

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE REMOVAL OF POST-COVID 19 MASKS IN CAMBA-CAMBA VILLAGE, BATANG SUB-DISTRICT, JENEPONTO DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Background: Various countries have made efforts to stop the transmission of the COVID 19 virus with various policies issued by their respective countries including the implementation of Health protocols and accelerated vaccination programs to create herd immunity. **Objective:** This study aims to determine the public perception of the COVID 19 mask release in Camba-Camba village, Batang sub-district, Jeneponto Regency. **Method** Qualitative research design with phenomenological studies, through semi-structured interviews with in-depth interview methods. The number of participants was 6 people obtained by purposive sampling. Data were collected in the form of interview recordings and field notes and using thematic analysis method. **Results:** 4 themes were found, namely: community knowledge about COVID 19, carrying out health protocols, new habits and new cultures and people's opinions about removing masks **Conclusion:** although the government issued a policy regarding the release of masks, there needs to be further understanding because there are several groups that are vulnerable and still required to use masks, but the most important thing is public understanding of healthy living behavior which is the responsibility of each individual.

KEYWORDS

Community, COVID 19, mask release, perception

INTRODUCTION

In early 2020 the world was shocked by the emergence of a deadly outbreak that initially originated in China's Hubei Province in the city of Wuhan. For the first time, China reported this new disease on December 31, 2019. At the end of 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) office in China was notified of a type of pneumonia of unknown cause. An acute respiratory infection that affects the lungs. And since January 3, China has been regularly notifying the WHO as well as relevant countries and regions such as, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, about the pneumonia outbreak. The development and regular reporting by the Chinese state came to the attention of WHO. Finally, the world health organization declared a global public health emergency on January 30, 2020. Some time later, on February 11, 2020, WHO announced this new virus called "COVID- 19". The spread of Covid 19 has spread throughout the world where the

first COVID 19 case outside China was reported in Thailand on January 13, 2020. Still in the Asian Continent, on January 29, 2020, COVID 19 reached the Middle East for the first time as the number of COVID 19 cases increased and spread to more countries, to the European Continent, Australian Continent and African Continent, (Kompas.com).

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID 19) is an infectious disease caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona virus 2 (SARSCoV-2). SARS-CoV-2 is a new type of coronavirus that has never been identified before in humans. There are at least two types of coronaviruses known to cause diseases that can cause severe symptoms such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Common signs and symptoms of Covid 19 infection include symptoms of acute respiratory distress such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

The incubation period averages 5-6 days with the longest incubation period of 14 days. In severe cases of Covid 19, it can cause pneumonia, acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure, and even death (Hasma et al., 2021).

Disease preventive measures involve health promotion activities, including specialized health education programs, designed to help clients reduce disease risk, maintain optimal function, and promote good health habits (Taulandi, Tucunan, and Maramis, 2020). Physical distancing is one of the efforts to prevent the spread of the Covid19 virus and accelerate its treatment and is helped by the policy of implementing Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) which is regulated in Government Regulation Number 21 of 2020 and Minister of Health Regulation Number 9 of 2020 (Media and Afriyani, 2020).

Masks are one of the personal protective equipment (PPE) that can protect the mouth, nose, and face from airborne pathogens, droplets, and splashes of infected body fluids. Proper use of face masks consists of correct use and wearing techniques. (Martiana et al., 2023)

Perception from the psychology dictionary is derived from English, perception which means perception, vision. Response; is the process of a person becoming aware of everything in his environment through his senses; or environmental knowledge obtained through the interpretation of sensory data (Adrianto, 2016). Factors that influence perception are internal factors and external factors (Agung Handoko 2015). Behavior is a human activity or activity that can be observed directly or that cannot be observed directly by outsiders. Activities that can be observed such as walking, reacting, dressing, talking and so on. Activities

that cannot be observed include thinking, perception and emotion (Notoatmodjo, 2014), is the factor that most influences public health status after environmental factors (Riyadi, 2016).

METHODS

The research design used was qualitative research with a phenomenological approach regarding community perceptions of the policy of releasing *COVID 19* masks in Camba-Camba village, Batang sub-district, Jenepono Regency. The participants of this study amounted to 6 people who were Camba-Camba villagers and experienced firsthand the impact of the *COVID 19* pandemic and knew about *COVID 19* for certain and were willing to become participants selected using purposive sampling method.

