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Communication Strategies Of Epidemiologists In Disseminating Monkeypox Virus Information

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Abstract

This study analyses the communication strategies expert epidemiologists employ in disseminating information about the Monkeypox virus outbreak through mass media. In the context of public health threats such as Mpox (also known as monkeypox), it is essential to understand how to deliver information optimally to shape positive public perception. A qualitative research method with a descriptive approach was used to explore in-depth interviews and observations concerning communication strategies. Informants included expert epidemiologists, media practitioners, communication professionals, and members of the general public. The findings indicate that the information must be grounded in scientifically valid data and trustworthy sources, presented transparently and educationally, and conveyed with empathy in response to public concerns. The use of varied media formats, effective two-way communication, communicator and data credibility, and simplifying complex information for better comprehension are all crucial. The study recommends implementing integrated and responsive health communication strategies to enhance public awareness and engagement in outbreak prevention and control efforts.

Keyword: Communication Strategy, Expert Epidemiologist, Mass Media, Monkeypox Virus, Public Health Outbreak.

Introduction

The re-emergence of the Mpox (monkeypox) outbreak has attracted significant public and media attention, particularly in Indonesia. The

dissemination of information about the outbreak has intensified across various news platforms, including television, which plays a vital role in educating the public. Rising case numbers in several countries, including Indonesia, have prompted extensive media coverage addressing the virus's prevention, treatment, and social impact (Iglesias et al., 2023). The presence of an epidemiological expert and the role of mass media are crucial in ensuring that accurate information reaches the public to promote a better understanding of the situation.

However, a significant challenge in information dissemination about Mpox lies in the spread of misinformation and disinformation. The public often experiences anxiety and confusion, especially when the information is vague or contradictory. Limited health literacy among the population exacerbates poor understanding and responses to health risks, making people more vulnerable to false information, particularly on social media. a (Miftahuddin et al., 2024). This situation hampers public health efforts and can worsen disease transmission. Therefore, strategic communication is needed to counter misinformation. Research by Nofianti et al., (2023) suggests that disseminating accurate information about Mpox can significantly improve public knowledge of symptoms and prevention methods. As such, expert epidemiologists must craft messages based on clear, scientifically supported data that are easy for the public to understand.

Furthermore, several previous studies have shown the importance of evidence-based strategic communication and integrated media use to address infodemics and stigma, such as those that occurred in the COVID-19 pandemic and the Monkeypox outbreak.k Mheidly & Fares, 2020; Tworek & Flores, (2023). In addition, studies in various contexts, including the use of community-based communication Iswadi et al., (2025)The application of intervention mapping for the Mpox vaccination campaign Evers et al., (2023)and cross-disciplinary collaboration in health crisis communication Mohammed et al., (2024)Confirm that integrated communication strategies are crucial in dealing with emerging infectious diseases.

Edinger et al., (2023) used a deep learning approach to map the Mpox narrative on Twitter and found that misinformation and irrelevant information spread faster and wider than official messages from health agencies such as the WHO, thus slowing down public health response efforts. Elemuwa et al., (2024); Zhao et al., (2025)also showed that social media platforms can serve as a "dashboard" to monitor Mpox conversations and track misinformation in real-time, thereby supporting data-driven decision-making for public health communication.

In addition to the aspect of information dissemination, public knowledge about Mpox also needs to be considered. León-figueroa et al., (2024) Conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis to assess the prevalence of Mpox information sources and reported that the majority of people rely on online sources such as social media (59%) and the internet (61%), while trusted sources such as WHO and CDC are only accessed to a limited extent. This study emphasizes that the quality and accuracy of sources must be improved for more effective and targeted health communication.

Furthermore, Arayici et al., (2025) In a cross-sectional study in Turkey, it was found that although public awareness of Mpox was high (97.1%), only 37.7% of participants had a good level of knowledge. Older age groups, female gender, and lower income showed lower knowledge and relied more on social media sources of information than on credible sources such as health professionals. Therefore, communication efforts need to emphasize digital literacy and involve medical practitioners as the main source of information to reach vulnerable groups.

However, a literature review shows a gap in research related to integrated health communication strategies in the context of emerging infectious disease outbreaks. Many studies focus on specific disease contexts or limited population groups, without exploring in depth how mass media plays a primary role in addressing misinformation and stigma more broadly.

