

The Movement Control Order during the COVID-19 Pandemic and its Impact on Malaysian Journalists

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Abstract

The Movement Control Order (MCO) is a law introduced to control the movement of the people of this country to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The first phase of the MCO starts from 18 March 2020 until 3 May 2020, followed by the Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) from 10 May 2020 until 9 June 2020, the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) from 7 June 2020 until 31 December 2020 and then extended further from January 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021. The MCO, which aims to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus, has a profound effect on all walks of life in this country, including journalists. This group is not exempt from experiencing difficulties in adapting to gather and deliver news in a new environment. This group also faces a high risk of contracting COVID-19. A qualitative study through in-depth interviews with 12 journalists delved into the effects faced by these media practitioners in carrying out their responsibilities in delivering information to Malaysians and overseas. The results of the study found that there were four positive effects and six negative effects due to the implementation of the MCO on journalists. Positive effects can be seen from the norm of obtaining news, technology that helps and the MCO that provides good mental and physical health to journalists. While from a negative point of view, the findings of the study show that working from home is uncomfortable and the introduction of communication technology makes it difficult for journalists to do their work, especially gathering news materials with human interest elements.

Keywords: Application, COVID-19, Effects, Movement Control Order, Journalist