Data collection through observation, in-depth interviews. The type of interview used is a semi-structured interview, in which the researcher has made a design in the form of an interview guide. In conducting interviews, interview tools such as notebooks, tape recorders, and cameras are needed as evidence that researchers have conducted interviews with participants (Sugiyono, 2010).

The interview process in this study lasted approximately 30-60 minutes or processed until data saturation was obtained (Mapp, 2008). The location of the interviews in this study took place at home and in the mosque while doing activities. To improve the accuracy of data collection, researchers used open-closed interview techniques, recorded interviews and made verbatim transcripts. In addition, the researcher also made field notes to further ensure the achievement of the descriptive results. Participant demographic data was

collected prior to the interviews to provide a brief overview of the participants.

All data collection processes were conducted from August 10 to September 10, 2022. After the interviews with all participants were completed, the interview data and field notes were collected to be managed and analyzed.

The data analysis technique of data processing was carried out by grouping the interview results according to the research objectives and then content analysis was carried out and interpreted, then presented in the form of a narrative. Data validity test; source triangulation, method triangulation and data triangulation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were 6 participants in this study. The age range varies from 35 years to 40 years with an educational background of elementary school 1 person, high school as many as 3 people Bachelor as many as 2 people. They are all people who have directly experienced the impact of the *COVID 19* pandemic and know about covid-9 with different occupations ranging from farmers, employees, village heads and Kiyai. Even with different occupations, almost all of them told how they perceived the policy of removing masks after *COVID 19*. The number of themes generated in this study are four, namely "public knowledge about covid-19, implementing health protocols, new habits and new cultures and public opinions about removing masks".

1. Public knowledge about *COVID 19*

This theme explains that the phenomenon that occurs in the community, already knows about everything about *COVID 19*, the theme "Public knowledge about *COVID 19*" is formed by three sub-themes: the beginning

of the emergence of covid1-19, information about *COVID 19*, and the dangers of *COVID 19*.

a. Public understanding of *COVID 19*

This sub-theme explains how the community understands *COVID 19*. All participants have knowledge about the emergence of *COVID 19*

"Yes, I know, the corona virus is a virus that originally emerged from the city of Wuhan China, then spread throughout the world," (P1), "The corona virus is a large family of viruses that cause mild to moderate upper respiratory tract diseases such as flu," (P2).

According to Notoatmodjo, knowledge is a cognitive domain. which is very influential in shaping a person's actions. Acceptance of new behavior will be easier if it is based on knowledge, while the behavior will not last long without being based on knowledge (Moudy & Syakurah, 2020). The results of this study are in line with Zhong's research (2020) which conducted knowledge research on the Chinese community with the results of good knowledge showing good preventive behavior where in the study there were only 3.6% who remained in crowded places and 2% who did not use masks when leaving the house (Zhong et al., 2020). This is in line with Nurul Aula's research (2020) which states that there is a significant relationship between knowledge and community behavior about *COVID 19*. In accordance with the adaptation theory which states that a good level of knowledge encourages a person to have good actions as well (Moudy & Syakurah, 2020).

b. *COVID 19* Information

This sub-theme explains how participants know well about *COVID 19* from various media.

"I know from the mass media tv, newspapers, and

also the local government."(P3) "knowing the existence of the COVID 19 virus from social media facebook, and articles on google that report about COVID 19, about the dangers of the number of cases affected by COVID 19 and so on."(P4)

The perception of the community in Camba-camba village is that most people get information about the COVID 19 virus through mass media television, Facebook, Instagram and local news and stories from their friends. According to Collinson et al (2015), social media campaigns as one of the information media related to epidemics or pandemics can be useful in conveying information to the general public, thus creating positive attitudes and behaviors that can slow the spread of disease, such as washing hands and maintaining distance,

c. Spreads of COVID 19

This sub-theme explains that people know how the corona virus spreads.

"The way it spreads, for example, such as crowding, conducting meetings, and if for example we do not use masks" (P5) the spread is by being close to people affected by the COVID 19 virus "(P6)

According to N. Suganthan, (2019), outlines the concepts of COVID 19 prevention. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that in the face of the COVID 19 outbreak is to do basic protection, which consists of washing hands regularly with alcohol or soap and water, keeping your distance from someone who has symptoms of coughing or sneezing, doing cough or sneeze ethics, and seeking treatment when you have complaints that fit the suspect category. The recommended distance to be maintained is one meter.

