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# Strategic Use of Communication in the Fight Against the COVID-19 Pandemic in Ouagadougou Markets and Yaars

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**Abstract:** Since its outbreak in March 2020 in Burkina Faso, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted people's lifestyles while becoming a health, social and political event all at the same time. COVID-19 is therefore becoming a major concern for governments, which are developing strategies to curb its development. Thus, communication in health emergencies (COVID-19) becomes an essential component of the risk management strategy in sensitive areas such as markets and yaars. It is in this context that the present study aims to analyze the communication of the governor intended for the users of markets and yaars in the dynamics of the fight against the spread of COVID-19. This analysis aims to decipher the communication channels and their relevance, the scope of the informational messages and also the representation systems of the market and yaar users in the face of the pandemic. In order to achieve the research objectives, we opted for a multidisciplinary and empirical methodological approach inspired by socio-anthropology. This methodological approach, which mobilizes a quantitative and qualitative approach as well as direct field observation, was carried out in five markets and yoghurts in the city of Ouagadougou with a composite sample of 350 individuals, including users and 31 resource persons in charge of managing the pandemic on the sites. At the end of the investigations, it can be estimated that if the communication mechanism developed by the authorities, in particular CORUS and its related structures, are favourable to the users of the study, in particular the traders and other actors, in order to change their behaviour, it will come up against social constructions or social representations developed and maintained by the latter, which do not facilitate its implementation in areas of high human concentration, including markets and yaars. In addition to the traditional communication tools of proximity (word of mouth), the use of media communication channels such as social networks seems to have had an impact on the actors of this general communication strategy, on the one hand, the project's bearers (CORUS) and, on the other hand, the users of the markets and yaars (traders, visitors, etc.).

**Keywords:** Communication, Media, COVID-19, Markets, Social Representation, Pandemic

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## 1. Introduction

Since its emergence in March 2020 in Burkina Faso, the COVID-19 pandemic (an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV virus) has changed people's lifestyles. As soon as the first positive cases were announced on March 9, 2020, several measures were taken by the government to stop the transmission [1] thus upsetting the daily life and social habits

of the populations. These measures to limit the spread of the disease were accompanied by a political communication whose objective was not only to reassure the populations, but also to bring them to comply with the decisions of the political and health authorities. In such a context, communication appears to be a key element in the package of measures following this public health emergency of international scope which has tested not only the health system but also economic and protection policies of the

various countries [2]. However, there was less reassuring emerging communication during the early stages of disease management. This had the effect of weakening the legitimacy of leaders on the issue and calling into question the authority of governments, forced to guide individual and collective behaviour and manage the establishment of a new social normality [3].

Communication in emergency situations is a key element of the risk management strategy, along with their identification (through scientific sources) and control (based on policy). The purpose of crisis communication is to enhance the capacities of those responsible, in making informed decisions, for the proper management of emergencies through protective and preventive activities. Thus, the notions of prevention and protection in question are those that appear on the agenda of government authorities with respect to their pandemic response strategy.

The measures taken by Burkina Faso to limit the spread of the disease and on which the need to communicate was imposed include the closure of borders; regional markets and yaars and the closure of places of worship and schools [4]. On 26 March, the mayor of the municipality of Ouagadougou closed the city's 40 largest markets and yaars. While this measure is widely accepted by politicians, its implementation will face protest from stakeholders [5, 1]. Their objection arises from the fact that:

Markets concentrate lucrative activities for hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom live in a business cycle of a few days; that is to say, to say that they need to continue their activity almost daily to derive livelihood resources from it" [6].

Pragmatism overcoming the injunctions of health stakeholders and under pressure from market players, on April 29, 2020, a decree of the Ouagadougou City Hall (decree no. 2020-107 CO/M/DAJC), allows the reopening of markets under strict compliance with conditionalities related to decree no. 2020-0271 PM/MDNAC/MATDC/MSECU/MS/MTMUSR.

This decision of the municipal authority regarding the reopening of markets and yaars raises the question of the management of public space in times of crisis especially with markets and yaars considered as public places that favour a high concentration of individuals from various origins. If the use of these spaces by populations remains a necessary condition, how does the information on restrictive measures affect users in the dynamics of limiting the spread of the disease? The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of a major health crisis. It is a test that puts governments in the face of uncertainty, fear of death and the unknown. It constitutes an unprecedented situation of public health crisis requiring an appropriate management of citizens' information which is an ethical and democratic requirement on the one hand, and a condition for effective management of health crises.

