

Investigating the Claims and Spread of Misinformation on Covid-19 across different Media Platforms in Nigeria

Olorunda, Sola Elijah

School of Secondary Education, Department of Social Studies, Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5818-0006>

Abstract

The misinformation spread about Covid-19 in Nigerian media is the main topic of the paper. All Nigerian nationals made up the study's population, which was conducted using an ethnography observation and interview. In Lagos State, Nigeria, 50 respondents made up the study's sample. It was decided to use a multistage sampling process that combines a simple random sampling technique with a purposive sampling strategy. To gather data, it uses in-depth interviews, observations, documents, and field notes to collect data. For the sake of answering the study questions, the gathered data were examined using narrative analysis. The research findings identified a variety of false information and unreliable information sources in Nigerian media. It was recommended that the World Health Organization's (WHO) guidelines for preventive measures should be followed and also advised. This endeavor can assist combat false information on Covid-19 in Nigeria. The initial beneficiaries of this information are typically relatives and friends; people who propagate these misconceptions and false information must stop doing so to prevent placing the lives of those they love in grave danger, before accepting or spreading any information on COVID-19, people should verify the source.

Keywords: *Covid-19*, Investigation, Misinformation, Media Platform.

Introduction

The seemingly harmless virus that appeared in Wuhan City, China as a fatal disease in late 2019 has evolved into many terrible levels, and this is no longer news. Therefore, from a disease that was only associated with China, it spread gradually to a contagious level, quickly spread across

borders to neighboring countries, and eventually crossed continents, with the corollary degenerating into a global disease and subsequent pandemic, hence the coronal virus coded Covid-19. The virus that has been destroying parts of the world's so-called wealthy nations and spread to Nigeria and the African continent in February 2020 so became well-known by the middle of March 2020. The pandemic has undoubtedly had an impact on all facets of the country, regardless of ethnicity, race, religion, gender, age, and career.

Major social media sites participated in a meeting held by the World Health Organization in February to address false information about the coronavirus. The intention was to jump-start the battle against what the UN has dubbed an "infodemic." Misinformation frequently focuses on particular areas and subjects. But COVID-19 is different because, for what feels like the first time, fact-checking and Misinformation campaigns are coordinated globally around a same set of narratives. The main trends in fact-checking and false information about the coronavirus were discovered through research. It tracked fact-check posts from January through July using Google's Fact Check Explorer computing interface, with the first checks showing as early as January 22, 2020. A variety of fact-checkers, the majority of which are a part of the Poynter Institute's International Fact-Checking Network, are connected to Google's Fact Check Explorer database.

According to the study, the number of fact-checks on false material on the coronavirus rose steadily during the early phases of the virus's spread (January and February) and then rapidly during the months of March and April, when the virus began to spread globally. Interestingly, even after breaking fact-checks into Spanish, Hindi, Indonesian, and Portuguese, it still discovered the same trend of slow and then dramatic growth. Thus, false information and subsequent fact-checking initiatives followed a similar pattern all across the world. This distinguishing quality of COVID-19. The investigation finds that other concerns like elections, terrorism, police action, or immigration have not experienced a comparable global increase. The Empirical Studies of Conflict Project and Microsoft Research started cataloging COVID-19 falsehoods on March 16.

James, Daron, and Asuma (2021). It accomplished this by compiling news stories with reporting from a variety of regional fact-checking networks and international organizations, including Agence France-Presse and News Guard. It examined this data set to examine the development of

particular COVID-19 storylines; a piece of false information's "narrative" is the type of tale it promotes. One false information story, for instance, focuses on the "origin of the virus." This includes the untrue assertion that a person eating bat soup caused the virus to spread to humans. The most typical global narrative, according to this study, was about "emergency reactions". These reports contained inaccurate information concerning political or governmental efforts to contain the virus's spread. This might be the case because, in contrast to stories about the "nature of the virus," it is simple to assume (and difficult to show) whether those in positions of authority have good or bad intentions. Notably, this was also the most typical story in the US, with a false report that the New York Police Department would instantly shut down New York City serving as an early example.

Andrew and David (2019) Furthermore, politics is a key driver of misinformation on social media. The trend of political misinformation may be explained by the heated political climate in the US. On August 1, a demonstration against coronavirus pandemic rules takes place in Berlin. The study also discovered that China has the falsest information narratives of any nation. This could be due to China having the largest population in the world. However, it's important to note that the Chinese Communist Party controls the principal fact-checking website the Empirical Studies of Conflict Project uses to identify false material originating from China. The percentage of total false information narratives on COVID-19 by the top ten nations between January and July of 2020 is represented in this graph. It is critical to have as many diverse, impartial, and open fact-checkers as possible when battling misinformation. This lessens the chance of bias.

