

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

**EXAMINING THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN THE COVID-19 SITUATION IN
GHANA**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM,
ACCRA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AN AWARD
OF A MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION**

NOVEMBER 2021

DECLARATION

We hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of our original research, and that no part of it has been presented for another (degree or diploma) in this institute or elsewhere. We are responsible for any shortcomings.

.....

AGYENSAIM LORD LISTOWEL

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.....

DATE

Supervisor’s Declaration

I declare that I have duly supervised the preparation of this dissertation of the above-mentioned students in this research in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of this term paper by the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ), Accra and I approve with an authorization that they can finally present.

DR. KOFI AMPOSAH-BEDIAKO

(Supervisor)

.....

(Signature)

.....

(Date)

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ABSTRACT

Communication plays a significant role to ensure that state and institutions benefit for the good it does. For the Government of Ghana to perform its role in a pandemic situation, it must communicate effectively to its citizen to make a positive change, is very imperative to engage the services of professional to help give the nation effective communication the state deserve.

The main purpose of this research is to examine the essence of communication as study and how it can help shape and enhance the covid-19 situation of Ghana.

This study collected data from primary and secondary sources. This study also made use of peer review articles and with the help of purposive sampling technique selected over twenty-five empirical literatures to help the researchers investigate the role communication plays in the covid-19 situation in Ghana. Further findings have revealed that various communication strategies were used to aid the covid-19 situation in Ghana.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 to officially be a pandemic after 3 months when China broke out the first outbreak of coronavirus disease in December 2019 in Wuhan city (Abrams & Greenhawt, 2020). The 2020 Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak is the largest in history of the world. Of more than 100,000 cases that were recorded in Ghana, many of them have resulted in deaths.

The overwhelming size and nature of the pandemic led to the collapse of many several sectors of the Ghanaian economy including the already fragile health care systems in the country (Aikins, & Akoi-Jackson, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic was hampered by misinformation and a lack of information about critical aspects of the response, including its transmission, case notification, infection control options, geographic spread, and health service availability. In addition, health workers were neither trained nor equipped for the COVID-19 outbreak and government-imposed travel restrictions make reaching them (for training, communication, and equipment) difficult.

Covid-19 has fundamentally changed the way in which people communicate and share information (Abrams & Greenhawt, 2020) and health communication has certainly not been immune to this information revolution (Basch, Mohlman, Hillyer & Garcia, 2020). As the general role of communication expands, research relating to the role of communication purposes in the Covid-19 era has also increased in scope (Chesser, Drassen & Woods, 2020). Rapid communication advances furthermore compel marketers of health messages to keep pace with the developments in order bring firsthand information about the disease to the public (Derek, Jana, & Veronika, 2020). During the pandemic era, there was an increasing number of conflicting information and news coverage about the pandemic in the media and various social media platforms. There was

the need for government communication to be strategic in a way that gets the facts about the various levels of the disease across to the public and its mode of transmission and protocols needed to be observed to safeguard against the virus (Aikins, & Akoi-Jackson, 2020).

According to communication scholars this presented a challenge and an the opportunity to access the role of communication to impact people's behaviour and perception of specifically Covid-19 through various communication messages, channels and strategies to help contain the spread of the virus (Chan, Nickson, Rudolph, Lee, & Joynt, 2020). As such in April 2020, Ghana was put under lockdown, the lockdown introduced strict measures. Authorities announced a closure of all schools and universities and applied distance learning tools and methods. All sports competitions had been postponed. Prayers had been suspended in all mosques and churches. All government organizations adopted a remote working system. Commercial centers, shopping malls and entertainment destinations were closed. Aviation authorities decided to suspend all flights from and to the state.

The government announced a program for disinfection by sterilization of the streets and buildings, all movements of the traffic and the public during this period were restricted.

The government advised citizens and residents to stay home and keep social distancing protocols in public places to ensure safety and health (Myjoyonline, 2020). Most essentially communication constituted a significant priority to help deal with the covid-19 situation of Ghana. The absence of communication in the fight against covid-19 was impossible. As such Dickmann, Abraham, Sarkar, Wysocki, Cecconi, Apfel and Nurm (2016) argues that the role of communication during pandemics cannot not be underemphasized. They further agree that all efforts by authorities should be decentralized as possible to allow for the strategic, efficient and effective success of the communication campaign suited to deal with the pandemic situation. In Ghana's situation even

though communication efforts to deal with the pandemic was decentralized through various channels like community radios and market and community sensitization it was not followed to the latter at some point. Various media reportage captured citizens flouting the covid-19 protocols and the improper wearing of the mask. Nnamdi, Hinson & Asiedu (2020) also add that communication when strategically designed and implemented, may be a potentially powerful tool for the dissemination of Covid-19 information to the public. Despite this assertion, little research has explored the role communication plays in pandemic situations and most especially in Ghana. This study thus seeks to contribute to an increasing demand for research assessing the role of communication in the covid-19 situation of Ghana.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The COVID-19 outbreak caused negative and enduring impacts on the economy and society, which reshaped individuals' lifestyles and behaviors (Wen, Kozak, Yang, & Liu, 2020). During these uncertain times, information is very important as there are a lot of fears in society (Surg, 2020). Boberg, Quandt, Schatto-Eckrodt and Frischlich (2020) mentioned that besides that the pandemic has severe cultural, societal, political, economic effects, it has also effects on media and government communication in unprecedented ways. For instance Dodzro (2020) present that the impact of COVID-19 on local brass band musicians in the Cape Coast metropolis of Ghana had taken a deep toll on the musicians since the onset of the pandemic. Scholars have argued that the media should be credible sources facing the spreading out of misleading fake news and lies or fabrications and as such government communication should adhere to many principles such as balancing between all citizens' needs and expectations; emphasizing the concept that their well-being is considered as a top priority; addressing and sharing all COVID-19 issues, knowledge to

