

Propagation of False Information on Covid-19 among Nigerians on Social Media

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Abstract:

Social media has become an indispensable aspect of modern life since it enables the distant creation of material for the purposes of amusement and information exchange, facilitating quicker and easier information sharing in Nigeria and around the globe. Through social networks and online communities, social media, as computer-mediated technology, promotes the development and exchange of concepts, awareness, professional interests, information, and other forms of expression. In Nigeria, the Covid-19 outbreak ushered in a digital age of first-ever marketing. During that time, citizens used social media to raise awareness among the public and demand action from the government to stop the spread of the virus. Within this conceptual context, the postulation of Technological Determinism theory serves the study goal. The study used secondary data to generate information on the subject matter. These sources provided concrete context for the thematic area of analysis. To interrogate the literature, a content analysis of secondary data was conducted. This made it possible to assess the body of knowledge in order to determine its applicability, consistency, and replication. It was established that customers used to rely on more traditional media, including radio and television, which included comparatively fewer and more reputable news sources. Consumers today are exposed to online information sources (the Internet), which was created to spread information and shape public opinion on topics by dictating what information is made available. The study concludes that the way that real-time audience participation has led to crowd sourcing content, which reflects the effects of rapidly evolving digital technology, online behaviors, and newsgathering techniques that has transformed journalistic practice as a result of social media. Members of a network can now communicate globally as a result of web-based applications, which facilitate the spread of fake information.

Keywords:

Covid-19; Fake information; Propagation; Social media and Technological Determinism.

I. Introduction

Social media has become an indispensable aspect of modern life since it enables the distant creation of material for the purposes of amusement and information exchange, facilitating quicker and easier information sharing in Nigeria and around the globe. In 2018, the World Economic Forum listed internet disinformation as one of the top 10 worldwide challenges to civilization. Likewise, research by Ahmed and Aondover (2022) indicate that false information may contribute to health anxiety and make bad decisions about one's health. False information that is purposefully spread by those who care little about the truth in an effort to further their own political agendas and increase online traffic is known as fake news. False information from journalists who are unaware of its falsity may also be included.

Aondover and Phillips (2020) has similarly described fake news as information that is knowingly and independently verified to be incorrect or misleading and purposefully spread to mislead people. Media organisations have become more aware of the role social media plays in the rapid spread of false information about current events in politics and society as a result of the growth in fake news. Thus, the dissemination of false information is facilitated by social media and its users.

The year 2020 saw the beginning of the corona virus disease (Covid-19) outbreak in Nigeria and most parts of the world. Previously known as the “2019 novel corona virus” or “2019-CoV,” this respiratory infection posed a serious threat to global public health. The virus is spread from person to person through contact with infected individuals or salivary droplets (Msughter et al., 2022). The first case of Covid-19 was reported in Nigeria on February 28, 2020. Subsequently, there has been a noted rise in the utilization of diverse social media channels to disseminate information on the illness (Suleiman et al., 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted numerous countries worldwide, requiring the implementation of diverse control measures to stop the spread of the disease. Social media is a useful tool in Nigeria for keeping up with global events and for shedding light on the country’s circumstances. However, it can be difficult to separate fact from fiction in the deluge of misinformation that is readily available on social media networks (Aondover et al., 2024; Oboko & Onyejelem, 2024).

Usman et al., (2022) note that the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria sparked a digital response, with citizens searching Covid-19 content to learn more about the virus. Nigerians seemed to have consulted a number of well-known channels, including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter, to raise awareness about Covid-19 in the nation. Given that many Nigerians think the virus is a hoax designed by the government to enrich a select few State officials through corruption, these scenarios are likely to be amplified or experienced in Nigeria during this time. Many people find it difficult to let go of this belief, which makes it nearly hard to follow the guidelines for personal guidelines recommended by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) (Pate et al., 2020; Onyejelem, 2024).

