Analysing Interpersonal Distances in Communication Among *Jamaah Masjid:* A lesson learnt from Pandemic Covid-19

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Abstract - **Studies on interpersonal distances in communication are generally subsumed under a theorem of proxemics and ample studies are well documented. Most of them involved culture comparations of two or more countries. Under a circumstance of religious communities such is likely scant. This research was conducted to analyse such interpersonal distances in communication in a Masjid community. The respondents were recruited from Jakarta and its surrounding and the derived data were analysed descriptively. Three key problems were addressed, (1) knowledge of social distancing, (2) attitudes toward practices of social distancing, and (3) belief on the effects of such practices. The research reveals the findings (1) the attitude of Jamaah towards the conduct of congregational prayers in Masjid with proximity is significantly positive, (2) the proximity (i.e., +/- 100 cm in the praying lines) for congregational prayers is appropriately comprehended, (3) the proximity for social interaction (e.g. hand-waving to replace handshaking) is comprehensible but the attitude towards such a proximity is to some extent negative, (4) Most Jamaah believe that the proximity in Masjid does not necessarily ruin their focus of transcendental interaction.**

Keywords: interpersonal distance, communication, Masjid community, pandemic Covid-19

INTRODUCTION

Although Pandemic COVID-19 had hit many countries in the globe since January 2020, it was only on 2 March that the government of Indonesia announced the first case. The delay of the announcement shows the country's complex problems involving religious, social and political configuration (Hasyim, 2020). Regarding this, one among other problems related to religious activities is the management of performing congregational prayers in *Masjid* or mosques such as five obligatory prayers on the daily basis and the mandatory Friday prayers every week in a larger gathering recommended for Muslim men. Such

prayers are offered by standing in rows in very close proximity to each other. This could be a fertile hotspot for the spread of novel viruses. In other words, the failure to cease such gatherings could lead to potential widespread of infection exponentially (Quadri, 2020).

On the other hand, one among other ways to prevent and control the outbreak of Pandemic Covid-19 is made through social distancing which means keeping a safe space between oneself and other people who are not from the same household. This means less contact with other people, no handshaking nor hugging (WHO, 2020). When this is the case, it is urgent to know how Masjid

community or *Jamaah* behave against the social distancing practices in *Masjid* and its premises.

In the sphere of human communication, studies on social distancing are well documented and subsumed under a theorem of proxemics. Such is applicable under normal circumstances and is discussed under the discipline of Linguistic Anthropology (Salzmann, Stanlaw, & Adachi, 2012). The term proxemics was firstly coined by Edward T. Hall in 1963 referring to the use of space on interpersonal communication (Zhuo-ying & Yu, 2017). Further, as cited by Ickinger, Hall defined it in various ways over the years (Ickinger, 1982). The first definition was made in 1963 when Hall initially put it as the study of how man unconsciously structures micro space the distance between men in the conduct of daily transactions, the organization of space in his houses and building, and ultimately the layout of his towns." The second definition was made a year later, in 1964, in which Hall accommodated what man gains in minds, i.e., knowledge, associated with the proximity. He defined proxemic as the study of the ways in which man gains knowledge of the content of other men's minds through judgements of behaviour patterns associated with varying degrees of (spatial) proximity to them." Next, two years later, in 1966, Hall put an aspect of culture in the definition, which reads the interrelated observations and theories of man's use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture. Finally, in 1974, Hall clearly classified proxemic in four components and put them in the new definition, the study of man's transactions as he perceives and uses intimate, personal, social and public space in various settings while following out of awareness dictates of cultural paradigms."

Following Hall's theory, ample research in the realm of proxemics have been conducted in many countries, most of which focusing on the comparison of two or more cultures, such as for example China and America (Zhuo-ying & Yu, 2017), Japan and America (Rogers, Hart, & Miike, 2002). In addition, a research to compare more than two cultures has also been conducted to highlight the discussion of proxemics (Sorokowska et al., 2017). Others were made to foster intercultural skills for foreign language learning (Grote & Jordan, 2014). As noted, most of them are applicable under natural circumstances in which there is no driving forces to set proximity to certain degrees of social distancing, like the one during the Pandemic Covid-19 recently.

