

**GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM (GIJ)**

**Effectiveness of Communication Strategies in the Management of COVID-19 Situation  
in Ghana: The Case of COVID-19 Communication Management within Greater Accra  
Metropolitan Area**

**By**

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**A thesis submitted to the Ghana Institute of Journalism in partial fulfillment of the  
requirement for the award of Master of Arts in Development Communications.**

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**DECLARATION**

‘I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the Master of Arts in Development Communications (MADC) Degree and that, to the best of my knowledge, it does not contain any materials previously published by another person or materials which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the university, except where references of other scholar’s work have been cited and acknowledgment has been provided in the text’.

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## **DEDICATION**

To the Almighty God to Him all Power, Strength and Wisdom belongs and come from. To my beautiful wife, Bibi for her unflinching support on this journey, my parents Mr. and Mrs. Adjei-Baah and my two sisters Jennifer and Rita for their spiritual support throughout this period of my education.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Communication holds an integral part to government function. To drive the national agenda, government must be seen to be using the best form of communication and the appropriate medium to reach all stakeholders. The failure of government to communicate its policy will result in failure of the entire policy implementation. In times of crisis like the COVID-19 era, leveraging on communication becomes integral for containing, curbing, and preventing the spread of the virus. This study therefore examined the effectiveness of Communication Strategies in the management of COVID-19 Situation in Ghana. To better understand the communication strategies adopted during this pandemic time, the study deploys the quantitative research design. Simple random sampling technique was used to sample 422 respondents for this study. The study further used questionnaire to collect data from the respondents. For analysis, the measures of central tendency such as frequencies, means and percentages were used. The study found that what is communicated by government must be guided by formal processes, engagement of all stakeholders and community leaders in party so that reaching the target audience could be faster. Religious organizations holding strong and entrenched position against the virus would only defeat the considerable efforts made by government to communicate to the masses. Government communication machinery alone cannot win in the fight against COVID-19, deploying all aspect of communication would therefore fast track the communication and reach large proportion of the population. Leveraging on private media houses to communicate government stance on COVID-19 will go a long way to consolidate efforts to reducing the spread and impact of the pandemic. Use of government communication machinery to demystify the negative religious perception on the virus is imperative. Government must design communication that addresses the issues of religiosity when it comes to dealing with COVID-19 pandemic.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Communication holds an integral part to government function. To drive the national agenda, government must be seen to be using the best form of communication and the appropriate medium to reach all stakeholders (Canal & Sanders, 2015). The failure of government to communicate its policy will result in failure of the entire policy implementation.

In times of crisis, it is expected that government would consolidate its communication strategy to meet the needs of the populace who may be in distress or facing one hardship or another (Eldridge, Hampton, & Marfell, 2020). COVID-19 has been one of the challenging times for governments over the world.

Being diagnosed on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019 at Wuhan City in China, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 as a global Public Health Emergency of international concern. The European countries had their share of COVID-19 with Italy, France, Spain, and the United Kingdom being the most affected (Aduhene & Osei-Assibey, 2021). The United State of America (USA) was estimated to have recorded over 5.7 million cases as at August 2020 (Worldometer, 2020). As of June 1, 2021, the global confirmed cases of COVID-19 stood at 170,426,245, with a total of 3,548,628 deaths (World Health Organization, 2021). In the area of economics, livelihood, production, and finance, COVID-19 has been seen to have had severe impact (Aduhene & Osei-Assibey, 2021). For instance, an estimated 2.7 billion workers across the globe were affected by the full and partial lockdown implemented by various countries (International Labor Organization, 2020). The 2.7 billion affected by the lockdown represent some 81% of global labor force.

South Sahara Africa (SSA) is also receiving its fair share of the COVID-19 infections. The confirmed cases recorded as of June 1, 2021, is 3,512,562. South Africa has the largest number of confirmed cases in Africa (confirmed cases=1,665,617) and death (56,506). Ghana which is the area of focus for this study has 93,898 confirmed cases with 785 deaths as of June 1, 2021 (World Health Organization, 2021). On 12th March 2020, Ghana recorded its first case of COVID-19 from two travelers who were coming from Turkey and Norway (Aduhene & Osei-Assibey, 2021).

These numbers arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic clearly indicates threats to the attainment of the sustainable development goals as stipulated by the United Nation. Those who engage in small scale businesses are further impacted as livelihood is threatened. With the lockdown increasing, redundancy and livelihood incomes are further threatened. Those categorized within the labor market for receiving daily wage, self-employed or entrepreneurs, refugees and migrant workers are exposed to further and increased levels of hardship (Aduhene & Osei-Assibey, 2021).

Ghana as a developing country adopted five objectives to dealing with the COVID-19 crisis: to curtail the importation of cases; identify and contain them; care for the sick; cushion the impact of COVID-19 on Ghana's economic and social life; and boost domestic production as a means of deepening self-reliance (Quakyi, Asante, Nartey, Bediako, & Sam-Agudu, 2021). The Ministry of Information (MOI) is the main mouthpiece of Government communication in Ghana, yet there are no clear-cut guidelines on how the communication of COVID-19 issues is to be managed. Again, the President in the State of Nation Address of March 2020 communicated that 'We know how to bring the economy back to life. What we do not know is how to bring people back to life.' These expressions even though assuring does not present a clear direction of what is to be achieved. Thus, the masses are left to contend with the gaps between rhetoric and reality (Quakyi, Asante, Nartey, Bediako, & Sam-Agudu, 2021).

For countries to ensure sustainable development, there is the need to provide quality healthcare to the people (Jahrami et al., 2021; Ji et al., 2020). In an era where nations have enrolled on the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), efforts must be made by countries to alleviate the poor nature of healthcare. It is against the foregoing background that the United Nation have adopted the Human Development Index (HDI) as a standard measure of global health and development (Hou et al., 2015). Clearly, the HDI considers health parameters for nations and within nations. The parameters considered for HDI include education, life expectancy, and per capita income. These parameters are used by the United Nation to estimate human development under four main tiers. Life expectancy is particularly a health indicator. Thus, the life expectancy index considers the mean time that an individual is expected to live. Indicators such as the current age of the organism, the year of birth and the sex of the organism. With the incidence of COVID-19 pandemic, the life expectancy of people has been threatened. Particularly, the confirmed cases and death have risen. The lockdown intervention policy during the pandemic is threatening the attainment of decent standing of living. Thus, per capita income of people is bound to reduce as productivity is generally declining (Aduhene & Osei-Assibey, 2021).

An intervention during pandemic within developing economies is the use of cash transfer as a hardship mitigation strategy (Bauer et al., 2021). Thus, the use of cash transfers during the COVID-19 period by some developed economies and developing countries is providing some poverty relief of persons heavily affected by the COVID-19. As of Mach 2020, it was reported that some 156 countries globally have instituted varied forms of cash transfers (Innovations for Poverty Action, 2021). Thus is the absence of generating higher per capita income as an indicator of growth, governments are leveraging on cash transfer to improve the standard of living of people. Evidently, some \$6 was spent on COVID-19 related cash transfer as a social protection intervention in low-

income countries while \$26 per person was spent in lower middle-income countries (Bundervoet & Davalos, 2021).

The emergence of COVID-19 was communicated using various media: electronic, television, and online media. Evidently, media and social conversation around COVID-19 have taken center stage of global discussion and communication to be specific. The preparedness and responsiveness to COVID-19 is largely dependent on effective communication (Reddy & Gupta, 2020). To exchange information and or message on COVID-19 requires that communication is effective in all its forms. In the view of Reddy and Gupta (2020), communication does not only focus on conveying messages but addresses broader issues within the social setting especially during pandemic such as COVID-19. Communication is therefore regarded as a bedrock of development within a nation. When policies and interventions are adequately communicated, there is the attainment of policy success in development (Bhattacharya et al., 2021; Reddy & Gupta, 2020).

Human capital is a store of accumulated habits, expertise, social and psychological traits that can provide economic value through the ability to carry out employment. Human capital is distinct and is different from any capital else (Bae & Patterson, 2014; Faggian et al., 2019). For people in a country to contribute meaningfully towards development, there is the need to increase their human capital through education (Bae & Patterson, 2014; Faggian et al., 2019). Thus, the cognitive stock of the individual translates into high levels of labour efficiency. Providing the right information and orientation to people broaden their horizon and appetite for development especially in developing economies (Bae & Patterson, 2014). People with the right education and information can make the right decision on their livelihood, especially on matters of health (Ogunleye et al., 2017; Reddy & Gupta, 2020).

The COVID-19 is unfolding in different phases with myriad of challenges that countries must contend with. With regards to development indicators, all objectives and targets set by various nations are being readjusted (Fenner & Cernev, 2021). The attainment of the 2030 targets for sustainable development goals (SDGs) seems to be extremely difficult as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pillars of zero hunger (2) and no poverty (1) in particular are highly impacted. Especially for developing countries, where there is huge levels of poverty and instance of hunger, the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened poverty and hunger. For instance, job creation potentials of developing economies are reducing (Leal Filho et al., 2020; Srivastava et al., 2020). In Ghana where there are a lot of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), COVID-19 has affected business operations and productivity. In a report by the Ghana Statistical Service on Ghana COVID-19 Agribusiness, it was found that over 16,000 agribusiness firms are closed because of the pandemic. Again, over 78,000 of staff have lost their jobs with some 267,000 facing varied forms of wage reduction between the period May 2020 and January 2021 (UNDP, 2021). Simply, the extent of COVID-19 pandemic on development across Ghana and the globe at large is huge and needs to be made known to all stakeholders. Communication around the COVID-19 is key to ensure spread and prevention under public health (UNICEF, 2021). The United Nations effort to intensify the role risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) is timely and the right direction to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Actively engaging communities and communicating the risk of the virus is the surest way to stop the spread especially in various areas and regions. The RCCE leverages on socio-behavioural trends analysis to communicate the risk of the virus and how to mitigate its spread and impact. Empowering community members with the right information is a surest step to demystify negative and false information in circulation about the virus. Other governments across the globe are leveraging on internet to spread information on the virus. For

instance, in India the government has developed Aarogya Setu mobile application with the aim of communicating with the public on best practices and risk on the COVID-19 virus (UNICEF, 2021). The Office of the President of Ghana has since the emergence of the COVID-19 in Ghana instituted the “President Address to the Nation”. As of May 2021, there has been 25 President Address to the Nation. The address using the National Television to circulate the President’s message on the COVID-19 and the directives and measures put in place by the government. The adoption of the Television media and consolidated by various online platforms is designed to reach various categories of Ghanaians.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

As the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 as a global pandemic from March 12, 2020, various countries and health officials and institutions started to draft messages that will help mitigate the spread of the virus (Thompson et al., 2020). Essentially, the message focused on using of no mask, regular washing of hands, and observing social and physical distance especially in public places. Various communication strategies adopted by countries are novel just like the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. These communication strategies are not well documented in literature (Antwi-Boasiako & Nyarkoh, 2020). This makes the assessment of the effectiveness of the communication strategies exceedingly difficult if not entirely impossible to do. In developing countries like Ghana, the communication from government has been done primarily in formal language with translations being done in local languages thereafter. Those who do not understand the official language of Ghana are faced with the challenge of understanding what has been communicated in the “President Assess to the Nation”. The only option available to those who cannot understand the official language is to rely on others for understanding. The National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) that is charged with the responsibility of

providing public information of such matters of education and health are facing huge resources constraint and is therefore not able to provide such messages in local languages across the country (Thompson et al., 2020; NCCE, 2020).

The government communication approach of “President Assess to the Nation” on COVID-19 has met different reactions on its effectiveness and ability to reach the targeted masses. Again, the bi-weekly Ministry of Information address, and several other address by the Ministry of Health, and Ghana Health Service (GHS) are all done in official language to the disadvantage of several mass of citizen who cannot understand these addresses (Antwi-Boasiako & Nyarkoh, 2020).

As part of Ghana’s Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP) objectives, Government through various partnership is to communicate critical risk and event information to all communities, and counter misinformation. This notwithstanding, Government has been criticized for having no mechanisms and procedures to follow when it comes to crisis like COVID-19 (DW, 2020).

