

# **Social Media Usage in Information Dissemination and Covid-19 Outbreak: A Study of NCDC Telegram and Twitter Handles**

---

**Prof. Nwammuo, Nkiru Angela**

Lecturer Department of Mass Communication  
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University  
Igbariam campus  
angelanwammuo59@gmail.com

**Nwachukwu, Amala Ozioma**

MSC Student, Department of Mass Communication  
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University  
Igbariam Campus  
jurgensnwachukwus@gmail.com

***Abstract***

*At the outbreak of covid-19 pandemic, both the government and all health agencies around the world including the Nigeria Center for Disease Control swing into action to pass information on the nature of the virus and its means of transmission for adherence to safety health measures in order to contain the spread of the virus. Relying on the height of decay in the Nigeria's health sector, the citizens were too pessimistic on the possibility of Nigeria surviving the pandemic if it really hits the country. In this regard, as these messages are being aired in all forms of the media, the masses share mixed feelings on the realities of the virus and doubt if it had possibly spread into Nigeria. Against this background, this study examined whether the citizens see NCDC's post as a true reflection of the realities of the virus and whether they adopt the health safety measures shared in NCDC telegram and twitter handles. The study adopted the survey research method in studying 400 social media users purposively selected from Awka metropolis. The social exchange and source credibility theories were used as theoretical framework. Findings shows that though the respondents are well exposed to social media information from NCDC, they hardly believe NCDC to be sincere to Nigerians on the true position of the virus. It was recommended that more efforts should be put into transparency to make the citizens see NCDC as a credible source of information in health emergencies.*

***Keywords:*** Covid-19, Health sector, Social media, Safety measures, Credibility

## **Introduction**

The consumption of online messages among the citizens has gained rapid increase in recent time owing to massive increase in use of internet enabled electronic gadgets among the world population. With the unprecedented number of electronic gadgets users, the number of internet users grows geometrically in days as a result of the production and distribution of cheap android smartphones with internet capacity (Obi-Ani, Anikwenzé, & Isiani, 2020). This makes the social media platforms very common among the people because anyone with android phone has the power to subscribe to one social media platform or the other. Right from inception, social media platforms have been used in sharing and disseminating information in different forms. It allows for the dissemination of both audio and visual contents. Its major advantage lies in its ability to encourage interactions which makes the sender and receiver equal partners in the communication process. This interactive nature of the social media encourages immediate feedback in information and communication flow.

Undoubtedly, social media have in recent time been the fastest means of reaching out to the people within the shortest possible time (Bowd, 2016). This is because, virtually all adult literate citizens around the world are social media subscribers. Given the fact that social media contain numerous users, business

organizations and brand marketers subscribe to its use in spreading information about their goods and services. A key strength of social media is that it reaches citizens remotely and at same time provides an opportunity for them to ask questions and get immediate response from the source (Togun, 2020). In like manners, security information for the safety of the people, job vacancies, public service announcements and very many other important public information including health emergencies are shared by the government and all other related bodies through the use of social media to enable them get wide reach.

As one of the fastest means of reaching a large and highly diversified audience, the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC) in their wise decision on how best to reach out to Nigerians and pass across coronavirus health safety measures, opened twitter and telegram accounts from where they sent across messages on the virus to the people. This was because health information according to Kreps (2001) is essential in health care and health safety measure promotion especially in a health emergency situation as in COVID-19 era. The ability of health information to provide the public with the direction and rationale for guiding strategic health behaviors, treatments, and decisions makes health information an indispensable element of health communication during health emergency situations. The health maintenance body in Nigeria used

these medium to share updates on the virus, its means of spreading, the symptoms of the virus, the best way to handle a victim and various safety measures that can be adopted to remain free from the virus.

