

MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF HMPV AND THE COVID-19 VARIANT NB 1.8.1 IN INDONESIAN LOCAL NEWSPAPERS: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

The media played a substantial role during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2019 to 2021. Intensive media coverage helped the public understand COVID-19. However, the situation was different when the HMPV virus and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 emerged. Using the critical discourse analysis (CDA) model developed by Teun A. van Dijk, this study examines how three Indonesian local newspapers, namely Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok, represent the HMPV virus and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 in their news coverage. The analysis draws on ten news articles published between January and June 2025, selected because the three outlets belong to the same media group (Kompas Group) yet represent geographically distinct regions of western, central, and eastern Indonesia. This study finds that local media portray the government's strategy in managing the outbreaks, depict HMPV and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 as low-risk, and urge the public to remain vigilant, maintain healthy habits, and avoid panic.

Keywords: local media, representation, human metapneumovirus, COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1.

INTRODUCTION

In late 2024, human metapneumovirus (HMPV) re-emerged as a prominent public health concern. It is a disease with flu-like symptoms and can cause lower respiratory tract infections such as pneumonia; individuals with a history of asthma may experience a relapse or worsening of their condition (Timdetik.Inet, 2025).

The HMPV virus was first discovered by scientists at the Erasmus Medical Center Rotterdam in 2001 and has recently regained public attention. WHO information indicates that the virus has spread in China (Zaenuddin, 2025), consistent with WHO's own classification of hMPV as generally mild but capable of causing serious illness in high-risk groups (World Health Organization, 2025). According to the Indonesian Ministry of Health (Kemenkes), HMPV is contagious but not particularly dangerous. In Indonesia, an increase in HMPV cases occurred in late 2024 and early 2025, which received extensive media coverage despite limited data (WHO, 2024a; Katadata.co.id, 2025).

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 re-emerged in early 2025 and was reported to be spreading rapidly but not as deadly as previous COVID-19 variants. However, the mass media often presented it dramatically, using terms such as super-contagious variant, mysterious, and new threat (DetikHealth, 2025). This demonstrates the importance of

examining how viruses are constructed as social entities in media discourse, not simply as biomedical phenomena.

Although HMPV and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 are considered harmless, the world was shocked by COVID-19 from 2019 to 2021, an infectious disease originating from Wuhan, Hubei, China, which spread to 210 countries worldwide and raised international public health concerns. More than 13 million people were affected, with a mortality rate of 1.4 percent (Anwar et al., 2020). There is public concern about the presence of HMPV and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1. This is where the media's role in disseminating accurate information about HMPV becomes essential, helping the public stay informed and rely on official sources.

Several studies have shown that both mass media and social media significantly influence public health protocol behavior. In the 2012 MERS outbreak, the media played a particularly significant role. Coupled with increasingly sophisticated media tools and easy internet access for the general public, public awareness of the importance of public health measures has increased rapidly, leading to their more effective implementation (Anwar et al., 2020). Studies of the role of social media in the 2012 MERS epidemic and the H7N9 epidemic in China have shown a stronger response in the H7N9 epidemic (Anwar et al., 2020).

Yan et al. (2016) found that public responses can change when they receive information from the media. Information from the media has the potential to influence disease control efforts. Media helps people take protective measures against disease. On the other hand, frequent media exposure can heighten public perception of a disease's severity, regardless of its actual risk (Young et al., 2008). This is some evidence that the media plays a crucial role in disease control efforts.

Furthermore, several studies have been conducted on the role of mass media in tackling COVID-19. One such study by Bridgman et al. (2020) found that mass media is the primary means of disseminating information about the risks associated with COVID-19. The media routinely helps raise public awareness of the importance of health protocols. Research by Vieten (2020) found that the media used specific framing, such as portraying the pandemic as a global health crisis or collective action, which influenced public opinion about the pandemic. According to research by Van Bavel et al. (2020), mass media plays a role in promoting compliance with public health policies, such as mask-wearing and vaccination. This study noted challenges in countering misinformation. Gozzi et al. (2020) supported the hypothesis that media coverage increased public attention to the pandemic, especially when infection cases peaked during the first wave. Zarocostas' (2020) research showed that mass media plays a crucial role in countering the spread of disinformation surrounding COVID-19, particularly on social media platforms. Ytre-Arne and Moe (2021) found that during the COVID-19 lockdown, people's news consumption patterns underwent significant changes, including doomscrolling (constantly searching for negative news that triggers anxiety), monitoring (regularly following the news to stay informed), and avoiding (avoiding news due to information fatigue or stress). COVID-19 is also widely discussed in memes, such as in Russia and China (Smirnova et al., 2021).