Among the masses there is perceived levels of mistrust and lack of knowledge about the vaccine that Government is using to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (UNICEF, 2021). There is a perceived deep-rooted attitude and belief among Ghanaian populaces on COVID-19 and this situation has been fueled by the lack of clear-cut communication on the pandemic.

The onus therefore lies with Government to consolidate its communication system for COVID-19 since the masses are not fully aware of the management of the COVID-19 in Ghana. This study is there aimed at understanding the role of communication in the management of the COVID-19 in Ghana.

### **1.3 General Objective**

Examining the Effectiveness of Communication Strategies in the Management of COVID-19 Situation in Ghana: The Case of COVID-19 Communication Management within Greater Accra.

### **1.4 Specific Objectives**

1. To identify clear guidelines on the communication of Covid-19 pandemic in Accra
2. To identify specific communication strategies employed in the management of the pandemic in Accra.
3. To find out whether the messages found acceptance among the intended targets.
4. To Examine the setbacks/ challenges in communication of Covid-19 pandemic in Accra

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. What guidelines has the government put in place regarding communication of Covid-19 pandemic in Accra?
2. What specific communication strategies are employed in the management of the pandemic in Accra?
3. To what extent do the messages on COVID-19 find acceptance among the intended targets?
4. What are the setbacks/ challenges in communication of Covid-19 pandemic in Accra?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study being a novel exploration of the communication of COVID-19 within Ghana will provide reliable information in policy design and most importantly on the efficiency and effectiveness of the various communication strategies adopted for the COVID-19. The study will bring out interesting findings that may influence and or signal the direction for further discussion and debate within academia. For instance, the effectiveness or otherwise of the government

adopted communication strategies for COVID-19 will be assessed from the perspectives of the target population.

### **1.7 Scope of the Study**

Even though the study provides assessment of the communication around COVID-19 within Ghana, the study shall be limited to media communications on COVID-19. Again, with regards to geographical scope, the study shall focus on COVID-19 communication within Accra as the capital of the country.

### **1.8 Limitations of the Study**

The study may not be able to generalize the findings as the findings will be typical of communication on COVID-19 within Accra. Thus, the effectiveness of COVID-19 communication for other regions may vary from the findings of this study.

### **1.9 Organization of the Study**

The study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter shall cover introduction. particularly, the introduction of the study shall focus on background of the study, the problem statement, objectives of the study, the research questions raised, significance of the study, limitations and finally the study organization. The chapter two shall review literature. The literature review shall cover theoretical, empirical, and conceptual issues around the objectives of the study. The chapter four covers methodology. The Methodology shall focus on research design, the population and sampling techniques adopted, the instrument for data collection, data collection, data analysis and ethical consideration. The chapter four shall provide the findings and discussions. The final chapter shall cover summary, conclusion, and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter of the study provides a thorough discussion of extant literature with particular focus on the research objectives. The chapter is essentially divided into three main sections: conceptual review, theoretical review, and empirical review. The conceptual section focuses on issues that are relevant to this study such as effective communication, communication strategies adopted for COVID 19, and challenges in communication during the pandemic. Theoretical issues such as extended parallel process model (EPPM), Social Cognitive Learning Theory, and Social Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) are discussed in the context of COVID 19. Relevant empirical studies from Ghana and those of other countries are presented.

#### **2.3 THEORETICAL REVIEW**

This section of the chapter presents information on theoretical issues that underpins this study. Several communication models and theories have attempted to lay the foundation of communication during crisis. This section of the study provides information on Extended Parallel Process Model, and Social Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC).

##### **2.3.1 Extended Parallel Process Model**

According to the extended parallel process model, an individual is only motivated to defend themselves if they believe they are in danger, believe they can escape that danger, and know that their chosen action will successfully do so (Jahangiry et al., 2020; Shirahmadi et al., 2020).

A person's degree of feeling threatened will affect how much incentive they have to act. To ensure the success of activities taken to protect themselves and others, individuals must think that these

measures will be effective at minimizing the risk they face. In the illustration below, the model identifies four behavioral outcomes, based on a mix of perceived danger (risk to oneself, or risk to one's peers) and perceived ability (a combination of self-efficacy and response efficacy) (Jahangiry et al., 2020; Shirahmadi et al., 2020).

**Table 2. 1 Extended Parallel Process Model**

	<b>High Efficacy</b> Beliefs that one is able to effectively avert a threat.	<b>Low Efficacy</b> Beliefs that one cannot avert a threat, and even if s/he could, it wouldn't work anyway
<b>High Threat</b> Beliefs that one is at-risk for a significantly harmful threat	<b>Danger Control</b> People taking protective action against health threat.	<b>Fear Control</b> People in denial about health threat, reacting against it.
<b>Low Threat</b> Beliefs that a threat is irrelevant and/or trivial	<b>Lesser Amount of Danger Control</b> People taking some protective action, but not really motivated to do much.	<b>No Response</b> People not considering the threat to be real or relevant to them, often not even aware of threat

In emergencies, developing activities that increase both response efficacy and self-efficacy is especially important because perceived threat is already likely to be high – it is critical that people understand what to do to reduce the threat (Jahangiry et al., 2020; Shirahmadi et al., 2020).

The EPPM has shown that fear of a health risk such as HIV/AIDS causes people to respond in ways that will help them to protect themselves, like working hard to stay safe, or ways that would hurt them, such ignoring their own welfare. When people think there is a threat and believe they can stop it, the model shows that they are likely to take some kind of self-protective action (Jahangiry et al., 2020; Shirahmadi et al., 2020).

The model makes the following prediction in such cases: in cases when there is a high threat but little confidence in their ability to defend themselves, people will do ineffective denial or rejection of defensive actions. Communicating risks to people through a communication strategy utilizing

the EPPM framework might allow the public to learn how to deal with risks through a fact-based approach (Combs, 2020; Jahangiry et al., 2020; Shirahmadi et al., 2020). It is crucial to bear in mind that risk behavior is driven by the feeling of danger plus efficacy. In the absence of information about how to counteract the danger, fear-based warnings might encourage people to retreat to avoid danger, instead of facing it to escape.

Health communication's Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM) is an ideal paradigm for approaching communication of public health issue. EPPM gives assistance on the development of successful communication messages on health. A health message is effective when individuals adopt the suggested course of action. In EPPM, the recommended course of action is called the control of hazards. Danger management takes place when people take efforts to reduce the harm they face (Combs, 2020; Jahangiry et al., 2020; Shirahmadi et al., 2020). Examples of COVID-19 hazard control include adequate hand washing, social removal, and self-isolation. EPPM sets forth the essential variables that might lead to the desirable control of danger or an unwanted control of fear (such as ignoring the threat).

The first stage in the EPPM paradigm is threat perception. People then analyze that threat, and the assessment decides whether they decide to take additional action. The first step is to assess the fundamental nature of the danger. People evaluate if the threat is vulnerable (perceived susceptibility) and if the threat is sufficiently significant to merit attention (perceived severity).

If the danger is of little relevance and/or is not too significant to individuals, the threat is ignored, and the assessment process is over. Crisis managers confront a difficult challenge when a section of the constituency considers the risk of a crisis to be ineffective. When a danger is considered relevant, individuals are driven to evaluate the effectiveness of the suggested threat response (Combs, 2020; Shirahmadi et al., 2020).

The reaction recommended reflects the measures that may be taken to lessen or eliminate the threat. Danger controls in EPPM represent the desired reaction, since they suggest that individuals take the recommended measures to lessen the danger (Combs, 2020; Jahangiry et al., 2020).

We can see risk control as a type of resilience since people take constructive measures to respond to the threat. Efficacy evaluations cover both the effectiveness and auto efficacy of the strategy. The effectiveness of the plan is whether people feel the advised course of action works—help them avoid this hazard (Combs, 2020; Jahangiry et al., 2020; Shirahmadi et al., 2020).

People do not take action that they do not think will be effective. Self-effectiveness is whether individuals think that they have the knowledge, abilities, and resources to carry out the recommended course of action. If individuals think they can't carry out the strategy, they won't bother to implement the plan. When responsiveness and self-efficacy are high, people are controlled and resilient. If the reaction and self-efficacy are either or both poor, people decide to manage fear and show a lack of resilience (Combs, 2020; Jahangiry et al., 2020; Shirahmadi et al., 2020). EPPM enables us to understand how a person goes from a danger to a threat, or just avoids or ignores that threat. It is overly simple to give a list which purports to represent "best practices" for pandemic communication. Not all crises fit one size, and this applies to pandemics.

### **2.3.2 Social Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC)**

In the contemporary theory of crisis communication, the Social Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC) paradigm plays an essential role. In the context of a crisis, several "publics" or "audiences" exist in the social media realm, including:

- Influentials: These individuals create information that others access
- Followers: These individuals follow the influentials and access the information they disseminate

- **Inactive Members:** Those individuals who do not directly access information from social media and rather seek information from other sources or are exposed to information from social media indirectly

The direct and indirect transmission of information across social media as well as across conventional and social media is essential for this strategy (Austin, Liu & Jin, 2012). This approach is therefore beneficial for communication efforts in emergency situations when defining and reaching the risk population. In a world increasingly connected by social networks, information transmitted on this platform can interact with many sorts of public audiences in situations of emergency. Although inactive members might indirectly link to social media through other members or conventional media, they can require different communications routes than influencers and followers. This theory presents a model that identifies audience traits that can assist to improve communication methods and components (Cheng, 2020).

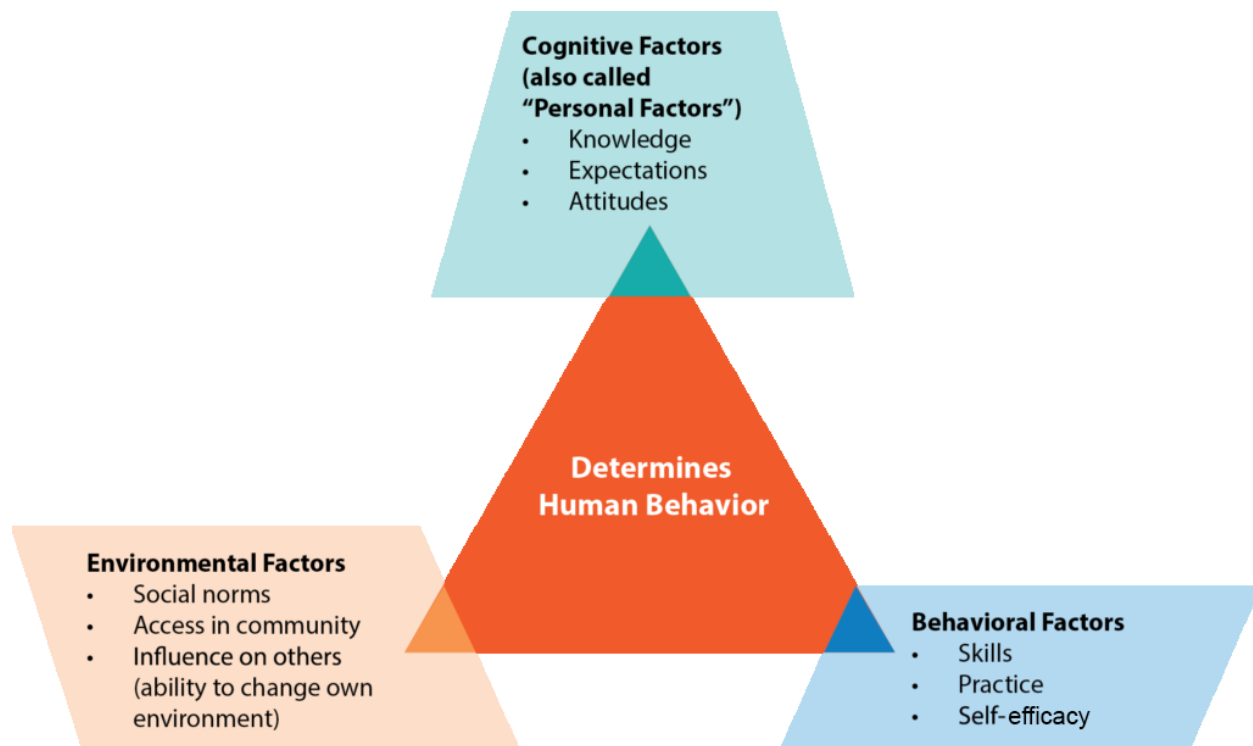
Social media has both possibilities and difficulties for crisis communication as a "double-edged sword." On the one hand, academics have discovered that social media may help companies monitor crises, open up-to-date talks with the public, build important contacts and create transparency of organizational actions (Cheng, 2020; Jin & Liu, 2010;). On the other side, disinformation, rumours, bad attitudes, and emotions on social media were reinforced and crisis managers may lose control of official statements when content produced by users surfaced or even dominated public opinion (Cheng, 2020).

