



# TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC POLICY AS A NATIONAL STRATEGY TO OVERCOME THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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## Abstract

The emergence of Covid-19 has made various activities such as economics, politics to education experience setbacks. Therefore, different countries that are feeling the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic immediately take multiple ways to overcome this problem. The transparency of policies made by the government has a critical role in providing effective decision-making in creating policies to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic. This research then aims to see how public policy transparency can help overcome the Covid-19 pandemic. In the discussion, this study will look at various countries that implement public policy transparency when facing a pandemic, so the Indonesian state can later learn. This research will be carried out using a qualitative approach with a comparative study method. The results of this study found that transparency in the governance system during Covid-19 will be the key to the success of this pandemic problem. Through this openness, the accuracy of mobilization and coordination from the government will result in good public participation so that, in the end, public policies can be implemented effectively.

7403

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## A. INTRODUCTION

A pandemic is the spread of a disease or epidemic that moves across countries and is a large-scale epidemic. Black Death, Spanish Flu, Asian Flu, Hong Kong Flu, HIV/AIDS, Smallpox, cholera, Dengue Fever, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), Avian Influenza (H7N9), Swine Flu (H1N1), Ebola, Zika, are a series of cases due to viruses that have attacked throughout the history of epidemic and pandemic cases in

the world. In 2020, more than 160 countries around the globe were devastated due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly affected economic activity, education, and even society (Mercer, 2021).

The dilemma of various countries in the world in tackling the Corona Virus Disease-19 (COVID-19) Pandemic has become a concern between one country and another. Government transparency is a guide during this epidemic that attacks the core human respiratory system (Hamza &



Kulkarni, 2022). Government policies to deal with COVID-19 are an effort to protect civil society from external parties, which at any time can become a time bomb and threaten public safety. A nationwide approach for combating COVID-19 is the state policy of providing adequate health services. Interestingly, not all nations use identical policies. This is because the capacity of each region within a nation might vary (Jones, 2020).

The urgency of this paper is that when there is an imbalance in the capacity of a region or country in fulfilling adequate facilities, government transparency is the key for all countries in uniting voices to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to understand that government transparency to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial for the state to implement because, after all, people have the right to feel safe in their country. The research is expected to be helpful as a national scientific reference with the learning experience method as a recommendation in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Good Governance: Transparency**

Good governance is a fundamental right for citizens to their government. Good governance channeled through services to the community has the basic structure of the state constitution. Some crucial points from obtaining the right to good governance are the right to inform, freedom of the press, and environmental protection. The United Nations Development Program classifies good governance as consisting of participation, transparency, responsiveness, accountability, legitimacy, cooperation, the rule of law, consensus orientation, equality, effectiveness and efficiency, strategic vision, resource truth, ecological health, empowerment, and spatial foundation in society (Scherer & Voegtlin, 2020). Good

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governance is based on the following indicators: placing all activities on a demand-driven basis; developing community-centric activities and seeking community participation; ensuring transparency in administration and decision-making processes; enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of essential services; and ensuring equality in the distribution of benefits to those in need (Dror, 2019).

The government as resource management requires transparency, openness, accountability, and truth. The government is obliged to provide information to the public. In this case, it is how citizens hold the government accountable for providing services to the community. Transparency and accountability are core concepts of good governance (Enria et al., 2021).

Transparency describes the rules, plans, processes, and implementation to know why, how, what, and how much. Transparency ensures that public officials, civil servants, managers, board members, and employers can report their activities so that the public can hold stakeholders accountable (Oats & Tuck, 2019). Then, the concept of accountability is used to answer government obligations, provide information about decisions and how implementation can be presented to the public and accountability institutions that provide oversight, advise the public or institutions to take responsibility for accountability that can penalize the guilty party or correct conflicting behavior (Breuer & Leininger, 2021).

