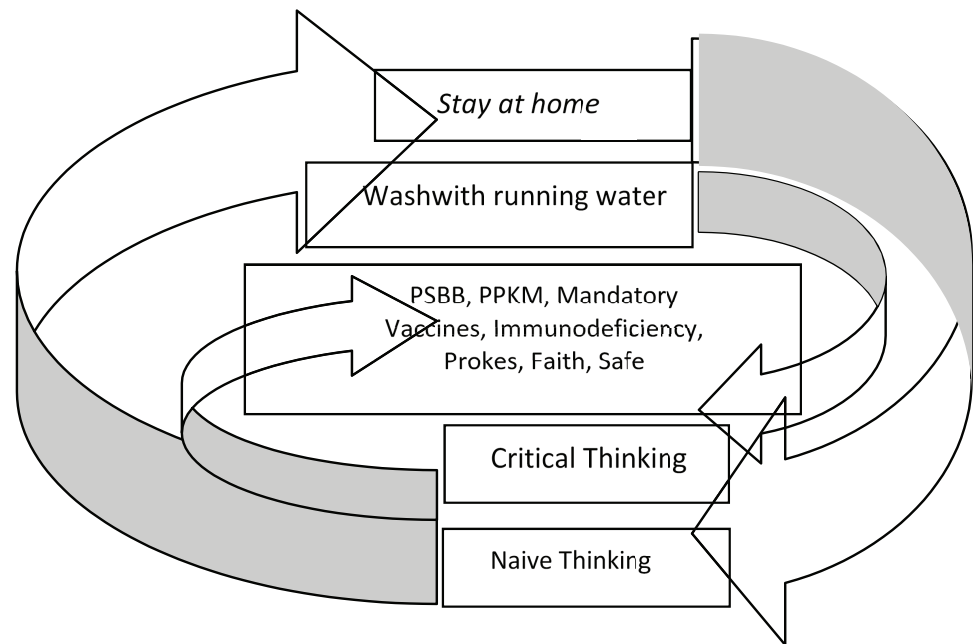
Naive awareness in which people believe that an event that occurs in their life is caused by themselves. Based on the results of research that the Pondok Labu market trader group has a naive awareness, they argue that the origin of this corona virus outbreak is indeed humans themselves, as a result of neglecting cleanliness which results in a virus, and the virus then infects the human body.

So in analyzing why a society is infected with an extraordinary epidemic like COVID-19, it is the fault of humans themselves, unable to take care of themselves and pay attention to body immunity. The reality is that the spread of COVID-19 is caused by the 'wrong' of the people themselves, because they are lazy, do not have a high sense of cleanliness. It is necessary to pay attention to whether it is good and right, in maintaining the health protocol. Therefore, the Pondok Labu market officer directed that traders could enter to adapt to the current system, the existence of PSBB, PPKM, and mandatory vaccination.

(*Critical consciousness*), sees more aspects of the system and structure as a source of problems. The structural approach avoids *blaming the victims* (blaming the victims) and is more analytical in order to be critically aware of social, political, economic, and cultural structures and systems and their consequences on the condition of society. The critical paradigm in implementing health protocols, PSBB, PPKM, and mandatory vaccination, implements that masks (your mask protects me and my mask protects you).

awareness *Stay at home* (don't leave the house unless there is an urgent need). Cough and sneeze etiquette (cover with elbows), keep a distance from others, worship at home, wash hands with soap and running water. Doing friendship by utilizing technology media (Chat using whatsapp, videocall). Awareness of the importance of maintaining nutrition by eating enough healthy food, getting enough exercise, getting enough rest (maintaining immunity, faith, and safety). Presented in Figure 4.

Implementation of social awareness of market life by continuing to behave with high awareness in carrying out and maintaining buying and selling activities in accordance with health protocols. Group communication is carried out by always paying attention to individuals, groups and the market environment so that they are maintained from the rampant COVID-19 outbreak.



**Figure 4:** The pattern of awareness of Paulo Freire's theory[5].

The pattern of awareness referring to Paulo Freire's theory is called Problem-facing Education. The concept of awareness that leads humans to be aware of the reality of the world and the reality of themselves. Because awareness is the core of the process, which is an opportunity to actively act and think as an actor with total reflection. The reality is that the COVID-19 outbreak is still there and life must go on.

