

Communication Of Details Model (CDM): Contribution Towards The Fight Against Corona Virus (COVID-19) Disease In Kenya; (1st To 12th July 2020)

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Research Article

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ABSTRACT

The war against COVID-19 pandemic has gone global and attracted global attention for the good and welfare of humanity. Leadership of each Nation has been tested to the core by the virus ranging from the developed Nations to the developing and underdeveloped. The disease hereby referred to as Coronavirus (COVID-19), has caused not only deaths and despairs among populations but also destruction and shut down of major economies. Social cultural engagements have been curtailed across Nations, societies and communities. Politics have been reshaped and major political debates occupy online platforms. Other important life needs such as education have also secured online presence after schools were officially closed in Kenya. Education programs and services are now offered through mainstream media, online institutionalized platforms and the online cyber space forums. Entrepreneurship both macro and micro are conducting more business online than the most popular face to face interaction.

Hence, the media whether fourth or fifth estate is no longer a pleasurable want but a major need in day to day engagements of citizens in Kenya. Communication takes center stage in media interactions; whether, in educating, informing, entertaining or actively engaging the masses. Packaging of information or media content is fundamental to the encoder and decoder on particular meaningful messages. The first case of Corona virus in Kenya was registered in the month of March 2020, since then the Ministry of

health has been active in disseminating information to Kenyans using different media platforms. Daily live media updates are the current norm and communication of details both phrasal and numbers have emerged from the Ministry of health daily briefs. This paper intends to analyse the impact and influence of these communication to the public in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya within the month of July 2020 (1st to 12th July 2020); taking cognizance that most restrictions were lifted by the government of Kenya on Monday 6th July 2020. The researcher used: observation, thematic and content analysis, categorization and statistical tables and graphs to: collect, analyse and present the data in the study. The study reveals the dynamics, emotions and regularity of communication of details as adopted by the ministry of health to the citizens of Kenya yielding a combination of negative and positive social cultural results of societal change. The paper argues that results and approaches provided will guide and aid task forces in the fight against COVID-19, hence an important approach to communication in time of such pandemics.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is what enables networking hence enabling the world to be a global village. Media stations capitalize on communication to disseminate information to the audience by creating and developing relevant and interesting content. This enhances networking and unity of communication among the audience. This clearly indicates that communication is a dialogic process, and dialogic is simply the act of taking part in a conversation, discussion or negotiation. Argues that communication generally means “to make common” or “to share”. Communication is the process by which meaning is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols signs or behaviour. It is a process because it is an activity, an exchange or a set of behaviours and not an exchanging product. Communication is not an object one can hold in his or her hands but an activity in which one can participate. COVID-19 pandemic has tested the relevance of significant communication in the fight against Coronavirus disease globally. Views communication as a process of transmitting information and understanding using verbal or non-verbal symbols. He argues that the word communication is derived from a Latin word “Communis” meaning to make common. The communicator seeks to establish commonness with the receiver. Communication may be viewed as the transfer of information and understanding from one person to another. It is a way of reaching others by transmitting ideas, facts, thoughts, feelings and values. Its goal is to have the receiver understand the message as it is intended. When communication is effective, it provides a bridge of meaning between the two parties so that they can share what they feel and know hence the parties can safely cross the stream of misunderstanding; what sometimes separates people. Communication therefore is the meaning derived from the content. Such meaning must be factual, timely, and truthful for effective decoding especially during times of pandemic such as COVID-19. States that, communication is a process of one person sending a message to another with the intent of evoking a response. They further explain that effective communication occurs when the receiver interprets the message exactly as the sender intended and it uses less time and fewer resources. Response is central to evaluating understanding of the other party. Effective and efficient communication must allow active participation of all parties and provide means and ways of channeling response. With modern technology two ways and more ways communication channels must be adopted to fight Corona virus [1-3]. Robbins and Judge believe that communication is the transference and understanding of meaning. It is more than merely imparting meaning but understanding the meaning. Argues that communication is the understanding, not of the visible, but of the invisible and hidden. These hidden and symbolic elements are embedded in the culture giving meaning to the visible communication process. He adds that communication is a personal process that involves the

exchange of behaviours since the only means by which people can influence each other is by the behaviours they perform i.e. information dissemination from the media be it radio or TV provide a platform by which listeners or viewers can be influenced on behavioural retention or adjustments/change. These resonates very well with COVID-19 ; coronavirus which one cannot see with bare eyes, yet such an individual must understand the presence, danger, precautions and effects of Corona virus in their day to day life. Such knowledge received through communication of details aids the fight against COVID-19 pandemic [4,5].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

