

**CHALLENGES OF REPORTING THE PANDEMIC ISSUES IN  
NIGERIA  
(A STUDY OF JOURNALISTS IN PUNCH AND VANGUARD  
NEWSPAPERS)**

**BY**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

I certify that this work was carried out by **Olawumi Tolu David** at the Department of Mass Communication, Mountain Top University, Ogun State, Nigeria under my supervision.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, my creator, my foundation of strength, my source of inspiration, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. He has served as the source of my confidence throughout this project. Many thanks to my encouraging and supportive family, as well as all the lecturers in Mountain Top University's department of Mass Communication, for influencing my knowledge.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study is a qualitative research into journalists' experiences covering the Covid-19 pandemic. The aim was to discuss the challenges of reporting pandemic issues in Nigeria, using as studies Journalists in Punch and Vanguard newspapers. The study also sought to discover the measures put in place to ensure the safety of journalists while covering the pandemic, as well as the survival strategies employed by journalists. The 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic shocked the world, affecting even high-income countries' healthcare systems. The situation has consistently triggered social and medical responses from the public and governments, respectively. On February 27, 2020, Nigeria recorded an imported case from Italy. The findings of this research, which were based on the fear appeal theory and the direct effects theory, revealed four major challenges faced by journalists from the Punch and Vanguard newspapers. The challenges include health challenges, security challenges, Transportation challenges, and salary slash. As a result, the study recommends, among other things, that media organizations and governments implement policies that will ensure the safety of journalists, as well as pay adequate attention to the welfare of journalists by paying hazard allowance to journalists.

**KEYWORDS:** Covid-19, Journalist, Pandemic, Nigeria.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the study

Media coverage of pandemics is an important area of research because it plays a critical role in educating the public about the public health emergency. This is because during an outbreak such as with the case with COVID-19, information sharing is key in combating it. Accurate information is what is needed because pandemics create panics, thus making the general public vulnerable to fake news and rumours that often characterize each outbreak. Gever and Nwabuzor (2014) note that strategic information control is needed in times of outbreaks so as to counter rumour and fake news. In the view of Gever and Nwabuzor (2014), the media and important stake holders provide accurate information through their coverage during diseases outbreak.

Accurate information about COVID-19 is thus needed to effectively educate the general public and decision makers on different issues related to the virus. Apuke and Omar (2020) opine that fake news and inaccurate information are common features during the outbreak of the virus. This reality underscores the need for the media to provide up-to-date coverage on the virus. This is important to guide policy makers, influence policy advocacy and policy implementation.

Mass media remains a powerful social establishment in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic. The media informs, creates awareness and educates individuals on the measures to curtail the spread of the virus. These are the already known normative functions they perform in the society. Sambe (2005) & Dominick (2011) add that the media also survey and interpret events to the public. These roles are better amplified since the outbreak of Covid-19 in China in December, 2019. Newspaper Media play crucial role in disseminating health information. Through the

dissemination of health news, medical analysis, and health policies, mass media play a number one role in spreading health news affecting the information and health beliefs of the general public and eventually promoting public health.

The influence of media on public beliefs is so immense that generally individuals often adopt a new treatment due to the newest health news they study through the media. No medic, for all their training, could save all live that might be in danger if the message to remain at home, maintain social distancing, put on face mask, among different measures weren't transmitted by the media. Moreover, media is known to affect decisions of doctors, policymakers, and health professionals. Considering the touchy issue of medical findings, it is obligatory on those concerned to arrange accurate, complete, and reliable news. Journalists are the key figures in manufacturing health reports for the media and their reports usually embody personal speculations and interpretations and yield incorrect and deceptive news items. Amidst a global pandemic, the need for efficient exchange of electronic health information between hospitals and public health agencies has never been more critical. Journalists and different media practitioners sacrifice their health and time to report health related issues (including pandemic issues) in spite of the risks and dangers involved.

Even within the face of the total lock down as most stringent measure to curtail the spread of the deadly Covid-19 pandemic, media practitioners were exempted alongside aid workers and security personnel as the social service providers in keeping the society safe. The social service of the media is provision of knowledge and information that enabled the citizens at home to take informed decision while staying at home mattered. To discharge their duties of keeping humanity informed, journalists like soldiers in the war front showed their resilience to risks, threats and even deaths related to the diseases. Media practitioners took the risks even government officials

would not have loved to take because discharging their social responsibilities matter most because media is one of the institutions whose services are considered essential to the wellbeing of society. The challenges faced by newsrooms and journalists in rising economies, including Nigeria, was making sense of the fast changing landscape. The lockdown and restrictions caused by the pandemic led to distributed newsrooms and made socially-distant coverage difficult. This meant that a decent variety of media organizations had to enforce engaging from home on their journalists.

Therefore, this study is an effort to examine the challenges of reporting issues related to the pandemic in Nigeria, using Journalists in Punch and Vanguard as studies.

