# Audio file

Participant 7.m4a

# Transcript

Speaker 1

Hello. First and foremost, I'd like to thank you for taking your time aside out of the day to do this interview. Before we begin with the interview, I'd like to explain to you the nature of the interview and why I'm conducting the research. So I'm currently studying. I'm currently studying in info in Strategic communications management at the University of Pretoria. And as a communications student, I'm particularly interested in communication and how it is conducted and received. Especially during times of crisis, the nature of my research is based on health crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic and seeing as the pandemic affected everyone, seeing as the pandemic affected everyone, I find that everyone has their own opinions and perceptions of our communications. How the communication of the health crisis could have been handled. So I want to interview you to understand your perception of implementing this type of communication. And I'd like you to thank not this as I'd like you to think of this not merely as an interview, but as a conversation between two people whereby one educates the other. And in this case, you are educator. So our interview is confidential and for insurance purposes, I would like. I would like your permission to record the conversation. If that’s OK?

Speaker 2

That is OK.

Speaker 1

OK.How did you respond when you first heard about the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa?

Speaker 2,

In South Africa or like?

Speaker 1

In South Africa.

Speaker 2

OK. I was just like, ohh OK, it happened in China, it's happening here. It's just gonna be like a two day thing. There's no need to worry. cause I remember when like it was becoming serious. We were playing hockey like on the field or whatever. And I remember they're like yeah, everyone don't shake hands just.Hit each other with your elbows and I was just like this is so. Nothing deep's. Gonna happen? Yeah, so. My initial reaction to it was just like a. People are blown out of proportion Yeah.

Speaker 1

what is your opinion of the COVID-19 information shared by the South African Government during the pandemic?

Speaker 2

I think in the beginning and and also I don't think a lot of people understood it to you before, but I think in the beginning it wasn't very well Communicated but also.Like I said, I don't think the government pulling knew what they were dealing with as well. I think the as time went on, if you were a person who was very diligent on looking at that because I was every day on Twitter or Twitter for the help page, I was there checking the stats, checking what's new, what's you know and all of that. And I was also.Very into. Like international as well. So I think that if you actually took the time to read, you would know more about it. But I think for like the normal every like day-to-day, it almost became like mundane is the wrong word, but like people just it, it was too much information. It was not in a sense like a digestible sense for people, for them to understand every day.

Speaker 1

Yeah.

Speaker 2

Because if you. Keep. Hearing it's day 30, something of lockdown and all that, you're just going. To skip the. News. I think there could have been better ways to keep people updated.

Speaker 1

Yeah.

Speaker 2

Rather than just boring.

Speaker 1

Do you find the COVID-19 information shared by the government easy to understand? And why?

Speaker 2

I think in terms of stacks it was easy. But in terms? Of like other information, I think anything with the government is difficult to understand, but I think in terms of what we as the public needed to know, I think it was. Sent like given in a very easy way to understand the things that we have to know. If you want to know more about it, maybe a bit more difficult. But the things that you needed to know about.

Speaker 1

Yeah, it was. Did you find the information accurate? And why?

Speaker 2

See this is the problem you hear a lot people will say no, they're fixing the numbers, they're doing this and doing that. So if I take it from first glance, I'm just gonna believe it because it's got a governmental stamp on it or something, you know. But in terms of what everyone else might have believed and what it seemed like, I don't think it was accurate because how many people? Were they actually actively, for example, in terms of statistics, were they actually actively testing every single day? It was up to you going and getting tested, and I know many people who, for example, never got tested for COVID and they knew they had COVID and they just carried on their lives. So in terms of statistics in that sense, I don't think that the numbers were true, but you can't control everyone as well.

Speaker 1

I hear you. I hear you. And what social media posts about COVID-19 caught your attention?

Speaker 2

Stats, It had a lot of pictures. It was quick, easy, like that was saying that if you're gonna deal with the pandemic or something at a large scale, if you have a quick, easy digestible way to get information and it's easy to remember. I don't remember the long post explaining this, explaining that you say get vaccinated. They say get vaccinated? Why? How? Put it out there way easier.

Speaker 1

And what made those posts stick in your mind?

Speaker 2

I'd say the use of like. Images and like we need numbers. They're big if they're a. Big problem, they're small if they're not needed and then just it was short, sweet. And you just have you every everything you needed to know for that was right there. So if it's gonna say get vaccinated, big heart. Why you know what I'm saying? And then everything else you do. You know, it's not on me.

Speaker 1

And how did you respond to the covenanting messages you saw during the? Pandemic.

Speaker 2

Or what do you mean by the messages?

Speaker 1

So, like the government sending out messages about getting vaccinated, this is where we had this face. What? What?

Speaker 2

How did I respond to those?

Speaker 1

Yes. How? Like, what was your initial reaction?

Speaker 2

I don't think I ever like an actual like SMS.

Speaker 1

Well, there are different types of messages, not necessarily in SMS like maybe. You'd see like one of those emails I'd say. Ohh OK. Stay indoors. Wear your mask.

Speaker 2

I'm a rule follower, so whenever I was told I'd do, but also, I think with things like that also comes scepticism. Because you don't know if it's actually. For real, especially ones we. Should just get it like a a message and you're like, ohh, health on something I'd be like. Is that really what's going on? Or, but that's why you need to be updated on all platforms I guess. But in terms of just the messages we got, if I got it.

Speaker

OK.

Speaker 2

Want me to do something? I just not think about. It again and just it.