The virus rate of infection was highly unprecedented and its rate of killing victims send the flaring signal that the world is nearing extinction. This was captured in Kudchadkar and Carroll (2020) who argued that since its origin as an epidemic in China in December 2019, information guiding critical care practice has been growing and changing each day, with anecdotal and case series data providing the foundation of therapeutic guidance for clinicians fighting the disease worldwide. In such an alarming situation, the need to get the public informed becomes sacrosanct in order to protect them from getting exposed to the dangerous life claiming virus that struck the world. Generally, communication is best appreciated with source communicating something that is close to realities in an environment. In the Nigerian health environment, it is a serious task to communicate the citizens of the country of its readiness to contain malaria not to talk of world threatening pandemic like coronavirus which wiped out millions in developed world with sophisticated health facilities and institutions. It is good to pass across an important message especially on a killer virus like COVID-19 but it is another thing to appear convincing and credible enough for the audience

receivers of the communication contents to accept the messages passed. It is in line of the last of the paragraph that this study is set to examine the audience level of exposure to social media messages on coronavirus and their response rate to the communicated messages which predicates their adoption of the health safety measures in the country.

### **Statement of Problem**

Significantly, the Nigerian health sector is something else that no citizen of the country will claim not to be aware of. The decay there is highly pronounced to the extent that it is only the poor ones in the country that are being attended to using the facilities while the rich and the politicians fly themselves and their relatives abroad for sound medical attention at any little health challenge (*Sahara Reporters*, 2009; Umeh, 2010; Agudoso, Ikegbunam & Obiakor, 2018). In this regard, the citizens have lost total trust in the capacity of the country's health sector to contain the virus should it eventually crept into the country. Unfortunately, NCDC is busy communicating the country's readiness to combat the virus contrary to the true position of the health institution in the country. The health situation that the people knew before the outbreak of the virus creates a different impression contrary to the information that NCDC are giving at the arrival of the virus which subjected both the rich and the poor to the compulsory use of the highly dilapidated health facilities in

Nigeria. This draws the battle line between what the people know and what they are told by the health maintenance body in Nigeria. The duty of NCDC is reduced to only sending information while that of the people is to receive what they are told and act or not to act. It could also be recalled since the outbreak of the virus, different studies from different scholars have examined different aspects of the virus but little or no effort have been put in place into examining the audience and their acceptance of the social media communicated messages showing updates and how to stay safe from the virus by NCDC. It was against this background that this study examined the exposure to social media messages and audience response to the communicated messages of the possible spread of the virus to Nigeria and their adoption of the health safety measure as communicated by NCDC.

### **Research Questions**

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the respondents' level of exposure to social media messages on coronavirus by NCDC?
2. To what extent do the respondents accept what NCDC tell them through social media handles as the true position of thing on the virus?
3. Does NCDC social media communications on the readiness of the country to curtail the virus

make respondents optimistic that the virus can be curtail in Nigeria?

4. Do respondents observe the health safety measures as a result of the social media messages from NCDC?

### **Significance of Study**

This study will show how credible Nigerians take NCDC to be during the COVID-19 pandemic period. It shows the height of the peoples' understanding of the true health realities in the country pointing at the decay that has made them loss confidence in the ability of NCDC to curtail the virus. This study reiterates the urgent need for the resuscitations of the health institutions and possible equipment of the sector with both human and material resources to make it functional for use by all ahead of other impending health emergencies. It will make the NCDC see how their social media messages on the virus were perceived by Nigerian citizens during the pandemic. Finally, the study will add to academic literature on health communication and emergency management in by the NCDC.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study is premised on NCDC use of twitter and telegram social media platforms for communicating coronavirus messages to the citizens of the country. Other social media platforms used by the health regulatory body in Nigeria other these two are beyond the coverage of this study. The

study also does not cover posts on social media that are shared by any other individual or group of persons other than NCDC. As an audience-based study, this study is premised in Awka metropolis. This means that respondents who are not from the above area of study were not covered in the study. The study is limited to the respondents' views on the social media posts concerning coronavirus by the NCDC between March 2020 and March 2021. Any post from the NCDC that came before or after this the above selected time frame is not covered in the study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In keeping with the importance of theory to Mass Communication and social science research, this study was based on the social exchange theory and source credibility theory as its theoretical framework.

