

INFLUENCE OF NEWSPAPER COVERAGE ON READERS' COMPLIANCE WITH COVID- 19 PREVENTIVE MESSAGES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the elements that affect people's compliance with preventative measures has become essential for public health activities in the aftermath of the global Covid-19 epidemic. This study looks into how readers' compliance behaviours with Covid-19 preventive measures are influenced by newspaper coverage. The study adopts a quantitative research approach, using surveys and statistical analyses to assess the link between newspaper coverage and readers' compliance with Covid-19 prevention guidelines, using both Agenda Setting theory and the KAP model. The questionnaire was used to test participants' understanding of preventative measures, exposure to Covid-19 news coverage, and compliance with suggested guidelines. The study discovered that during the pandemic, newspapers had a substantial influence on readers in preventing the virus's spread. The findings shed light on the role of newspapers in shaping public behaviour during a health crisis and inform communication strategies to promote effective preventive practices. Ultimately, the study provided actionable insights for policy-makers, journalists, and health professionals to enhance public health outcomes and mitigate the spread of infectious diseases. The results provide insight into how newspapers affect public behaviour during a health emergency and provide guidance for communication methods to support successful preventative measures.

Keywords: Covid-19, newspapers, preventive measures, coverage, pandemic

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INTRODUCTION

Media messages play a pivotal role in educating and informing the masses on various topical issues ranging from politics, economics, entertainment and health. Covid-19 is caused by a novel strain of coronavirus, and the symptoms were identical to those of the common cold. Cough, loss of smell, shortness of breath, and fever are examples (WHO, 2020). On the other hand, the repercussions are more severe than the symptoms, since it can result in pneumonia, distress syndrome, viral sepsis, acute respiratory failure, renal failure, and other issues. According to Sravani S, Arpan A, Kishore Challagundla, and Siddapa N. B (2020), the problems have been noted to intensify with time dependent on the individual's health status. The majority of COVID-19 patients will have mild to moderate respiratory illness and will get better without the need for additional treatment. (Sohrabi, C., Alsfi, Z., O'Neil, N., Khan, M., Kerwan, A., Al-Jabir, A., Iosifidis, C., Agha, R., 2020).

However, in communicating health crisis the mass media has a tangible role to play in creating awareness about the health issue. According to Laswell Harold (1948), the three primary roles of communication in society are environmental monitoring, societal response to its environment coordination, and the dissemination of cultural legacy. Wright (1960) created this fundamental framework to explain numerous media impacts and included amusement as a fourth crucial media function. Global media coverage was provided by the Covid-19 illness surveillance and updating via a live updates dashboard. Thanks to the media, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) were able to respond to public health messages promptly and extensively.

In order to eradicate pandemics, the role of the media continues to be fundamental. Media outlets including television, radio, and print have frequently been used to spread information about effective public health measures like social withdrawal, washing our hands, breathing hygiene, and government policies in containing epidemics (Collinson, S., Khan, K. & Heffernan, J. M. 2015). Ekwutosi et al. (2020) claim that journalists covered cases, death tolls, and preventative measures the public should take to avoid getting infected with the virus from their first-hand accounts. Both the media and healthcare officers have been working hard to ensure that Covid-19 is combated by keeping the public informed. One of the contemporary global challenges in managing infectious diseases is dealing with information about novel coronavirus 2019 (Covid-19). Daily newspapers are part of the mass media. Mass media aim to inform, educate and entertain. Apuke and Omar (2021) opine that fake news and inaccurate information are common features during the outbreak of the virus. This gives emphasis to the need for the media to provide up to date coverage about the virus.

Numerous studies have been conducted on how Covid-19 has been covered by the media worldwide and in Nigeria. (Ata-Awaji and Confidence, 2021; Igboeli and Ezebuneyi, 2021; Ufuophu-Biri E and Bebenimibo Paul, 2021; Scopelliti, M., Pacilli, M. G., & Aquino, A. 2021). However, studies are yet to interrogate the influence of media reportage on creating awareness and audience

compliance to the preventive messages about Covid-19 with particular reference to Ogun State Nigeria

Research Objectives

1. To evaluate audience knowledge of Covid-19 preventive messages as disseminated by Nigerian Newspaper
2. To evaluate audience Attitude to Covid-19 preventive messages as disseminated by Nigerian Newspaper
3. To evaluate audience Compliance level of Covid-19 preventive messages/ guidelines as disseminated by Nigerian Newspaper.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Newspapers, being a permanent media, have been researched by numerous researchers from various angles over the years. This study provides a comprehensive review of several research papers linked to the topic of this research attempt.

Similar studies on Nigerians' exposure to broadcast media messages and awareness of the Covid-19 epidemic in Port Harcourt were conducted by Ata-Awaji and Confidence 2021. The investigation confirmed that broadcast media messages concerning Covid-19 are being disseminated to Port Harcourt citizens. They have extensive understanding about the virus. However, they have a low compliance attitude towards the disease-related broadcast messages. The study finds that although Port Harcourt people were exposed to broadcast messages and were aware of COVID-19, they did not trust the messages and showed little compliance with them. In their study, Igboeli and Ezebuneyi's (2021) findings, a significant proportion of the participants in the survey had been exposed to newspaper coverage regarding COVID-19. Most participants agreed that news coverage of Covid-19 in newspapers raises awareness of the disease's prevalence. A sizeable portion of respondents had positive things to say about newspaper coverage of COVID-19. Furthermore, the majority of respondents concurred that their opinions on the matter were influenced by the strategy newspapers used to cover COVID-19. The study revealed that a considerable number of participants, precisely 115 individuals or 29.8%, strongly agreed when asked to rate the degree to which news reports about the Covid-19 pandemic influence their opinions. 41 people, or 10.6% of the sample, disagreed, while 86 more respondents, or 22.3 percent, chose to agree. Furthermore, 25 participants, or 6.5 percent, strongly disagreed, showing that over two-thirds of respondents agreed that news reports about the Covid-19 pandemic have an impact on readers' opinions of the virus.

