

Communicating Risk, Trust, and Resilience Among Diverse and Marginalised Populations

Ian Somerville ¹ and Jenny Zhengye Hou ²

¹ School of Arts, Media and Communication, University of Leicester, UK

² School of Communication, Queensland University of Technology, Australia

Correspondence: Ian Somerville (ijas1@leicester.ac.uk)

Submitted: 13 April 2026 **Published:** 29 April 2026

Issue: This editorial is part of the issue “Communicating Risk, Trust, and Resilience Among Diverse and Marginalised Populations” edited by Ian Somerville (University of Leicester) and Jenny Zhengye Hou (Queensland University of Technology), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.i507>

Abstract

This thematic issue presents current empirical research focusing on theory and practice around the communication of risk, trust, and resilience in the context of societies characterised by diversity and/or inequality. A key goal of the editors was to include studies from the Global South as well as the Global North and thereby ensure a truly international collection of research studies, and we are delighted to be able to publish 10 high-quality research articles from authors in Africa, Asia, Oceania, South America, and Europe. In this collection, many authors note that there is a need for a transition from solely top-down, expert-centred communication to equity-oriented, inclusive communication which will help to bring to the centre marginalized voices and thereby improve outcomes for health, safety, and welfare of these groups.

Keywords

communication; diversity; marginalized populations; resilience; risk; trust

1. Introduction

The times in which we live are characterised by increasing global instability in the wake of the pandemic, rapid and accelerating climate change, and a huge growth in violent conflicts. One outcome of this ongoing instability is that many societies around the world are becoming more diverse due to much increased levels of migration and a subsequent growth in existing ethnic minority populations in some societies. The Covid-19 pandemic and recent ecological disasters have brought sharply into focus the challenges that governments and the public sector have faced in communicating risks, building trust, and developing resilience with ethnic minorities and other marginalised populations. This thematic issue presents current

empirical research focusing on theory and practice around the communication of risk, trust, and resilience in the context of societies characterised by diversity and/or inequality. Research analysing a wide range of approaches from public information campaigns and government communication, to community-oriented cultural communication and participatory approaches was particularly welcomed. The thematic issue call for papers attracted a lot of submissions and 10 articles eventually made it through the review process to publication in this thematic issue of *Media and Communication*. A key goal of the editors was to include studies from the Global South as well as the Global North and thereby ensure a truly international collection of research studies, and we are delighted to be able to publish high-quality research articles from authors in Africa, Asia, Oceania, South America, and Europe.

This collection of articles presents the results of recent research in a range of areas around health and disaster risk communications with diverse and marginalised groups in society. They examine how information flows and communication dynamics impact minority and marginalised populations who are facing structural inequality or experiencing existential crises. The research studies investigate how vulnerability is intensified by digital divides, misinformation, and media framing, particularly for certain groups such as ethnic minorities, low-income workers, and adolescents. A number of studies highlight that resilience is a relational process built through cultural resources and through community engagement when institutional support is lacking. Others evaluate how governance strategies and, more recently, AI fundamentally influence the spread of health information in societies.

2. The Contributions to the Thematic Issue

The first article in the thematic issue, “The Role of Harm, Misinformation Age, and Information Scrutiny on Adolescents’ Trust in Misinformation” by Farooq, Rutland, and McGuire (2026), presents the results of a study that examines how adolescents’ trust in Covid-19 misinformation is influenced by perceived risk and the age of the source. Their research with 131 adolescents aged 14–17 found that they trusted misinformers more when they perceived a risk to their own age group. Using the elaboration likelihood model, the authors discovered that those who regularly scrutinise information prioritize source credibility during high-risk scenarios. Conversely, those who scrutinise less often tend to rely on their personal relationships with peers sharing the information. Their findings highlight the critical need for media literacy education to help adolescents navigate misinformation during public health crises. Benlarbi and Belghitia’s (2026) article “Risk and Crisis Communication During Covid-19 in Algeria: Planning and Practice Evaluation” evaluates Algeria’s government communication strategy during the Covid-19 pandemic by comparing national plans with actual practices. While the country adopted international standards for transparency and monitoring, institutional challenges such as inconsistent reporting and unidirectional messaging hindered success. Significantly, marginalized populations, including rural residents and low-income households, faced restricted access to official information flows. In addition, their findings demonstrate that digital divides and linguistic barriers further complicated how these groups interpreted risk messages. Their research indicates that effective crisis communication requires social equity, community engagement, and specific message adaptation to meet the diverse needs of vulnerable populations. The third article, by Nguyen, Nguyen, and Wang (2026), “Representation of Vulnerable Groups in Dutch Climate Crisis News: An Analysis of Mainstream Narratives,” presents an empirical analysis of how vulnerable groups, including migrants, children, and those in poverty, are represented in Dutch climate crisis reporting. Using computational text analysis of over 17,000 news articles from 2014 to 2023, the study

identifies dominant media frames. Their analysis focuses on determining whether these marginalized groups are portrayed as active agents of change or passive victims of environmental developments. The article's findings offer critical insights into current framing practices in the Dutch media and suggest ways to foster more inclusive and equitable societal debates in the area of climate communication.