### **The Social Exchange Theory**

The Social Exchange theory was propounded by Homans in 1958 to present the possible human behavior on taken certain decisions in accepting a given media message designed for them. The theory looked at human beings from the point of view of their ability to analyze all communicated contents by placing the cost of an action against its benefits. Considering human beings as rational animal that looks at the gratifications for taking a particular course of action, the theory posits that the media audience weighs the benefits of the marketing

communication designed to attract them into acting in a particular way against the possible cost of acting in such manner. Whether to accept to act in line with the communicated values or attitude is dependent upon the success of possible positive outcome. In other words, if the cost is higher than the benefits that they audience perceive, they will abandon the communication but if otherwise, they will take the better side. Drawing from the postulation of the theory as stated above, to arrive at a decision to accept that the killer coronavirus had spread to Nigeria as communicated by NCDC, the citizens of Nigeria weigh the capacity of the health management body to battle the virus and compares this to what the virus do to lives in other countries with reliable health facilities and trusted health institutions like China and US, Canada and Germany. Unfortunately, a careful consideration of the health institutions and their facilities in the above mentioned countries when placed against their Nigerian counterpart will not permit any Nigerian to admit that coronavirus ever entered the country. Even without being told, Nigerians are aware that they can only survive the virus through God's intervention and never as a result of medical facilities and ability of the NCDC to manage the virus.

Social exchange theory is a social psychological and sociological perspective theory that explains social change and stability as a process of *negotiated* exchange between parties

(Njoki, 2013; Ikegbunam & Agudoso, 2021). Social exchange theory posits that human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost benefit analysis and the comparison of possible outcomes. The theory has its roots in Economics, Psychology and Sociology. The theory shares similar views and assumptions with structuralism and rational choice theory. It is also frequently used in the business world to imply a two-sided, mutually contingent and rewarding process that are usually seen in business transactions or exchange.

While acknowledging the position of the theory, Ikegbunam and Agudoso (2021) opined that the individual media messages consumers are expected to consider the costs of their behavior –what do they stand to gain or loss and the possible future impacts that can follow up an action taken as a result of adopting and accepting a given media message. If actually, NCDC social media audience subscribe to their messages that they can combat coronavirus with the medical facilities in Nigeria, they can agree and accept their messages as true and therefore, act in line with the directives given to help them combat the virus. If otherwise, the audience are bound to read the messages from NCDC and find other important things to think about rather than there are coronavirus in Nigeria.

Actually, while dishing out the information about the spread of the virus to Nigeria and the possible health behaviors to adopt to stay free from

the virus, NCDC have their target audience at heart. Their social media followers who they want to sell their ideas to and the people who will serve the secondary audience to influence others into accepting what is communicated. The position of this theory is that people accept to act in a particular manner if they consider the benefits of engaging in the action outweighs the costs of embarking on such behavior. What do Nigerians loss in accepting that the virus has spread to the country and what they stand to gain if the virus did not spread to Nigeria forms the controlling variables that will determine whether to accept the messages by NCDC or not.

Moreover, this theory shares the same aspiration with the uses and gratifications theory which presupposes that the world has transcended from what the media contents do to the audience to what the people do with the media contents (Agbanu, 2013, p. 176; Nwabueze, 2014, p. 47; Nwodu, 2017, p. 141). It is pertinent to also state that the theory shares the same view with the theory of reasoned action which according to Glynn (2004, cited in Agbanu, 2014), argues that human beings are rational and as a result, evaluate the cost and benefits of their actions and inactions before taken decision on media messages.

Relating this theory to this current study, the message of the spread of coronavirus to Nigeria and the request by NCDC to place bans on public function and several other

safety health measures as presented in their social media messages to their followers have been received by the respondents but whether they buy the idea and as well act in the direction of the message is by this theory seen as a matter of exchange controlled by observed cost/benefit analysis.

