

Robert G. Nyaga, Ph.D.
Technical Director, Qualitative Research
Busara Center for Behavioral Economics
38 Apple Cross, Lavington, 00100
Nairobi, Kenya
[Personal Website](#)

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Communication

Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA

Aug 2020

Master of Arts Communication

Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois, USA

Aug 2016

Bachelor of Science Communication & Public Relations

Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

Dec 2013

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Technical Director, Qualitative Research

Jan 2023- Present

Busara Center for Behavioral Economics, Nairobi, Kenya

- Managing a team of qualitative researchers in applying behavioral research combining qualitative research approaches with insights from behavioral science.
- Leading thought leadership in behavioral science and qualitative research through conference presentations, thought pieces, and engagements with clients and funders.
- Driving the long-term growth and positioning of the qualitative research in partnership with executive leadership, including overall talent strategy, learning, and development.
- Designing research studies and managing projects on cutting-edge SBC work and qualitative research.
- Enhancing organizational technical excellence through diagnosis of inefficient processes and designing solutions for upscaling across the organization.

Associate Director, Qualitative Research & Design

July 2022- Dec 2022

Busara Center for Behavioral Economics, Nairobi, Kenya

- Provided leadership to a team of qualitative researchers, design specialists, and analysts.
- Led thought leadership initiatives focused on applying behavioral science and qualitative research at Busara through: training, conference presentations, and engagements with clients and funders.

Qualitative Research Specialist

June 2020- June 2022

Busara Center for Behavioral Economics, Nairobi, Kenya

- Designed and managed qualitative research projects for a wide array of corporate organizations introducing new products to the market so as to ensure they have a clear understanding of the market dynamics before the actual deployment.
- Designed empirically driven interventions aimed at encouraging behavior change in sex and reproductive health, maternal health, nutrition, and WASH programs.
- Contributed to organizational strategy and growth by participating in business development activities, demand generation, and client management.

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Graduate Research Assistant

June 2016- Aug 2020

Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana

- This position entailed conducting research in cancer prevention and designing and implementing health campaigns on campus.

Graduate Research Assistant

Social Media Analytics and Command Center

School of Communication, Illinois State University, Normal, IL

Aug 2014 - Aug 2016

- Conducted qualitative and quantitative social media data analysis using Nuvi, Geofeedia, Gephi, Google Refine, Rapid Miner, and NodeXL

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Faculty,

May 2021- Present

United States International University, Nairobi, Kenya

This position involves advising master's students writing graduate theses and teaching the following classes:

- Global Communication. A master's class of **25** students.
- Development Communication Theory. A master's class of **18** students
- Media Ethics: An undergraduate class of **25** students
- Behavior Change Communication. A master's level course focusing on design and evaluation of behavior change interventions. **14** students
- Risk Communication Class: A master's level course focusing on risk assessment and designing of risk communication strategies and techniques. **14** students
- Communication Research Methods. An undergraduate course introducing students to research in communication studies around the world. Enrollment: **15** students

Graduate Teaching & Research Assistant,

Aug 2016 – Aug 2020

Purdue University, Indiana, USA

Instructor of Record: Brian Lamb School of Communication for the following courses:

- Com 303: Intercultural Communication. Graduate Teaching Assistant of Record
Enrollment: 25 Students
- Com 114: Fundamentals of Speech communication
Enrollment: 50 Students
- Com 318: Principles of Persuasive Communication. Graduate Teaching Assistant Enrollment: 375 Students

PUBLICATIONS

Manuscripts in press

Nyaga, R. (In Press). From Africa to the United States: Exploring African students' lived experiences at an American university. *Journal of International Students*.

Ndegwa, M.N. & Nyaga, R. (In Press). Young mothers' perspectives on maternal nutrition communication in Kenya's informal settlements: A case study of Pumwani Hospital. *Communicare: Journal for Communication Studies in Africa*

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Book chapters

Nyaga, R. & Adu Gyamfi, P. (2026). An Exploration of Health Communication in Africa: A Systematic Analytic Review. In Connaughton, S.L., Cruz, J.M., & Lumala, F.M. (Eds.). *The Handbook of Communication in Africa: Theory, Research, and Praxis: Theory, Research, and Praxis*. (2026). Routledge & CRC Press.
<https://www.routledge.com/The-Handbook-of-Communication-in-Africa-Theory-Research-and-Praxis-Theory-Research-and-Praxis/Connaughton-Cruz-MasiboLumala/p/book/9780367764258>

Selected peer-reviewed publications (Arranged by year of publication)