Therefore, this study explicitly aims to analyze the communication strategies used by epidemiologists in disseminating information about Mpox through mass media in order to overcome the growing misinformation and stigma. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to better health communication practices while strengthening the development of health communication theory, especially in the context of combating emerging infectious diseases.

Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology with a descriptive approach to explore the communication strategies used by expert epidemiologists in disseminating information about Mpox through mass media. Creswell defines qualitative research as understanding a problem through a comprehensive written representation (Mawuru, 2023). According to Komariah, (2014) as cited in (Hanyfah et al., 2022)The descriptive method involves data processing without manipulating the research variables.

The informants in this study consisted of 5 people, including one

epidemiologist, 2 media practitioners, and 2 health communication professionals. The selection of informants was carried out purposively (purposeful sampling) with inclusion criteria, namely, informants who have direct experience in disseminating Mpox information through mass media, are involved in compiling health messages related to Mpox, or are recipients of the health information.

Table 1. Informal List Background

Informant	Position	Role
D.B.	Epidemiological Expert	Mass media resource person for related news
E.M.Y	Public Relations Practitioner & Marketing Manager of a National Hospital in Indonesia	Provided in-depth insights into health communication
P.O., L., P	Journalist, news presenter, and audience member of Mpox-related news coverage	Provided insights from mass media resources and audience viewpoints on Mpox information in the mass media

Source: Author (2025)

Ethical considerations in this study were a major concern. Before the interview process began, each informant was given a detailed explanation of the purpose of the study, the interview procedure, and their rights, including the right to withdraw without any consequences. Informed consent was obtained in writing, and all data collected was kept confidential and used only for research purposes. Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews and observations. Interviews were conducted both in person and online to accommodate the informant's time availability, while observations were made of the process of conveying health information by epidemiologists and the mass media on various platforms (Ruslin et al., 2022).

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three main stages. First, data reduction is done by sorting, selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data from interviews and observations to identify relevant key themes. Second, the reduced data is presented in the form of a thematic matrix and descriptive narrative to facilitate drawing conclusions. Third, drawing conclusions and verification is done repeatedly by referring to the reduced and presented data to ensure consistency of findings (Miles et al., 2014). To maintain data validity,

source triangulation was conducted by comparing data from epidemiologists, media practitioners, health communication professionals, and the community; technique triangulation by combining interviews, observations, and document studies; and time triangulation with data collection conducted in several stages to test the consistency of information (Nurfajriani et al., 2024; Sugiyono, 2023).

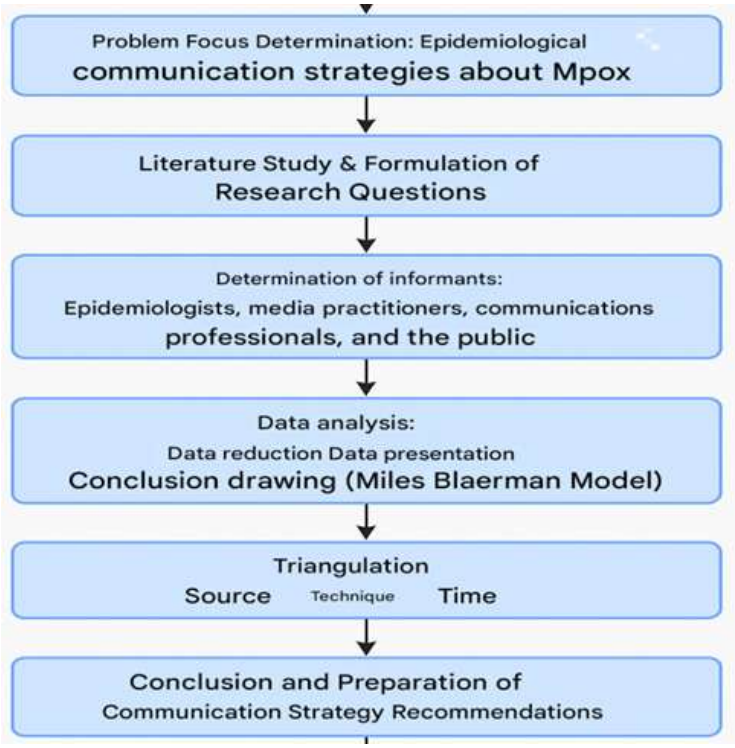

Figure 1. Research flowchart

Results and Discussion

Providing Evidence-Based Information

Media professionals and experts, such as epidemiologists, are responsible for conveying high-quality information. In practice, Informant D.B. utilizes scientifically valid data and presents it in an accessible and comprehensible manner. He also stated, "When conveying information related to Mpox, I always refer to WHO or Ministry of Health data, then simplify it so that it is easy for the public to understand. For example, I explain that this virus is transmitted through direct contact and the symptoms are similar to chickenpox, so that the public is not confused." This approach

fosters a culture of trust in information and empowers communities to make informed health decisions. Information quality significantly influences public responses and behaviours when facing health crises.