When HMPV and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 emerged, little to no research had focused on the role or contribution of mass media in conveying information about their symptoms, transmission, and preventive measures, which could otherwise increase public health awareness. Tsao et al. (2021) found that mainstream media during the pandemic triggered a collective public response but often focused too much on negative narratives, causing information fatigue and obscuring effective health prevention strategies. However, the media also played a positive role in reporting on COVID-19, as evidenced by Liu et al.'s (2021) study, which found that media coverage in China during January-February 2020 significantly reduced population mobility and cut the potential for approximately 394,000 new cases and 1.4

million close contacts. This study supports the effectiveness of contact tracing, with media coverage being a crucial driver.

This gap presents an opportunity for further research that could benefit the public, particularly local media, which are closer to the community and can therefore capture the phenomena around them. Joseph et al. (2022) found that although local media plays a crucial role in conveying risk information to the public, the volume and tone of COVID-19 coverage are not always evenly distributed and are influenced by political, audience, and geographic factors. Journalists reporting on the situation often face technical and physical constraints, media organizational structures, economic pressures, and high public expectations (Nor, 2022).

This study aims to examine how *Tribun Jabar*, *Tribun Yogyakarta*, and *Tribun Lombok* represent the HMPV virus and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 through critical discourse analysis, focusing on the structural dimension of news texts. Accordingly, the research question guiding this study is: How do local Indonesian newspapers represent the HMPV virus and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 in their news coverage?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the context of a health crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or other disease outbreaks such as HMPV (human metapneumovirus), the media plays a vital role in disseminating public health information: providing education about disease symptoms, prevention, and government regulations; shaping public opinion by encouraging awareness and compliance with health protocols; and acting as a liaison between authorities and the public (Houston et al., 2012); as well as combating misinformation by clarifying hoaxes and misleading content (World Health Organization, 2020).

As the object of this research, local media in a health crisis functions as a provider of information, shaper of public opinion, and maintainer of public trust in health authorities (Houston et al., 2012). Local media such as *Tribun Jabar*, *Tribun Yogyakarta*, and *Tribun Lombok* play a special role in reporting on HMPV and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1, given their geographical and cultural proximity to the community, which allows them to convey health messages with an approach more appropriate to the local context (Haryanto, 2016). This is something national media, hampered by distance and time in accessing local issues or events, would not be able to do. Meanwhile, local media has the advantage of presenting local phenomena and supporting issues or events that can be raised to the national level.

Mass media is a crucial channel for disseminating information during public health crises. In the Indonesian context, media not only conveys information but also plays a role in shaping public opinion, framing crisis narratives, that is, selecting and emphasising particular aspects of an issue while downplaying others, and mediating relations between the government and the public (Kriyantono, 2020). Indeed, during several incidents of the COVID-19 pandemic, many media outlets acted as mediators for the government in disseminating COVID-19 messages.

In the COVID-19 pandemic and the spread of the HMPV virus, the media is expected to take responsibility for avoiding panic and balancing caution with rationality (Parahita, 2021). This role is even more crucial when information is technical, rapidly changing, and sometimes confusing. National and local media can step in to provide clearer information when situations and circumstances are unfavorable.

Several studies on media's role during COVID-19 (2019-2021) offer useful comparisons with coverage of HMPV and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1. Krawczyk et al. (2021) analyzed 26 million articles from the front pages of 172 online news sources in 11 countries from January to October 2020. Krawczyk et al. found that media coverage varied emotionally, with approximately 16 percent of COVID-19 articles classified as negative, such

as those related to death, fear, and crisis. Wang et al. (2024) demonstrated that media coverage of the pandemic, anti-pandemic measures, and public support could mitigate negative public emotions. However, negatively framed coverage, such as reporting focused on case counts and fatalities, also influenced negative public reactions.