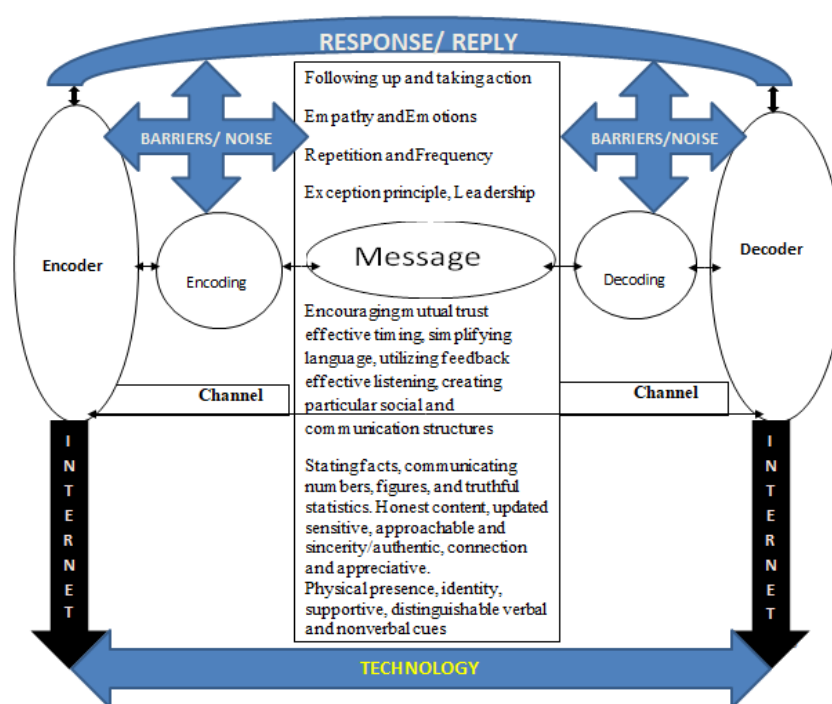
Communication of details model

According to “Communication is the process of sending and receiving message and it occurs whenever we express ourselves in a manner that is clearly understood. It is a process in which the sender transmits a message to the recipient who responds with feedback”[6].

This indicates that communication is an active rather than passive process. Such a process takes account of all the elements of communication: Encoder, encoding, message, channel, decoder, decoding, response, barriers to communication and technology.

Without technology as an element of communication in modern world, the fight against Corona virus would suffer time space and monetary resources, hence becoming an expensive measure that would disadvantage many households. Observes that effective communication aims at narrowing the communication gap. The following Figure 1 is an improve version of where response is incorporated as an important element of the model and technology takes the base line as an important element of modern communication through internet enabled gadgets such as :mobile phone, tablets, computers and other modern equipment and gadgets[3].

Figure 1. Communication of details model in modern world; fighting COVID-19 Pandemic. **Note:** Researcher (2020), improved from Gibson, et al. (1997:427); narrowing the communication gap approach.