An epidemiologist and expert in health security and risk communication emphasized the importance of delivering accurate, clear, evidence-based information to the public. This statement illustrates that disseminating data-supported and scientifically grounded information forms the cornerstone of effective and trustworthy health communication. Public understanding of health issues, such as the Mpox outbreak, heavily relies on the quality of the information received. Inaccurate or unclear communication may lead to confusion and widespread misunderstanding.

Previous research has also reinforced the importance of employing data-driven information and peer-reviewed scientific literature to support optimal public health policy. Integrating validated research into mass media strengthens the credibility of messages and helps mitigate misinformation, particularly during health emergencies such as the Mpox outbreak. When the public receives evidence-based information from credible sources, trust in the message is enhanced, promoting better adherence to preventive measures (Setiaji & Pramudho, 2022). Evidence-based communication strategies also help alleviate public confusion; objective and measured message delivery strengthens the communicator's credibility and increases awareness of the importance of prevention. In situations such as the Mpox outbreak, trust in the source of information is critical for maintaining social stability and safeguarding public health.

From the health communication perspective, Informant E.M.Y. affirmed that an evidence-based approach, presented clearly and systematically, is highly effective in building public trust and ensuring message accuracy. This aligns with the academic principles of risk communication, which stress the importance of information validity and transparency in the presentation of health data. Hence, the accurate, data-driven messaging delivered by Informant D.B. positions him as a reliable source of information, playing a key role in raising public health awareness. Professionally managed communication strategies reinforce the validity of public messages and encourage individuals to rely on factual information in making health-related decisions. This underlines that optimal health communication must prioritize data integrity to foster a healthier and more resilient society.

However, even though evidence-based communication has been implemented by referring to WHO or Ministry of Health data, there are contradictions in its implementation in the field. Information disseminated through mass media does not always reach people in rural areas or groups

with low health literacy. This raises the risk of information gaps that need to be addressed with additional strategies such as community-based communication through local figures and health volunteers.

Addressing Misinformation and Stigma

In interviews, Informant D.B. acknowledged that conveying information regarding outbreaks, especially Mpox, is challenging due to the rapid spread of misinformation and the emergence of stigma directed toward specific groups. This recognition highlights the impact of misinformation and stigma on public responses to health crises. To address these challenges, Informant D.B., as an epidemiology expert, adopted a communication strategy centered on factual reporting to reduce societal fear and confusion.

This study found that Informant D.B.'s transparent and data-informed approach to addressing stigma is vital in shaping healthier public perceptions. By separating factual content from misinformation, his method enables communities to understand health risks better. Effective communication helps foster constructive public discourse and encourages the public to seek accurate information, thereby diminishing stigmatization.

Rachmawati & Agustine, (2021) Likewise, stressed the importance of information literacy in avoiding hoaxes and misinformation, particularly in social and mainstream media. They argued that the public must be equipped to identify reliable sources, critically assess the credibility and content of information, and apply such knowledge appropriately in everyday life. Informant D.B.'s longstanding expertise in mass media reporting further affirms his credibility as a trusted epidemiological expert. By offering data-driven communication, he contributes to a more informed public understanding and helps reduce the potential for stigma and misinterpretation.

High-quality information is essential for fostering a healthy information culture within society. Informant D.B.'s awareness of the detrimental effects of misinformation has prompted him to consistently improve public narratives by providing accurate and educational content. His efforts enhance his credibility as a health expert and empower communities to engage more deeply with health information. This underscores the importance of strategic communication in combating misinformation and stigma. Informant E.M.Y. similarly acknowledged that the epidemiologist's approach demonstrates a congruence between field practice and academic theory, which emphasizes the value of factual content and media literacy in reducing stigma and strengthening public

awareness.