### **2. The Concept of Transparency in Public Policy**

Transparency is a component of the notion of good governance. In governance, the concept of transparency is analyzed in negotiation theory, international security, and regime effectiveness.. In this case,

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transparency becomes the affective side for the government in issuing public policies, especially in identifying how effective a policy is for its application to society (Mehrpouya& Salles-Djelic, 2019). Transparency in public policy is defined as the government's efforts to provide information on social, political, and economic fields that involve the community in giving availability, trust, and accessibility of information among stakeholders(Gil-Garcia et al., 2020).

In 2009, President Obama also stated that transparency promotes accountability and provides information to the public about what their government is doing. Transparency will strengthen the role of democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in government (Wukich, 2021).

Transparency in policy is a powerful tool in informing policy choices aimed at product improvement and how to implement them. Communities, both in groups and individually, can encourage gains in the performance of the transparency system by involving consumers, workers, and citizens (Winkler et al., 2022). They can act as intermediaries in interpreting the data provided and encourage improvements in the quality of the information in the political field. In this case, public awareness of whether or not to fulfill the promise of a policy is used to create vigilance and political dynamics in support of strengthening transparency (Kumar et al., 2018).

Clarity is required to generate sufficient transparency in social policy so that openness can significantly contribute to public risk or the failure of public services. The effectiveness of openness must be bolstered by public communication methods if it is to be successful in the absence of community participation in improvement measurement attempts (Mansoor, 2021). The public has the willingness, capacity, and cognitive abilities to pursue their choices as

information consumers, thus if the data has no value, it will not be a good fit for the transparency process. Disclosure of information can minimize risk and increase the performance of policy transparency. If transparency fails, as in policies in the education system in schools and health services, public trust will be lost (Susser et al., 2019). Effective policy transparency by applying the following principles:

- a) Provide information that the public can easily use.
- b) Strengthen the user groups used for a sustainable transparency system. An example is when advocacy groups, analysts, politicians, and stakeholders represent the community's interests.
- c) Help understand how when options in the policy change. In this case, policy transparency will fail if stakeholders cannot differentiate civil society's choices with why they changed or were unable to make those choices. The success of openness depends on understanding the problems that cannot be achieved successfully by disclosing information alone.
- d) Designing the usefulness of disclosing information. Policies should seek to produce information that strengthens economic, political, and regulatory incentives in the discloser's environment.
- e) Design parameters that align with policy objectives and allow the public to compare products or services easily.
- f) The policy will be more effective if it can match the content and format of information with the level of attention and understanding of the community. This is supported by the availability of massive field facts using metric data.
- g) A transparency system that combines analysis and feedback functions will conduct periodic analysis, view feedback,



and revise policies that adapt to changing conditions.

- h) Provide sanctions for those who violate the substance to strengthen law enforcement.
- i) When insufficient to produce effective outputs, transparency can be designed in conjunction with other government policies (Schmidt & Wood, 2019).

However, public disclosure is a human right for the community, such as obtaining information about the public policy process, budget, monitoring, and evaluation, so that the government's performance is expected to follow the community's expectations and how the government takes sides with public services. In addition, transparency can establish checks and balances on social control (Kuziemski&Misuraca, 2020).

### C. METHOD

This research will be carried out using a qualitative approach. The method used in this research is a comparative study with the learning experience as the analysis medium. The data used to make this comparison come from different research results and previous studies still relevant to this research. When the research has been successfully collected, the data will then be processed so that the researcher can find the research results.

### D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 1. Implementation of Transparency in Public Services as a National Strategy

Transparency is now urgent for developing politics and governance in the world. Not only for public service, but transparency also affects the trust of a country with other countries in the framework of cooperation. According to OMBUDSMAN, several strategies for implementing transparency in public services

are: Identifying the role of the community to encourage public participation to improve the quality of public services; Increasing the part of external supervisory agencies in supervising public services; and the government's commitment to public openness, so that the public can quickly obtain information, oversee the process of public services, and evaluate sub-optimal public services (Cross et al., 2019). Availability of health infrastructure in terms of public policies that have not been adequate is the initiation of the central government and the private sector to involve the private sector, foundations, volunteer groups, and professional groups (Labrique et al., 2018).