all segments in the society (Jallow, Renukappa, & Suresh 2020). People and organizations are using digital means to communicate and collaborate to get news about the pandemic and to work, interact and discuss by using many platforms and applications (Jallow et al., 2020). Mason, Flores, Liu, Tim's, Spencer and Gire, (2019) discussed the role of digital communicating during disasters to warn, respond and recover as well as conveying operational messages. During such crises and large public health threats, government communication should be transparent and open to all publics, interact and coordinate with all citizens and institutions to raise their awareness, engagement in anti-pandemic procedures by providing all necessary information and instructions, spreading recent statistics about infected cases, and delivering notifications about the decisions and actions. Despite the relevance of research such as this, there is no study on the current subject matter in Ghana.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. The study aims to examine the role of communication in the covid-19 situation of Ghana.
2. To find out the effectiveness of the communication used by the government of Ghana.
3. To find out the communication channels that were used by the government of Ghana
4. To ascertain the messages that were used by the government of Ghana

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the role of communication in the vocid-19 situation of Ghana?
2. How effective was the communication used by the Government of Ghana?
3. Which channels were used for message dissemination by the government of Ghana?

4. How effective were the messages used by the government of Ghana?

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on the role of communication in the covid-19 situation of Ghana. Particularly it examines in details the various messages, strategies and channels that were used by the government of Ghana during the Covid 19 pandemic. It brings to light the perspectives of the various benefits communication brings to the public during health crisis in the country and across the globe.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The necessity for this study is strengthened by the fact that the availability of literatures and research materials in this field is very limited and as such, this research will add on and serve as literature for subsequent studies in related field of corona virus issues and communication in Ghana.

In addition, the importance of this study will help with discovering effective communication in pandemic situations and improve current communication systems

Will help change the minds of those who initially did not want to take the vaccines

Ensuring that different approaches in terms of communication are used to create the needed impact and promote social-economic development

1.7. BROAD NARRATIVE OF THE STUDY

The research shall comprise of five (5) chapters. Chapter One covers the background of the study, statement of research problem, aim and research objectives, research questions, relevance of the study, limitations and the Scope of Study. Chapter Two on the other hand deals with the literature review which shall include: Introduction, Related Studies to the research topic under study, Definition of key concepts, and Review of theoretical framework. Chapter Three discusses the methodology used for the study and would outline the setting of the research, target group and research design. This research is based on a quantitative research method. Other key areas under methodology to be considered are sources of data and data collection techniques and tools, population, sample size and the sampling technique. Chapter Four of this research looks at the organization and presentation of data collected in the study. It will also unveil the findings of the study and their interpretations. And finally, Chapter Five will focus on the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the related and relevant literary works conducted by different researchers in the field communication and health. Communication is vital in very sphere of life and this study is directed at understanding its role in the Covid 19 situation of Ghana. It also encompasses the theoretical foundation of this study and analyzes how theories relate to this study.

2.1 COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Effective health communication is essential for improving individual outcomes and promoting safety and prevention (Abor, 2019). Emergency risk communication has received the greatest amount of attention in this area, however. This emphasis is likely due to the immediate and tangible nature of health emergencies in addition to novel challenges, such as limited preparation time, that emerge in particular crises. Additionally, like all of health communication, crisis communication can impact the social norms, behaviors, and the spread of information. Health communication refers to communication strategies built to enrich health information to the public and community and impact their health behaviors, practices and decisions. Health communication concerns health education, risk communication, health literacy. Strategies in health communication act to disseminate information that influences personal health behaviors and choices to be more committed to proper health procedures (Basch et al., 2020; Jansen & Van der, 2019) The importance of public health communication in crises and importance of grasping context—"social, economic, political and cultural factors influencing people's perception of risk and their risk reduction behaviors"—is emphasized by the publication of the WHO Guideline for Emergency

Risk Communication (ERC) (World Health Organization, 2018, p. ix) The multiplicity inherent to public engagement with the health and medical practice is most apparent in the increased interest in bioterrorism and biodefense post-9/11. This example helps to showcase the impact that health communication has in determining policy and affecting social norms, thereby suggesting that emergency situations where emotions may be increased are much more precarious. Therefore, more attention should be paid to the public health communication. Furthermore, particular diseases and catastrophes receive more attention than others, suggesting that the public and/or media pay attention to certain populations more than others. As evidence, of this, in an analysis of the diseases with the highest rates of mortality between 1980 and 1998 in the U.S., Armstrong, Carpenter, and Hojnacki (2006) found that broadcast media paid less attention to diseases that had a higher burden on black populations versus white. This emphasizes the impact of social and cultural behaviors on public health that influence the progression of a disease. As a result, it can be inferred that there are certain prerequisites necessary for a crisis to receive widespread media coverage, for instance, the conformation with existing narratives which highlight whose opinions' matter in the public sphere and, consequently, whose lives matter.