Empathetic and Compassionate Communication

In his interview, Informant D.B. expressed his understanding of public anxiety and described how he responded with tangible solutions. This reflects a deliberate effort to build trust and mutual support with audiences, vital in health communication. Through demonstrations of empathy, Informant D.B. established stronger emotional connections with the public, facilitating greater message acceptance and internalization. Such empathetic approaches meet informational needs and address the emotional concerns of communities affected by the Mpox outbreak.

The findings reveal that Informant D.B.'s deep understanding of public concerns enabled him to identify his audience's needs. The empathetic strategies employed by the epidemiologist are further supported by the study of Purwana et al., (2024), which found that the use of empathetic language and emotional support significantly enhances public trust and comfort in health communication. Their research also highlighted that non-verbal cues—such as tone of voice and attentive body language—contribute meaningfully to building positive and supportive relationships, especially during sensitive health discussions. By considering the emotional dimension of audiences, empathetic communication emerges as a crucial tool in increasing the receptivity of health messages and motivating public action.

Thus, empathetic communication proves to be a key factor in fostering trust and engagement. Through this approach, Informant D.B. addressed pressing health issues and helped shape a responsive and compassionate information culture. These efforts illustrate that successful health communication relies heavily on acknowledging the emotional context of the audience, ultimately enhancing understanding, awareness, and preventive behaviour across communities.

Presenting Information in Diverse Publication Formats

Findings from interviews with Informant P.O., a journalist and presenter at a national news channel, revealed that news on the Mpox outbreak was delivered through various formats, including live reports and engaging visuals. This indicates that mass media employ diverse formats to enhance accessibility and improve public comprehension and retention of health information. As a result, the media serve as channels for information and practical tools for public health education.

This study demonstrates that presenting information in various formats contributes to a more vibrant information culture among

audiences. Working alongside editorial teams, Informant D.B. aimed to improve accessibility and foster a better understanding of Mpox by the public. Engaging multimedia formats—such as audio-visual materials—have been shown to reduce public misunderstandings and increase message recall.

The use of varied information delivery methods significantly improves public understanding. By offering multiple presentation styles, such as live coverage, visual graphics, and talk shows, the media can meet the diverse preferences of audiences and deliver content more interactively and engagingly. The epidemiologist and the press collaborated to cultivate a media environment encouraging public participation and raising health awareness.

Expert Informant E.M.Y. supported this view, noting that modern health communication stresses the importance of media variety in reaching broader and more heterogeneous audiences. This approach aligns with mass communication theories that advocate for mixed-media strategies to maximize the reach and depth of public education. Research by Wulandari et al., (2025) further substantiates that visual communication is particularly effective in health campaigns, promoting public motivation to adopt healthier lifestyles. Visual tools such as posters, infographics, and presentations attract attention and tangibly increase public awareness. Beyond television broadcasts, digital platforms and social media use ensure that visual health messages about Mpox are disseminated more broadly and effectively.

Although various media formats have been used, the study results show that mass media reach remains limited in areas with weak communication infrastructure. Therefore, more inclusive public health policies are needed, for example, by strengthening the role of community radio and citizen forums as communication channels. In addition, training programs for epidemiologists and health workers in public communication skills, especially related to the use of local media and culture-based approaches, need to be urgently developed as part of national preparedness.

To clarify the relationship between epidemiological communication themes in the dissemination of Mpox information, the following diagram summarizes the relationship between valid and credible data, empathetic and simple messages, the use of varied media, and public feedback.

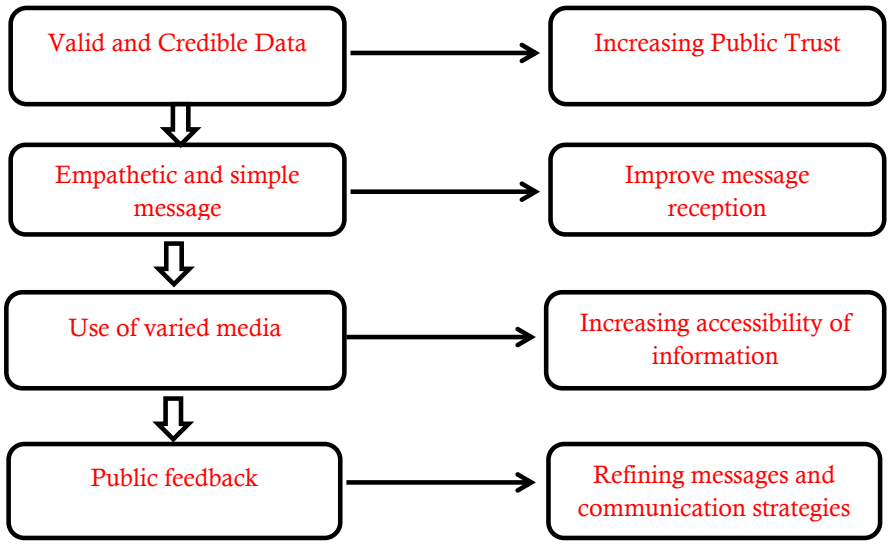

Figure 2. Connection Between Theme Communication Epidemiological in Distribution Information Mpox