Liu et al. (2012) created a social mediated crisis communication model to address the impact of social media on crisis communications, which was the first theoretical context to describe relations between organizations, online and offline publics, social media, traditional media, and word-of-mouth communication before, during and after crises (Austin, Fraustino, Jin, & Liu, 2017).

### **2.3.3 Social Cognitive Learning Theory**

Bandura (1971) is noted for his presentation on the Social Learning Theory (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Usher & Schunk, 2018). The Social Cognitive Learning Theory states that through seeing other people might acquire new behavior. Previous theories of learning highlighted how people respond to external cues, such as physical rewards or punishment. In contrast, social cognitive learning theory stresses the reciprocal link between social features of the environment, how persons are regarded, and how a person is motivated and able to repeat behaviors around him. People both impact the environment around them and are influenced by them. Social cognitive theory recognizes the ongoing interplay between the individual and his or her environment to shape behavior, both structural and social (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Usher & Schunk, 2018). The cognitive factors focus on three domains: attitude, knowledge, and expectation. Individuals are more likely to conduct themselves if they witness others modeling the behavior and then get favorable benefits. Individuals are more inclined to conduct themselves if they feel that the advantages of carrying out this activity outweigh the disadvantages. People are more inclined to practice a desired activity if they feel they have the skills and the ability to do so (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Usher & Schunk, 2018).

**Figure 2. 1 Social Cognitive Learning**



Source: Bandura (1971).

This theory may be more suited for an emergency or post-emergency assessment, as it emphasizes the necessity of building a structural and social environment that is supportive. Social learning concepts may be used to nearly every social and behavior change communication (SBCC) programme, which is designed to affect social behaviors, especially complicated behaviors or interactions with others (Usher & Schunk, 2018).

It can particularly be helpful when it is difficult to define a certain behavior but can be described by demonstration or modeling. Furthermore, social learning concepts may be utilized to illustrate how a person can overcome and succeed in adopting or practicing a specific behavior involves overcoming obstacles or problems. Finally, because individuals tend to adopt and practice behavior; they see other people doing so, social learning principles may be used to modify

perceptions of the social environment, to make conduct more frequent and to encourage those who consider a change in behavior (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Usher & Schunk, 2018).

## **2.2 REVIEW OF CONCEPTS AND KEY ISSUES**

### **2.2.1 Effectiveness of Communication Strategies in Management**

Government operations are defined by effective communication. Government is obliged to use effective methods of communication to satisfy all stakeholders (Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020). If the administration fails to explain its plans, the whole process will fall apart. It is expected that during a crisis, the government will strengthen its communication plan to help the people who may be in distress and are experiencing various challenges. The world has seen many difficult times: COVID-19 Included.

To further understand what communication is, picture a message passing between a transmitter and a receiver. It was formerly the case that all you had to consider was how you communicated in person or on paper. Technology has drastically transformed the situation. People should think about all the details involved in communicating information. Communication methods are utilized to great effect here. The blueprints for this information exchange are in the form of communication strategies (Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020; Dalton *et al.*, 2020)

The immense value of successful communications in guiding public behavior and encouraging public health advice compliance has been made manifest. There have been many discussions on the harmful impact of muddled messages in the media at a time when concise, understandable, and transparent communication is necessary. Effective communication is a non-pharmaceutical intervention (NPI) that, when paired with COVID-19, can help improve patient adherence to behaviors that protect others from the virus (Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020).

In most countries, programs have been enacted to help decrease COVID-19 infection rates and transmissions, as well as its treatment, which fall under the social determinants of health (SDH) (Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020). These strategies operate on several levels; they are mostly in the domain of the non-health sector. Because they involve things like avoiding social activities and staying home, they include things like using hand gloves and face masks, school closure, and travel restrictions (Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020).

Despite the widespread existence of the SDH in public health, its effectiveness is based on critical communication and risk approaches, which are essential to include as SDH communication (because they explain an already known, though previously unutilized, public health methodology) (Ataguba, 2020; Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020).

So far, nations have undertaken several different health system interventions, such as screening, testing, and managing cases of COVID-19. SDH are making a big contribution in this area. And these important measures on the SDH will greatly alleviate and postpone strain on our healthcare systems. To say something is arguably correct is to express uncertainty; an argument, nevertheless, may be made that the good work done on the SDH has also contributed to reducing the economic burden of the COVID-19 epidemic (Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020).

### **2.2.2 Communication during Pandemic or crisis**

Government communications are created to increase the effectiveness, compassion, and understanding of people to tackle the challenge of communicating through government channels regarding issues like 'Stay Home' ideas during COVID-19 pandemic (Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020; Radwan & Mousa, 2020).

The field of strategic communication is rather vast, and it covers several areas for public sector companies. The handling of crises requires strategic communication. Many people believe that public institutions are effective because they can handle crisis situations. It is not surprising that after natural catastrophes, significant chemical spills, or mass transportation fatalities, the public sector has to focus on their crisis demands. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought forth new issues for public sector crisis communication and management efforts. It is useful for government workers to think about the several approaches public sector groups have taken in response to COVID-19 (Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020; Radwan & Mousa, 2020).

In general, government communication is anything done by government agencies to provide information, clarify government goals, choices, and actions. The government aims to get various messages through, such as informing the public about its choices, goals, and actions, as well as preparing them for any emergencies (Radwan & Mousa, 2020).

Risk communication describes how risk information is distributed. In addition, it is a method of communication that gives guidance on how to improve life and offers people tips for helping them survive hazards. Additionally, risk communication was a technique for helping residents learn how to react in the event of an infectious disease outbreak. It is a sort of communication which is participatory and raises awareness during potential hazards and calamities (Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020; Radwan & Mousa, 2020).

It is essential to develop a culture of shared knowledge and buy-in across the community when dealing with risk issues. This is done through communicating about the risks in an open, transparent, and frequent manner. The ability to accurately identify risk-taking situations and quickly analyze risk information, together with the creation of successful communication methods,

will allow authorities to create an efficient communication strategy (Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020; Radwan & Mousa, 2020).

In cases of dangers and emergencies, citizens need timely, complete, credible, and straightforward information from their elected leaders. Using credible sources of information help individuals stay away from false statements, rumors, and alternative facts. This keeps people feeling secure, even when they are exposed to potential misinformation (Bratu, 2020; Radwan & Mousa, 2020).

The outbreak is placing various demands on public officials and health communication groups. The frantic news cycle has created an environment of paranoia and mixed messages as the epidemic continues to worsen. To deal with the many social, cultural, and economic difficulties that arise due to the pandemic, a flexible communication plan with a proactive approach is necessary (Ratzan et al., 2020 Radwan & Mousa, 2020).

There are countless ways to communicate risk, with hundreds of standards, concepts, and regulations to follow. They are focused with communicating, measuring risk, implementing communication tools, and assessing the decision-making process (Radwan & Mousa, 2020). A risk communication strategy's success is intimately linked to a person's understanding of a risk, attitudes, and behavioral change. Developments in media and communication technology as well as the ease with which people may access it through several platforms provide advantages for health communication via successful media tactics (Radwan & Mousa, 2020).

In response to communication failures that had led to poor communication about the deadly 2003 European respiratory disease epidemic (also known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS), the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) developed best practices for communication that include accuracy, timely distribution of accurate information, balancing

resources and content, engaging with community values, using a trustworthy style, having evidence-based material, and making sure information is easily understood (Radwan & Mousa, 2020).

For dealing with any health crisis, successful communication methods are needed when creating and disseminating danger messages, announcements, alerts, information on health conditions, and other such messages. In an epidemic, all individuals have various requirements and expectations, therefore governments should stay committed to balancing those different factors while prioritizing the public's health (Jallow et al., 2020; Radwan & Mousa, 2020).

Social media platforms and other digital services are being used to communicate, share, and work on the crisis through sharing news, networking, and interacting with others (Jallow *et al.*, 2020). In their article, Mason *et al.* (2019) emphasized the importance of using digital media during a catastrophe to broadcast warnings, provide information on recovery efforts, and communicate operational messages.

Government communication in times of emergencies and massive public health risks should be transparent and open to all citizens. This communication should interact and coordinate with all individuals and organizations to raise their awareness and involvement in response efforts by sharing all necessary information and guidance. Communication should share recent information about infected individuals and the distribution of notifications regarding what decisions and actions are being taken (Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020; Radwan & Mousa, 2020).

Many applications were created by governments, which enabled individuals to get information about the situation, monitor their health, and find out what to do (Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020; Radwan & Mousa, 2020). It has been shown that, to acquire information on diseases and enhance

illness preventive methods, people tend to prefer accessing trustworthy information channels and sources such as the internet. The government provides valuable information to citizens that lets them make reasonable decisions and helps calm fears about the future (Derek & Veronika, 2020).

### **2.2.3 Guidelines on the communication of Covid-19 pandemic**

As the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 as a global pandemic from March 12, 2020, various countries and health officials and institutions started to draft messages that will help mitigate the spread of the virus (Thompson et al., 2020). Essentially, the message focused on using of no mask, regular washing of hands, and observing social and physical distance especially in public places. Various communication strategies adopted by countries are novel just like the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. These communication strategies are not well documented in literature (Antwi-Boasiako & Nyarkoh, 2020). This makes the assessment of the effectiveness of the communication strategies exceedingly difficult if not entirely impossible to do. But efforts made by the World Health Organization (2020) and the Pan-American Health Organization (2020) provides frameworks for countries to design their own communication guidelines for COVID 19. The WHO (2020) outlined action plan for the COVID-19 Global Risk Communication and Community Engagement Strategy (RCCE). RCCE has four main objectives. National governments are responsible for acting on a country-wide basis. Regional responsibility resides with the six RCCE coordination platforms created throughout the region. Typically, WHO and other technical bodies serve as chairs or co-chairs of these forums (WHO, 2020).

To accomplish the ultimate aim, the Collective Service has to take care of the actions needed to deliver the objectives. To streamline efforts and maximize success, the Collective Service manages the coordination across various levels (national, regional, and global) to harmonize and optimize efforts to achieve the mission (WHO, 2020). Member states and their supporting partners will

benefit from the COVID-19 Global Risk Communication and Community Engagement Strategy, which is extremely significant since it will serve as a vital update.

The method has been strengthened with a socio-behavioral study of what people want and how they act, which complements the past learnings about consumer preferences. The report's recommendations will help reduce the risk of disease outbreaks because they will provide the people the ability to participate in governance (WHO, 2020). The end objective of the strategy is to have community-driven and people-centered methods advocated as more generally accepted by stakeholders, which will see a consequent rise in trust and social cohesion. This will lead to less negative consequences of COVID-19.

**Figure 2. 2 Risk Communication and Community Engagement Strategy (RCCE) Objectives**



Source: World Health Organization (2020).

### **Community-led**

Support community driven actions by improving the consistency and quality of RCCE methods. Local solutions to COVID-19 should be planned, designed, implemented, monitored, and evaluated, with participation from the community. The community must first analyze its own requirements and partake in the process.

### **Data Driven**

Conduct research to identify the community's resources, social connections, beliefs, and behavioral patterns. Research is necessary to understand what populations are more vulnerable or excluded, and this research must be disaggregated by sex, age, and other characteristics such as ethnicity, language, and disability in order to develop more effective policies and responses to COVID-19.

### **Reinforce capacity and local solutions**

Increasing capacity and sharing resources with local stakeholders (including media and communication sectors) and the government at the national and sub-national levels to strengthen control over the pandemic and reduce its impacts by providing support in the form of mentoring, technical support, and resources to local actors.

