Journal of Public Health Indonesian
Volume.2 Issue.4, (November, 2025) Pages 13-24
E-ISSN: 3048-1139
DOI : https://doi.org/10.62872/20z97s64
https://nawalaeducation.com/index.php/JHH

Social Epidemiology Study on Community Preventive Behavior in Facing the Global Health Crisis

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Received : October 24, 2025
Revised : October 30, 2025
Accepted : November 12, 2025
Published: November 24, 2025

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***Abstract*:** *This study examines community preventive behavior during global health crises from a social epidemiology perspective, emphasizing the roles of social determinants, institutional trust, and structural inequality. A critical integrative literature review was conducted using thematic analysis of 45 publications indexed in PubMed, Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Google Scholar, published between 2019 and 2025. The synthesis shows that preventive behavior is not merely a function of knowledge or individual motivation, but is consistently patterned along lines of education, income, employment status, and access to credible information. Populations in structurally disadvantaged positions tend to display markedly lower preventive capacity, while higher levels of institutional trust are associated with more consistent adherence to recommended measures. Yet, much of the existing scholarship still privileges individual psychological determinants, leaving insufficient attention to how macro-level social structures and trust dynamics jointly shape collective compliance and health resilience. This article addresses that gap by developing an integrated conceptual model that connects social epidemiology, structural inequality, and trust theory to explain preventive behavior during global crises. The study contributes theoretically by reframing prevention as a socially produced capability rather than an isolated individual choice, and practically by offering a framework to reorient public health policy toward structural equity, trust-building, and socially grounded risk communication as foundations for sustainable collective prevention.*

Keywords: social epidemiology; structural determinants; preventive behavior; institutional trust; health inequality; global health crisis

How to cite:
Tenriyola., A.N. (2025). Social Epidemiology Study on Community Preventive Behavior in Facing the Global Health Crisis. *Journal of Public Health Indonesian*, 2(4), 13-24. DOI: https://doi.org/10.62872/20z97s64

INTRODUCTION

Global health crises in the twenty-first century have repeatedly demonstrated that disease outbreaks are never merely clinical events situated within hospitals, laboratories, or biomedical discourse. Instead, they unfold as deeply embedded social processes that expose historical inequalities, question institutional legitimacy, and reveal the fragility of public trust in science and governance. The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, underscored how public health outcomes cannot be separated from social structures, political dynamics, and cultural meaning-making. Even highly advanced societies with sophisticated health infrastructures struggled to mobilize preventive behavior consistently when social

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cohesion weakened and trust in institutions fractured. These conditions affirm the central premise of social epidemiology that health outcomes are a function not only of biology and behavior but also of the structural forces that shape vulnerability, access, and compliance.

Yet despite this recognition, mainstream public health discourse often continues to privilege individual-level explanations of preventive behavior, relying on models such as the Health Belief Model or Theory of Planned Behavior. These frameworks focus on personal attitudes, perceived risk, knowledge, and psychological readiness, presuming that once people understand health risks, they will comply with preventive recommendations. However, empirical evidence from global crises demonstrates that knowledge and awareness do not automatically translate into action. Many populations fully understood preventive protocols yet remained unable or unwilling to adhere due to economic precarity, social pressure, cultural norms, or mistrust toward political institutions and health authorities. The persistence of such disparities suggests the inadequacy of individual-centric frameworks and highlights the need for a structural approach that understands preventive behavior as socially conditioned.

Within this context, social epidemiology provides critical conceptual lenses to connect community health behavior with broader socioeconomic forces. It argues that disease vulnerability and preventive capacity follow a social gradient shaped by income, education, work conditions, housing, and access to reliable information. Populations with greater resources are more capable of complying with preventive directives because they possess not only knowledge but also structural freedom: flexible employment, digital exposure, stable housing, and sufficient healthcare access. In contrast, structurally disadvantaged groups, despite understanding risks, often face constraints that limit their ability to follow guidance, creating a paradox where those who need prevention most are often least able to adopt it. This social gradient in health behavior has been observed consistently across multiple crisis settings and underscores the centrality of structural determinants in shaping compliance.

