

## WEBTOON AS A PLATFORM TO RAISE COVID-19 AWARENESS

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### ABSTRACT

*Various media are trying to raise awareness and spread positivity during COVID-19 outbreak. LINE Webtoon, a digital comic platform originated from South Korea, has issued a comic series concerning COVID-19 awareness as well as promoting healthy lifestyle in response to the pandemic. This study analyzes the impact of this comic for teenagers and young adults in coping with this pandemic. A questionnaire will be spread among webtoon readers as a method to determine the effect of this campaign. The result shows that the responder, who are mostly teenagers, are attracted to the visual nature of webtoon, thus making it more favorable than reading the news and articles.*

Keywords: *webtoon, covid-19, campaign*

### INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has disrupted people's activities with the newly-implemented quarantine and stay-at-home policies. In response to the outbreak, Official departments are promoting a new healthy lifestyle in order to interrupt virus transmission. People are advised to keep individual physical distancing, following the hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and using medical mask when going out in public spaces (WHO, 2020). Some communities are also doing campaign to spread encouragement and positivity amidst COVID-19, which is essential especially for students, whose mental health is greatly affected by public health emergency (Ardan et al., 2020).

Consumption of digital entertainment and activities has increased during the pandemy (King et al., 2020). Digital media are more favorable during pandemic because of its ease of access, even from home. Information regarding COVID-19 regulates quickly and easily within many online news portals, which updated all the time. Various digital media are contributing to spread awareness about COVID-19, of them is through online comic.

As has been researched before, comics have a potential to be an effective tool for health information issue (McNicol, 2017). Comics, in a sense, is collaborative form of sequential drawing, sometimes accompanied with text, which purpose is to inform something. With the use of drawing and text, comics are able to translate medical narratives to help patient understand better. Comics has been used in a lot to relay information, and as stated in previous study by McNicol (2017), comics have a potential to be an effective tool for health information issue. There has been multiple platform to post comic online, one of them is LINE Webtoon.

LINE Webtoon is a digital comic platform originated from South Korea which participates in a campaign against COVID-19. On April 11 2020, the Indonesian-version of Webtoon released a comic anthology made by affiliated authors which gives various health advice, sanitation protocol and positive messages regarding the outbreak.

This research is to determine the impact of this comic for teenagers, whether it is effective or not, and what particular aspect of comic affected the readers' responses.

## DATA DESCRIPTION AND DISCUSSION

### Comics for Health-related Information

Comics are a carefully designed words and picture, both helps on delivering information regarding health (Gary and Alex, 2018). Comics designed for health issue are divided into two: one told an experience of personal health or illness, and another consist of information mostly designed for education (Giliauskas, 2020). The example for first type of health-related comic is *Taking Turns: Stories from the HIV/AIDS Care Unit 371* by Mary Kay Czerwiec. It tells a story of the author as a young nurse taking care of people with HIV/AIDS at Illinois Medical Center in unit 371, hence the title. The example for the second type is a comic from Whit Taylor and Allison Shwed as shown in Fig.1. Its purpose is to debunk some Covid-19 myths.



Figure 1. Comic from Whit Taylor and Allison Shwed  
Source: <https://thenib.com/covid-19-myths-debunked/>, accessed 2020

A prior study regarding comic effectiveness in conveying health-related information by McNicol (2017) also suggests that images often appeared to be more powerful than words, in term of relaying messages.

### Webtoon Compilation: 'Sehat-sehat, Ya!'

On April 5 2020, Indonesian LINE Webtoon released a compilation titled '*Sehat-sehat, Ya!*' to help contributes in socializing healthy lifestyle in response of COVID-19 issue. This compilation was joined by more than 40 authors, all affiliated to LINE Webtoon Indonesia. There is a total of 44 episodes, each drawn by different authors and convey different messages. The main theme of this compilation is related to COVID-19 awareness. This includes how to stay healthy amid the pandemy, such as wearing masks, washing hands, carrying out physical distancing, etc. Each episode consists of 1-7 scrollable pages and is fully colored. (Fig2)



Figure 2. Episode #11 from *Sehat-sehat, Ya!* Compilation, featuring works from Lunariaco  
Source: Sehat-sehat, Ya! webtoon compilation