The aforementioned empirical studies demonstrate that the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbates the fake news problem, and there are examples of social media being used to disseminate false information about the pandemic. The majority of the studies concentrate on exposure, awareness, behavioral influences, political, and preventive perspectives, as well as identifying significant platforms that are utilized in the dissemination of false information about the pandemic. This study aims to evaluate fake news linked to Covid-19 that is created, shared, and circulated on social media in order to close this knowledge gap.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To examines social media as an information outlet
2. To interrogates the concept of news and fake news
3. To investigates the spread of Covid-19 in Nigeria
4. To explores the influence of social media and the spread of fake news on Covid-19 in Nigeria

II. Review of Literatures

The Technological Determinism theory serves as theoretical framework. By challenging the extent to which technical variables impact human thought and behavior, Marshall McLuhan's 1964 communication theory sheds light on what or who could have a controlling influence in human affairs. It demonstrates how media technology affects how people think, feel, and behave in a society as well as how that society functions and transitions from one technological era to the next. According to Hauer (2017), those who support technological determinism believe that technology shapes and influences society and that people should adjust to new innovations and technologies. They also contend that people's poor use of technology, rather than the inherent qualities of technology, is what causes negative effects of technological development. Technological advancements have an impact on society; the bad impacts stem from people's improper use of the technology, not from the technology itself; also, the introduction and adoption of new technology is a product of social order (Vitalis et al., 2024; Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024a).

The theory is based on a number of assumptions that can be broken down into different interpretations. These assumptions include ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions, as well as metatheoretical assumptions. Thus, while Karl Marx believed in economic determinism and that the economic structure of society constitutes an essential aspect of his life, McLuhan believes that significant technological inventions have a major impact on societies (technological determinism). The idea holds that the media is the message, however some media scholars believe that the media determines the impact and quality of communication. For this reason, McLuhan believes that the media's technology cannot be separated from its content. This appears to be somewhat connected to the agenda setting theory, which explains how social media can affect the importance of certain issues on the public agenda (Mojaye & Aondover, 2022).

That is, the public will consider a news story more significant if it is covered regularly and widely. The widespread dissemination of fake news in society has been greatly impacted by the technological advancements that contribute to the transmission of fake news on Covid-19, particularly in the field of online technology (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024b). The modern, sophisticated phones that were utilized for communication back then have had a significant impact on how people communicate on social media (Msughter et al., 2022). Examining further tenets of the theory provides more insight into the dissemination of false information regarding the Covid-19 outbreak in Nigeria among social media users. By looking at historical events, people are able to determine that there is just one truth. The communication patterns of society evolve along with the medium (Aondover et al., 2022). People are limited to using the medium for which it was designed (email for computer-based communication, or phones for voice over lines). If social media is the impersonal medium, then the message is also impersonal.

The argument suggests that mediums like printing, radio, and film do not require message recipients to make an effort, participate, or cohabit. As a result of the world turning into a "global village," McLuhan affirms that this contributed to what he dubbed "the era of anxiety," during which the electronic media assisted in making the world smaller both spatially and temporally, to the point where it was referred to as a "global village." People became acutely conscious of their responsibilities, and this may be considered the "era of anxiety" because the new, immediate technological revolution requires people to dedicate themselves fully to it. One of the most critical criticisms of this theory comes from Richard Black, who

notes that the “global village” no longer exists in reality. He explains this by pointing out that McLuhan’s technological advancements did not create the “global village” that McLuhan claimed existed. In this sense, Black claims that the development he relied on McLuhan to “describe the global village” eventually led to the fragmentation and destruction of the global village (Aondover et al., 2022).

The fact that technology never imposes itself on members of society is another argument against technological determinism. Technology is something that man invents and chooses to use; it is not something that is imposed upon people. For example, using a car or a microwave needs human participation at some point. Therefore, the decision to use technology and deal with its consequences rests with the individual human. The connection between the theory of technological determinism, and the digital dissemination of false information via the Internet, is made possible by the very nature of online information exchange. Accordingly, based on the theory’s tenets, it is critical that the theory’s assumptions align with the subject matter insofar as this study’s goal is concerned. The theories’ tenets align with the findings of researchers such as McLuhan (1984) and Williams (2004), as information technology and the evolving role of Nigerian media require technological advancements, particularly for social media that employs contemporary methods of disseminating information.

