

Research article

Public Response to COVID-19 in the Media: Are You Anxious or in Awe?

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Abstract.

People today are more disoriented as a result of COVID-19. People are often confused as a result of the abundance of information provided by all forms of offline and online media. The purpose of this paper was to look at how people reacted to the government's handling of COVID-19 in the media. Data were gathered from social media and television content that depicted the public's reactions and attitudes toward the government's COVID-19 handling policy. After that, the data were analyzed using an interpretive approach. The findings revealed three distinct types of public reactions: anxiety, awe, and silliness. People were more likely to experience anxiety, fear and panic, as well as panic buying, spreading hoaxes, refusing to have rapid tests or PCR tests, isolating themselves, and avoiding medical personnel. Some people, on the other hand, reacted by displaying positive messages, positive support, and humor. Also, others indicated that they would do things like forge signatures, flee the hospital/isolation room, confiscate and dismantle coffins, be desperate to break health protocols, travel and vacation while ignoring risks, and try to influence the officers when they returned home. The three types of responses of anxiety, awe and ridiculousness highlighted different people's awareness and knowledge of COVID-19.

Keywords: COVID-19, pandemic, new media, anxious, awe, ridiculous or silly, literate

1. Introduction

The increase in psychological pressure due to Covid-19 is not caused by the virus, but due to the selection, sorting and absorption of misinformation obtained from various sources which are then uploaded on social media[1], [2]. Social media has become another alternative regarding Covid-19 information, as a way out of the limited information provided by the government[3], [4]. Social media is a space for public expression related to Covid-19 with various responses[1], [5], [6]. Therefore, it is also positioned as the source of truth, where the validity of the source is no longer important[7], [8]. What is considered as the truth of social media is no longer whether the source of the news is valid and traceable or confirmed, but how quickly and often the news arrives and ultimately affects the people who then spread the news [9][10]. New media forms its

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own truth interpreted by the subject and it experiences justification in the post truth era like today[11], [12].

Recently, writing about news and uploads in the media related to Covid-19 seems depending on the most widely reported issues or content that are most widely reported, people's response regarding Covid-19[13], encouragement or reasons for people to upload news[14][10], [15], [16]; and also see the positive and negative sides of the media on Covid-19 [9], [16], [17][18]. This paper will complement the findings of previous research by examining the responses and reactions of the public through posts on social media related to Covid-19. Research on public reactions and responses is important to identify whether the reactions and responses of the Indonesian people have the same tendency as people in other countries who are also exposed to Covid-19[19][16]], [20]], [[10] or has its own characteristics. It is important that the reaction and response of the Indonesian people be known and mapped as a basis for the government to choose the most appropriate news platform and also to convey information more effectively and meet public expectations. Delivering accurate and easily understood information affects the level of acceptance and reaction of the community[7] and information that is clear and easy to understand has a significant effect on the rate of virus spread[8].

Departing from this issue, this paper aims to examine the reactions and responses of the Indonesian people regarding Covid-19 uploaded on social media and online media. Social media and online media uploads related to Covid-19 can show the tendency of community characteristics as a reflection of their social, cultural, and religious values. Guess explains that people who share the news believe that the news is the truth, even though they do not know whether the news is fake or not[21]. What is uploaded and then shared on social media may be believed to be the truth, although that is not necessarily true.

This paper is based on the argument that new media is a free alternative channel for the public to express thoughts and feelings related to Covid-19, both in the form of positive and negative reactions. The public reacts to Covid-19 information and responds through uploads on social media which are divided into three attitudes, namely anxious attitude which explains fear and trauma and is shown in the form of panic buying, spreading hoaxes, refusing to do rapid or SWAB, exclusion of patients and their families, to stigmatization of health workers. The second attitude is awe which explains an optimistic, rational attitude, and is also active in sharing positive and inspiring news. While the third attitude is in the form of a ridiculous response which is shown in the form of faking a signature, escaping from the hospital/isolation room, confiscation and dismantling of coffins, desperate to violate health protocols, traveling and vacations

by ignoring risks, to manipulation of officers while going home. The three responses reflect the categorization of society which is also divided into three, namely the literate community, namely people who are literate and have adequate knowledge regarding Covid-19 information; illiterate society, namely people who have the wrong attitude about Covid-19 information but ignore information filters; and an alliterate society, namely people who have knowledge but are apathetic/indifferent, and ultimately act irrationally and ridiculously.