Stefano and Thomas (2020). Misinformation stories about "fake cures" and "false preventative measures" were another common theme. In both China and Australia, this was one of the most prevalent topics. The illustration was a social media video that went viral and claimed that hydroxyl chloroquine was a successful coronavirus treatment. Despite the fact that doctor's claim it is not a proven COVID-19 treatment and may perhaps have hazardous side effects, this still occurs. There were several misconceptions concerning the "nature of the virus." These made reference to the virus's distinct properties, such as its inability to propagate through surfaces. This is false, as we are aware.

Different storylines peaked at various times during the virus's propagation, according to the data. Early on in the outbreak, there was a lot of misinformation spread about the virus's characteristics, likely as a result of a lack of scientific investigation into the virus's characteristics. As countries continue to put policies in place to stop the spread of COVID-19, theories on emergency responses, on the other hand, emerged later and continue to exist today.

Chuan, Hunt, and Mathew (2019). In contrast to websites looking into other issues, it also found websites fact-checking COVID-19 falsehoods to be more diverse. Only 25% of the 6,000 fact-check pieces or stories that the top five fact-checking websites released since January (ranked by number of posts). In contrast, 68% of 3,000 fact-checks on climate change were posted by the top five websites. It appears that resources that were previously devoted to a variety of subjects are now focusing on false information about coronaviruses. However, it is impossible to estimate the whole amount of this internet content. The best defense at the moment is for governments and online platforms to raise public awareness of misleading claims and expand on the capable fact-checking infrastructures at our disposal. 2020 (Jason, Jacob, Jan, & Paul).

Luo, Hu, Check, and Zhao (2021). An infodemic, a huge and complex mashup of information, misinformation, and disinformation, has been caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. False claims that the COVID-19 symptoms are brought on by 5G wireless communications technology and that the virus was designed to be deployed as a bioweapon have been spreading like wildfire on social media and other communication channels in this environment. Some of these false narratives are used in deceitful campaigns. Although the idea of disinformation frequently conjures up images of overt propaganda distributed by totalitarian regimes, the reality is far more nuanced. Although disinformation does have a purpose, it is frequently hidden under facts and spread by honest and frequently well-intentioned people.

This mixture of information types makes it challenging for people, including those who create and manage online platforms, to differentiate between an organic rumor and an organized disinformation campaign, according to a researcher who focuses on how communications technologies are used during crises. And when efforts to comprehend and respond to COVID-19 become entangled in the political machinations of this year's presidential race, this task isn't

becoming any simpler. During times of crisis, rumors are prevalent and have always been so. Confusion about the situation, worry about its effects, and uncertainty about how individuals should react are frequently present during crises. People naturally want to eliminate that ambiguity and worry, and they frequently try to accomplish so by coming to a consensus.

It is a process of gathering together to learn more and build theories regarding the current event. Rumors come about naturally. While rumors are not always evil, the same circumstances that give rise to them also leave people open to the more pernicious falsehoods. Disinformation is incorrect or misleading information that is disseminated with a specific goal in mind, sometimes a political or financial one, as opposed to rumors and misinformation, which may or may not be purposeful. Tom (2020). The practice of *dezinformatsiya*, adopted by the Soviet Union's intelligence services to try and alter how people perceived and interpreted events in the world, is where disinformation got its start. It is helpful to view of misinformation as a campaign, a collection of acts and narratives created and disseminated to deceive for political purposes, rather than as a single piece of information or even a single narrative. Former Soviet intelligence operative Lawrence Martin-Bittman, who later became a professor of misinformation after defecting from what was then Czechoslovakia, explained how successful misinformation tactics are frequently built around a real or convincing core. They take use of prejudices, conflicts, and contradictions already present in a particular group or community. Additionally, they frequently use "unwitting agents" to promote their message and further their goals.

Real Nazi documents and a tricked Czech television crew were used in a Soviet-era misinformation effort against West Germany at Black Lake in the Czech Republic. Flickr user Ladislav Bohá, CC BY-SA Misinformation operates on a variety of levels and scales, whoever the offender. Pervasive misinformation works more deeply to undermine democratic societies than a single misinformation effort, which can aim to change public opinion about a political candidate or program, for example.

