

## **RESEARCH INTO THE POTENTIAL LINKS BETWEEN COVID-19, MISINFORMATION AND THE "MISMEDICATION" IN THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

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### **Abstract - Academic paper.**

The quick spread of false information on social media, radio, and other trusted family members about the COVID-19 pandemic creates fear and panic for rural folks and makes them resort to the use of "dangerous" substances and medicinal herbs in the treatment and prevention of COVID-19, which could arguably lead to poisoning and degrade the health of rural folks. This paper argues that bringing these response strategies to light will go a long way towards reducing the use of those dangerous substances that have a chance to further degrade the health of rural folks in Lesotho. Again, knowledge of the response strategies of rural folks will help health officials and policymakers adopt proper measures to tackle the spread and treatment of COVID-19. To do this, the study adopted a qualitative study design and accidentally selected 50 rural folks cutting across all the 10 regions of Lesotho for an in-depth interview. The study's findings, which was based on protection motivation theory, show that rural Lesotho residents perceive a high level of vulnerability and likelihood to the COVID-19 virus. They also consider the COVID-19 virus a dangerous virus and have high fear arousal of contracting the COVID-19 virus.

**Keywords:** Covid-19 pandemic, Misinformation, Mismedication, Protection motivation theory, Rural folks, medicinal herbs

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