

The effectiveness of strategic health communication in Zimbabwe: A case of Masvingo Provincial School Vaccinations

Isaac Mhute

Abstract

Zimbabwe has been hit hard by a variety of diseases, with AIDS, Covid-19, Cancer, Typhoid, and Cholera being some of the most recent ones. Lots of lives have been lost in the process resulting in some of the diseases, like AIDS and Covid-19, being declared pandemics in the country. To minimize fatalities, the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ), through the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC), has resorted to some proactive and reactive measures which include prescribing safety precautions, vaccination, and treatment of infected citizens. A close look at responses to the initiatives, for instance, in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, demonstrates mixed feelings in the majority of the populace resulting in fatal moves like refusing to observe precautionary measures and vaccination hesitancy. The same kind of response seems to be transpiring with efforts towards vaccination against diseases like Covid-19 and cervical cancer in schools, which has allegedly seen some parents forbidding their children from taking the doses by going as far as making them bunk-off school each time such exercises are scheduled to take place. This is quite worrisome for an environment that is being frequented by pandemics of quite alarming magnitudes. In this regard, the current qualitative study sought to analyse the impact of strategic health communication in Zimbabwe taking Masvingo province as a case. It employed interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with purposively sampled schools' teachers, students, and parents to generate data that was analysed using the Conceptual Model for Evaluating Emergency Risk Communication (CMEERC) in Public Health.

Keywords:

vaccination, cervical cancer, COVID-19, CMEERC, Masvingo province