Inpatients with suspicion of COVID 19 should also be kept at least one meter away from other patients, given surgical masks, taught coughing/sneezing etiquette, and taught to wash their hands. Hand washing behavior should be applied by all health workers at five times, namely before touching the patient, before performing procedures, after exposure to body fluids, after touching the patient and after touching the patient's environment.

1. Implementing health protocols by the community

a. When implementing health protocols

This sub-theme describes community compliance in implementing health protocols,

"Yes, I always apply health protocols, when I go out of the house, and when I work, and also when I meet my friends, so masks" (P1) when I go to public places, for example such as markets, crowded places, "(P2)

This refers to the Decree of the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia Number HK.01.07 / MENKES / 382/2020 concerning health protocols for the public in public places and facilities in the context of preventing and controlling corona virus disease 2019 (COVID 19) which states that the community has an important role in breaking the chain of COVID 19 spread so as not to cause new sources of transmission. The community is expected to resume their activities by adapting to new habits that are healthier, cleaner, and more obedient. This role must be carried out by implementing health protocols, one of which is using personal protective equipment in the form of masks if you must leave the house or interact with other people whose health status is unknown (Martiana et al., 2023).

b. Purpose and benefits of implementing health protocols.

This sub-theme explains the purpose and benefits of implementing health protocols.

"Implemented during the pandemic to maintain or reduce the spread of this corona virus," (P2), for those who apply health protocols, I see their lives and the risk of disease is very small because they apply health protocols and that is good" (P3),

Health development is a government effort to fulfill the basic rights of the community in obtaining health services that are carried out professionally, successfully and provide maximum benefits for increasing optimal public health status. The use of masks during the COVID 19 pandemic is very important to protect yourself and others from the risk of transmission of this virus. (Hasma et al., 2021)

1. New Habits and New Culture

This theme explains how people respond to the policy of removing masks. The theme "New habits and new culture" is formed by 3 (three) themes based on community responses, namely "Removal of masks, anxiety, fear and habits."

a. Mask removal

This sub-theme explains how the community in Camba-Camba village perceives the removal of masks.

"This means that the spread of the coronavirus is not as severe as when it first emerged" (P1) direct policy to not require the use of masks when doing outdoor activities (P2),,

Based on the guidebook on the importance of using masks (2020), the purpose of using a mask is to avoid the spread of droplets, so the mask worn must

cover the mouth, nose, to the chin, besides that, the mask worn must not be loose, because this can allow air to enter without being filtered by the mask, eventually viruses and bacteria can enter the respiratory tract, thus preventing COVID 19 (Maulydia, 2021). President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) decided to relax the policy on wearing masks outdoors. The decision was made after considering several aspects. This was confirmed by Jokowi in a press conference related to easing the use of masks at the Bogor Presidential Palace, West Java, Tuesday (BBC News Indonesia, 2022)

b. Anxiety

This sub-theme explains the feelings of the public about the coronavirus when they are no longer required to wear masks.

"There is still anxiety for myself because the corona virus has not completely disappeared, especially now that a new variant has emerged and it is still spreading" (P3) "I am still worried about the spread of the virus, I still use it just in case" (P4).

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), anxiety is an emotional state that arises when individuals are under stress, and is characterized by feelings of tension, thoughts that make individuals feel worried and accompanied by physical responses (fast heartbeat, increased blood pressure, and so on (Okazaki, 1997), (Beaudreau & O'Hara, 2009). According to Dr. Kartini Kartono, anxiety is a form of fearlessness plus anxiety about things that are not clear (Kartono & Andari, 1989; Annisa & Ildil, 2016; Sumeru & Mulyaningrat, 2022). There is a significant difference in the frequency of anxiety about COVID 19 before the intervention and after the health education intervention

(Syamson et al., 2021).

c. Fear and habit

This sub-theme explains the fear and bad feelings due to the habit of wearing a mask when doing activities.

"For the first time doing activities without wearing a mask, there is a feeling of anxiety, maybe because I am used to interacting with people around by wearing a mask, and a fear of contracting *COVID 19*" (P5), still afraid to take off the mask in public places because covid 19 has not completely disappeared and a new variant of this virus has emerged again" (P6).

President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) also announced that the public may remove masks when doing activities outdoors that are not crowded with people. For people who are categorized as vulnerable, elderly or have comorbid diseases, I still recommend wearing a mask when doing activities, "said President Jokowi. Likewise, for people who experience symptoms of coughs and colds, they still must use a mask when doing activities," he said. Then, the use of masks must also be done if the community is active in a closed room. Likewise, if the community is on public transportation. "For activities in closed rooms and public transportation, you still have to use a mask (Dian Erika Nugraheny, 2022)

1. Public opinion about taking off masks.

a. Response

This sub-theme explains people's responses to the government's policy of not using masks when doing activities.