III. Research Methods

The majority of the information in the study was obtained from secondary sources. These sources included official publications, pertinent texts, journals, historical documents, and the Internet. These sources provided concrete context for the thematic area of analysis. To interrogate the literature, a content analysis of secondary data was conducted. This made it possible to assess the body of knowledge in order to determine its applicability, consistency, and replication.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1 Social Media as an Information Outlet

Social media refers to interactive online platforms that allow users to create profiles, post material, share information, and connect with others. Examples of these platforms include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Whatsapp, LinkedIn, Google+, Wikipedia, and blogs. Social media, in its broadest sense, is an assortment of websites and web-based platforms that facilitate widespread communication, sharing, and engagement among users within a network (Kurfi et al., 2021). These many communication channels and media platforms were crucial in enabling revolutions like the Arab spring (AlSyyad & Guvenc, 2015). The live images captured via video capturing of the events as they happen are what give it its power. Events can be streamed live internationally and have the power to mobilize large numbers of people for either positive or negative causes. Furthermore, it has been crucial in undermining autocratic governments. Sadly, these different platforms have been misused as dishonest individuals have taken advantage of their anonymity to commit fraud or spread false information (Obi-Ani et al., 2020). According to Storsul (2011), social media gives users the ability to communicate with others in their network, share their political opinions, and obtain information.

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo implemented a telecom policy in 1999 following his inauguration, giving the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) the authority to

restructure, hold an auction, and grant new licenses to profitable businesses that could offer Nigerians an effective and reasonably priced phone system. This intended to solve the landline issue, which only the wealthy could afford. On March 23, 2001, Digital Mobile (DM) licenses were awarded to Nigeria Telecommunication Plc (NITEL), MTN Nigeria, and Econet Wireless, with a ninety-day window in which to commence operations. According to Bowd (2016), social media's introduction has improved news organizations' capacity to interact with a larger audience, which has expanded the dissemination of information to a larger audience. Msughter's et al., (2022) assertion that the Internet transforms society is supported by this. However, Africans use social media at a relatively low rate, hence research is needed to determine how social media usage affects civic involvement in specific African nations or subregions (Oginni & Motui, 2015). As a result, the pandemic has caused Africans—Nigerians in particular—to use social media more frequently in order to stay informed about world events.

The first Coronavirus victim in Nigeria was announced via a number of social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, and other websites. Spreading this information was made simple by the large number of Nigerians who have access to these platforms. Through these social media channels, health care agencies like the NCDC subsequently informed the public on the number of cases that are positive, dead, or have recovered in Nigeria. As a result, Nigerians had a greater opportunity to be fully ready for Covid-19 than they did during the influenza epidemic in Nigeria, when there was less information available. The colonial authority of Nigeria was only able to contain the influenza at the time in certain areas of Lagos by cleaning homes; yet, information-sharing barriers caused the epidemic to spread more quickly to other regions of the nation (Adebowale, 2020).

Aondover (2020) claims that social media raises young people's feeling of visibility for their regular friend-based social interactions as well as their sense of belonging. According to a 2012 Pew Research Center study conducted in the US, young people are more likely to use social media for online political promotion, thinking posting, and/or liking. In order to educate, attract, and mobilize young people, a few political groups and organizations that are now offline in Western nations like the US and the UK have adapted digital models. Social media, for instance, was used to organize the masses during the Arab Spring in Egypt and was viewed as an instrument for democracy and liberalization since it empowered and gave voice to the activists. People posted on social media as soon as they heard about Covid-19 because, according to Kent (2020), these platforms allow the public to communicate and exchange information. It is necessary to determine the manipulation that this information-sharing behavior has caused in terms of new beliefs or behaviors among Nigerians. Yates (2020) noted that while social media brings people together, it also exposes them to information from around the globe, which can lead to abuse of the platform and tarnish its positive aspects.

Nevertheless, despite the NCDC's warning not to engage in social media misuse by disseminating false information or fake news stories, social media has also shown to be a vehicle for people to transmit panic, anxiety, and confusion among themselves (NCDC, 2020). This illustrates how social media is acceptable for everyone, allowing unverified and fraudulent news to be disseminated without fear of repercussions.

4.2 Understanding News and Fake News

According to Asemah (2018), news is a report of a noteworthy and timely occurrence in society. This definition appears restrictive in light of Fry's (2017) observation that the old

definition of news has evolved to become an account of an uncommon event in the present digital environment, which is marked by the proliferation of social media. According to McQuail (2014), news is the primary way that media outlets of all stripes disseminate up-to-date information regarding public events. The latter definition effectively conveys the reality that news is information disseminated over various media platforms, even if it is evident from the definitions provided here that currency is one of the unique characteristics of news. Simply put, news is information about events that have recently occurred or are presently taking place.

