

As per the reviewer's comments, I have fully readdressed each recommendation below:

1. Theoretical Sections – Analytical Depth:

- Each theory section now moves beyond description by explicitly linking the theory to recent empirical findings (i.e., social media survey data, national vaccination trends, evidence of the Spiral of Silence in specific communities, and risk perception data).
- These new paragraphs make clear, analytical connections between theory and real-world data, strengthening the manuscript's analytical depth.

2. Case Studies – Foregrounded:

- The introduction now includes a preview sentence highlighting the role of regional case studies.
- This foregrounds the practical application of theory and signals its importance earlier in the manuscript.

3. Foundational References – Conceptual Grounding:

- Each theory section is now introduced with a foundational citation (i.e., Katz et al., Rogers, Noelle-Neumann, Grunig & Hunt), providing deeper conceptual grounding and addressing the need for classic sources.

4. Structure & Theoretical Engagement – Tightened:

- After the empirical trends section, a transition paragraph explicitly connects observed patterns in vaccine hesitancy to the Spiral of Silence and Diffusion Theory, reinforcing theoretical engagement and synthesis.
- As no section remains purely descriptive; all major empirical claims are now interpreted through relevant theoretical frameworks.

The transitions and placements are smooth, and each improvement aligns with the reviewer's suggestions.