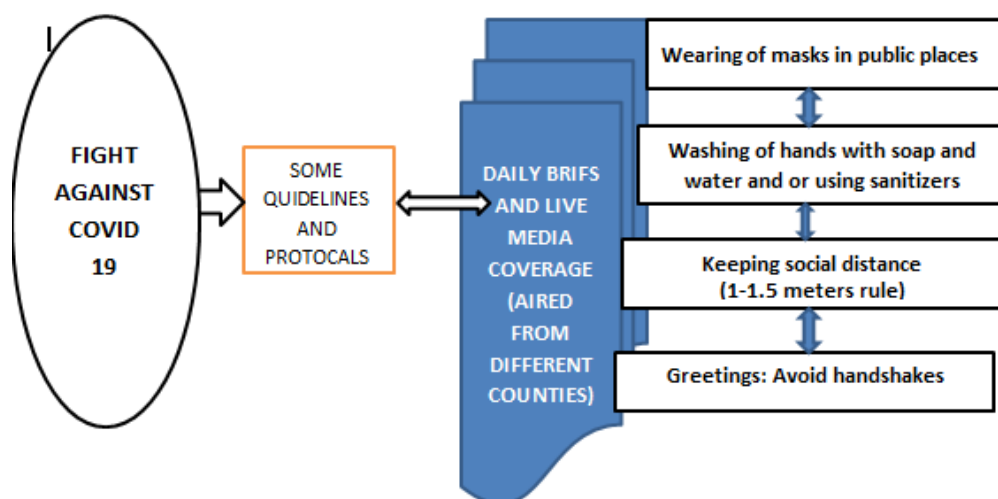


Information is power, the mode and way of delivery as well as the content of the various channels may create, recreate, generate or regenerate particular beliefs, structures and perception in society with reference to either trusting the content or ignoring the information in totality. Communication of details model takes appreciation of the eight elements of communication and makes emphasize on technology as the other important element in modern communication. Without technology in the new norm of COVID 19 countries and regions lock down; communication would suffer incomplete processes and conclusions. Internet aided technology is the new norm globally where meetings, gatherings, teachings and other societal engages are now online. Anyone ignoring Technology in modernity is courting disastrous social-communication breakdown. Technologies adopted in communication enable interaction and experience with information at individual or institution level and aid development of image or brand [7]. The current war on COVID-19 pandemic across Nations seems to acknowledge Giddens assertions. Communication of details models makes emphasis on the whole process of communication and more so: development, packaging, dissemination and evaluation of the message/s. According to the model, communicating matters: regulations, protocols, laws and government decisions during tragic times such as COVID-19 pandemic is founded on the following attributes: making follow up and taking action on any new or existing information or knowledge, talking cognizance of empathy and emotions of individuals involved, being repetitive on messages and communicating frequently on the subject and object of interest or concern, showing exception principle in upholding high standards of leadership and team work. Showcasing that the war on COVID-19 calls for teamwork in all fronts rather than individuality. Communication adopted must encourage mutual trust of all team players and uphold timely and current rather than stale information while holding public and media briefs. Where conflict of information in public eye is detected, timely correction and advisory would be executed. Simplifying the language used encourages understanding and decoding of meaning by the recipient as intended by the encoder. The model encourages utilization of feedback and practicing effective listening where each voice matters, emboldens creation of particular social and communication structures that resonate well with: Social cultural, political, religious, physiological, psychological, National values and economic environment of the target audience. While disseminating information the model guides on matter: factual communication of numbers, figures, and truthful statistics. Manipulation of such data is unethical. Honest content, updated information, being sensitive and approachable as well as sincerity/authenticity of information made public is key to the success in the war against COVID-19 pandemic. The authority in question practices appreciation of the public by way of connecting with the needs of the masses and providing solutions in such challenging times. The model points on the importance of: physical presence with the public rather than sitting and announcing from the Capital Cities of authority, identity with the public, offering practical and affordable support systems. Further, the model encourages the use of: positive, easy and distinguishable verbal and nonverbal cues to avoid conflict of information and misinformation. Communication of details model encourages use of multiple communication and medial channels to reach out to majority of the target audience. Such channels include: Mainstream media: television, radio, newspapers, magazines; online cyberspace forums: websites, web pages, social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram and others), and online meetings through virtual boardrooms and mobile applications such as: Zoom, Kenet, WhatsApp and others. These approaches are encouraged as strategy towards effective communication as well as strategy to counter the element of barriers to communication or noise and deliver meaningful information as intended to majority of target audience **Figure 2**.

