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Synchronizing the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Compound Cases Re-Summons

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the challenges faced at the Counter Summons Again for Cases Discharged Not An Acquittal (DNAA), particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, when civil servants were required to follow rapidly changing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) while still performing their duties. As frontliners, these officers had to deal with public frustration, especially from individuals unable to renew their driving licenses due to expired summonses that could no longer be paid at the counter and instead required court appearances. This situation reflects a larger issue within the SOP framework, the procedures, though well-intended, were not adaptable enough to accommodate the unique and evolving circumstances brought on by the pandemic. The main objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness and suitability of the current SOPs in handling such exceptional cases and to propose necessary improvements that would help streamline services at the DNAA counter. Using a qualitative approach, this research analyzes actual cases and officer experiences at the DNAA counter to identify gaps and inefficiencies in SOP implementation. It also explores how the rigidity of existing SOPs prevents officers from offering practical solutions to the public during emergency conditions. The findings indicate that there is an urgent need to revise the SOPs to better align with real-world situations, allowing for more flexible and responsive public service. In doing so, this would also support the broader mission of the Malaysian Road Transport Department (RTD) to standardize and strengthen national transportation procedures while ensuring efficient service delivery in times of crisis.

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic brought many challenges to government departments and public service delivery in Malaysia, especially with the frequent changes in policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) [1-22]. One of the affected areas was the management of summonses under the Road Transport Department (RTD), particularly cases classified as “Discharged Not An Acquittal” (DNAA). Officers at the DNAA counter found it increasingly difficult to carry out their responsibilities

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effectively due to unclear and inconsistent procedures across different states. Members of the public, especially those with expired summonses, were also affected, as they could not make payments or renew their driving licenses, road tax, or handle other essential RTD transactions during this period.

This issue is made worse by the lack of uniformity in the court's decision-making process. While some courts allow DNAA status after a single court mention, others require up to three mentions before the status can be updated. This inconsistency causes confusion and delays, not only for the public but also for RTD officers who must follow SOPs that vary depending on state practices. As a result, the same offense may receive different treatment in different districts, creating inequality and inefficiency in the system. Therefore, this study is conducted to examine the current SOPs for DNAA-related summonses and to highlight the challenges faced due to these inconsistencies. By doing so, the study aims to suggest improvements and encourage a more standardized approach across all RTD offices in Malaysia, ensuring fairness, clarity, and better service for all.

According to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in various states, any summons case must remain in "warrant status" for six months. Only after six months (and after being mentioned in court three times) can the case status be changed to "Discharged Not An Acquittal" (DNAA). While the case is still under warrant status, the person with the summons can only settle it through court proceedings. If they wish to avoid going to court, they must wait until the six-month period ends, when the court cancels the case and updates it to DNAA. Only then are they allowed to make payment, and all restrictions such as renewing a driving license, renewing road tax, or handling other Road Transport Department (RTD) transactions, are lifted. If the person fails to attend the first court trial, an arrest warrant will be issued, and the RTD officer will blacklist them, preventing access to services like renewing licenses, road tax, or transferring vehicle ownership.

The problem arises at the DNAA counter due to differences in how SOPs are implemented across states. For the same offense, summons, and timeline, court decisions vary depending on state practices. In some states, DNAA status is granted after the first court mention, while in others it is only given after three mentions. This inconsistency leads to unequal treatment and confusion, especially in terms of the payment process. For example, in one state the offender may be allowed to pay RM300 after one court mention, while in another state, payment is only allowed after three mentions. This study aims to highlight the issues caused by these differences and to propose that SOPs for DNAA-related summons cases be standardized across all states under the RTD. Therefore, the two main objectives of this paper are: (1) to analyze the issues arising from the non-uniformity of SOPs in summons cases leading to DNAA status, and (2) to recommend that SOPs be aligned across all RTD offices in Malaysia.

2. Literature Review

Every organization must have a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to help management monitor employee performance, ensure work meets required standards, and reduce the risk of errors. An SOP is a written document that provides step-by-step instructions on how to carry out specific tasks or activities. It ensures that all staff perform their duties in a consistent and standardized manner, regardless of who carries out the task or when it is performed. SOPs are also useful tools for training employees, as they help create uniformity in how tasks are completed across departments.