Speaker 1

Yeah. And can you share any examples of messages that change how people around you thought about COVID?

Speaker 2

I think the vaccination one. When vaccination is time to do a vaccination, which people get vaccinated first, I think that should today be like a lot of people that I know view on it because some people felt like, oh, the government's telling me to get vaccinated and also with all the. The fake news going around it made people not trust what was being said and almost felt like they were being told what to do and they have a choice in what? Because the message was like get vaccinated or you can't go to work or you can't go to school. You can't.Go to you know. So I think. I know a lot. Of people whose. Like thought on COVID changed then. But yeah, I think that.

Speaker 1

Did the way like the way Covid was communicated. Influence how you saw the pandemic?

Speaker 2

The way Covid was?

Speaker 1

The way COVID was communicated. Did it influence how you saw the pandemic? And if so in in which way?

Speaker 2

I think yes, because it did change the way I thought about it because like I said, when I when it first arrived, I was just like, it's not going to be anything that serious. But I think as soon as. You saw, like the social media posts and the news speaking about it. Then the seriousness of it all became more and more real. And then when you hear this many deaths and this many in this in this province or you know, and then especially because in the Eastern Cape there was a lot and I'm very close to the Eastern Cape so hearing those numbers and knowing that what if that's my neighbour or whatever, then I think I started realising how serious it was. Because when I was first two people. People in I don't know where they were the first two people. It was just like their fault, you know? But as soon as it was like here in province and all of that, then I was like maybe.

Speaker 1

What do you think about the government's hotline/WhatsApp group for COVID-19 information?

Speaker 2

I didn’t have that.

Speaker 1

You didn't have that?

Speaker 2

No

Speaker 1

So the government had a WhatsApp group whereby they check information about COVID, and the people could join the group, but only like the government. Like sending out information and stuff. Yeah. So you're saying you didn't have that?

Speaker

I was.

Speaker 2

Very. But if I were to be honest, I think it's really beneficial because. Social media is a very easy way to get information nowadays, especially during COVID. Yes, we watched the news, but a lot of our time was spent on all types of social media. So I think utilising a WhatsApp group would have been very beneficial. It's only being the government. I still agree. With that, because having too many people speaking. Group. Misinformation everywhere. So at least knowing that it's from government officials. Yes, the only problem that I think would come with that is fake groups being formed and with information being shared there.

Speaker 1

Was a trustworthy?

Speaker 2

Yeah, I. I wouldn't trust it. I know I'm saying that I trust Twitter, but I think a WhatsApp group. How do you validate that it really is? Because, at least with at least now you can, but during 2020 you couldn't say that this is a verified.

Speaker 1

Account.

Speaker 2

Yeah , but like on other social media such as Twitter, you could, it was a verified account, you know. So I think I wouldn't trust it. Maybe that's why I never even knew they existed. Cause yeah.

Speaker 1

Do you think people in different parts of South Africa perceived COVID-19 differently based on the messages they received?

Speaker 2

Yes. And. Their understanding of the messages they received, so I feel like in my in my environment I had people that were very. Always looking at the news and looking at the no matter we were South Africa, wherever it was, so we were very well informed about what was going on day-to-day. But if you're hearing things here and there on, for example radio or the news. And you're not actively always listening to it or whatever. And if the people around you aren't experiencing it, then how do you actually believe that what's going on is really true? So I've got lost your question.

Speaker 1

Let me repeat it? Do you think people in different parts of South Africa perceived COVID-19 differently based on messages they received?

Speaker 2

Yeah, so I think. Based on the messages you received, yes. You could take it very differently. So for example, if you're always on. The WhatsApp group. Thing you're going. To think it's more serious than someone who's only hearing it on the. Radio once or. Twice. So yeah, I do think that different people.

Speaker 1

Can you think of any events during the pandemic that made people trust health authorities more or less?

Speaker 2

More was when people did start seeing the numbers go down after, like strict regulations were put in place. I think that's when people started trusting them more and I think that people started trusting them less during the vaccination time. Because people like we're getting vaccinated, but the numbers aren't going down and all of that.

Speaker 1

And what are your thoughts on the fake news that spread during COVID-19?

Speaker 2

It's really difficult to control fake news, especially in this era that we're in. I think that even though you would be giving a lot of information. I think that keeping people well informed all the time would be the best way to combat fake news. Umm, because if someone's gonna. Say something you're like. No, but I actually read from the government official side that this is going on. So constantly putting out news, even if even if it's like a lot of information for people, can help combat fake news. But I think it was bound to happen because everything is a conspiracy all the time. So, something is going to. Be the reason why and yeah, I don't think the government could have done much on that. They can't take people's social media away.

Speaker 1

Yeah. Do you think the spread of false information made people trust health authorities less?

Speaker 2

The spirit of false information.

Speaker 1

The spread of false information make people trust health authorities less.

Speaker 2

Yes.

Speaker 1

Why?

Speaker 2

Confirmation bias. So if someone's gonna say the reason why the numbers are increasing is because it's winter and it's due, we know that people get sick and winter, you're just going to assume that that is the real reason why that is a bad example. But if something if you say something and it correlates with what you're seeing, you're going to believe it.To this, confirming what you're already thinking.

Speaker 1

Hmm. Thank you very much for your meaningful responses and contributions to the study. We have ended the interview and have covered all the questions I intended to ask. Is there anything else you'd like to add to our discussion?

Speaker 2

No Thank you.

Speaker 1

Thank you for your time and I've learned plenty from you and your experience.

Speaker

Thank you.