Alhaji, M. M., Umar, L., Yusuf, M. A., **Nyaga, R.**, Singh, J., Okafor, A., Meyo, F., Shayau, Z. H., Isah, Z. I., Abubakar, M., Umar, A. I., & Ozohu-Suleiman, Y. (2025). Supply and demand barriers to PHC maternal care services uptake: qualitative and behavioural insights from Gombe State, Nigeria. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 25(1), 939. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-025-08071-4>

Alhaji, M. M., Yusuf, M. A., Umar, L., **Nyaga, R.**, Okafor, A., Meyo, F., Shayau, Z. H., Ozohu-Suleiman, Y., Isah, Z. I., Dodo, A. M., Abubakar, M., Umar, A. I., Abubakar, H., Kolo, H. N., & Adamu, U. S. (2025). Applying behavioral science to increase use of maternal care services: Findings from a field experiment in northern Nigeria. *Behavioral Science & Policy*, 11(2), 38–48.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/23794607251382993>

Okafor, A., Lilumbi, M., Nigudkar, A., **Nyaga, R.G.**, Wambua, R., Chouhan, K. (2025). *Applying HCD to improve the uptake of routine immunization: A case of South Sudan*. Busara Groundwork No. 27 (Thought Piece). Nairobi: Busara, 2025. DOI: doi.org/10.62372/XYGP3979

Nyaga, R.G., Wambua, R., Kaur, K., Okafor, A., Mahiaini, F. (2025). *Lessons from the field: what have we learnt from six years of doing qualitative research?* Busara Groundwork No. 22 (Lessons Learned). Nairobi: Busara. doi.org/10.62372/TQUI9790

Turere, I. & **Nyaga, R.** (2025). Risk communication strategies used during the rising water levels around Kenya's Lake Naivasha. *Communicare: Journal for Communication Studies in Africa*, 44(2), 75-87. <https://doi.org/10.36615/vf3wth53>

Nyaga, R.G., & Wendel, S. (2024). *What is rigorous in-depth qualitative research in behavioral science?* Busara Groundwork No. 11 (Thought Piece). Nairobi: Busara. doi.org/10.62372/LDGW4731

Jang, C., Koki, E., **Nyaga, R.**, Okafor, A., Singh, J., Vang, A., & Wendel, S. (2024). *The Busara toolkit: Leveraging behavioral science for development*. Busara Groundwork (Research Agenda). Nairobi: Busara. doi.org/10.62372/WQSB6195

Nyaga, R. (2024). Do You Chew? A qualitative examination of the perceptions of Kenyan students toward Khat (*Catha edulis*) in Kenya: *The Journal of Development Communication*, 35(2), 27-38. Retrieved from <https://jdc.journals.unisel.edu.my/index.php/jdc/article/view/264>

Nyaga, R. & Adu Gyamfi, P. (2024). A comparative study of HPV vaccine acceptability across global north and south countries: USA and Kenya. *Communicare: Journal for Communication Studies in Africa*, 43(1), 59-75. <https://doi.org/10.36615/jcsa.v43i1.2782>

Nyaga, R., Hildenbrand, G. M., Mattson, M., Collins, B., & Masibo, L. (2021). How does privacy influence patient satisfaction? An investigation into how perceived privacy influences patient

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satisfaction among college students and staff in a large Kenyan university. *International Journal of Communication*, 15, 3908- 3927. doi:1932–8036/20210005

Nyaga, R. & Mattson, M. (2021). Does identification matter? How felt-connectedness among university students in Kenya and the USA influences health seeking behaviours. *Journal of Development and Communication Studies*, 8(2), 70-84. doi. 10.4314/jdcs.v8i2.5

Nyaga, R. (2020). The HIV/AIDS war in Kenya: An investigation into the perceptions of Kenyans toward people living with HIV/AIDS and government's programmes. *African Journal of AIDS Research*, 19, 117-122. doi: 10.2989/16085906.2020.1758172

Perrault, E., Hildenbrand, G., & **Nyaga, R.** (2019). Epigeneti-what? Approaches on translating research for primary breast cancer prevention. *Frontiers in Oncology*. doi: 10.3389/fonc.2019.00267

CONFERENCES (*Competitively Selected)

***Nyaga, R. & Kariuki, R.** (2024). An assessment of data use in the health ecosystem in Ethiopia. **Presented at the 2024 Africa Evidence Summit in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in June 2024.**