In addition to promoting consistency, SOPs support safety and efficiency in various areas such as operations, staff training, and financial procedures. According to Bailey [2], SOPs ensure that all staffs follow the same procedures every time, which leads to predictable and reliable results. Irawan [9,10] emphasized that employees are expected to follow the SOP without deviation to ensure that

transactions remain standardized across all branches of the same organization, no matter where they take place. The concept of standardization, which was once mainly applied in engineering fields, is now widely used in business, organizational management, and social studies. Brunsson *et al.*, [5] described standards as commonly agreed rules that guide how tasks are performed and can be used voluntarily. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO, 2004) defined a standard as a document created and approved by consensus, containing guidelines intended to bring consistency and order to a specific process or context. Brunsson *et al.*, [5] also identified three types of standards: technical vs. non-technical, process vs. result-based, and official decision-making processes versus widespread practice and user agreement. Additionally, Steiner [20] noted that SOPs help organizations comply with legal and regulatory requirements. Many laws demand that institutions and businesses implement and regularly update their SOPs as part of good governance and operational accountability.

Recent research highlights the continued importance and modernization of SOPs in contemporary settings. Winarno *et al.*, [22] found a strong positive relationship between the implementation of SOPs and employee performance. Their study emphasizes that when employees work in a structured and supportive environment, adherence to SOPs significantly enhances productivity and task efficiency. In the context of digital transformation, SOPs have transitioned from static manuals to dynamic, real-time digital workflows. O'Higgins [15] explains that effective SOPs are now integral to business architecture strategies, enabling better organizational alignment, improved service delivery, and enhanced strategic outcomes. This evolution is especially relevant in fast-paced and technology-driven environments.

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) further advances SOP functionality. Kulkarni [11] proposed the use of Large Language Models (LLMs) in handling the workflows, allowing AI systems to execute SOPs by interacting with environments and learning from feedback. These AI-enhanced SOPs provide automation, adaptability, and fault tolerance, setting new standards in operational management.

SOPs also remain critical in training and development. According to Melyng *et al.*, [13], SOPs serve as reliable resources that help new staff understand procedures, reduce onboarding time, and maintain service quality across teams. Furthermore, NSKT Global [14] stressed the role of SOPs in risk mitigation and regulatory compliance. When SOPs incorporate legal guidelines, they help organizations build audit trails, demonstrate accountability, and meet government or industry standards. Overall, the literature confirms that SOPs are not just procedural documents, but strategic tools that contribute to organizational consistency, digital efficiency, legal compliance, and employee performance. Their ongoing refinement, especially with the advancement in technology has reinforced its role in management practices.

2.1 Standard Operation Procedure for Payment of Traffic Fines

According to the Registrar General's Circular "Procedure for Handling Traffic Summons and Arrest Warrants in the Subordinate Courts," states traffic summons cases that are not disposed of on the first mention day because the People were not present on the time of the application of the prosecuting officer (PO), the arrest warrant must be issued on the people with a summons by the judge or magistrate of the hearing court. The date of the next mention must be fixed within two months of the second mention. If on the date of the second mention, the arrest warrant still fails to be produced or the people with a summons still fail to appear, then the date of the third mention must be fixed within two months from the date of the second mention. Next, on the fourth mention, if the arrest warrant or people with a summons still fails to appear, then the summons must be

quashed, and the people with a summons it will be Discharged Not An Acquittal (DNAA). The period from the date of the first mention until the date of the summons is quashed shall not exceed six months.

Any charge that is dropped when the trial has not started and witnesses have not been called is Discharged Not An Acquittal (DNAA), according to legal experts. Discharged Not An Acquittal (DNAA) is a case against an accused individual who was dropped, but the party concerned was not released by the court. to release without release the party concerned is a normal matter from the point of view of national legislation (sinarharian, 2017). And If the Status of the summons is Discharged Not An Acquittal (DNAA), this means that the payment restriction on the summons has been opened, and allows the person who has the summons to settle the summons at any nearby RTD office or branch.

According to the Standard Operating Procedure in the "Procedure for managing the registration and updating of prosecution cases under APJ 1987 and ALPKP 1987" states the prosecution cases if the person with the summons or the attorney appointed there absent, the PO must mention and get the court to decide whether DNAA or issue an Arrest Warrant and update the court's decision as soon as the decision is obtained (subject to court practice in the respective state).