2. Literature Review

2.1. New Media and Covid-19 as Infodemic

Social media has two sides to the coin. On the one hand, it can serve to spread information about viruses, but on the other hand, it can also be very dangerous if the spread of the information is wrong and difficult to trace the truth. The power of social media has been proven by many studies to have a major role in disseminating information without any filter of truth[22]. The position of the power of information through social media and online information is the truth that can be distorted and there is manipulation of the truth. This manipulated information is often referred to as fake news.[23]. Society is so easy and fast to get any information just by typing one word on the internet. When someone searches for news on social media, automatically, the media will continue to present news and content that is similar. The internet system has made it possible for the human mind and the movement of the human finger to present information easily which is called the echo chamber / filter bubble[12], [11], [24].

During the Covid-19 pandemic, what frightened the public is not only the virus but also the confusion of information related to this disease. Too much information is distorted that accompanies the spread of the virus, starting from how it spreads, preventing the virus with certain ingredients and foods, to the emergence of conspiracy theories[25][26], [27]. The spread of the virus is much more deadly and has been declared by the WHO as *infodemic*[7], a term that refers to the rapid, massive, and unstoppable dissemination of information. The *infodemic* will lead to misinformation among the public, which Chou defines as a claim to false facts caused by a lack of scientific evidence.[28]. This has led to a new crisis during the pandemic, namely not only virology but also virality, which is spreading very rapidly not only the virus but also information (much more misleading) regarding this outbreak.[29], [30]. The *infodemic* crisis, as explained by Tedros, from WHO is far more contagious than the virus itself[31].

The report from WHO also states that the information disseminated by WHO is far behind hoaxes and speculation over the theory of confirmation of this virus.[32]. The covid -19 *infodemic* has actually caused panic and anxiety and trauma to the community[24], [16], [31]. As a result of misinformation it causes many people to act rashly, for example, during the lock down period, people experience panic buying by buying up and hoarding a lot of food, thus ignoring the risk of social distancing by forming a crowd, physical touch[33]. Misinformation has also led people to ignore health protocols such as wearing the wrong mask or not wearing a mask at all.

2.2. Community attitudes and responses

The power of social media as the creator of truth is not the first time this has occurred during a pandemic. This misinformation has been declared by the World Economic Forum as one of the ten most problematic cases in the world in 2013[12]. The power of new media during the pandemic has rediscovered its momentum with post truth conditions[22], [12]. The post truth era with the power of new media makes it difficult to find the truth, because it becomes difficult for people to change their beliefs due to the fact that the facts offered are no longer interesting[12]. Anyone has the right and opportunity to post anything and even share it widely with others. In social media, there is no editor or reviewer mechanism that will validate whether the information is correct, valid and the source of truth can be accounted for.[1], [2]. Information spread in the post truth era makes it difficult to identify itself, because the boundary between fact or reality and just an opinion becomes vague[34]. The worst thing about the effect of distortion of truth in information on social media is if people do not believe the statements of medical experts[8]and trust more massive news spread. The facilities provided by new media also obscure the differences between educated and less educated people because there are almost no more categories of people who are literate and not.[35]. In remote areas, the people have even been touched by the internet, if there is electricity and network providers in that area. The massive coverage of Covid-19 during this pandemic caused people to experience difficulty in sorting out true news from fake news, even the emotional aspect was more prominent than the rational one.[2]. The rational response of society is very dependent on the values and beliefs that have been held so far, people will not easily believe in the truth if there is less media literacy, low emotional intelligence, and also less open to logical thinking.[33].

On the other hand, there are also people who respond to the pandemic crisis more rationally and respond on social media in a more relaxed even humorous manner [13].

People who see the pandemic crisis in a different way do not mean to ignore this virus, but rather choose to react to it rationally and are also psychologically encouraged to keep their hearts from anxiety and fear due to information that is still circulating in various online news and social media. Humor can boost your immune system or reduce stress, at least in the short term[36], [37].