Furthermore, they addressed culture at a national level (e.g., China vs America) instead of cultural clusters based on geographic locations (e.g., Latin America or Arabian countries) nor is it at other cluster bases across civilizations, such as Western, Orthodox Christians, Islamic, or Hinduism (Gupta, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002).

On top of that, studies about proximity related to religious congregation under Pandemic Covid-19 are worth reviewing to highlight this Sosis, and Schjoedt (2020) reported a case in Shincheonji Church of Jesus in Daegu South Korea where the church had insisted on in-person meetings, banning health masks, praying while touching others, and refusing to hand in its membership list to health officials. Due to it the church was blamed for contributing to the local epidemic of Covid-19 since almost two-thirds of coronavirus infections were traced back to an individual who worshiped in the church. Similarly. Quadri (2020) reported an Iranian case of the first Covid-19 deaths on February 19, 2020, in the main shrine in the Shiite city of Qom. Here the Head of the shrine asked the pilgrims to keep coming and promoted it as a place of healing. Since then, Iran was reported as one of the worst-hit countries in the current pandemic. In addition, he also reported cases of religious gatherings held by *Tablighi Jamaat*, a Muslim sect originated in pre-independent India as an Islamic revivalist movement which has now spread to other countries. Three *Tablighi Jamaat* gatherings in Pakistan, Malaysia and India became hotspots of Covid-19. These cases were possible due to the failure of implementing the practices of social distancing. This surely underlies the reason why this research is crucial to be conducted. In other words, it is urgent to examine such proximity along with the said Pandemic in the community of *Masjid* where Moslems meet to perform their conduct of congregational prayers for a transcendental interaction including their Islamic culture and values.

This research addressed three main questions, (1) to what extent is the spatial distance appropriate to conduct transcendental and social interaction in *Masjid*? (2) what is the attitude of *Jamaah* or *Masjid* community regarding the practice of social distancing? (3) how do *Jamaah* believe in the effects of social distancing practices towards their transcendental and social interaction?

The first question is raised to represent the knowledge of *Jamaah* about the proximity in two

domains of interaction i.e., transcendental and social. The transcendental interaction is manifested in the conduct of prayer congregationally performed in *Masjid*. Whereas the social interaction refers to the social formalities commonly shared among *Jamaah* before or after prayers (e.g., handshaking). The basic consideration of making such a representation was formulated based on a definition of knowledge synthesized by Bolisani and Bratianu (2018) which says, "Knowledge is a justified true belief in which three basic conditions are incorporated i.e., truth, belief and justification". The truth condition concludes that what one is said to know is necessarily and sufficiently true. This is a pre-requisite for the other two's to happen. In addition, it differentiates knowledge from opinion. When fulfilled, one is sure of it, and such has the right to be sure.

The second question accommodates attitude domain which is defined as a disposition to react with a certain degree of favourableness or unfavourableness to an object, behaviour, person, institution, or event or to any other discriminable aspect of the individual's world (Beri, 2009). Similarly, as Eagly and Chaiken put it, attitude is defined as a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour and disfavour (Aladwani, 2014). The emphasis in the second definition is that evaluation encompasses all classes of attitudinal responding, i.e., affect, cognition, and behaviour. Above all, the evaluation of affective domain of attitude has long been regarded as dominant. It consists of, among others, emotions, feeling, or moods (Kroenung & Eckhardt, 2011). Similarly, Underwood (2008) claims that attitudes have three different types of antecedents, i.e., cognitive, affective, and behavioural. Henceforward, the attitude in this article focuses on the affective domain. In addition, attitude should be linked to knowledge and skills in the performance of tasks in specific situations. Regarding this, three integrations apply, i.e, Low-road, High-road, and transformative (Baartman & Bruijn, 2011). The first integration occurs through practice towards automation, the second requires reflections on the tasks beside practice, and the third requires critical self-reflection and openness to change.