In a similar vein, Malaysian communication scholarship has also examined how the mass media manages public compliance during health crises. Mohd Yusoff et al. (2022) examined Malaysia's Stay-at-Home Campaign during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that public cooperation with government health directives depended largely on how clearly the purpose and benefits of the campaign were communicated through the media. Their findings reinforce the argument that media clarity, rather than sheer volume of coverage, is what ultimately shapes public compliance with health measures.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that local media occupy a distinct communicative position during health crises, combining geographical and cultural proximity to the community with a mediating role between health authorities and the public (Houston et al., 2012; Haryanto, 2016; Kriyantono, 2020). However, existing scholarship on pandemic-related media coverage has concentrated predominantly on the 2019–2021 COVID-19 outbreak (Krawczyk et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2024) or on national-level reporting patterns (Joseph et al., 2022; Mohd Yusoff et al., 2022), leaving the representational strategies used by Indonesian local media for subsequent, lower-severity health events, such as HMPV and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1, largely unexamined. This study addresses that gap by applying Van Dijk's (2006) critical discourse analysis to Indonesian local newspaper coverage of these two specific health events.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model developed by Teun A. van Dijk (2006), which comprises three main dimensions. This study focuses specifically on the structural dimension of news texts, analyzing titles, leads, paragraph content, word choice (diction), metaphors, active and passive sentences, stylistic strategies, and narrative. This study adopts a preliminary, text-focused approach within Van Dijk's (2006) CDA framework, consistent with similar text-focused applications of Van Dijk's model in Indonesian media discourse research (Putri et al., 2023). The cognitive and socio-political dimensions of discourse fall outside the scope of this initial analysis and are proposed as directions for future research.

This research examined three local newspapers: *Tribun Jabar* (representing West Java Province), *Tribun Yogyakarta* (representing the Special Region of Yogyakarta), and *Tribun Lombok* (representing West Nusa Tenggara Province). Therefore, the selected media outlets represent western, central, and eastern Indonesia.

Data collection covered news reports published between January and June 2025. All news articles related to HMPV and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 published by the three newspapers within this period were included, yielding a total of 10 articles. These ten articles represent the complete population of HMPV- and NB.1.8.1-related coverage published by the three outlets during the study period, rather than a sample drawn from a larger pool; the modest number reflects the comparatively lower media salience of these two health events relative to the 2019–2021 COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 1 illustrates the overall data structure, and Table 1 presents the distribution of articles by outlet and topic.

Articles were identified through manual searches of each outlet's online archive using the keywords 'HMPV', 'human metapneumovirus', 'Covid-19 varian baru', and 'NB.1.8.1' in Bahasa Indonesia and English. Articles were included if they were published between January and June 2025 and contained substantive reporting on either health event; brief news aggregator

summaries and duplicate wire reports were excluded. The unit of analysis was the individual news article, encompassing headline, lead, and body text. Coding followed Van Dijk's (2006) structural categories, namely headline, lead, quotation patterns, lexical choice, and sentence structure, with themes developed inductively through iterative, theory-informed close reading. All news excerpts were originally published in Bahasa Indonesia and translated into English by the researchers; a fellow researcher subsequently cross-checked translations to ensure accuracy and preserve the original meaning and tone of the source texts.