"My response is of course that the government has considered the risks that will be faced, but there are still people who use masks, it is even a good action" (P1), I still use a mask when doing activities in crowded places,

especially when a new variant comes out, it still scares people (P2),

This is the first step in starting the transition from pandemic to endemic in accordance with the policy previously announced by President Joko Widodo. One of the most important things to reach this stage is public understanding of healthy living behavior, which is the responsibility of each individual. "Learning from the history of pandemics that have occurred in the world, the transition to an endemic is carried out when people have begun to realize how to carry out healthy health protocols for themselves and their families. And this requires education and gradual implementation." Said Minister of Health Budi Gunadi Sadikin, in an online press conference with the *COVID 19* Handling Task Force (TIM CNN, 2020).

Minister of Health (Menkes) Budi Gunadi Sadikin said masks can also be removed if they are in good health.(Linda Hasibuan, 2023). The use of masks is relatively higher among respondents who are worried about *COVID 19*, respondents who have received a second dose and booster, have been positive for *COVID 19*, are not aware of the mask easing policy, and respondents who disagree with the policy. There are a few reasons why respondents continue to use masks despite the policy of easing the use of masks. The main reason is as protection from air pollution and odor. (Angelia, 2022).

b. Fear

This sub-theme explains the feelings of fear and anxiety when not required to wear a mask during activities.

"There is a new variant of covid 19, there must be

fear in the community, especially since this new omicron variant is said to be more dangerous than the previous virus" (P5) There must be fear in the community again, especially since it is rumored that this new variant is more dangerous than the first virus that appeared" (P6).

The removal of masks may cause fear in some people, especially as the COVID 19 pandemic is still ongoing and there is still a risk of transmission. But some people also feel uncomfortable when wearing a mask for a long time. (TIM CNN, 2020) In addition, President Jokowi's policy to remove masks outdoors in May 2022 has drawn pros and cons. Some experts are concerned that this policy is too soon and could trigger a new wave of COVID- 19. (BBC News Indonesia, 2022). However, some people also agree with the policy, especially respondents who have not been vaccinated. (Titin Ariyani, 2020). The public response to mask release may vary depending on factors such as the level of awareness of health protocols, vaccination rates, and the pandemic situation in each country or region.

c. Mask removal with vaccine

This sub-theme explains the community's understanding of vaccines.

"I take it because this vaccine is to prevent the transmission of covid 19 and can increase the body's immunity" (P1), that's why the government requires vaccines starting from the first vaccine to the third vaccine" (P3), vaccines can prevent transmission of the corona virus" (P4), by doing vaccines interacting with the community no longer feels afraid of contracting the corona virus, (P5). For the community to avoid the virus "(P6)

After vaccination, some countries have issued a

policy of removing masks outdoors. However, some experts are concerned that these policies are too fast and could trigger a new wave of COVID 19. (Rakhmat Nur Hakim, 2022). However, experts from home and abroad recommend that people continue to wear masks even though they have been vaccinated because vaccination does not provide 100% protection against COVID 19 and there is still a possibility of being infected and transmitting the virus to others. Even though they have been vaccinated, people are still advised to adhere to health protocols, including wearing masks, keeping a distance, and washing hands regularly (Dinkes, 2021). The sooner you are vaccinated, the sooner you will build up your immunity. Nowadays, booster vaccinations can be given sooner, 3 months after the second dose was injected (Titin Ariyani, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

Camba-camba village community members have understood about knowledge, information and the spread of COVID 19 through the Government, Social media Facebook, Instagram etc., with the government's policy on the release of masks, Camba-camba village community members feel afraid and anxious about contracting COVID 19 with new variants so that many residents still carry out health protocols such as wearing masks, Avoiding crowds and continuing to wash hands with soap and water or disinfectants, as well as getting vaccinations as an effort to prevent the spread of COVID 19, there needs to be further understanding of the government's policy on the release of masks, because there are several groups that are vulnerable and still required to use masks, but the most important thing is public understanding of healthy living behavior which is

the responsibility of each individual.

There are several limitations of this study. Qualitative research methods with a minimal number of participants led to limited information available. Less exploring data and characteristics of closed participants, thus affecting the depth of the research results. Further research is needed with other research methods and a larger number of respondents so that the research results are even deeper.

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