Institutional trust emerges as another decisive determinant. Preventive behavior requires not only access and ability but also to a belief that government decisions are credible, that science is neutral and reliable, and that health information is delivered transparently. When trust weakens, populations turn to alternative networks, informal sources, and identity-based narratives, often amplifying rumors, conspiracy theories, and populist rhetoric. The pandemic revealed how scientific messaging can lose authority when politicized, fragmented, or inconsistent. Misinformation flourishes not only because people lack knowledge, but because they lack trust in those disseminating knowledge. Thus, institutional trust functions as an invisible infrastructure that determines whether society collectively adopts or resists preventive measures.

The rapid digitalization of public life further complicates these dynamics. Digital media has become a primary arena where public understanding of health is constructed, negotiated, and contested. Online platforms not only disseminate information but also shape risk perception, amplify emotions, and produce symbolic meaning around preventive practices. Memes, hashtags, influencers, and viral narratives often carry more persuasive power than formal announcements from health agencies, especially among younger demographics. As a result, preventive behavior increasingly reflects digital socialization patterns and algorithm-driven information flows rather than purely rational assessment of scientific data. The digital public sphere thus functions as a hybrid arena where biomedical truth, cultural identity, political ideology, and emotional resonance are constantly negotiated.

Despite the transformative impact of these social and digital forces, research on preventive behavior remains dominated by biomedical and behavioral lenses. Studies frequently emphasize individual motivation, psychological characteristics, or risk perception without fully considering how structural inequality, digital socialization, and institutional trust interact to shape compliance. It is within

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this gap that the present study finds its scholarly relevance. While foundational works such as Bardosh et al. (2020) *Integrating the Social Sciences in Epidemic Preparedness and Response* highlight the value of social science in crisis response, they do not fully construct an integrated model linking structural inequality with collective behavioral patterns. Similarly, Brugnara et al. (2020) in *Quality Improvement of Health Systems in an Epidemic Context* emphasize systemic improvement but do not extend their analysis to the social mechanisms shaping preventive practices at the community level. Meanwhile, Wong et al. (2022) in *The Role of Institutional Trust in Preventive Practices during COVID-19* provide empirical insight on trust but stop short of synthesizing trust with socioeconomic and digital determinants across societies.

The absence of integrated analysis across these dimensions such as social determinants, institutional trust, and digital ecosystems, reveals a significant research gap. Current literature remains fragmented, with some streams focused on individual behavior, others on public trust, and still others on digital communication. Few attempts have been made to weave these elements into a unified conceptual synthesis that explains preventive behavior as a socially produced phenomenon shaped simultaneously by material conditions, belief systems, and information structures. This fragmentation limits the ability of scholars and policymakers to develop interventions that address not only awareness and attitudes but also structural constraints and social realities.

Responding to these limitations, the present review synthesizes multidisciplinary evidence to advance a more comprehensive understanding of preventive behavior during global crises. Its objective is to articulate a social-epidemiological model that situates individual behavior within the broader context of inequality, trust, and digital information flows. Rather than viewing prevention as a function of personal choice alone, the study positions it as an expression of social capacity, mediated by institutional legitimacy and cultural meaning-making. This approach shifts the focus from "why individuals comply or not" to "how societies enable or constrain compliance," offering a framework that bridges macro-structural forces with micro-level behavior.

The novelty of this synthesis lies in its integrative perspective. By merging insights from social epidemiology, trust theory, and digital sociology, it proposes that preventive behavior cannot be fully understood unless analyzed through three intersecting dimensions: structural conditions, institutional belief systems, and digital communicative environments. This conceptual lens helps illuminate why preventive policies succeed in some communities yet falter in others, even when biomedical guidance is identical. It positions community resilience not merely as an outcome of medical capacity but as a function of social cohesion, equitable infrastructure, and trust-driven governance. In doing so, the study contributes to shifting public health discourse toward a socially grounded approach that recognizes the human dimensions of crisis response.

Ultimately, this narrative positions preventive behavior as a reflection of social justice and collective trust rather than isolated decision-making. It asserts that effective public health strategies require not only medical preparedness but also social preparedness: strengthened institutions, equitable resource distribution, and inclusive communication systems capable of bridging social divides. Through this integrated conceptual understanding, the study aims to inform future policy design and scholarly inquiry, emphasizing prevention as both a health imperative and a social contract.