Responding to Public Feedback

Findings from interviews with Informants L. and P. also underscore the significance of public feedback, particularly as media continue to expand their reach. Monitoring and responding to audience feedback is crucial to ensure that communication strategies remain relevant and adaptive. In this way, responsiveness to public input enables media practitioners—such as Informants D.B. and P.O.—to better understand and address public concerns and information needs.

This study affirms that public feedback is central to improving information quality. Media must remain responsive to public anxieties and interests to create a more effective communicative environment. Through feedback mechanisms, editorial teams are better equipped to discern the types of information most needed by the public. These insights are then related to health experts to be addressed accurately and contextually appropriately through mass media. As a result, health communication strategies become more targeted and impactful.

Prior research by Saputri et al., (2021) revealed that managing two-way communication—through monitoring, evaluation, and audience feedback—produces measurable improvements in message dissemination. Responding to feedback enables more inclusive and adaptive communication, which is essential in conveying information about Mpox. The resulting increase in public engagement in health dialogue is especially

valuable amid uncertainty during health crises.

Thus, incorporating and processing audience feedback is key to fostering participatory communication and enhancing the relevance and accuracy of health messaging. Insights from expert interviews confirmed that communication is not a one-way process but an interactive exchange that requires continual content evaluation and adjustment to meet the audience's real needs. This aligns with theories of health communication that underscore the importance of dialogue and public participation in strengthening message understanding and implementation.

Use of Credible Sources

Epidemiology expert D.B. stated that he utilizes data from reputable organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Indonesian Ministry of Health as primary sources of information. This highlights the significance of selecting credible sources to enhance public trust in health-related communication. The information presented is valid and reinforces the communicator's credibility by referring to data from reputable national and international institutions.

The findings demonstrate that relying on trustworthy sources helps establish a solid foundation for communication. Credible sources contribute to the formation of a healthy information culture within society. In this context, by referencing data from organizations such as the WHO and CDC, Informant D.B., as an epidemiologist, ensures that the information he disseminates is accountable and evidence-based. The credibility of the information not only influences public understanding but also impacts the individual actions taken in response to health issues.

From an empirical standpoint, research by Chandrabuwono and Alif (2022) asserts that source credibility is a primary factor in the success of communication and the socialization of values within society. Credibility includes elements such as authority, competence, character, and charisma of the communicator, all of which contribute to fostering public trust. Their study also emphasizes the importance of communicators' legitimacy and a strong reputation, as these characteristics significantly increase message acceptance. This strengthens the communication strategy of epidemiologist D.B., who consistently refers to official and authoritative sources, thus creating an atmosphere of trust, particularly crucial during health crises such as the Mpox outbreak.

Maintaining Message Quality and Simplicity

Findings from interviews with audience L. and P., who follow the

epidemiologist's report on the Mpox outbreak from mass media, suggest that practical information must be grounded in scientific evidence and delivered clearly and understandably. This indicates that maintaining the quality of information while prioritizing simplicity is vital in addressing the diverse needs of the public. The clear and straightforward delivery of information allows people from various backgrounds to comprehend health messages better and process them. Hence, the success of health communication is measured by informational accuracy and how effectively the message is received across diverse segments of society.

This study found that simplicity in message delivery significantly contributes to public understanding of health issues. By conveying information about Mpox inaccessibly and plainly, Informant D.B. aims to ensure that all segments of society—including those without a background in health—can grasp essential health concepts. From a social perspective, simplifying health communication also reduces confusion and misinterpretation among the public. Accessible and comprehensible information encourages individuals to take greater responsibility for their health and to respond more actively to preventative efforts.

These findings are supported by (Miftahuddin et al., 2024), whose research shows that health literacy is highly influenced by the clarity of health message delivery and the appropriateness of the language used. Their study found that effective health communication requires selecting relevant and straightforward language and an adaptive delivery style to ensure message acceptance, optimizing the public's understanding and application of health information.