### **Source Credibility Theory**

This theory was propounded by Hovland, Janis, and Kelly in 1951 (Olumuji, Asemah & Edegoh, 2013). The theory posits that media message consumers are likely to accept, believe and be persuaded to believe what is communicated to them when the source of such information presents itself to be credible. Considering the above position of the proponents of this theory, the credibility of a media message is grossly dependent on the audience reaction to the content. As captured in the words of Chu and Kamal (2008), the credibility of a source determines how the audience reacts to its contents. According to Murphy and Auter (2012, cited in Nwabueze and Ikegbunam, 2015), source credibility theory provides a template for explaining the ways through which the characters of communications influence the receivers into processing and utilizing the contents received. Here the consideration of the receivers' attitudinal change occasioned by the message received is solely dependent on the views and perception of the sender by the receiver. Significantly, message receivers' believability is

controlled by the ability of the receiver of media content to adjudge such content as credible.

Relating this theory to the current study, the source credibility theory provides readers with an understanding of what the receivers of the NCDC social media messages that coronavirus has entered the country feel about what they received. What is their views of the source that supplied them such media contents and what satisfaction do they derive from the content? It cannot be out of place to state that the views held and utilization of media content is dependent mostly on the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction the receivers derive from the content. When a particular media content failed to satisfy the aspiration of the public, it will be hard for such media content to translate into action among the people (Nwabueze & Ikegbunam, 2015). The theory provides the study with the views held among people who receive news about the spread of coronavirus to Nigeria.

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Social Media and Rapid Information Dissemination in a Global Pandemic**

To reach out to the public faster, social media platforms are considered among information disseminators. This is because a reasonable number of the population of the global society are social media subscribers. The ability of social media to transmit information faster to a large audience has been

grossly established by different social media scholars. According to Kudchadkar and Carroll (2020), there had never been a more important need for rapid information dissemination in the 21st century than during the coronavirus pandemic. At the time of the pandemic, there arose the urgent need to keep the public informed of the impending health danger especially given the fact that the ravaging virus proves highly incurable. This need forced the NCDC to subscribe to the use of social media platforms which penetrate the people even without due respect for their privacy as a means of disseminating information on the virus. Social media is a real-time and instant communication platform that is used in healthcare for information dissemination and acquisition, professional networking, and patient advocacy (Barnes, Kaul, & Kudchadkar, 2019; Carroll, Dangayach, & Khan, 2019). One significant benefit of social media use for information dissemination during the COVID-19 period is prompt delivery which encourages instantaneous access to the most recent information and or update available on the virus. In the adoption of the social media in the dissemination coronavirus related information, the NCDC are focused on the citizens with the aim of ensuring that they are informed on the health challenges facing the world. The messages are designed in a way to make the citizens understand that they are their own caregiver and health attendants considering the stubborn

nature of the virus and they can achieve this through subscribing to the communicated safety measures. Studies (Harris, Hawkins, & Nguyen, 2017; Scott & Errett, 2018; Lehnert, Ellingson, Goryoka, Kasturi, Maier & Chamberlain, 2017) have shown that social media is globally becoming the most cost-effective means through which public health practitioners disseminate health related information and enhance communication during public health emergencies or outbreaks, and respond to public reporting of a particular public health issue.