The objective of this research is to analyse the government's communication to market users and to yaars as part of the momentum to combat the spread of COVID-19. This analysis aims to decipher the channels of

communication and their relevance, the scope of informational messages and the systems of representations of users of the markets and yaars in the face of the pandemic. What is the methodological and theoretical framework of this study?

## 2. Theoretical and Methodological Approach

In this paper, we used the theoretical approach of communication for behavioural change. For the forerunners of this approach, Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) aims to emphasize the behaviour of the individual [7]. It is an approach that fosters and facilitates the evolution of knowledge, attitudes, norms, beliefs, and behaviour. The approach on the discovery of the complexity of human behaviour will undergo a mutation to become the communication of social and behavioural change (CCSC). This approach follows a systematic process to analyse a problem to identify the main obstacles and motivating factors for change, and then design and implement a comprehensive set of interventions to support and encourage positive behaviours [8].

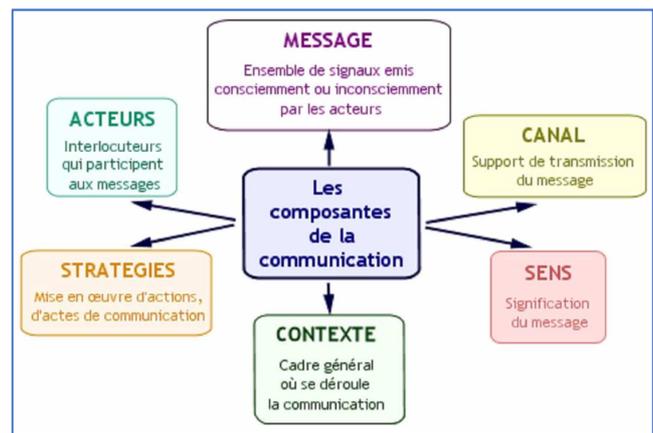


Diagram of Jakobson's communication

Figure 1. Diagram of the communication mechanism for behaviour change.

In terms of research methodology, a multidisciplinary and empirical experience is highlighted. The methodology was based on socio-anthropology and involved quantitative, qualitative, and direct observation in the field. The observation allowed a close examination of the behaviour of the market players, which made it possible to understand their reaction and to give an explanation [9]. The observation has completed a work of administration of questionnaires to the actors of the markets and yaars and the realization of semi-directional interviews with the administration and security managers of the markets. The research was conducted on five (5) yaars markets in the town of Ouagadougou. These markets, as reported by Rouamba et al. [1], have two statuses: those that are developed and managed by the capital's municipality (the Rood Woko and the 10

Yaars markets) and those that are managed by the merchant associations (Cissin market, Toéssin market and Zone 1 market).

The quantitative survey was conducted among 350 people.

The second part of the data collection was the conduct of semi-directional interviews with the various actors. His goal was to understand the representations and strategies of the actors in the face of the disease. The data collection concerned shop owners, but also administrative market players and municipal police officers who helped to comply with barrier measures in the markets and yaars. Traders were interviewed in the markets. The institutional actors (police, market managers, managers of trade associations) have been on their premises. The qualitative survey involved 31 people [1].

For this research, we will combine the socio-anthropological approach with the analysis of content defined as a set of methodological instruments increasingly refined and in constant improvement applying to «discourses» extremely diverse and based on inference and inference. It is an effort of interpretation that balances between two poles, on the one hand, the rigour of objectivity, and, on the other hand, the fruitfulness of subjectivity [10].

### 3. Results of the Study

The communication strategy on risks for the protection of health developed in the direction of the users of the markets and yaars of the capital of Burkina Faso has encountered

difficulties partly related to the complexity of the related factors of social order, cultural, economic, political, etc.

#### 3.1. Social Representations of COVID-19

Several measures were taken in March and April 2020 to break the COVID-19 transmission chain. This includes the closing of markets and yaars. While this closure is justified by scientific reasons, market actors and yaars had their own ideas about the disease and its harmful capacities. As an imported disease [11], this pandemic will find itself at the centre of debates in which social imaginations intersect and deconstructions of health logics on which decisions to close markets are based. Starting from something we look from afar in the media, not palpable, but only with tragic images that take place on the other side of the world (China, Italy, France, Spain, etc.), to finally “land” in Ouagadougou, we are moving from the imagination to the reality of a disease in Burkina Faso that other countries have already experienced bitterly [11]. The lack of knowledge about the virus and the pandemic has sparked imagination, particularly the emergence of new questions about how the disease has evolved over time [12]. For merchants in the Ouagadougou and yaars markets, COVID-19 is the subject of several representations. Research has shown that users of the markets and yaars, especially traders and visitors to these places, have a wide range of knowledge both origin of the disease and of the forms of its manifestation, as already noted by Zongo *et al.* [13].