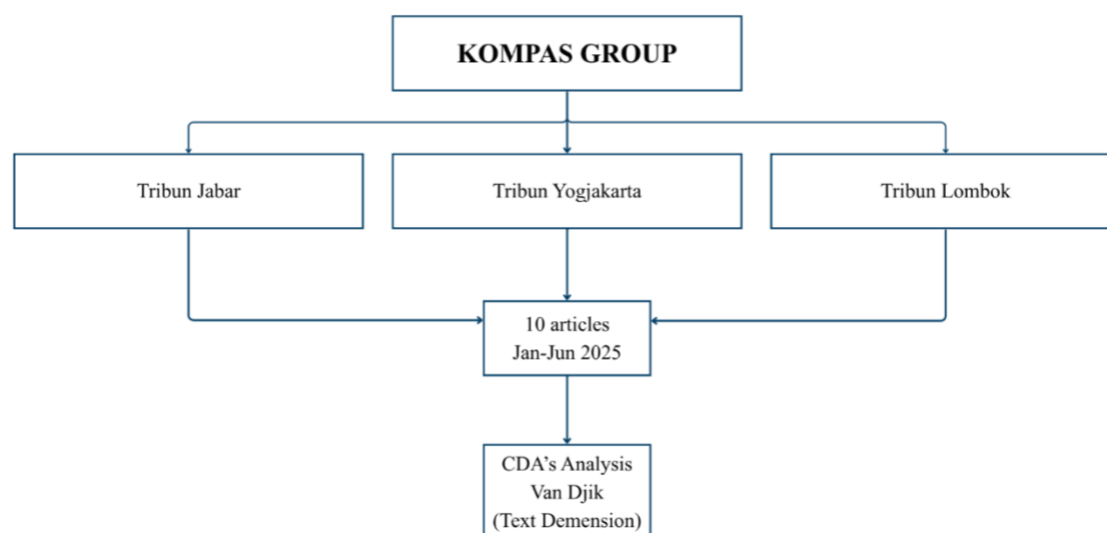


Figure 1: Data Structure of the Study

Table 1: Distribution of Articles by Newspaper and Topic

Newspaper	HMPV News	NB 1.8.1 News	Total
Tribun Jabar	2	2	4
Tribun Yogyakarta	2	2	4
Tribun Lombok	1	1	2
Total	5	5	10

Source: Compiled by the authors, 2025.

The news items analysed comprise all HMPV and COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 coverage published by Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok between January and June 2025, as detailed in Table 1. These outlets were selected because they belong to the Kompas Group, maintain consistent print publication alongside other distribution platforms, and have a large and influential local readership. These outlets are also located in areas with high numbers of international tourists and visitors. Selecting outlets within a single media group also serves a methodological purpose: by holding editorial ownership and corporate policy constant across the three outlets, the analysis can more clearly attribute variation in coverage to regional and local-context factors rather than to differing corporate editorial standards.

As this study employs Van Dijk's (2006) CDA, a qualitative-interpretive approach, interrater reliability testing, typically associated with quantitative content analysis, was not applied. Analytical rigour was instead maintained through close, theory-informed reading of the selected texts.

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FINDINGS

Based on data obtained from news reports in Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok, there are several important points to note regarding the representation of the HMPV virus and the Covid-19 variant NB 1.8.1 carried out by the three local media outlets, namely: the media represents the power of the state in responding to and managing global health issues that can impact the Indonesian people; the media represents that the public remains alert and does not panic in facing it; the media reminds the public to maintain a clean and healthy life to avoid various viruses; and the media informs that the HMPV virus and the Covid-19 variant NB 1.8.1 are scientifically not very dangerous.

State Power in Responding to Global Health

In their reporting on the HMPV virus and the NB 1.8.1 variant of Covid-19, Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok consistently portrayed the state's power in managing global health issues. Here, they portray the state as an authoritative, responsive, and responsible actor, handling the virus's spread through surveillance and public education. As written by Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok:

"The Ministry of Health issued a circular warning of an increase in Covid-19 cases, following the emergence of new cases in several Asian countries such as Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore." (Tribun Jabar, 3 June 2025)

"The health office is directly educating the public, including through social media, and coordinating with 27 districts and cities to promote vigilance and improve surveillance performance. The West Java Health Office has forwarded the Ministry of Health's circular regarding Covid-19 vigilance to districts and cities throughout West Java." (Tribun Jabar, 2 June 2025)

"The Indonesian Ministry of Health (Kemenkes) issued a circular warning of Covid-19 cases. The ministry noted that 72 cases of Covid-19 were detected in Indonesians during 2025." (Tribun Yogyakarta, 6 June 2025)

"Head of the Sumbawa Health Office, Junaedi, urged all healthcare workers to be on alert for the new Covid-19 variant." (Tribun Lombok, 10 June 2025)

In their reports, the three local media outlets represented that Indonesia did not directly issue appeals and warnings to the public but instead monitored developments in other countries and followed the guidance of the WHO, the highest health body. The three local media outlets presented the Indonesian government as an actor responsible for public health. They also demonstrated how the Indonesian government, as the policymaker and health administrator, was fully prepared for the threat of new diseases. The government continued to coordinate with President Prabowo, the Minister of Health, and the central and regional governments.

The three media outlets reported on state officials, in this case the Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, highlighting various efforts as a rapid response by the Indonesian government to the spread of the HMPV virus and the Covid-19 variant NB 1.8.1, also as a form of state responsibility to protect its citizens from the spread of disease. Learning from the experience of handling Covid-19 in 2019, the government and the media were both proactive. The government was proactive by making appeals and clarifications about the HMPV virus and the Covid-19 variant NB 1.8.1 and publishing what the Indonesian government had done so that the public received information earlier regarding these health issues.