## **1.2 Statement of the Research Problem**

Media play crucial role in disseminating health information. Despite the importance of provision of accurate and correct writing and communicating health related issues (including Pandemic issue), inaccurate and incorrect news are still being circulated on health related issues, most especially COVID – 19, which often lead people astray or even complicate the issue. Outdated information are sometime disseminated which cannot provide the appropriate knowledge needed at that particular time. The researcher intends to investigate the challenges facing news organizations and their reporters when it comes to news gathering during pandemics and other public health emergency situations, to see how their challenges affect news outcomes. The problem of the study is therefore embedded in the question if newspaper organizations are confronted with challenges in terms of reporting the pandemic issue surrounding it.

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The aim of the study is to examine the challenges of reporting issues related to the pandemic in Nigeria; using as studies Journalists in Punch and Vanguard newspapers.

The specific objectives, however, include;

1. Investigating the importance of reporting the pandemic and related issues in Nigeria.
2. The challenges of reporting the pandemic and related issues in Nigeria.
3. The frequency and depth of coverage of the COVID-19 outbreak in the sampled newspapers.
4. The ways to overcome the challenges of reporting pandemic issues in Nigeria.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research questions guiding the study include;

1. What are the challenges of reporting the pandemic and related issue in Nigeria?
2. What is the frequency and depth of coverage of the COVID-19 outbreak in the selected newspapers?
3. What are the ways to overcome the challenges of reporting the public health emergency issues in Nigeria?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

It is hoped that the result of this study would be of significance and benefit to the following: the general public, health and medical facilities, research centers, and newspaper organizations.

The public would benefit from the findings of this study because it will enable them to understand the danger of consuming all types of information circulated on the media. This would further help them to know the true source of information before consuming and circulating it on social media.

Medical research centers would benefit from the finding of this study as it enables them to understand the danger of disseminating incorrect information about public health related issues (pandemic issues) and its effects on the general public. This would further enable them write and report accurate and correct information on all health related issues (pandemic issues) uncovered by their reporting.

The Health and medical centers would benefit from the findings of this study because if medical research centers adequately disseminate accurate and correct information on health related issues, proper treatment and medication will be provided which will go a long way to reduce fake treatment circulation.

Government would benefit from the end result as they device a new strategy on monitoring the activities on media use in disseminating important information such as the one that has to do with health related issues

Other researchers would also benefit from the end result of this research as it would help them in other related areas of research.

## **1.6 Scope of Study**

This research will focus on the challenges of reporting pandemic issues in Nigeria, using Journalists in Punch and Vanguard as studies. The research will also focus on the importance of reporting pandemic issues accurately and correctly, the frequency and the depth of coverage of

the COVID-19 outbreak and the ways to overcome the challenges confronting the reporting of pandemic issues.

## **1.7 Definition of Terms**

**Challenges:** this refers to the obstacles that hinder a successful reporting of pandemic

**Newspaper organizations:** this refers to agencies responsible for the disseminating of information on pandemic issues.

**Pandemic:** is an epidemic of an infectious disease that has spread across a large region, for instance multiple continents or worldwide, affecting a substantial number of individuals.

**Reporting:** this refers to the dissemination of information on pandemic issues.

**Journalists:** A writer for newspapers, magazines, or news websites, or someone who prepares news for broadcast.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

The literature review is presented in four segments, the conceptual review, the theoretical framework, the empirical review and the summary of literature review. This chapter reviews the published papers and journals of scholars who have carried out similar study in this area of research.

#### 2.1 Conceptual Review

##### 2.1.1 Media Coverage of Health Crisis

Studies conducted outside Nigeria that focused on health issues are growing. For example, Bowen (2013) cited in Apuke and Omar (2021) found that media messages convinced Cameroonians to use a treated net to prevent the spread of malaria. This outcome suggests a positive relationship between health media messages and healthy behavior. Contrary to this outcome, another study found that media overconcentration on panic reporting during the Ebola outbreak in Ghana increased the fear among the public and health care workers. It also made some to flee from isolation centers, and suspicious patients in dire need of medical attention were abandoned (Iddrisu, 2018 cited in Apuke and Omar, 2021). Basch et al (2014) cited in Apuke and Omar (2021) investigated how three widely read newspapers covered Ebola in the United States. The study found that the media primarily focused on death tolls, with less emphasis on educating the readers on the critical aspect of the Ebola epidemic. With regard to studies conducted in Nigeria, Uwom and Oloyede (2014) cited in Apuke and Omar (2021) studied newspaper coverage of health issues in Nigeria with a focus on the *Guardian* and *Punch*



newspapers. The study found that even though health issues were well reported in the media, most of the news were reported using straight news format and there was less prominence allocated to the issue of health. Straight news here means stories that report only the most essential information in a concise and impartial manner. Having understood media coverage of health crisis, it is pertinent to specifically look at media coverage of COVID-19 pandemic which is the focus of this study.