It is extremely difficult to distinguish between inadvertent misstatement and intentional misinformation. Particularly in online settings where the original source of information might be hidden, intent is frequently difficult to establish. In addition, those who hold such misinformation

to be true may disseminate it. Additionally, as part of a misinformation operation, unintended misinformation can be purposefully propagated. Definitions and differences quickly become muddled.

The authors are Yariv, Boomgaarden, Stromback, Vliegthart, Damstra, and Lindgren (2020). Think about the "Pandemic" video, which went viral on social media in May 2020. Numerous exaggerations and conspiratorial beliefs concerning COVID-19 were present in the film. In a problematic way, it opposed wearing masks, arguing that doing so would "activate" the virus, and it created the groundwork for later opposition to the COVID-19 vaccination. Despite the fact that many of these bogus narratives had already surfaced online, the 26-minute "Pandemic" film brought them all together. The video was widely shared on Facebook and garnered millions of views on YouTube before it was taken down by the platforms for containing harmful medical misinformation. The anti-vaccine movement, the QA non conspiracy theory community, and pro-Trump political activism all actively pushed and amplified it as it spread through public Facebook groups and networked communities on Twitter.

But was there misinformation or false information here? Understanding how the video went viral and drawing some conclusions about why is the key to finding the solution. Dr. Judy Mikovits, a disgraced scientist who had previously promoted various unfounded notions in the field of medicine, such as the notion that vaccines cause autism, served as the protagonist of the film. She was advertising a new book before the "Pandemic" video was released, and it included many of the narratives that were in the film. The National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases head, Dr. Anthony Fauci, was the target of one of those storylines. At the time, Fauci came under fire for endorsing social isolationist policies that some conservatives believed were detrimental to the economy. Damage to Fauci's reputation appears to have been a specific objective of Mikovits and her allies' campaign, based on statements they have made in public.

The National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases head, Dr. Anthony Fauci, getting ready to speak during a Senate hearing. The 'Pandemic' conspiracy theory video singled out Fauci as a target. Pool/Kevin Dietsch via AP. In the weeks before the "Pandemic" video was released, a coordinated campaign to raise Mikovits' popularity on various social media sites took shape. Her

name was given to a brand-new Twitter account, which swiftly racked up hundreds of followers. She took involved in interviews with political news organizations True Pundit and The Epoch Times. As soon as Dr. Fauci is recognized for who he or she "truly is," Mikovits welcomed her new followers on Twitter.

A recent interview with Mikovits was scheduled to appear on 191 local television stations across the nation owned or operated by Sinclair Broadcast Group, in which she reaffirmed the main points of "Plandemic." Sinclair would have exposed new audiences to these untrue and potentially harmful themes by presenting this program under the guise and with the legitimacy of local news. After receiving feedback, the corporation is rethinking its choice; however, the interview was apparently uploaded for a while on the company's website and was broadcast by one station.

This context shows that Mikovits and her associates had more goals than just disseminating her incorrect views regarding COVID-19. They comprise monetary, political, and reputational goals. However, it's also likely that Mikovits, like the millions of others who liked and retweeted her message online, truly believes the information she was presenting. We will probably continue to see misinformation tactics used in the US as COVID-19 merges into the presidential race for political, financial, and reputational benefit. These strategies will be used by domestic activist groups to create and disseminate false and inaccurate narratives about the sickness and the election. Foreign agents will make an effort to contribute, frequently by infiltrating existing groups and attempting to influence them in the direction of their objectives.

(Kate, 2020). There is a crisis among refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. According to the study, this community experienced an information void at the beginning of the pandemic, which contributed to a general feeling of confusion and worry and the dissemination of false information. In order to gain a deeper understanding of how the COVID-19 problem was affecting these communities, we choose to talk to the people who deal with asylum seekers, refugees, and undocumented migrants on a daily basis after the lockdown cut off our fieldwork with these groups in Amsterdam. Interviews were held with volunteers, immigration officers, and NGO staff. Most persons we spoke with said that a lot of the people they were assisting had gone through stress or some other kind of personal crisis as a result of not

having access to trustworthy information. Long asylum processes have been shown to have a negative psychological impact.

Regarding two weeks following the lockdown, Pharos (a healthcare translation and distribution center) translated and disseminated government material about the virus, safety measures, and official policy in a number of languages, including Arabic, Tigrinya, and Farsi. Since then, the government news conferences have been translated into eight languages by the translation agency Global Talk so that refugees can immediately learn about the happenings.

