

Analysis of Attitudes of Small and Medium Enterprises in Processing of Food before and after Pandemic Corona Virus Disease 19 (COVID-19) in North Sumatera

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ABSTRACT

The Corona Virus Disease 19 (COVID-19) pandemic is currently spreading in almost all regions of the world. Many parties have been disrupted due to this pandemic, and health is the aspect most affected, both physically and in people's behavior. Small and medium enterprises, especially the food sector, are one of the sectors that are affected, not only in the economy but also in behavior related to food processing. This study aims to analyze the attitudes of small and medium businesses regarding food processing before and after the Covid-19 pandemic. This research uses a comparative / ex post facto causal approach. The research sample consisted of 29 respondents who were UKM fostered by the incubator of state universities in North Sumatera. Data analysis used the McNemar test. The results showed that there were differences in the attitudes of SMEs before and after the Covid-19 pandemic, the Covid-19 pandemic turned out to change the attitudes or views of SMEs in managing food, the attitudes of SMEs during the pandemic became better before the Covid-19 pandemic occurred. Those who foster SMEs should maintain this attitude and improve the skills of SMEs in processing food in accordance with health standards.

Keywords: Attitudes, Food Processing, Small and Medium Enterprises, Covid-19

INTRODUCTION

The Corona Virus Disease 19 (COVID-19) pandemic is a disease that has

a major impact on public health in 2020. Not only is the health of various industries and sectors affected by the causes of this disease; these include the pharmaceutical industry, solar power sector, tourism, the information industry and electronics. This virus creates significant indirect effects on the daily life of citizens, as well as on the global economy.^{1,2}

Covid-19 also has a psychological impact. Although the main importance is given to physical health which includes the therapy and treatment of psychological health symptoms is no less important, because this pandemic is not only an epidemic but also an infodemic causing serious problems for public health.³

The pandemic shows the impact that the potential loss of income in affected countries can be significant, with global GDP declining by up to 3.9%, and developing countries hardest hit (4% on average, but some over 6.5%). The government needs to offer significant support to affected businesses and households.⁴

Moshin Safi's research shows that most of the SMEs have been badly affected and are facing several problems such as finance, supply chain disruptions, decreased demand, decreased sales and profits. Moreover, more than 83% of companies are not ready or planning to handle this pandemic situation. More than two-thirds of

participating companies reported that they would not be able to survive if the lock down lasted more than two months.⁵

In SMEs the effect on sales and production among firms has been the most problematic, a temporary reduction in paid employment was also observed. This is particularly evident in the construction and manufacturing industries, followed by the food and agriculture industries.⁶

According to Suliman Khan (2020), apart from physical matters, it is important for the world to evaluate and develop strategies to deal with psychological health and mental disorders caused by direct or indirect exposure. This strategy is specifically to target the community or the entire population as well as the individuals affected by it.⁷

One of them is the Small and Medium Enterprises community, why this group is very important because in addition to maintaining the impact on themselves, SMEs must also continue to run their business for family needs. Besides the health impacts of SMEs, they also experience direct economic impacts. Therefore, the behavior of SMEs is very important to maintain in addition to protecting the community as well as maintaining the spread through the products they produce. In particular, SMEs in the food sector have also been affected by Covid-19. The purpose of this study was to analyze the attitudes of SMEs in food processing before and when the Covid-19 epidemic took place in North Sumatera

MATERIALS & METHODS

This study uses a quantitative analytic research design with a causal comparative approach. According to Kerlinger (1983) states that comparative causal research or it can also be called ex post facto research is research that is carried out systematically in which the researcher cannot control whether the independent variable has occurred or cannot be manipulated.⁸

The sample of this study was the small and medium enterprises in the food sector fostered by the Business Incubator of State Universities in North Sumatera in 2019 with a total of 29 respondents. The attitudes of respondents in the period before the Covid-19 pandemic that have been measured will be compared with the attitudes of the same respondents during the Covid-19 pandemic. Data during the pandemic was collected using an online questionnaire

Statistical Analysis

Data analysis used the McNemar test. The data compared is ordinal, which is data before the Covid-19 pandemic with data at the time of the Covid-19 pandemic taking place in the same sample.

RESULT

The results of this study can be seen in the following table

Pre-Covid Attitude	Attitude at Covid	
	Enough	Good
Enough	3	13
Good	0	13

The results showed that 13 respondents who changed their attitude from good enough to good, 13 respondents who did not change in good condition. The table above shows that there is a change in the attitude of the respondents from what was good enough during the pandemic to become good.

Then the results of the analysis through the Mc Nemar test are known based on the following table:

	Pra Covid & At Covid
N	29
Exact Sig. (2-tailed)	.000 ^b
a. McNemar Test	
b. Binomial distribution used.	

The statistical test results show a probability value of 0.000. This probability value is far below alpha = 0.05, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis is

rejected or it means that there is a difference in attitude between before Covid-19 and when the Covid-19 pandemic occurred. This means that the Covid pandemic condition indirectly affects the respondent's attitude in managing food.

DISCUSSION

The results showed that there was a change in the respondent's attitude between before the pandemic and during the pandemic. The change in attitude that occurred was even more positive, where before the pandemic the attitude of the majority of respondents was moderate, then during the pandemic it changed for the better where the majority had more positive personal hygiene attitudes.

This complements Masudin's research that food and food transportation, safety issues are also an increasing challenge during the COVID-19 outbreak⁹, so it is necessary to strengthen personal hygiene so that sales will continue during this pandemic. Dominican Głabska's study in Poland proved that during the COVID-19 pandemic, all Polish adolescent hand hygiene behaviors were assessed to have improved, compared to before, but hand hygiene education is still needed.¹⁰ This is quite in line with the changes in attitudes that have occurred in SMEs, in addition to protecting themselves, this change in attitude is the key to maintaining customer trust in their products.

Community-based sanitation programs can be key to ensuring a healthy household environment and reducing malnutrition.¹¹ Including SMEs, it is very important to maintain personal hygiene in food processing to reduce the spread and at the same time increase the trust of the community to buy their products.

This change in attitude is rooted in respondents' perceptions of Covid-19 disease. Perceived seriousness refers to a subjective assessment of the severity of a health problem and its potential consequences. This is in line with the concept of the Health Belief Model which

reveals that individuals who feel that a given health problem is serious are more likely to behave to prevent the problem (or reduce its severity). Perceived seriousness includes beliefs about the disease itself.¹²

Likewise, perceived benefits refer to an individual's assessment of the value or efficacy of behavior to reduce disease risk. If an individual believes that certain actions will reduce susceptibility to health problems or reduce their seriousness, then he is likely to engage in behavior that is independent of objective facts about the effectiveness of the action.¹²

In addition to perceptions of the disease that has no cure, for SMEs there is an economic perception that changes their attitude towards food processing. If food processing is better and healthier, it will certainly attract people's trust and intend to buy its products.

CONCLUSION

There are differences in attitudes between before Covid-19 and when the Covid-19 pandemic occurred, the condition of the Covid pandemic indirectly affected the respondent's attitude in managing food. Perceptions of the threat of disease to health as well as the threat to the business being run are one of the driving forces for changing attitudes towards SMEs. This condition must be utilized by UKM assistants to maintain consistency in SME food processing so that it can last for the long term even though Covid-19 ends.

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