In shaping the national strategy, the transparency function must be strong because public trust in the government's authority can increase the accountability and process of the government's authority. The national strategy also aims to increase transparency in decision-making mechanisms and rules, access to civil services, state budget revenues and expenditures, financing of political parties, government procurement, privatization, functions of state authorities, municipalities, and other regions (Wang et al., 2020).

Various countries have implemented transparency in public policies as a national strategy in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Preventive measures and overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic are carried out to reduce the number of significant transmissions to the broader community. This impacts the social aspect and harms the economic sector (Ayuningtyas et al., 2021). National strategy as a political aspect is required to realize transparency to minimize cases of the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments in various countries have methods of implementing effective and efficient public policies. However, on average, the key to world governments'



success is applying transparency in their public services (Abdou, 2021).

The urgency of transparency in health services for the public and how the central and local governments are integrated provide direction in facilitating economic and logistical needs (including food). However, not all countries have determined public policy as a national strategy to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic (Hotez et al., 2021). Anticipation of general traffic to prevent transmission is also carried out with regional quarantine or lockdown, but the term lockdown has narrowed its definition to create miscommunication between the central government, provincial governments, and the community. The existence of conflicts between needs and interests in other sectors is referred to as the government's reluctance to provide information openly. So there is public distrust in the government's authority (Chum et al., 2021).

## **2. China's Public Policy in Handling the Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic was first confirmed in Wuhan, China. The outbreak of a virus that mutates under current conditions has been said to have been heard since November 2019 by a Chinese health expert. Its spread to other countries began to spread since the beginning of 2020. As a country known for its large workforce and ability to work quickly, China's ambitions for development and construction workers are known to be superior to other countries. In dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese government is aggressively mobilizing its resources to build health infrastructure. Huoshenshan Hospital in Wuhan was built in 8 days, Xiaotangshan Hospital in Beijing in 7 days, and Leishenshan Hospital in Wuhan in 7 days. The speed of construction of the hospital was allegedly a learning experience when building a

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particular SARS hospital, Xiaotangshan, in Beijing in 2003 (Lee & Lee, 2020).

China, as a country with a socialist system of government, has successfully shown how its economic progress is increasing. This is inseparable from the Chinese-style good governance system that offers effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness in public institutions without the frills of democracy. In the Xi Jinping Regime, the good governance system is oriented towards developing the political economy with the social environment. Xi Jinping instilled a national "Chinese dream" rhetoric focused on wealth and power through government intervention. Xi Jinping upholds the urgency of the rule of law, uses the core attributes of a socialist form of government, and improves the people's position as the leading actor with Chinese-style characteristics so that they do not obey the laws and regulations of capitalism (Wu et al., 2021).

To demonstrate the global response to COVID-19 response in China, the WHO-China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease 2019 recommends 5 main areas:

- a) As a country with ambition, agile, and aggressive in dealing with viruses throughout history. China's strategy is a national approach that promotes temperature monitoring, masks, and hand washing. As the outbreak progressed, China took a science and risk-based approach to adapt control processes. These measures are adapted to the context of provinces, districts, communities, regulatory capacities, and the nature of transmission of the COVID-19 virus in China. China's concentration is to increase the speed of case detection, isolation, and early treatment. This is supported by innovation and aggressive use of advanced technology, switching to online medical platforms for routine and school care to using 5G

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platforms to support rural response operations (Peng et al., 2020).