The third question represents an aspect of belief which, according to Goodenough (1963), is defined as propositions that are held to be true and are accepted as guides for assessing the future (Richardson, 1996). In addition, belief differs from knowledge based upon notions of truth, certainty and justification in the sense that knowledge depends upon a truth condition but beliefs, on the other hand, do not necessarily require it (Beswick, 2011). Further, Beswick argues that belief can be regarded as having a greater affective and lesser component than knowledge dimension. Similarly, Calderhead (1996) as cited by Turner, Christensen and Meyer (2009) argue that knowledge refers to factual propositions and is subject to the standards of truth, whereas beliefs are suppositions, not subject to outside evaluation. Knowledge is consensual, but beliefs represent individual ideologies and commitments. Despite this, there are two types of belief, i.e, personal beliefs and commonly held beliefs. However, the truly personal belief is rarely known, as ones tend to share their personal belief to others in a social communication (Underwood, 2008).

To answer the questions, first it is significant to analyse Hall's definitions of proxemics so that clear understanding how they relate to each other can be acquired. As noted, four complementary definitions have been made and it is apparent that the definitions gradually cascade from one to another with additional points of clarity and completeness. In this line, the definitions consist of five components, such as (1) distance to conduct daily interaction (2) locations, (3) existence of judgement of behaviour patterns, i.e., belief of the effects of the spatial distances activities (4) culture, (5) classification of such a spatial proximity, , intimate, personal, social, and public. Hence, an operational definition of proxemic applicable to this research can be formulated. It refers to the use of space on transcendental and social interaction practised by the community of *Masjid* in Mosques and the premises based on Islamic culture and value performances.

Next, a brief discussion on Hall's theory of proxemics and other related concepts is necessary to be raised adequately. As Hall put it, the interpersonal distance that people take while interacting with others depends not only on the personal attitude toward another person but also on certain characteristics, such as social environment where the interaction takes place, age and dyads like gender (Hall, 1966 as cited by Sorokowska et al., 2017). In addition, Hall has made an initial attempt to determine the limits of American proxemic zones. As noted, He categorizes distance as intimate, personal, social, or public. The first

zone, the intimate, resides at a location between 0 to 18 inches, resembles to 0 to 46 cm. This is the distance of playful reserved for closest friends, family, and romantic/intimate partners. However, enforced closeness in a crowd, e.g., in elevators doesn't count. The second zone, the personal, is located between 18 inches to 4 feet or 46 to 122 cm which is maintained during interactions with friends. The third is social distance which counts between 4 to 10 feet, similar to 122 to 210 cm and the forth is public distance, between 10 feet to infinity or above 210 cm (Em Griffin, n.d.). Regarding this, Hall, himself, admitted that within a given culture there are wide individual differences. In addition unless they are carefully treated, such differences may result in violation as what might be considered normal for one person could be harmful for another person (Joosse, Evers, & Lohse, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

Respondents

There were 81 respondents (60 male and 21 female) with the age range between 21 to over 50 years. They were taken voluntarily from greater Jakarta and its suburban areas, including Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi, popularly acronymized *Jabodetabek*, but limitedly chosen to those who attended to *Masjid* on a regular basis (i.e., 5 times a day for men and 1 time for women). As noted, some characteristics of respondents may affect the preference of taking the spatial distance. Therefore, various attributes about the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are crucial to be identified. Data of such attributes are presented in a table below (Table 1).