### **2.1.2 The Media and COVID-19 Pandemic**

Recent evidence has shown that media coverage could be an effective way to curb the spread of COVID-19 (Zhou et al, 2020, cited in Apuke and Omar, 2021). For example, Mutua and Oloo Ong'ong'a, (2020) cited in Apuke and Omar (2021) studied international news media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus was on BBC, CNN, Al-Jazeera, and People's Daily. The results showed that the media played a vital role in providing information on the initial stages of the outbreak, which influenced public perceptions of the disease and contributed to curtailing the spread. This is contrary to Basch et al. (2020) study, cited in Apuke and Omar (2021) which analyzed Google videos from January to February 2020 and found death rates as the most common topic mentioned across all videos. Pertinent information regarding preventive measures received little attention, suggesting that most of the videos missed the chance to encourage and promote coping strategies and health-sustaining behavior. With regard to Nigeria, Gever and Ezeah (2020) cited in Apuke and Omar (2021) investigated media coverage of COVID-19 in Nigeria with a focus on TV, Radio, and Newspapers. The study found that the sampled Nigerian media outlets had less emphasis on the issues of COVID-19 before the first case was announced in Nigeria. However, after cases were reported, the media had an upsurge in its interest and reportage.

It should be noted that there are two main types of media in Nigeria, and this includes private and government-owned media. The private media are entirely established by private individuals, while the government media are owned and managed by the government (Dogari et al., 2018, as cited in Apuke and Omar, 2021). An example of the private press in Nigeria includes TVC news, AIT, *Vanguard* newspaper, *Tribune* newspapers, *Daily Trust*, *Daily Sun*, and many more, including online newspapers. At the same time, the government media includes NTA, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), and so on (Apuke, 2017, cited in Apuke and Omar, 2021). Further evidence has shown that in Nigeria, Radio reach more people; however, television is also largely used by a lot of Nigerians with both low and high literacy as well as low and high class (Apuke, 2017, cited in Apuke and Omar, 2021).

### **2.1.3 The role of the media in communicating pandemics/crises**

The mass media have important roles to play in communicating health information to the general public. Through media messages, people get to know about health issues. Many decades ago, Flora *et al* (1989) cited in Ogbonne (2021) suggested four roles which the media can play in health communication. The first role according to Flora *et al.*(1989) is known as media as educator role. This role requires the media to provide information that educates the general public on health issues. Within the context of this study, this requires the media to educate the masses on issues related to COVID-19. Information on the virus could include symptoms, causes, prevention as well as treatment. The second role is media as supporter (Flora *et al.*1989 *cited in Ogbonne 2021*). Here, the media are expected to support efforts aimed at controlling the negative impact of health issues. Within the context of this study, the media are expected to support efforts aimed at controlling the spread of COVID-19. The third is media as programme promoter. Here, the expectation is for the media to promote programmes that are targeted at

combating health issues. From the perspective of the current study, the media are expected to promote programmes that aimed at combating COVID-19. The last role, in the view of Flora *et al.*(1989), is media as supplement. This requires the media to augment the efforts of health promoters. The media can achieve this through coverage of health issues.

It is noteworthy that in most instances; the media may not deploy one strategy but a combination of strategies. Kim and Noriega (2019) cited in Ogbonne (2021) corroborate that one of the strategies through which the media can play their role in communicating health crisis is combination of education and entertainment. This is sometimes called edutainment. This approach ensures that health messages entertain as well as educate on health issues. According to Okim-Alobi and Okpara (2017) cited in Ogbonne (2021) the mass media of communication provide health information to the general public thereby serving as a guide for people to adopt life- saving behaviour.

#### **2.1.4 The Frequency and Depth of Coverage of the COVID – 19 Outbreak in Newspapers**

The coronavirus disease outbreak of 2019 (COVID-19) shocked the world, overwhelming most nations' health systems. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel human coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, which began in Wuhan, China, a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) (WHO, 2020). W.H.O categorized Nigeria as one of the 13 high-risk African countries with respect to the spread of COVID-19 (Amzat & Aminu, 2020). Nigeria is also among the vulnerable African nations, given the weak state of the healthcare system (Marbot, 2020). In Africa, there are still communities without healthcare facilities, apart from the scarcity of health workers (Amzat, 2011). In terms of sociology, the pandemic has caused global social disruption

by restricting global social relations. The idea of “social distancing” negates regular social interaction, which is the bedrock of human society (Amzat and Razum, 2014).

Globalization, which means the compression of time and space, helps promote disease transmission on a global scale, facilitating the spread of COVID-19. The world has been witnessing global trade, movement of people, and the globalization of health (Youde, 2020, cited in Amzat and Aminu, 2020). Global disease transmission is one of the dysfunctions or latent functions of globalisation, which provides both opportunities and disasters. The world is a global village; hence the health of individuals is intrinsically linked irrespective of distance (Amzat & Aminu, 2020).