### **Collaborative**

Encourage coordination across tiers (global, regional, and national as well as subnational) to ensure all the areas of the public health, humanitarian, and development work to respond to COVID-19 operate efficiently. Partnerships between community-based groups, INGOs, local governments, the corporate sector, and the community should be created so that community-centered solutions may be determined.

To support the public's awareness of the hazard and the potential danger, the COVID-19 emergency communication action plan needs to engage with a variety of stakeholders to prepare for and protect individuals, families, and public health by understanding risks and risk assessment through involvement with the target community, implementing an effective plan, and continuing the process to promote timely education and responses (WHO, 2020). A record level of importance must be placed on how communication and community engagement (RCCE) impact how chains of transmission are broken and how COVID-19 is kept from impacting the public (WHO, 2020). Individuals are far more effective than medical technology when it comes to limiting the reach of the virus since it spreads more via human interaction and as long as people can be encouraged to limit their contact with others, it can be contained (WHO, 2020).

The Pan-American Health Organization (2020) guideline on COVID 19 focuses on risk communication principles and guidelines as advanced by the WHO Outbreak Communication Guidelines. Uncertainty in health risks becomes evident when the first case(s) of COVID-19 are identified in your nation, necessitating that people get information about what is known and unknown about the virus, how high their risk is, and how to plan for future decisions. To minimize concerns, as much information as possible should be provided before the first identified case.

A country's initial identification of COVID-19 would surely prompt and fuel a lot of people's demands for information, from the public to news outlets to healthcare practitioners and lawmakers. In order to communicate effectively with the public, public health and risk communication, as well as media relations training, is needed for healthcare personnel and those working in public health. If the public can be properly informed about COVID-19, people will place more trust in the research and less faith in rumors, which will lead to better comprehension

of risk information. The response efforts were weakened by lack of coordination in the dissemination of information among the several international groups involved in the relief efforts. Information for the public should be technically correct, honest, transparent, adequately thorough, and not condescending. To best represent what statistics show, information must exclude over-interpretation of data and prevent over-confident predictions on the success of health-related studies and control measures. To ensure that future advice will be in line with our findings, it is crucial to clarify that we may modify our guidelines and recommendations.

### **The case of Ghana**

In developing countries like Ghana, the communication from government has been done primarily in formal language with translations being done in local languages thereafter. Those who do not understand the official language of Ghana are faced with the challenge of understanding what has been communicated in the “President Address to the Nation”. The only option available to those who cannot understand the official language is to rely on others for understanding. The National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) that is charged with the responsibility of providing public information of such matters of education and health are facing huge resources constraint and is therefore not able to provide such messages in local languages across the country (Thompson et al., 2020; NCCE, 2020). The onus therefore lies with Government to consolidate its communication system for COVID-19 since the masses are not fully aware of the management of the COVID-19 in Ghana.

#### **2.2.4 Communication Strategies employed in the management of the pandemic**

Effective government communication can be a significant strategy in addressing the epidemic. Information is used by governments to drive policy activities by informing or keeping social actors

in the dark. Governments are trying to devise strategies to communicate with the public about the virus with varying levels of success (Antwi-Boasiako & Nyarkoh, 2020; Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020).

Ghana has received much praise for its ability to garner the support of residents by making efficient use of all the communication technology it can discover. “We know how to bring the economy back to life.” That is the President of Ghana's remark on a common example (Antwi-Boasiako & Nyarkoh, 2020; Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020). What everyone wants to know is how to bring the dead back to life. Although the Covid-19 epidemic is far from ordinary, there is very little information on how nations have dealt with it via communications. To explain the actions done to fight the epidemic, the government of Ghana has utilized presidential speeches (Antwi-Boasiako & Nyarkoh, 2020; Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020).

The speeches have had varying responses, all depending on their most noteworthy components. The Ghana Health Service, Ministry of Information, and the Ghana Health Service are all involved in regular bi-weekly press briefings. For immediate and precise information, the Ghana Health Service set up a website solely dedicated to telling Ghana's COVID 19 case count (Antwi-Boasiako & Nyarkoh, 2020; Ataguba & Ataguba, 2020).

To attain effective communication during a pandemic, there must be a high level of trust and faith in each other's values and predictability of future outcomes (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021). Transparent information strategy is needed to give people confidence that they can act and promote transparency failures since it may compromise their faith in institutions.

It is obvious when the public loses faith in their government; it's when leaders of that government don't follow the same laws and standards as the rest of the people (Fancourt et al., 2020). In the

instances where governments have to move fast without considering a wide array of stakeholders, openness should be prioritized. If the information and decision-making processes are both open and transparent, people will have more faith in government and corporations.

To maintain open dialogue about recommendations in a public health emergency, it is essential to disclose the evidence that was considered in the recommendations, who was contacted, and what scenarios and consequences were examined (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021). The public must get involved in the decision-making process, because coherence of values leads to trust and as such is critical to being able to establish common values (Miranti and Evans, 2019). Meaningful stakeholder involvement can increase the likelihood of cooperation from the public while increasing the efficacy of containment measures

Stakeholder involvement contrasts with the “deficit model” that holds up one-way communications as a process of informing the public of its own ignorance (Meyer, 2016). The deficit model treats the public as a single entity and disregards the essential role that locals' experience, values, and skills may play in formulating effective policies (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021). Obviously, under crisis conditions, when governments must rush to make critical choices that often need quick actions, and often lack the time for meaningful community involvement, civic engagement can be difficult. These things may change lives in more ways than one. Even if trade is resumed and limitations are loosened, the expenses and loss of trust resulting from the COVID-19 epidemic will remain for a long time (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021). Although public participation will be critical in recovering from the disaster, the efforts must be continuous to be effective.

### **2.2.5 Acceptance of communication messages by intended targets under the Covid-19 pandemic**

What is communicated may be interpreted by people in myriad of ways. Ensuring that what is communicated reaches the targeted audience is very important for behavioral change to occur (Khan et al., 2017; Purnell, 2018). Different people will reach different judgments based on the same circumstances or data. There is no universal agreement on anything. When evaluating the analyses of others, verify what they concluded and be straightforward about your view. Experts in health crisis and pandemic have asserted that pandemic will continue to occur as people travel and conduct various forms of business within the global economy (Coombs, 2020).

Individual conduct impacts one's impression of taking any health advantages or care. Common behavioral models have been found to include the model of extended parallel process model, social cognitive theory, social mediated crisis communication, and planned behavior theory. Using these models, in the existing coronavirus pandemic scenario, accepting measures such as hand wash, facial mask use, cough labels and people's social distancing involve an individual's perception of personal vulnerability, seriousness of the pandemic as a problem, benefits of action and barriers to the discovery of new behavior (Bhattacharya et al., 2021).

Initiation and maintenance by any individual of a particular habit stresses the significance of interactions between cognitive, contextual, and behavioral variables. Behavior learning appears like a simple procedure, but it takes a lot of patience, time, positive attitudes, and the ability to overcome hurdles in everyday life. When the authorities give advice on the prevention of COVID-19, it is important for an individual to follow them. They were asked to adopt a common course of action. But instilling such behavior in everyday life will take a long time before a permanent behavioral shift takes place inside an individual and the masses (Bhattacharya et al., 2021).

One key thing to keep in mind when you want to engage your audience is to use language that everyone understands. Nonetheless, significant disparities separate healthcare providers' views of health information and general population comprehension of it (Coombs, 2020; Finset, 2021). To help health professionals and political officials better communicate with their constituents, they need to engage with communication experts and community groups to raise public health literacy among influential individuals and others. The announcement must cover why control measures are necessary now since extensive immunization campaigns are being carried out (Finset, 2021).

Unwavering uncertainty, given medical uncertainties, in the regular day-to-day issues caused by lockdown and other measures, as well as worries surrounding infection management trigger negative feelings about what is communicated on COVID 19. During the early weeks of the epidemic, we were able to see a drop in uncertainties and doubts and a rise in the frequency of other things. Many individuals cited extreme worries and terror, relating to the dangers and outcomes (Finset, 2021). Over time, people had different worries. A better understanding of how the public reacts to the disease at various stages may prove to be helpful information for those engaged in disseminating information about the pandemic to the public (Finset, 2021).

#### **2.2.6 Challenges in communication of Covid-19 pandemic**

The ongoing problem of the COVID-19 epidemic is one that impacts public health system immensely. The masses must be educated to align so that the trouble of non-compliance by the public can be reduced. This means implementing enormous behavioral shifts and long-term collaboration. People should have the abilities of good communication and rhetoric if they want to change behavior and have the public on their side.

In terms of behavior challenges that impact the communication process of COVID 19 pandemic, some specific issues can be identified: informational uncertainty challenge, the vaccination rates for both the vulnerable and the privileged class in society.

The stress and unpredictability in the workplace negatively impact information processing. Information can be lost because listeners do not retain it, recall it, or misinterpret it. A tendency to stick to long-held ideas may dissuade people from making a decision that goes against their intuition.

People tend to just seek out information that reinforces their existing viewpoints. The most trust is placed in the initial claim. The message is used as a baseline for further information (Ontario Hospital Association, 2021). Fear and other unpleasant emotions can cause a change in the perception of a threat. An active drive to achieve something makes people more likely to respond to messages that cause anxiety (Bavel et al., 2020).

It is possible for people to act erratically in order to escape danger if they are anxious. People's inclination to believe they are invulnerable and won't contract COVID-19 also impacts how they understand and act on communications (Halpern et al., 2020). The flawed process of decision-making starts with emotion and is further skewed, creating risk. "The dread and disgust in the event – from which the term "affect heuristic" is derived – serve as the base for risk assessment" (Ontario Hospital Association, 2021).

When someone is afraid, they tend to overestimate risk, while when someone is furious, risk is usually minimized. Availability heuristic describes how assessments of risk might be excessively influenced by information that is easily recalled, either because it is recent or because it is emotionally meaningful. When an event seems safe enough, we have an implicit go-ahead, have

total control, get advantages, trust those that provide us these risks, and do not expect repercussions as we are already mature (Tumpey et al., 2019).

Decisions are influenced by the messages people get, and these messages are influenced by the environment of the people who receive them. When they are stressed, people make decisions depending on the behavior of others. For example, they may act in panic or take up hoarding (Kameda & Hastie, 2015). A person's own probability to engage in a behavior is affected by how others' perceptions of the behavior align with their own beliefs about what is considered acceptable behavior.

Social networks can facilitate the transmission of positive and detrimental practices. Individuals often base their decisions on their cultural identity, which also comes into play heavily when people are making decisions. Cultural identity may also be linked to an increased risk of sickness.

In order to engage the target audience, messaging should be geared towards community hazards and appropriate to cultural expectations (Airhihenbuwa et al., 2020). Behavioral and social science findings can provide the first basis for initiatives aimed at encouraging targeted behavior change (Soofi et al., 2020). An example of this would be telling someone who refuses to keep a safe distance that if they go close enough, they'll contract COVID-19, which may well enhance their level of anxiety and make them more willing to step back from the danger. Many of the behavioral findings regarding COVID-19's capacity to shift behavior are just unknown. An intervention known as nudging manipulates one's surroundings to modify a person's choice but does not cause individuals to alter their behavior (Hume et al., 2020).

With the constantly changing nature of a pandemic, it is impossible to prevent some contradictory communications, especially when various local governments handle crises differently (e.g.,

different regions might choose different strategies, or localized outbreaks might lead to localized restrictions) (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021).

The phrase consistency should apply at every stage of the communication process. Consistency may be achieved in a government's communications by ensuring that all the government's channels, from local governments to the central administration, are well-coordinated. An example of this is that if every relevant authority says that everyone must wear a mask that stays in place when they are outside of their house, that message will have more influence (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021).

## **2.4 EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

Some authors and researchers have made effort to share light on the occurrence of COVID 19 and relevant issues on communication. This section of the study provides information on some relevant empirical studies.