The Corona Action Committee for Refugees (CAS), which was founded by a number of different grassroots organizations, launched a helpdesk where people may ask any queries they may have in Tigrinya and Arabic. But there are a number of issues with volunteers. One informed us. It used to be possible for refugees to have someone practically stand next to their computer and assist them, but that is no longer an option. Additionally, it is exceedingly challenging for us to remotely file for unemployment or social security benefits. That is a very difficult job. Additionally, they don't have Skype or Zoom, so you can't just tell them to switch those on. The Dutch bureaucracy has many immigrants trapped, making it difficult to provide them with remote support. How do you describe over the phone the ability of someone using an antiquated computer system to fill out complex official forms? If the resources are just not available, how can you support homeschooling? The government has not yet formally supported helpdesk volunteers. According to the volunteers we spoke with, this needs to happen immediately so that refugees may learn crucial details about how Dutch society functions. Without the resources to support themselves, refugees' risk being mired in a never-ending cycle of stress, red tape, and dread. (Llse, Van, & Mieke, 2020)

We are not simply fighting an epidemic; we are fighting an infodemic, declared Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), in response to the pervasiveness of false information regarding the coronavirus pandemic. A surplus of information, some accurate and some not, during an epidemic is referred to as an infodemic. People find it challenging to identify dependable and trustworthy sources as a result. Misinformation is a problem that is present in many situations. We must comprehend how false information spreads in

particular host ecosystems if we want to combat this infodemic. This necessitates research on media users' culture, background, and lived experiences. Misinformation is a virus, and we need multi-leveled, socio-cultural approaches and strategies to contain and mitigate it.

1. Representation:

Texts serve as battlegrounds where meanings are disputed and counter meanings are created. Messages are encoded and decoded based on the context in which they are used. Health officials may use technical coding to illustrate how they stop the spread of a virus, for as when referencing the use of masks. But there has been a slide of meaning, with audiences misinterpreting it as a threat to their freedom. These lapses make it simple for false information to enter. Understanding how disinformation is created to appeal to people's everyday emotions, worries, and concerns as well as which political discourses resonate with them can be done with the aid of cultural studies.

2. Identity:

How do people create a sense of community and belonging by ingesting and disseminating false information? Political affiliation, age demographics, and similar identification stances may increase people's propensity to spread false information, according to previous studies.

3. Production:

The distinction between the creation and consumption of information has become hazy as a result of the digital media ecosystem. Parody, rumors, memes, and jokes are now widely used. In "echo chambers" or "filter bubbles," users can receive validation of their personal prejudices and ideas, ranging from speculations linking the spread of the virus to 5G towers to pseudoscientific cures. When addressing the infodemic, it's crucial to understand the repercussions of this change in media output.

4. Consumption:

Media users are seen as active contributors to the creation of meaning by cultural studies, not as passive recipients. Media consumers don't just consume false information; they also create, curate, and spread it. Many African social media users admit to distributing news stories that they were aware were false. How come this is the case? Only in light of the circumstances and the users' actual experiences can we provide an answer to that query. People may give alternate sources of

information more authority if they don't trust established sources of information. Because of the tradition of state-owned media in Africa, individuals have long turned to informal networks of rumors, jokes, and humor to challenge illegitimate authorities. Although news media consumption has increased significantly due to the Covid-19 outbreak, overall levels of trust appear to be at an all-time low. Less than four out of ten (38%) respondents to the Reuters Institute survey say they generally believe the news.

The destruction of trust and the incapacity to make educated decisions have also been brought on by information overload and "noise." According to the same poll, 56% of respondents still had no idea if online information was reliable or not.

People in Africa who report being more exposed to misinformation also report having less faith in the media. These trends may have become more pronounced due to conflicting and speculative stories about cures and vaccines, or unclear instructions for the usage of masks, for example. People may be more open to false information if they are skeptical of official narratives. According to a study conducted in the US, black people are less trusting in government interventions and medical authorities as a result of the public health system's ongoing and systemic failure to provide for their needs. According to the study, this indicates that these communities may instead rely on local knowledge to survive. They might be exposed to harmful false information as a result.

5. Regulation:

Human rights and free speech watchdogs have fiercely opposed attempts by several nations (such as South Africa and Brazil) to outlaw falsehoods about Covid-19 out of concern that it would impede free expression and political responsibility. We can think of more effective treatments when we have a better understanding of why people do not trust mainstream media or what their potential incentives for disseminating false information may be. Some motivations mentioned in the literature include monetary or political gain, the want to express one's emotions, the need to deal with uncertainty, the desire to form relationships, and the desire to rally against a political system. Colleagues' focus group studies in six African nations revealed some additional incentives. Our respondents' most frequent justification for spreading false information was a (misplaced)

sense of civic obligation to spread awareness. To inform people of false information was the second most frequent justification.