Vigilance Without Panic

Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok also presented the HMPV virus and Covid-19 variant NB 1.8.1 with an informative and calming approach without creating tension for readers. All three media outlets presented the HMPV virus and Covid-19 variant NB 1.8.1 with complete information and could meet the information needs of the public. Although coverage from each outlet was brief, averaging two news items per topic, it met readers' information needs and helped ease public unease, drawing on lessons from 2019-2021, when extensive Covid-19 coverage caused anxiety, stress, and illness. Such as the news in Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok:

“The Sumbawa Health Service (Dinkes) has asked all health workers to be on alert for the new Covid-19 variant.” (Tribun Lombok, 10 June 2025)

“Yes, we have received a circular from the Ministry of Health to be alert for the new Covid-19 variant. We ask our healthcare workers to be on alert, said Junaedi.” (Tribun Lombok, 10 June 2025)

“He is monitoring the development of Covid-19, noting that there has been a surge in neighboring countries like Singapore, Malaysia, and others. Although Indonesia hasn't seen a surge yet, positive Covid-19 cases must be monitored closely. Junaedi urged the public not to worry about this new variant of Covid-19 but to remain vigilant, even though no cases have been detected yet.” (Tribun Lombok, 10 June 2025)

The three local media outlets consistently remind the public to remain vigilant and avoid panic. Another suggestion from these three local media outlets, citing local authorities, is to use the Covid-19 pandemic that occurred between 2019 and 2021 as a valuable lesson in maintaining health. The messages from the government to the local community, disseminated by these three local media outlets, are that the experience of dealing with the 2019 pandemic is invaluable. Remaining cautious by maintaining health, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and getting regular rest will strengthen the immune system. Conversely, the government's message is also to avoid panic and stress, because panic leads to stress, and when stressed, the immune system will weaken. A weakened immune system will be susceptible to various diseases, including HMPV and Covid-19.

All three media outlets were more cautious in reporting on the HMPV virus and the new Covid-19 variant. Based on the experience during the 2019-2021 Covid-19 pandemic, media coverage was overly extensive and bombastic, leading to fear, stress, and a decline in immunity (Vasterman et al., 2005). This ultimately led to many becoming victims of Covid-19. Some members of the public also blamed media outlets reporting on Covid-19 for fuelling public panic.

Live Clean and Healthy

Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok also convey the public health call to remain calm but vigilant regarding the presence of the HMPV virus and the Covid-19 variant NB 1.8.1. In addition, the media emphasises Clean and Healthy Living Behaviour (PHBS), an inexpensive and practical strategy for maintaining health, as unhealthy lifestyles are among the sources of disease exposure. As described by Tribun Lombok, citing a statement from a Lombok health official, and by Tribun Jabar and Tribun Yogyakarta:

“From now on, we urge the public to practice good hygiene and continue wearing masks to prevent the spread of Covid-19.” (Tribun Lombok, 10 June 2025)

“The public is also urged to adopt a healthy lifestyle to avoid infection. In an effort to prevent the spread of the JN.1 variant, Aji urged the public to continue maintaining their immune system and implementing PHBS. To prevent transmission, the public is asked to adopt a clean and healthy lifestyle, such as eating a balanced diet, getting enough rest, and maintaining good hygiene by washing hands frequently.” (Tribun Yogyakarta, 6 June 2025)

The three local media outlets provide health education to residents of West Java, Yogyakarta, and Lombok. Educating residents about healthy living by maintaining good food, hygiene, and adequate rest is crucial. Diseases can originate from various sources, including poor diet, unhygienic environments, and irregular sleep patterns, which increase susceptibility to illness. Local media outlets, by reminding residents to maintain a healthy and hygienic lifestyle, indirectly assist the government in preventing further exposure to HMPV and the spread of the Covid-19 variant NB 1.8.1. With the abundance of information on how to combat HMPV and Covid-19, including maintaining a healthy environment and lifestyle, the public is better prepared to deal with the spread of these health threats.

Scientific Information

Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok present the HMPV virus and the Covid-19 variant NB 1.8.1 with a rational and educational approach. Scientific information, quotes from medical authorities, and explanations of virus and Covid symptoms help dispel misconceptions and address public concerns. When these three media outlets report on the scientific and medical aspects, the public gains knowledge, insight, and a clearer understanding of the risks posed by the virus and Covid-19. This can be seen in the coverage from Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok, namely:

“Similar to SARS-CoV-2, which causes Covid-19, symptoms include coughing, runny nose, nasal congestion, sneezing, sore throat, and wheezing. The Minister of Health explained that the HMPV virus is different from the Covid-19 virus.” (Tribun Yogyakarta, 8 January 2025)

“When the Covid-19 virus was first discovered, it was a new type of virus, while HMPV is an older virus with similar characteristics to the common cold. The human immune system has long been familiar with the HMPV virus and therefore generally responds well to this disease.” (Tribun Jabar, 6 January 2025)

The three media present information about the HMPV virus and Covid-19 variant NB 1.8.1 from a scientific perspective, aiming to increase public understanding of the origin of these health threats, their mutation, how they are transmitted, and who is vulnerable to exposure, as well as scientific ways to address them.