Shirahmadi et al., (2020) investigated fear control and danger control amid COVID-19 dental crisis by leveraging on the understanding of Extended Parallel Process Model. The study was a cross sectional study. The study used 300 oral health care providers within Iran. For data collection, a validated self-report EPPM questionnaire was used. For data analysis, the study used the descriptive statistics, Fishers exact test and Chi-square test. The study found that oral health care providers perceived high threat of infection. Washing hands frequently with water and soap and use of hand sanitizer was reported. There was a high and significant association among age, sex, occupation field, and danger control responses. The oral health care providers were seen to quickly adopt preventive behaviors.

To understand and appreciate fear and control during a pandemic period, Quick et al., (2018) used the Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM) in health communication. The study sampled 435

college students from the Midwestern university. The study was particularly an experimental design. Behavioral dimensions that relate to health threat were examined. Participants were given 90 seconds to express their thoughts on messages presented to them by the researcher. The study examined efficacy appraisal, threat appraisal, fear, freedom threat, attitude, psychological reactance, message minimization, and negative cognition. The structural equation modeling technique was used to examine the relationship among the variables. The study found that fear positively and significantly influence favorable attitude and freedom threat. Efficacy on the contrary negatively and significantly influence freedom threat. Freedom threat act as a mediator between fear and reactance, while reactance mediates the relationship between freedom threat and message minimization. Finally, reactance had a significant negative association with favorable attitude.

Cheng (2020) on his part focused on social-mediated crisis communication by revisiting dialogue between organizations and publics in crises of China. The study adopted a content analysis technique on 61 selected journals on the subject matter of crisis communication that were published from 2006 to 2018. Thus, this study used the qualitative research design to understand the phenomenon. Contextual factors such as face and favor, relationship (Guanxi) and sentiment (Renqing), and the centralized political system that may facilitate/inhibit dialogue in crises of China were identified in this study. Thus, communication around the COVID 19 is best designed when the socially mediated dialogue is adopted.

In a study conducted by Ataguba and Ataguba (2020) the focus was on social determinants of health: the role of effective communication in the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries. The study used the exploratory research design framework. The study provided exploratory information on the measures adopted by most countries within developing economies to contain

and control COVID 19: good hygiene, social distancing, cancelling of social and sports events, avoiding large gatherings, schools, and restaurants closure, using personal protective equipment, and country lockdown. The study identified risk communication as key in the fight against COVID 19. Effective communication was identified to be crucial social determinant of health for COVID 19. The study again, identified that countries in their effort to guide the communication during the pandemic must adapt and modify the WHO COVID-19 Global Risk Communication and Community Engagement Strategy (RCCE).

Jahangiry et al., (2020) examined risk perception related to COVID-19 among the Iranian general population. The study used the extended parallel process model. A cross sectional research design was used. The study sampled a total of 1933 respondents. The participant for the study were selected using WhatsApp, Telegram, and Instagram. EPPM designed questionnaire was used for the data collection. The variables that were examined under the study were risk perception (efficacy, defensive responses, perceived treat) related to the COVID-19. The analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, chi-square, t-test, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The study found that significant differences in efficacy, defensive responses, and perceived treat among different population groups.

## **2.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TWO**

Communication plays an integral role in ensuring that government policies, directives and programmes are implemented in an effective and efficient manner. Designing appropriate communication strategies requires the involvements of all stakeholders and not central government only. People and institutions must interact on a regular basis for government policy and programmes to be actualized. Communication within the time of crisis, as in the instance of COVID-19, must be designed to be very interactive, people centered, and all-encompassing for

the objectives of preventing, curbing, and reducing the spread of the virus. Government communication machinery must be deployed and include both government and private media houses.

What government communicates is perceived by individuals and populace within a country as truth and verifiable. Government must be seen to be proactive, relying on scientific data, and using both formal and informal communication mechanisms to send messages to targeted audience with regards to COVID-19. Failure to reach the targeted audience, means that government will fail at implementing designed COVID-19 programmes.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter goes over the various methods for acquiring and analyzing data. The following components of methodology are covered in this chapter: the philosophical foundation of the study, study design, population, sample and sampling techniques, data collection processes, method of data analysis, validity and reliability, and ethical considerations.

#### 3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy represents how researchers tackle the problem they are trying to solve (Novikov & Novikov, 2019). Simply, research philosophy encompasses everything from formulating a research plan to gathering, organizing, and interpreting data. Ontology and epistemological techniques are covered by research philosophy (Hair et al., 2019; Novikov & Novikov, 2019). Positivism asserts that the social world is empirically understandable (Arseniev, 2019). As an objective spectator of science, the researcher sets aside personal goals and pursues his research on his own terms under the positivism philosophy (Arseniev, 2019; Schmaus, 2020). Interpretation is a critic of positivism assumes that people can have subjective experiences with their surroundings (Curry, 2021; Poslajko, 2020). Interpretivism emphasizes the significance of understanding how people see the social world (Curry, 2020; Poslajko, 2020). Under the interpretivism philosophy, researcher plays an important role in studying the social environment (Poslajko, 2020). Under interpretivism philosophy, the study is focused on the researcher's desires (Curry, 2020; Poslajko, 2020). Because the phenomena were investigated objectively without the involvement of the researcher, this method heavily relies on positivism.

### **3.3 Research Design**

The research design is a means for the study technique, incorporating all of the study's parts in a coherent and complete manner to meet the study's goals (Jilcha Sileyew, 2020; Novikov & Novikov, 2019). The research design focuses on more particular aspects of the research issue, such as the data collection and analytic procedures used (Jilcha Sileyew, 2020; Ryser, 2021). The research design is broadly categorized into quantitative and qualitative research design. Quantitative research design use numerical data to quantify phenomena such as attitudes, perspectives, and behaviors, as well as other recognized factors (Novikov & Novikov, 2019a) The quantitative approach is more objective in measuring phenomena by examining numerical data collected from pools, questionnaires, and surveys (Novikov & Novikov, 2019b). In order to better understand the communication strategies adopted during this pandemic times, the study deploys the quantitative research design.

### **3.4 Data Collection Method**

Data is frequently collected through the use of questionnaires in quantitative research designs (Sfakianaki, 2019; Looy, 2020). This study's data was collected quantitatively by the use of a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a method for gathering first-hand information that is well-structured. There are several advantages to using a questionnaire in this type of study. When conducted correctly, surveys can be an excellent approach to gather statistical data on people's views, values, experiences, and previous behavior (Sfakianaki, 2019; Looy, 2020). Researchers can save time and money by using questionnaires while still getting valuable information. When surveys are sent out via mail, they can reach a far larger audience while also allowing respondents to react at their leisure (Looy, 2020; Sfakianaki, 2019). Previous studies were used to create the questionnaire. The questionnaire was a closed-ended form that used a five-point Likert Scale to

measure components. Respondents were able to submit speedy responses to numerous items and/or questions addressed in the questionnaire as a result of this. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to guarantee effective and efficient data gathering. The use of Google Forms was used to prevent direct touch, which can result in COVID-19 contractions. Again, the researcher's use of Google Forms ensures that the government's social distance standard is followed.

### 3.5 Population

Population forms the unit of interest around which research is designed. A population can be human beings, countries, firms, or even objects. Population contains the features that are of interest to a researcher (Davis, 2020). In this study, the population are those populaces within the health sector, the media, entertainment industry, agriculture and educational sector. Based on available data from the various entities and organizations, the total target population is recorded in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3. 1 Target Population**

Entity/firm	Total respondents within Accra	Source
Media Companies	75,800	Ghana Media Commission
Arts and entertainment industry	11,000	Ministry of Arts and Culture
Agriculture	8,765,680	World Bank Data
Education	219,086	Ministry of Education
Health	105,440	Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Service.
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,177,006</b>	

The total target population for this study is therefore 9,177,006.

### 3.6 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The simple random sampling technique is a probability sampling technique that ensures that sample units and or individuals have an equal chance of being selected to be part of a study (Etikan & Babatope, 2019; Lohr, 2019). To obtain responses from the sampled population, probability sampling (simple random sampling) was employed to collect quantitative data. Based on the Yamane Function for adequate sample size determination, a total of 400 was estimated.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N * (e)^2}$$

n - the sample size

N - the population size

e - the acceptable sampling error

*\* 95% confidence level and p = 0.5 are assumed*

### 3.7 Data Validity and Reliability

To ensure that the data collected clearly measures the issues and concepts in this study, Cronbach alpha was estimated for the individual items raised (Taber, 2018). To ensure that the measurement item has content validity, the measurement instrument was carefully examined by the supervisor. Again, the examination of the measurement instrument by the supervisor consolidated the face validity of the questionnaire.

### 3.8 Data Analysis

This study deployed the quantitative analysis technique since the research design is a quantitative one. Particularly, measures of central tendency such as frequencies, means and percentages are used to identify the guidelines on the communication of Covid-19 pandemic, specific communication strategies employed in the management of the pandemic, and challenges in

communication of Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the study uses the descriptive statistics technique to understand the communication strategies around COVID-19. The result is present in tables and figures to bring a clear understanding and or comprehension of the phenomenon under investigation.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics are important in this study since it involves people with different cultural viewpoints on what forms ethical behavior (Lenton et al., 2021; Liebe & Hunter, 2021). Some of the ethical blunders that research is prone to include skewed and incorrect study findings, bias analysis to support the researcher's philosophical stance and premise, and, most importantly, data privacy issues (Lenton et al., 2021; Schamp et al., 2019). Knowing about these highlighted the necessity of gaining consent from respondents, as well as ensuring that data privacy, dignity, and the benefit-to-risk ratio were not threatened during the study's execution. Respondents were required to sign a consent form stating their readiness to share their personal information for the purpose of this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

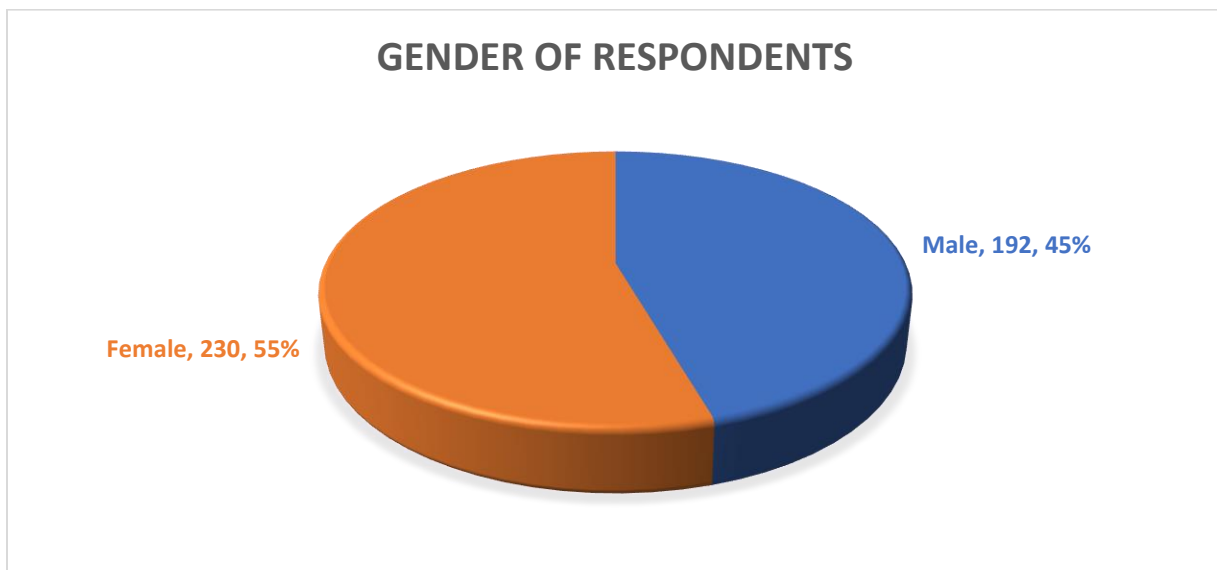
#### 4.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to address the objectives of the study by providing results from the data collected. The chapter presents the demographic information of the respondents covering issues such as gender, age, educational background, marital status, and industry of operations. The other section of the chapter is presented according to the objectives of the study.