Monari and Ott's (2026) article "Governing Health Risk Communication in the Age of AI: Approaches from Brazil and Germany" presents a comparative study of Brazil and Germany. Their study examines how democracies govern health risk communication in the age of AI. They find that national governments viewed AI as an ambivalent tool that can both spread misinformation and provide mechanisms for detecting and monitoring it. They highlight that Germany utilizes a multi-level strategy combining regulation with independent fact-checking and media literacy while Brazil focuses on legislative proposals and national AI plans, though in the case of the latter, political and economic dynamics complicate the implementation of these plans. They argue that current governance processes tend to focus on individual and platform responsibilities while neglecting broader societal factors like trust and political structures. Brey's (2026) study, "Media Coverage of Social Cohesion and Minorities During Riots in the UK and Spain," analyzes media coverage of riots in the UK and Spain following crimes committed by individuals perceived as "foreigners." She deploys an agenda-setting analysis of 298 news articles to examine whether newspapers utilize culturally informed communication. She finds that while progressive newspapers in the UK were found to be more culturally informed than conservative ones, the distinction was less clear in Spain. Her findings also indicate that the mainstream media often reproduced far-right arguments and online misinformation which contributed to the legitimization of anti-migrant rhetoric and, thus, she encourages the placement of immigration at the centre of debates regarding social cohesion. Zhao and Falkheimer's (2026) article "Resilience in Marginalized Communities During Crises: A Literature Review of Communication Scholarship" reviews 45 peer-reviewed articles from 2010 to 2025 to explore how communication scholarship addresses resilience among marginalized populations during crises. Their findings reveal that resilience is frequently narrowly defined as mere coping or adaptation rather than being understood as a broader social process. The article identifies several key communicative practices, including the mobilization of networks and the affirmation of identity, which help frame resilience as a relational and discursive process. However, they highlight that frequently structural power dynamics and intersectional vulnerabilities remain under-researched. Ultimately, the authors argue for an equity-oriented crisis communication agenda that will bring marginalized voices to the centre.

Gong and Somerville's (2026) article, "Covid-19, Community Resilience, and Marginalised Populations: Health Communication and Chinese Communities in the UK," explores how UK-based Chinese communities utilized community resilience to navigate the disproportionate impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Using focus groups and the communication theory of resilience, the research identifies how these marginalized groups drew on their own cultural and linguistic resources. The study finds that this self-reliance was often born of necessity, as there was minimal support provided by government or health authorities. Their findings demonstrate that Chinese communities actively constituted resilience through specific communicative processes despite facing long-standing social inequalities. Such a "bottom-up" approach helps provide new insights into healthcare for ethnic minorities and the importance of culturally specific communication. In "Empowering Vulnerable Women: Communication and Media Strategies for Obstetric Fistula Awareness in Nigeria," Folarin (2026) investigates how communication and media strategies can raise awareness for obstetric fistula, a preventable childbirth injury affecting marginalized women in Nigeria. Focusing on the

Bashir Foundation for Fistula and Women's Health, her research study employs a qualitative case study and content analysis of media materials. Her findings identify best practices for community engagement, sustainability, and advocacy to combat the socio-economic and cultural factors sustaining the health crisis. She concludes that effective public health communication for vulnerable populations requires a combination of strategic communication/media campaigns, direct community interaction, and educational efforts to reduce social stigma.