DISCUSSION

State Power in Responding to Global Health

This pattern of indirect appeal, relying on WHO guidance rather than direct public warnings, reflects the WHO's role as a strategic response driver, as demonstrated in Tarisa's (2021) research showing that the WHO, as the highest authority in global health, provides guidance to UN member states on disease surveillance and public education. Similarly, Tang et al.'s (2024) analysis highlights the role of the state as a strategic response driver for various diseases and other issues.

WHO guidelines serve as a reference for countries in implementing policies to prevent their populations from being more severely exposed to various diseases, including the HMPV virus and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1. South Korea, for example, responded to the WHO's warning to conduct surveillance and mitigation, emphasizing strict efficiency and effective public education (Jonathan & Sitha Dewi, 2021).

This reliance on government health authorities parallels Brazilian media outlets, which cited statements from officials as part of the government's political and scientific communication efforts, framing the issue of addressing social inequality as part of crisis communication to address COVID-19 (Oliveira et al., 2021). Hayek (2024) similarly found that media in five European countries presented their governments' responses during the pandemic crisis, while Hall and Wolf (2021) found that German media demonstrated effective communication by health authorities as a crucial part of their pandemic control strategy, building public trust.

Vigilance Without Panic

As McCombs and Shaw (1972) noted, media outlets not only convey health issues but also shape how the public understands them. Calm and educational framing encourages a more rational public response. This resonates with Salleh and Ibrahim's (2015) study on agenda-setting theory published in Jurnal Komunikasi Borneo, which found that Malaysian print media's news selection strategies determine which social and health issues gain public salience; in the same way, the selective and measured coverage given by Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok was framed to encourage vigilance rather than fear as the intended reader response to HMPV and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1.

Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok consistently maintain an educational and non-sensational approach to disease reporting, consistent with Dabas's (2022) finding that calm, credible reporting fosters public trust and reduces anxiety, unlike sensationalist coverage that amplifies fear. Renn and Levine (2020) similarly suggest that information and empathy-based media can prevent infodemics, build social resilience, and foster public trust.

This reassuring approach is supported by Joffe's (2015) research analyzing calm framing, which can lead to a more collaborative public response, compared to fear framing,

which tends to make the public distance themselves from information. This closeness, in turn, benefits the media itself, as audiences continue to seek out and consume their coverage. Media messages that are low on threats have also been shown to increase public compliance without arousing excessive anxiety (Stanulewicz-Buckley & Cartwright, 2025).

Live Clean and Healthy

The media's role in raising awareness for healthy living is evident in how these three outlets consistently encourage PHBS alongside their vigilance-without-panic messaging. As demonstrated in research by Mufidah et al. (2024), during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019-2020, there was a significant increase in knowledge, such as increased handwashing frequency and soap use and increased sanitation practices.

This pattern of public compliance driven by clarity of media messaging is also consistent with Mohd Yusoff et al. (2022) study in Jurnal Komunikasi Borneo on Malaysia's Stay-at-Home Campaign, which found that public cooperation with health-protective measures depended on how effectively the campaign's purpose was communicated through the media and government channels; where communication was unclear or inconsistent, compliance weakened. This suggests that the calm, clean-living messaging consistently repeated by Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok appears designed to function as a compliance-encouraging device, resembling the messaging dynamics observed in the Malaysian public health campaign context.

Beyond mainstream media, education about healthy living during the pandemic or how to avoid disease can also be delivered through social media. Steinke's (2022) study of children's YouTube videos about COVID-19 showed that a combination of friendly and reassuring frames, such as wearing a mask to keep everyone safe, was quite effective in conveying serious messages about maintaining health without creating undue fear among the public.

Other studies have also shown that news reporting that prioritizes solutions without making many threats, encouraging people to remain calm, stay vigilant, wash hands diligently, and maintain distance, is much more effective as a proactive, educational narrative for raising public motivation to fight the pandemic without creating tension (Gutiérrez-Doña, 2025).