However, bogus news spreads “faster, farther, deeper, and more broadly than truth,” (Vosoughi et al., 2018). Since information disorder encompasses the following: genuine content shared out of context; imposter content (when someone using a newsroom logo or satire and parody uses a journalist’s name), manipulated and fabricated content, click-bait headlines, and the misleading use of captions, visuals, or statistics. All of this indicates that the crisis is far more complicated than what the term “fake news” implies. Similar to this, social networking sites provide a platform for citizen participation and the exercise of unrestricted freedom of expression through the use of photographs and the disappearance of authorship regarding the production, sharing, and consumption of online memes that raise awareness of pertinent issues without going through gatekeepers to confirm the legitimacy of such memes or content.

However, content creators, the motivation behind their creation, the type of content being produced, the recipients of such content on social media, and the recipients’ motivation to repost are the key factors in addressing the problems caused by this type of information polluting our social media streams and preventing it from flowing into traditional media outputs. In a similar vein, Donald Trump, the former president of the United States of America (USA), tweeted about the effectiveness of chloroquine in treating Covid-19 during the 2020 pandemic crisis without consulting a medical professional or specialist. According to Suleiman et al., (2020), a large number of Nigerian teenagers and adults alike enthusiastically spread this information. This behavior resulted in a rise in chloroquine misuse, with many people being diagnosed as having abused the medication and two people being admitted to a Lagos hospital. Health organizations responded to such fake news by using traditional media channels to caution against such remarks (Aondover & Phillips, 2020).

As per Shereen et al., (2020), the initial documented case of the virus started in December 2019 in Wuhan, the Chinese province of Hubei’s capital. In the province, it started out as a kind of pneumonic instances. After the cases were reported to the country office of the World Health Organization (WHO), it was found that the SARS-CoV virus of 2020 was a new strain. The virus was given the name Covid-19 by the World Health Organization on February 11, 2020. It stands for Corona Virus Disease of 2019 and is an acronym. The signs and symptoms were similar to those of a normal cold. These consist of fever, cough, dyspnea, and olfactory loss. Nevertheless, the consequences outweigh the symptoms since they can deteriorate depending on the patient’s health and result in pneumonia, viral sepsis, acute respiratory distress syndrome, kidney failure, etc (Sohrabi, 2020). At first, close contact with droplets from infected individuals—such as chatting, holding, caressing, and hugging contaminated objects and people—is the main way that the virus spreads among people. According to studies, the virus’s half-life outside of the human body depends on humidity and temperature, hence the rate at which it spreads can vary depending on the location.

The most preventive control method, according to some research, is to socially disengage while donning a face mask, often washing your hands with sanitizer, and wiping off surfaces. Without testing, it is challenging to definitively identify an infected individual due to the irregularity of the symptoms. Lauer (2020) therefore divided the symptoms of Covid-19 into three silent carriers, which are as follows:

1. Asymptomatic: those who maintain an active infection in their bodies but never show any signs of illness.
2. Presymptomatic: those who have contracted the virus and are incubating it but have not yet displayed any symptoms.
3. Persons with very minor symptoms: those who have a slight illness from a Covid-19 infection but keep in close touch with other persons.

In a more positive direction, technological progress has contributed to the containment of this illness; yet, the global pandemic continues to pose a problem as nations unite to pool their financial and intellectual resources in an effort to confront it. Despite this, countries are reporting daily deaths and surges of up to a thousand or more, suggesting a possible global increase in the spread. According to reports, the country's most impacted by this pandemic are in North America and Europe (World Health Organisation, 2020).

Therefore, there are many definitions of the term 'fake news' and even 'fake media' to describe reporting with which the claimant does not agree. A Google Trends map shows that people began searching for the term extensively in the second half of 2016. Fake news is also referred to as "false news" or "misinformation." Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) described fake news as "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers. Fake news is generated when information is adulterated or fabricated to create tension and fear. The consumers of fake news may take no measure to ascertain the accuracy of the news as far as it suits partisan opinion or alignment. Hence, it takes a balanced and objective mind, to a great extent, to be able to ascertain whether the news is fake or not. However, it is quite difficult for most humans to be balanced in analysis and opinion (Sulaiman et al., 2020).