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	Attribute	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	60	74,07
	Female	21	25,93
Age (Year)	21 - 30	10	12,35
	31 - 40	16	19,75
	41 - 50	25	30,86
	Above 50	30	37,04
	Total	81	100,00
Ethnicity	Java	32	39,51
	Sunda	16	19,75
	Betawi	10	12,35
	Batak	5	6,17
	Minang	9	11,11

Characteristics	Attribute	Frequency	Percentage
	Aceh	4	4,94
	Bugis	3	3,70
	Others	2	2,47
	Total	81	100,00
Dwelling	Jakarta	26	32,10
	Depok	20	24,69
	Bekasi	14	17,28
	Bogor	9	11,11
	Tangerang	9	11,11
	Others	3	3,70
	Total	81	100,00
Education	Doctor	27	33,33
	Master Degree	21	25,93
	Bachelor	29	35,80
	Others	4	4,94
	Total	81	100,00
Job Profession	Teacher	37	45,68
	Employee	20	24,69
	Daily Worker	6	7,41
	Engeneer	7	8,64
	Medical Doctor	4	4,94
	Entreprenur	7	8,64
	Total	81	100,00
Siblings (person)	> 3	27	33,33
	3	23	28,40
	2	16	19,75
	1	10	12,35
	0	5	6,17
	Total	81	100,00
Family Size (person)	1 to 2	27	33,33
	3 to 4	26	32,10
	5 to 6	18	22,22
	> 6	10	12,35
	Total	81	100,00
Attendance (daily)	4 to 5	36	44,44
	2 to 3	33	40,74
	1	12	14,81
	Total	81	100,00

Data were derived using a 10-item-questionnaire covering three dimensional aspects, i.e., knowledge, belief, and attitude. It was developed in the form of four-point Likert-type scale asking for agreement or disagreement across the three dimensions related to proxemics practiced by *Jamaah*. Each dimension is

characterised by indicators presented in table 2. The validity and reliability of the instrument were well tested using Pearson Product Moment test for validity and Alpha Cronbach test for internal consistency reliability.

In addition, a verification was made to know whether the *Masjid* where respondents conduct the congregational prayers have undergone the health protocol. For this purpose, four questions were included in the questionnaire. They respectively addressed the provision of key facilities, such as thermo-guns to check the body temperature, signs of proximity in the praying lines, hand-sanitizer or washbasins and posters of reminder about health protocol.

Table 2. Indicators of each dimension

Dimension	Indicators
Knowledge	Justification that spatial distance implemented in Masjid activities is consensually appropriate.
Attitude	Favourable or unfavourable affects (emotion, feeling or mood) as a disposition to react upon behaviour and events related to spatial distance implemented in *Masjid* activities.
Belief	Subjective judgment of what one knows is true.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Validity tests

As noted, the item validity was tested using Pearson Product Moment to verify the correlation of each item with the total items of the instrument. For this, SPSS version 23 was utilised to analyse the data. The result shows all items are valid. This can be confirmed that the scores of correlations (r-scores) respectively are higher than that of the score of critical value (i.e., 0.576). The detail is described in table 3.

Table 3. Item Validity

	r-score	r-table	Decision
Item 1	0.786	0.576	Valid
Item 2	0.857		Valid
Item 3	0.796		Valid
Item 4	0.761		Valid
Item 5	0.763		Valid
Item 6	0.619		Valid
Item 7	0.829		Valid
Item 8	0.715		Valid
Item 9	0.783		Valid
Item 10	0.673		Valid

Reliability test

The reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha procedure since the questionnaire, as noted, was developed in a Likert scale covering affective and cognitive domains. As Taber (2016) put it, Cronbach's Alpha is commonly reported for the development of scales intended to measure attitudes and other affective constructs. It is also devised to test the aspect of knowledge dimension. From the data analysis, using SPSS version 23, it gives a Cronbach Alpha score of 0.918 (table 4).