***Nyaga, R. & Meyo, F.** (June, 2024). Social and behavior change strategy to improve maternal nutrition in Ethiopia. **Presented at the 74th International Communication Association Conference in Gold Coast, Australia in June 2024.**

***Nyaga, R. Chouhan, K., & Meyo, F.** (2024). Social and behavior change strategy to address open defecation in Ethiopia. **Presented at the 3rd National Social and Behavior Change (SBC) Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in February 2024.**

***Nyaga, R.** Hildenbrand, G., Mattson, M., & Masibo, L. (2019). Does perceived privacy influence patient satisfaction among college students? A comparative study of students at a Kenyan university and those at a large American Midwestern university. **Presented at the International Communication Association Convention in Washington, D.C., USA, in May 2019.**

***Nyaga, R. & Adu Gyamfi, P.** (2024) A comparative study of HPV vaccine acceptability across global north and south countries: USA and Kenya. *Communicare: Journal for Communication Studies in Africa*, 43(1), 59-75. <https://doi.org/10.36615/jcsa.v43i1.2782>. **Presented at the World Social Marketing Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa in April 2023**

***Nyaga, R.** (2019). Do You Chew? A Qualitative Examination of the Perceptions of Kenyan Students Toward Khat (*Catha edulis*): A Case of a Large Kenyan University. **Presented at the 2019 National Communication Association Convention in Baltimore, M.D., USA, in November 2019.**

***Nyaga, R.** (2018). The HIV/AIDS War in Kenya: An Investigation into the Perceptions of the Public toward People Living with HIV/AIDS and the Kenyan Government's Commitment to Eradicate HIV/AIDS. Presented during the **2018 Central States Communication Association Convention, Milwaukee, WI (Presenter, Top Paper Panel).**

***Nyaga, R.** (2017). How “Social” Are the Healthcare Providers? An Analysis of the Social Media Presence of Two Leading Teaching and Referral Hospitals in Kenya. Paper presented during the

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2017 Central States Communication Association Convention, Minneapolis, MN (Presenter, Top Paper Award).

***Nyaga, R. (2016).** From Africa to “The States”: A qualitative examination of the experiences of African students in America. Paper presented during the **2016 National Communication Association Convention, Philadelphia, PA (Presenter).**

***Nyaga, R. (2016).** The attitudes and knowledge of Kenyans toward condoms and HIV/AIDS: A study of social media content. Paper presented during the **2016 National Communication Association Convention, Philadelphia, PA (Presenter).**

COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FUNDING AND GRANTS (*Above \$1,000)

Global Synergy Grant \$7,500 (Purdue University). Funded research on communication about HPV Vaccination and barriers to HPV vaccination.

Brian Lamb School of Communication, Purdue University, Research Grant \$10, 000. Used to cover costs related to data collection for dissertation focusing on HPV vaccine in Kenya from June 2019 to Aug 2019.

PROMISE Award Research Fund, Purdue University, \$1,500: Provided by the College of Liberal Arts, Purdue University. Used to collect data on the HPV vaccination intentions of students in Kenya in June 2019 to August 2019.

College of Liberal Arts, Purdue University, Training Funds \$1,850: Used to meet training expenses for the Applied Management Principles (mini-MBA) organized by the Krannert Business School.

Purdue University, Summer Research Grant \$3, 597: Used to conduct research on cancer prevention in developing countries.

PROMISE Award Research Fund, Purdue University, \$1,500: Provided by the College of Liberal Arts, Purdue University. Used to conduct research on patient satisfaction with the healthcare system in Kenya in May 2018.

PROMISE Award Research Fund, Purdue University, \$1,500: Provided by the College of Liberal Arts, Purdue University. Used to conduct research on khat in Kenya in May 2017.

Purdue University Peace Project Grant \$1,000: Used to conduct groundwork in Kenya to assess the feasibility of Purdue Peace Project’s operations in Kenya.

LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE ACTIVITIES

- a. **Peer Reviewer:** I review journal submissions for the *Communicare: Journal for Communication Studies in Africa*, and conference submissions for International Communication Association.
- b. **Master of Arts Thesis Supervision (Ongoing) at United States International University, Africa**

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1. Ruchiami, K.C. (Ongoing). *Influence of “Angaza-Kifafa” Health Communication Campaign on Stigma Reduction and Treatment Uptake Among People Living with Epilepsy in Kilifi County, Kenya*. United States International University, Africa, Nairobi, Kenya.
2. Mpamugo, S. (Ongoing). *The Influence of Students’ Satisfaction With Digital Communication Platforms On University Brand Perception: A Case Study of United States International University – Africa Blackboard Usage*. United States International University, Africa, Nairobi, Kenya.