- b) China's extraordinary achievements were made possible because of the great commitment of the Chinese people to take collective action in the face of common threats. The community level performed well on provincial and city scale solidarity in supporting the most vulnerable populations and communities. In addition, the Governor and Mayor sent thousands of health workers and provided vital PPE to Hubei Province and Wuhan City (Hua & Shaw, 2020).
- c) A joint mission between WHO and China in response to the global response in suppressing the power of COVID-19 infection in countering international spread. This is done by increasing capacity in health infrastructure and increasing collaboration between knowledge and medical devices (Alkhaldi et al., 2020).
- d) Doing it appropriately with a science-based, risk-informed approach and gradually having apparent readiness for the needs needed in dealing with COVID-19 is a critical element of containment strategies (Ruiu et al., 2020).
- e) China's national strategy in cooperating with WHO received a global response because COVID-19 is highly contagious, spreads very quickly, and significantly impacts people's health, economic and social activities. COVID-19 results from a virus mutation that develops and can adapt to the current world climate. In addition, many global people are not ready with the mindset and materials. In cooperating with international health organizations, the Chinese government is trying to implement transparency in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of planning and implementation. The transparency of China's national

strategy is also aimed at the global community and gains confidence in its capabilities (Yu et al., 2021).

### 3. South Korean Public Policy in Handling the Pandemic

South Korea became the second largest country in the world for cases of transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic that occurred within 3 weeks. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, South Korea has reduced the number of virus transmissions through government transparency measures, the latest technology, and a responsible approach by institutions and citizens. Implementation of transparency and disclosure of information by the South Korean government to the public regarding the situation. Health authorities in South Korea track and publish the names of individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19, allowing their population to determine if they have had contact with an infected individual. In addition, the government is taking steps to solve the scarcity of masks and hygiene goods by cracking down on illegal hoarders, prohibiting the export of masks, and exerting complete control over distribution and logistics to boost the pace of local production and distribution ratios (Fisher & Wilder-Smith, 2020).

The government's management of transparency and open communication, public-private partnership, dissemination, evidence-based public health action, and innovative use of technology and data contributed to South Korea's effectiveness in addressing the COVID-19 situation. Transparency and communication measures implemented by the South Korean government aid in dispelling fear and preventing panic. The government disseminates vast amounts of information to the general public and conducts campaigns regarding personal hygiene and social





distance. The government informs the press twice daily, updates information online continuously, and sends targeted text messages. Then, launch a large-scale test and be informed about the results to minimize fear and misinformation. The government has imposed restrictions on large-scale meetings, shut down schools and daycare centers, and requested that employers provide flexible work arrangements. Daegu City and three North Gyeongsang counties were classified as special care zones and proclaimed disaster regions so that the community could get additional resources and medical personnel (Santos-Carrillo et al., 2020).

South Korea utilizes Big Data, such as GPS Tracking data from cell phones and autos, credit card transactions, travel history, CCTV footage, and artificial intelligence to identify high-priority cases and follow the paths of infected individuals in order to improve countermeasures. International visitors who enter South Korea and are compelled to undergo 14 days of monitoring or self-isolation are also provided with smartphone applications. The hospital also introduced remote diagnoses for patients with mild symptoms and freed medical professionals to carry out medical technicians on patients with severe symptoms. The South Korean government is also working with the private sector, a well-known ICT company in South Korea, by building the Global Epidemic Prevention Platform (GEPP). South Korea's success refers to its experience tackling the MERS outbreak (Mora et al., 2021).

The South Korean government's aggressive steps in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic with a democratic government system prove the function of a solid good governance system. The government's openness of information to its people not only gives advice but is also supported by adequate health infrastructure. The function

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of the government to mobilize medical equipment is to become a distribution center for priority people, especially medical personnel, so that medical facilities such as PPE are met (Kusumasari et al., 2022).

