# Audio file

Participant 9.m4a

# Transcript

Speaker 1

Hello first and foremost, I'd like to thank you for putting time aside out of your day for this interview. Before we begin, I'd like to explain the nature of this interview. I'm conducting this research. So I'm currently studying an MPhil in strategic communications management at the University of Pretoria and as a Communications student, and particularly interested in communication and how it is conducted and received. Especially during times of crisis, the nature of our research is based on health, on the health, communication during the COVID-19 pandemics, and seeing as how the pandemic affected everyone, I find that everyone has their own opinions and perceptions of how the COVID-19 health crisis communication could have been handled. I want to interview you to understand your perception of implementing this type of communication, and I'd like you to think of this not merely as an. Interview, but as a conversation, as a conversation, and where one educates the other. And in this case you are the educator. Our interview is confidential and for assurance purposes I would like to. I would like to ask your permission to record this conversation, if that's OK.

Speaker

That’s OK.

Speaker 1

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

Speaker 2

So when I first heard about the COVID-19, it was 2019 December. But not everyone took it seriously at that time because we only thought it affected the outside world. It was different when we started hearing about the cases inside South Africa. During 2020. That was was my Matric year . So in the beginning of the year. Everything started off well. It started off OK. And then I remember what happened was. We were told about it in school and we were told no. We're gonna have a little bit of a break at school because of the the virus just to contain a little bit. And after that, I just remember us being on lockdown for a couple of months, quite a few couple of months, which is quite difficult to adjust to, but.

Speaker 1

Yeah.

Speaker 2

That's all. Well, I think, yeah.

Speaker 1

What is your opinion on the COVID-19 information shared by the government during the pandemic?

Speaker 2

I think the information that they gave us was a little bit vague. I don't think we got all like every detailed aspect of what is actually happening with COVID and how it's affecting the, the, the community itself. I think they focus broadly on how it's affecting the economy. And I understand that because it filters down from the economy into the communities and the at the bottom. But I think some of the information that was there, they allowed a lot of false information to be laid out there about the virus instead of trying to contain as much information as they could to give us the most accurate. Was actually detailing of of the virus itself if I Can put it that way.

Speaker 1

Did you find the COVID-19 information shared by the government easy to understand?

Speaker 2

I think for me, if I'm speaking on a personal point of view as a as a student at the time I I did, I was able to know that, OK, this is how many cases do we have? Excuse me. There's how many cases. How many people get affected in a day and what was the cause of the virus and stuff like that, the science behind it, I think I was able to understand that even when they told us they broadcast it and they explained the stats and everything, I was able to understand it a little bit better than I think. Yeah, dealing with something new, you tend to not know where to. Look or what? To say, but I think I could understand it much, much better.

Speaker

And with that.

Speaker 1

Did you find the information accurate? And why?

Speaker 2

To be honest, I can't fully say that I found the information that you have because. I didn't conduct any studies myself, but I think what they portrayed to us was what was what was happening around us, basically, because even in our Community we saw people dying because of the the virus itself. So it's kind of hard to say that the tests that they provided were not accurate at all when I could see things happening around the area that were visible fully visible. To me, for me to understand that this is how hectic it is and this is what it it can do to people. So I I do think that the information was accurate.

Speaker 1

what social media posts about COVID-19 caught your attention.

Speaker 2

I think I'm going to be biased with this one because I'm a. Instagram fanatic, so I I watched the IT was a meme. It was a funny meme about what could potentially happen if it spread out and it became a little bit more serious when it actually did spread out and and. it affected? People that I knew closely and people around me, so I'd say a a reel and Instagram reel is the one thing that I saw on social media that actually spoke to me about COVID-19 so.

Speaker 1

what made those posts stick in your mind?

Speaker 2

I think I'll go back to the real the real was funny. So I enjoy humor. So I think that stuck to me itself. But there was another contrasting one that I saw that was actually explaining in deep detail as to what could potentially happen if. The the the spread could go Wilder than what it has or we can't find a way to contain it, which got a little bit scary. So I think the thought of know. Even that. And they told us the ages that people might die and my parents being in those in that age care gap or demographic basically became a little bit scary. So the thought was always in the back of her mind. And how can this what do, what do I do? What am I going to do when this happens? So I think that's why the the. Reels stuck to me basically.

Speaker 1

How did you respond to the COVID-19 messages you saw during the pandemic?

Speaker 2

I am gonna be completely honest. I really didn't pay any attention to them. Like the messages that we got on our phones or the some of the broadcasts. Yes, had watched just to see, like, if schools are going to open again because like I said, I was going to check that time. So me being away from school is a little bit nice, but missing the sport was something different. This, but I don't think I paid a lot of attention to the messages. To be honest. I don't think I did. I only paid attention to where I was and what was happening around me, so I can't say that that's much of that's paying attention to the entire broadcast itself.

Speaker

Yeah.

Speaker 1

Can you share any examples of messages that change how people around you thought about COVID?

