

Study highlights importance of social media influencers in information dissemination during mpox outbreak

September 4 2024, by Meredith Bauer



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

A recent study shows social media influencers are more important than previously thought when it comes to getting out vital information in a

crisis.

The study suggested partnerships that could improve [public communication](#) between governments, non-profits and [social media influencers](#) during crises.

The study, conducted by UF/IFAS assistant professor Kimberly Kay Wiley, a researcher in the family, youth and community sciences department, and Bridgewater State University associate professor Seth Meyer, shows how these groups can collaborate to effectively disseminate information and manage [public health emergencies](#) on social media.

"In this case, the informal public health authorities seem to be able to reach the at-risk audiences and build on the trust that they have in a way that the formal health authorities just weren't able to do," Wiley said. "There are strong [partnership](#) opportunities here."

The study, titled "A Framework for Messy Communication: A Qualitative Study of Competing Voices of Authority on Social Media," explores social media communication during the 2022 mpox outbreak. It was [published](#) in *Administrative Sciences*.

By analyzing 1,392 social media posts from governments, non-profits and influencers across six platforms, the researchers identified how these groups could improve their reach and impact.

One of the central findings of the study is the importance of partnerships with non-traditional allies. Governments and non-profits can significantly enhance their communication efforts by partnering with influencers who are trusted by specific communities—in this case, the LGBTQIA+ community. This approach allows for a more targeted strategy to get the word out to hard-to-reach groups, particularly to

isolated or minority groups that may be more vulnerable during crises.

Non-profits can tailor messages to address specific needs and concerns, while influencers, with their broad reach, trusted relationships with their followers and engaging content, can amplify these messages to a wider audience.

During the 2022 mpox outbreak, the study found, the most successful communication strategies were those that used partnerships to manage a rocky start. Initially, there was a vacuum of information from official sources such as governments, leading to confusion and misinformation.

However, as governments began to collaborate with influencers, the messaging became more organized and audience-specific. These findings highlight the need for proper planning and for groups to set up partnerships before a crisis happens.

The researchers also emphasized the importance of trust in these public-private partnerships. Influencers, in particular, must be selected based on their credibility and reliability to ensure that the information they disseminate is accurate and helpful. At the same time, influencers need the freedom to frame messaging for their audiences, even when it falls outside of a [government](#)'s branded social media approach.

"Formal health authorities can step in with resources and evidence-based action steps, but influencer partnerships can reach specific communities with the right messaging and get right into their social media feeds," Wiley said.

More information: Seth J. Meyer et al, A Framework for Messy Communication: A Qualitative Study of Competing Voices of Authority on Social Media, *Administrative Sciences* (2024). [DOI: 10.3390/admsci14070145](https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci14070145)

Provided by University of Florida

Citation: Study highlights importance of social media influencers in information dissemination during mpox outbreak (2024, September 4) retrieved 5 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-09-highlights-importance-social-media-dissemination.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.