2.2 Types of Traffic Fines

Effective enforcement of road laws is essential to improving road safety outcomes. The decision to obey traffic rules and pay fines is influenced by formal institutions (e.g. laws, court summons, and fines) as well as informal institutions (e.g. norms and cultural aspects). Formal and informal institutions create incentives that must be designed to steer individual behavior toward desired outcomes. Unfortunately, there is no reason to believe that the institutions to deal with traffic violations in South Africa currently create effective incentives. Early payment discounts versus late payment penalties (used in other countries, for example, some states in the US), and the absence of any incentives. In addition, we examine whether the willingness to settle a fine is sensitive to the possibility of detection by the authorities. We found that introducing financial incentives significantly increases voluntary fine payment, regardless of whether prompt payment is encouraged with a discount or late payment is discouraged with a surcharge. In addition, subjects are more sensitive to the possibility of detection when financial incentives are present (Du Plessis *et al.*, [7]).

Table 1 shows examples of similar offenses from different enforcement districts and fines imposed for a certain period of time for the payment of the summons.

Based on Table 1, which outlines the fines for summons payments, it is observed that the impact of late payments and the factors that lead to payment restrictions. In such cases, payments can only be made through the court, and the time period after the court's mention determines whether the fine can be paid at any Road Transport Department location. This process is influenced by the Discharged Not An Acquittal (DNAA) status, which varies depending on the district where the court is located. The Table 1 also highlights the relevant court districts where the summons was issued, in relation to the implementation of SOPs for DNAA cases.

Table 1

Examples of similar offenses from different enforcement districts

A compound case for summon at road transport department can make a payment				
		Don't have a driving license for vehicles <250 cc		
The price of the suit depends on the time of the payment period	1 -15 (days)	16 - 30 (days)	31 - 60 (days)	If the summons are not paid within 60 days, the person who is sued cannot make payment for the such summons and is required to make payment in court only
	RM 100	RM 150	RM 250	
Days 61 - 80 suit has been blocked for preparation of court file for first mention				
All restrictions at a person get summon such as renewing driver's licenses and renewing vehicle road tax as well as other transactions involving the road transport department cannot be done.				
The court that can be Discharged Not An Acquittal (DNAA) for compound cases at road transport department at first mention.		Must pay the summon at the court as the first mention		The court that can be Discharged Not An Acquittal (DNAA) for compound cases at road transport department at the third mention.
Court in Selangor		Fault area		District court other than Selangor
Can pay after the first mention court.	80 days as a first mention	All restrictions at a person get summon such as renewing driver's licenses and renewing vehicle road tax as well as other transactions involving the road transport department cannot be done. Act RTA 1987 Sec.26 (1) except as otherwise provided in this act, no person shall drive a motor vehicle of any class or description, on any road unless he is the holder of a driving license authorizing him to drive a motor vehicle of any class or description that, and no person shall employ or permit another person to drive any motor vehicle on the road unless the person employed or permitted to drive is the holder of such a driving license. (2) any person who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offense and upon conviction may be fined not less than three hundred ringgit and not more than two thousand ringgit or imprisoned for a period not exceeding three months or both.		80 days as a first mention
	140 days as a second mention			140 days as a second mention
	200 days as a third mention			200 days as a third mention
				Can't pay
				Can't pay
				Can pay after the third mention court.
Payment of the summons with a maximum price rm250 all blacklist will be clear after pay a summon				

2.3 Significance of the Study

For cases that miss the compound payment period of 60 days and after that the summons cannot be paid within 20 days to be cited in court as a first mention case, the next 60 days as a second mention court case, and the next 60 days as a third mention case. If the summons is not cleared within the stipulated summons payment period, all transactions such as renewing driver's licenses, road tax and all transactions involving the Road Transport Department will be blocked until the summons is cleared. And the re-opening of the suit in the compound can only be made after being mentioned in court through 2 ways based on Registration management procedure and update of prosecution cases under APJ 1987 and ALPKP 1987 are:

i. Summons can be paid after the first court mention:

Compound summons that has expired, after the first mention of the court depending on the permission of the court can be updated or re-summoned, valid within 80 days and can be paid at any counter of the road transport department

ii. Summons can be paid after the third court mention:

Court mention, which is after 80 days, is not allowed to make a payment except to pay a fine in court depending on the magistrate's decision. And if you want to make a compound payment, you must after the court mention the second time (60 days) and to the 3rd (60 days) mention of the court which is for the next 120 days. Meaning automatically after 200 days, the summons can be updated or re-summoned at any Road Transport Department and the summons can be paid with the maximum rate of the summons fine.