3. Research Method

Data collection is carried out by tracing online information reports, in the form of newspapers, magazines, websites, TV broadcasts, and social media which contain information about the attitudes and responses of the public in response to Indonesian government policies in overcoming COVID-19. In addition, tracing is also carried out by gathering viral conversations on social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp groups, how people respond to government policies related to Covid-19.

This online information is collected by browsing information content through keyword searches in the headline and news content relating to government policy issues to overcome the spread of the virus and how people respond and behave towards it. Searching for information online began with the news of March-September 2020. March was the starting point for Indonesia to announce that there were patients exposed to the corona virus until September, which the Indonesian government called the new normal period.

The data were collected, categorized into certain aspects concerning various public responses related to government policies to overcome Covid-19, in the form of anxious responses, anxious responses, and ridiculous responses with indicators that lead to each of these responses. Data analysis was carried out by using a content analysis approach with various news and messages, both through online news, websites, social media and television broadcast content that contained public responses and attitudes in responding to government policies to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

4. Results and Discussion

News and government policies related to the handling of Covid-19 have led to various responses and reactions from the public uploaded on social media and online media. Social media and online media become media to convey messages and intentions freely in various forms. Because of its freedom, the distribution is as found by Lewandowsky[22]escaped the truth filter. Even so, this information, which WHO calls

an *infodemic*, continues to attack people’s awareness and way of thinking, whose effects are far more dangerous than the pandemic itself.[7], [29], [30], even the preachers beat the official news about the pandemic. The response and reaction of the community shows their feelings and conscience in responding to Covid-19 and the handling carried out by the government. Uploads and news related to the public’s response and reaction to the corona virus handling policy are shown in the form of anxious responses, anxious responses, and ridiculous responses.

4.1. Anxious Response

Public anxiety can be seen from panic buying, spreading hoaxes, refusing to do rapid or SWAB, isolating patients, and their families, stigmatizing health workers. Anxiety is a marker of a person’s psychological disruption. Covid-19, which appeared suddenly around the world, is one of the causes of public anxiety. Anxiety can lead to inappropriate and sometimes irrational attitudes and actions.

TABLE 1

Content	Code
Preventing the Coronavirus Crisis, residents bought masks and basic necessities	Panic Buying
Residents buy up APL which causes scarcity and prices to rise	Panic Buying
Covid-19 is a conspiracy	Influenced by conspiracy theories
Corona will not lose to high doses of vitamin C	Hoax Spread
Basking in the hot sun will prevent Covid-19	Hoax Spread
Eating boiled eggs in the middle of the night can prevent the corona virus	Hoax Spread
Drinking herbs and spices can keep the corona virus away	Hoax Spread
Residents refuse to carry out rapid tests and swabs	Resisting Rapid and Swab
The medical personnel complained about accusations from residents	Medical personnel stigmatization
Medical personnel were evicted from boarding, excommunicated, and their children bullied	Medical personnel stigmatization
The families of Covid-19 patients are shunned by neighbors	Patients and their families are isolated

The lockdown policy, PSBB (large-scale social restrictions) or other terms used have caused many people to accumulate large amounts of basic needs (panic buying) in almost all regions of Indonesia that enforce this policy. [38]. This condition is a symptom that is endemic in almost all of the world who have been exposed to Covid-19 and have

implemented a lock down policy[33]. The purchase of personal protective equipment by the community also causes the availability of these tools to become scarce (KompasTV, 22 March 2020). Anxiety is also shown by spreading hoaxes, both related to virus issues connected with conspiracy theories (Republika, 2020; Kompas, 2020; TribunNews, 2020), as found by several studies.[25][26], [27]. Controversy over rapid and swab tests (Ferdiaz, 2020; DetikNews, 2020) in Indonesia has also become a common case, as well as drugs and foods that can ward off viruses, such as eating boiled eggs in the middle of the night to drinking spices.[39], [40]. Hoax in Covid-19 reporting is a very confusing issue that can even create fake news which cannot be verified.[23]. Hoaxes get the power to continue to be present because the communication system and the connectedness of topics to one another in social media are controlled by what is called an echo chamber / filter bubble[12], [11], [24]. The use of media that causes various social, economic, cultural, political, and even religious effects is claimed by the World Economic Forum as one of the 10 most problematic cases in the world in 2013[12]. The various actions taken by the public indicate an increasing sense of anxiety over the rapid spread of this virus[24], [16], [31].