In 2021, Ufuophu-Biri E and Bebenimibo Paul conducted a study in Delta State, Nigeria, focusing on the residents' adherence to preventive measures and their exposure to media messages regarding

Covid-19. According to the findings, 86% of the participants reported frequently being exposed to Covid-19 messages in the media. There was also a significant association found between the exposure to Covid-19-related media messages and the observance of preventive measures, even though most participants only partially complied.

In a related study, "TV News and COVID-19: Media Influence on Healthy Behaviour in Public Spaces," Scopelliti et al. (2021) found that media exposure, attitudes towards social preventative activities, and mild anxiety all appeared to play a part in promoting healthier behaviours when it comes to using public spaces. It's interesting to note that perception of scary information did not significantly predict healthy behaviours in public spaces.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

This study uses both Agenda Settings theory and the Knowledge Attitude and Practice (KAP) model to form the theoretical framework of the study.

The Agenda Setting Theory

This theory was propounded by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in 1972/1973. The major assumption of the Agenda setting theory as presented by Anaeto et al (2021) is that the media the facts media audiences know about public issues are those that the media presented to media audience that is the media set agenda for public discussion.

The agenda-setting hypothesis contends that the media have the authority to choose which issues receive attention and how they are presented, ultimately influencing public opinion and policy debates. The media may influence the prominence and significance of certain problems in the audience's thoughts by repeatedly covering and emphasising them. The media are crucial in shaping the bounds of public debate since they inform the public and set the agenda.

According to McCombs & Valenzuela (2007), the news media's agenda-setting function goes beyond only bringing a certain set of issues to the public's notice; it also affects how we see and grasp the news' subject matter. Going by this, According to the argument, media outlets encourage individuals to think about certain things rather than telling them what to believe. The media may focus public attention and sculpt popular perceptions of social issues and events by emphasising some issues and downplaying others. In addition, agenda-setting theory contends that the media's effect goes beyond the subjects they cover to the way they present those problems, affecting how viewers view and assess them. Therefore in relation to this study, the general objective of this study set out to discover if the frequent or continuous coverage of Covid-19 related stories by Nigeria newspapers influences the readers' knowledge, attitude and practice of the preventive guidelines presented by the newspapers

KAP Model

KAP theory is a theory of health behaviour change that was put forth by western academics in the 1960s. According to this theory, human behaviour changes occur in three stages: acquiring knowledge, developing attitudes, and forming behaviours (Kim, T. R., Ross, J. A., & Smith, D. P. 1969). When it comes to understanding the processes involved in behavioural and social change, the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practise (KAP) model provides a framework that clarifies the connections between an individual's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours (Singhal, Rao, & Pant, 2006; Singhal & Rogers, 1999). Per this theory, beliefs and attitudes act as catalysts for behavioural change, while knowledge acts as the first step towards it (Fan Y, Zhang S, Li Y, Li Y, Zhang T, Liu W, Jiang H, 2018).

The relationship between knowledge, attitude, and practise is explained by a number of theoretical models; however, the most common framework for classifying KAP components is the cognitive model (Valente, Parades, & Poppe, 1998). According to this model, people learn about a behaviour and then engage in it after having a positive attitude towards it (Valente, Parades, & Poppe, 1998). The present study examines the effects of Covid-19 preventive recommendations that are circulating in newspapers on the conventional KAP model among Ogun State residents. Figure 1 presents the KAP model.

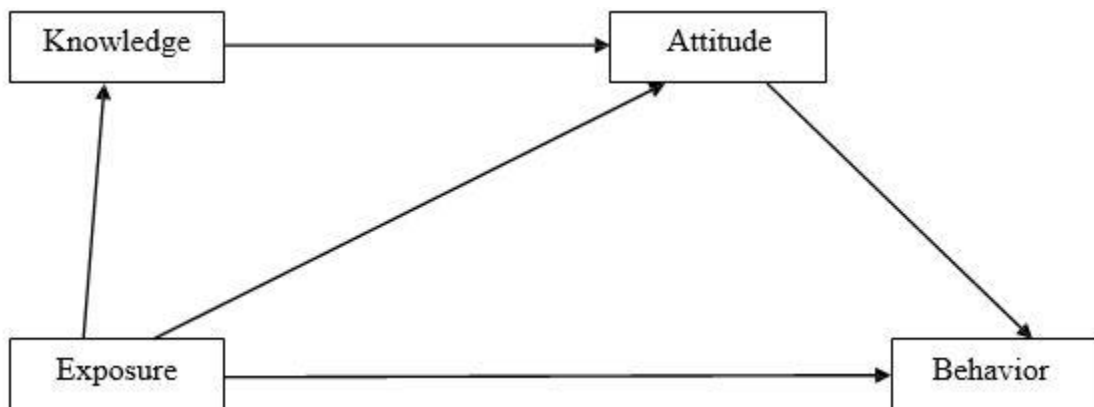


Figure 1: Depiction of KAP model

METHODOLOG

Research Design

The plan for doing research that incorporates the convergence of techniques of inquiry and particular procedures is referred to as research design. (Creswell, 2013). The research design used in

the study is quantitative. For this study, the popular survey research approach was utilized, which is ubiquitous in behavioral science and communication research. The descriptive study (survey) was carried out in order to show the importance of the information's abrupt surge in terms of readers' knowledge of and adherence to the Covid-19 prevention messaging in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Population of the Study

In the study the target population for the quantitative research approach were the 3,751,140 (National Population Commission, 2006) residents of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Sample size refers to the number of participants or observations included in a study. Since it is almost impracticable to study the entire population in any quantitative research, for this reason researchers have come up with sample size determining technique. This entails studying part of the population from where a conclusion about the population is drawn.