Nyhan and Reifler (2015) note the danger of fake news and state that fake news can continue to affect the attitudes of those exposed to long after it has been debunked and withdrawn from the media. Scholars like Spectra (2017) derided the concept of fake news and argued that if it is fake, then it is not news. Fry (2017) corroborates this and points out that the application of the term "fake" to news is inappropriate because news is a social construct, which already has a lot of economic, social and political biases, as well as medium constraints. However, one can only assess the world through instances of accurate accounts of events.

Howell (2013) noted that the spread of fake news is a global concern. Unknowingly to many, the information they share only help progress the dastardly efforts of fraudsters. Rubin, Chen and Conroy (2015) corroborates that there are three types of fake news, which is evident in sensationalism and yellow journalism so as to increase profit; firstly, fabrication of news stories like falsification, fabrication and exaggeration, just the way people in other part of Nigeria believed that the figures of Covid-19 are overestimated by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) (Aondover, 2020).

Secondly, 'hoaxes', which is a large-scale deception being deliberately masqueraded as news in social media or mainstream media, often may be picked up and mistakenly validated by supposedly credible news outlets causing harm to the victim. The last one is humorous

fakes, which are playful pieces of information meant for humour, they include satire or news parody, which rely on irony and humour to imitate genuine or credible news sources and news game show, where unusual news pieces are read aloud for listeners to call in and guess, which is real or fake. The awareness of the playful intents by the readers often makes them not to take such humour seriously (Kurfi et al., 2021). Thus, Hollander (2018) suggests that misperception often lead to misinformation or conspiracy beliefs.

Kiernan (2017) stated the need for social media users to identify fake news stories, that they should be more aware and educated in their ability to properly evaluate the information that they are being exposed to. It was stated further that the CRAAP (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose) method employed by researchers can be used to test the veracity of news seen on social media. Kim et al., (2011) noted that unlike library sources, social media aids contribution of information by verified and unverified users whose credibility may be unknown making it difficult to evaluate.

4.3 The First Covid-19 Case in Nigeria

Nigeria is one of the 210 countries affected globally; the first case was confirmed in Lagos State on 27 February 2020. This index case was a 44-year old man, an Italian citizen who returned from Milan, Italy, on 24 February and presented at a health facility on 26 February 2020 (NCDC 2020). Obi-Ani et al (2020) add that the announcement of the first Covid-19 victim was made through various social media platforms, which led to the spread of the information, since a good number of Nigerians use it. Subsequently, Health Care Agencies, such as the NCDC updated the masses on the number of cases tested that are positive, fatal or have recovered in Nigeria through social media platforms. This prepared the citizens for the Covid-19 virus as opposed to the period of the Influenza pandemic in which there was limited news on social media about the virus when it came to Nigeria, which prompted the faster spread of the disease to other parts of the country.

The first case of the deadly disease Covid-19 was confirmed in an Infectious Disease Centre, Yaba, Lagos State, Nigeria on the 27th February, 2020, as an Italian citizen arrived at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos on 24th February, 2020 on-board a Turkish airline from Milan, Italy. He visited his company's site in Ogun State the following day where he presented himself at his company's staff clinic. The physician-on-duty had a strong suspicion of the presence of the virus. This led him to refer the Italian citizen to Infectious Disease Hospital (IDH) and the Covid-19 status was confirmed (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, 2020).

This however led to the tracing of all persons he must have contacted from the flight as well as people who had close contact with him by Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). Onyeji (2020) adds that after a period of two weeks, a cluster of cases was detected in Lagos and Abuja, this was noted to be the emergence of the nationwide spread of the virus. The Federal Government, through the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), restricted International commercial flights into the country, effective from 23rd March, 2020. On the same day, Nigeria registered her first fatality; a 67-year-old male returnee from the United Kingdom who already had underlying medical issues that were been managed before his death. The death occurred in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Although, the initial performances of the various institutions and agencies of the Government showed the ill-preparedness to combat the virus but the subsequent responses have been phenomenal. This is evident in the containment of the ongoing pandemic spread in

Nigeria that began February, 2020. In order to reduce the spread worldwide ban on inter-state travel was an appropriate containment measure (AbdulAzeez, 2020). The Federal Government responded with the authorization of the closure of all non-essential services (businesses and industries) and restricted movement of people in Lagos State, Ogun State and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Most State Governments restricted public gathering and there were restrictions on Inter-state movement. The Government later authorized the gradual easing of lockdown in states on the 4th May, 2020.