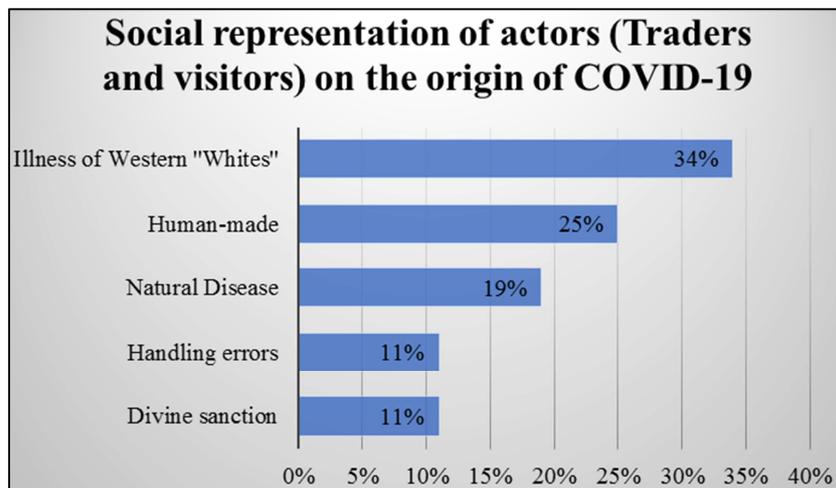


Figure 2. Summarizes the representations of the disease among traders.

Source: Quantitative data from the study (Social representations of COVID-19 and compliance with barrier measures in the markets and Yaars of the city of Ouagadougou), FONRID project January to April 2021

Most of the actors attending the markets and yaars of the capital Ouagadougou have a non-scientific knowledge of the origin of the Covis-19 pandemic. We notice that 34% of the actors think that this is a disease that affects only «Whites». Such a perception is not fortuitous because, the media hype that accompanied the first discoveries of COVID-19 cases in the world is remarkable in terms of the volume of time

occupied by the pandemic in the world’s largest media groups, and in terms of geographical spread in Western countries. The media have been under a lot of pressure and according to a study conducted by the International Centre of Journalists (*link is external*) and the *Tow Center for Digital Journalism* at Columbia University, attended by 1,400 media professionals from 125 countries. 89% of media content covered a topic

related to COVID-19 [14]. The media content has helped to root in the market players and yaars of the commune of Ouagadougou the belief of a disease specifically intended for 'whites', that is, Westerners, to a lesser extent the countries of Asia from which the first cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Burkina Faso. In fact, the first cases that made their appearance in Ouagadougou on March 9 were returning from a trip to France. This part of the infected persons' itinerary was taken up by the Minister of Health, insisting that the two infected persons stayed in Mulhouse, France, on 24 February [15]. Thus, being an imported pathology, it is automatically put in a register that considers the origin of this disease which confirms, the idea that, reactions to various epidemics or pandemics, depend quite closely on the cultural representations that populations make of the origin and causes of diseases that affect them [16]. Among those interviewed, there is also a significant segment that regards COVID-19 as a divine sanction. They represent 11% of all respondents. A significant part of the actors, 11% point to a laboratory manipulation error in the West that would be the source of this pandemic [13]. In addition to this category of persons, there are those who think that the disease would be a human

invention. The latter represent 25% of the general opinion and maintain that the virus was created by the major powers in their economic warfare. If these opinions exist, they are not to be sought elsewhere than in this ecosystem of infodemics cleverly maintained, developed, and disseminated by some traditional media but also and above all through digital social networks. Market participants succumbed to the conspiracy theory [4] (Soré, 2022) that prevailed over the disease.

### 3.2. Sources of COVID-19 Information

Information sources on the COVID-19 pandemic used by market and yaars users are both traditional and social media. According to the chart, market participants primarily obtain information about COVID-19 from informal sources: word of mouth (46%) and social networks (26%). This is what helps circulate *fake news* about the disease. "Word of mouth" (the rumour) is nothing more than the same people who inform themselves through social networks. By analyzing information systems or sources of information, we are getting closer to the phenomenon of misinformation about COVID-19.