3. Methods

The objective of this study is to determine the factors that lead to differences in the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for compound cases in the road transport department where the term of the compound has expired and re-summon again for Discharge Not An Acquittal (DNAA) has been opened for payment. This section discusses study design and analysis methods.

3.1 Understanding the Current Process

In this study the problem focuses on the non-uniformity of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) on re-summon again by RTD Malaysia for different states. In order to further understand the problem, the current procedure is analyzed. Figure 1 describes a sample of the procedure on Act APJ1987 Sec. 26. The first step is on the Act that can impose a summon on a driver, follow by the failure to pay the summon which ends up with the driver being re-summon and APJ1987 Sec. 26

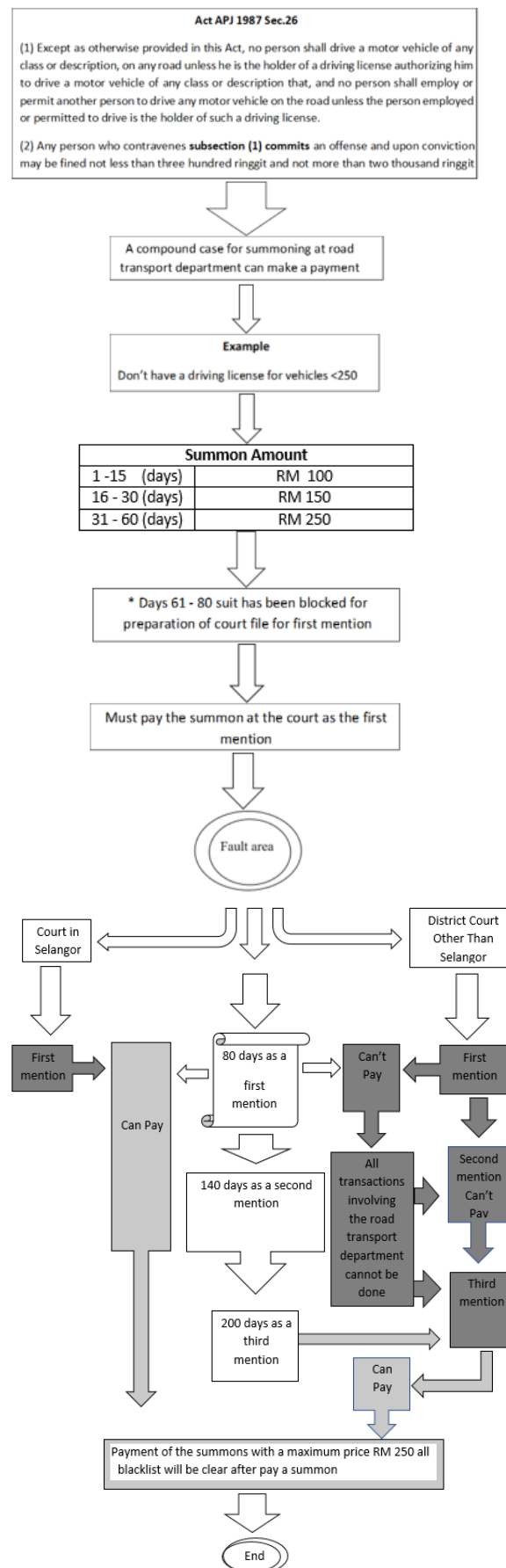


Fig. 1. Description of Act APJ 1987 Sec.26

Note* impose that if the summons is not paid within 60 days, the person who is sued cannot make payment for the summons and is required to make payment in court only. All restrictions on sued people such as renewing driver's licenses and renewing vehicle road tax as well as other transactions involving the road transport department cannot be done. All restrictions on sued people such as wanting to take a driving license, renewing vehicle road tax, and other transactions involving the road transport department cannot be done.