In determining the sample size for the quantitative research (Survey), the researcher used the Taro Yamane (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n = sample size; N = population size; e = limit of tolerable error always assumed to be 5% or 0.05; 1 = unity (always constant). The formula is reconstituted as:

Note: Population in Ogun State = 3, 751, 140 (from fct.gov.ng, 2006 census figures)

$$n = \frac{3, 751, 140}{1 + 3, 751, 140 (0.05)^2} = 400$$

Therefore, deducing from the Taro Yamane formula the total sample size for the survey is 400 respondents.

Multi-stage sampling was employed for the survey. Initially, every field of study was split up into three senatorial districts. Then the researcher randomly selected three Local Government Areas from the senatorial districts to study. Within the Local Government Areas, a second balloting was conducted to draw out the streets to be studied. Households in the streets were chosen for study using the systematic sampling technique. From each Local Government Areas, a total of one hundred and twenty (140) respondents were issued the questionnaire to get the total number of four hundred and twenty

respondents (420) to analyse. However, three hundred and twenty –four (324) questionnaires were returned. The various senatorial districts are:

Table 3.1: Senatorial districts within Ogun State.

SENATORIAL DISTRICTS	LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS
Ogun West	Ado Odo Ota (Otta), Imeko Afon (Imeko), Ipokia (Ipokia), Yewa North (Ayetoro) and Yewa South (Ilaro).
Ogun East	Ijebu East (Ogbere), Ijebu North (Ijebu Igbo), Ijebu North East (Attan), Ijebu-Ode (Ijebu ode), Ikenne (Ikenne Remo), Odogbolu (Odogbolu), Ogun Waterside (Abigi), Remo North (Ilisan Remo) and Sagamu (Sagamu).
Ogun Central	Abeokuta North (Akomoje), Abeokuta south (Ake), Ewekoro (Itori), Ifo (Ifo), Obafemi owode (Owode egba) and Odeda (Odeda)

Research Instrument

The quantitative technique involves monitoring and extracting Covid-19 news stories from the chosen newspapers in order to collect, evaluate, and display data using numerical (numerical) values. As a result, the researcher used a questionnaire to collect primary data used for this study. The questionnaire contains of twenty-four (24) closed-ended questions designed to elicit information about the respondents' demographics, traits, knowledge, attitudes, and practices about Covid-19 preventative messaging published in newspapers

Validity and Reliability for the Research instrument

In addition to avoiding double-barreled questions and using basic, well-known, and straightforward language while creating the questionnaire, the researcher did a pre-test exercise to guarantee the validity and reliability of the study. The pre-test survey collects the opinions of a small number of people in the population who were not included in the final survey sample (Forsyth & Lessler, 1991). 40 participants (10% of the survey sample size of 400) were used for the pilot test. In order to accomplish this, the researcher chose 36 respondents at random from the Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area, and asked them to reply to the questionnaire in the same manner that they typically participate in any data gathering activity that includes them.

This study used a test-retest reliability technique, in which the same test is given to a set of respondents once, and then the same respondents are given the same test again later.

In particular, the researcher asked the respondents about how responsive the questionnaire was, how easy or difficult it was to answer the different items, how clear the response options were, and how well the respondents could understand the questions. They also asked the respondents about the things they thought were disgusting. The researcher was able to improve the quality of the survey questionnaire in its final version by taking into account the pre-test overall input as well as the comments made by the participants who were studying.

Method of Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) package was used in the analysis of the data gathered using the questionnaire. The frequency distribution tables, percentage, chart and graph were also used for pictorial presentation of results to exhibit audience knowledge, attitude and practice of newspaper Covid-19 preventive measures.

Research Objective Explication

Here, the researcher used the data gathered from the quantitative analysis to proffer solution to this research objective. The researcher considered the knowledge, attitude and compliance level of the audience to the Covid-19 preventive measures/ guidelines.

- a) **Covid-19 Knowledge:** The respondents' demonstrated understanding of the Covid-19 preventive messages was assessed by means of ten (10) closed-ended questions. The questions focus on the respondents' awareness of Covid-19 preventive measures covered by newspapers, how often they are exposed to these measures, and how much the Covid-19 preventive messages have influenced their general perspective on the pandemic.
- b) **Attitude toward Covid-19:** The researcher employs five closed-ended questions to gauge respondents' attitudes regarding the Covid-19 preventive messages. Here, the researcher assesses the respondents' attitudes and beliefs regarding the Covid-19 prevention messages published in newspapers as well as their trust in the media to stop the virus from spreading. A question about the respondents' opinions of newspapers' functions and attitudes towards Covid-19 prevention messaging was posed. There will be a Strongly Agree or Strongly Disagree response option on the Likert scale.
- c) **Practice towards Covid-19 prevention:** Five closed-ended questions were posed in order to find out how frequently respondents generally practised Covid-19 prevention. The questions include how frequently the respondents follow the Covid-19 preventive advice published in newspapers, such as using a nose mask, avoiding social gatherings, washing their hands with soap, and maintaining a 2-meter social distance.