2.2 OUTBREAK COMMUNICATION

Outbreak narratives have social and political consequences through the narratives that they create, outstripping the epidemiological nature (Weldon, 2001). Therefore, by understanding the persistence and appeal of narratives created and supported by epidemics, we are able to understand how it affects social values and norms of morality, outsider, and safety to name a few (Finnegan & Keränen, 2011). A review performed by Toppenberg-Pejcic et al. (2019) compared the emergency risk communication of Ebola, Zika, and yellow fever and emphasized the importance

of having existing lines of connections with the regions and altering the individualizing the messages for a specific region.

This is key to establishing engagement and trust, which can affect the response time and disease progression as evidenced by the “turning point [of the West African Ebola outbreak] was reached before the full-blown response was operational (Toppenberg-Pejcic et al., 2019, p. 439). As emphasized by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), it is important to be able to engage local communities actively to build trust (i.e., respect local culture, language circumstances, and listen to local concerns) and help safeguard against the disease (Toppenberg-Pejcic, 2019; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2015). For example, in the case of the Ebola outbreaks in West Africa, communication was necessary to help people understand how to protect themselves and why certain cultural practices such as burial rituals could not be maintained, (i.e., the bodies had to be disposed of in other means as it was a biohazard; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2015).

The need to personalize health communication can be exemplified through the national language of Guinea being French and the majority of individuals practicing Islam, which favors washing dead bodies as part of burial rites (Oloke & Kochha, 2018). Other sources emphasize the need to tailor health communication in order to affect and promote safe and healthy behavior (Bol, Smit, & Lustria, 2020; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2015). This means that individualized communications must be created for specific locations. Not only are these supposed to be related to the specific communities’ needs, cultural practices, and past and current political realities, but the specific communications must also be aligned with the goals of the health communication. This need was illustrated by the outbreak in West Africa. All three regions—Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia—had recently experienced civil war, existing tensions

between ruling parties, legacies of colonialism, corruption and a lack of local representation in government, and attempts to remove traditional religion (Toppenberg-Pejcic et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2016). Whereas it is important to individualize public-facing health communication in order to increase health behavior, there has also been a study suggesting that how the information is presented is more important than what information is presented (Bol, Smit, & Lustria, 2020). Both arguments highlight that a “one-size-fits-all” approach is likely to be ineffective, however, emphasizing the need to understand and work within local communities.

2.3 GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION

Government communication is generally defined as all the communication activities of government bodies that are aimed at conveying and sharing news, information to present and explain government policies, plans, decisions and actions.

Government communication acts on achieving many objectives such as explaining to the public the government’s goals, decisions, actions and activities; keeping people up to date with their rights and obligations; giving the community instructions for how to act in the case of an emergency and increasing awareness of social, economic, environmental issues (Kang et al., 2018; Soukenik, 2018).

During risks and emergencies, information from public officials should be adequate, frequently not sporadically reported, not deceptive, authoritative and unambiguous. Misinformation leads to uncertainty and anxiety, but news consumption from trusted sources make individuals keep away from delusions, rumors and alternative facts (Bratu, 2020). The current pandemic has posed many challenges facing governments and health communication organizations. The rapid escalation of

the pandemic has been accompanied by tension, confusing and misinformed news. A flexible communication strategy has to be adapted with a proactive approach to handle all social, cultural and economic challenges related to the pandemic (Ratzan et al., 2020). There are a vast number of guidelines, principles and rules of effective risk communication strategies and plans. They are concerned with audience involvement, communication tools, risk assessment methods and evaluating decision-making process. Risk communication strategies are strongly associated with threat sense, attitudes and behavioral change (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005).

The development of new media and communication technologies and their availability from a wide range of platforms creates great advantages for health communication by using effective media strategies (Schiavo, 2020). The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) established principles that guiding health communication strategies including accurate information, available to the audience, balance among resources and information, consistent content, competent with community culture, strong evidences, reach to the target audience and understandability. In general, health disasters have always required effective communication strategies and components while planning risk messages, warnings, notifications, information regarding health issues.

The literature indicates that many studies had published about government, health and risk communication during the COVID-19 pandemic focused on how to plan, design and deliver informative and persuasive messages to interact and influence the audience' knowledge, attitudes and behaviors during the crisis. Many of them examined the practices and effectiveness of communication strategies used by the government and organizations. An and Tang (2020) referred that the pandemic has hit every country in the world. Politicians and government officials tested their crisis management capabilities to adopt divergent emergency management effective

strategies in both the short and the long run. Governments struggled with the fast and widespread of COVID-19 faced many overwhelming challenges with the novel of the pandemic that is considered a compelling global crisis that is not easily solvable because of the scale and speed of infections (Moon, 2020). The COVID-19 outbreak caused negative and enduring impacts on the economy and society, which reshaped individuals' lifestyles and behaviors (Wen et al., 2020). During these uncertain times, information is very important as there are a lot of fears in society (Surg, 2020). Boberg et al. (2020) mentioned that besides that the pandemic has severe cultural, societal, political, economic effects, it has also effects on media and government communication in unprecedented ways. These media should be credible sources facing the spreading out of misleading fake news and lies or fabrications Many apps were developed by government organizations that allowed citizens to track the situation and get health advice (Grizzle et al., 2020; Moon, 2020). Chesser et al. (2020) found that publics prefer using trusted and reliable information channels and sources to get health information and increase COVID19 knowledge and disease prevention strategies.