Fight against Coronavirus (COVID-19) disease in Kenya

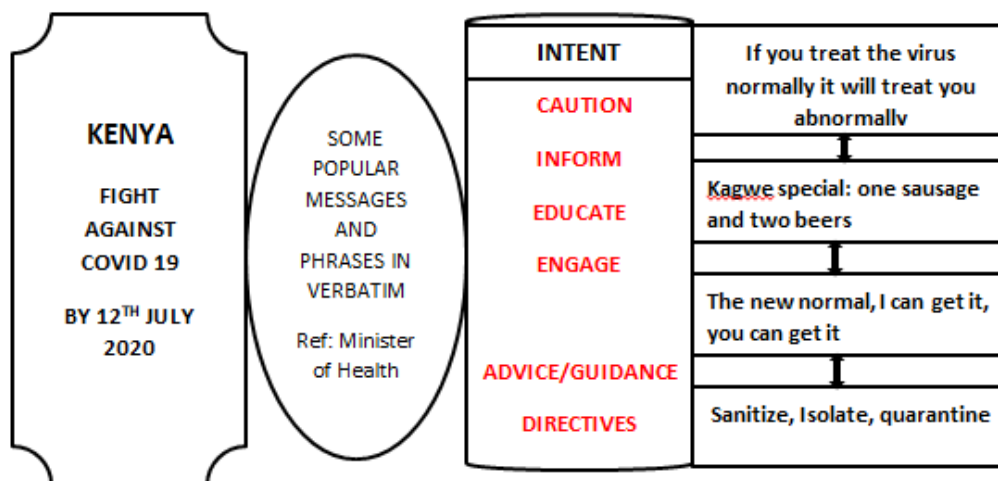
According to the Ministry of Health (Kenya), the first case of COVID-19 infection in Kenya was registered in the month of March 2020. Since then the government took a multi-disciplinary, multi ministerial approach and a task force was put in place to handle matters Coronavirus (COVID-19) disease. Daily Communication briefs and updates are regularly held on live media coverage with questions and queries handled. The ministry of Health developed protocols and regulations to be followed. By way of informing, educating and engaging the masses, most citizens are enlightened on important attributes used to fight Coronavirus. Such factors include: wearing of masks, keeping social distance, staying at home, avoiding handshakes and hugs, coughing and or sneezing on one’s elbow or usage of handkerchief and getting medical attention if and when one experiences Coronavirus symptoms as elaborated by World Health Organization. Members of the public are provided with a call number: 719, “Bonyeza *719#”to get medical and psychological support. “Bonyeza” is Kiswahili word meaning “Dial”. The government put in place measures to curb the virus. Some of the measures include: Dusk to dawn curfew (later revised to 9 am to 4 am), cessation of movement to and from the counties of: Nairobi, Mombasa, Kilifi, Kwale and Mandera (later on lifted on 6th July 2020).These factored coupled with communication of details model informed the study.

Figure 2. Some guidelines and protocols: Fight against COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya. Note: Researcher (2020), and ministry of health website



Cascading Communication to the audiences: Communication of details model suggests that physical presence and connection with the audience from their environment. Making announcements and giving media briefs within their localities adds weight on identity, empathy, emotions and sensitivity while allowing interaction and engagement with opinion leaders and shapers of particular society or community. The ministry of health has adopted the strategy. From the daily briefs and live coverage, the citizens continue to associate themselves with popular messaging, phrases and slogans meant to aid the fight against COVID-19. Such popular messages have been captured in the following Figure 3.

Figure 3. Popular messages and phrases in Kenya; fight against COVID-19 pandemic. **Note:** Researcher (2020), and the Minister of health; Mutahi Kagwe.



The messages falls within the principles advocated by the communication model of details proposed in this study. The phrases are identifiable and one could easily associate with the wording and the spirit of inclusivity in the fight against COVID-19 in Kenya. The intent is to caution the audience on the danger of Corona virus: that the virus kills and one must exercise self-care. That observing the ministry of health guidelines and protocols is the new way of life, which includes: sanitizing, isolating in case one contracts the virus and ultimate quarantine as one seeks medication hence the new normal and if one must visit restaurant; it is advisable to keep social distance and order for only two beers and one sausage. The minister delivers the messages with intent of: informing, educating, engaging, communicating government directives and offering guidance to the public on the reality of Corona virus (COVID-19) disease in Kenya. These seem to reverberate positively with the masses [8].

The following table indicates the date, day and place from where media briefing were done between: 1st July to 5th July 2020, then, 8th July to 11th July 2020; where members of the public were sensitized on health guidelines and protocols through messages such as shown in Figure 3 above. The government lifted most restrictions: “lockdowns”, cessation of movement on Monday 6th July 2020.

Table 1. Cascading communication to Counties; Fight against COVID-19 (1st to 5th July 2020). **Note:** Researcher (2020) and Ministry of health website.