According to the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control, cited in Amzat and Aminu, (2020), the training of the rapid response teams across the 36 states in Nigeria was concluded in December 2019. On January 28, the NCDC further revealed that a Coronavirus Group had been set up to activate its incident system to respond to any emergency. Additionally, the NCDC worked with 22 states in Nigeria to activate their emergency operations centers to manage and link up with the national incidence coordination centers (Ihekweazu, 2020, cited in Amzat and Aminu, 2020). Despite the fact that the government had increased airport surveillance since January 2020, Nigeria recorded its COVID-19 index case, which was imported from Italy, on February 27. This raised questions about the effectiveness of airport surveillance, and thus about the country's overall preparedness. The index case (an Italian) had visited other states of the federation before testing positive for COVID-19. The pre-COVID-19 preparedness was grossly inadequate (Amzat & Aminu, 2020).

### **2.1.5 Reporting in the pandemic**

In a research commentary released in the early stages of the pandemic, Lewis (2020) cited in Perreault (2021) argued that the COVID-19 did not solely add new issues for journalists to work through but also compounded existing issues and enlarged “the blind spots in our work”. Lewis (2020) cited in Perreault (2021) stated that, “Journalism research . . . tends to underplay some aspects of their lived experiences. Consider the complexity of covering crisis and trauma while also experiencing the same yourself”. This applied to local journalists who are residents and stakeholders in the communities in which they work (Perreault, 2020, cited in Perreault, 2021). According to Katz (1989) cited by Perreault (2021), news work resembles the work of science. Journalists must act as fact checkers and information relayers for the public. Journalists contribute to the COVID-19 communication ecology through formal, professional, informal, and personal means.

In disaster and crisis communication, journalism serves as a conduit for communications from public officials and experts to the broader public—which is known as the facilitative role of journalism (Christians et al., 2010, as cited in Perreault, 2021). Journalists foresee and carry out their roles based on what they believe their audience requires. For example, a research conducted by Perreault, Johnson, et al. (2020) cited in Perreault (2021) has shown that journalists operate in a storyteller role when mitigating coverage of dangerous actors, an enrichment role when trying to comprehensively serve a particular community, and a disseminator role when attempting to maintain objectivity in a volatile cultural space. In the facilitative role, the journalist’s purpose is to monitor, or observe, the environment for “relevant information about events, conditions, trends, and threats” and is operated in a response to a perceived need for collaboration (Christians et al., 2010, cited in Perreault, 2021). The facilitative role draws on an understanding

that the journalist is responsible to society and perhaps contributes to the public's decision making in a crisis.

### **2.1.6 The challenges of reporting pandemic issues**

COVID-19 brought with it an unprecedented era of information disorder, not just the novelty and health threats that journalists had to endure. From conspiracy theories about the coronavirus's origin to several unfounded and unverified myths about treatment options and preventive practices, the world has seen a massive flood of misinformation, making it difficult for many people to distinguish between what is true and what is not. This situation broadened the horizon of the virus's war for journalists, forcing them to fight on two fronts: as traditional journalists and fact checkers. The challenge is obviously universal. Most newsrooms around the world have faced enormous challenge as a result of the pandemic; however, these issues, though drastic, come in different forms and patterns for media organizations in different countries.

#### **2.1.6.1 Combating fake news and the Infodemic:**

The COVID-19 pandemic came with it a barrage of misinformation, disinformation and several false claims. As the virus spread, so was the false information about it. Data released by UNESC cited in Jonathan (2021), shows that in April 2020 alone, Facebook has flagged over 50million pieces of content related to COVID-19, while twitter has challenged over 1.5 million users, and google has blocked over 18 million scam emails on Gmail all related to COVID-19. Though these facts have raised questions about the role of journalism in combating the dangers of fake news and misinformation, they have also ushered in a new era for media organizations and their working journalists. Multiple pandemic theories were developed in Nigeria to cater to the populace's biases. Examples include claims that the virus was created in a lab as a bioterrorism agent or that the symptoms are caused by the 5G mobile network. Furthermore, fake

COVID-19 cures that were reported, as well as multiple false rated claims about the efficacy of the uncovered vaccine, left journalists struggling for facts to report the accurate truth.

#### **2.1.6.2 Encroachments on media freedom:**

Concerns have been raised that the COVID crisis is being used to limit media freedoms around the world. This manifests itself in a variety of ways, including restrictions on access to information, attacks on journalists, government closures of news outlets, and new laws restricting press freedom. New laws for journalists to follow, restrictions even for journalists, have led to a reliance on government-based data, which is not always reliable. Journalists were among the privileged essential workers who had government authorization for movement due to the importance of their job amidst the pandemic when the lockdown began in Nigeria. Despite this privilege, journalists have reported instances of harassment perpetrated by Security Men. Several media organizations have accused Nigerian authorities of mistreating journalists on charges of defamation for exposing corruption, on-air personality harassment, cybercrime accusation, stigmatization for investigative journalism, and arrest for social media posts, among other things. While this is not applicable to the Nigerian context, it does highlight the common but unusual challenges that journalists face worldwide as a result of the pandemic.