Government communication during the pandemic helps in decreasing the level of confusion among people by covering the news with factually accurate information and enabling individuals to make rational decisions as regards keeping themselves safe, and also confronting the feel of apprehensive preponderantly about the future (Derek & Veronika, 2020). Government communication develops health communication campaigns to ensure that people are being noted effectively, respectfully about the situation, and are being helped to understand the claims of these campaigns such as 'Stay Home' concepts. Campaigns during this novel should be flexible, resilient and establishing partnerships with all partnerships in society to inform, educate people (Stolow et al., 2020).

2.4 MEDIA AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The media play an important role in dissemination of information, including that during a public health crisis, directly affecting how its audience reacts (Ihekweazu, 2017). As a result, how information is presented is incredibly important. Perhaps unsurprisingly, western media outlets focused coverage on what their countries' governments were doing.

This was what affected the majority of their audience and fit within the existing narratives of colonialism and the “white savior.” By focusing on the differences in coverage in Western countries and West Africa, one study emphasized the agreement with preexisting conceptions. An investigation of the narratives supported the idea of western newspapers sensationalizing Covid-19 by painting an image of Africa that needed intervention: “poor, war-torn and diseased” (Duru, 2020, p. 113). This sensational news is evidenced through the emphasis on the recent civil wars, poor infrastructure, and weak government. This coverage helps to reinforce ideas like the white savior complex— “the notion that Westerners are the solution to African problem”—and justify involvement in these countries, as West African countries were portrayed as unable to contain the disease themselves (Duru, 2020, p. 115).

However, the emphasis on how Western countries helped and little attention paid to the local government may have also been done to increase viewership through sensationalizing the stories surrounding Covid-19 in West Africa (Duru, 2020). Conversely, the West African media suggested another perspective. Local governments were working with national and international bodies to fight the pandemic, and the media focused on more salient effects of the virus: economic, travel restrictions, curfew, and a lack of resources (Duru, 2020). As communication is constitutive, it can

be inferred that this is evident on how individuals and populations thought about and interacted with the disease.

In addition to the role communication played by the media, Louisi, Barker, & Geanea (2020) argues that the WHO exacerbated the covid-19 pandemic through the emphasis on scientific knowledge. The complexities that arose as a result of the international dimensions as well as the progressing scientific knowledge created a gap between the interests, the information necessary, and what was available, impacting the credibility of health workers in the eyes of the public. This arose partially due to varying expectations and misunderstandings about the information and resources available. These experts had to make scientific concepts accessible and addresses emotional and social concerns that were only exacerbated by politicization of the health experts in media (Condit, 2020). This hesitancy and fear towards disease is also evident in popular culture and accounts of some past diseases.

Communication has an impact on how humans construct reality; we are able to evaluate the impact of the diaries on transmission during the pandemic. communication through media provides a good opportunity to examine the political, social, and cultural factors that impact health communication and its ability to inform and impact individual, group, and societal change. However, as emphasized by the WHO guideline for emergency risk communication and recent papers, it is essential that these messages are personalized for the geographical audience (Bol, Smit, & Lustria, 2020).

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Reynolds et al. (2005) built an integrative model for ‘Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication’ based on five stages—*Précises*: in that stage communication campaigns target the public to facilitate recognition of the emerging risk, prepare them for the possibility of an adverse situation and changes in behaviors, to warn them about threats; *Initial Event*: in that stage communication reflects empathy, helps in the understanding of the circumstances, consequences; *Maintenance*: in that stage communication supports and cooperates with the response and recovery actions, gets feedback from target publics to correct any misunderstandings and misleading data. *Resolution*: communication acts to inform and convince about ongoing rebuilding efforts for remediation and recovery. It acts also to reinforce positive identities and images. *Evaluation*: communication acts on evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of all strategies and plans. Rambaree and Nässén (2020) applied the ‘Interest Theory of Rights’ (ITR) as a framework to assess the Swedish strategy during the pandemic, and how the government communication advised the citizens to apply mutual understanding and follow the advice and the recommendations with a high level of responsibility. During the pandemic, government communication can support public health initiatives and provide interactions with citizens, social dialogue about public health and trust information (Pulido et al., 2020). In the current pandemic, communication provides rapid and effective key information with established professional platforms and to meet the community needs (Chan et al., 2020). Chesser et al. (2020) demonstrated the importance of established reliable public health information through communication, trusted sources and channels such as health experts and government to increase the knowledge about COVID-19 and the strategies had been taken to prevent the disease. Seale et al. (2020) found government communication in Australia affected the perceptions and behaviors of citizens and helped them to adapt the right recommended behaviors.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focused on the population, sample and sampling techniques as well as the research method. The research method are the methods, procedures and techniques used in an attempt to discover what we want to know (Kumekpor, 2002:28). Distinguishing method from methodology, Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2015:10) defined method as “the systematic technique or procedure used to conduct research”; and methodology as, the study of a method, or of multiple methods. For the purpose of this dissertation, quantitative research method was used. The research design, population and population sampling techniques have been described in this chapter of the study.