Date	Day	Venue/place/ county of media briefing	Total COVID-19 cases	Daily variance
1 st July 2020	Wednesday	Nairobi	6673	
2 nd July 2020	Thursday	Nairobi	6941	268
3 rd July 2020	Friday	Nairobi	7188	247
4 th July 2020	Saturday	Nairobi	7577	389
5 th July 2020	Sunday	Nairobi	7886	309

Table 2. Cascading communication to Counties; Fight against COVID-19 (8th to 12th July 2020). **Note:** Researcher (2020) and Ministry of health website.

Date	Day	Venue/place/ county of media briefing	Total COVID-19 cases	Daily variance
8 th July 2020	Wednesday	Makueni	8975	
9 th July 2020	Thursday	Mombasa	9448	447
10 th July 2020	Friday	Kilifi	9448	473
11 th July 2020	Saturday	Kwale	9726	278
12 th July 2020	Sunday	Nairobi	10,105	379

The daily variance in Table 1 was recorded before lifting of most restrictions while Table 2 contains results of COVID-19 data after most restrictions were lifted. To comprehend the tabulated daily variance, the data is represented in a line graph below. The statistics are dependent on the number of COVID-19 tests conducted in each day holding all other factors at ceteris paribus.

Figure 4. Graphical distribution of new COVID-19 infections in Kenya (by 12th July 2020). **Note:** Researcher (2020).

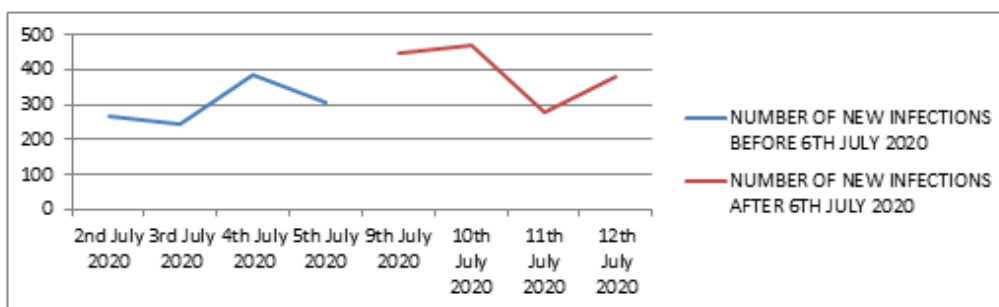


Figure 4, indicates the need to sensitize the population and fully embrace communication of details model; these would in turn assist in flattening the curve. The situation before lifting of most restrictions and the situation after most restrictions were lifted or else relaxed indicates a surge in the numbers of new infections; though depended on total number of individuals tested in each case. Most of the restrictions were lifted/relaxed on 6th July 2020. There is need to flatten the curve.

RESULTS

Comparative study on health guidelines and protocols; fight against COVID-19 pandemic: The researcher undertook a comparative study by way of observation; one week before and one week after most restrictions were lifted by the government. Observations were made in the County of Taita Taveta, Coastal Kenya, in towns of: Voi, Taveta and Wundanyi. The County shares borders with Mombasa County, Kilifi County, Kwale County which were all under “partial lockdown”, cessation of movement. Taita Taveta County shares borders with The Republic of Tanzania, a boarder under controlled strict measures of movement due to COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the lifted restrictions include: Cessation of movement from the counties of: Nairobi, Mombasa, Mandera, Kilifi and Kwale. Others include;

Controlled numbers of worshippers in attending religious services at places of worship, preparation to open colleges and Universities by September 2020 and self-isolation and quarantine at home for individual citizens who may experience COVID-19 symptoms. Through research assistants, the researcher used the following parameters to make observations:

- Wearing of masks in public places
- Washing of hands with soap and water or using sanitizers in public
- Keeping social distance (1 meter to 1.5 meters rule) in public places
- Greetings: Avoiding handshake and hugs

Table 3. Frequency of use of library by the research scholars. **Note:** Researcher (2020)

County	Guideline/Protocol	Observations	In every	10 adults
Taita	Wearing of masks in public places	Voi town 8 to 10 wore masks	Taveta 9 to 10 wore masks	Wundanyi 7 to 9 wore masks
	Washing of hands with soap and water or using sanitizers in public	7 to 8 washed hands/sanitized	6 to 9 washed hands/sanitized	7 to 10 washed hands/sanitized
Taveta	Keeping social distance (1 meter to 1.5 meters rule) in public places	5 to 8 kept social distance	8 to 9 kept social distance	5 to 7 kept social distance
	Greetings: avoiding handshake and hugs	8 to 9 avoided handshakes/hugs	8 to 10 avoided handshakes/hugs	7 to 8 avoided handshake/hugs

Table 4. Observed health guidelines and protocol, 8st to 12th July 2020. **Note:** Researcher (2020).