#### **2.1.6.3 Health Challenge (Fear of Virus contraction):**

Journalists lived in fear of contracting COVID-19 while gathering information to help people make informed health decisions and alleviate their fears. According to Sweeney (2020) cited in Adams (2020), Journalists are used to covering traumatic event, but COVID-19 has a different dimension as it brings out anticipatory trauma and hence the need for media organizations to make adequate preparation for Journalists. As a result, where basic preparations are lacking, it is counterproductive because journalists are ill equipped to handle this type of

reportage from the start. Journalists are anticipating not only what they will see when they go out to cover COVID-19 related issues, but also what will happen to them as reporters on the ground without adequate protective kits. There are also no therapists to speak with. Journalists lived in psychological fear of contracting the virus while gathering news and nothing was done to allay their legitimate fears, and there were no therapists to discuss how to cope with this. Jibril (2020) cited in Adams (2020) stated that Journalists covering COVID-19 are closed to being endangered as organizations care more about their station and revenue than the safety of Journalists covering the pandemic.

#### **2.1.6.4 Transportation Challenge:**

Another challenge was transportation; the lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited vehicular movement. At some point, only vehicles providing essential services could move freely. The lockdown and restrictions brought about by the pandemic resulted in distributed newsrooms and made socially distant reporting difficult. As a result, many media organizations were forced to require their journalists to work from home. Because working from home was the option, several newsrooms were forced to rely on technology. The virus's novelty and the constant flow of complicated information surrounding it left most newsrooms confused on what to do next.

#### **2.1.6.5 Security Challenge:**

There were numerous security issues. Journalists were also harassed by security officers, despite the fact that they are classified as essential workers. According to Fox (2020) cited in Adams (2020), many more people would be dead without journalism and its practitioners as no medic, for all their training, could save all lives that would be at risk if the message to stay at home, maintain social distancing, put on face mask, among other measures were not transmitted



by the media. Journalists and other media practitioners sacrifice their health and time to report these in spite the dangers and risks involved. This attitude exposes journalists to unnecessary danger rather than ensuring their safety. This is in line with the assertion of Akpan, Ering and OlofuAdeoye (2013) cited in Adams (2020) who stated that Journalists continue to suffer challenges which are counterproductive.

#### **2.1.6.6 Salary Slash:**

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations around the world have experienced a decrease in revenue generation. This has resulted in salary reductions and, in some cases, job loss. Reporters at media organizations were also subjected to pay cuts, resulting in the layoff of some journalists. Some Journalists, however, left the organization in search of greener pastures. According to Jibril, (2020) cited in Adams (2020), Apart from Doctors and para-medics, the journalists are the most victims of COVID-19. The worst is that there is no health insurance for Journalists, but the media organizations insure their equipment, building and properties. In other words, journalist's lives are put at risk as a result of their coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Idris (2017) cited in Adams (2020) stated that globally, there are evidences showing the absence of the required regards for the safety of Journalists, thus, leaving Journalists to thrive on self-surviving strategies. This situation was prevalent in most media organizations in Nigeria, as most of them had to lay off some of their staff or initiate pay cuts.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.2.1 Fear Appeal Theory; Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM)**

Fear appeal theory was used to anchor this study. Kim Witte developed the extended parallel process model (EPPM) in 1992 to demonstrate how people react to fear-inducing

messages. According to the fear appeal theory, disease threat information causes fear or anxiety. This theory recognizes the unique problems faced by journalists in newspaper organizations as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak; problems such as, fear of death and virus transmission, health challenges, restriction of vehicular movement, and so on. These challenges have an impact on how Nigerian newspaper journalists cover pandemics and health-related issues. According to proponents of this theory, newspaper journalists faced difficulties in properly interviewing individuals due to fear of infection and maintaining social distance, and having to wear a face mask hampered reporters' ability to gather news accurately. This theory focus on how newspaper journalists are affected during a public health emergency situations. Similarly, the fear appeal theory sought to acknowledge the fact that, as a result of their fear of health crisis, newspaper journalists faced difficult challenges of reporting pandemic issues. Therefore, this study is an attempt to investigate the challenges of reporting pandemic issues in Nigeria, using Journalists in Punch and Vanguard as case studies. As a result, the researcher found this theory useful because it intends to investigate the challenges that news organizations and their reporters face when gathering news during pandemics and other public health emergency situations, and how those challenges affect news outcomes

### **2.2.2 The Direct Effects Theory**

The theory emerged in the first half of the 20th century, in reaction to the use of the media as a tool of propaganda in Europe, the Soviet Union, and, to a lesser extent, in the United States. According to the Direct Effects Theory, audiences passively consume whatever is depicted in the media and can thus be easily manipulated one way or another by misinformation presented through social media. The fact that social media has immediate and widespread effects on people and contributes to society's ills poses a significant challenge for journalists. The public

tends to believe everything they see on social media and refuses to read newspapers for information on the covid-19 outbreak. Thus, this affects journalists in newspaper organizations because fake news and unverified news are being spread on social media, leaving the public confused and uninformed about accurate information about the virus's expansion. False information has influenced the profession of journalism, journalists, and news production. The researchers' perception that the emergence of the covid-19 pandemic affected newspaper journalists in reporting pandemic issues in Nigeria illustrates the importance of this theory for the study. This theory aims to prove that the public failed to take newspaper reports on the covid-19 outbreak seriously, posing a significant challenge to journalists.