#### 4.2 Demographic information of the respondents

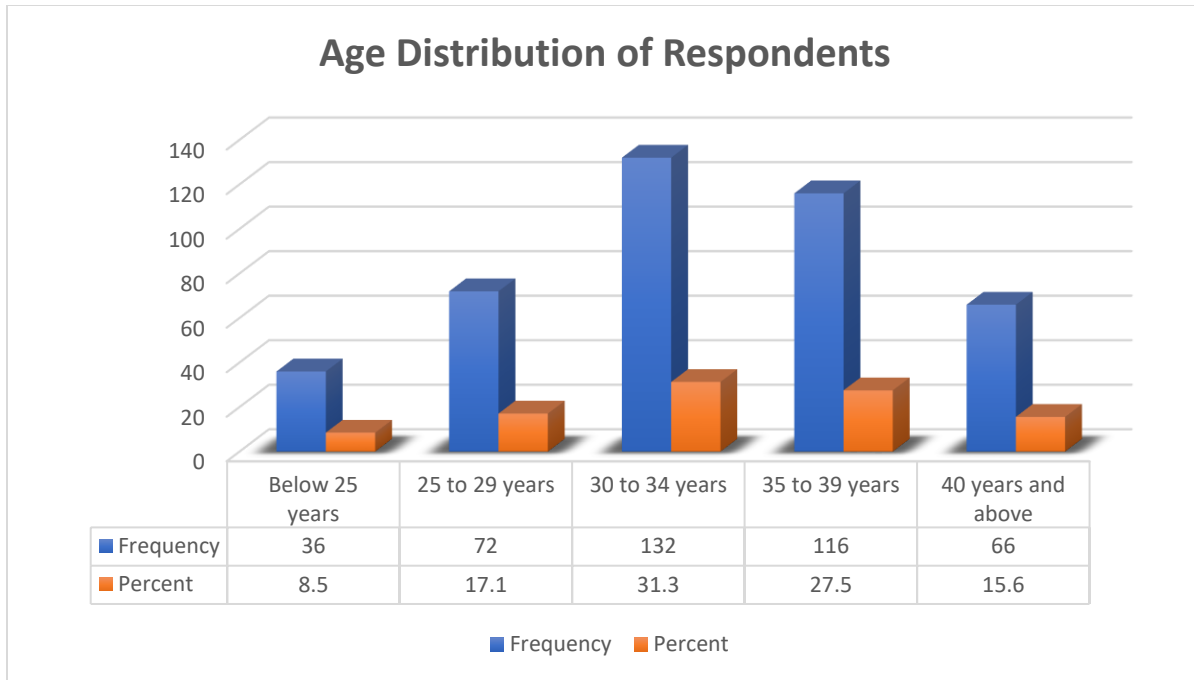
As per the estimated sample size in Chapter Three, 400 minimum respondents were to be selected from the target population. In all 500 online contacts were engaged. Four hundred and twenty-two (422) respondents were realized after the data collection process. This gave a response rate of 84.4%. Again, the questionnaire received were above the minimum sample size of 400.

**Figure 4. 1 Gender of Respondents**



The gender representation of the study largely skewed towards female respondents (55%), with male respondents constituting 45%.

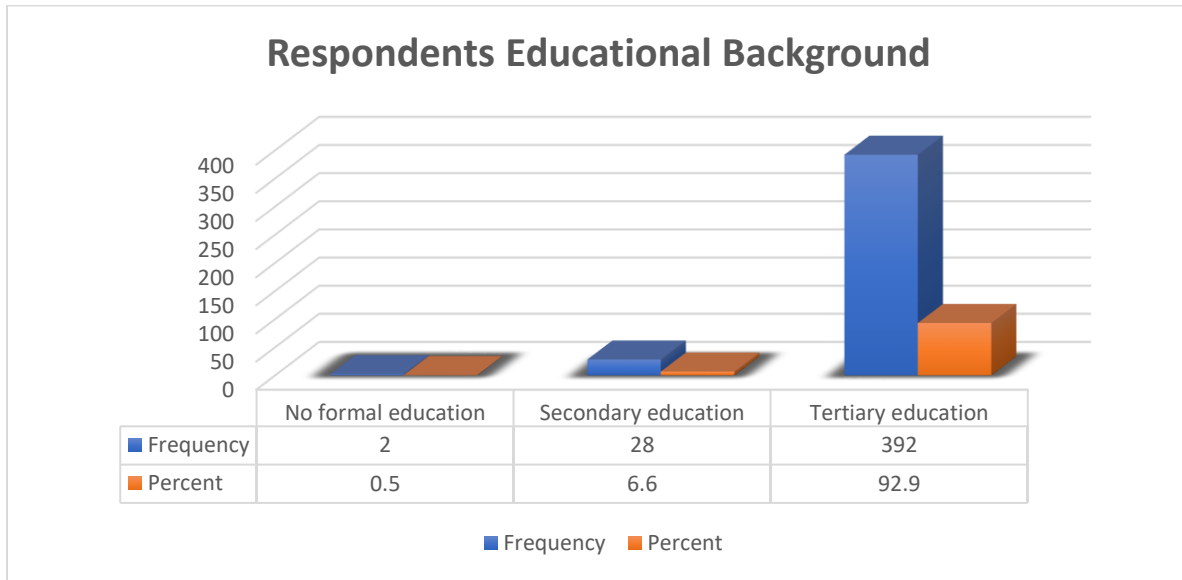
**Figure 4. 2 Age Distribution of Respondents**



The age distribution of the respondents as indicated in Figure 4.2 shows that a considerable number of the respondents are within the age bracket of 30 to 34 years (132, 31.3%). This was followed by those respondents within the age bracket of 35 to 39 years (116, 27.5%). Simply, the age bracket of those above 30 to 39 years total 248 (58.8%). This means that those who took part in this study are within the active labour population of the country. Again, these age group form a considerable proportion of the population of Ghana.

Educational background of respondents has an association with how respondents understand a study and provide responses. From Figure 4.3, it can be observed that majority of the respondents (392, 92.9%) had tertiary education. It is therefore anticipated that responses would be accurate enough, and clearly expresses the opinion of the respondents without any duress.

**Figure 4. 3 Respondents’ Educational Background**



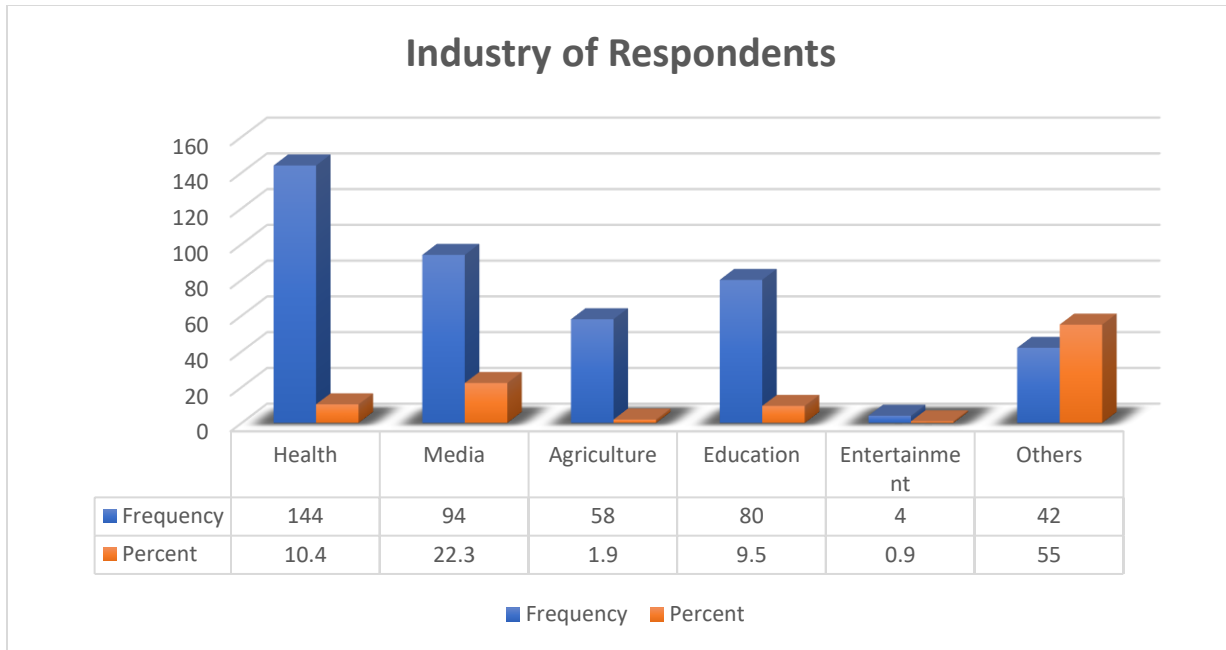
In a study where health is a matter of concern, identifying the marital status of respondents becomes very important. Thus, during the COVID-19 Pandemic, parents and or couples are particular about the welfare of their children and wards and would appreciate any form of information and or communication originating from government. From Figure 4.3, it is clear that a greater number of respondents are single (230, 54.5%). However, some considerable number of respondents are married as well (184, 43.6%).

**Figure 4. 4 Marital Status of Respondents**



This study sampled respondents from varied industry including health (144, 10.4%), media (94, 22.3%), agriculture (58, 1.9%), education (80, 9.5%) and entertainment (4, 0.9%) (Figure 4.5).

**Figure 4. 5 Industry of Respondents**



### 4.3 Guidelines on the communication of Covid-19 pandemic in Accra

The first study objective looked at the guidelines on communication of COVID-19 pandemic. To address this research objective, a five-point Likert scale was used (1=Very lowly agree; 2=Lowly agree; 3=Moderately agree; 4=Highly agree; 5=Very highly agree). The result to the communication guidelines is summarized in Table 4.1. Using a five-point Likert scale, the standard rule is to use mean score from 0.01 to 1.00 is (Very lowly agree); to 2.00 is (lowly agree); from 2.01 until 3.00 is (moderately agree); 3.01 until 4:00 is (high agree); mean score from 4.01 until 5.00 is (very highly agree) (Kaplan et al., 2021; Vogel et al., 2020). Based on the forgoing criteria for determining affirmation or support of the points raised as communication guidelines, it can be concluded that all the COVID-19 communication undertaken within Greater Accra is data driven (mean=3.1185, sd=1.089).

**Table 4. 1 Communication Guidelines for COVID-19**

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
The COVID-19 communication guideline is Community-led	Very Low agree	84	19.9	19.9	2.5118	1.06938
	Low agree	124	29.4	49.3		
	Moderately agree	146	34.6	83.9		
	Highly agree	50	11.8	95.7		
	Very Highly agree	18	4.3	100		
What is communicated about COVID-19 is Data Driven	Very Low agree	36	8.5	8.5	3.1185	1.08988
	Low agree	76	18	26.5		
	Moderately agree	156	37	63.5		
	Highly agree	110	26.1	89.6		
	Very Highly agree	44	10.4	100		
COVID-19 communication is designed to reinforces capacity and local solutions	Very Low agree	50	11.8	11.8	2.9005	1.11332
	Low agree	102	24.2	36		
	Moderately agree	142	33.6	69.7		
	Highly agree	96	22.7	92.4		
	Very Highly agree	32	7.6	100		
COVID-19 communication guidelines promote collaborative	Very Low agree	44	10.4	10.4	2.9905	1.10275
	Low agree	90	21.3	31.8		
	Moderately agree	150	35.5	67.3		
	Highly agree	102	24.2	91.5		
	Very Highly agree	36	8.5	100		
The communication from government has been done primarily in formal language	Very Low agree	50	11.8	11.8	2.9763	1.16334
	Low agree	98	23.2	35.1		
	Moderately agree	128	30.3	65.4		
	Highly agree	104	24.6	90		
	Very Highly agree	42	10	100		
	Total	422	100			

Source: Field Data, 2021

This finding supports the period release of COVID-19 report and public briefing undertaken by President of Ghana (Amoah et al., 2021; Arthur-Holmes & Agyemang-Duah, 2020; Med, 2020).

Thus, all formal communications undertaken by government bodies are done based on data collected and scientifically verified. The use of data goes to consolidate credibility of information that originate from the seat of government and bolsters the confidence of the public. Other guidelines that were identified in extant literature as guidelines of communication for COVID-19 and moderately agreed by the respondents included the use of formal language (mean=2.9763, sd=1.16334), collaborative communication (mean=2.9905, sd=1.10275), leveraging local capacity and solutions (mean=2.9005, sd=1.11332).