#### **4. Taiwan's Public Policy in Handling the Pandemic**

The country, dubbed the Republic of China, is geographically very close to China. Based on data from the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus COVID19 Global Case map, as of March 3, 2020, there were only 42 cases of COVID-19 in Taiwan and one death. This is in contrast to China which reached more than 80,000 cases with a death toll of more than 2,900. The Taiwanese government established the National Health Command Center (NHCC) after SARS, and the health service became a disaster management center focused on responding to significant outbreaks and acting as a direct operational command point. Stanford University health policy expert noted that Taiwan integrated the national health insurance database with immigration and customs databases for extensive data analysis to identify cases that generated warnings during clinical visits based on travel history and clinical symptoms. The Taiwanese government also uses QR Code scanning and online reporting of travel history and health symptoms to clarify the risk of infection in the past 14 days. The state also facilitates a toll-free hotline to report suspicious symptoms (Huang, 2020).

Transparency carried out by the Taiwan Government is an effort to take preventive and countermeasures as early as possible. Like South Korea, the government's function is essential as a distribution center in securing PPE to meet medical needs. Information disclosure, government mobilization, and government efforts to encourage public participation are the keys to Taiwan's success in suppressing the

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spread of COVID-19 in the country (Walther et al., 2021).

### **5. Vietnam's Public Policy in Handling the Pandemic**

Vietnam is a developing country that has a reasonably high poverty rate. Vietnam's limitations in providing sophisticated medical infrastructure have not dampened Vietnam's determination to reduce the country's transmission rate of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Vietnamese government's swift action in offering information and power to mobilize public areas with a high risk of COVID-19 transmission plays a crucial role in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic. It is interesting how Vietnam quickly responded to quarantine for foreigners and public areas by incentivizing their needs and closing off the most affected regions of Vietnam (Taniguchi, 2022).

Vietnam also does not hold a mass test program like South Korea. Data from the World Economic Forum shows that until the end of March 2020, Vietnam had no fatalities due to COVID-19. The Vietnamese government's move to aggressively suspend flights, close schools, and quarantine new arrivals is vital for Vietnam in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic effectively. From early February, Vietnam closed flight access to and from China, closed schools until after the Lunar New Year ended, and 2 weeks later implemented a regional quarantine in Vinh Phuc Province, North Hanoi. Vietnam benefits from being a single-party country with a large security sector so that public services are well organized. This impacts decision-making that is carried out quickly (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021).

### **6. Canadian Public Policy in Handling the Pandemic**

As a democracy that demonstrates a good governance system in tackling the

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COVID-19 pandemic, Canada emphasizes strengthening transparency and providing adequate data to provide effective services to the community. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau projects the central government's collaboration with provincial governments to increase data sharing. Although Canada is not more aggressive than the countries above, transparency is possible considering that Canada borders the United States as the world's most prominent victim of COVID-19 today. Not only fulfilling medical facilities, but the Canadian government is trying to make people stay calm at home, such as ensuring food supplies, business needs, easy access to information through platforms, closing schools, and providing access to children about preventive measures for the COVID-19 pandemic. The existence of Jason Trudeau in conveying the government's plan of action is an attempt to psychologically calm people to stay at home safely through government transparency (Seijts et al., 2022).

### **7. The Urgency of the Government's Quick Response**

China, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Canada are the countries that are in the ranks of successfully tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. The exciting thing is that these countries have different systems of government. The key to the success of these countries is government transparency, both access to good information and government mobilization. Government transparency does not always exist in a democratic system of government. Seeing how a single party controls China and Vietnam has a significant role in making decisions quickly. On the other hand, the United States, as a democratic 'mecca' country, has been slow to respond to this case. The transparency efforts made by President Donald Trump to the public are not effective because they are not accompanied

7410





by information disclosure and public participation in government movements.

The government's immediate response also calls for social or physical distancing from the entire community. Community involvement plays an essential role in preventing the transmission of COVID-19. However, until now, many people still heed, mainly because of economic and even social factors. This is where the role of the central and local governments is to openly provide adequate information and mobilize stakeholders, including the private sector, to provide flexibility to the work of their employees; limiting the movement of the community while still empowering traders who meet the needs of the community; run logistics distribution; facilitate access to health services for Persons Under Monitoring; Patients Under Care, and Positive; the government as a center for PPE distributors; blockade of flight access, both from within and outside the country to limit tourists going back and forth freely; closing public facilities that have a high level of risk, such as schools, etc. Even implementing a regional quarantine for areas experiencing an increased risk of transmission.