c. Master of Arts Thesis Supervised (Graduated) at United States International University, Africa

1. Ng’ang’a, K.N. (2025). *Visual Representation of Science Communication: A Case Study Exploring Researchers’ Use Of Engagement And Science Reporting Materials In Kenya*. United States International University, Africa, Nairobi, Kenya
2. Ahmed, M.Y. (2025). *Representing The Self Through Consumerism On Instagram: A Study Of Young Adults’ Brand And Product Representation*. United States International University, Africa, Nairobi, Kenya
3. Karanja, K.W. (2025). *The Role Of Kenyan Social Media Influencers On Travel Related Decision Making*. United States International University, Africa, Nairobi, Kenya
4. Nkonge, M.K. (2025). *Exploring The Role Of Tiktok In Shaping Contraception Knowledge And Use Among Female Undergraduate Students: The Case Of USIU-Africa*. United States International University, Africa, Nairobi, Kenya
5. Nyabuto, C.M. (2025). *Influence Of Communication On The Uptake Of Iron And Folic Acid Supplementation Among Pregnant Women in Nakuru West, Kenya*. United States International University, Africa, Nairobi, Kenya
6. Wachira, A.W. (2025). *Enhancing Open Communication On Menstrual Health Between Mothers and Adolescent Daughters In Nairobi, Kenya's Kawangware Informal Settlement*. United States International University, Africa, Nairobi, Kenya
7. Ndegwa, M.N. (2024). *Exploring Young Mother’s Perspectives On Pumwani Hospital’s Communication Strategies To Promote Maternal Nutrition In Mathare*. United States International University, Africa, Nairobi, Kenya
8. Turere, I.A. (2022). *Climate Change Risk Communication And Adaptive Behavior In The Rift Valley Lakes Regions: A Case Study Of Lake Naivasha*. United States International University, Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

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9. Okindo, I. (2023). Role Of Risk Communication In Adoption Of Health Behaviors: A Case Of Youth In Kibra Informal Settlement, Nairobi. United States International University, Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

d. Purdue University, Global Ambassador

Aug 2018 to Aug 2021

- Organized recruitment initiatives on behalf of the Purdue Graduate School aimed at engaging prospective graduate students from Kenya and Africa at large.

e. Member, By Laws Ad Hoc Committee of the Senate of College of Liberal Arts, Purdue University

Jan 2019 to Mar 2019

- Conducted reviews of the by-laws of the Senate of College of Liberal Arts with respect to the mandates and composition of the standing committees and revised outdated clauses.

f. Vice President International Relations and Cultural Inclusion, Communication Graduate Students Association (CGSA), Purdue University

Aug 2017- May 2018

- Organized events aimed at bringing American and international students at Purdue together to enhance inclusion and diversity between groups from different cultural backgrounds.

ACADEMIC HONORS AND AWARDS

- **2019 Bilsland Fellowship Nominee** for the Brian Lamb School of Communication, Purdue University.
- **Fellow of the 2018/2019 Cancer Prevention Internship Program-** A one-year opportunity that is awarded to only four graduate students at Purdue University. Fellows design and implement service-learning activities aimed at creating awareness among the college fraternity.
- **Best Student Debut Paper 2017:** Presented at the Central States Communication Association Convention in Minneapolis, MN (March 2017).

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

Google UX Design Professional Certificate Course	2024
Applied Management Principles Certificate (Mini-MBA), Krannert Business School, Purdue University	2019
Graduate Social Policy Certificate, Department of Political Science, Purdue University	2019
Certificate in Foundations of College teaching, Purdue University	2018
Certified Public Secretary of Kenya (at Section 5 out of 6 Sections) Kenya Accountancy and Secretaries Examinations Board	2014

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

- International Communication Association Jan 2019- Present
- National Communication Association May 2016- Present
- Africa Social Behavior Change Alliance May 2023- Present
- Africa Social Marketing Association March 2023- Present

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REFERENCES

Dr. Marifran Mattson (**Chair**, Dissertation Committee)
Head of Department, Brian Lamb School of Communication
Purdue University
West Lafayette, IN, USA, 47907-2098
E: mmattson@purdue.edu

Dr. Steve Wendel,
Co-Founder & Head of Methodology,
SistemaFutura
E: steve@sistemafutura.com

Dr. Gilbert Nyaga (**Career Mentor**)
Professor, D'Amore-McKim School of Business,
Northeastern University
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