Thus, these findings underscore the need to integrate community-based communication strategies and health literacy programs into national policies. This includes training epidemiologists in risk communication as well as the use of traditional media to reach vulnerable groups in remote areas.

Based on results analysis, interview, and observation, the findings of the main study can be summarized in a number of strategic categories. Table 2 below serves as a comparison of findings based on the main category/variable. To make it easier for the reader to understand the focus and essence of the results of the study.

Table 2. Research Findings by Category

Category / Variable	Findings Main
Delivery Information Based on Proof	Referring to WHO data and the Ministry of Health to make

Category / Variable	Findings Main
	accurate, credible, and helpful public health decisions.
Handling Misinformation and Stigma	Responding to the stigma and misinformation, past facts, and media literacy, strengthening public trust and reducing anxiety
Communication, Empathetic, And Support Emotional	Delivery message with empathy (tone, language simple, caring) to create trust and respond to public anxiety.
Media Format Variations	Utilizing multiple media formats (graphics, video, broadcast directly) to expand the range and to clarify the message.
Bait Come back Public And Communication Two Directio.n	Emphasize the importance of evaluation and respond actively to public feedback for repair accuracy and relevant messages.
Credible Source Information	I emphasize using official and trusted sources (WHO, CDC, Ministry of Health) so that the message is credible and easily trusted by the public.
Simple And Easy to Understand	Delivery information in a way that is simple and at an accessible level of literacy for maximizing the reception and implementation of the message on health

The diagram below illustrates the cause-and-effect flow of the health communication strategy in disseminating Mpox information. The process begins with the delivery of evidence-based information and the use of credible sources to ensure the accuracy of the message. This information is then delivered empathetically and simply so that it is easier for the public to understand. In addition, the use of various media formats makes the message more attractive and reaches a wider audience. This strategy is complemented by public feedback management, so that communication remains responsive and adaptive. By integrating all these elements in an integrated manner, the dissemination of Mpox information becomes more effective in combating misinformation, reducing stigma, and increasing

public participation in efforts to prevent and control the outbreak.

Figure 3. Cause-and-effect flow of health communication strategies in the dissemination of Mpox information

Conclusion

This study explored the communication strategies employed by epidemiologists in disseminating information on the Monkeypox virus through mass media, aiming to shape accurate public perceptions and enhance health awareness. As a communicator, it is essential to ensure that information is consistently supported by valid scientific data and credible sources, fostering public trust and enhancing credibility. Furthermore, transparent and educational communication is necessary to minimize the spread of misinformation and reduce negative stigma towards specific groups. An empathetic approach to public concerns strengthens emotional engagement and message acceptance.

The media is key in utilizing diverse formats—such as live reports, graphics, and digital platforms—to expand audience reach and understanding. Effective message reception also requires two-way communication management, monitoring, and responding to public feedback to enhance relevance and optimize message delivery. Moreover, health communication strategies must be grounded in data from official institutions such as the WHO and the CDC to ensure the credibility of both

the message and the communicator. Delivering information simply and understandably allows all layers of society to access and comprehend health messages optimally.

Implementing integrated communication strategies grounded in professional health communication principles via mass media has proven effective in shaping more accurate and responsive public perceptions regarding the Mpox virus. This success is achieved through evidence-based information delivery, empathetic engagement, varied media platforms, and interactive public dialogue, all raising awareness and encouraging active public participation in prevention and control efforts during the outbreak.

This study highlights the novelty of integrating empathy and data credibility in health communication strategies by epidemiologists during the dissemination of Mpox information through mass media. The combination of evidence-based messaging with empathetic engagement represents a significant advancement in fostering public trust, emotional connection, and responsiveness during health crises. These findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on health communication by illustrating how credible data sources and compassionate delivery together enhance message acceptance and support positive public health behaviors.

However, this research has certain limitations, particularly its focus on the context of Indonesia. The regional specificity of this study may limit the generalizability of the findings to other countries or cultural contexts with different media landscapes and public health infrastructures. Future studies are encouraged to conduct comparative analyses across diverse cultural and national settings to better understand how communication strategies may need to be adapted. Such research could provide deeper insights into the influence of cultural values, media ecosystems, and audience characteristics on the effectiveness of health communication in managing infectious disease outbreaks.

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