In response to this gap, the present study seeks to advance a conceptual model that connects these three domains by examining how structural inequalities influence people's capacity to adopt preventive measures, how institutional trust shapes their willingness to comply with public health guidance, and how digital communication ecologies condition the ways in which risks are perceived, negotiated, and socially interpreted. By synthesizing these interrelated processes, the study positions preventive behavior not

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merely as an individual choice, but as an outcome of intersecting structural, institutional, and communicative forces. This integrative framing underscores the study's contribution to developing a more socially grounded understanding of public health resilience in times of global crisis.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a critical integrative literature review approach to analyze community preventive behavior during global health crises through the lens of social epidemiology. Unlike systematic reviews that adhere to rigid procedural protocols, an integrative review emphasizes theoretical depth, critical synthesis, and conceptual development, making it suitable for examining complex socio-structural determinants of health behavior. Consistent with Torraco (2016), this method enables the researcher to assess, interpret, and merge diverse scholarly perspectives in order to produce a renewed conceptual understanding, rather than merely aggregating empirical results.

The literature search was conducted across five major academic databases such as Scopus, PubMed, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Google Scholar, using keyword combinations related to social epidemiology, preventive behavior, health inequality, institutional trust, and global health crisis. The search generated approximately 275 initial documents published between 2019 and 2025, a timeframe chosen to reflect the evolution of preventive behavior during contemporary global health emergencies, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic and emergent post-pandemic contexts. Titles and abstracts were screened to ensure conceptual relevance, and studies focusing solely on biomedical interventions, virology, or purely clinical outcomes were excluded. Through this filtering process, 45 publications were retained for detailed review, of which 30 peer-reviewed articles formed the core analytical corpus while the remainder served as complementary sources.

The analysis followed a thematic synthesis approach aligned with Braun and Clarke's (2006) interpretive model. Articles were read in full and coded inductively to identify recurring patterns, conceptual intersections, and theoretical tensions related to preventive behavior. Coding proceeded through two stages: initial open coding to catalogue emergent ideas, followed by thematic consolidation to cluster related concepts into more abstract categories. Manual coding was conducted using a structured analytical matrix to ensure consistency, traceability, and conceptual rigor, rather than using computer-assisted qualitative data software such as NVivo. The coding process yielded three principal thematic domains: first, the influence of structural inequality and social stratification on preventive capacity; second, the role of institutional credibility and public trust in shaping compliance; and third, the formative influence of digital communication ecologies on risk perception and behavioral norms.

To enhance analytical credibility, the study incorporated source triangulation by drawing from intersecting fields including public health, sociology, and digital communication studies. Reflexive reading practices were applied throughout the analysis to ensure alignment between textual interpretation and the overarching social epidemiology framework. Consistent revisiting of coded material also helped maintain internal coherence and avoid thematic drift. This methodological stance acknowledges that the interpretation of social phenomena demands sensitivity to context, power relations, and symbolic processes rather than purely technical classification.

It is important to note that although initial text screening loosely followed systematic principles, this review does not claim to be a systematic review nor to apply PRISMA guidelines in full. Rather, it positions itself deliberately as a critical conceptual synthesis, prioritizing depth, interpretive clarity, and theoretical integration over procedural exhaustiveness. This approach reflects the study's objective to develop a conceptual model that connects structural determinants, trust dynamics, and digital ecosystems in shaping preventive behavior, thereby offering explanatory insight that extends beyond the scope of

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conventional behavioral models. Through this methodological orientation, the review not only compiles scholarship but also interrogates it, identifying conceptual gaps and advancing a holistic interpretive model. The resulting synthesis is intended to support the development of a more socially grounded paradigm of public health preparedness and community resilience in global crisis contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social Structure as a Determinant of Community Preventive Behavior

The global health crisis has starkly revealed that community preventive behavior cannot be understood merely through psychological or biomedical explanations, but must be situated within the broader social structures that shape capacity, exposure, and opportunity. Preventive practices are not neutral actions equally available to all groups; rather, they reflect the distribution of social power and resources that determine who is able to protect themselves and under what conditions. This aligns with the core premise of social epidemiology, which views health behavior as socially patterned and deeply embedded within the everyday realities of economic life, education access, and occupational arrangements.

Empirical findings in various contexts demonstrate that individuals with greater educational attainment consistently exhibit higher adherence to preventive protocols such as mask-wearing and physical distancing. Research in Banda Aceh (Marzuki et al., 2022) showed that those with higher education levels were 1.85 times more likely to adopt preventive measures compared to individuals with lower educational backgrounds, suggesting that educational privilege not only enhances literacy and access to credible information but also strengthens the cognitive ability to interpret and act upon scientific recommendations. Likewise, Jang (2022) found that individuals employed in informal sectors displayed lower adherence than formal workers due to unstable income, limited workplace protections, and the necessity to continue physical mobility for economic survival. These examples do not simply illustrate behavioral differences; they underscore how structure precedes agency, meaning that compliance emerges not only from awareness but from the feasibility to act on that awareness.