Table 4. Cronbach-Alpha reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.915	0.918	10

Proximity in Masjid Community
Knowledge Dimension

As noted, three questions were raised related to the proximity in *Masjid* community covering three dimensions, i.e., knowledge, attitude, and belief. The knowledge dimension was manifested in the first question and the result shows that the percentage of those who disagree that the proximity set for the conduct of transcendental interaction is too large (i.e., +/- 100 cm of spatial distance in the prayer lines) is bigger than those who agree (54.1 > 45.9). When such is verified if the proximity of +/- 100 cm for spatial distance is appropriate for transcendental interaction, there are more pro's than contra's (83.8 > 16,2). This means +/- 100 cm of spatial distance for transcendental interaction is appropriate. Likewise, the spatial distance for social interaction is appropriately practiced. At such, the data show the average of those who agree about proximity for social interaction, (e.g., hand-waving from a distance), is bigger than those who disagree (67.53 > 24.33). This means most respondents realize that hand-waving is appropriate to replace handshaking under the situation of Pandemic Coved-19.

Attitude Dimension

The attitude dimension was manifested in the second question, "what is the attitude of *Jamaah* or *Masjid* community regarding the practice of social distancing? As noted, the attitude in this article focuses on the affective domain (i.e., emotion, feeling and moods of the respondents) as a manifestation of their favourable or unfavourable affects. The result shows that the percentage of those who were in favour of item 1 (*i.e., Saya senang karena dalam suasana pandemi Covid-19 saat ini sholat berjamaah di masjid sudah dapat*

dilaksanakan) which means I am glad that congregational prayers in *Masjid* could be performed under the situation of Pandemic Covid-19 is significantly higher than those who disfavour (91.9 > 8.1). This means the attitude of *Jamaah* towards the practice of conducting congregational prayers in *Masjid* is very positive. However, the percentage of those who agreed to item 5 (i.e., *Saya sedih tidak dapat berjabat-tangan (bersalaman) dengan jamaah saat bertemu di masjid* meaning I am sad for not being able to handshake with other *Jamaah* in *Masjid*) is also relatively higher than those who disagree (59.4 > 40.6). This means the attitude of social distancing for social interaction is somehow negative.

Belief Dimension
This dimension was manifested in a question, "How do *Jamaah* believe in the effects of social distancing practices towards their transcendental and social interaction? The result shows that the average of those who agree about proximity of transcendental interaction, (e.g., *Konsentrasi/kekhusukan sholat saya tidak terganggu oleh shaaf/barisan sholat yang renggang/tidak rapat* which means proximity does not necessarily influence the focus of conducting congregational prayers)* is bigger than those who disagree (65 > 35.1). This means the respondents believe what they know about social distancing for transcendental interaction is true. More importantly, this proximity does not decrease the focus of prayers. Similarly, the average of those who agree about proximity of social interaction, (e.g., *Menyampaikan salam dengan isyarat tangan dari jarak jauh sudah cukup menggantikan kebiasaan bersalaman* or greeting delivered by means of hand-waving from a distance is adequate to replace handshaking), is bigger than those who disagree (67.53 > 24.33). This means the belief of hand-waving to replace handshaking is appropriate.

It is apparent that the attitude of *Jamaah* towards the conduct of congregational prayers in *Masjid* is positive as such, particularly for men, is an obligatory according to Law of Islam (Al-Sadlaan, 2000), (Quadri, 2020). However, that their attitude towards hand-waving to replace handshaking for social interaction is negative can be comprehended. As noted, most of the respondents (59.4%) felt sad because of the prohibition of shaking hands during the Pandemic Covid-19. It is likely difficult for them to cease the temptation to handshake each other for social interaction in *Masjid*, for it has been practiced for long. At such, handshaking has been considered as a part of social etiquettes and it may reveal one's personality (Chaplin et al., 2000). In addition, handshakes in a social life may influence deal-making. They carry profound meaning beyond their physical feature since handshakes have been considered as social rituals (Schroeder, Risen, Gino, & Norton, 2019). However, the proximity (i.e., +/- 100 cm) for transcendental interaction in congregational prayers and (+/- 100 cm to infinity) for social interaction (e.g., hand-waving) is comprehensibly accepted. This likely relates to the obedience to the *Fatwa* or message from two prominent mainstream Islamic civil society organizations (i.e., *Nahdlatul Ulama* or *NU* and *Muhamadiyah*) and Ulama Council of Indonesia (MUI). Regarding this, they provide prescriptions related to religion (e.g., *Fatwa* on Social Distancing) without neglecting the guidance from health authorities (Hasyim, 2020). Specifically, MUI declares that straightening and tightening the rows in congregational prayer is the virtue and perfection but to prevent the transmission of the COVID-19 outbreak, the application of physical distancing during such prayers is permissible (MUI, 2020)

