

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges across the world. One of these challenges relates to the communication of COVID-19 messages due to the complexities of health communication, especially among vulnerable people living in urban slum areas. Using data from populations in Kenya's urban informal settlements, this paper investigates stakeholders' capacities, successes and challenges in communicating health crisis messages. The data are drawn from people living in Majengo and Makaburini informal settlements in Kakamega town, Western Kenya. The findings indicate that lack of structured crisis communication has hampered the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially among people living in urban informal settlements where essential social amenities are limited. We also use the collected data to describe how a crisis communication model, adapted from Kaplan and Norton's (Strategy Leadersh 32(5):10–17, 2004) strategy map can be customized to enhance effectiveness of health communication campaigns. The implications of this strategy serve to broaden both theory and practice of healthcare crisis communication and provide insights into ways to strengthen the quality of crisis emergency communication response.

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