3.2 Data Collection Method

The data has been obtained from RTD Bangi on the confirmation of the head of the enforcement division and the data has been verified by the counter staff cum the summons payment counter. The summons data obtained for the duration of before, during and after the MCO. Hence, data of 5 days of detailed daily transaction payments before the MCO which was from 14 /01/2019 - 18/01/2019, 5 days of detailed daily transaction payments during the MCO which was from 23/01/2020 and 5 days of detailed daily transaction payments after the MCO which was from 24/01/2022-28/01/2022 were collected.

Before doing the analysis, the data was cleaned in order to fit the analysis. Table 2 shows the breakdown of data, based on the dates for payment.

Table 2
Summary of Payment Date for Re-Summons

	The Date Payment of the summons	The Day of Paying the Summons before or after the End of the 60 Day Period for the Summons	The Court District Involved
Before MCO	14/01/2019 - 18/01/2019	• 1 - 15 days	• courts in the state of Selangor • courts other than Selangor
During MCO	24/01/2020 - 28/01/2020	• 16-30 days	
	24/01/2021 - 28/01/2021	• 31- 60 days	
After MCO		• 80- 200 days • 201 and the next day	

3.3 Method of Analysis - Descriptive Statistics

The collected data is analyzed using graphs.

- Bar graph- to examine the distribution of date for paying summon and to compare between the three sets of data (before, during and after MCO)
- Bar arrow- to highlight the issue of DNAA (that disables the driver from making payment)
- Simulation- to simulate the potential effect of the amended procedure.

4. Results and Discussion

In this section, explaining the evaluation through the data obtained and the results of the data study prove the cause of the difference in the implementation of SOP according to the difference in the court in the district of the person sued for committing an offense.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The summons data obtained is the summons data of 5 days of detailed daily transaction payments before the MCO which is from 14 /01/2019 - 18/01/2019, 5 days of detailed daily transaction payments during the MCO which is from 23/01/2020 and 5 days of detailed daily transaction payments after the MCO which is from 24/01/2022-28/01/2022.

Table 3 summarised the data obtained from the Bangi Branch Road Transport department, Selangor that cumulates the total transaction within the state. It was found that the number of people paying summons is increasing from before the MCO with the collection of summons payments for 5 days amounting to RM31370. During the MCO, the amount of summons payment collection increased to RM37780 within 5 days and the sum of summons payment collection continued to increase by RM56100 after the MCO. This shows that the number of people who come to the RTD Bangi branch for summons payment matters increases from one period to another, which is 5 days before the MCO, 5 days during the MCO and 5 days after the MCO.

Table 3
Summary of summon issued until days completed

Description		1-15 (Days)	16-30 (Days)	31- 60 (Days)	80-200 (Days)	More than 201 Days	Total
Before MCO	Amount (RM)	23250	4070	0	1000	3050	31370
	Number of summons	141	22	0	4	11	178
During MCO	Amount (RM)	11980	17550	0	300	8050	37880
	Number of summons	116	113		1	28	258
After MCO	Amount (RM)	20600	26800	0	0	8700	56100
	Number of summons	191	162			30	383

Figure 2 illustrates the total amount of summons payments and the corresponding number of days taken to make those payments, segmented into three periods: before, during, and after the Movement Control Order (MCO). Prior to the MCO, the highest amount of payments was made within 1–15 days, while the lowest payments occurred within the 80–200 day range. Payment amounts for the 16–30 day and over 200 day periods were relatively similar.

During the MCO, the highest payment amounts shifted to the 16–30 day range, likely due to limited driver mobility and restrictions in place at the time. Payments during the 80–200 day period remained low, and in some cases, non-existent. This is because that range often involves court proceedings, and courts were closed during the MCO, preventing any payment from being made.

After the MCO, the pattern continued, with the highest amount of payments still observed in the 16–30 day period. Figure 2 also includes directional arrows to indicate data distribution across each period. These arrows show significant deviations, particularly during the 80–200 day period, with some values falling into the negative range. This negative value reflects situations in which payment could not be made due to court restrictions during the MCO period.