Speaker 2

There was a message when we received the first broadcast that was telling us about lockdown because lockdown was meant to be two weeks, if I'm not mistaken. And then there was another broadcast. I came on when our president told us that, listen, it's going to be longer than what we expected it to be because of what's happening. So. I think that that was one that got people's attention up and then seeing like the drastic measures that were being taken to make sure that people stay indoors, that's when people actually started paying more attention to it, taking them, myself included.

Speaker

Hmm.

Speaker 1

Did the way COVID-19 was communicated influenced how you saw the pandemic, and if so, how.

Speaker 2

It it didn't have much of a difference because I knew what it was doing and I felt like. Going through social media and finding out the little detail wasn't going to help me in any way, so I don't think it. And I think don’t think it played a huge role because I already knew the basis of what was happening, so I didn't find it in me to go and search for more because I felt like there's not. It's not like I'm a scientist. I'm not going to. Go and figure. Out something about. It so I. Tried my best to just keep to myself and to my family in terms of social media as well and the exposure that we caught as a family.

Speaker 1

What did you think about the governments WhatsApp Hotline group for COVID-19 information?

Speaker 2

I wasn't part of it, but I think it was a good initial idea. I think so because WhatsApp is is is a broadcasting channel or or broadcasting website. If I can put it that way. App actually, yeah. So if they wanted to get the messages out for us, that was one way that they could do it and even.

Speaker

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Speaker 2

When people wanted to find out certain things. If I'm not mistaken, I think it was automated so you could ask and then it would give you and then yeah, that back and forth, even though it wasn't human interaction, but the interaction played this role between. The people themselves and the government and they communication about what was happening with the.

Speaker 1

Virus. Hmm. Was it helpful and if? If so explain.

Speaker 2

I think it was helpful. I think it was because. If I stay in a rural area and I don't have a television, but I have a phone and then I will know what's happening even though I'm not gonna see it on the TV or I'm gonna. Hear about it anyway, but. Because people had to go back home, and that's, for instance. I used old people they had, even though they they had radios and everything else, but they could get more detailed stats from the app itself, from the WhatsApp broadcasters on the app itself. So I think it did help. I think it did it definitely.

Speaker 1

Was it trustworthy?

Speaker 2

That's it. That's that's. I'm a little bit.

Speaker 1

Explain.

Speaker 2

I'm a little bit in between with that one. If it is trustworthy or not, because as a government you don't want your people to panic, so it's very easy for you to give out false information or none, maybe falsified or maybe under exaggerated than what it was actually was just to try and keep the panic down. So I can't say that I would go and make it and say that I trusted. That's that. They gave us some answer. I can't say anyone could just hack into and then just give stats out as they want to. We truly didn't even know that it was them who was giving us the stats at the end of the day, so.Personally, I can't say that it was trustworthy at all.

Speaker 1

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

Speaker 2

I think they might have, but at the end of the day I do feel like the messages that were broadcasted, the broadcasted to the whole of South Africa, not a specific part of it. So if I got the same message that everyone asked, God, I might not have the same perspective as they do, but I do think that the information that we were told was the same. I don't think everyone took it the same though. Because some people fear more, some people fear less. Some people didn't have enough exposure to the virus, like around people around them actually being infected with it, so they didn't. They didn't quite believe it. If I can put it that way, because as humans or we believe what we see. So I think yes, maybe we might have had different perspectives and might have viewed it differently according to how we were all told, basically.

Speaker 1

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

Speaker 2

The I cant really definitely say that there was something that they did. Physically, because even then, the mobile clinics that were were pinned to distributed were for basically for them to come and fetch people. There was no vaccine at the point, so there was no them taking and going, giving people vaccine out there. So I feel like they were also scared, so it gave them. It gave the people less hope as to going to the hospital rather than and finding out what they needed to do, so they made home remedies and dealt with the virus themselves. Who shows a lack of trust within their health department. So I do think that it and maybe people trust the health department a little bit less because if you're a doctor then I'm relying on you. I'm scared. I'm expecting you to not be as scared as I am because you know what you're doing or you have studied for what I'm coming to you about. So I do think. It did play. A role in a little bit of distrust between. The the people and the healthcare services.

Speaker 1

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

Speaker 2

I think. The fake news was was mostly for people who just wanted to start disruptions around. Many stories came up about it and what it could do how to. Defeated, basically because people just came up with things and assumed that they were working. So. Yeah. That's basically what I the answer I can give for that one . Yeah, the that the fake news themselves, they played a little bit of a role, especially towards, I don't say, naive people, but people who are very accepting of something that's over the phone and just believing and trusting them it it's disrupted the communication between the. government and the people.

Speaker 1

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

Speaker 2

Yes, I think it did, because if the health services are taking out service, that's giving them to people and then they someone else is providing others that it causes a bit of confusion because you you, you get people who are trying to decide who they trust, the people who actually study this or The information that they're getting from social media because they seem to believe anything that comes from social media. So I did. I do think it played a role exactly the play a role in in them, not fully trusting their their health services.

Speaker 1

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

Speaker 2

No, thank you. Just that COVID-19 has truly taught people how to deal with humanity and how to.

Speaker 1

Umm.

Speaker 2

Ah established themselves in difficult situations. Thank you for your yes, Sir.

Speaker 1

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

Speaker 2

You. That's it. Thank you, Sir.