Anxiety about being accused of being a covid-19 patient makes some Indonesians refuse when officers will carry out a rapid test or swab, as happened in Lombok, West Java, Central Lombok, West Kalimantan, even some patients choose to run away when they are going to be tested, as what happened in Kendari [41]. Market traders in Bogor even expelled officers who wanted to carry out the Rapid test (CNN Indonesia, June 11, 2020). Anxiety is caused by feeling fine (so that they do not need to undergo any tests), fear and boredom when quarantined, or fear of being convicted as a Covid-19 patient which is considered a disaster or sin. In addition, anxiety about being infected makes the public have the heart to ostracize neighbors, relatives, or people categorized as a patient with Covid-19, even before the person has undergone a new test to the extent that he is suspected of having contact with a Covid patient.[42]. The community in Sragen also demonstrated exclusion and even stigmatization of medical personnel, where a nurse was ostracized by the local community for examining Covid-19 patients[43], [44]. This is the case in several other areas in Indonesia[45], [46], [47].

For those who are anxious, their anxiety level is caused by the consumption of news that they receive also from dubious news. He is unable to filter which news is true and which is classified as fake news. People who are anxious are thus an illiterate group, they know enough about the news about Covid-19 from various media, but they realize that they are not strong enough to filter, so what happens is constant anxiety and acts less logically.

4.2. Awe Response

Not all people react to Covid-19 news and policies with anxiety. There are some people who respond positively and quite rationally. Public expression of anxiety is shown by giving messages of optimism, active support and positivism, even humorous response [13]. Some people respond to Covid-19 by taking attitudes that are more inspirational and positive, some are actively collecting funds through their respective social media, especially public figures, even carrying out campaigns against Covid-19 in ways wise, even with a funny message / humor.

The community makes subtle satire against residents who do not wear masks, still make efforts to get together for something that is less important, so they are still doing tourism or traveling during the pandemic as told by Aming in his Instagram status [48].

The humorous response was shown by residents of motorbikes who returned to their village of Eid in the middle of the pandemic by writing on the back of their backs (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VAH43IR0R7I&feature=youtu.be>). Posters and memes are also shown playfully as messages to prevent the spread of the virus from spreading, as some evidence below:

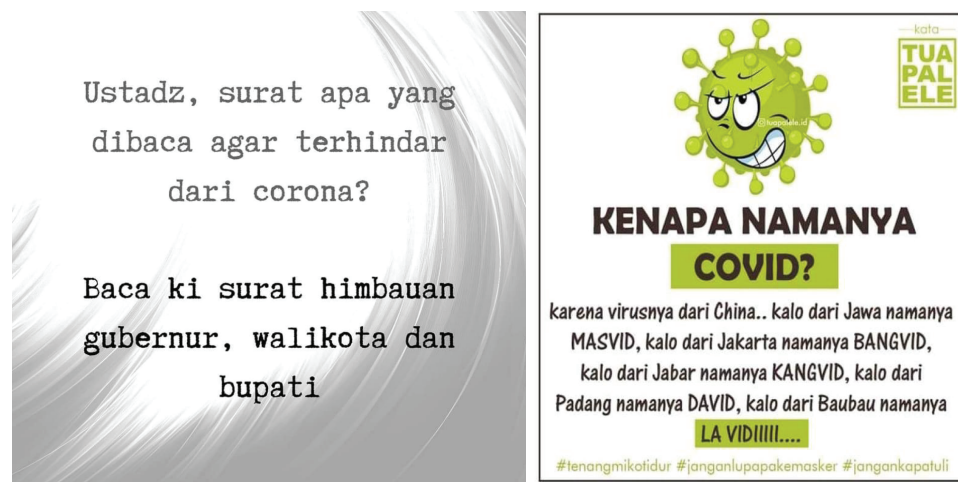


Figure 1: Covid-19 funny memes.

Awe experienced by residents about how to protect themselves from Covid-19 in a religious manner, for example the community responded by posting a meme that the letter that must be read for Muslims to avoid Covid-19 is to read the government's appeal, both central and regional governments. Likewise, the fear of corona has been diverted in a humorous manner with a lighter interpretation that even marks the virus and is associated with the naming of the virus based on ethnic groups in Indonesia. Two memes as picture 1 illustrates the message of the antics.