### **2.3 Empirical Review**

Ezegwu, *et al.*, (2018) examined newspaper framing of monkey- pox outbreak in Nigeria and its influence on south east media audience. The study aimed at ascertaining the genre of the story, prominence, kind of frames, dominant frame and influence of the frame on south east media audience. Three newspapers; The Guardian, The Punch and Vanguard were selected for the study which covered a period of four months. Mixed methods were used in the study (Content analysis and survey research method). Their results showed that the newspapers used the straight news format most in the reportage of the monkey-pox outbreak in Nigeria. The outbreak was not given prominence in the studied newspapers, especially in terms of placement. Transmission/causes frame was the most dominant frame used by the newspapers which accounted for 47(34%) issues, transmission/causes frame used by the newspapers raised fear on media audience. The authors recommended detailed reports that will educate the public more should be employed by the media and solution/control frame should be used when covering

health related matters or outbreak of diseases in order to reduce tension among the media audience.

In another study by Smith and Smith (2016) titled, Media coverage of the Ebola virus disease in four widely circulated Nigerian newspapers: lessons from Nigeria, stated that the importance of the media in the coverage of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in Nigeria and its implications (negative or positive) amongst the populace cannot be overemphasized. Their study was conducted to assess the role of media in the Ebola reportage and its implication in creating awareness and stopping the spread amongst the populace. They found that a total of 1625 articles were published between July 2014 to October 2014 and these were divided into news (1127; 69.4%), features (267; 16.4%), opinion (76; 4.7%), editorials (149; 9.2%) and interviews (6; 0.4%). The most common topic was Ebola cases in Nigeria (17.5%) followed by discrimination due to Ebola (10.8%) and least of all the use of salt and or Kola for the cure of Ebola (5.2%). The study by Smith and Smith (2016) implied that although the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Nigeria Ebola free on the 20th October 2014, continual reportage of the Ebola disease for effective awareness, prevention and control of the virus is recommended.

In 2020, Nwakpu et al., evaluated how Nigerian media depict the coronavirus pandemic and how the depictions shape people's perception and response to the pandemic. The study employed a quantitative design (newspaper content analysis and questionnaire). The content analysis examines the nature of media coverage of coronavirus in Nigeria and China using four major national newspapers (The Sun, The Vanguard, The Guardian and The Punch). The period of study ranged from January 2020 to March 2020. A total of 1070 newspaper items on coronavirus outbreak were identified across the four newspapers and content-analysed. Their (Nwakpu et al., 2020) finding showed that the coverage of the pandemic was dominated by

straight news reports accounting for 763 or (71.3%) of all analysed items. This was followed by opinions 169 (15.8%), features 120 (11.2%) and editorials 18 (1.7%) respectively. The Punch 309 (28.9%) reported the outbreak more frequently than The Sun 266 (24.9%), The Guardian 258 (24.1%) and Vanguard 237 (22.1%). Finding further suggests that the framing pattern adopted by the newspapers helped Nigerians to take precautionary measures. They therefore concluded that continuous reportage of COVID-19 has proved effective in creating awareness about safety and preventive measures thereby helping to ‘flatten the curve’ and contain the spread of the virus. However, the newspapers should avoid creating fear/panic in reporting the pandemic.

Coverage is one of the leading ways through which the media can fulfill their role to the society. Gever and Ezeah, 2020, cited in Ogbonne, 2021, corroborate that coverage is a key avenue through which the media can carry out their role of communicating health information to the general public. Gever and Ezeah (2020) conducted a study to examine media coverage of COVID-19. They divided their study duration into two phases. The first phase was before COVID-19 cases were confirmed in Nigeria. The second phase was after COVID-19 cases were confirmed in Nigeria. The researchers reported that the media in Nigeria did not effectively play their role of communicating health crisis because before cases were confirmed, there were very little stories on the virus, an indication that the media did not provide sufficient warning health messages. Apuke and Omar, (2020), cited in Ogbonne (2021), investigate Nigerian media coverage of COVID-19 and reported that there were less frequency, less prominence and volume of stories on COVID-19 when compared to other issues reported in the media within the same time frame.

Apuke and Omar (2020) examined media coverage of COVID-19 in Nigeria with attention to the frequency and depth of coverage, story format, news sources, media tone and themes. Four widely read newspapers were content analyzed between February 2020 and April 2020. Focus was on *Daily Sun*, *Vanguard*, *Daily Trust* and *Leadership*. Results indicated that the Nigerian media performed well in terms of covering the pandemic, which in turn created awareness. However, the coverage was not in-depth as most of the reported stories were short and were predominantly straight news. It was also observed that the media cited more of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and government officials. Further findings disclosed that most of the stories were alarming and induced panic. Most common topics were coverage of cases in Nigeria, death rates and concerns about Nigeria's preparedness. Public sensitization and education were sparingly covered. Ethics healthcare workers could adhere to received minimal attention. The media should focus more on sensitizing and educating the public on the necessary steps to take in curbing the virus. They should refrain from over usage of alarming and panic tone in presenting the stories of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria (Apuke and Omar, 2020).