The WHO report (2023) similarly confirmed that income and employment status are directly associated with the likelihood of engaging in routine preventive measures. In communities where economic security and social support systems are weak, preventive behavior is often overridden by immediate material needs, demonstrating that rational choice in public health is mediated by structural constraints. This pattern reveals an ethical dimension often neglected in conventional health promotion narratives: communities are not “non-compliant”; rather, they are structurally constrained in their capacity to comply. Preventive behavior thus cannot be conceptualized solely as an individual moral obligation but must be understood as a manifestation of unequal social opportunity.

The table below, as presented in the original study, captures this social gradient in preventive behavior:

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Table 1. Empirical Evidence of Social Determinants Influencing Preventive Behavior

Social Determination	Impact on Preventive Behavior	Empirical Findings ($p<0.05$)	Source
Higher education	Odds Ratio 1.85 for PPE compliance	Banda Aceh (Marzuki, 2022)	MJI Journal
High economic status	Preventive compliance is 1.4x greater	Jang. (2022)	PLoS One
Formal employment	The frequency of preventive behavior increased by 32%	WHO Health Behaviors, 2023	WHO Report

These data points support the argument that preventive behavior emerges from the interaction between knowledge, resource availability, and structural opportunity. Communities possessing stable employment, adequate income, and educational capital are more capable of translating awareness into consistent preventive action. Conversely, marginalized populations, even when informed, face structural barriers that make compliance precarious, inconsistent, or even impossible. This confirms that structural inequality is not an external variable influencing behavior but is a determinant condition without which prevention cannot be sustained.

Therefore, this section reinforces a central thesis of the article: preventive behavior during a global health crisis reflects social stratification more than individual choice. Public health policy that fails to recognize these structural determinants risks reinforcing inequity by implicitly placing the burden of prevention on those least able to fulfill it. This understanding lays the conceptual foundation for the following sections, which further analyze how institutional trust and communication ecosystems interact with these structural forces to produce differentiated public health outcomes.

Beyond descriptive associations, these findings reveal a deeper sociological mechanism in which structural positioning not only shapes access to preventive resources but also produces differentiated forms of agency. In line with Marmot's social gradient theory and Bourdieu's notion of social capital, preventive behavior operates as a function of accumulated social advantages that confer not merely knowledge, but *capacity, autonomy, and perceived entitlement to protection*. In disadvantaged groups, the need to maintain income, navigate uncertain labor arrangements, and manage household vulnerabilities often forces individuals to prioritize immediate survival over long-term risk mitigation. This does not reflect irrationality; rather, it demonstrates what Beck termed “risk hierarchy,” where the privileged can afford to avoid risk, while the vulnerable must live within it. Thus, compliance emerges not only from willingness but from structurally produced feasibility, indicating that failure to adopt preventive behavior often reflects systemic inequities rather than individual neglect or cultural resistance. Recognizing this relationship is essential, as policy frameworks that assume equal ability to comply may unintentionally penalize the most exposed populations, reinforcing cycles of vulnerability.

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Crisis of Trust and Politicization of Risk in Global Health Dynamics

Public trust in health institutions, government actors, and scientific authorities has emerged as one of the most decisive factors shaping people's willingness to adopt preventive behavior during global health emergencies. While structural vulnerability establishes the material possibilities for compliance, trust governs whether individuals perceive preventive mandates as credible, legitimate, and aligned with collective welfare. When institutional legitimacy is strong, public health policy is interpreted as a shared obligation; however, when trust erodes, preventive behavior is reframed as an imposition, contested directive, or political symbol. This dynamic underscores that preventive compliance is not purely epistemic, but moral-political, rooted in how individuals evaluate the authority issuing the guidance.

The global health crisis demonstrated that trust is not static, nor merely informational, but historically layered, socially negotiated, and emotionally mediated. In settings where governments demonstrated inconsistency, lack of transparency, or unequal enforcement of policies, individuals displayed hesitancy or outright resistance, even when scientific evidence was clear. Conversely, contexts that maintained clear communication, coherent policy direction, and equitable treatment of citizens saw higher compliance rates. This pattern confirms the social epidemiology insight that institutional credibility functions as a "moral infrastructure" enabling collective action, rather than simply a communication tool for disseminating public health messages.

