

## Attitudes, Knowledge and Perceptions towards Cervical Cancer Messages among Female University Students

**Authors :** Anne Nattembo

**Abstract :** Cervical cancer remains a major public health problem in developing countries, especially in Africa. Effective cervical cancer prevention communication requires identification of behaviors, attitudes and increasing awareness of a given population; thus this study focused on investigating awareness, attitudes, and behavior among female university students towards cervical cancer messages. The study objectives sought to investigate the communication behavior of young adults towards cervical cancer, to understand female students recognition of cervical cancer as a problem, to identify the frames related to cervical cancer and their impact towards audience communication and participation behaviors, to identify the factors that influence behavioral intentions and level of involvement towards cervical cancer services and to make recommendations on how to improve cervical cancer communication towards female university students. The researcher obtained data using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions targeting 90 respondents. The semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out through one-on-one discussions basis using a set of prepared questions among 53 respondents. All interviews were audio-tape recorded. Each interview was directly typed into Microsoft Word. 4 focus group discussions were conducted with a total of 37 respondents; 2 female only groups with 10 respondents in one and 9 respondents in another, 1 mixed with 12 participants 5 of whom were male, and 1 male only group with 6 participants. The key findings show that the participants preferred to receive and access cervical cancer information from doctors although they were mainly receiving information from the radio. In regards to the type of public the respondents represent, majority of the respondents were non-publics in the sense that they did not have knowledge about cervical cancer, had low levels of involvement and had high constraint recognition their cervical cancer knowledge levels. The researcher identified the most salient audience frames among female university students towards cervical cancer and these included; death, loss, and fear. These frames did not necessarily make cervical cancer an issue of concern among the female university students but rather an issue they distanced themselves from as they did not perceive it as a risk. The study also identified the constraints respondents face in responding to cervical cancer campaign calls-to-action which included; stigma, lack of knowledge and access to services as well as lack of recommendation from doctors. In regards to sex differences, females had more knowledge about cervical cancer than the males. In conclusion the study highlights the importance of interpersonal communication in risk or health communication with a focus on health providers proactively sharing cervical cancer prevention information with their patients. Health provider's involvement in cervical cancer is very important in influencing behavior and compliance of cervical cancer calls-to-action. The study also provides recommendations for designing effective cervical cancer campaigns that will positively impact on the audience such as packaging cervical cancer messages that also target the males as a way of increasing their involvement and more campaigns to increase awareness of cervical cancer as well as designing positive framed messages to counter the negative audience frames towards cervical cancer.

**Keywords :** cervical cancer communication, health communication, university students, risk communication

**Conference Title :** ICHC 2018 : International Conference on Health Communications

**Conference Location :** Barcelona, Spain

**Conference Dates :** February 27-28, 2018