#### **2.4 Summary of Literature Review**

The review of literature focused on the main challenges that media organizations and journalists faced while covering the coronavirus pandemic issues and dealing with misinformation. The commendable work done by media organizations during the pandemic is outstanding; through their work, journalists attempted to hold government officials accountable and effectively conveyed the complex issues surrounding the COVID-19 virus into a much easier and simpler form for the general public to understand. The pandemic's impact on media organizations across Nigeria demands serious cause for study. This could have serious implications for both peoples' immediate information needs and the long-term picture of media freedom.

Journalists around the world are facing unprecedented challenges in accurately and safely reporting the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. While thousands of employees work from home during the pandemic, many journalists are forced to report from their studios, newsrooms, or the field. As proven by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an immediate emergency need for real-time data to inform risk assessments and guide public health actions.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter deals with the method and procedure of data collection adopted by the researcher. The chapter discusses the research design, population and sample, sampling technique, instrument for data collection, validity and reliability of instrument, procedure for data collection, and method of data analysis.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research design considered suitable for this study is the survey research design. Survey design describes situations as they exist in the natural setting. Cresswell (2008) sees survey as a popular design in education which is used to collect data from a sample using questionnaires to describe the attitude, opinions, behaviors and characteristics of the population. According to Briggs, Coleman, and Morrison (2012) survey is a method of collecting standardized data from a large number of respondents, using standardized forms for the purpose of generalizations. Gay, Mills, and Afrasian (2006) further define survey to involve collection of data to test hypotheses or to answer questions about people's opinions about issues under investigation. It gathers data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the existing conditions and it determines relationship that exists between variables.

The researcher used the survey, since it permits the investigation of individual characteristics or traits and also permits the establishment of causal relationship. This design is appropriate because small sample population can be used to generalize on a population which is



the fundamental characteristics of survey design. The survey design considered appropriate for establishing the challenges of reporting pandemic issues in Nigeria.

### **3.2 Population and Sample**

Population refers to the whole of the things which the researcher is interested in studying; from which information that is relevant to the study can be obtained. The population for this research comprised of reporters in newspaper organizations. Only two (2) newspaper organizations would be used for this study (namely; Punch and Vanguard) to serve as case studies.

### **3.3 Sampling Techniques**

Convenience or Available sampling technique was used in determining the sample for the study. Convenience or available sampling is a method where research data is collected from a conveniently available pool of respondents who are readily available to be a part of the sample. Thus the selected newspaper organizations are shown in the table below.

**TABLE 1: Showing selected newspaper organizations and respondents**

<b>S/NO</b>	<b>NAME OF ORGANIZATIONS</b>	<b>RESPONDENTS</b>
1.	Punch	20
2.	Vanguard	20
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>

### **3.4 Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument used for the collection of data in this study is the questionnaire.

### **3.4.1 Description of Instrument**

The questionnaires involve the use of set of questions divided into sections A and B. Section A sought for demographic data of the respondents such as Gender, Name of Newspaper Organization, Age and Years of work experience. Section B contain analytic questions or statements requiring respondents to tick in the column containing options such as Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The respondents are free to provide responses as they appealed to them.

### **3.4.2 Procedure for Instrument Development**

The researcher consulted and reviewed different materials which played a significant role in the development of the instrument. The researcher was able to identify the content to be included in the questionnaire. The researcher sought the assistance of experts in the department of Mass Communication and that of the supervisor who made the necessary corrections and recommendations. After which the draft questionnaire was produced.

### **3.5 Validity and Reliability of Instrument**

Validity is the process of checking the questionnaire items to ensure they are in line with the research questions. To ensure content validity of the instrument, it was first scrutinized by the supervisor, who is a specialist in Mass Communication to determine the validity.

### **3.6 Procedure for Data Collection**

A letter of instruction was obtained from the Department of Mass Communication, soliciting for the cooperation of the Managing Director of the selected newspaper organizations. Having obtained permission from the Managing Director, the researcher administered the

questionnaire to the selected newspaper organizations. The questionnaire was distributed and collected immediately from the respondents.

### **3.7 Method of Data Analysis**

Data obtained from the respondents were analyzed using simple percentage. The simple percentage is given by the formula:

$$\frac{TN}{TNR} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Where:

TN = Total Number of responses

TNR = Total number of respondents

100 = which is constant

### **3.8 Restatement of Research Questions**

The research questions guiding the study include;