Empirical studies reinforce this observation. Ware (2024) showed that public trust in health institutions directly predicted the intensity of protocol adherence, demonstrating a causal linkage between legitimacy and compliance. Similarly, van der Linden (2022) found that exposure to misinformation significantly diminished vaccination intentions, indicating that belief formation under uncertainty is highly sensitive to competing authority claims. Yet these studies do not operate merely as empirical anecdotes; they reveal a deeper epistemic tension wherein individuals must navigate conflicting narratives in a fragmented public sphere. Modern societies no longer rely on a single, unified locus of truth, but instead encounter health information within a contested communicative environment where emotional resonance and identity alignment may outweigh scientific rationality.

This crisis of trust cannot be reduced to ignorance or cognitive deficit. Rather, it reflects the intersection of political history, cultural identity, and lived experiences of governance. Communities with longstanding experiences of marginalization or institutional neglect exhibit greater skepticism toward public health directives, demonstrating that compliance is directly tied to perceptions of fairness, transparency, and reciprocity. In this sense, resistance to preventive measures may signify a rational response to historical inequity rather than irrational rejection of science. Public trust thus functions not simply as psychological confidence, but as a form of social capital grounded in accumulated relational experience between citizens and state.

The politicization of risk further complicates compliance. During the pandemic, protective actions such as mask-wearing, vaccination, and mobility restrictions were not interpreted solely as health behaviors, but also as symbolic acts carrying moral, political, and identity-laden meaning. In polarized environments, preventive behavior became entangled with partisan loyalty or ideological stance, transforming health decisions into expressions of belonging or dissent. The public sphere became a battleground where scientific claims competed with populist narratives, conspiracy rhetoric, and culturally embedded moral frameworks. As the crisis unfolded, it became evident that truth claims no

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longer circulated within a neutral epistemic commons, but through fragmented networks organized by affinity, emotion, and shared identity.

Digital media amplified this process. Rather than functioning as a neutral conduit for scientific information, online platforms accelerated narrative fragmentation by privileging content that evokes reaction over content that educates. Algorithms rewarded outrage and sensationalism, inadvertently elevating anti-institutional messages and eroding social cohesion. As a result, individuals increasingly relied on peer networks, influencers, and community norms to evaluate truth, further weakening institutional authority. Scientific evidence thus entered a competitive discursive arena, where legitimacy was shaped not only by accuracy but by emotional resonance and perceived alignment with community identity.

Taken together, these dynamics illustrate that preventive compliance cannot be disentangled from political trust, moral legitimacy, and social belonging. Public health measures succeed when populations believe institutions act transparently, equitably, and competently. When that belief falters, compliance declines, even among structurally advantaged groups. The crisis of trust therefore operates as a mediating layer between structural capacity and behavioral expression, transforming potential compliance into either coordinated collective action or fragmented individual response. In this way, trust functions as the connective tissue between public authority and civic duty, and its erosion threatens not only immediate health outcomes but the long-term social contract underpinning public health governance.

Integrated Socio-Cognitive-Communicative Model of Preventive Behavior

The interaction between structural conditions, institutional trust, and digital communication practices reveals that preventive behavior during public health emergencies emerges from a complex social process rather than an isolated individual decision. In contemporary crisis settings, citizens do not engage with health information in a vacuum. Instead, they interpret guidance through cognitive and emotional filters shaped by their socio-economic realities, previous interactions with state institutions, and the information environments to which they are exposed. As the digital sphere increasingly becomes the primary arena for meaning-making and risk interpretation, preventive action evolves into a socially mediated behavior that reflects not merely knowledge acquisition, but collective trust, communicative legitimacy, and perceived structural feasibility.

The digital information ecosystem plays a crucial role in this process. Scientific directives, institutional announcements, and public health messages compete with viral narratives, personal testimonies, and emotionally charged discourses circulating on social media platforms. Individuals often rely on familiar networks, community figures, and identity-aligned sources to evaluate risk and institutional credibility. The communicative environment therefore creates a dynamic in which preventive behavior is continuously negotiated within discursive spaces, rather than simply adopted in response to expert advice. In this context, digital communication does not function only as a channel of transmission but as a social arena where authority is constructed, contested, and reinterpreted. Public trust is strengthened when messages resonate with lived realities and appear consistent, transparent, and equitable, while inconsistency, historical grievances, or perceived bias easily erode legitimacy.