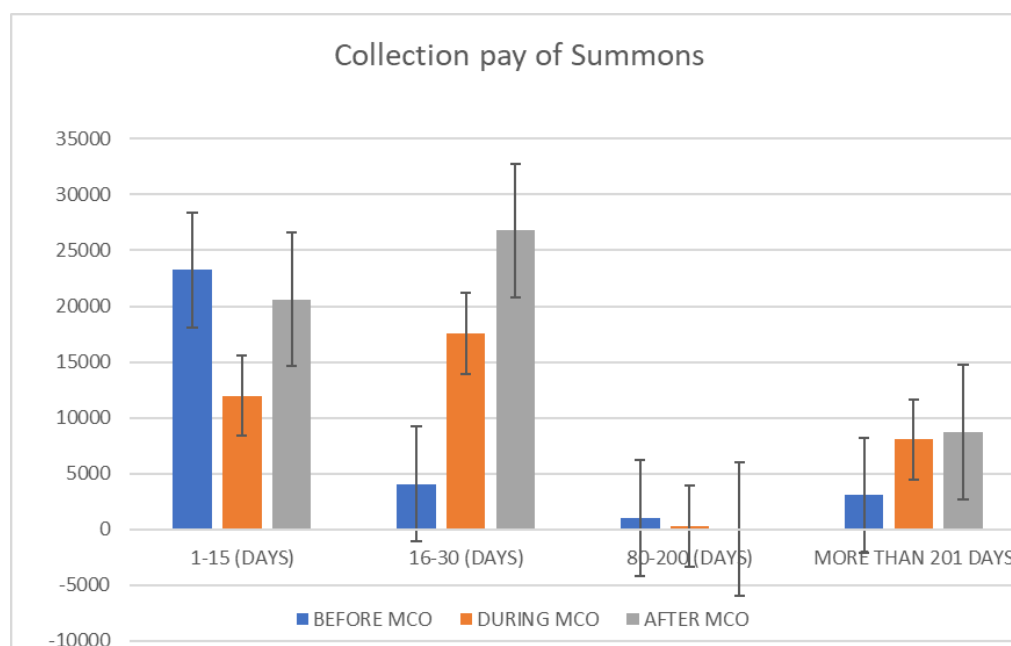


Fig. 2. Distribution of Summon Amount Days to Pay

Table 4 shows the amount of summons paid in Selangor and summons other than the state of Selangor. Before the MCO with a total of 178 summonses, that is 167 summonses paid with a percentage of 93.8% and 11 summonses from other states with a percentage of 9.7%. After the MCO the number of summons collected increased to 258 which is from Selangor with 230 with a percentage of 89.1% and other than Selangor with a total of 28 summons which is 21.3% percent. While after the MCO the number of summons paid increased more to 383 total summons paid from Selangor as much as 353 which is 92.2% and other than the state of Selangor as many as 30 summons with 15.5% percent.

Table 4

The percentage of summons paid in Selangor

	Number of Summons			Amount of Summons (More than 201 Days)		
	Selangor	Total	Percentage	SELANGOR	Total (RM)	Percentage
Before MCO	167	178	93.8%	3050	31370	9.7%
During MCO	230	258	89.1%	8050	37880	21.3%
After MCO	353	383	92.2%	8700	56100	15.5%

Compared to Figure 2, different payment pattern was observed in Figure 3 due to different SOP.