FINDINGS

Section One: Demographic Distribution of the Respondents

Table 1. Gender distribution of survey respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	153	47.2
Female	171	52.8
Total	324	100

Table 1 above illustrates the gender distribution of the survey participants, revealing that 47.2 percent of female respondents and 52.8 percent of male respondents, respectively, were newspaper readers. Given that this study focused on literate Nigerians who read newspapers, it is possible to infer from table 4.7 that the results represent the differences in literacy between males and females in Nigeria.

Table 2: Age Distribution of the Survey Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-29	99	30.6
30-39	33	10.2
40-49	142	43.8
50-59	35	10.8
60+	15	4.6
Total	324	100

Table 2 above shows that age group of 40–49 accounts for the majority of survey respondents, with 142 (43.8%) making up this group. The second-largest age group, with 99 (30.6%) respondents, is 18–29. Other age groups that comprised 10.8% and 10.2% of the total respondents were the 30-39 and 50-59 age groups.

Table 3: Marital status distribution of the survey Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Single	106	32.7
Married	151	46.6
Divorced	15	4.6
Widowed	52	16.1
Total	324	100

Table 3 above depicts the marital status of the respondents of the survey. The data revealed that majority 151(46.6%) of the total respondents are married while 106(32.7%) of the respondents are single and 16.1% are widowed and 4.6% of the respondents are divorced.

Table 4: Educational qualification distribution of the survey Respondents

Marital Status	Frequenc	Percent
None	0	0
Primary	10	3
Secondary	180	55
Tertiary	103	32
Post Graduate	31	10
Total	324	100

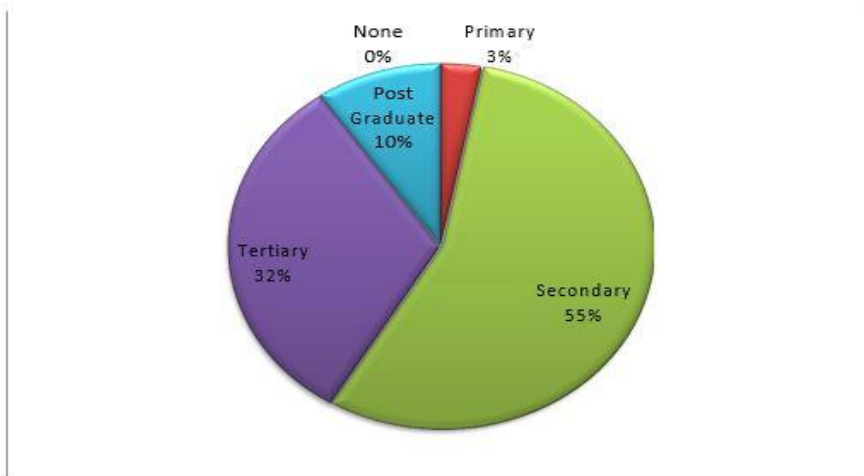


Figure 2: Educational qualification distribution of the survey respondents

The above figure 2 and Table 4 reveal that 3% of the respondents had only primary education, 55% had secondary education, 32% had tertiary education while 10% have post graduates’ qualifications. This finding implies that majority of the respondents had secondary education.

Table 5: Religion of the survey respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Christianity	127	39.2
Islam	197	60.8
Total	324	100

The above Table 5 above depicts the religious distribution of the respondents. The analysis of the religion gives the result percent of the respondents that practice the Islam religious to be the majority of the respondents of this study representing 60.8% while 39.2% of the respondents are Christians.

Section Two: Characteristics of The Respondents

Items in this section are used to analyze the respondents’ usage of newspapers

Table 6. Preferred version of newspaper among study respondents

Newspaper Version	Frequency	Percent
Print Copy	138	42.6
Online Copy	186	57.4
Total	324	100

Table 6 above reveals that 42.6% of the respondents prefer print copy of newspaper while 57.4% of the respondents are suited by the electronic version of newspaper. This implies that majority of the respondents prefer to read newspapers online rather than having the hard-copy.

From the foregoing table analyses, it can be deduced that a large number residents of Ogun State are prone to reading newspaper, however more than the average of the respondents reads online version of newspapers. This by extension means that internet version is more preferable than the printed version of newspaper by the readers in Ogun State.

Table 7. Frequency of newspaper readership

Response	Frequency	Percent
Everyday	125	38.6
Weekly	77	23.8
Monthly	14	4.3
2-3 times in a week	35	10.8
Cannot say	73	22.5
Total	324	100

The above table reveals that 38.6% of the respondents read newspapers daily, 23.8% read newspapers weekly, 4.3% read newspapers monthly, 10.8% read newspapers 2 to 3 times a week while 22.5% cannot fast track the frequency of newspaper readership. This implies that majority of respondents read newspapers on a daily basis.

Table 8: Purpose of reading newspaper

Response	Frequency	Percent
To improve general knowledge	162	50
For fun and passing leisure time	94	29
As a Hobby	68	21
Others	0	0
Total	324	100

From the above descriptive statistics, it is shown that 50% of the respondents read newspapers to improve their general knowledge, 29% read for fun and passing leisure time, 21% read newspaper as a hobby. The analysis implies that most of the respondents read newspaper to improve their general knowledge.