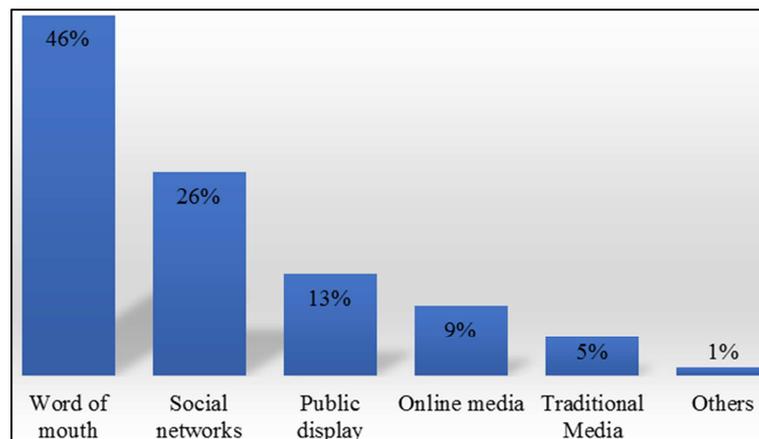


Figure 3. Media sources of the COVID-19 study.

Source: Quantitative data from the study (Social representations of COVID-19 and compliance with barrier measures in the markets and Yaars of the city of Ouagadougou), FONRID project January to April 2021

By referring to fake news in this research as a language act [17], several categories of "misleading" information appear and match social representations about the origins of COVID-19. As Angeliki Monnier [18] says, false sets of information about COVID-19 tend to index perpetrators. This information covers most cases in which the virus originated. On this issue, the author, referring to conspiracy theory, reports that some sources indicate that:

SARS-CoV2 would have been manufactured in a Wuhan laboratory, orchestrated by the State of Israel and the Zionist elite of the world, by Bill Gates, by North Korea, China and the Democrats in order to sabotage the American president, etc. Vaccine patents would have already been filed by pharmaceutical companies but would become available later to raise prices, or hide a sterilizer aimed at reducing the world population, etc. On the Inserm

website, an alert is issued against a viral conspiracy video involving the Institut Pasteur that allegedly invented the virus. For others, this pandemic would be a divine punishment inflicted on the United States and the European Union for their international policies, a sanction on China, a divine punishment against gay pride, abortion, corruption, euthanasia, etc. [18].

The manipulation of information is an historical phenomenon that began well before the birth of modern journalism and its rules of information integrity [19]. These days, with the development of new technologies, the principles of journalism no longer apply to the production and distribution of all messages. New technologies facilitate the manipulation and manufacture of content, while social media dramatically amplifies fake news [20]. History also teaches that the forces behind disinformation do not

necessarily want to persuade (...) a wider audience of the truthfulness of false information, but rather try to sow doubt about the state of the information (...). This confusion leads many new consumers to believe more and more that they are free to choose or create their own "facts" [21]. The views of those interviewed on the origins of the disease are strongly influenced by the media in general. Thus, [22; 23] (Lasswell, Balle) who was among the first authors to examine the question postulated that mass communications were likely to directly and immediately influence the opinions of individuals and public opinion. The authorship of behavioural theory about the effects of mass communication is usually attributed to two authors [24] (Tchakhotin) and [25] (Le-Bon). In his book "*Le viol des foules par la propagande politique*" Tchakhotine examines the capacity of mass media immediately, directly and influence the opinions and behaviour of individuals. It would suffice to inject a good amount of information, communication, or propaganda to achieve the effect sought by the speaker. *Fake news* broadcasted on social media and relayed by users has greatly influenced actors' perceptions of the pandemic. Despite false information on COVID-19 on social media, an important segment remains convinced that COVID-19 is like any other disease. These people are recruited among the literate merchants. They represent around 20% of all the actors interviewed on the issue.

### 3.3. Risk Communication as a Strategy to Combat COVID-19 in Markets and Yaars

Risk communication refers to the real-time exchange of information, advice and opinions between experts or official figures and individuals facing threats to their survival, health or economic or social well-being. The fundamental purpose of risk communication is to ensure that anyone at risk can not only make informed decisions that can help mitigate the effects of the threat, which can be an epidemic, but also adopt protective and preventive measures. Each response to a public health event is unique in terms of the diversity of political situations, socio-cultural contexts, demographic and geographic factors, environmental and social determinants of health and governance systems. For this reason, risk communication and operational plans need to be tailored to the context in each country [26]. The communication strategy that aims to change behaviour consists of mastering the communication mechanism developed by Jacobson.