The community shows alternative ways to invite them to implement social distancing and physical distancing policies in a wiser way even using local languages, as in the following poster:



Figure 2: Antics in the Poster.

The community chooses to respond to stubbornness and disobedience to the policy of staying at home not by means of instructive and threatening ways, but rather by means of local wisdom as shown in Figure 2 and also lighter sanctions for acceptance, as on the left in Figure 3.

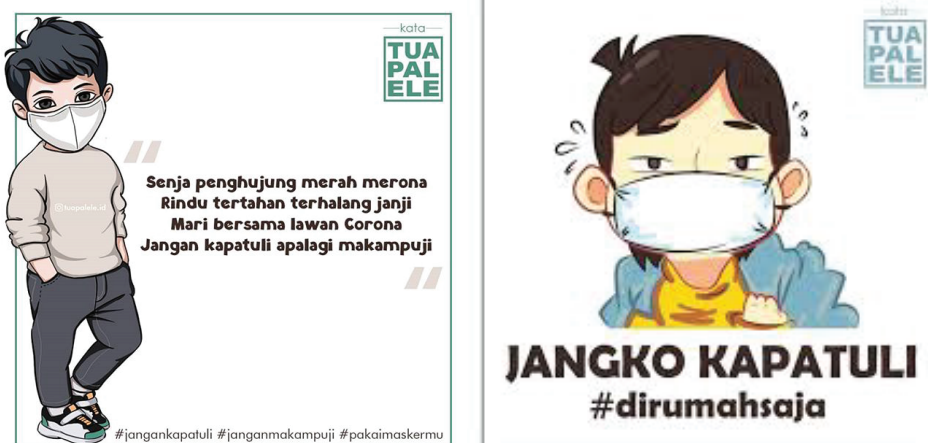


Figure 3: light memes and popular local dialect.

Likewise, the above meme was uploaded to convey a message that is more fluid, acceptable, and uses humorous caricatures and uses languages that are more familiar to the younger generation. The crisis period faced lightly relaxed, without neglecting the substance is an effort to maintain body immunity and humor as one of the media. Crisis can not only be faced with stress, but it requires other media channels that can relieve stress and pressure, although perhaps in the short term.[36], [37].

People who respond are anxious to understand the Covid-19 issue and have control over the existing news and including being able to control themselves not to easily believe any news without checking the truth further. Parties in this category are included in the literal category. Even further, he was able to respond to the pandemic crisis in a relaxed, fluid manner, and offered humorous alternatives and jokes (laughs at the virus itself).

4.3. Silly Response

The community shows silly responses in various actions, including falsifying signatures in order to travel, as happened to DPR members in one of the districts in Southeast Sulawesi (ZonaSultra, 30 July 2020). Other desperate actions were shown by residents by fleeing from the hospital or isolation room,[41], [49][50]even traveling outside the region (ZonaSultra, 5 July 2020). The opportunity to run away from the hospital was caused by worrying about being avoided by neighbors, and some even considered it a mere project. There are residents who can travel even though they have tested positive, as in Southeast Sulawesi due to differences in test results between hospitals and other health units, in addition to the ease of traveling by land or sea in the Southeast Sulawesi region without the enforcement of strict regulations such as at airports .

In several regions in Indonesia, cases of confiscation and even dismantling of coffins that have been declared positive for Covid have been challenged and have even received resistance from the community [51][52],[53],[54],[55], as happened in Kolaka Southeast Sulawesi and Makassar South Sulawesi (Kompas, 2020), in Blora, Central Java (DetikNews, 2020), Manado (MetroTV, 2020), Surabaya (TribunNews, 2020). Debating and even against officers in the case of confiscation of bodies is more driven by the desire to treat the family's corpse more appropriately and in the act of confiscation that is carried out puts forward the emotional aspect rather than rational[2]. For groups of people who act unreasonably as in the case of confiscation of bodies, it becomes difficult for people to distinguish between opinions and actual reality. A person does not easily trust anyone other than the truth that he believes[34]. In fact, in some cases of confiscation of bodies in Indonesia, the patient's family has even been involved in an argument against medical officers in the form of explaining the covid procedure and the risks[8].