Figure 3: Assessment of the most read content of newspapers by respondents

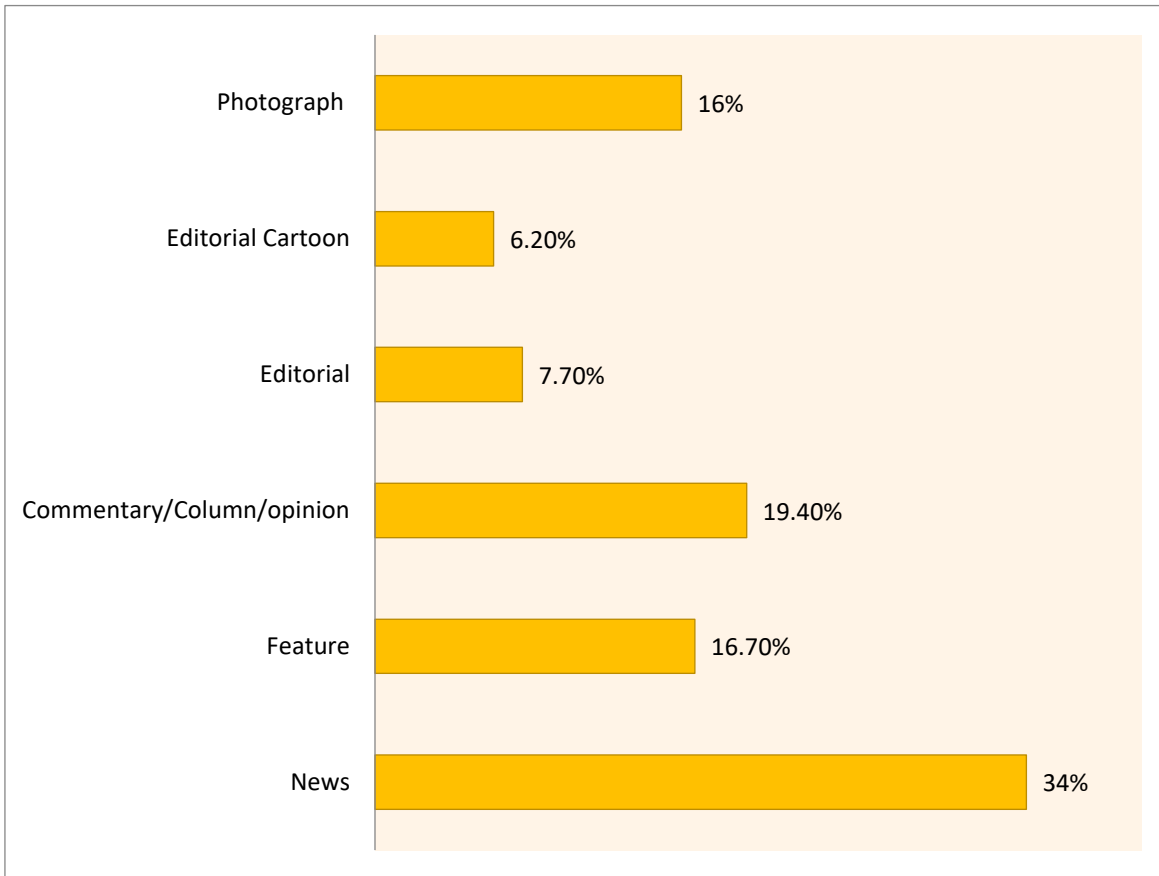


Figure 3: Assessment of the most read content of newspapers by respondents

The above figure reveals that 34% of the respondents read straight news in newspapers, 23.8% read feature stories in newspapers, 19.4% reads commentary/column/opinion items in newspapers, 7.7% reads editorial the most in newspapers, 6.2% of the respondents reads editorial cartoon the most in the newspaper. While 16% read photograph and picture stories in newspaper. This implies that majority of respondents’ reads news items on newspapers.

SECTION THREE: Evaluation of Respondents Knowledge of Covid-19 Preventive Messages

Table 9. Assessment of whether respondents have seen item related to Covid-19 preventive measures in the newspaper.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	324	100
No	0	0
Total	324	100

The findings in Table 9 reveal that all the respondents of the survey have been exposed to the Covid-19 preventive messages disseminated by Nigerian newspapers. The findings also revealed that majority of the respondents have seen some preventive messages in Nigerian newspapers such as washing of hands with soap and water, usage of nose mask and hand sanitizers, social distancing and avoiding unnecessary gathering.

Table 10. Frequency of respondents' exposure to Covid-19 Preventive Messages In newspaper.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Every time	203	62.7
Almost every time	85	26.2
Not often	36	11.1
Total	324	100

The above table reveals that 62.7% of the respondents are exposed to Covid-19 preventive messages every time, 26.2% are exposed to Covid-19 preventive messages almost every time, while 11.1% are not often are exposed to Covid-19 preventive messages This findings implies that majority of respondents are exposed to Covid-19 preventive messages every time.

Table 11: Respondents rating of newspaper messages on Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Good	187	57.7
Moderate	108	33.3
Poor	29	9
Total	324	100

The above table reveals that 62.7% of the respondents are exposed to Covid-19 preventive messages every time, 26.2% are exposed to Covid-19 preventive messages almost every time, while 11.1% are not often are exposed to Covid-19 preventive messages This findings implies that majority of respondents are exposed to Covid-19 preventive messages every time.

Table 12. Evaluation of newspaper messages influence on the respondents’ overall thinking of Covid-19 pandemic.