It is based on the relationship between issuers and beneficiaries. The issuer who wants to give information must translate it into a language understandable to the recipient and compatible with the means of communication used: it is the coding. The resulting message will then be transmitted and transmitted through a physical medium: the communication channel. It then reaches the recipient, the receiver who, through a decoding activity, will be able to appropriate and understand the message. To be fully effective, the system must provide for a method of controlling, regulating, and handling errors: it is the *feedback*, that is, the feedback loop from the receiver to the transmitter [27]. The

first actor on which the communication strategy was based on the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in the markets and yaars of the city of Ouagadougou was the Health Emergency Response Operations Centre (CORUS), the institution authorised to steer and organise the communication strategy. The target of the communication strategy is none other than market users and yaars traders and visitors. If CORUS knows its interlocutors perfectly, the reverse is less evident because market users and yaars are less familiar with their interlocutor, CORUS. 58% of respondents say they do not know CORUS, compared with 42% who do. This disproportionate communication among users is one of the weaknesses of CORUS' communication strategy in its mission to bring about a change in user behaviour. The communication channel of CORUS is different from that of market players. Indeed, CORUS and its partners, including the mayors in the districts of the city of Ouagadougou convey messages in several local languages and in French according to local realities. There is a mismatch between the educational level of the market and yaars users and the languages in which the messages on barrier measures are broadcast. See figure below.

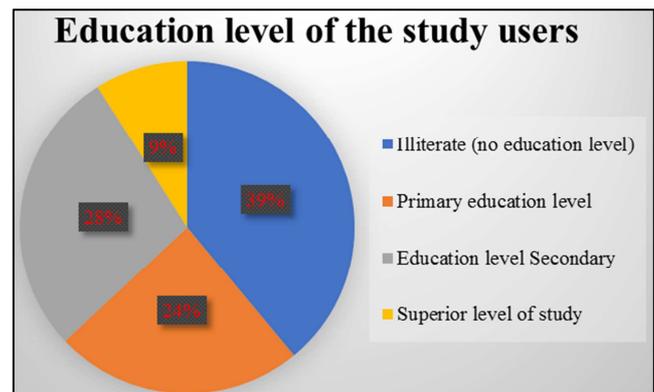


Figure 4. The level of education of users in relation to the language used by CORUS.

Source: Quantitative data from the study (Social representations of COVID-19 and compliance with barrier measures in the markets and Yaars of the city of Ouagadougou), FONRID project January to April 2021

In terms of statistics, it can be said that market and yaars users are mostly illiterate and/or have a low educational level. Indeed, illiterates and people with a primary education account for 63% of all respondents. This composition of market participants shows the problem of receiving messages, given that messages are largely communicated in the French language.

In most cases, our interlocutors are people who have not gone to school and are therefore not fluent in French. The messages we receive for user awareness here in our markets are developed in French. We can say that this is where our difficulty lies. However, we have found an alternative by using interpreters to help us convey the message to merchants, but especially visitors, (Excerpt from the interview with Director of Market Equipment

(DEM)) Ouagadougou Urban Development Agency, March 2021).

Although French is the most widely used language, the fact remains that national languages are also present in the communication, as the following graph shows.

The diversity of languages used to convey messages is an asset in terms of the profile of users of markets and yaars. The variety of languages is also helping to revitalize the communication strategy to curb COVID-19 propensity in markets and yaars. The media thereby ensure the visibility of the situation and condition citizens' perception of the risks in the light of the facts reported to them. The media, whether it be radio, print or television, sorting out the information they

would bring to our attention, this would create a certain hierarchy of issues and vulnerabilities in our minds and thus influence our relationship to contemporary threats [28]. According to Figure 5, the most used mode of information during this pandemic in the markets is through word of mouth. This channel occupies almost half of the information system of the users of the markets and yaars. It represents 48% of all channels used to raise awareness users of the market. This shows that, in most cases, Figure 5 summarises the communication channels used to raise awareness among market actors and yaars. Figure 5 summarises the communication channels used to raise awareness among market participants and yaars.

