

# Government's crisis response and citizen's confidence reconstruction: A literature review study from Post COVID-19

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented an unprecedented global crisis, highlighting the vital role of government in crisis management, especially in public health emergencies. This literature review, "Government's Crisis Response and Citizen's Confidence Reconstruction: A Post-COVID-19 Review," delves into the varied governmental responses worldwide and their impact on public confidence and trust. It focuses on maintaining public trust while managing public health in a stable economic environment. The study emphasizes concepts such as "crisis response" and "citizen confidence reconstruction," which contribute to understanding government actions, public trust, and compliance. Using a literature review, case studies, and regional comparison, it offers a multifaceted view of the responses of different regions. Although the study lacks quantitative analysis and focuses primarily on Asia-Pacific, its generalizability may be affected by its limited quantitative analysis. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of effective crisis management and rebuilding public confidence in the post-COVID-19 era, it would be helpful to expand the geographical scope, incorporate quantitative methods, and explore the long-term psychological and social impacts of pandemic responses.

**Keywords:** Crisis Management; Public Health; Government Health Emergency; Asia-Pacific Region

## 1. Introduction

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted swift and varied responses from governments. The purpose of the literature review study, "Government's crisis response and citizen's confidence reconstruction: A literature review study from Post COVID-19," is to examine how governments respond to crises and how citizens regain their confidence. Public confidence and trust are especially examined when governments respond to crises, particularly during health emergencies. Pandemics have highlighted governments' crucial role in crisis management, particularly those involving public health. Government responses have varied internationally, affecting public trust and adherence to health guidelines. This study analyzes the variation in responses and their impact on citizen confidence.

Public health, as is economic stability and maintaining public trust, is a key issue emerging from the pandemic. The relationship between government transparency, communication efficiency, and public compliance has been crucial but has not been explored to its full potential. It emphasizes terms such as "crisis response," which refers to the government's immediate actions in managing the pandemic, and "citizen confidence reconstruction," which refers to rebuilding public trust. By analyzing these dynamics, the study contributes to understanding crisis management and restoring public confidence. Its

comprehensive approach makes this article innovative. In addition to a literature review, it includes case studies and regional analyses to obtain a multifaceted picture of different regions' responses. This approach aims to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in crisis management and the reconstruction of citizen confidence in the post-COVID-19 era. Despite the study's comprehensive nature, a geographical focus primarily on Asia-Pacific limits its effectiveness.

Consequently, the findings may not be generalizable to other contexts. Future research could include a wider geographic scope and incorporate quantitative methods for a more objective analysis. Additionally, a holistic understanding of pandemic response strategies would require an examination of long-term psychological and social effects.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Social Media in Public Health Communication

Social media platforms, for example, Facebook and Weibo, developed in the COVID-19 era, are key to disseminating information and encouraging healthy communication (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018; Zarocostas, 2020). Several studies have explored the intricate dynamics of platforms, emphasizing the importance of calibrating public opinion responses during health crises, such as those by Liu et al.

(2022). As social media has become increasingly popular, the “infodemic” of misinformation has also emerged. However, these platforms also provide effective tools for managing public responses and communicating risks, as Sesagiri Raamkumar et al. (2020) outlined. Chan, Nickson, Rudolph, Lee, & Joynt (2020) indicate that the government recognizes the value of these platforms for health communication. Due to such a situation, social media has become an essential source of information and guidance on health measures (Merchant & Lurie, 2020) while serving as a conduit for misinformation, leading to an “infodemic” (Zarocostas, 2020; Pulido et al., 2020). According to estimates, social media activity can impact public sentiment and trust, influencing perceptions of epidemics and government policies. (Bridgman et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2020). However, government and health organizations should fundamentally use social media for effective crisis communication to increase the public’s trust and adherence to relevant health recommendations (Sesagiri Raamkumar et al., 2020; Bavel et al., 2020). Since social media, information dissemination, and public trust are interdependent, effective communication strategies in public health are imperative.

## 2.2 Public Trust and Health Policies

During health emergencies, there can be no doubt that government trust is integral to the response to health emergencies. This is because the ability of the government to remain resilient and effective depends largely on the trust and support of citizens. Recent systems theory echoes this view (Béland et al., 2022). In particular, during the height of the COVID-19 crisis, social media had a vital impact on driving citizen compliance while highlighting the critical role of such interactions (Liu et al., 2022). Improving compliance with health policies and public trust is inextricably linked to the success of health policies. A nation’s trust in government is related to its perception of its ability to meet the needs of all citizens. As the COVID-19 pandemic progressed through its chaotic phase, timely implementation of policy decisions, effective enforcement, and evolving public sentiment reinforced one another and symbiotically interacted (Legido-Quigley et al., 2020). Ongoing communication, unwavering transparency, and responsiveness to citizens’ concerns were the pillars of this trust (Van Bavel et al., 2020). In addition, compliance with proposed health directives has increased in areas with strong government health advisory services (Ansah et al., n.d.).