One among other health authoritative documents cited to discuss the research finding is the Decree of the Minister of Health (Kemenkes, 2020) in which health protocol to prevent and control the outbreak of Pandemic Covid-19 is stipulated. This is to argue how cognitively respondents agree to the proximity of both transcendental and social interactions but affectively disagree to the proximity of social interaction. In the document, twenty-two points are clearly mentioned which are applicable for both the Managers of *Masjid* and *Jamaah.* As noted, four of which are taken and verified, i.e., the provision of thermo-guns to check the body temperature, signs of proximity in the praying lines, hand-sanitizer or washbasins and posters of reminder about health protocol. At such, it is apparent that all *Masjid* selected in this research have undergone the health protocol adequately. Data are respectively presented in the pie charts below:

Provision of thermo-guns
The question raised to verify this facility reads, *'Apakah di Masjid tempat Bapak/Ibu biasa sholat berjamaah tersedia alat pengukur suhu badan?'* (Are thermo-guns available in *Masjid* where you conduct congregational prayers?). The answer shows 51% of respondents say 'yes', 27% say 'no' and 18.9% don't know.
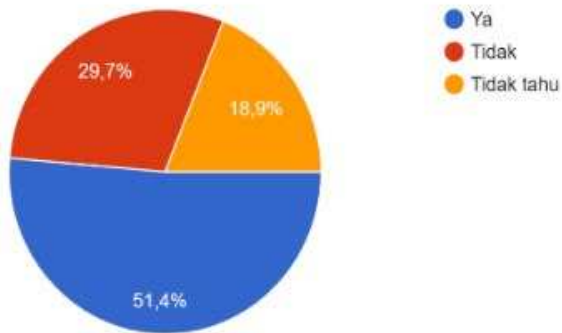
Figure 1: Availability of Thermo-g

Provision of proximity signs in the praying lines
The question raised to verify this facility reads, *'Apakah shaaf atau barisan untuk sholat berjamaah telah diberi tanda berjarak?'* (Are praying lines marked with proximity signs?). The answer shows 67% respondents say 'yes', 16.2% say 'no', and 16.2% don't know
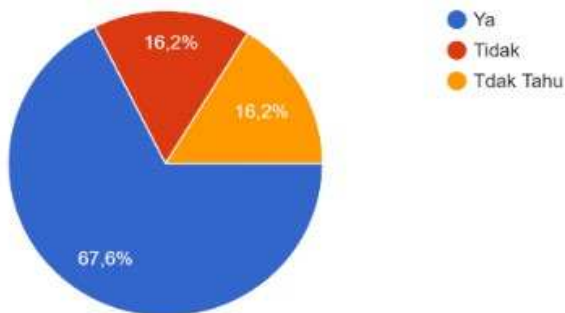

Figure 2: Proximity signs

Provision of soap and washbasins or hand sanitizers
The question raised to verify this facility reads, *'Apakah disediakan sarana cuci tangan dan sabun atau hand sanitiser?'* (Are soaps and washbasins or hand sanitizers available?). The answer shows 75% respondents say 'yes', 8.1% say 'no', and 16.2% don't know
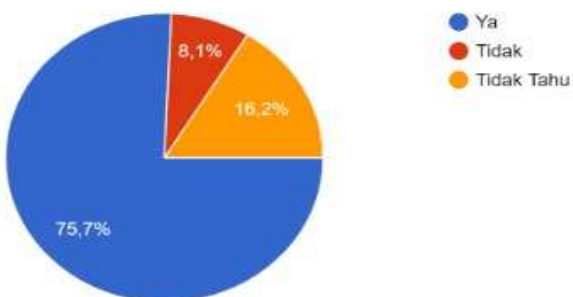