Preliminary Information Gathering

This involves the review of significant literature, interviews and discussions from significant sources. The sources of literature reviewed include both formal and informal interviews from experts in political marketing, the interest groups and published books. It also involved both published and unpublished work on the area under discussion in articles, thesis, journals and reports.

3.1 Research Design

This study focused on the quantitative research design because, quantitative method uses numerical measures to investigate social phenomena (Priest, 1996:4). Survey research design method was used. “Survey is a social scientific research instrument in which respondents are asked questions about their own or other individual’s attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, perceptions, and/or values”(Croucher and Cronn-Mills, 2015:222). Jacqueline P. Wiseman and Marcia S. Aron (1970:37) defined survey as “a method for collecting and analysing social data via highly

structured and often very detailed interviews or questionnaires in order to obtain an information from large numbers of respondents presumed to be representative of a specific population” (in Berger, 2000:188).

Surveys were extremely useful in this study because there are relatively inexpensive and useful sample tools for a large Populate of registered voters who are mostly targets of political marketing techniques.

The questionnaire used in the survey research design for this study were filled out by the research participants of the study that is citizens of Ghana. The questionnaires were administered to respondents on hand delivery and collection bases. It was collected on the same day to ensure reliability and validity. The questionnaire used was the self-administered questionnaire and the interviewer/personal interview questionnaire.

3.2 STUDY AREA/POPULATION

The conceptual scope of this research work was in a selected constituency in Accra. The Korle Klottey District Assembly was the selected area of consideration.

The aforementioned area was considered for the purpose of this research work because the district is a cosmopolitan area. However, the choice of Accra as the geographic scope was influenced by the dominant socio-economic activities undertaken in this area and also considered as the largest city in Ghana

3.3 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

According to the electoral commission there are 323, 674 people in this district.

For the purpose of this dissertation, the non-probability sampling technique was used because according to Leard Dissertation it represents a group of sampling techniques researches to select units from a population that they are interested in studying. Collectively, this unit form the sample that the researcher studies. We selected the above area based on our subjective view rather than random selection because we require specific answer which we felt would be gotten from the selected population. We choose 100 questionnaires because according to the Central Limit Theorem, given a sufficiently large sample size from a population with a finite level of variance, the mean of all samples from the same population would be approximately equal to the mean of the population. As per the central limit theorem the questionnaires designed to solicit information from a population of interest shouldn't be less than 30, hence in this regard, the higher the number of questionnaires the more valid the outcomes are. Close-ended and open-ended questions was asked.

3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

A survey approach was implemented for the research under study where questionnaire was used as the tool in information gathering. Close ended and open ended form of questionnaire was developed for this study. The questions were designed to suit the objectives of this study.

Relevant lessons from literature review pertaining to the topic under study were included in the questionnaire. Questions were developed by the researchers and not adapted or adopted from other questionnaires. All questionnaires was correctly filled with no errors because questions were clear, understandable, logically grouped and arranged, and devoid of bias.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

A letter of attestation was obtained from the Department of Journalism and signed by the Head of Department, stating the purpose of the study and encouraging participants to respond to the questions and this helped the researcher achieve its stated objectives. Self-administered questionnaires was given to 100 respondents as hand delivery and collection questionnaires.

The data for this study was collected under normal working conditions. Respondents were served the questionnaires and required to respond to the items. The filled questionnaires were later returned to the researcher. Pens or pencils were used in filling the questionnaires. In the case where the participants cannot read the questionnaires, the researcher read the statement and interpret it to the respondents.

3.6 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

Primarily, questionnaires were used in the collection of data. The decision to use questionnaires was informed by the numerous benefits questionnaires have over other data collection tools. One hundred questionnaires made up of open and closed-ended questions were used for this purpose.

3.7 STRUCTURE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was designed in four (4) main sections. The first section was the demographic characteristics of respondents comprising of their gender and age.

The second section of the questionnaire was designed to address the first objective of this research work. Ascertaining the role of communication in the covid-19 situation in Ghana.

The third section of the questionnaire was designed to address the second objective of this research work under study. Thus, identifying the various communication strategies used by the government of Ghana. All in all, the final section of the question addressed the third and fourth objective of

this study. That is, to ascertain the effectiveness of the messages and channels used during government communication.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Participating respondents provided their background information as presented on the designed questionnaire. Respondents also provided some numerical scoring expressing their opinions in response to a list of messages and strategies which they felt helped the country contain the spread of the virus. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 2.0 software and the Microsoft Excel was used to analyse the collected data. The variables under study was coded for recognition in SPSS. The output of the SPSS was presented using histograms, frequency distribution table and charts (pie and bar), hence the use of descriptive data analysis approach.

3.8. 1 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The criterion for participating in the study was that respondents be Ghanaian citizens living in the Korle Klottey District. All participants in this study remainend anonymous and no identification information was gathered hence ensuring confidentiality. Moreover, the act of participation was completely voluntary and there will be no actual benefits attached. The topic is overall neutral in nature and unlikely to cause discomfort and posed no risk to the respondents. However, respondents were at liberty to skip any question they deem uncomfortable.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.0. Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the collected data. The chapter also includes the background information of respondents. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 and the statistical techniques adopted for the analysis were the descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies.