## 2.3 Risk Identification and Assessment

Affected by the epidemic, public health emergencies require governments to improve risk assessment and

adopt flexible communication strategies. The Social Amplification of Risk Framework (SART) proposed by Kaspersen et al. (1998) remains important for understanding the dynamics of public perception during health crises. In the digital age, this framework can help assess health risks. Further, Shi, Qi, and Wang’s research (2022) provides an analytical perspective on the dynamism and complexity of public opinion, based on social network events, with special emphasis on times of crisis. Understanding the need for adaptive strategies based on public insights depends on modeling and analyzing fluctuations in public opinion. In addition, studies such as Zhao, Yan, and Chen (2023) investigate comparative pandemic control policies, focusing on Chinese, Singaporean, and Hong Kong regions during the Omicron phase. Studies such as these bridge the gap between risk identification and policy implications and effective risk identification and assessment in shaping public perceptions and policy effectiveness.

## 2.4 Research gap

Past articles have lacked a comprehensive approach, so this article combines a literature review with case studies and comparative regional analysis to provide a multifaceted view of different regional responses. This approach contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities of crisis management and rebuilding citizen confidence in the post-COVID-19 era.

## 3. Case study

### 3.1 Singapore

While COVID-19 was a global outbreak, Singapore’s response embodied a comprehensive crisis management strategy, combining a strong public health infrastructure with an early and vigorous response. The characteristics are an early rigorous response, a strong public health infrastructure, and a transition to becoming a virus carrier. Singapore employed a dynamic and adaptive crisis management approach after the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first instance, Singapore adopted a zero-COVID strategy like China, implementing stringent measures such as lockdowns, border closures, and aggressive contact tracing. By implementing an effective public health infrastructure and communicating clearly, a vigorous early response was able to control the spread of the virus effectively (Zhao et al., 2023).

However, the pandemic’s evolving nature and significant economic impact resulted in a strategic shift in the organization’s approach. As Singapore experienced its worst recession since its independence, with a 5.8% decline in 2020, slightly better than the expected 6-6.5%

decline, it transitioned from a zero-COVID policy to a “live with COVID” one (Phua, 2021). The strategic pivot enabled by a successful vaccination campaign, which resulted in over 80% of the population receiving vaccinations by September, made it possible to ease restrictions. Rather than aiming for zero infections, the focus shifted from minimizing hospitalizations and mortality to minimizing hospitalizations and mortality (Heijmans, 2021).

The Singaporean government introduced a four billion dollar Stabilisation and Support package, tax rebates on corporate income, and enhanced tax treatments to balance public health risks with economic needs (Zhao et al., 2023).

### 3.2 Hong Kong

Combining knowledge of local socio-political conditions and strict public health measures characterized the Hong Kong government’s response strategy to the COVID-19 pandemic. This comprehensive strategy includes enhanced border controls, strict enforcement of quarantine regulations, social distancing measures, and comprehensive contact tracing.

In Hong Kong’s response strategy, electronic wristbands have become a distinctive feature. By monitoring and enforcing quarantine regulations, these devices ensure that people adhere to isolation instructions. This demonstrates Hong Kong’s determination to adopt innovative technologies during the public health crisis. In Hong Kong’s comprehensive response to the COVID-19 outbreak, electronic wristbands have played a key role in providing real-time surveillance and enforcing public health measures. When a quarantined person crosses a designated area, the wristbands alert authorities that they have crossed it. The wristbands communicate with a geofencing system and track the wearer’s location. In addition, this technology effectively tracks those in mandatory quarantine and enhances the public’s sense of responsibility and compliance with regulations. By deploying these wristbands, Hong Kong has demonstrated its determination to integrate technology into public health measures, using technology to enforce quarantine regulations efficiently.

Hong Kong’s strategy to deal with the second wave of the epidemic from March 21 to late August 2020, especially for returning travelers, demonstrated its flexibility (Vyas and Butakhieo, 2020). This response strategy balances public safety and the effectiveness of modern technology to control the spread of COVID-19 through electronic wristbands.

