

Examining Vietnam's COVID-19 response

Ngoc Hoang

<https://www.rmit.edu.vn/news/all-news/2020/apr/examining-vietnam-s-covid-19-response>

RMIT University Vietnam (21 April 2020)—A recent study by Vietnamese social scientists looked into the initial success of Vietnam's response to COVID-19.



The initial success of Vietnam's response to COVID-19 spurred a study by group of social scientists.

The resulting article, titled "Policy Response, Social Media and Science Journalism for the Sustainability of the Public Health System Amid the COVID-19 Outbreak: The Vietnam Lessons", first appeared in the Sustainability journal published by MDPI in early April.

The study focused on the Vietnamese government's response in terms of public health measures and policy implementation, as well as the mobilisation of citizens to help contain the disease.

As of 20 April 2020, COVID-19 has resulted in 268 confirmed cases but no deaths in the Southeast Asian country.

"This study is among the first attempts of Vietnamese social scientists to share lessons from Vietnam, which have proven to be prompt and effective to date in the combat against COVID-19," said Ms. Pham Thanh Hang, a lecturer at Hanoi University and a doctoral student at RMIT University.

Ms Hang, who is also a member of the tourism and hospitality research cluster within RMIT's School of Business & Management, is the corresponding author of the article in cooperation with 10 other Vietnamese researchers from several institutions.

The research team developed a web crawl engine and used it to scan and collect online news related to COVID-19 in Vietnam. The scan was run between the beginning of January and 4 April 2020, and yielded a dataset of 14,952 news items.

The findings shed light on how Vietnam, despite having an under-resourced healthcare system, has shown readiness to combat the emerging pandemic since the earliest days.

| Sources | Start Date | News |
|--------------------------|------------|------|
| <i>kenh14.vn</i> | 15/01/2020 | 2132 |
| <i>vtc.vn</i> | 17/01/2020 | 909 |
| <i>suckhoedoisong.vn</i> | 09/01/2020 | 929 |
| <i>cafef.vn</i> | 12/01/2020 | 804 |
| <i>tuoitre.vn</i> | 12/01/2020 | 1196 |
| <i>chinhphu.vn</i> | 09/01/2020 | 441 |
| <i>Zing.vn</i> | 17/01/2020 | 1360 |
| <i>dantri.com.vn</i> | 10/02/2020 | 1838 |
| <i>plo.vn</i> | 23/01/2020 | 400 |
| <i>vnexpress.net</i> | 23/01/2020 | 917 |
| <i>vov.vn</i> | 27/02/2020 | 1748 |
| <i>nld.vn</i> | 28/02/2020 | 577 |
| <i>rfa.org</i> | 10/02/2020 | 248 |
| <i>thanhnien.vn</i> | 18/02/2020 | 1453 |

List of online news sources used in the study (as of April 4, 2020).

The Director of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Social Research at Phenikaa University, Hanoi, and lead researcher in this project, Dr Vuong Quan Hoang said it is likely that the Vietnamese government learned from its experience with the SARS epidemic in 2003.

"Vietnam was the first country to control SARS effectively. So this time with COVID-19, they took drastic measures from the early stage of the disease, such as strict screening of inbound travellers and government-run quarantine of suspected virus carriers," Dr Hoang said.

The research group thinks that Vietnam's response to COVID-19, which has been a combination of political readiness, timely communication and scientific journalism, may offer valuable lessons to other countries.

“There has been an emphasis on raising citizens’ awareness of disease prevention without spreading panic, via fostering genuine cooperation between government, civil society and private individuals,” Ms Hang said.

According to the research group, this is “not only relevant to the concurrent fight against the COVID-19 pandemic but also the overall responses to a public health crisis”.

The researchers expect the dataset to keep growing over time, presenting them with new opportunities to extract deeper and more valuable insights. This may also contribute to the global efforts in the COVID-19 combat and help reduce costs as well as enhance the value of science.

Further Readings (selected)

- Giang, H. T. N., Shah, J., Hung, T. H., Reda, A., Truong, L. N., & Huy, N. T. (2020). The first Vietnamese case of COVID-19 acquired from China. *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, *20*(4), 408-409.
- La, V. P., Pham, T. H., Ho, M. T., Nguyen, M. H., P Nguyen, K. L., Vuong, T. T., ... & Vuong, Q. H. (2020). Policy response, social media and science journalism for the sustainability of the public health system amid the COVID-19 outbreak: The Vietnam lessons. *Sustainability*, *12*(7), 2931.
- Le, T. Q. M., Takemura, T., Moi, M. L., Nabeshima, T., Nguyen, L. K. H., Hoang, V. M. P., ... & Duong, T. N. (2020). Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 Shedding by Travelers, Vietnam, 2020. *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, *26*(7). doi:10.3201/eid2607.200591
- Nguyen, T. H., & Vu, D. C. (2020). The largest epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in Vietnam. *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology*. doi:10.1017/ice.2020.128
- Phan, L. T., Nguyen, T. V., Luong, Q. C., Nguyen, T. V., Nguyen, H. T., Le, H. Q., ... & Pham, Q. D. (2020). Importation and human-to-human transmission of a novel coronavirus in Vietnam. *New England Journal of Medicine*, *382*(9), 872-874.
- Thanh, H. N., Van, T. N., Thu, H. N. T., Van, B. N., Thanh, B. D., Thu, H. P. T., ... & Nguyen, T. A. (2020). Outbreak investigation for COVID-19 in northern Vietnam. *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, *20*(5), 535-536.