Thirdly, sub-Saharan media consumers claimed they spread false information "for enjoyment." For media consumers overwhelmed by serious or gloomy news, humor, gossip, and satire seem to be a haven that fosters camaraderie and connection. These contextual, social, and cultural distinctions highlight the significance of taking misleading practices into account as socio-cultural phenomena. From that vantage point, we may assess what kinds of responses might be best suitable for various settings rather than seeking to offer a magic bullet. (W. Herman, 2020)

The campaign's purported goal is to influence online discussion of important topics including the COVID-19 epidemic and the unrest in Hong Kong. Since Twitter is blocked in China, there is no chance for the Chinese government to create and integrate troll accounts into regional Twitter networks. China has very certainly stolen, hacked, or bought legitimate accounts instead. Twitter has not specifically stated how it discovered the state-sponsored accounts, most likely because doing so would provide other states with instructions on how to get beyond the platform's security measures. However, a New York Times article claims that one red flag is when a user logs into numerous accounts from the same website. Unblocked accounts that are publishing from China may be operating maliciously with government approval, according to Twitter.

Foreign Minister Marise Payne charged China with circulating false information during the coronavirus pandemic earlier in June. She declared that Australia would lobby for stronger national interests' protection from the World Health Organization. AAP/JOEL CARRETT. The Australian Department of Home Affairs has issued a warning that, unless precautions are taken, there is a "realistic likelihood" that foreign actors may interfere in Australian politics, including the upcoming federal election. The government has issued a warning about this potential threat. However, we assert that deception is already being utilized to sway public discourse in Australia based on the data at hand. An Oxford University study released the previous year claimed coordinated attempts to manipulate social media had taken place in 70 nations, including Australia. As stated by earlier ASPI analysts, nationalist and Islamophobic material was purposefully disseminated online throughout the 2016 election campaign. The most notorious instance of a

massive disinformation campaign may have originated from Russia in 2016, when a planned effort was made to influence the US presidential election. Similar to Russia, China now seems to be spending a lot of money on disinformation tactics. Australia should prepare for additional sophisticated attacks carried out by both external and internal actors. These could be shady electoral campaign strategies or campaigns supported by foreign governments.

Many Twitter bot accounts were discovered using the hashtag #ArsonAttack during the terrible bushfires of last summer to spread the myth that the fires were mostly caused by arson rather than climate change. News Corp newspapers picked up the incorrect information, which then shaped discussion of the issue. Such assertions cause widespread confusion. They deepen political polarization and undermine public confidence in the media and government.

We can hope Twitter increases its efforts to identify harmful accounts that disseminate misinformation, but we cannot assume state-sponsored actors will remain passive in the face of this threat. Governments have made excessive investments in these attacks, and the efforts have been effective. User education is the most accessible form of defense against the majority of modern cybercrime. Users of social media, regardless of their political views, should be aware that what they are reading online might not be true and should be evaluated critically. Some of us are more adept at spotting bogus content online and can contribute to the removal of unreliable, unconfirmed, or simply incorrect stuff. Offering explanations that are consistent with the other's preexisting ideas and expressing the facts (without focusing on the myths directly) are two straightforward approaches to accomplish this.

Regardless of motivation, it's crucial to keep in mind how minor actions like "liking" and "retweeting" articles can contribute to the spread of misinformation. Furthermore, while the aforementioned measures are helpful, it is unlikely that they would totally protect Australia from the possibly disastrous repercussions of upcoming disinformation operations. We'll require fresh ideas from both the public and commercial sectors. In a perfect world, we would like to see government oversight of misinformation. And even though this hasn't happened yet, the creation of a government-run taskforce to combat disinformation is at least a positive step. (Sarah, Bellinda, & James, 2020).

Kirck (2020). So let me clarify something regarding this virus. It is "new" but was really developed since 2003 and built in a lab in 2015. The patent expired today, the day the first case was publicized in the US. The CDC was a collaborator on this, according to the patent! The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a department of the US government, developed this technology. So, since the U.S. Government owns certain rights to this discovery, how come a vaccine is currently being developed for it? However, the 2015 patent already makes reference to a vaccine for it. I am just a conspiracy theorist, so what do I know. The International Fact Checking Network: Corona virus fact Alliance database later deemed this assertion to be untrue. A number of articles published in January 2020 on Weibo, Twitter, and Facebook state that a leading Chinese respiratory expert advised individuals to gargle with salt water solution to avoid contracting a new virus outbreak. The articles were released following the discovery of a novel coronavirus strain that had infected hundreds of individuals in Wuhan, a city in central China. The claim is untrue; the expert's team stated that saline would not "kill" the new virus and advised people not to trust or spread medically inaccurate online rumors. The World Health Organization informed AFP that there was no proof that saline solution would protect against infection with the new coronavirus.