Hong Kong’s ability to face the second wave, from March 21, 2020, to late August 2020, primarily fueled

by returning travelers, demonstrated its agility (Vyas & Butakhieo, 2020). In response to evolving pandemic scenarios, airports became sites of stringent health checks, requiring passengers from high-risk areas to undergo deep-throat saliva tests, demonstrating the region’s proactive and dynamic response.

Last, Hong Kong’s response to COVID-19 demonstrates how disease control can be accomplished with minimal impact on psychological and social well-being. Even though the government’s measures largely succeeded in containing the spread of the virus, they also inadvertently exacerbated residents’ stress, anxiety, and depression. Considering the psychological and physical impacts on citizens, strategies must be tailored to the specific situation when managing a public health crisis. Based on the Hong Kong experience, it is evident that there is a need for a holistic approach to crisis management that incorporates mental health support and interventions into public health interventions.

### 3.3 Mainland China

Shenzhen’s transition from dynamic zero-COVID to stable zero-COVID was examined through an agent-based model simulating various transition strategies. However, the severity and duration of epidemics depend on how strict the measures are, not just a gradual transition with some restrictions. In severe cases and the event of long-term COVID-19 symptoms, policymakers must consider the possibility of sequelae and reinfection (Wu et al., 2023) to prepare for possible sequelae and reinfections.

According to the study, assessing the challenges caused by many people with sequelae conditions following the policy’s implementation is also important. As a result of this approach, healthcare resources will be allocated effectively, and patients with sequelae and long-term COVID-19 will be able to receive treatment more efficiently (Munblit et al., 2022).

Increased tolerance of infected cases to lockdown was considered a buffer to transition from a dynamic zero-COVID policy. According to simulation results, lockdown measures effectively maintained infections and limited virus spread while keeping the number of severe cases stable (Tang et al., 2023). However, this approach was accompanied by a heavy price, as the epidemic would linger longer, especially if lockdown thresholds were small. Among the factors to consider were the financial implications of possible economic recessions, such as income loss, increased unemployment, reduced production, and the negative consequences for social activities, mental health, and vulnerable populations. When health system capacity was tight, policymakers recognized that this approach could purchase more time

for preparation (Eduardo et al., 2021).

Based on simulations of a broader reopening scenario, in which no lockdowns are implemented, and testing occurs at varying frequencies, an outbreak of this type would affect the healthcare system regardless of the strategy utilized. Testing all citizens for 48 hours can prevent an outbreak and limit its scope, but this strategy is costly and requires significant manpower. As a result of the lifting of the embargo and other restrictions, the researchers recommend that policymakers focus on the knock-on effects of severe infections and the potential long-term impacts of COVID-19 rather than their short-term effects. Through the implementation of a variety of measures, such as improved surveillance and tracking, public health education campaigns, and the preparation of the healthcare system for providing adequate care and support to those suffering from long-term COVID-19 symptoms, the public health system has been able to reopen facilities for potentially long-term housing for outbreaks of COVID-19 (Wang et al., 2023).

In summary, China's experience managing the COVID-19 pandemic by transitioning from static to dynamic zero-COVID policies highlights the importance of balancing strict health measures and economic and social sustainability. As a result of these lessons learned, especially in the light of current pandemic challenges, global health governance and crisis management strategies may be critical in the future.

### 3.4 Macau

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges, requiring a swift and effective government response. Macau has a heavy reliance on tourism and faces several unique challenges. It provides an in-depth analysis of the Macau government's crisis response strategy and its confidence in citizens' impact based on the document "Mechanisms Affecting Residents' Support for Government Policies to Accelerate Tourism Recovery under Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia (COVID-19)" and insights from the latest developments in 2023. (Zhai & Shi, 2021)

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Macau responded in a multifaceted manner that reflected local needs and alignment with mainland Chinese policies. The Chief Executive of Macau, Ho Iat Seng, endorsed the 'dynamic Covid-zero' strategy in line with China's strategy. As a result, strict border controls and quarantine measures were implemented in conjunction with the larger national strategy ((Macau to Stick to Dynamic Covid-zero Policy Set Out by China – CE | Macau Business, 2022)).

Various entry restrictions were implemented following the COVID-19 outbreak, particularly for residents and non-

resident workers from Greater China (Macau, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China), the only groups permitted to enter the city. A 14-day medical observation period was required for returning residents who had to register before arrival (An Overview of the Current Local COVID-19 Border Entry Policies, 2020).