The polemic of regional quarantine or lockdown is still a debate because, on the one hand, it can block the flow of investment and trade, but on the other hand, it is necessary for areas that do not yet have adequate medical facilities. Chaos due to the lockdown occurred in India, where this implementation occurred too early, and the government lacked preparation to meet the community's needs. In addition, Italy and Spain, as countries with the highest number of COVID-19 cases in the world, were able to reduce the number of victims by 2 times because they managed to implement a lockdown. Polemics that are still being debated occur in Indonesia. Until April 7, 2020, Indonesia became the country with the highest death rate in Asia. Data from the

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Ministry of Health and the Task Force for the Acceleration of Handling COVID-19 showed that as many as 221 patients died, with an increase of 2,738 positive COVID-19 patients. The lack of transparency of the central government in providing valid data has decided that several local governments have locked down or quarantine their territories independently. However, this decision was opposed by the central government because the regional quarantine decision was the authority of the central government. The asynchronous integration of the central and local governments has caused the spread of COVID-19 in almost all provinces in Indonesia to move quickly. Jakarta is no exception as a city with several victims of COVID-19 in Indonesia, which has just imposed Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) approved by the central government but applies nationally.

PSBB in Indonesia refers to Law Number 6 of 2018, Article 1 Paragraph 1 concerning Health Quarantine which states that "Large-Scale Social Restrictions are restrictions on certain activities of residents in an area suspected of being infected with a disease and contaminated in such a way as to prevent the possibility of spreading the disease or contamination." PSBB at least includes holidays from schools and workplaces, restrictions on religious activities, and restrictions on activities in public places or facilities.

While Regional Quarantine refers to Law Number 6 of 2018 Article 1 Paragraph 10 concerning Health Quarantine which states that "Regional quarantine is a population restriction in an area including the entrance area and its contents suspected of being infected with the disease and contaminated in such a way as to prevent the possible spread of disease or contamination." Regional quarantine is carried out to all community members in an area if there is a spread of disease in that

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area; the quarantined area is given a quarantine line and continuously guarded by the health authorities and the police who are outside the quarantine area; Members of the public are also not allowed to enter and exit the quarantine area. What is emphasized in Article 55 is that the central government is responsible for meeting the basic needs of the community and even food for livestock during the regional quarantine. The responsibility of the central government involves local governments and related parties in implementing regional quarantine.

The debate on the urgency of regional quarantine or PSBB, the central government's authority, needs to be adjusted to the regional government because not all regions in Indonesia have the same capacity. Jakarta may apply PSBB, but it may not be effective in Eastern Indonesia. Central and regional coordination determines whether an area deserves a regional quarantine (which can be partially implemented) because it needs to adapt to the needs and capacity of the region. The creation of decision-making is supported by appropriate downstream. Transparency efforts to respond quickly so far can be seen from several local governments that set public policies independently.

Recalling that public policy is closely related to services from the government to the community. In Indonesia, the principle of transparency to realize good governance and support government policies is enshrined in Law Number 25 of 2009, Article 4. Community participation plays a crucial role in supervising public services. The implementation of the state is realized through political openness, as stated in Law Number 14 of 2008 concerning the importance of public transparency in the context of realizing transparent, effective, efficient, and accountable participation and state administration. The good governance system, coveted by the world community

today, is still controversial in public policy, especially in terms of transparency. Decision-making in public policy as a world national strategy today must be realized that the things that often clash are needs, understanding, and what should be.

#### E. CONCLUSION

Transparency in the good governance system in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic in various parts of the world is the key to several governments' success. Disclosure of information, the accuracy of mobilization, coordination of central and local governments, and substantial community participation is the core supports for implementing effective public policies. An effective public policy will become a national strategy that can suppress cases of COVID-19 transmission.

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