Conversely, if the media focuses too much on threatening messages, it can trigger fear, while framing positive futures can foster greater hope, especially when coupled with messages that offer hope and practical steps to increase preventive measures, such as handwashing and mask use, without inciting panic (Zhu, 2023).

Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok combined informative and positive emotional aspects in their coverage of the HMPV virus and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1, creating a reassuring and motivating representation. Zhang et al. (2023) found that this can reduce negative perceptions about the virus and increase public adherence to PHBS, demonstrating in research conducted in China, the origin of COVID-19, that reducing excessive risk perceptions can simultaneously increase adherence to PHBS practices such as vaccination and hygiene.

Scientific Information

Media coverage in Ireland paralleled that of Tribun Jabar, Tribun Yogyakarta, and Tribun Lombok in reporting on HMPV and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1. Both print and digital media in Ireland consistently highlighted the scientific dimension of the story during the first wave of COVID-19, presenting expert narratives and scientific context for uncertainties, with direct quotes from Irish scientists and health officials (Fährnich et al., 2021). Fährnich et al. (2021) recommend that media use an educational approach that illustrates the scientific process and rationally explains changes in recommendations, rather than downplaying the scientific value of news.

Ogbodo et al. (2020) similarly argued that media needs to balance information about threats with concrete steps, such as symptoms and health protocols, so that reporting remains educational and reduces public panic, an approach reflected in how *Tribun Jabar*, *Tribun Yogyakarta*, and *Tribun Lombok* explained the scientific basis of HMPV and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 through an informational, non-alarmist register.

This contrasts somewhat with Reiter-Haas et al. (2024), who found that mainstream media more frequently used a scientific framework, presenting reliable data and sources, while conspiracy media focused on narratives of personal belief. Educational media narratives emphasized information from authorities, including the WHO and relevant health officials, explanations of symptoms, and clarification of potentially misleading facts.

CONCLUSION

The representation of the HMPV virus and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 by local media (*Tribun Jabar*, *Tribun Yogyakarta*, and *Tribun Lombok*) aligns with WHO's health communication framework, providing education about disease symptoms, prevention, and government regulations while framing both health events as manageable rather than alarming. Local media also constructs these health threats as low-risk while positioning vigilance as the appropriate reader response. Coverage consistently encourages compliance with health protocols and positions local media as a liaison between government health authorities and the public, disseminating policies and preventive measures intended to protect the community against the HMPV virus and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1.

Tribun Jabar, *Tribun Yogyakarta*, and *Tribun Lombok*, as local media that are close to the community, are positioned to build community trust because they present the phenomena of the HMPV virus and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 within the media's immediate coverage area, namely West Java, Yogyakarta, and West Nusa Tenggara. This local proximity allows the three outlets to connect coverage of health threats directly to the community's everyday context, an approach especially relevant given the risk of hoaxes, as seen during the 2019-2021 COVID-19 pandemic, when misleading information caused widespread unease.

This study concludes that local media plays a substantial role in representing the HMPV virus and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1, namely: portraying a responsive government in managing global health issues; encouraging public vigilance without panic; promoting clean and healthy living habits; and presenting HMPV and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 as scientifically less severe than the 2019-2021 COVID-19 outbreak. These findings offer a practical reference point for local health journalism: they suggest that a calm, source-anchored, and scientifically grounded reporting register, of the kind observed across *Tribun Jabar*, *Tribun Yogyakarta*, and *Tribun Lombok*, can be paired with sustained health education content without resorting to alarmist framing. For local newsrooms covering future lower-severity health events, this pattern of institutional-source reliance, measured tone, and consistent public-health messaging offers a replicable editorial model.

This study is limited to a preliminary, text-focused analysis of ten news articles from three Indonesian local media outlets over a six-month period. As the analysis relies solely on Van Dijk's (2006) structural dimension of news texts, it examines how HMPV and the COVID-19 variant NB 1.8.1 were represented in media discourse rather than how audiences perceived, trusted, or responded to this coverage. Claims regarding public reception, trust, or behavioural compliance therefore fall outside the scope of this study and are proposed as directions for future audience-reception research. Future studies could also extend Van Dijk's (2006) CDA framework to the cognitive and socio-political dimensions of discourse, examine a longer time frame, or compare local media representation with national or international outlets.

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