Figure 3: Availability of washbasins or hand sanitizers

Provision of posters of reminders
The question raised to verify this facility reads, *'Apakah di lingkungan masjid disediakan poster*

atau pengumuman tentang protocol kesehatan dalam sholat berjamaah??' (Are posters of reminder about health protocol available in the premises of Masjid?). The answer shows 56.8% respondents say 'yes', 27% say 'no', and 16.2% don't know.

This proves most, if not all, managers of *Masjid* have obeyed the health authority in applying the health protocol to prevent the outbreak of Pandemic Covid-19. Such obedience likely strengthens the knowledge of *Jamaah* about the urgency of preventing and controlling the outbreak of Pandemic Covid-19. However, as noted, what Baartman & Bruijn (2011) argue about the integration of knowledge and attitude has likely not worked at maximum rate. This is to say that the strong cognitive recognition of proximity is not adequately followed by attitudinal acceptance. Only does it the first integration run adequately, i.e., Low Road integration through practice towards automation.
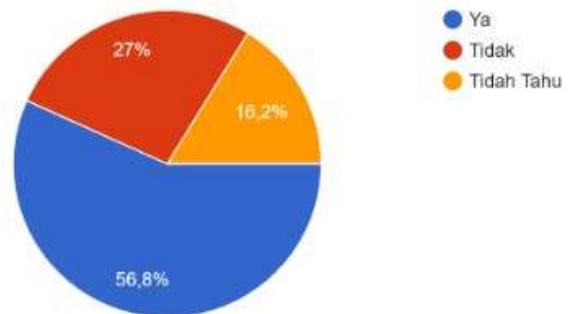

Figure 4: Availability of posters

When this is the case, it is likely true to say that such an automation may facilitate the other two integrations to happen. In other words, as noted, attitude will likely change through reflection on the tasks and openness to change as a result of critical and reflective thinking. This is possible in line with the mechanism of belief system since attitude often arises from belief. It is in this mechanism that beliefs are considered as the antecedent of attitudes (Underwood, 2008).

In addition, from the four points in the authoritative document of health protocol, which were verified, provision of soap and washbasins or hand sanitizers got the highest affirmation (75%) whereas the provision of thermo-guns got the least (51%). This is likely comprehensible since the facility of washbasins or hand sanitizers make the respondents directly do and physically see the result of their

doing (i.e., wet or moisture hands) which cause them to feel secured from being infected with the viruses. Conversely, the provision of thermo-guns puts the respondents passively receive the treatment of being shot, mostly on the foreheads, before entering *Masjid*. This likely worries them for being contaminated with the infrared from the guns although much has been clarified that it is not true. It is likely in this reason why 'I don't know' responses for this item are the highest.

CONCLUSION

This research, as noted, addresses three focal questions related to the respondents' knowledge, belief, and attitude as far as social distancing in *Masjid* is concerned. It includes both transcendental and social interactions. From the aspect of knowledge, it is evident that spatial distance (i.e., +/- 100 cm) in the praying lines is appropriate and cognitively accepted. Likewise, the spatial distancing (i.e., 100 cm to infinity) for social interaction (e.g., hand-waving) is accepted to replace handshaking in the Pandemic Covid-19. The attitude of *Jamaah* towards the conduct of congregational prayers in *Masjid* is positive. In other words, the respondents are favourable with the proximity for transcendental interaction. However, the attitude for social interaction (e.g., hand-waving to replace handshaking) is negative. Interestingly, regarding this, more respondents believe that hand-waving from a quite distance is appropriate to deliver social interaction under Pandemic Covid-19. This confirms that beliefs and attitudes are not necessarily congruent.

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