

# “But it is that very strong cough that we have always suffered from”

## Authors

Jacquelyn Nambi Sanyu<sup>1</sup>, Lydia Peace Ochoero<sup>2</sup>, Freddy Eric Kitutu<sup>3,4</sup>

## Affiliations

<sup>1</sup>Department of Health Policy, Planning and Management, Makerere University School of Public Health, Kampala, Uganda; <sup>2</sup>Infectious Disease Research Collaboration, Kampala, Uganda; <sup>3</sup>Department of Pharmacy, Makerere University School of Health Sciences, Kampala, Uganda; <sup>4</sup>Sustainable Pharmaceutical Systems, Kampala, Uganda

A qualitative study of COVID-19 misinformation in Buikwe, Uganda

## 1 Background

Misinformation is a problem in most large-scale infectious disease outbreaks including the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Contexts in Africa such as communities in poor and remote rural areas on the countryside in countries such as Uganda are often forgotten.

## 2 Objective

To characterise the existent COVID-19 misinformation in Buikwe district, Uganda, the sources of the misinformation and the drivers of the spread of misinformation.

## 3 Methodology

The study was part of the formative phase of a larger interventional study.

**Site:** Buikwe, a rural district in central Uganda, Study participants: Household members selected in consultations with community leaders.

**Data collection methods:** 6 FGDs and 13 IDIs were conducted using qualitative topical guides



## 4 Results

- 47 participants were included in six FGDs, with 23/47 being female. 23 had education up to secondary school level and only 5 had higher than a secondary school education.
- Of the 13 key informants, 11 were male. These included district health authorities, opinion leaders and health workers

### Existent misinformation

- About the existence of COVID-19
- About the origin of COVID-19
- About susceptibility to COVID-19
- About the treatment of COVID-19
- About the COVID-19 vaccine.

*From the internet, they say that Bill Gates has put a microchip in the vaccines to control our minds. So, if we accept these vaccines, they will change our DNA and a lot of other information on internet.*

Key informant 10

### Sources of misinformation

- Social media,
- Mainstream media (radios and television)
- Community members
- Places of worship
- Politicians
- Health workers and authorities

*It's the campaign and politicians spreading the misinformation. It's the government which wants to benefit, but COVID is not there. When people were stopped from attending certain political rallies, they started saying, 'it's the government forging news about COVID.'*

Key informant 8

### Drivers of misinformation

- Lack of accurate information
- Dissatisfaction with the national COVID-19 response
- Ease of information dissemination on social media
- Financial motivation

*The media and Ugandans are crazy with technology due to the fact that it is widely used. One makes up a story and it is spread very fast to where it is intended to go unlike before because it used to be very hard disseminating information from one place to another. But now one just sits in one place, cooks up a story and spreads it with much ease*

Participants 8, FGD5

## 5 Conclusion

The study highlights several misinformations existent in the community and a lack of trust in information provided by some reliable sources and opinion leaders, such as health workers and authorities and politicians, which could have implications for future risk communication for COVID-19 and routine vaccination.

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### References

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