4.4 The Spread of Covid-19 in Nigeria

The Nigerian Federal Government acted quickly to limit the virus as a result of its widespread across the globe. The existing data on the virus and the wellbeing of her population served as guiding lights for the periodic restrictions designed to optimize containment. Prior to containment measures being expanded to non-essential services, educational and religious institutions were the first bodies to be restricted (Onyeji, 2020). The Presidential Task Force for the Control of the Covid-19 (PTF) and the Nigeria Centre for Disease and Control (NCDC) provided the Federal Government of Nigeria with strong backing as it mounted a valiant defense against the Covid-19 pandemic. The Federal Government did this with the assistance of several ministries and governmental agencies.

Only those who have been tested can be positively identified as infected due to the nature of the symptoms. A growing number of people have been verified to have Covid-19, according to test results. Even while a sizable portion of the population recovers from the virus, those who have not been tested should raise the most alarm. The rate of interaction among the population and the ease of transmission suggest that the confirmed cases represent only a small portion of the true numbers. The daily rate of newly confirmed instances serves as evidence for this. The NCDC's daily statistics state that Lagos State, which has Nigeria's highest population density, has been reporting the most number of confirmed cases.

In all, 25 cases were reported in the nation. Upon closer inspection, it was discovered that 76 percent of the confirmed cases of Covid-19 had a history of travel outside the nation, and 20 percent of the confirmed cases had close contact with other Covid-19 patients. Four percent of confirmed cases remained unclassified as inadequate information and no epidemiological relationship. The NCDC issued a guideline requiring returnees from high-risk nations to remain in isolation for a least of 14 days, based on the implication that most confirmed cases in Nigeria were from epicenters. With effect from March 23, 2020, the Federal Government halted all international flights into Lagos and Abuja (Onyeji, 2020).

In a similar direction, as of March 21, 2020, only Lagos (19), Ogun (2), Ekiti (1), and Abuja (3) States of the Federation plus the Federal Capital Territory had reported instances of Covid-19 nationwide. Every region of the nation had at least one verified incidence of Covid-19 by the end of the fifth week. This resulted in a lockdown (complete restriction of movement) and limitations on interstate travel in Lagos, Ogun, and Abuja. The NCDC had to test more suspected cases in reaction to this development. As a result, the organization expanded its nationwide laboratory collection by adding a modular laboratory to University College Hospital in Ibadan, Oyo State, and announced that six more will be added in the upcoming weeks.

Regretfully, due to skepticism regarding the veracity of the outbreak in the nation, residents of Abuja, Lagos, and Ogun State did not comply well with the orders to maintain a complete lockdown. In a similar way, given that Nigeria is the epicenter of global

multidimensional poverty, citizens of the society perceived promises of palliatives (cash transfer and distribution of relief materials) as a significant failure because of the degree of corruption among government officials in the nation (Okon, 2020). As a result, several areas of Lagos and Ogun States saw a rise in crime. Other Federation states did not strictly enforce the idea of social distance, and several did not forbid religious gatherings.

Given that the virus was correctly controlled in the geopolitical zone until the index case was reported in the state of Kano, the rise in verified Covid-19 cases in the North West region raised concerns. Kano, the index case, was reported to have attended multiple religious prayer areas and parties while exhibiting signs of Covid-19. According to Ezeamalu (2020), this had a significant impact on the pace of diffusion throughout the state and the geopolitical zone. Because of the large number of deaths reported, Kano State attracted attention; however, a report from the state government stated that the deaths had nothing to do with Covid-19. But there were claims that autopsies weren't performed. The evacuation of Almajiris, or children who travel in pursuit of Islamic knowledge, from the eight local government areas that make up the metropolis back to their states of origin was the measure taken by the Kano State Government in an effort to stop the spread of Covid-19 in the State.