Question	Response	Frequency	Percent
Do newspaper messages influence your overall thinking about the Covid-19 pandemic?	Yes	255	78.7
	No	69	21.3
	Total	324	100

The findings in Table 12 reveals the influence newspaper on the respondents thinking about Covid-19. The findings indicates that newspaper messages influence the overall thinking of the majority 78.7% of the respondents about Covid-19 pandemic while 21.3% of the respondents are not influenced by newspaper messages about Covid-19 messages. The findings also revealed that majority of the respondents are influenced by newspapers’ messages about Covid-19 pandemic.

SECTION FOUR: Respondent’s Attitudes towards Covid-19 Preventive Messages

Table 13: Evaluation of respondents’ attitude towards Covid-19 preventive messages.

Item	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
1	Newspaper is a tool for public enlightenment on Covid-19	16 (49.4%)	101 (31.2%)	27 (8.3%)	21 (6.5%)	15 (4.6%)
2	Newspaper helps to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Ogun State	167 (51.5%)	85 (26.2%)	57 (17.6%)	5 (1.5%)	10 (3.1%)
3	The language used by newspaper in reporting Covid-19 are appropriate and understandable	80 (24.7%)	176 (54.3%)	30 (9.3%)	15 (4.6%)	23 (7.1%)
4	Newspaper information about Covid-19 are not adequate and this make me doubt Covid-19 as a reality	44 (13.6%)	42 (13%)	23 (7.1%)	125 (38.6%)	90 (27.8%)
5	Newspaper information on Covid-19 are centered on implication on the country’s economy rather than the how it affected the people	94 (29%)	75 (23.2%)	66 (20.4%)	37 (11.4%)	52 (16.1%)

The findings of the Table 13 above indicate the assessments of respondent's attitudes towards Covid-19 preventive messages disseminated by the Nigerian newspapers. Item 1 on the table assesses respondent's believe in newspaper as a tool for public enlightenment and it was discovered from the analysis that majority of the respondents representing 49.4% strongly agreed that newspaper is a tool for public enlightenment on Covid-19, 31.2% of the respondents also agreed that newspaper is a tool for public enlightenment on Covid-19 also 8.3% of the respondents are undecided as to whether newspaper is a tool for public enlightenment on Covid-19 while 6.5% and 4.6% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed on newspapers being a tool of public enlightenment on Covid-19

Item 2 on the table assesses respondent's perception on the role of newspapers in preventing the spread of Covid-19 in Ogun State. The findings on item 2 on the table indicates that majority of the respondents representing 51.2% strongly agreed that newspaper helps in the prevention of Covid-19 in Ogun State, 26.2% of the respondents also agreed that newspaper helps in the prevention of Covid-19 in Ogun State, also 17.6 % of the respondents are undecided as to whether newspaper helps in the prevention of Covid-19 in Ogun State, while 1.5% and 3.1% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that newspaper helps in the prevention of Covid-19 in Ogun State.

Item 3 on the table assesses respondent's view on the appropriateness and understand-ability of the languages used by newspapers in the reportage of Covid-19 related stories. Finding reveals that 54.3% representing majority of the respondents agreed that the languages used by newspapers in reporting Covid-19 are appropriate and understandable, 24.7% of the total respondents strongly agreed that the languages used by newspapers in reporting Covid-19 are appropriate and understandable but 9.3% of the total respondents are undecided about the appropriateness and understand-ability of the languages used by newspapers in the reportage of Covid-19 related stories. Contrarily, 4.6% and 7.1% of the total respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that the languages used by newspapers in reporting Covid-19 are appropriate and understandable.

Item 4 on the table assesses the adequacy of newspaper information to influence of respondent's reality about Covid-19. The finding of Item 4 on the table revealed that majority of the respondents representing 38.6% disagreed that newspaper information about Covid-19 are not adequate and as such makes them doubt Covid-19 as a reality. Similarly, 27.8% of the total respondents strongly disagreed that newspaper information about Covid-19 are not adequate and thus makes them doubt Covid-19 as a reality. Contrarily, 13.6% and 13% of the total respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that newspaper information about Covid-19 are not adequate and this has made them doubt Covid-19 as a reality.

Item 4 on the table evaluates the attitude and perception of respondents as to whether newspaper framing of Covid-19 being centered on its implication on the county's economy rather than how it affected the people. Finding reveals that 29% representing majority of the respondents strongly agreed that newspaper information on Covid-19 are centered on its implication on the country's economy rather than how it affected the people, 23.2% of the total respondents agreed that

newspaper information on Covid-19 centered on its implication on the country’s economy rather than how it affected the people. However, 20.4% of the total respondents are undecided as to whether newspaper information on Covid-19 being centered on its implication on the country’s economy rather than how it affected the people. Contrarily, 16.1% and 11.4% of the total respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed that newspaper information on Covid-19 centered on its implication on the country’s economy rather than how it affected the people.

SECTION FIVE: Respondent’s practice of Covid-19 preventive measures as presented by the selected newspaper.

Table 14: Assessment of how respondents practice Covid-19 preventive measures as presented by newspapers.