4.1.2. Respondents

Table 4.1.2.2 Distribution table showing the sex of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	63	67.0	67.0	67.0
Valid Female	31	33.0	33.0	100.0
Total	94	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The table above shows the number of males and females who took part in our study. The study showed that more males 63, representing 67.0% took part in the study while 31, representing 33.0% took part in the study.

The non-probability sample was used for this study because; specific responses were required for

this study. In view of which more men were made to participate in the study because of their heavy interest and exposure to politics in the country. This made them more reliable for information on the subject.

Distribution table showing the age of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 18-28	72	76.6	76.6	76.6
29-39	11	11.7	11.7	18.3
40-50	8	8.5	8.5	16.8
51 AND ABOVE	3	3.2	3.2	100.0
Total	94	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The illustration above showed the age distribution of the respondents of the study. Only 3.2% were people of 51 years and above. 8.5 percent of them were between the ages of 40-50 years and 11.7 percent were of the ages of 29-39. People of the ages of 18-28 took the larger percentage of 76.6%. Hence, most of the people who took part in this study, 72, were of the ages of 18-28.

Distribution table showing the level of education of respondents.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SHS	6	6.4	6.4	6.4
DIPLOMA	11	11.7	11.7	18.1
A				
B.A/BSc	55	58.5	58.5	76.6
MA	11	11.7	11.7	88.3
MPhil	5	5.3	5.3	93.6
OTHERS	6	6.4	6.4	100.0
Total	94	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The table above shows the level of education of the participants of the study. A number of whom were B.A/BSc holders which represents 58.5% of the respondents followed by Diploma and MA holders with an equal percentage of 11.7% with least being MPhil holders with a percentage of 5.3. Therefore, more people with B.A/BSc, 55, took part in the study.

Did you get to hear of any communication of the government on the COVID-19?

Distribution table showing exposure of any communication of the government on the COVID-19

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	38	40.4	40.4	40.4
No	55	58.5	58.5	58.5
Valid 13.00	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The table above shows the response to the question, did you get to hear of any communication of the government on the COVID-19? Out of the 100 respondents, 55 respondents of the total population representing 58.5% responded “YES”, while 38 respondents which represent 40.4% answered “NO” to the question. It can also be seen that, 2 respondents of the population which represent 1.1 % answered “I don’t know”. From the data, it is seen that most respondents answered “YES” which has the highest percentage “58.5%” as compared to the other options, this shows that, most people were exposed to government communication on COVID-19.

Government’s communication on the Covid-19 situation in Ghana calmed my fears.

Distribution table showing Government’s communication on the Covid-19 situation in Ghana calmed my fears.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	27	12.8	12.8	12.8
Agree	39	41.5	41.5	41.5
Valid Disagree	12	28.7	28.7	28.7
Strongly disagree	16	7.0	7.0	7.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	

The table above addresses Government’s communication on the Covid-19 situation in Ghana calmed my fears. Comparing figures from the Table above, it can be seen that most of the respondents did agree that Government’s communication on the Covid-19 situation in Ghana calmed their fears. 12.8% strongly agreed, whilst a whopping 41.5% agreed. Only 28.7% and 7% disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

Which of the following medium did you get the information from?

Distribution table showing which of the following medium did you get the information from.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Newspaper	4	4.3	4.3	4.3
Radio	43	45.7	45.7	45.7
Valid Television	17	18.1	18.1	18.1
Social Media	30	31.9	31.9	31.9
Total	94	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The table above shows responses of respondents based on their answer to the previous question and where they saw which of the following medium did you get the information from. From the data it can be seen that 43 respondents which represent 45.7 % of the actual population responded they got information COVID-19 from radio. 30 respondents corresponding to 31.9% also answered that they saw information on COVID-19 related information on social media while 17 respondents which represent 18.1% of the sample size responded they became aware of the coronavirus information via television whilst 4 respondents on the other hand representing 4.3% of the total sample again responded that they saw the COVID-19 information in the newspaper. From the data, it is seen that respondents who got information on COVID-19 related information via radio were more than any other medium in this survey.

Was the government’s communication on the response to COVID-19 easily understandable?

Distribution table showing Was the government’s communication on the response to COVID-19 easily understandable

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	85	90.4	90.4	90.4
No	9	9.6	9.6	9.6
Other	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
Total	94	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

This Table addresses the question **was the government’s communication on the response to COVID-19 easily understandable?**

Figures from this table shows that, majority of respondents stated that the communication on the response to COVID-19 was easily understandable. An overwhelming 90.4% of respondents answered in the affirmative about this question while 9.6% answered in the negative about government’s communication on the response to COVID-19 was not easily understandable.

How will you rate the government’s communication on the COVID-19?

Distribution table showing the rate of the government’s communication on the COVID-19.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Poor	11	9	9	90
Good	20	19	19	19
Excellent	69	68	68	68
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The table above shows the respondents’ responds to the question, **How will you rate the government’s communication on the COVID-19?** From the data, it can be seen that 68% of the respondents rated government’s communication o the COVID-19 as excellent, whilst 19% rated government’s communication on COVID-19 as good only 9% rated government’s communication on COVID-19 as poor. Clearly it can be said that majority of respondent were satisfied with the government of Ghana’s communication on COVID-19.