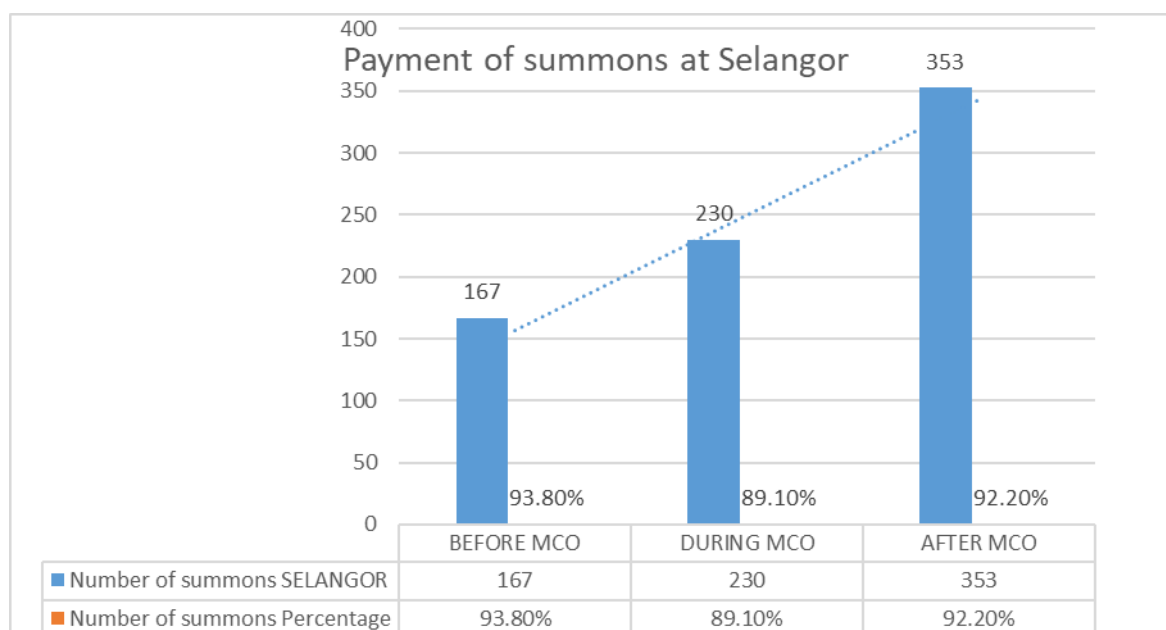


Fig. 3. Payment of summon distribution in Selangor

4.2 Process Improvement

In this section, potential improvement throughout the process is identified based on two scenarios.

Scenario 1: How the non -uniformity of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) affect the case of Discharges Not An Acquittal (DNAA) in RTD Malaysia?

According to the Registrar General's Circular "Procedure for Handling Traffic Summons and Arrest Warrants in the Subordinate Courts," states traffic summons cases that are not disposed of on the first mention day because the People were not present on the time of the application of the prosecuting officer (PO), the arrest warrant must be issued on the people with a summons by the judge or magistrate of the hearing court. The date of the next mention must be fixed within two months of the second mention. If on the date of the second mention, the arrest warrant still fails to be produced or the people with a summons still fail to appear, then the date of the third mention must be fixed within two months from the date of the second mention.

This means that lawsuits that have passed the compound period of the compound period can only be paid after the 3rd court mention. Meanwhile, according to the Standard Operating Procedure in "Procedures for managing the registration and updating of prosecution cases under APJ 1987 and ALPKP 1987" states prosecution cases if the person with the summons or the lawyer appointed there is not present, the PO must mention and get the court to decide whether to DNAA or issue an Arrest Warrant and update the court decision once the decision is obtained (subject to court practice in each state).

This means that each state practices Discharged Not An Acquittal (DNAA) cases according to the court district where the offense was committed.

Figure 4 indicates the step proposed to be excluded for other states. This proposal should be able to reduce the number of summons being hold after 200 days in other state (not including Selangor)