This dynamic gives rise to a model in which three foundational elements such as social structure, trust, and communication could operate interactively to produce compliance or resistance. Structural determinants shape the material capacity of individuals to comply with health measures; trust establishes

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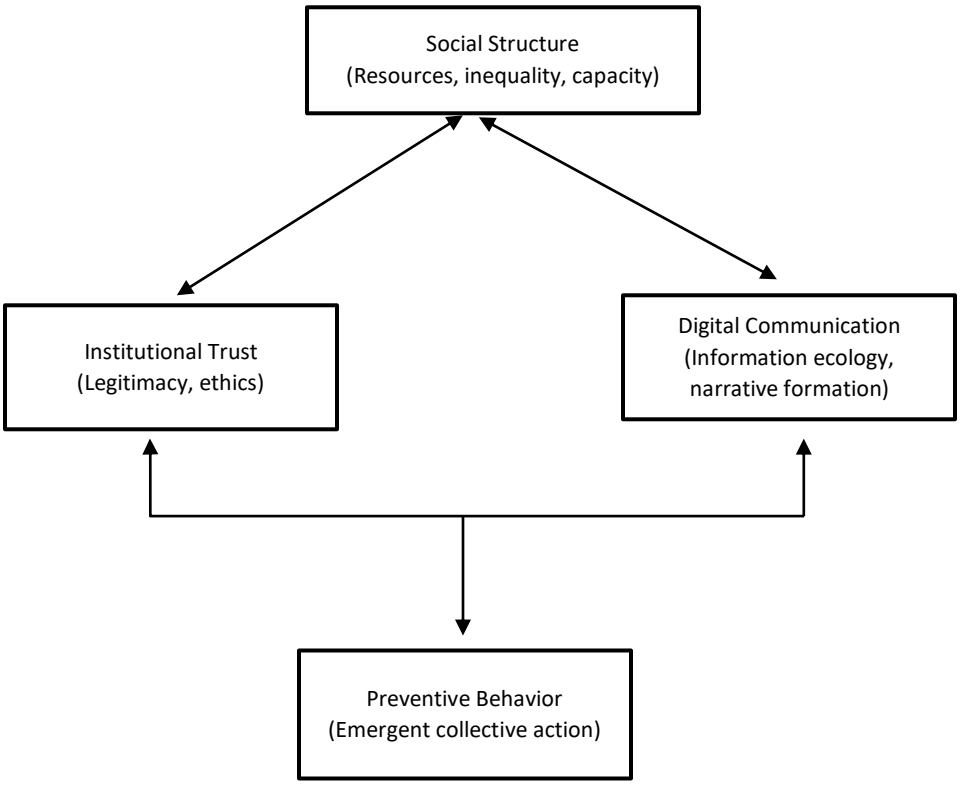
the moral and political basis for accepting guidance; and communication forms the epistemic framework through which information is interpreted. Preventive behavior ultimately arises at the intersection of these conditions. When socio-economic constraints are severe, compliance becomes materially difficult regardless of knowledge. When trust in institutions diminishes, directives lose moral force even when individuals possess the means to comply. When communicative environments are fragmented or flooded with misinformation, uncertainty undermines decision-making and destabilizes compliance even in structurally supported and trust-based contexts.

To visualize this conceptual relationship, the following schematic representation illustrates the interconnected nature of preventive behavior determinants:

Figure 1. Integrated Socio-Cognitive-Communicative Model of Preventive Behavior illustrating the intersection of social determinants, institutional trust, and digital communication processes in shaping community preventive actions.



The diagram illustrates that preventive behavior during public health crises does not arise from isolated individual decision-making, but instead from the convergence of three interdependent domains: social structure, institutional trust, and digital communication flows. Social structure provides the fundamental capacity for preventive action by shaping access to resources, stability of employment, quality of education, and exposure to inequality. Individuals positioned within secure socio-economic environments possess greater autonomy to comply with preventive directives, while those situated in

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vulnerable social strata often confront structural limitations that constrain compliance even when awareness and intention are present.