County	Guideline/protocol	Observations	in every	10 adults
		Each day		
Taita	Wearing of masks in public places	Voi town 6 to 8 wore masks	Taveta 7 to 8 wore masks	Wundanyi 5 to 8 wore masks
	Washing of hands with soap and water or using sanitizers in public	5 to 7 washed hands/sanitized	6 to 9 washed hands/sanitized	5 to 6 washed hands/sanitized
Taveta	Keeping social distance (1 meter to 1.5 meters rule) in public places	4 to 6 kept social distance	7 to 9 kept social distance	4 to 6 kept social distance
	Greetings: avoiding handshake and hugs	6 to 7 avoided handshakes/hugs	8 to 9 avoided handshakes/hugs	4 to 6 avoided handshakes/hugs

From Table 3 members of the public in the selected towns were more cautious and majority strived to observe set health guidelines and protocols compared to Table 4; when/after most restrictions were lifted/relaxed. For instance in the urban town of Voi; 8 to 10 adults were wearing masks in any single day within the week before most restrictions were lifted compared to 6 to 8 adults days after 6th July 2020 [9]. These could be an indication that the Citizens may have interpreted the lifting of most restriction as relaxation of protocols and health guidelines. The same is observed in the border town of Taveta where: 6 to 10 adults wore masks before 6th July 2020 compared to 7 to 8 adults thereafter. The same is applicable to rural town of Wundanyi. The research also revealed that the citizens in the border town of Taveta are more cautious and dedicated in following the health guidelines and protocols compared to the other two towns. The rural town of Wundanyi scored lower than the other two towns in the overall parameters observed. The Kenyan culture of greetings by way of handshakes was observed to be dominant in the rural town of Wundanyi compared to the other towns. Continuous reminder and education of the masses on health guidelines and protocols was noted to be crucial for the success in the fight against COVID-19 among the citizens. The researcher noted other contributing factors on adherence to health guidelines and protocols, namely:

- Closeness to the boarder point between Nations of Kenya and Tanzania: for the town of Taveta (Boarder point settings)
- Stop over point for Nairobi–Mombasa highway; for the town of Voi (Urban town settings)
- Presence of County Assembly offices and chambers; for the town of Wundanyi (Urban-Rural town settings)

The research noted the need for continuous application of the proposed communication of details model for the fight against COVID-19 pandemic in different Nations; in conjunction with other health guidelines, protocols as well as media and communication strategies [10,11].

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Communication of details model provides key guidelines to observe: technology is the foundational element towards effective and efficient communication in modern day world; and more so during times of pandemic, country/ies and region/s lockdown. The model aids the way against COVID-19 by empowering audiences with information and providing avenues of communication engagement. The research yielded data to the effect that the war on flattening the curve on COVID-19 infections should be escalated. The audience may have interpreted negatively the action of lifting cessation of movement from the counties that were initially under partial lockdown in Kenya.

The study recommends: continuous utilization of the proposed communication of details model in informing, educating, entertaining and engaging the masses towards winning the war against COVID-19 pandemic and eventually flattening the curve. Up scaling sensitization programs to the audiences on the need to continuously observe and implement the set health guidelines and protocols in day to day engagements; which include but not limited to: wearing of face masks covering the mouth and nose when in public places, washing hands with soap and water and or use of approved sanitizers, observing and keeping social distance (1meter to 1.5 meters rule) in public places, avoiding handshakes and hugs and instead wave as a way of greetings, staying at home especially for the vulnerable groups (those suffering from chronic ailments, those under the age of 13 years and over 58years), coughing and sneezing on the elbow or usage of handkerchief, isolation and quarantine. Lastly, by way of

seeking medical treatment when one experiences Corona virus symptoms as provided by the Ministry of Health Kenya and World Health Organization (WHO).

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