### **The Nigerian Government and Her Health Sector Vs Coronavirus Pandemic**

At the outbreak of the coronavirus, governments across countries were challenged to make efforts towards the containment of the virus which proves to be incurable. It is the duty of the government to provide utilities for the people in the state. The utilities that the people deserve from the government includes health facilities that can help in combating health emergencies such as the coronavirus. Unfortunately, the Nigerian government has over the years been grappling for survival from unprecedented governance challenges, insecurity, secession as a result of power imbalance and more. The country is based on self-help for the poor masses and foreign medical treatment for those in power. Since those in power sought and get medical

helps abroad, it became very hard for the government to initiate public policies on maintenance of health institutions in Nigeria and execute them. Shamefully, the pandemic uncovered gaps in both lack of government commitments to establish a working health institution in the country and their subscription to seeking medical treatment abroad which directly affect the nature and quality of the health institutions in the country rendering it perfectly incapacitated to tackle the pandemic and its spread (OECD, 2020). The level of decay in the country's health sector put the health managers into a fire brigade approach to tackling the pandemic which was manifest in the establishment of the coronavirus isolation centers across the country.

The coronavirus compounded the country's problem and places the government on more complicated state of the mind because no country is safe for the big brothers to seek medical help from. Significantly, managing such crises like coronavirus pandemic and addressing its socio-economic consequences requires robust policy action to maintain functioning healthcare systems which is completely lacking in Nigeria. considering the health condition of the country, Obi-Ani, Ezeaku, Ikem, Isiani, Obi-Ani and Onu (2021) argued that at the breakout of the virus, Nigerians were overwhelmed with fear and awe not only because of the deadly and contagious nature of the virus but because of prevailing certain

conditions rampant in Nigeria which but not limited to an inept and unconcerned leadership crowned by dilapidated health institutions characterized by poor working conditions, facilities and incentives. The researchers blamed the government of the government for lone term negligence of the health sector for foreign medical help sought by the big brothers and those in control of public owned resources who use same for their health medical trips at the expense of the public.

According to WHO, Nigeria is among the high-risk countries of the world where the coronavirus effect is expected to be very devastating and dreadful. This alone puts pressure on every Nigerian especially the low-income earners who hardly eat well in the house talk more of affording the pay for their health rehabilitation. According to centre for policy Impact in Global Health (2020), Nigeria has an average score of 1.9 across the 15 World Health Organisation's Joint External Evaluation (JEE) indicators in the prevent category. This means that in all, Nigeria has limited capacity to prevent biological, chemical, or radiation health risk. The report also shows that the country was better prepared in the detect category with an average score of 2.6 across the 13 World Health Organisation's Joint External Evaluation (JEE) indicators meaning that the country has developed *some* capabilities to detect new health risks through real-time surveillance, and laboratory

capabilities to test the diseases. Unfortunately, the sustainability of these capabilities is still in doubt. Finally, it was confirmed that Nigeria performed *badly* in the respond category, with an average score of just 1.5 across the 20 World Health Organisation's Joint External Evaluation (JEE) indicators which means that Nigeria has limited capacity to respond to a sudden health risk. The above data was corroborated by the views expressed in (Obi-Ani, 2021) where they concluded that the fear in Nigeria is not on the deadly nature of the virus but on the decay of health sector. A cursory look at the Nigeria level of preparedness to combat the disease shows that the country had only 350 ventilators and 350 ICU beds for its entire population before the outbreak and was able to acquire only 100 more ventilators in April 2020. The rate of growth of the cases in the country means that this will not be enough. Drawing from the above data, it could be concluded that the country is not capable of handling coronavirus. The implication of this is that the government and the health maintenance body in the country has to leverage on the use of the media to inform the people to stay out of the virus for prevention is better than cure. This also calls for the investigation of media contents on the infrastructural decay in the health sector.

### Method of Study

This study was conducted using the survey research method. The

researcher shared the questionnaire to the respondents who filled same and returned. There was a total mortality of 68 copies accounting for 17 percent of the sample drawn for the study. This means that the data presented below are based on the responses from these 32 copies that were safely returned and found valid for the study. The questionnaire investigates the people's level of exposure, whether they believe in NCDC reports on the pandemic and whether they are optimistic that the health body in Nigeria is actually ready to combat the pandemic.