Item	Questions	Response	Frequency n=324	Percent n=100
1	How often do you practice the Covid-19 preventive suggestions as presented by newspapers like washing of hands, keeping social distance and usage of nose masks as disseminated by the media?	Regularly	261	80.6
		Occasionally	61	18.8
		Never	2	0.6
2	The fear of getting infected makes me adhere to newspaper preventive suggestions about Covid-19	Yes	311	96
		No	13	4

The results of Table 14's Item 1 show how frequently respondents use the Covid-19 preventive measures that are advertised in newspapers. The results show that the majority of respondents, or 80.6% of the total, regularly follow the newspaper-recommended Covid-19 preventive measures. 18.8% of the respondents said they occasionally followed the newspaper's recommended Covid-19 preventive measures. Nevertheless, 0.6% of all respondents said they never followed the newspaper-recommended Covid-19 preventive measures. As a result, the majority of respondents practised the Covid-19 preventive measures that the media had recommended.

The evaluation of item 2 on table 4.21 revealed that though majority of the respondents practise Covid-19 preventive suggestions as presented by newspapers but this practise was as a result of the fear of the respondents in getting infected with the virus as majority representing 96% of the respondents adhere to newspaper preventive suggestions because of the fear of being infected leaving 4% of the total respondents who are not adhering because of the fear of getting infected with the virus

Table 15: Assessment of respondent’s practicability of newspapers suggestions of Covid-19 preventions.

Question	Response	Frequency	Percent
Newspaper suggestions about Covid-19 preventions are not absolutely practicable?	Yes	28	8.6
	No	296	91.4
	Total	324	100

The findings in Table 15 reveal that all the majority of the respondents representing 91.4% of the respondents have positive standpoint to the practicability of newspapers suggestion of Covid-19 preventions. However, a minority of 8.6% of the respondents hold a negative standpoint as to their practicability of newspapers suggestion of Covid-19 preventions.

DISCUSSION

Severe Acute Respiratory Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) is the viral illness responsible for Covid-19, which is pandemic and poses a serious danger to public health. (Guan W-j et al 2020).

In addition to other changes in human activity, the 2020 worldwide health pandemic, also known as the Covid-19 pandemic, caused distress, agony, and a stop in social engagement.

As a result, the social phenomena that people rely on to survive the worldwide healthcare crisis is information and awareness. The results of this study demonstrate that female respondents take part in the survey at a higher rate than male respondents. In this survey, there were 5.6% fewer male respondents than female respondents. The result indicates that those in the age bracket of 40-49 years are the majority of the respondents of this study. The findings of this study also revealed that majority of the respondents representing 46.6% are married and 55% had acquired secondary school education. Meanwhile the study discovered that both Christians and Muslims participated in the survey however Islamic religion worshipper were 21.6% more than the Christian religion worshipper.

Findings of this study show that reveals that 42.6% of the respondents prefer print copy of newspaper while 57.4% of the respondents are suited by the electronic version of newspaper, thereby indication that more than one-half of the total respondents for the survey prefer the online version of newspapers. It was also discovered that majority of the total respondents reads newspaper daily thereby increasing the probability of them being exposed to Covid-19 related stories in newspapers. Asogwa C.E (2018) also discovered that majority 52.40% which is more than one half of the total respondents of the survey prefer reading the online version of newspapers. Since the growth of the internet and the development of technology, there has been discussion over print and online newspapers. The usage of both forms of newspapers can have benefits and drawbacks, though. Although print has traditionally been the main medium for providing

entertainment and information, the emergence of new technologies and internet media has changed this idea. The way society consumes news has changed significantly over time, moving from newspapers to radio, television, computers, and laptops to today's smart devices. In 1995, Negroponte envisioned an electronic newspaper and noted a number of challenges. Consider receiving your newspaper as bits on an electronic device. Let's say it arrives at a paper-thin, flexible, paperweight, magical, wireless, light-weight, waterproof display. Humanity's vast experience with headlines and layout, typographic landmarks, graphics, and a range of browsing-assistance tools will likely be incorporated into the interface approach. This could be an excellent news medium if executed properly. If it is done poorly, hell waits.

Furthermore, Fidler (1997) noted that digital print media "will need to be highly portable and simple enough for anyone to use without having to read a manual in order to function as a practical alternative to mechanical printing and pulp paper." Digital forms need to be easy to read whether you're lying in bed, taking a subway ride, eating at a restaurant or relaxing on a park bench—just like traditional print media. In order to maintain the readability and convenience of using paper, they will also need to incorporate some of the more interesting aspects of cyber-media, such as interactivity, hypertext, and audio/video clips.

The nation's agenda can be determined by the news media, which can also draw public attention to certain topics. In addition to giving readers and viewers accurate information about current affairs, the news media also teaches them how much importance to assign to various topics based on how frequently they are reported in the media. Newspapers provide a number of cues about the significance of the daily news items, including large headlines, multiple front page displays, and the lead article on page one. These everyday cues effectively communicate the importance of each issue. Stated differently, the news media has the power to shape public opinion by selecting and presenting stories that interest them (McCombs, 2003).

According to Pavlik (1997), the internet newspaper shouldn't serve as merely another platform for distributing traditional media. It has several built-in benefits that might significantly improve the way that newspapers do their customary duties. Newspapers have traditionally served as a source of news and information, as well as an opportunity for readers to scan their surroundings, connect environmental occurrences, amuse readers, and pass along social history from one generation to the next (Wright, 1960).

One-half percent of all respondents read newspapers to increase their general knowledge, according to research on the general characteristics of the respondents and the aim of reading newspapers. Asogwa C.E. (2018) found that the majority of respondents, or 33.20 percent, read newspapers to learn about current events, while 23.1 percent of respondents did so for educational objectives. With its hypermedia and multimedia capabilities, the Web, according to Pavlik (2001), offers a variety of framing options distinct from those found in conventional media. Layering

multimedia components, such as audio and video files, may provide supplementary material to many pieces of a particular tale. Hypermedia, or the capacity to connect across online items, gives "additional background, detail and, most importantly, context." connections to previous articles on the subject, direct connections to internet sources, transcripts and recordings of sources' viewpoints, and other materials that could have served as only a reference for the journalist's synthesis for conventional media might all be considered "perspectives" for stories. To investigate gate keeping effects, several researchers contrasted print and online editions (Blake, 2004; Singer, 2001).