This principle acts to change the oppressive reality and on the other hand continuously fosters awareness of reality and the desire to change the oppressive reality. Like the conditions and reality at the time the COVID-19 pandemic hit human life. Preventive actions with full awareness need to be carried out, by continuing to behave by acting correctly, and appropriately, complying with health protocols. Apart from the feeling of oppression due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

According to them, although "we are traders, we are also aware that cleanliness is very important to maintain our own health". Such behavior is a form of awareness of the group of traders at Pondok Labu Market. However, even so, traders still hope that the implementation of PSBB, PPKM, and mandatory vaccination will only apply temporarily, and market activities are still allowed to carry out buying and selling transactions (markets may still operate).

The traders realized that they still believed in fate, despite all the efforts made to maintain health through health protocols. Fatalistic theology sees humans as completely passive agents. Here, destiny is understood as God's decree, given, cannot be changed, and must be taken for granted and as it is. In line with this, critical awareness also occurs

among traders at Pondok Labu Market. They feel that they are bored with the COVID-19 outbreak.

#### **4.1. Implications of the PSBB, PPKM Policy on Traders Groups at Pondok Labu Market**

The reality is that the implementation of the PSBB, PPKM, has an impact on the decline in buyers at the Pondok Labu Market. Overall, the economy of the merchant group at Pondok Labu Market almost paralyzed because they had to obey these regulations. Traders' income input decreases, access to information through social gathering group communication and with WhatsApp groups remains in synergy. Especially for clothing traders, because their wholesale/shopping place is also closed (Tanah Abang Market), they also cannot increase their stock of merchandise.

### **5. Conclusion**

The largest group is grocery traders, which is 50 people. The traders still comply with the implementation of the PSBB, PPKM, and vaccination policies, but have an objection to PSBB and PPKM because they reduce income and do not even earn income. There is a limited stock of merchandise, especially for clothing traders.

The results of the study show that awareness continues to process, develop and expand, from the level of "naive awareness", "critical awareness", and reaches the highest level of awareness "awareness" by manifesting in behavior implementing health protocols. The awareness process in keeping the health process going for the better in the daily life of PSBB, PPKM and zone treatment on the environmental restrictions imposed, the traders have grown awareness to take care of the health program well. There are still not many hand washing facilities, hand sanitizers provided for traders at the Pondok Labu market.

### **6. Conflict of Interest**

I declare that this research is my own writing and that there is no conflict of interest whatsoever in the process of compiling this research.

## Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the Pondok Labu Market office for being willing to provide data for research. Thank you to the group of traders at Pondok Labu Market who have become respondents in this research. Thank you for your cooperation and assistance in answering the questionnaire questions in order to complete the research results to complete this research.

## References

- [1] KEPPRES No. 7 Tahun 2020 tentang Gugus Tugas Percepatan Penanganan Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) [JDIH BPK RI]. (n.d.), from <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Home/Details/134544/keppres-no-7-tahun-2020>, accessed 1-6-2022
- [2] Kriyantono, R. (2008). *Teknik Praktis Riset Komunikasi/Rachmat Kriyantono*, Prenada Media Group
- [3] Sugiyono, P. D. metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D, , Alfabeta, cv. (2016)
- [4] Littlejohn, S. W. (2014). *Teori Komunikasi Edisi 9*, Salemba Humanika
- [5] Freire, P. (2001). *Pedagogi Pengharapan: Menghayati Kembali Pedagogi Kaum Tertindas* (1st ed., Vol. 1), Kanisius, Yogyakarta
- [6] Setyoningsih, H.; Pratiwi, Y.; Rahmawati, A.; Wijaya, H. M.; Lina, R. N.; Kudus, K. (2021). Penggunaan Vitamin Untuk Meningkatkan, Vol. 4, No. 2, 136–150
- [7] Tukan, R. A. (2020). *Mengulik Perilaku 'Bandel' Masyarakat Di Tengah Pandemi Covid-19* (1st ed.), Syiah Kuala University Press, Banda Aceh
- [8] Suni, N. S. P. (2020). A BRIEF STUDY OF ACTUAL AND STRATEGIC ISSUES, *INFO Singkat*, Vol. XII, No. 3, 13–18
- [9] Buana, D. R. (2020). Analisis Perilaku Masyarakat Indonesia dalam Menghadapi Pandemi Virus Corona (Covid-19) dan Kiat Menjaga Kesejahteraan Jiwa, *SALAM: Jurnal Sosial Dan Budaya Syar-I*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 217–226. doi:10.15408/SJSBS.V7I3.15082