### Data Presentations

#### Respondents' level of exposure to NCDC social media messages on the spread of coronavirus to Nigeria

Response categories	Frequency	Percentage
Highly exposed	218	66%
Moderately exposed	114	34%
Poorly exposed	0	0%
Total	332	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2021

This data suggests that the NCDC has done their best by using their social media platforms to pass across information to the people on the state of the pandemic. It also shows the social media power of disseminating information to the public.

**To what extent do the respondents accept what NCDC tell them through social media handles as the true position of thing on the virus?**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Very high extent	78	23.4%
High extent	54	16.2%
Low extent	115	34.6%
Very low extent	85	25.6%
Total	332	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2021

In this table the researcher tested the extent of acceptance of the messages from NCDC among the people. The data revealed that majority of the respondents have low extent of acceptance of what they are being told by the NCDC on social media concerning the state of the virus in Nigeria.

**Does NCDC social media communications on the readiness of the country to contain the virus make respondents optimistic that the virus can be contained in Nigeria?**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	65	19.5%
Never	163	49%
Can't say	104	31.2%
Total	332	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2021

This table deals on the trust of the health body in Nigeria by the citizens. According to the data, 163 respondents never subscribe to the power of NCDC in handling coronavirus in Nigeria. They are not optimistic that the virus can be managed in the country is it eventually hits that country.

**Do respondents observe the health safety measures as a result of the social media messages from NCDC**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	67	20.1%
Never	114	34.3%
Not very sure	151	45.4
Total	332	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2021

This table shows that respondents observe health safety measures but not as a result of the NCDC social media communications on the status of the virus. With only 20.1% of the people admitting that they adhere to health safety measure because of their exposure to the social media updates by NCDC on the virus, it is a pointer to the fact that the people hardly take the NCDC serious on the outbreak of the virus.

**Discussion of Findings**

On the first research question posed to the respondents' level of exposure to NCDC social media information dissemination on COVID-19, the data from table one demonstrated that the majority of the respondents are highly exposed to NCDC social media messages on COVID-19. In fact, all the respondents admitted being exposed in different magnitude with none choosing the poorly exposed response category. This finding corroborates the findings in tandem with that of Bao, Sun, Meng, Shi & Lu, (2020) where it was found that the social media is one of main channels

of updating the COVID-19 information around the world. The finding shows the social media power of disseminating information urgently to the people and as well justified the claims by social media scholars that there is heavy presence of the youths in different social media platforms (Pew Research Center, 2015; Instagram, 2018). The global use of social media in several other situations in mobilizing the people for mass action also justifies the power of the social media to set agenda for public discussion.

Looking at the second research question posed for the study, the researcher found that there is low level of believability of the NCDC messages shared on social media among the people. The messages that were shared to convince the audience of the presence of COVID-19 in Nigeria were seen by the respondents differently. While the NCDC were busy dishing out communications on how best to combat the virus, the audience are busy considering how much the members of the organization are going to make from the public treasury after the pandemic. This corroborated a statement made by the director of NCDC Chikwe Ihekweazu, who lamented getting a true picture of the pandemic is becoming difficult in some states of the federation (Adepoju, 2020). The distrust on NCDC by Nigerians can be justified in the views expressed in Marbot (2020) that Nigeria is not only at high risk of being hit by the virus

but also among the vulnerable African nations, given the weak state of her healthcare system. This finding is a pointer to the fact that there are other factors that compete with the media in setting agenda for public discussions. In this contest, the people's previous knowledge of the decay in the Nigeria's health sector has denied NCDC communication the power to create impact on the people and get them to agree that the NCDC can cure the virus. This finding further supports the views in Ikegbunam and Agudoso (2020) who argued that setting agenda is different from acting the agenda. The media have set an agenda in the communication on COVID-19 but previous knowledge has set a counter agenda that appealed to the people more than the former.