Our penultimate article, "(Re)Contextualizing Organizing Inequities: The Communicative Production of Worker Vulnerability in Global Supply Chains" by Ganesh, Nandurkar, and Sun (2026), examines the communicative production of worker vulnerability within global supply chains in China and India. The authors identify three communicative conditions that shape these vulnerabilities: fluidity, visibility, and disarticulation. Fluidity is highlighted through fast-fashion workers in China, while visibility is explored through the labour of women in Indian onion supply chains. Disarticulation is examined via garment workers in India who are severed from their communities. The study argues for the use of multi-sited ethnographies to understand how global supply chain infrastructures determine labour risks and inequities. Our final article in the collection, Hou and Hearn's (2026) "Storytelling Networks and Social Capital for Disaster Resilience: Empowering Narrative Agency in Diverse Communities," addresses a gap in disaster resilience research by examining how storytelling networks can actively constitute social capital among marginalized populations. Their work moves beyond seeing social capital as a pre-existing attribute to use storytelling networks theory to explore collective sensemaking. Using 36 in-depth interviews, their research study highlights how community-led storytelling can help navigate power asymmetries and exercise narrative agency. Their findings reconceptualise social capital through a participatory lens, offering practical insights for emergency practitioners. Ultimately, the study emphasizes that empowering diverse communities to share their own stories is fundamental to building lasting social capital and disaster resilience.

3. Conclusion

A common thread in the research studies in this thematic issue is the advocacy for more equitable communication practices that prioritise not just the agency but also the specific cultural needs of underrepresented groups. Ultimately, the key overall finding of many of the studies in this collection is that expanding community-based communication channels and utilizing "bottom-up" approaches are essential for building societal resilience and ensuring equitable access to vital resources during crises. Many authors note that there is a need for a transition from solely top-down, expert-centred communication to equity-oriented, inclusive communication which will help to bring to the centre marginalized voices and thereby improve outcomes for health, safety, and welfare of these groups. To this end, a range of communicative strategies can be mobilized, including (but not limited to): culturally, linguistically, and infrastructurally tailored messaging; more just and reflexive media framing practices; the ethical use of digital technologies (including AI); the empowerment of vulnerable groups through opportunities to share lived experiences; and the co-construction of trust and resilience strategies between authorities and communities. We are delighted to present this wide-ranging collection of articles to the readership of *Media and Communication* and our hope is that the research presented will play a meaningful role in navigating the current global polycrisis.

Acknowledgments

We are deeply grateful to all of the anonymous reviewers who helped make this thematic issue possible.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

References

- Benlarbi, Y., & Belghitia, S. (2026). Risk and crisis communication during Covid-19 in Algeria: Planning and practice evaluation. *Media and Communication*, 14, Article 11169. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.11169>
- Brey, E. (2026). Media coverage of social cohesion and minorities during riots in the UK and Spain. *Media and Communication*, 14, Article 11392. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.11392>
- Farooq, A., Rutland, A., & McGuire, L. (2026). The role of harm, misinformers age, and information scrutiny on adolescents' trust in misinformation. *Media and Communication*, 14, Article 11106. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.11106>
- Folarin, M. (2026). Empowering vulnerable women: Communication and media strategies for obstetric fistula awareness in Nigeria. *Media and Communication*, 14, Article 11251. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.11251>
- Ganesh, S., Nandurkar, B. K., & Sun, S. (2026). (Re)contextualizing organizing inequities: The communicative production of worker vulnerability in global supply chains. *Media and Communication*, 14, Article 11521. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.11521>
- Gong, S. Q., & Somerville, I. (2026). Covid-19, community resilience, and marginalised populations: Health communication and Chinese communities in the UK. *Media and Communication*, 14, Article 11476. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.11476>
- Hou, J. Z., & Hearn, G. (2026). Storytelling networks and social capital for disaster resilience: Empowering narrative agency in diverse communities. *Media and Communication*, 14, Article 11508. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.11508>
- Monari, A. C., & Ott, T. (2026). Governing health risk communication in the age of AI: Approaches from Brazil and Germany. *Media and Communication*, 14, Article 11242. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.11242>
- Nguyen, S., Nguyen, D., & Wang, Y. (2026). Representation of vulnerable groups in Dutch climate crisis news: An analysis of mainstream narratives. *Media and Communication*, 14, Article 11216. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.11216>
- Zhao, H., & Falkheimer, J. (2026). Resilience in marginalized communities during crises: A literature review of communication scholarship. *Media and Communication*, 14, Article 11437. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.11437>

About the Authors



Ian Somerville (PhD, Queens University Belfast) is a public communication scholar focusing on health, sport, and government. He has researched and published widely on social exclusion, deeply divided societies, and promotional cultures in contemporary societies.



Jenny Zhengye Hou (PhD, University of Queensland) is an associate professor in strategic communication at the Queensland University of Technology, Australia. Her research interests include transmedia storytelling in disaster risk communication, social media intervention, and community engagement.