On January 24, 2020, the official death toll from the virus, also known by its technical name 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV), reached 26. As a result, China has isolated millions of residents in the vicinity of the virus epidemic. Here is a report on the situation from AFP. A number of posts arose on social media shortly after China revealed that the new SARS-like virus had spread from person to person, pretending to offer "professional advice" from Chinese respiratory expert Zhong Nanshan (2020)

The captions on the posts, like this one from January 22, 2020, on Facebook, are written in traditional Chinese and read, "Zhong Nanshan's amazing concept on preventing infection." Scientist Zhong Nanshan, who works for the National Health Commission, contributed to revealing the severity of the SARS outbreak that claimed hundreds of lives in Hong Kong and mainland China in the early 2000s. Here is a report from AFP on the subject. According to the posts, Zhong Nanshan said: "I recommend everyone cleanse his or her throat with diluted saline water before going to hospitals or other public venues, and rinse again once returning home.

According to the posts, the data is a: "Academician Zhong Nanshan's suggestion, dated January 21, 2020

The exact same instructions on how to use diluted saline to prevent infection were shared in this Facebook post, citing the Wuhan Union Hospital rather than Zhong Nanshan as the source of the information. This is just one example of similar claims linking the same prevention method to other people or hospitals. The caption begins, "This is sent by Wuhan Union Hospital," and concludes, "This procedure is straightforward, efficient, and uncomplicated. The secret is being constant, the assertions are all untrue. The assertion was deemed medically incorrect by Zhong's medical staff's base of operations, the First Affiliated Hospital of Guangzhou Medical University. Two red simplified Chinese letters that read "rumor refutation" have partially obscured the image of the false allegation in this January 22, 2020 Weibo post by the First Affiliated Hospital of Guangzhou Medical University.

Rumors Refutation is how the simplified Chinese caption for the image is translated into English. Online rumors have recently claimed that academic Zhong Nanshan advises using saline water the hospital's academic Zhong team officially denies the rumor by stating that saline is helpful for treating pharyngitis and for cleaning the mouth and throat. The respiratory system, which the new coronavirus invades, cannot be cleared by mouth rinse. Second, there is currently no evidence that saline water can eradicate the novel coronavirus, and people should refrain from spreading or believing the rumor.

Statement of the Research Problem

Due to the numerous unconfirmed cases reported by various media outlets in various countries, which have caused confusion among citizens and nations, it is crucial to look into the claims and the dissemination of false information on Covid-19 across different media platforms and nationally in Nigeria. The Covid-19 pandemic caused thousands of deaths, and it ultimately resulted in a global economic collapse. Because of the unverified information spreading on many media platforms both offline and online, residents have been forced to live in dread, which has led to widespread panic. The government is making an attempt to stop the phony news of Covid-19, and committees have been established to take responsibility. This research used ethnographic

observation/interview. Therefore, the scope of disinformation was examined in this study. To do this, the researcher conducted a thorough stakeholder analysis and used the results to recommend a suitable Covid-19 policy intervention in Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

This project will examine allegations and the dissemination of false information about Covid-19 across various Nigerian media outlets, as well as the factors that cause uncertainty among Nigerian citizens as a result of such false information.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised:

1. How widespread is false information on the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria?
2. How do media outlets and the dissemination of false information about Covid-19's procedures and practices differ among Nigerian citizens?
3. What part do government policies play in addressing the issue of false information among Nigerian citizens?

Methodology

Research Design

Historical Research Design was adopted in this study, historical research design looks appropriate because it describes and examine events of the past to understand the present and anticipate potential future effects.

Data Collection

This includes ethnographic observations, In-depth interviews, documents and field notes.

Population

The population for this project consists of all concern personnel on Covid-19 in Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used in this study, first stage involved the use of simple random sampling techniques to select Lagos State. The second stage involved the use of Purposive sampling technique to select the 50 respondents that include residents' citizens, the government official in Nigeria.

Administration of the Instrument

The researcher discusses the relevance of the project with the respondents, this is to enable the researcher to solicit for their cooperation during the interviews.

Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed by using narrative analysis.

Findings

The study's conclusions are presented in accordance with numerous media reports, as well as information from selected respondents in the areas.

