

## Implementing Health Literacy Intelligence during COVID-19 outbreak

Gisela Leiras

G Leiras<sup>1</sup>, M Arriaga<sup>2</sup>, R Gaspar<sup>3,4</sup>, B Raposo<sup>3</sup>, S Domingos<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Baixo Mondego Health Cluster, IHMT, Porto, Portugal

<sup>2</sup>Directorate-General for Health, Lisbon, Portugal

<sup>3</sup>Católica Research Centre for Psychological - Family and Social Wellbeing, Lisbon, Portugal

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Human Science, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisbon, Portugal

<sup>5</sup>William James Centre for Research, ISPA-Instituto Universitário, Lisbon, Portugal

Contact: gisela@campus.ul.pt

### Background:

During events that involve health risks, people may feel the need personal and social resources to cope with the demands posed by event. Depending on their individual characteristics, people may perceive their resources as sufficient or as insufficient to face the situation. Risk perception analysis was conducted in Portugal during the COVID-19 outbreak, to develop communication strategies, customized to the changing needs, helping people make informed decisions.

### Methods:

Citizens messages on social networks of 3 official information sources, and 8 media sources were analyzed between 26th January and 5th March 2020. A sample of comments to publications related to COVID-19 were analyzed in 4-days periods and categorized. A qualitative theory-driven thematic analysis was carried out based on two global categories: Demands and Resources. From this analysis, the threat level ratio (Demands/Resources) was calculated.

### Results:

A total of 8,251 comments were analysed in 10 periods of 4 days of data collection, from 26th January to 5th March. The threat level ratio increased during the first 15 days of analysis, having its maximum (6.80) in the period between the 7th and 14th of February, mostly associated with the perceived danger associated with the lack of airports arrivals control from China. After the announcement of the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in a Portuguese citizen outside Portugal, on 23rd February, the risk perception increased 1,4% compared to the previous period of analysis. On the contrary, after announcing the first confirmed case in Portugal, on the 1st March, the risk perception decreased 1,6%, which is inferred to be associated with a shift in the media discourse and to the use of humour.

### Conclusions:

Awareness of risks is a necessary condition for people to adhere to the necessary recommendations to mitigate the crisis. During an epidemic, an effective communication strategy can become an opportunity to promote health literacy.

### Key messages:

- Risk perception is essential to define effective communication strategies to promote health literacy and best practices among targeted populations.
- effective communication strategies customized to people's needs and priorities help people making informed decisions during a public health emergency.