The tradition of people who like to celebrate joy or gratitude is also still ongoing while still practicing the tradition of gathering and eating. This celebration was actually carried out as a sign of gratitude for traders in the Solo market after being declared negative for

Covid-19 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3KBXw7AqKg&feature=youtu.be>). The thanksgiving was carried out by traders as a socialization to the public that the market was free of Covid-19. Citizens continue to take walks and holidays as if they were not in a pandemic. Weekend holidays and Eid al-Adha are actually moments for people to leave the house and spend their holidays in various tourist attractions that are already open to the public.[56],[57]. The great desire to go home before the Eid al-Fitr 1441 H holiday makes residents desperate to go home to disregard health protocols (CNN Indonesia, 2020). Some residents also did various ways to get through the officers' inspection[58],[59], even manipulation of officers during homecoming (KompasTV). Some are hiding behind pick-up cars, some even rent travel cars.

TABLE 2

Content	Code
Board members forged Covid-free certificates to travel	Dare to fake a signature
Covid patients run to the hospital	Escape
Traders held thanksgiving after being declared negative for Covid, ignoring health protocols	Free from covid but close to the potential of covid
Giving BLT ignores health protocols	Ignore the huge risk of contracting it
Forcibly unload the covid-19 coffin	Resistance to medical procedures
Desperate to bring home the body of Covid-19	Resistance to medical procedures
Residents continue to do weekend holidays and Eid al-Adha during the pandemic	Perform activities that endanger the health of oneself, family and others
Homecoming during a pandemic by ignoring health protocols	Ignore the huge risk of contracting it
Homecoming tactics during a pandemic so that officers do not find out	Ignore the huge risk of contracting it

The various ridiculous attitudes shown by the community blur the line between someone who is highly educated and those who do not or have knowledge of Covid and those who do not[35]. People who respond to covid-19 with ridiculous responses have insufficient knowledge and understanding of the virus and end up taking unreasonable actions, endangering themselves, their families, and others. This group is included in the alliteral category. It may also be that they are aware of the dangers of the virus but remain indifferent, because this is against their beliefs and habits so far. Manipulation of letters, escaping from the hospital, and confiscating the bodies are all unreasonable actions carried out by people who ignore the risk of contracting the virus. This can

happen, as emphasized by Ahinkorah, due to a lack of media knowledge, prioritizing emotions and lack of logical thinking[33].

Various responses and public reactions to the spread of covid-19 shown on social media underline the power of new media in the post truth era [22], [12]. Hoaxes that have already spread widely and create anxiety, moreover, ridiculous responses are no longer determined by the validity of the news[1], [2]However, the speed and frequency of the news is uploaded and distributed and it has rolled wildly because there is no editor or reviewer for the posted news. So do not be surprised if the antidote, deterrent and cure of the corona virus spreads quickly and the public already believes. Public trust in the media categorizes the community into three responses, namely the anxiety response represented by the literate group, the anxiety response shown by the illiterate community group, and the silliness response represented by the illiterate group.

5. Conclusion

The response and reaction of the public on social media related to the handling of Covid-19 has caused various reactions, not only positive, but also negative, even destructive and dangerous. The variety of public responses and reactions on social media cannot be separated from the sources of knowledge and understanding of the community from various media, both online media, social media, and television news and the extent of their attachment and trust to these media. People who have good filters will be positive and active in countering even humorous responses to the virus during a pandemic crisis. On the other hand, people who have less filters will be easily influenced by anxiety and fear. Meanwhile,

This study enriches previous studies that have looked at the public response to the spread of Covid-19 in almost all over the world. However, this research fills in the gaps of previous studies that found the response of the ridiculous attitude of the Indonesian people regarding Covid-19. The findings of this study indicate that the public still needs reliable information according to their level of knowledge and understanding. On the other hand, the government needs to provide massive, clearer and more reliable media of information to prevent anxious attitudes, especially silly attitudes that can actually pose a greater risk, both to oneself, family and others. Aside from that,

This study is limited to online media in examining the community's response to Covid-19 and has not yet corroborated it with data in the field. Direct public response and reactions are very important to get a broader and richer view of how the community responds more completely to handling the spread of Covid-19. Media coverage and real

data in the field will be able to find alternatives and solutions to find ways to give, share, and control news and information related to viruses during a pandemic. In line with that,

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