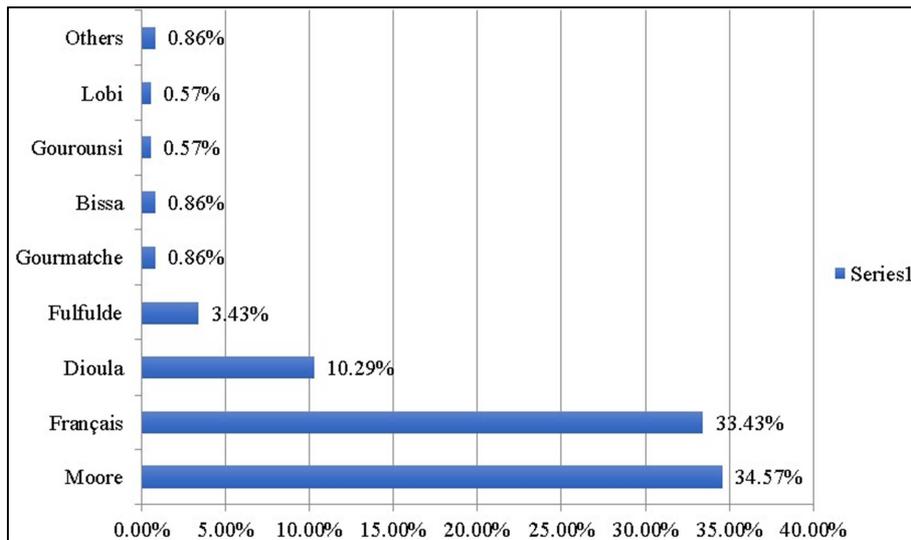


Figure 5. Languages used in COVID-19 awareness in markets and yaars.

Source: Quantitative data from the study (Social representations of COVID-19 and compliance with barrier measures in the markets and Yaars of the city of Ouagadougou), FONRID project January to April 2021

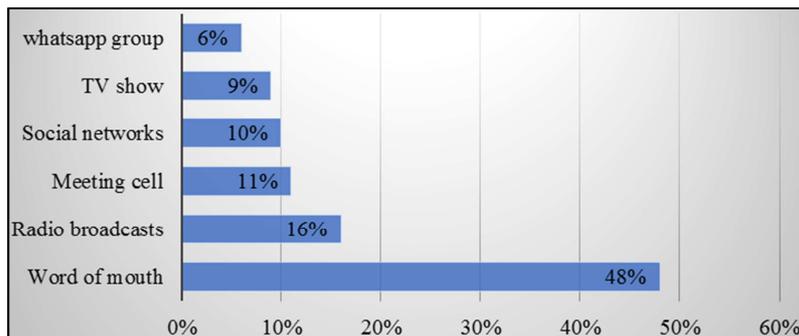


Figure 6. Representation of the use of communication channels.

Source: Quantitative data from the study (Social representations of COVID-19 and compliance with barrier measures in the markets and Yaars of the city of Ouagadougou), FONRID project January to April 2021

The *Word-of-Mouth* Channel is thus reserved for language performances that engage particular modes of production and reception, different from the ordinary verbal exchange (conversation, discussion, chatter, dialogue, etc.). They assume a collective oral memory, and both presuppose and somehow configure shared cosmologies and more general

socio-symbolic links [29]. Word of mouth is crucial in a society of orality. The motivations of individuals, in particular market and yaars users, to use word of mouth are also analysed.

We have developed within the market a local communication technique using word-of-mouth

technology where with the information relays made up of all the associations of traders and other practitioners on the market are associated with the awareness-raising process. We train volunteers from these groups who in turn are tasked with crisscrossing the arteries of the market to bring the right information on the barrier measures and especially all kinds of information about COVID-19 to those who exercise [merchants] that visitors [customers]. Through this local communication technique, we reach as many people as possible who come into the market (excerpt from the "10 Yaars" manager, March 2021).

The society in which the data was collected is an oral society. This may justify word of mouth as the preferred channel for COVID-19 inquiries. The results of Figure 6 above show that, beyond *word-of-mouth* techniques, social media has played an important role in raising awareness among market and yaars users. This channel occupies 16% of all modes of communication in reaching out to users. The use of social networks as a communication channel can be compared with a viral marketing campaign which reduces the negative effects of a traditional campaign. It is not surprising that social media has gained the upper hand over the COVID-19 crisis. Their increasing use in these times of crisis is due to the fact that they remain accessible to the media everywhere and also facilitate access to plural information. The production and dissemination of information is no longer the sole responsibility of the political actor. The coronavirus outbreak is emerging as the first pandemic in the digital social media era. It brings a new illustration of the phenomenon with dimensions for some unpublished.