Chylian Azuh stated that it is falsely believed that commonly consumed foods like pepper, garlic, and ginger can prevent COVID-19. In Lagos, Nigeria, during the first two weeks of the lockdown, many residents were concerned about getting sick. The World Health Organization advised them to practice physical distance, use gloves, and wear face masks (WHO). Some people's skepticism about the presence of the virus is fueled by conspiracy theories that are circulated on social media and in local conversations. By the third week of the outbreak, individuals appeared to be divided into two groups: those who believed the virus existed and took all necessary precautions to stop its spread, and those who either didn't believe it existed or thought it only existed in certain places of the world but not in Nigeria. The majority of the myths and inaccurate information regarding the epidemic were transmitted as a result of this second category. Tosin Wurola, a food seller in her early fifties in Ojodu Berger in Lagos, explained that the virus does not exist if she does not observe a COVID-19 positive case in her social circle. Sadly, she has probably been successful in persuading the majority of her clients to share her opinion.

This kind of false information is widespread and could account for the lack of noticeable physical distance in the markets. Some people's skepticism about the presence of the virus is fueled by conspiracy theories that are circulated on social media and in local conversations. One of my neighbors, Peace Ejechi, who owns a supply store in Lagos' Ojodu Berger neighborhood, said that the lockdown was necessary for the government to successfully deploy the 5G network, not to flatten the curve. Another misconception is that because of Nigeria's climate, the virus cannot survive there. Nigeria has a tropical climate, with an average annual temperature of 25.7 °C. a

former immigrant, it's possible that the virus made it to Nigeria, but Ogba, Lagos resident Teniola Olatunji is confident that it has completely disappeared. There is no need to stress or worry if it is in the country because our climate is too hot for the symptoms to appear.

The majority of those surveyed have similar views about the virus. There is no way that this is true. The WHO claims that COVID-19 spreads regardless of the local climate. Over 15,000 cases of the virus were confirmed in Nigeria by mid-June, and 4,800 people had recovered. Several survivors have opened up about their time spent in isolation units and treatment facilities around the nation. There is still a belief that some mixtures can both prevent and treat COVID-19. Some women offered homemade treatments during the awareness-raising campaign at General Market, Ipodo, Ikeja, including drinking wine or blending ginger and garlic, which they think has kept them safe during the pandemic. Bola Ibiyemi, a vendor at Ipodo Market in Ikeja, stated, "I have been using a face mask, cooking my food with ginger and garlic, and keeping a physical distance." Despite the substantial nutritional and physiological advantages of these foods, there is no conclusive evidence that they help treat or prevent COVID-19. Self-medication is a widespread problem that many people engage in. To combat malaria, several families turned to herbal remedies and doctor-prescribed medications. The World Health Organization's (WHO) guidelines did not include this. Sadly, they continued to spread incorrect information to everyone who was interested in learning more after they stopped using these drugs.

The second wave of Covid-19 began in Nigeria around the end of December, and the increase was greater than the first wave. The misinformation about the weather is still widespread among the populace; some still think that the cold weather in December was to blame and that there was no need to be alarmed; the majority of people continue to go about their daily lives without paying attention to warnings; some states have already restricted citizen movement in early January 2021. Due to fear and a reluctance to fact-check information, unverified information continues to travel swiftly in Nigeria, as it does in the majority of other nations. In order to combat the spread of false information and fake news on COVID-19, the UN recently launched "Verified," its fact-checking project, with the goal of enhancing access to and distribution of reliable and accurate information. Reliable information on COVID-19 is available from the Verified campaign. In many localities,

though, including those in Nigeria's Southwest, North Central, North West, North East, South East, and South-South, false information persists. Because of this, offline and online campaigns complement one another well. To increase public knowledge of COVID-19, programs like Migrants as Messengers (MaM), a regional peer-to-peer program, conduct activities on radio, television, in markets, and other public places.

Conclusion

The spread of the virus in Nigeria has been negatively impacted by inaccurate information about the COVID-19 across various Nigerian media platforms. In January 2021, the federal government of Nigeria announced the importation of the vaccine from abroad, including Prizer/BioTech, Janssen (Johnson and Johnson), and Oxford/Astra Zeneca, to stop the virus' spread. The executive decided to order the vaccine for the benefit of the citizens. According to support.google.com, as of this year, 2022 foreigners have donated Nigeria about 56.1 million doses of Covid-19, and 24.7 million of Nigeria's population had received the vaccine. Although it appears that not everyone who was immunized received the full three doses that the world health organization (WHO) recommends.