Each author uses characters from their pre-published series to attract more attention. This proves previous study by McNicol (2017) about how pre-existing characters could help reader to associate them with issues at hand and remember the information better than if it were presented in textual or more abstract way. To further support this, it can be seen that the most likes in the compilation is episode #1 which was made by Yaongyi, whose webtoon gets an average 99.999+ likes (as shown in the app, see Fig.3)



Figure 3. The most liked episode in 'Sehat-sehat, Ya!' (Episode #1) It features works from Yaongyi  
Source: Sehat-sehat, Ya! webtoon compilation

### Research Method

This paper uses field research as the primary method. The questionnaire will be distributed online to around 200 respondents. Indonesian, age ranged from 12-30, are invited to participate online survey through Google Form platform. The survey is limited to people who have read the webtoon episode to obtain more specific data. The questions listed in the online survey are used as measurements to conclude how the webtoon episode affects reader's view and behavior toward healthy lifestyle campaign. Respondents are also asked to write their opinion

regarding their favorite aspect of webtoon that makes it easier to conclude information.

The survey was conducted online for 2 days from July 27, 2020 to July 29, 2020. The forms were distributed in social media to gain more exposure and to reach the intended target audience. There were a total of 748 responses collected. The participants were of all genders, with the only requirement being a webtoon reader who had previously read the '*Sehat-sehat, Ya!*' compilation. The impact of '*Sehat-sehat, Ya!*' towards the readers and whether they are convinced to be more aware on health issue can be measured from these questions:

Table 1. Questions list and what can be analyzed from each of it.

Question Code	Question	What can be measured
Q1	Respondents' age (divided into 4 categories: 12-17, 18-25, 25-30, and others)	Respondent's age is needed to measure which age range is relevant to this research
Q2	Occupation/employment status (students, employed, or unemployed)	This question may help researcher in further analyzing whether background statuses affected the media's effectiveness
Q3	Which media gives the respondents most information regarding COVID-19	To support recent study that suggests there is a great increase of online activity during pandemic (King et al., 2020)
Q4	Which media suggests the respondents to do sanitation protocol (digital or traditional media)	To measure which media gives the reader most awareness regarding the suggestion to do sanitation protocol
Q5	Was ' <i>Sehat-sehat, Ya!</i> ' compilation informative enough?	To generally sum up readers' responses on the compilation
Q6	Which part of information-relaying in the webtoon was the respondents' favorite?	To know what aspect of webtoon is most effective in relaying information
Q7	Whether the respondents felt obliged (albeit slightly) to follow the sanitation procedures after reading the compilation or not	To know whether this webtoon compilation gives positive effect (and is effective), albeit only a slight change of feeling or perception.

Source: Olivine and Andini, 2020

## CONCLUSIONS

From the questionnaire, there are several findings that can be discussed. To refer each question, 'question code' from table 1 will be used.

### ***Age and Occupation Relevant to The Research***

Of all 748 participants, around 65% were in 12-17 age group, whereas the 25-30 had the least number of respondents. This matched the result of Q2 as well, which showed the most respondents came from students. The second group with most respondents were in 18-25 age range and college students. It can be concluded from Q1 and Q2 results that students aged 12-17 are most relevant to this research.

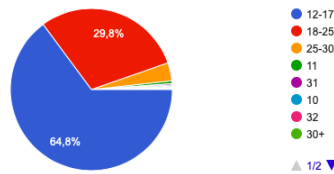
Rentang usia anda  
748 tanggapan

Figure 4. Survey results for Q1

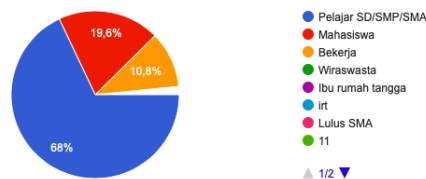
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Figure 5. Survey results for Q2

### Preferred Media

The participants' preferred media can be assumed from Q3 and Q4. Both questions are about which media gave them the most exposure regarding COVID-19 and sanitation protocol. In Q3, 50% respondents picked social media as the media that offers the most information about the pandemic-related issue. Others chose TV channel and online news, while only 0.4% participants opted for newspaper. 3 out of 4 options available in Q3 are in digital format (social media, online news, tv channel), while newspaper is the only conventional or traditional media. The results suggest that the respondents get mostly informed from digital media, whether they are deliberately searching up for information or just passively informed.