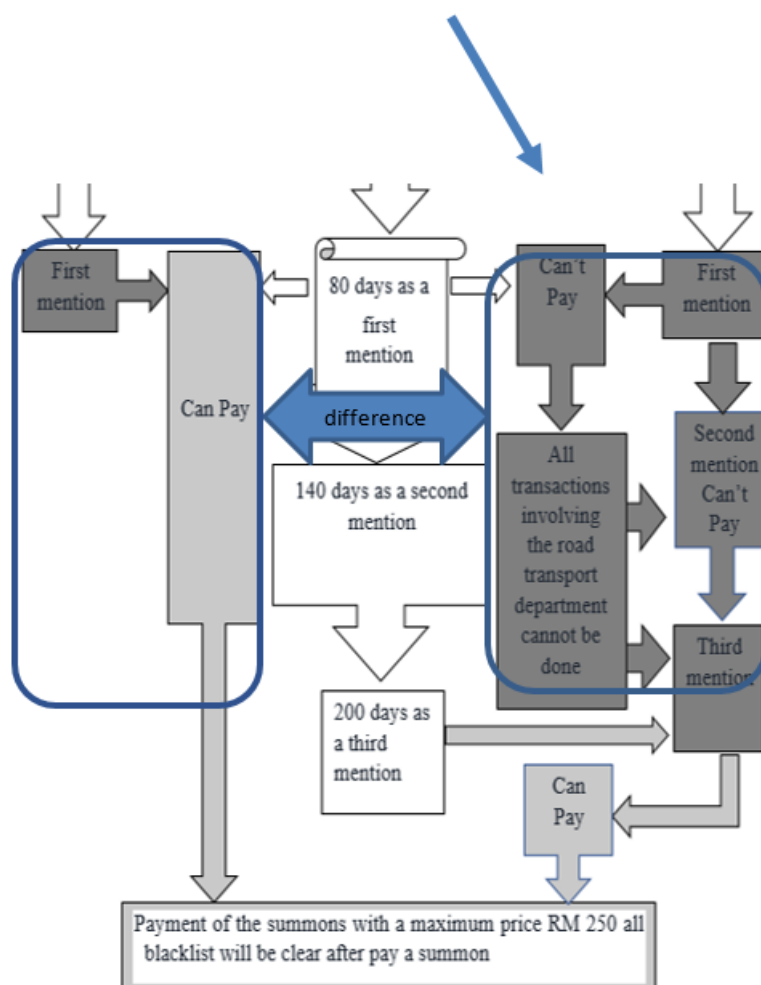


Fig. 4. The proposed amended procedure for standardization

Scenario 2: What is the best alternative solution for improvement and how to overcome it?

The best alternative solution for improvement is to coordinate the SOP for the re-summons of cases that can be compounded according to the SOP practiced by the courts in the state of Selangor, which is the re-summons of Discharged Does Not Mean An Acquittal (DNAA) cases are allowed to make payment after the first mention.

In this section, the proposed amended procedure is simulated and recalculated for Selangor. The result is summarised in Table 5. It can be concluded that total of member of summons that can be cleared in less than 200 days can be 100%, as no more summons is categorised as more than 201 days.

Table 5

Simulated result based on process improvement in Selangor

Description		Within 1-80days	80-200 (days)	Before More than 201 days	Amended (New) 80-200 (days)
Before MCO	Amount (RM)	27320	1000	3050	4050
	Number of summons	163	4	11	15
During MCO	Amount (RM)	29530	300	8050	8350
	Number of summons	229	1	28	29
After MCO	Amount (RM)	47400	0	8700	8700
	Number of summons	353		30	30

5. Conclusion

From the findings of this study, several important conclusions can be drawn. One of the main issues identified is the inconsistency in the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for summons payment across different states in Malaysia. For example, in Selangor, individuals who have been sued or summoned in court are allowed to make payment immediately after the first mention of the case. However, in other states, such as those outside Selangor, individuals are only allowed to make the payment after the third mention of the case, which typically takes place around the 201st day. This difference creates confusion and delays in the payment process. As a result, people who are willing and ready to pay their summonses are not able to do so simply because of the district in which the case is being handled. Such inconsistencies make the legal process more complicated and unfair for the individuals involved.

Additionally, the study found that many individuals who were sued or summoned also failed to make the payment on time. This failure to pay has direct consequences, especially in relation to services offered by the Road Transport Department (RTD). When a person has unpaid summonses, they are often blocked from renewing essential documents like their driver's license and road tax. These services are critical for ensuring that vehicles are legally allowed on the road and that drivers are properly licensed. When people are unable to renew their licenses or road tax, they may continue to use their vehicles illegally, exposing themselves to more legal risks and potential penalties.

The delay and restrictions in summons payment can lead to a cycle of increasing problems. When someone cannot pay their summons due to SOP restrictions, they are also blocked from performing RTD-related transactions. This can result in them being stopped at roadblocks and facing further legal action. In some cases, individuals may even attempt to flee from roadblocks to avoid arrest or further punishment, creating dangerous situations for both them and others. This can escalate what began as a simple traffic offense into a much more serious legal matter. Such outcomes could easily be avoided if there were a more straightforward and consistent system in place.

Based on these issues, it is strongly recommended that the SOPs for summons payment be standardized across all states in Malaysia. The RTD Malaysia should ensure that the Summons Payment Counter and the Enforcement Division follow the same procedures nationwide. This will help prevent confusion and make the legal process more efficient and fairer. Regardless of the district where the offense was committed, the procedures for paying a compound summons should be the same. Standardizing the SOP would not only help the public fulfill their legal responsibilities more easily, but it would also improve the efficiency and credibility of the legal and administrative system. Overall, a unified SOP would reduce delays, prevent unnecessary legal complications, and help ensure safer roads for everyone.

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