While probing to know whether the assurance by the health organisation in Nigeria on their preparedness to tackle the virus as communicated in the social media handles make the people to believe them, data from table 3 revealed that Nigerians were very pessimistic on the ability of the health agency in the country to contain the virus. Majority of the respondents categorically choose the Never response category when asked whether they believe the claims by NCDC that they can handle the virus. This finding confirms the level of distrust that Nigerian population have on the NCDC. The decay in the health sector makes NCDC less credible before the audience who access them based on

their infrastructures rather than their communication techniques. Their knowledge of the condition of the health sector in Nigeria has taken the peoples' attitude on health realities away from what is communicated to what is realizable. To many of the respondents, the messages from the health agency in Nigeria are a scam aimed at enriching themselves at the expense of the masses. This finding corroborates the fact presented in the record from Centre for Policy Impact in Global Health (2020) where it was reported that Nigeria has an average score of 1.9 across the 15 World Health Organisation's Joint External Evaluation (JEE) indicators in the COVID-19 prevention category.

On the fourth research question posed to ascertain if the respondents adopt and observe the health safety measures as result of the posts by NCDC on social media, the data obtained as contained in table four shows that the audience are not moved to accepting the communicated health safety measures by the message, they saw from NCDC. The table maintained that vast majority of the sample 151 respondents choose the "Not Very sure" response category. The observed none compliance among the citizens is mainly because of inappropriate provision of economic needs of the people especially among the low-income earners. This finding corresponds with the views of social exchange theorists who argues that the adoption of a given media messages by the audience are based on observed

cost benefit analysis of the respondents (Glynn, 2004, cited in Agbanu, 2014). To adopt a message or not is an attitude-based actions that are mostly determined by other factors such as education, age and economy to name but a few. The respondents in this study have different reasons for their decisions. While some admitted obeying the restrictions as a result of their exposure, others declined. This also implies that exposure to certain communication contents does not necessarily translate to acting the communicated behavior by the target. After a due consideration of the possible outcome of staying at home and regularly washing of hands with soap and running water, one may be forced to flaunt to the restriction order if the next possible consequence of the action is considered more inimical to flaunting the order.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the data presented, this study concludes that although the respondents are well exposed to NCDC social media messages on COVID-19, the majority of the target audience never believed the messages and claims of being able to handle the virus. The study also concluded that a target audience previous knowledge usually creates an impact on what they believe irrespective of where and how it was communicated. This is evidence in the observed impact exerted by the situation of health institutions and the facilities in the country which set counter agenda that dominated the

media agenda. Finally, media agenda setting is not automatic. It is dependent on other factors which compete with the media in setting the agenda for the public. It is time to consider the realities on ground while looking at the media messages on the people. The target audience failed to trust the NCDC as a result of the previous knowledge and the height of corruption in Nigeria.

### Recommendations

This study recommended as follows:

1. That the federal government should do all in their power to provide a better health institutions and facilities to boost the health strength of the health agency in the country ahead of other emergencies.
2. That the NCDC should purify themselves of corrupt officers in order to regain credibility from the people since this study has shown that they are not trusted by anybody in the country.
3. Nigerians should adhere to health organizations and obey restriction orders during health emergencies in order to prevent spread of diseases.
4. That economic life and survival of the people must be factored in each time some restrictions are to be placed against certain behaviours for health reasons.

### References

- Adepoju, p. (2020). *Politics gets in the way of Nigeria's COVID-19 response*.  
<https://www.devex.com/news/politics-gets-in-the-way-of-nigeria-s-covid-19-response-97720>.
- Agbanu, V. N. (2013). *Mass communication introduction, techniques, issues*. Enugu: Rhyce Kerex Publishers
- Agbanu, V. N. (2014). *Propaganda, mass media and public opinion. A discourse on the battle for people's mind*. Enugu: Rhyce Kerex Publishers
- Agudoso, F. I., Ikegbunam, P.C. & Obiakor, C. U. (2018). *A study of selected nigerian newspapers' coverage of president buhari's ill health*.
- Bao, Y., Sun, Y., Meng, S., Shi, J. and Lu, L. (2020). 2019-nCoV epidemic: Address mental health care to empower society. *The Lancet*, Feb 07, 2020. DOI:[https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30309-3](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30309-3).
- Bowd, K. (2016). Social media and news media: Building new publics or fragmenting audience. In M. Griffiths & K. Barbour (Eds.), *Making public, making spaces* (pp.129-144). University of Adelaide Press.
- Chu, S. & Kamal, S. (2008). The effect of perceived blogger credibility are argument quality on message elaboration and attitudes: An exploratory study. *Journal of*