#### 4.4 Communication strategies employed in the management of the pandemic in Accra

Different communication strategies have been deployed by both developing and developed economies to addressing COVID-19 (Amoah et al., 2021; Antwi-Boasiako & Nyarkoh, 2021). The second research objective examined the different communication strategies employed in the management of the pandemic in Accra. This section of the study used the five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Not Sure; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree) to examine the communication strategies used by Ghana in addressing COVID-19 (Table 4.2).

**Table 4. 2 Communication strategies employed in the management of COVID-19**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
The COVID-19 communication adopts awareness creation as a strategy	Strongly Disagree	10	2.4	2.4	4.78	1.012
	Disagree	25	5.9	8.3		
	Indifferent	24	5.7	14.0		
	Agree	242	57.3	71.3		
	Strongly Agree	121	28.7	100.0		
The COVID-19 communication adopts Public education as a strategy	Strongly Disagree	15	3.6	3.6	4.35	0.846
	Disagree	20	4.7	8.3		
	Indifferent	20	4.7	13.0		
	Agree	246	58.3	71.3		
	Strongly Agree	121	28.7	100.0		

The COVID-19 communication adopts Advocacy communication as a strategy	Strongly Disagree	30	7.1	7.1	4.65	1.025
	Disagree	5	1.2	8.3		
	Indifferent	26	6.2	14.5		
	Agree	260	61.6	76.1		
	Strongly Agree	101	23.9	100.0		
The COVID-19 communication adopts Entertainment education as a strategy	Strongly Disagree	10	2.4	2.4	4.81	1.112
	Disagree	35	8.3	10.7		
	Indifferent	14	3.3	14.0		
	Agree	342	81.0	95.0		
	Strongly Agree	21	5.0	100.0		
The COVID-19 communication adopts Behavior Change communication as a strategy	Strongly Disagree	5	1.2	1.2	4.13	1.326
	Disagree	35	8.3	9.5		
	Indifferent	24	5.7	15.2		
	Agree	238	56.4	71.6		
	Strongly Agree	120	28.4	100.0		
The COVID-19 communication relies on technology	Strongly Disagree	68	16.1	16.1	2.9716	1.19744
	Disagree	72	17.1	33.2		
	Indifferent	118	28	61.1		
	Agree	132	31.3	92.4		
	Strongly Agree	32	7.6	100		
The COVID-19 communication is done in regular bi-weekly through press briefings.	Strongly Disagree	56	13.3	13.3	2.981	1.18967
	Disagree	90	21.3	34.6		
	Indifferent	126	29.9	64.5		
	Agree	106	25.1	89.6		
	Strongly Agree	44	10.4	100		
COVID-19 communication leverages stakeholders' engagement	Strongly Disagree	30	7.1	7.1	3.2085	1.10457
	Disagree	84	19.9	27		
	Indifferent	124	29.4	56.4		
	Agree	136	32.2	88.6		
	Strongly Agree	48	11.4	100		
COVID-19 communication is	Strongly Disagree	38	9	9		
	Disagree	44	10.4	19.4		

done through the NCCE platforms, Ministry of Communication, Ministry of Health, and Ghana Health Service	Indifferent	84	19.9	39.3	3.5829	1.23161
	Agree	146	34.6	73.9		
	Strongly Agree	110	26.1	100		
	Total	422	100			

Source: Field Data, 2021

The respondents agreed that “COVID-19 communication adopts awareness creation as a strategy” (mean=4.78, sd=1.012). COVID-19 awareness creation has been one of the key communication strategies adopted by the government of Ghana through the establishment of the Ghana COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Project as supported by the International Development Association. Particularly, the project for awareness creation around COVID-19 witnessed the establishment of information centers across the 16 regions in Ghana. Again, sign language was used to reach those who were tone-deaf and those who could not speak and write the formal language. The awareness messages were also delivered using caravans in various districts across the country.

Public education corroborated the awareness creation (mean=4.35, sd=0.846) as the health and public officials used the opportunity to educate the masses on washing of hands with soap under running water, the use of nose mask, and hand sanitizers. The public education efforts were strongly championed by the Ministry of Health, Ghana Health Service, and National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE).

Largely, the use of Entertainment education as a strategy was admitted by the respondents (mean=4.81, sd=1.112). Entertainment-Education (EE) is a communication approach that uses a custom-tailored piece of entertainment to address a social issue or educate the audience. It is characterized by a set of approaches and procedures aimed at communicating social and behavior

change through various levels of mainstream media. In this era of COVID-19 were there is a lot of social distancing, leveraging on media entertainment has been one of the strategies of government to communicate measures to curb and prevent the spread of the various.

The communication around COVID-19 is done around state agencies and institutions. The respondent affirmed that state institutions such as NCCE platforms, Ministry of Communication, Ministry of Health, and Ghana Health Service are used as strategic medium for communicating COVID-19 (mean=3.58, sd=1.231). Another communication strategy adopted by the government in addressing COVID-19 is stakeholder engagement (mean=3.208, sd=1.104). Since COVID-19 is an entire environment and community issue, the involvement of stakeholders in the communication process and system is the surest means to addressing it. The regular and or period Presidential statement on COVID-19 further consolidate the interaction with the public, and rightly consolidated by efforts by state institutions such as NCCE, Ghana Health Service (GHS), and the Ministry of Health.

#### 4.5 Whether the messages found acceptance among the intended targets

The third objective of the study assessed whether the message and or information from the government bodies found acceptance and reached the intended target given that many people live in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area. Responses from study participants are summarized in Table 4.3.

**Table 4. 3 COVID-19 Communication Message reaching intended Target**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
The COVID-19 communication language is easy to understand	Strongly Disagree	30	7.1	7.1	3.6114	1.16589
	Disagree	40	9.5	16.6		
	Indifferent	100	23.7	40.3		
	Agree	146	34.6	74.9		

	Strongly Agree	106	25.1	100		
The COVID-19 communication is not done in my local language, I do not understand	Strongly Disagree	174	41.2	41.2	1.9905	1.0941
	Disagree	140	33.2	74.4		
	Indifferent	64	15.2	89.6		
	Agree	26	6.2	95.7		
	Strongly Agree	18	4.3	100		
I find it difficult to follow COVID-19 communication since it requires a change of behavior which takes longer time to do.	Strongly Disagree	140	33.2	33.2	2.1327	1.06395
	Disagree	146	34.6	67.8		
	Indifferent	90	21.3	89.1		
	Agree	32	7.6	96.7		
	Strongly Agree	14	3.3	100		
COVID-19 communication mechanism does not use community groups to raise public health literacy	Strongly Disagree	88	20.9	20.9	2.6161	1.20943
	Disagree	126	29.9	50.7		
	Indifferent	98	23.2	73.9		
	Agree	80	19	92.9		
	Strongly Agree	30	7.1	100		
COVID-19 communication mechanism does not use influential leaders to raise public health literacy	Strongly Disagree	112	26.5	26.5	2.4218	1.19671
	Disagree	132	31.3	57.8		
	Indifferent	92	21.8	79.6		
	Agree	60	14.2	93.8		
	Strongly Agree	26	6.2	100		
Due to medical uncertainty, the message on COVID-19 does not receive acceptance from the masses	Strongly Disagree	84	19.9	19.9	2.6493	1.18992
	Disagree	120	28.4	48.3		
	Indifferent	104	24.6	73		
	Agree	88	20.9	93.8		
	Strongly Agree	26	6.2	100		
Worries surrounding infection management trigger negative feelings about what is communicated on COVID 19	Strongly Disagree	46	10.9	10.9	2.9858	1.1553
	Disagree	104	24.6	35.5		
	Indifferent	124	29.4	64.9		
	Agree	106	25.1	90		
	Strongly Agree	42	10	100		
	Total	422	100			

Source: Field Data, 2021

A large number of the respondents affirmed that COVID-19 communication language is easy to understand (mean=3.611, sd=1.116). Thus, there is a clear indication that COVID-19 message has reached the intended audience as per those surveyed in this study. ability to understand the messaged delivered is a clear indication that the communicated message has reached target audience. In the study by Antwi-Boasiako and Nyarkoh, (2021) it was affirmed that since citizens have also been provided with enough information, they have been able to observe the protocols and it is for this reason that Ghana continues to be lauded by scholars and key stakeholders including the WHO. Again, the respondents disagreed with the assertion that “I find it difficult to follow COVID-19 communication since it requires a change of behavior which takes longer time to do” (mean=2.1327, sd=1.06395). Thus, with little or minimal efforts, these respondents are able to clearly understand the COVID-19 messages. Also, the respondents disagreed with the notion that “COVID-19 communication mechanism does not use community groups to raise public health literacy” (mean=2.4218, sd=1.19671). In the view of the respondents, the statement “Due to medical uncertainty, the message on COVID-19 does not receive acceptance from the masses” is particularly not supported since they appreciate the message received on COVID-19 in Ghana.

#### 4.6 Challenges in communication of Covid-19 pandemic in Accra

The final research objective considered the challenges in communication of Covid-19 pandemic in Accra. A five-point Likert scale was used (1=Very lowly agree; 2=Lowly agree; 3=Moderately agree; 4=Highly agree; 5=Very highly agree) as shown in Table 4.4.

**Table 4. 4 challenges in communication of Covid-19 pandemic in Accra**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Information uncertainty challenge	Very Low agree	62	14.7	14.7		
	Low agree	104	24.6	39.3		

	Moderately agree	156	37	76.3	2.7678	1.11056
	Highly agree	70	16.6	92.9		
	Very Highly agree	30	7.1	100		
Stress in the workplace negatively impact information processing	Very Low agree	66	15.6	15.6		
	Low agree	116	27.5	43.1		
	Moderately agree	144	34.1	77.3	2.7014	1.1075
	Highly agree	70	16.6	93.8		
	Very Highly agree	26	6.2	100		
Unpredictability in the workplace negatively impact information processing	Very Low agree	52	12.3	12.3		
	Low agree	114	27	39.3		
	Moderately agree	150	35.5	74.9	2.8104	1.09938
	Highly agree	74	17.5	92.4		
	Very Highly agree	32	7.6	100		
A tendency to stick to long-held ideas may dissuade people from making a decision that goes against their intuition.	Very Low agree	44	10.4	10.4		
	Low agree	68	16.1	26.5		
	Moderately agree	142	33.6	60.2	3.1517	1.15157
	Highly agree	116	27.5	87.7		
	Very Highly agree	52	12.3	100		
Fear and other unpleasant emotions cause a change in the perception of a threat.	Very Low agree	34	8.1	8.1		
	Low agree	60	14.2	22.3		
	Moderately agree	118	28	50.2	3.3412	1.13554
	Highly agree	148	35.1	85.3		
	Very Highly agree	62	14.7	100		
People's inclination to believe they are invulnerable and won't contract COVID-19 also impacts how they understand and act on communications	Very Low agree	30	7.1	7.1		
	Low agree	42	10	17.1		
	Moderately agree	98	23.2	40.3	3.654	1.20518
	Highly agree	126	29.9	70.1		
	Very Highly agree	126	29.9	100		
Religious inclination inhibits efforts to communicate COVID-19 messages	Very Low agree	48	11.4	11.4		
	Low agree	76	18	29.4		
	Moderately agree	120	28.4	57.8	3.1943	1.25024
	Highly agree	102	24.2	82		
	Very Highly agree	76	18	100		

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Source: Field Data, 2021

Human behavioral tendencies are factors that inhibit efforts to in the communication of Covid-19 pandemic in Accra. Particularly, the respondents highly agreed that “People's inclination to believe they are invulnerable and would not contract COVID-19 also impacts how they understand and act on communications” (mean=3.654, sd=1.205). Another area that is becoming a challenge to communicating COVID-19 message to the masses is the instance of people’s religious inclination (mean=3.1943, sd=1.250). There are some charlatans and religious fanatics who are of the view that COVID-19 pandemic is more than science issues but hold the assertion that COVID-19 is a religious and spiritual issue. This stance by individuals within society thereby defeats government communication efforts. For instance, the government directive of wearing nose mark and social distancing has been disobeyed by some religious organizations within Accra. Another problem and or challenge identified to inhibiting COVID-19 communication within Accra and by large the entire Ghana is the Fear and other unpleasant emotions cause a change in the perception of a threat (mean=3.341, sd=1.135).