Visitors from Greater China were permitted entry under normal circumstances, except if they had traveled to any overseas country or region within the previous 14 days, in which case they had to undergo a 14-day medical observation period. The holders of 'Blue cards' from Greater China who had been outside Greater China within 14 days before entry were required to undergo medical observation, with specific protocols for those who had also been to Mainland China. (An Overview of the Current Local COVID-19 Border Entry Policies, 2020)

Furthermore, anyone entering Macau must complete a health declaration and undergo COVID-19 testing. People who had traveled outside Greater China awaited the results of their tests at the Conde S. Januario Hospital. They were sent to a designated hotel for medical observation if their results were negative. It is possible that non-compliance with health policies could result in forced medical observation and criminal liability. (An Overview of the Current Local COVID-19 Border Entry Policies, 2020)

Besides health, economic, and social measures, Macau's government implemented comprehensive crisis management measures. The government has improved infrastructure and supported small and medium businesses to stimulate the economy. Approximately 60 percent of Macau's GDP will be generated by non-gaming sectors due to the "1+4" diversification strategy. Among other things, Macau has developed into a smart city, electric vehicles have been prompted, and single-use plastic cutlery has been banned (Wong & Lai, 2022, 2023 Policy Address Outlines Steps to Boost the Economy While Preventing COVID-19, 2022).

Although the government took effective measures to control the outbreak, residents still expressed anxiety and distrust. There was an interdependence between government policy, public anxiety, and trust in crises, illustrating the complex dynamics of these situations.

Based on Chinese policy and local challenges, Macao's response to COVID-19 provides insight into effective emergency governance. Apart from providing immediate relief, the government has set the stage for a resilient and sustainable future. The lessons learned from Macao's outbreak will benefit other regions facing similar challenges in the future.

### 3.5 Summary

Region	Approach to COVID-19	Key Strategies and Measures	Economic Impact	Mental Health Impact
Singapore	The transition from zero-COVID to “live with COVID.”	Early response, strict measures, vaccination campaign.	Economic recession, government support.	The public experienced stress and uncertainty.
Hong Kong	Comprehensive approach with stringent measures.	Border controls, social distancing, electronic wristbands.	Social isolation, mental health challenges.	Increased stress, anxiety, and depression.
Mainland China	Evolution from static to dynamic zero-COVID.	Lockdowns, testing, contact tracing.	Economic challenges need for healthcare capacity.	Economic hardships, mental health concerns.
Macau	Adopted “dynamic COVID-zero” strategy.	Strict border controls, quarantine, economic stimulus.	Alignment with Mainland China’s strategy	Residents expressed anxiety and distrust.

### 4. Conclusion & Discussion

This study critically analyzes government crisis response and citizen confidence building after COVID-19. This article focuses on public trust and health policy, social media’s role in public health communication, and identifying and assessing risk. Asia-Pacific case studies include Singapore, Hong Kong, Mainland China, and Macau to examine and compare the approaches taken to respond to the outbreak.

By examining these case studies, some clear commonalities and differences can be identified. A striking similarity is an emphasis on prompt and effective government action, transparency of communication, and reliance on technology, as observed in analyzing the case of Singapore ( Bridgman et al., 2020; Chan et al., 2020). These elements are critical for the effective management of the epidemic. There are differences in the stringency of the measures and the balance between public health and economic considerations. For example, Macau’s approach focuses more on economic recovery than the stringent public health measures in Mainland China (Zhao, Yan, & Chen, 2023).

Despite this, this study is limited by the lack of quantitative analysis. Quantitative analysis might have better understood the effectiveness of different crisis management strategies. Further, the geography focusing mainly on Asia-Pacific may have missed some valuable lessons from other parts of the world, like Europe and the

Americas, which have dealt with the epidemic differently (Legido-Quigley et al., 2020).

The geographical scope of future research could be expanded to include more diverse countries and regions. Crisis management strategies worldwide will be more fully understood with the expansion. Furthermore, combining quantitative methods such as statistical analysis of public health data and economic indicators can provide a more nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of different strategies (Sesagiri Raamkumar et al., 2020; Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018). In addition, the long-term psychological and social consequences of the pandemic and the government’s response could also be focused for future research, both of which are key aspects of a public health crisis.

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, governments have discovered the importance of an effective and rapid response to the crisis and restoring citizens’ confidence in their constructs. The upshot of this research is that many lessons could be learned about crisis management and public policy that can be applied across the Asia-Pacific region. Even though the execution and focus of these strategies differ, the overall objective of balancing public health concerns with economic and social considerations remains the same. Through this review, insight has been gained into the field of crisis management and public health policy, which will be valuable in future crises. This area requires continued exploration and analysis due to these research limitations and future directions.

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