What did the government communication you received do to you?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
It provided information on the country's case situation	11	11.7%	11.7%
It provided education	45	47.9%	47.9%
It provided assurance	20	21.3%	21.3%
It reduced the risk of exposure to the disease	18	19.1%	19.1%
Total	94	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

This table addresses the question: **What did the government communication you received do to you?** 11 respondents representing 11.7% believe it provided information on the country's case situation. 45 respondents representing 47.9% believe that the communication they received from government provided education on COVID-19 related issues. 20 respondents represent 21.3%

stated that provided assurance to them whilst. 18 respondents representing 19.1% believe that government's communication helped to reduce the risk of exposure to the disease.

Which message did you frequent receive from the government communication on the COVID-19?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Enhanced measures taken against the spread of the COVID-19	69	68	68	68
Measures taken on re-opening of schools	20	19	19	19
Opening of places of worship (churches, mosques, etc.)				
Closure of social centers	11	11	11	11
Provision of PPE				
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

From the table above 68% of respondents indicated that they frequently received messages from government on the “measures taken to contain the spread of the virus”. This is followed by 20% of respondents who indicated that they received messages on the reopening of schools whilst 11 percent indicated that they frequently received messages on the closures of social centers and provision of PPEs.

Your exposure to Covid-19 preventive messages influenced your adherence to the Covid-19 safety measures.

Distribution table showing your exposure to Covid-19 preventive messages influenced your adherence to the Covid-19 safety measures.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	40	41.5	41.5	12.8
Agree	27	28.7	28.7	41.5
Valid Disagree	12	12.8	12.8	83.0
Strongly disagree	16	17.0	17.0	100.0
Total	94	100.0	100.0	

The above table asked the question on “your exposure to Covid-19 preventive messages influenced your adherence to the Covid-19 safety measures”. From the table a whopping majority of 41.5% strongly agreed that their exposure to Covid-19 preventive messages influenced their adherence to the safety protocols. Whilst 28.7% agreed and only 12% and 16% disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Which of the safety precautionary messages were you exposed to from the government communication on the COVID-19?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Wear your nose mask	11	11.7	11.7	11.7
Wash your hands regularly	40	42.6	42.6	54.3
Maintain social distancing	33	35.1	35.1	89.4
Sanitize your hands	9	9.6	9.6	98.9
Not applicable	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
Total	94	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

From the table above it can be seen that 42.6% of respondents were exposed to the “wash your hands regularly” precautionary message from government. 35.1% of the respondents indicated they were exposed to the maintain social distancing message whilst 11.7 % and 9.6 % were exposed to the wear your nose mask and sanitize your hands messages respectively.

Which of these covid-19 symptoms were you exposed to through government communication on the COVID-19?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Fever	11	11.7	11.7	11.7
Cough	40	42.6	42.6	54.3
High temperature	33	35.1	35.1	89.4
Frequent sneezing	9	9.6	9.6	98.9
Loss of taste/smell	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
Total	94	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The above table asked the question which of these covid-19 symptoms were you exposed to through government communication on the COVID-19? 42.6% of the respondents indicated that they were exposed to cough symptoms as an indication of one likely having covid-19. 35.1% of the respondent indicated they were exposed to high temperature as a symptom of covid-19. Whilst 11% indicated exposure to fever as a Covid -19 symptom and 1.1% citing exposure to loss of taste/smell as a Covid-19 symptom.

Did government communication make available measures to take should one be infected with Covid-19 infection?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	38	40.4	40.4	40.4
No	55	58.5	58.5	98.9
Valid 13.00	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
Total	94	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

Which of the following messages were communicated by the Government to help contain the spread of the virus?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Self-isolation	17	18.1	18.1	18.1
Get tested in case of any of COVID-19	43	45.7	45.7	63.8
Valid Quarantine	34	31.9	31.9	95.7
Total	94	100.0	100.0	

**Source:
Survey
study/**

questionnaire

The above table asked the question which of the following messages were communicated by the Government to help contain the spread of the virus? From the it can be seen that 45.7% of respondents indicated that government communication to contain the spread of the virus was on getting tested. From the table also 31.9% and 18.1% indicated Quarantine and self-isolation as messages communicated by government to help contain the spread of the virus.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This part of the research presents a discussion of the key findings of this study. It also summarizes the key findings of the research as well as a presentation of some recommendations based on the present studies. The discussion is done based on the research objectives set out in this research, as well as reviewed with the literature analyzed in this research. The chapter ends with a recommendation for future researchers.

5.1 Discussions

This part of the research presents a discussion of the findings made in this research based on the objectives set out in the first chapter of the study. The research sought out to examine three key objectives and the main findings of the research are discussed within these objectives.