In addition, the Federal Government asked for a substance from Madagascar that purports to cure Covid-19 in an effort to provide relief. In Madagascar, the product's great recovery rate was acknowledged. Directives were issued to guarantee a careful examination and examination before to its entry into the nation (Daily Trust, 2020). On April 8, a group of fifteen Chinese medical professionals also arrived in the nation with the intention of sharing their experiences in combating Covid-19. When the team arrived, they found that their sole purpose was to look after the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC). When they arrived, there was a controversy among medical professionals about whether foreign staff was necessary; however, this debate has since died down in relation to their actions. On May 30, it was assumed that the medical staff and 286 Chinese citizens had returned to China (Chinedu, 2020).

4.5 The Influence of Social Media and the Spread of Fake News on Covid-19 in Nigeria

When it comes to the public and private sectors' decision to stop initiatives such as airline programs, public opinion and media coverage might have a bigger impact than the real need for public health (Depoux et al., 2020). Social media has long been recognized as one of the most important sources of information about public perceptions of risk; via it, individuals learn about topics that present risk warnings and understand the risks associated with the pandemic. People's perceptions of risk are influenced by the way risk information is presented, particularly when it comes to dramatic media coverage of pandemic crises.

Specifically, the effect of media exposure on the feeling of personal danger is thought to be mediated by anger and anxiety, which in turn leads to an increase in protective behaviors. The Covid-19 outbreak is a bad thing that has caused an unexpectedly high number of diseases and deaths, which has made people feel bad about themselves. Social media is typically used by people to voice their concerns about the pandemic epidemic. But occasionally, the media fails to identify the outbreak in a timely manner, failing to establish itself as the leading indication (Liu & Huang, 2020). Since the corona virus is new and not enough research has been done on it, mass media news reports lag behind real-time trends and thus do not serve as a useful pre-warning tool for communicating and raising public

health awareness. Additionally, the volume of misinformation that is spread can have negative psychological effects on people, such as anxiety, rage, or sadness.

Due to individuals consuming unmonitored messages on social media, users searching for information about Covid-19 have encountered millions of bogus content (Apuke & Omar, 2021). Online, there is an increasing amount of misleading material on Covid-19 in Nigeria. The government (NCDC) also used the media platform to disseminate updates on the nation's health situation with reference to the flu's spread during this Covid-19 epidemic. As a result, fraudulent accounts linked to the NCDC were made. Consequently, Hassan (2020) noticed a tweet that said President Muhammadu Buhari was ill and had caught the virus; in a few of hours, this post received over 3,000 likes and was shared over 200 times. In a similar vein, a purported WHO health worker's voice clip went viral, predicting that the virus would kill millions of Nigerians.

Sahu et al. (2020) support this by citing the participation of medical professionals or self-proclaimed experts who give fictitious cures by spending a lot of time in the sun since heat kills viruses. Others asserted that the virus cannot infect or thrive in Africans (Lampos et al., 2020). While sharing news is thought to promote social cohesiveness, users are driven to do so by the news' perceived emotional effect, potential relevance for the recipient, and the sender's desire to "provide advice or warning." These reasons are specific to Nigerians, who are frequently characterized as having a very altruistic mindset. Nigerians are known for their tendency to support one another, which is demonstrated when they share knowledge. They don't care if it is genuine as long as it includes safety precautions for particular situations.

V. Conclusion

Fake news is more likely to propagate because of social media and its users. The year 2020 saw the beginning of the corona virus disease (Covid-19) outbreak in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Previously known as the "2019 novel corona virus" or "2019-CoV," this respiratory infection posed a serious threat to global public health. Via contact with infected individuals or salivary droplets, the virus is spread from person to person. The first case was reported in Nigeria on February 28, 2020. Since then, it has become more common to use different social media channels to provide information about the virus. The global epidemic known as Covid-19 has had varying effects on most countries and control methods. It was argued that customers used to rely on more traditional media, including radio and television, which included comparatively fewer and more reputable news sources. Consumers today are exposed to online information sources (the Internet), which was created to spread information and shape public opinion on topics by dictating what information is made available. The study concludes that the way that real-time audience participation has led to crowd sourcing content, which reflects the effects of rapidly evolving digital technology, online behaviors, and newsgathering techniques that has transformed journalistic practice as a result of social media. Members of a network can now communicate globally as a result of web-based applications, which facilitate the spread of fake information.

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