- Interactive Advertising*, 8(2) (spring), 26 – 37.
- Ikegbunam, P. C., & Agudosy, F. I. (2021). Cultivating Biafran agenda in Nigeria: Evaluation of the influence of radio Biafra’s rhetoric of ethnic marginalization on rural dwellers in the South-east. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 13(1), 23-37.
- Kreps, G. L. (2001). The evolution and advancement of health communication inquiry. In: Gudykunst WB, ed. *Communication yearbook* 24. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001.
- Kudchadkar, S. R. & Carroll, C. L. (2019). *Using social media for rapid information dissemination in a pandemic*. #PedsICU and Coronavirus Disease 2019.
- Marbot, O. (2020). *Coronavirus Africa map: Which countries are most at risk?*  
<https://www.theafricareport.com/23948/coronavirus-africa-which-countries-are-most-at-risk/>
- Murphy, C.J. & Auter, P.J. (2012). The politics of the source: How the credibility of a news source changes based on the political perception of blogs. *American Communication Journal*, 14 (1), 1-17.
- Njoki, M. M. (2013). Effect of customer perception on performance of private hospitals in Nairobi: A case study of Karen hospital. *Asian Society of Business and Commerce Research*, 4(5), 60-71.
- Nwabueze, C. & Ikegbunam, P. (2015). Source credibility and internet blog news stories: Implications to security in Nigeria. *ANSU Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 3 (2), 22-36.
- Nwabueze, C. D. (2014). *Introduction to mass communication. Media ecology in the global village*. Owerri: Top Shelves Publishers.
- Nwodu, L. C. (2007). “Questioning the media power of agenda setting: A case for agenda mirroring hypothesis. *International Journal of Communication, UNN*.
- Nwodu, L.C. (2017). *Research in communication and other behavioural sciences: Principles, methods and issues*. Enugu: Rhyce Kerex Publishers.
- Obi-Ani, N. A., Anikwenze, C. & Isiani, M. C. (2020). Social media and the Covid-19 pandemic: Observations from Nigeria. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 7(1), 1799483, DOI: 10.1080/23311983.2020.1799483 Accessed on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2021 from <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2020.1799483>.
- Obi-Ani, N. A., Ezeaku, D. O., Isiani, I, Obi-Ani P. and Onu F. C., (2021). Covid-19 pandemic and The Nigerian primary healthcare system: The leadership question, *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 8:1, 1859075, DOI:

- 10.1080/23311983.2020.1859075
- OECD, (2020). *OECD policy responses to coronavirus COVID-19 and Africa: Socio-economic implications and policy responses*.  
<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid-19-and-africa-socio-economic-implications-and-policy-responses-96e1b282/>
- Olumuji, E., Asemah, E.S. & Edegoh, L.O. (2013). Citizen journalism and credibility: A study of *Sahara reporters.com*. ANSU, *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, (2) 1-13.
- SaharaReporters (MAY 30, 2009). *Umaru Yar`dua: Great expectation, disappointing outcome -Nasir El-Rufai*.
- Togun, E. (2020). *BMJ global health, in conjunction with the emerging voices for global health on covid-19 in sub-saharan Africa*.
- Umeh, T. (2010). *Media framing of late president Yar`Adua's absence: The push for favorable public opinion*. An Unpublished Seminar Paper Presented at the Annual Conference of SIFE in Abuja.