The use of social networks is beneficial because it is a very efficient technology which many users in our markets possess through the mobile phone the smartphone. The crucial information is sent back to the WhatsApp groups of the various associations of merchants who transfer them to their members which makes all users are informed because 90% own the smartphone. With the support of the volunteers, they translate the information from French to certain local languages so that all are informed in time and hours this channel allows us to reach a maximum of individuals even outside groups of associations. Some merchants have important relationships with customers, this channel is also used to inform these other users of the markets and yaars (interview with the manager of ROOD-WOOKO, March 2021).

We talk about the impact of media on public health campaigns, on the COVID-19 pandemic. It is therefore a communication strategy based on a sociological approach whose communicating actors are dynamic. Although the diversity of communication channels has existed to raise awareness among market and yaars users to bring about a change in behaviour, it should not be forgotten that these users are free to act on the messages they receive. The researchers [30; 31] consider this free adherence as a form of resistance to the pressure of the communications world, as Berton [32] points out.

The distrust of the media, while continuing to feed on it,

the indifference to advertising, while continuing to consume, the rejection of politics, while being passionate about what is happening there, makes us paradoxical, cultivating social separation as a guarantee of integrity that has become an impossible ideal [32].

Everyone in their experience sees how they filter the messages they receive. Receiving does not mean adhering. This receptor resistance is positive but can also be negative when it involves refusing what disturbs one's habits [33]. For this purpose, we will focus on the role of informal ecosystems that disrupt user behavior in accordance with barrier measures: *fake news*.

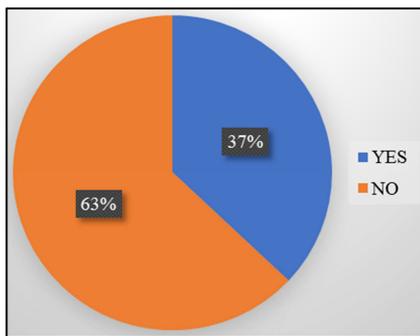
#### 4. Information Policy and Socio-Behavioural Trends of Market and Yaars Users

The emergence of *fake news* during a crisis in Burkina Faso is not a new phenomenon. The country has known them since it faced the threat of terrorism, which created an environment conducive to the proliferation of unfounded information. With the advent of COVID-19, Burkina Faso is managing both the terrorism and pandemic fakes. Each of these issues goes with its own batch of rumours [34]. Misinformation is undermining the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic by shaking trust, increasing fears, and sometimes creating harmful behaviours of users. While gaining user confidence is essential to meeting barrier measures, a wave of misinformation is undermining public initiatives to address the COVID-19 pandemic. These amounts of unfounded information concerning the disease, its medical treatments or prevention techniques, flood the Internet and are disseminated by certain users whose fears are accentuated by the enormous volume of contradictory information circulating [35]. The behaviour of market users and yaars depends on the nature and credibility of the information provided by those in charge of combating the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the data in Figure 7 below, 63% versus 37% of the market and yaars users do not trust the authorities with the information they disseminate through the various information channels they use. This lack of confidence on the part of users is manifested not only by a failure to respect barrier measures, but also by the tension between populations and public agents responsible for the control of barrier measures, especially in markets and yaars, and between rulers and populations.

The police are accustomed to something; For example the one who does not wear the nose mask, it is an offence because according to the press releases, the wearing of nose covers is mandatory (...) The police go to war to the recalcitrant users who want to defy the law, some arrests give right to clashes that make the social climate more tense (...) (interview with the Commissioner of Police of the Large Market Rood-Wooko, March 2021).

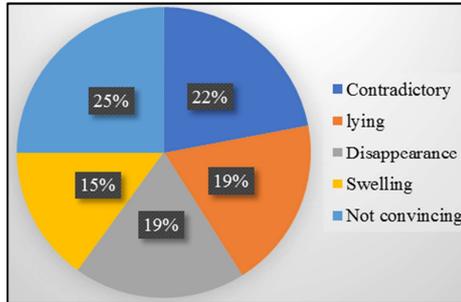
If compliance with the barrier measures encounters such a refusal on the part of the users, it is partly thanks to the lack

of confidence that the populations develop towards the rulers in connection with their unconvincing informational policy. For this purpose, several factors contribute to non-compliance with protective measures. It took up the dynamic of the fight against COVID-19, a crisis of the government's word. Citizens believe that governments are stuck in an international conspiracy that leads them not to tell the truth about the virus and its dangerousness [4]. The chart below shows the degree of trust between citizens and governments. Indeed, 63% of respondents do not trust the words of the political authorities and authorities in charge of the fight against COVID-19.