#### **4.7 Discussions**

From the findings on communication guidelines within the Greater-Accra, respondents moderately agreed that there is community collaboration, local people involvement, use of formal and people centered. The government through its various machinery has demonstrated commitment to consolidating the communication around COVID-19 in the country (Antwi-Boasiako & Nyarkoh, 2021). The presidency, which is the seat of government has demonstrated strong position to communicating guidelines especially on social distancing, washing of hands regularly, the wearing of mask and use of hand sanitizers. This study has therefore consolidated the position of government to using formal language in the communication of COVID-19. More so, the reliance

on accurate data on the spread, containment, active cases and total death recorded has been largely demonstrated.

Data driven communication during the time of pandemic provides a sound basis for citizen acceptance and commitment to solving and or curtailing the challenge. citizen who see that the data on COVID-19 can be trusted and coming from government body and or institution are often willing to comply. Again, the use of state institutions as key disseminators of COVID-19 messages fosters public acceptance (Amoah et al., 2021; Antwi-Boasiako & Nyarkoh, 2021).

Central to promoting COVID-19 communication is providing awareness. Simply, awareness creation by the government through its bodies has been very imperative during this crisis. Using existing technologies and media houses within Accra to propagate government programmes on the COVID-19 has been promoted. Citizens have leveraged on radios and television programmes to understand the state of COVID-19 and what government intends to do, and what government has done in awareness creation.

Public education on handwashing, using nose mask, and observing social distancing has been very topical in public education undertaken by government in Ghana. The public education and communication on COVID-19 has been corroborated by entertain education as a strategy. People and or the masses leverage on entertainment to communicate ideas, issues, and solutions to various challenges. The government through its media links have used entertainment in the form of music to disseminate information on COVID-19 to the people of Ghana.

Citizens religious inclinations as well as behavioral dimensions go a long way to influence the degree of acceptance of COVID-19 message. As people are driven by religious values and beliefs,

observing key messages and directives issued by government and government bodies become non-effective.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The section of the study provides a summary of the findings based on the data collected and analysis done in chapter four, the conclusions drawn from extant literature and findings, and finally some recommendations for those in government (that is policy makers, government officials, and public servants) and those in academia.

#### 5.2 Summary of Findings

The study was designed to examine the communication around COVID-19 as adopted and implemented by the government of Ghana using a descriptive survey. A total of 422 inhabitants of Accra participated in the study, with questionnaire as the research instrument. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation were used for data analysis. Key findings of the study include:

1. The study has demonstrated that communication especially from government on COVID-19 must be data driven so that its verification and veracity is assured.
2. More so, the communication and or what is communicated must be guided by formal processes, engagement of all stakeholders and community leaders in party so that reaching the target audience could be faster. Government communication machinery alone cannot win in the fight against COVID-19, deploying all aspect of communication would therefore fast track the communication and reach large proportion of the population.

Communication strategies found in this study showed that government largely depends on its institutions across the country and in particularly those within Greater-Accra. The Ministry of

Health, Ministry of Communication, Ghana Health Service and the Presidency have demonstrated great commitment in the communication around COVID-19. Using formal institutions as done by the government at the initial stage of the virus have demonstrate government effort withing the sub-region.

The respondents asserted that message on COVID-19 as sent and or delivered by the government is clearly understood and meets its intended targets. The educational background of the respondents showed that those formal language used is clearly understood. The setback that was identified in this study is largely that of behavior of the general public and religious inclination that negate government efforts at communicating the dangers of the virus, and its impact on the public. Some religious organizations have clearly not complied with the directives issued by government. These religious institutions have organized programmes that involves large crowds, not observing social or physical distance, and not wearing nose mask as directed. This brings up the question as to whether the communicated message had reached those institutions and individuals.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Ghana has not won the battle against the virus yet, which is still raging and forcing a second lockdown in other areas of the world, but it has been able to control it considerably well. The government and the people of Ghana have benefited greatly from the actions adopted thus far. One of the most essential aspects of the government's overall plan for combating the virus was its communication strategy.

The government's communication infrastructure has helped to keep the virus from spreading further. The proper flow of information not only warned the public, but also assuaged their

anxieties by assuring them that the government was trying to contain the epidemic. This best conveys the perspective that a weak communication strategy will render any approach useless.

Within and across nations, communicating uncertainties and concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic might have short-and long-term economic consequences, influencing morbidity, mortality, trust, and reputation in many ways.

Ghana was designated early in the epidemic as one of the most vulnerable African nations, having insufficient capability to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. While other initiatives and other measures are put in place to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, communication on handwashing and using Veronica Buckets with running water and soap in public spaces must continue.

Given the negative repercussions of uncontrolled COVID-19 spread, it may be required to go beyond appealing to users and management of public places to use the facilities and to utilize additional tools, if necessary, to enforce basic hand hygiene standards. This might entail employing procedures like those used in the airline industry to avoid terrorism, which have now become commonplace public safety requirements for air travel. COVID-19 transmission cannot be prevented without proper handwashing.

Several causes might account for the lack of hand washing at public transit stops. For starters, it might be connected to a lack of appropriate public education about the necessity of handwashing in the prevention of COVID-19 infection. This is more plausible, given the late onset of public knowledge of the pandemic and a general low-risk impression of COVID-19 community spread. Second, it might be related to the simple yet cultural truth that many individuals are not accustomed to washing their hands in public, particularly at service stops.

It will take time for people to develop the habit of often washing their hands. This shows that ongoing public education, utilizing suitable local media and language, is required to ensure that COVID-19 prevention information, guidance, and recommendations are widely available and intelligible to the general Ghanaian audience. Education initiatives are especially important since improved communication about the importance of washing hands often and correctly, as well as practicing social/physical distance, has proven to be more effective in preventing and decreasing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inadequate communication by private institutions activities might be linked to the private sector's lack of awareness of the role it can play in national efforts to stop COVID-19 from spreading. Furthermore, they lack the expertise and capacity to respond to such a health threat in a methodical manner. As a result, the local government will need to back them up in this area.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on extant literature reviewed, the data and findings arrived at, this study postulate some recommendations for policy makers in government, those in academia and for the general public within Accra and Ghana in particular.

The government through its various institutions must continue and consolidate communication within the public space. This communication should intensify the need for the public to intensify mandatory use of face masks by the public, undertaking cleaning surfaces such as public seats, counter tops, and arm rests of vehicles (in the case of public vehicles) with appropriate sanitizing agents, are examples of specific actions that can help address the guidelines adherence gaps identified. Again, the communication should be emphasized by the government. The mandatory wearing of nose mask within the capital city of Accra should be adequately communicated to all

class of people within Accra. Using only formal language as identified would limit the reach of the communication given the different languages used within Accra.

Leveraging on private media houses to communicate government stance on COVID-19 will go a long way to consolidate efforts to reducing the spread and impact of the pandemic. This approach is particularly important since there are numerous or large numbers of media houses within Accra.

Use of government communication machinery to demystify the negative religious perception on the virus is imperative. Government must design communication that addresses the issues of religiosity when it comes to dealing with COVID-19 pandemic. Religious organizations holding strong and entrenched position against the virus would only defeat the considerable efforts made by government to communicate to the masses.

#### **5.4.1 Suggestions for Further Studies**

Further studies should examine the corroborative role of private media in the communication of COVID-19 within Ghana since the government machinery alone cannot reach the entire population within the country.

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## Appendix

### QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

I am an MA student at the Ghana Institute of Journalism. This questionnaire attempts to solicit for information for my research work on the Effectiveness of Communication Strategies in the Management of COVID-19 Situation in Ghana: The Case of COVID-19 Communication Management within Greater Accra. I would appreciate if you could kindly take a little of your time to complete this questionnaire. I believe that your comments and opinion will make this study a very successful one. Your confidentiality and anonymity are assured.

Thank you for your cooperation.

#### SECTION A: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Instructions: Please tick as appropriate

1. Gender:                      a. Male [  ]    b. Female [  ]
2. Age: Below 25yrs [  ]      25-29yrs [  ]      30-34yrs [  ]      35-39yrs [  ]      40 and above [  ]
3. Educational level: No formal education [  ]      Basic education [  ]      secondary Education [  ]      Tertiary education [  ]
4. Marital status: Single [  ]      Married [  ]      Divorced [  ]      Widowed [  ]
5. Industry/sector
  - I. Health [  ]
  - II. Media [  ]
  - III. Agriculture [  ]
  - IV. Education [  ]
  - V. Entertainment [  ]
  - VI. Others [  ]

#### SECTION B: GUIDELINES ON THE COMMUNICATION OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN ACCRA

The following statements relate to guidelines on the communication of Covid-19 pandemic. Please indicate by ticking the extent to which you agree with the following statements as

guidelines on the communication of Covid-19 pandemic in Accra.

Use the following scale: 1=Very lowly agree; 2=Lowly agree; 3=Moderately agree; 4=Highly agree; 5=Very highly agree

<b>Code</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
6.	The COVID-19 communication guideline is Community-led					
7.	What is communicated about COVID-19 is Data Driven					
8.	COVID-19 communication is designed to reinforces capacity and local solutions					
9.	COVID-19 communication guidelines promote collaborative					
10.	The communication from government has been done primarily in formal language					

**SECTION C: SPECIFIC COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES EMPLOYED IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PANDEMIC IN ACCRA.**

Please indicate by ticking the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

Use the following scale: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Not Sure; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree

<b>Code</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
11.	The COVID-19 communication adopts awareness creation as a strategy					
12.	The COVID-19 communication adopts Public education as a strategy					

13.	The COVID-19 communication adopts Advocacy communication as a strategy					
14.	The COVID-19 communication adopts Entertainment education as a strategy					
15.	The COVID-19 communication adopts Behavior Change communication as a strategy					
16.	The COVID-19 communication relies on technology					
17.	The COVID-19 communication is done in regular bi-weekly through press briefings.					
18.	COVID-19 communication leverages stakeholders' engagement					
19.	COVID-19 communication is done through the NCCE platforms, Ministry of Communication, Ministry of Health, and Ghana Health Service					

**SECTION D: WHETHER THE MESSAGES FOUND ACCEPTANCE AMONG THE**

**INTENDED TARGETS**

Please indicate by ticking the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Use the following scale: 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Not Sure; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree

<b>Code</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
20.	The COVID-19 communication language is easy to understand					

21.	The COVID-19 communication is not done in my local language, I do not understand					
22.	I find it difficult to follow COVID-19 communication since it requires a change of behavior which takes longer time to do.					
23.	COVID-19 communication mechanism does not use community groups to raise public health literacy					
24.	COVID-19 communication mechanism does not use influential leaders to raise public health literacy					
25.	Due to medical uncertainty, the message on COVID-19 does not receive acceptance from the masses					
26.	Worries surrounding infection management trigger negative feelings about what is communicated on COVID 19					

**SECTION E: CHALLENGES IN COMMUNICATION OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN**

**ACCRA**

The following statements relate to challenges in communication of Covid-19 pandemic. Please indicate by ticking the extent to which you agree with the following statements as challenges in communication of Covid-19 pandemic in Accra.

Use the following scale: 1=Very lowly agree; 2=Lowly agree; 3=Moderately agree; 4=Highly agree; 5=Very highly agree

<b>Code</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

1.	Information uncertainty challenge					
2.	Stress in the workplace negatively impact information processing					
3.	Unpredictability in the workplace negatively impact information processing					
4.	A tendency to stick to long-held ideas may dissuade people from making a decision that goes against their intuition.					
5.	Fear and other unpleasant emotions cause a change in the perception of a threat.					
6.	People's inclination to believe they are invulnerable and won't contract COVID-19 also impacts how they understand and act on communications					
7.	Religious inclination inhibits efforts to communicate COVID-19 messages					

**Thank you**