In relation to the knowledge of the respondents about Covid-19 preventive messages, this study has specifically discovered that all the respondents have been exposed to various Covid-19 preventive messages as presented by newspapers. Ata-Awaji A.R and Confidence O.S (2021) discovered that 38% of the respondents listen to the broadcast media every night It reveals that more than a third of the sample regularly tunes in to broadcast messages on Covid-19. Furthermore, the study found that the majority of Port Harcourt people (56%) exposed themselves regularly to broadcast media messaging on the COVID-19 epidemic. The study discovered that the overall attitude of the respondents to the various preventive messages disseminated by newspapers were positive.

In a similar vein, Ata-Awaji A.R. and Confidence O.S. (2021) found that 27% of respondents found broadcast messages on Covid-19 to be of very low quality; 39% of respondents find the messages to be of low quality; 22% of respondents find the messages to be of high quality; and 12% of respondents find the messages to be of very high quality. This study also discovered that apart from the findings that the respondents are exposed to newspapers' Covid-19 preventive messages but majority (96%) of the respondents complied to this preventive measure out of fear of getting infected, which is as a reflection of the framing of Covid-19 by newspapers with majority of the frame was majorly on containment and impact/effect frames. The positive attitude and practice of the respondents to the Covid-19 preventive messages presented by newspapers showed that newspaper messages have great influence on the reader's attitude towards the issues being discussed.

Similarly, the dominant framing pattern tends to affect used in the reportage of a health issue tends to affect the how it is being understood by the readers. The investigation of how frames could help us understand how the media affect how an audience perceives a situation is an important contribution of this finding. The study also emphasized on how setting media agenda has the power to affect how audiences view a certain event, in this example, how people view Covid-19 in Ogun State.

CONCLUSION

This study provided light on numerous essential aspects of newspapers' function in distributing information during the Covid-19 epidemic, as well as their influence on public perception and

behavior. Newspapers have clearly played an important role in providing Covid-19-related information to the public, since all respondents in our study acknowledged exposure to preventative messaging through newspapers.

Respondent demographics, such as a greater participation rate among females and a preponderance of respondents in the 40-49 age categories, give insights into the audience profile. Furthermore, the preference for electronic editions of newspapers, as well as daily readership patterns, show the changing media environment and the growing reliance on digital channels for news consumption.

Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of newspapers in framing topics and molding public perceptions. The good reaction and high compliance rate with Covid-19 preventative measures among respondents can be linked in part to how media framed the epidemic, emphasizing containment and effect frames. This research highlights the media's ability to shape public views and behaviors amid a health crisis.

Overall, this study adds to our knowledge of how newspapers act as information sources and agenda-setters during a global health crisis. It stresses the significance of media framing and its influence on public attitudes and adherence to preventative actions. These findings highlight the essential role of the media in shaping public reactions and supporting public health as we continue to negotiate the challenges of Covid-19 and other health emergencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings presented in this study regarding the role of newspapers in disseminating Covid-19 information and its impact on public perception and behavior, several recommendations can be made:

- 1) **Digital Adaptation:** Because electronic newspaper versions are preferred, publishers should continue to invest in and improve their online platforms. This involves making sure that the interfaces are user-friendly and that the material is easily accessible and navigable.
- 2) **Media Framing Awareness:** The impact of framing in molding public attitudes and behaviors should be recognized by media sources, particularly newspapers. They should aim for ethical and accurate reporting that focuses on public health initiatives and their efficacy.
- 3) **Collaboration with Health Authorities:** To promote accurate and timely transmission of Covid-19 information, newspapers and health authorities should work closely together. In news reporting, providing reputable sources and professional opinions helps increase public confidence and comprehension.
- 4) **Interactive Content:** Investigate the use of multimedia components, such as audio and video files, to complement and contextualize news content. This has the potential to increase engagement and comprehension of essential health information.
- 5) **Public Health Messaging:** Continue to prioritize and promote preventative actions in the

media, emphasizing their significance in public health. Encourage mask-wearing, social distancing and immunization by using clear and consistent messaging.

- 6) **Media Literacy Programmes:** Implement media literacy programmes to assist readers assess news sources critically and distinguish between legitimate and untrustworthy material. During a health crisis, these programmes can help the public make educated decisions.
- 7) **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Newspapers shall analyze the impact of their Covid-19 reporting on public attitudes and behaviors on a regular basis. Conduct surveys or focus groups to gather reader input and change reporting tactics as needed.
- 8) **Agenda-Setting Responsibility:** Recognize the media's agenda-setting power and the ethical responsibility it entails. Journalists and editors should prioritize reporting on critical public health issues and avoid sensationalism.
- 9) **Research and Adaptation:** Stay attuned to evolving media consumption patterns and audience preferences. Conduct ongoing research to adapt newspaper content and delivery methods to the changing media landscape.

By implementing these recommendations, newspapers can continue to serve as essential sources of information and contribute positively to public health efforts during health crises like Covid-19. These measures can help ensure that newspapers remain effective tools for informing, educating, and influencing public behaviors in the face of global health challenges.

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