Recommendations

1. The significance of adhering to the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommendations for preventive measures; this effort can assist combat false information about Covid-19 in Nigeria.
2. It is essential that those who disseminate these myths and false information stop doing so in order to prevent endangering the lives of those they care about; typically, family and friends are the first to hear this information.
3. Before accepting or spreading any information concerning COVID-19, people should verify it.
4. To stop the spread of Covid-19 among the populace, the government needs to compile the information provided by the many researchers and put it into action.

References

A Guide to Misinformation: How to Spot and Combat fake News. www.verizon.com Retrieved on 15th June, 2021

- Chenk, K, Luo, Y, Hu, A, Zhao, J & Zhang, L (2021). Characteristics of Misinformation Spreading on Social Media during Covid-19 Outbreak in China: A descriptive Analysis www.dovepress.com Retrieved on 5th July, 2021.
- Chris, K, (2020). www.facebook.com www.pema.cc Retrieved on 16th, April, 2020
- Daron, A, Asuman, O, & James, S, (2021). Misinformation Strategie Sharing, Homophily, and Endogenous Echo Chambers. Retrieved on 30th June, 2021.
- Explain what is False Information (Fake News)? www.webwise.ie/teachers. Retrieved on 25th June, 2021.
- Filippo, M, & Thomas, H (2020). Information Overload Helps Fake News Spread, and Social Media Knows It. www.scientificamerica.com Retrieved on 1st July, 2021.
- Gordon, P, & David, R, (2019). Fighting Misinformation on Social Media Using Crowdsourced Judgements of news SourceQuality. www.pnass.org retrieved on 10th June 2020
- Herman, W, (2020). Cultural Factors are behind disinformation pandemic why this matters. www.theconversation.com/cultural-factors. Retrieved on 9th September, 2020.
- How to Identify Fake News on Social Media. www.mailchimp.com Retrieved on 15th May, 2021.
- Hunt, A, Matthew, & Chuan, Y, (2019). Trend in the diffusion of Misinformation on Social Media. www.journals.sagepub.com Retrieved on 18th June, 2021.
- International Fact Checking Network, (2020). Corona Virus Fact Alliance Dataset
- Jason, w, Jacob, S, Jan, O & Paul, H, (2020). Corona virus misinformation is a global issues, but which myth you fall for likely depends on where you live. www.theconversation.com/coronavirus-misinformation. Retrieved on 9th September, 2020.
- Kate, S, (2020). Disinformation campaigns are murky blends of truth, lies and sincere beliefs- lesson from the pandemic. www.theconversation.com/disinformation-campaigns. Retrieved on 9th September, 2020.
- Ilse Van, L, & Mieke, K, (2020). Coronavirus: Misinformation is leading to fake news, anxieties in Dutch refugee communities. www.theconversation.com/coronavirus/misinformation. Retrieved on 9th September, 2020.
- Sarah, M, Bellinda, B, James, M, (2020). China's disinformation threat is real. We need better

- defenses against state based cyber campaigns. www.theconversation.com/disinformation. Retrieved on 9th September, 2020.
- Tom, B, (2020). Why do People Spread False Information online? The effect of message and viewer characteristics on Self-Reported likelihood of sharing Social Media disinformation. www.journals.plos.org Retrieved on 17th June 2021.
- Yariv, T, Boomgaarden, H, Stromback, J, Vliegenthart, R, damstra, A & Lindgren, E, (2020). Causes and Consequenses of mainstreams media dissemination of fake news: Literature Review and Synthesis www.tandfonline.com Retrieved on 25th June, 2021 Annals of International Communication Association Vol. 44 issue 2.
- Zhong N, (2020). Saline Solution Kills China coronavirus? Experts refute online rumour. www.factcheck.com/saline-solution
- World Health Organization (2021). How to report misinformation online www.who.int/campaign/connecting-the-world-to-combact-coronavirus.
- Bora, R. (2023b). Challenges and emerging trends in cyber security. *Shodh Sari-An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, 02(03), 26–41. <https://doi.org/10.59231/sari7590>
- Avurakoghene, O. P., & Oredein, A. O. (2023). Educational leadership and artificial intelligence for sustainable development. *Shodh Sari-An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, 02(03), 211–223. <https://doi.org/10.59231/sari7600>
- Muibi, T. G. (2023b). Potentials of blended learning in changing the delivery of literacy education and skills acquisition in Nigeria in the digital Age. *Shodh Sari-An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, 02(03), 274–293. <https://doi.org/10.59231/sari7605>

Received on March 25, 2023

Accepted on July 12, 2023

Published on Jan 01, 2024