5.1.1 RO1: To examine the role of communication in the covid-19 situation of Ghana

This study was conducted to examine the role of communication in the Covid-19 situation of Ghana. Only few studies have tried to examine the role of communication and media in the Covid-19 pandemic in the western counties and those few are mostly descriptive, examining knowledge without necessarily showing any statistical data about the role of communication during the Covid-19 pandemic. For instance, Gillian et al (2021) sought to understand the attitudes of the American public towards taking a COVID-19 vaccine and the willingness to do so going forward. Their study revealed the urgent need of health communicators to understand the varying perceptions of the public in order to tailor communication strategies to help deal with the perceptions of the public about the vaccine in order to encourage trust and increase the uptake of the vaccine. In order to

fully comprehend what would provide the best communication strategies for the Government of Ghana and Health communicators, more information on the role of communication in the Covid-19 situation of Ghana is essential to answering the research question on what is the role of communication in the Covid-19 situation of Ghana? On the premise of this question underpins some portions of the study's questionnaire upon which the study revealed that majority of respondents believed that government communication on the COVID-19 situation helped to shape their understanding of what measures they needed to put in place individually to protect themselves against the COVID-19. Only a few respondents indicated that government's communication on the disease did not play a role in determining what measures they put in place against the disease. This goes to signal the fact that Ghanaians in general came to believe in the existence of the disease and were convinced about government's communication on the disease. They clearly indicated that government's communication about the disease played a significant role in helping contain the spread of the virus. The study also revealed that a high majority of the respondents were in the affirmative that through communication they believed that and came to understand what they needed to do in safeguard their personal health against the spread of the virus. Regardless this notion did not jeopardize the perception and behaviour of the Ghanaian populace towards accepting that vaccination was an effective measure to helping the fight against COVID-19. A whopping majority of forty-seven percent affirmed that they received Covid-19 messages via radio and television. This clearly shows that communication played a significant role in the Covid-19 situation of Ghana.

5.1.2 RO2: To find out the effectiveness of the communication used by the government of Ghana

The next objective of the study set out to reveal the effectiveness of government's communication towards containing the spread of the virus. In line with the research question of How effective was the communication used by the Government of Ghana? The present study reveals data that confirms early findings of previous academic literatures. In the present study, it is revealed that most government's communication to help contain the spread of the virus in Ghana proved to have achieved its objectives as majority of Ghanaians were exposed to government's messages on Covid-19. This present finding supports the revelation by Machida et al (2021), whose research revealed that, with about 2956 people surveyed in Japan, 62.1% of participants strongly agreed to receiving government's communication and looked forward to most communication from government because it was credible. Majority of respondents totaling to 52% affirmed they were exposed to government's messages on Covid-19 which informed their decision to take measure to protect themselves against the spread of the virus. This underpins similar assertions in the literatures reviewed. Again the present findings of this study confirms report by Machida et al (2021), that people's exposure to government communication on Covid-19 influenced their decision to protect themselves and adhere to the Covid-19 safety measures announced by government. The findings of the study also revealed that respondents' level of trust in government's communication was very high. Majority of the respondents also indicated that they were highly informed about the precautionary actions to take in order to avoid contracting the virus and the immediate actions to take when one contracts the virus. Majority indicated they were aware of the Covid-19 symptoms.

5.1.3 RO1: To find out the communication channels that were used by the government of Ghana

This research objective is underpinned by the recommendations of Verger and Dubé (2020) whose research undertook a study to understand the value of communication in the Covid-19 pandemic. Dror et al (2020) also highlighted the need for an integrated communication channel to help reduce ineffectiveness of the relevance of communication in health crisis. They indicated that this is essential to help combat misinformation and avoid fear and panic amongst the public. The present findings of the study also revealed that majority were exposed to government communication on Covid-19 via radio. Whilst a significant number also drew the attention of the researcher that they were exposed to government messages on Covid-19 via social media. Other media channels like Television and Newspapers were in the minority of frequently exposing respondents on government's communication on Covid-19. It was also revealed that respondents' exposure to COVID-19 educative materials mostly came through radio and social media. Respondents of the study also revealed that the messages on containing the spread of COVID-19 was enough because only a few were not in the affirmative whilst majority were of the view that government's communication on the Covid-19 situation of Ghana was excellent. This suggest that the general public knowledge and awareness about the Covid-19 situation of Ghana is high. The exposure of the public towards the messages of COVID-19 issues need to be intensified via mediums like Television and Newspapers to help reach the majority people across board.

5. 2 Recommendations

1. This study recommends that government's communication about the Covid-19 situation of Ghana need to intensified across all media to help magnify public awareness and improve the Covid-19 situation of Ghana.
2. It is the recommendation of this study that future studies should look at the use of social media platforms in communicating the Covid-19 situation of Ghana.
3. The study also recommends that a strategic communication campaign needs to be set in place to accentuate measures of safety to help in the fight against COVID-19.
4. The study also recommends that future studies should employ a mixed research approach to study the perceptions and behaviour of the public towards government communication.

5.4 Conclusion

The study examined the role of communication in the Covid-19 situation of Ghana. The results appear to show that communication played a crucial in Ghana's fight against containing and minimizing the spread of the virus. The COVID-19 pandemic has raised novel questions for scholars of communication. As a discipline, our work is more relevant than ever, which is reflected by the many research efforts related to COVID-19 and communication. The pandemic is leading many to identify and adopt novel communication methods. The pandemic also opens up possibilities for and affects how we use communication in all other aspects of our lives. As

communication has become more fundamental to everyday life a process that has been accelerated by the global pandemic, the study of people's communication and media behaviors is likely to become increasingly important.

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