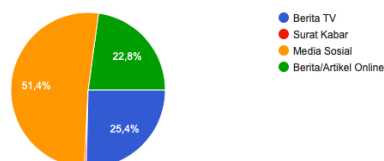
Dari media apa anda paling banyak mendapat informasi terkait COVID-19?  
749 tanggapan

Figure 6. Survey results for Q3

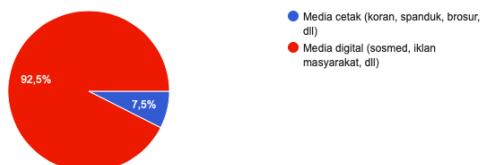
Anda pernah melihat anjuran mengikuti protokol kesehatan dimana? (Misal: anjuran memakai masker)  
749 tanggapan

Figure 7. Survey results for Q4

### The Impact of 'Sehat-sehat, Ya!' Webtoon Compilation

This research limits the impact of webtoon compilation episode toward the readers to 1) how informative is it for the readers, and 2) how do the readers feel after reading the episodes. It can be inferred from Q5 result that most of the participants judged 'Sehat-sehat, Ya!' as informative enough. As shown in Fig.8, the number goes as high as 96.9%

Apakah kompilasi webtoon: Sehat-sehat, Ya! sudah cukup memberikan informasi berguna bagi anda?  
749 tanggapan

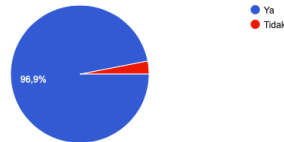


Figure 8. Survey results for Q5

In Q7, the participants were asked to decide how did the webtoon compilation affect them. This paper measures the effect from any slight change in the reader's thinking (not in behavioral aspect). Q7 asked whether at least the readers feel obliged to follow sanitation protocol or not. The result, as shown in Fig 9, tells that almost all respondents feel somehow compelled to do sanitation protocol after reading the webtoon compilation. Both results prove that 'Sehat-sehat, Ya!' compilation is informative for most readers and gives a positive effect regarding COVID-19 awareness.

Apakah setelah membaca kompilasi, anda jadi merasa harus mematuhi aturan kesehatan?  
749 tanggapan

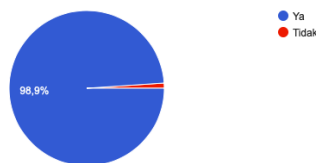


Figure 9. Survey results for Q7

### Favored Aspect in Webtoon

Participants were asked to choose, or write down their most-liked aspect in 'Sehat-sehat, Ya!' compilation, especially regarding its way on delivering information. The responses were quite vary because participants were allowed to write custom answers concerning the matter. However, 587 participants (78,4%) did agree that they liked the visual aspect of webtoon. Other answers to Q6 were: 1) They liked that the complex information was concluded in a simple way, and 2) They liked it because there was less text than a news article or infographic, but still enough useful content.

Bagian apa yang paling anda sukai dari penyampaian informasi di webtoon 'Sehat-sehat, Ya!?'  
749 tanggapan

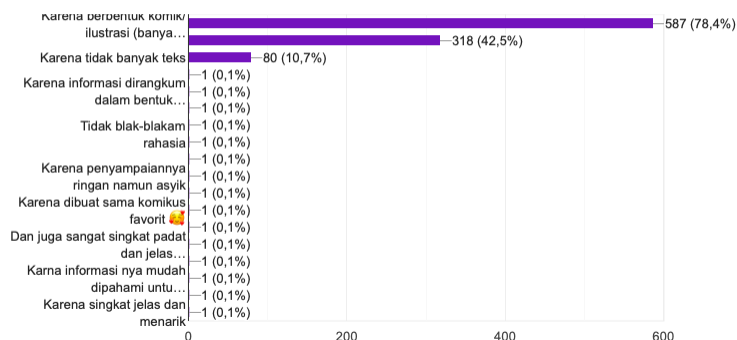


Figure 9. Survey results for Q6. Readers were asked to write their favorite aspect in 'Sehat-sehat, Ya!' compilation

### Conclusions

From this research, it can be concluded that target audience, who is mostly teenager and student, gets positive effect from reading 'Sehat-sehat, Ya!' webtoon compilation, hence making it effective in spreading awareness. Teenagers feel informed by reading a visual-based media, such as webtoon, because it has a lot of pictures, less text, but still contextual.

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