**Figure 7.** Respondents' confidence in the word of government.

Source: Quantitative data from the study (Social representations of COVID-19 and compliance with barrier measures in the markets and Yaars of the city of Ouagadougou), FONRID project January to April 2021



**Figure 8.** Level of user confidence in authorities and their reasons.

Source: Quantitative data from the study (Social representations of COVID-19 and compliance with barrier measures in the markets and Yaars of the city of Ouagadougou), FONRID project January to April 2021

Trust in the word of authority is impacted by the contradictions that emerged in the various messages conveyed by members of the government and agents involved in the fight against the pandemic. This is clear from the data in Figure 8, where 25% of respondents believe the government is not convincing in its pandemic communications. In the context of markets and yaars, not being convincing means that the communication does not contain pragmatic elements that show not only the danger of the disease, but also the most effective drugs. In the same sense, 22% of the users surveyed believe that there are contradictions in the government's overall messages, while 19% of those surveyed believe that the authorities are

spreading false messages about COVID-19. 19, 15% believe that the figures given by the authorities tend to exaggerate the scope of the pandemic.

We can include in this group, the 19% of respondents who believe that the illness is over, and that the government continues despite the communication.

All these factors encourage denial or resistance to a government that we no longer believe in. Thus, it is increasingly logical to adopt behaviour contrary to those deemed necessary to limit the spread of the disease, as follows:

It is hard to believe in someone whose words change, I would even say that someone whose words may sow doubt. The same government says one thing today and another tomorrow, how you people take them seriously, to respect the instructions to fight the disease, we must believe in those who give its instructions, but that is not the case, so everyone is going to behave according to these beliefs, when you look at the different perspectives of users, you systematically understand their behavior here in the market (...) they do not want to respect anything because they do not even believe in this disease there (Interview of the mayor of Borough 6 and president of the anti-COVID cell of Borough 6 of the commune of Ouagadougou, March 2021).

All the barrier measures that suffer from their implementation are the result of ill-adapted coordination of national policies (CORUS), international ones, especially those of the WHO, and local representations of the disease. Given that COVID-19 is global, the first actor to communicate has logically been the WHO. But during the crisis, the content of WHO's communication continued to evolve, sometimes in contradiction. Reversals are very indicative of how difficult it is to provide the right information in these times of crisis. Good communication may also mean not being able to communicate [36]. These messages from the WHO communication were wishful thinking and were rejected by the population as a central piece in the global conspiracy following the advent of COVID-19 as shown in Soré [4].

## 5. Conclusion

With the contours of a global pandemic officially on the horizon, Burkina Faso witnessed the first case of COVID-19 in Ouagadougou in March 2020. The State activates an institutional management mechanism and performs crisis communication to sound the alarm and limit the spread of the disease. Densely populated regions like markets and Yaars are becoming targets for Burkina Faso's COVID-19 strategy. While the fight against COVID-19 seems to have been organized by government officials through CORUS and related institutions, it has come up against social factors including social representations of the disease by users. As a result, despite the efforts and participation of health professionals in communicating against the disease, government communication has not erased the idea that

COVID-19 is a western invention. Others, even refusing to blame the West, saw the disease as a divine sanction [13; 4].

Such a conception of the disease in populations has positioned itself as an obstacle to the communication strategy whose objective is a new adaptation of behaviours to slow the development of the pandemic. The multiplication of communication channels was seen as a way for those in charge of the fight to circumvent this social context unfavourable to the acceptance of the natural origins of the disease. In this sense, the use of local communication practices like "word of mouth" has been an effective approach to this fight. The use of traditional media such as radio has shown its efficiency particularly because of its ability to reach a wide audience of market and yaars users. Digital social media such as WhatsApp has not only made it possible to penetrate the networks of the various organizations of the users of the markets and Yaars as for example the networks of the merchants, but also to facilitate the access and the understanding of the messages. In short, while some aspects of communication have remained inadequate and misunderstood by the targets of communication, The fact remains that CORUS and its related institutions have conducted a communication strategy that has helped convince some market users and Yaars to adopt behaviours that ultimately have helped to slow down the advance of COVID-19.

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