Institutional trust functions as the interpretive and moral gateway through which individuals assess the legitimacy of guidance issued by public authorities and scientific institutions. Trust transforms capability into willingness; where legitimacy is perceived as strong, compliance becomes a collective civic duty. Conversely, distrust (even in structurally advantaged communities) diminishes the motivational force of public health directives and establishes fertile ground for skepticism, contestation, and symbolic resistance. Trust therefore acts as the affective and cognitive filter through which structural capacity is either mobilized or neutralized.

Digital communication constitutes the epistemic environment in which individuals and communities encounter, evaluate, and negotiate public health information. Media ecosystems, social platforms, and narrative flows mediate the circulation of expertise, emotion, and identity, creating an informational field where scientific claims may coexist with conspiracy narratives, political rhetoric, and culturally rooted interpretations of risk. The digital sphere shapes the meaning of preventive behavior by influencing what is seen as credible, acceptable, and socially normative. In this model, communication does not merely transfer knowledge; it constructs the symbolic and emotional reality in which decisions about health are made.

Preventive behavior emerges only where structural feasibility, institutional legitimacy, and communicative coherence intersect. If a community possesses economic capacity but lacks trust, compliance fragments. If trust exists but structural conditions are precarious, preventive behavior becomes unsustainable. If both structure and trust are present but communicative environments are chaotic or dominated by misinformation, uncertainty and confusion disrupt adherence. The model therefore positions preventive action as an emergent outcome of social coordination rather than a product of individualized rationality. It conceptualizes prevention as a relational achievement shaped by power, legitimacy, and information but not simply personal motivation.

The novelty of this framework lies in its integration of socio-structural, cognitive, and communicative dimensions into a unified explanatory model. Existing studies often examine these domains separately, treating structural inequality, institutional trust, and digital media as discrete analytical categories. This model advances beyond fragmented approaches by demonstrating that these forces operate simultaneously, continually shaping one another, and jointly determining behavioral outcomes. In doing so, it reframes preventive behavior as a function of social justice, institutional ethics, and epistemic stability, and not merely as a compliance outcome derived from awareness or risk perception. This theoretical contribution responds directly to gaps identified in prior research and offers a more comprehensive foundation for understanding and governing collective health behavior in future crises.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that community preventive behavior during public health crises is not determined solely by individual awareness or psychological disposition, but emerges through the simultaneous interaction of structural conditions, institutional trust, and digital information flows. Socio-economic security provides the fundamental capacity to comply with health directives, while trust supplies the moral legitimacy that converts capacity into collective action. At the same time, the digital

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communication environment shapes how risk is understood and how institutional messages gain, lose, or compete for authority. Preventive behavior therefore represents a socially constructed outcome rather than a personal choice in isolation, revealing that effective public health responses depend on structural equity, ethical governance, and communicative coherence. The integrated socio-cognitive-communicative model presented in this article contributes a unified conceptual lens that advances existing literature, closing the analytical gap between epidemiological, sociological, and communicative perspectives. Future research should employ mixed-method and longitudinal designs to empirically test the conceptual pathways proposed in this model, including how structural feasibility, communicative legitimacy, and trust dynamics evolve over time. Digital ethnography, cross-country comparative studies, and operational indicators for measuring structural and communicative constraints would further strengthen the empirical applicability of this framework.

Implications

The findings of this synthesis underscore that public health governance must extend beyond biomedical preparedness to include structural support systems, trust-building mechanisms, and ethical communication strategies. Policymakers need to institutionalize equity-based protection frameworks that reduce socio-economic barriers to compliance, ensuring that preventive guidance is accompanied by material support, transparent decision-making, and responsive governance that reinforces civic trust. In practice, public health agencies and practitioners should adopt communication approaches that do not rely solely on information transmission, but instead cultivate dialogue, community engagement, and empathetic messaging aligned with lived experiences and cultural realities. Preventive programs require not only technical accuracy but also resonance, enabling citizens to see compliance as meaningful participation in shared responsibility rather than as passive obedience.

Future research must build upon this conceptual model by empirically examining the relational mechanisms that link structural capacity, trust dynamics, and information ecologies. Mixed-method designs, longitudinal approaches, and digital ethnography will be especially valuable for testing the pathways proposed in this framework, including how socio-economic vulnerability interacts with online exposure patterns and institutional narratives. Studies should also develop and validate indicators capable of measuring communicative legitimacy and structural feasibility in crisis settings. By moving beyond fragmented analytical traditions and advancing empirical inquiry grounded in this integrated model, scholarship can contribute to more equitable, resilient, and socially grounded public health systems.

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