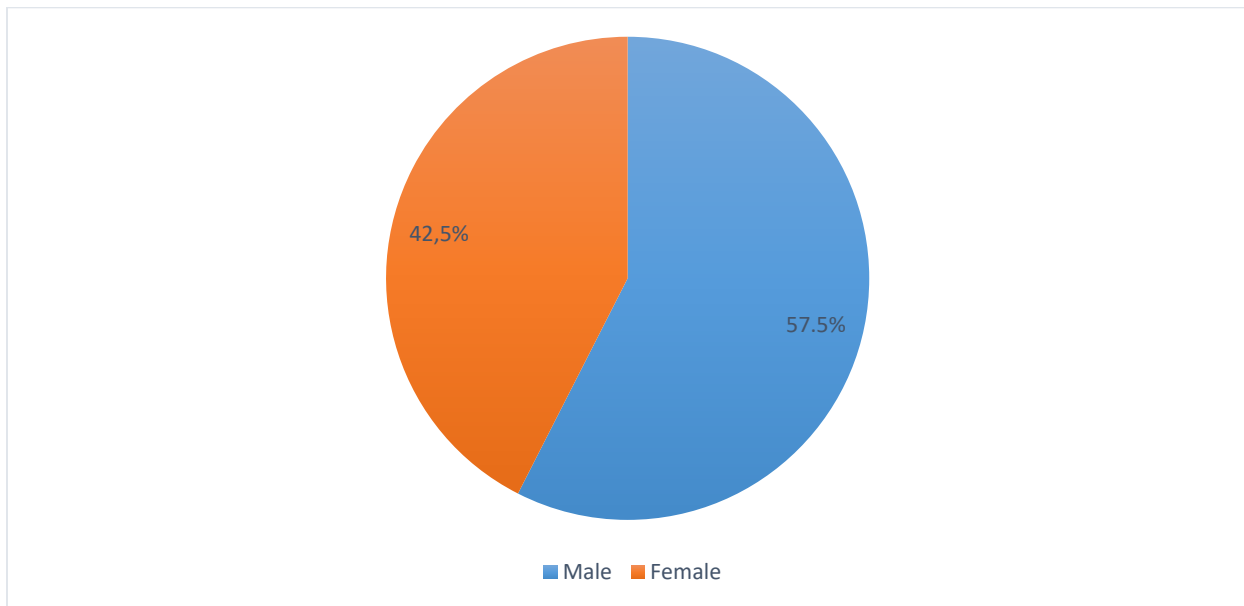
1. What are the challenges of reporting the pandemic and related issue in Nigeria?
2. What is the frequency and depth of coverage of the COVID-19 outbreak in the selected newspapers?
3. What are the ways to overcome the challenges of reporting the public health emergency issues in Nigeria?

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS

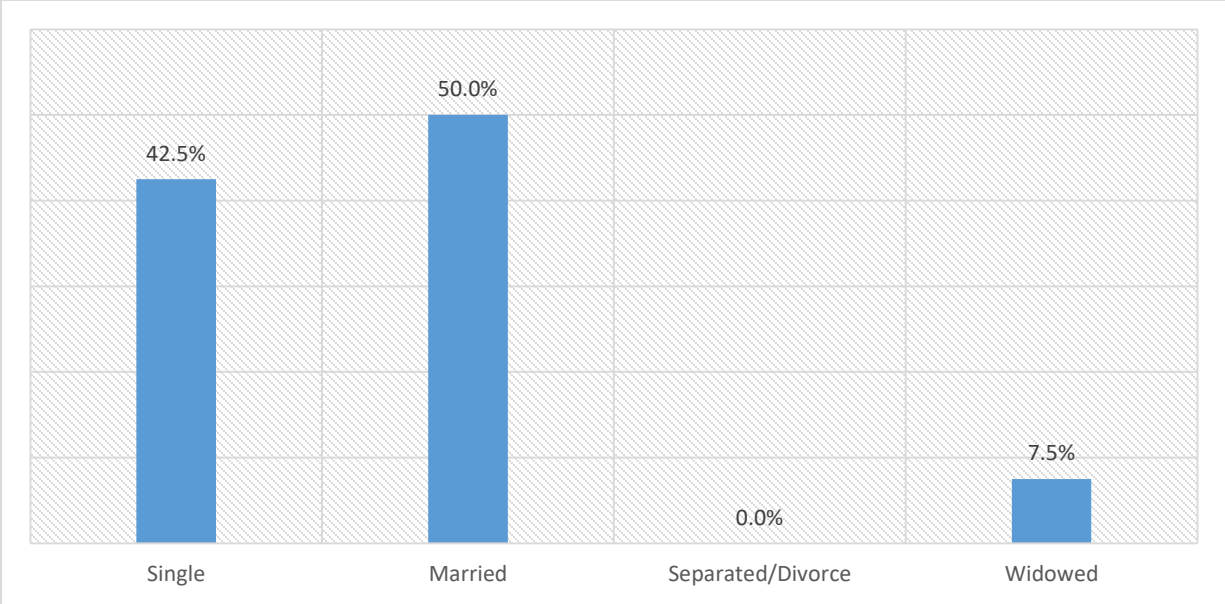
#### 4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The analyses, presentation and interpretation of qualitative data collected from the field are provided in this chapter. The descriptive and inferential statistical analyses are equally presented. Data are in both univariate and bivariate forms. The univariate tables show distribution of variables such as gender, age, qualification, income range etc.



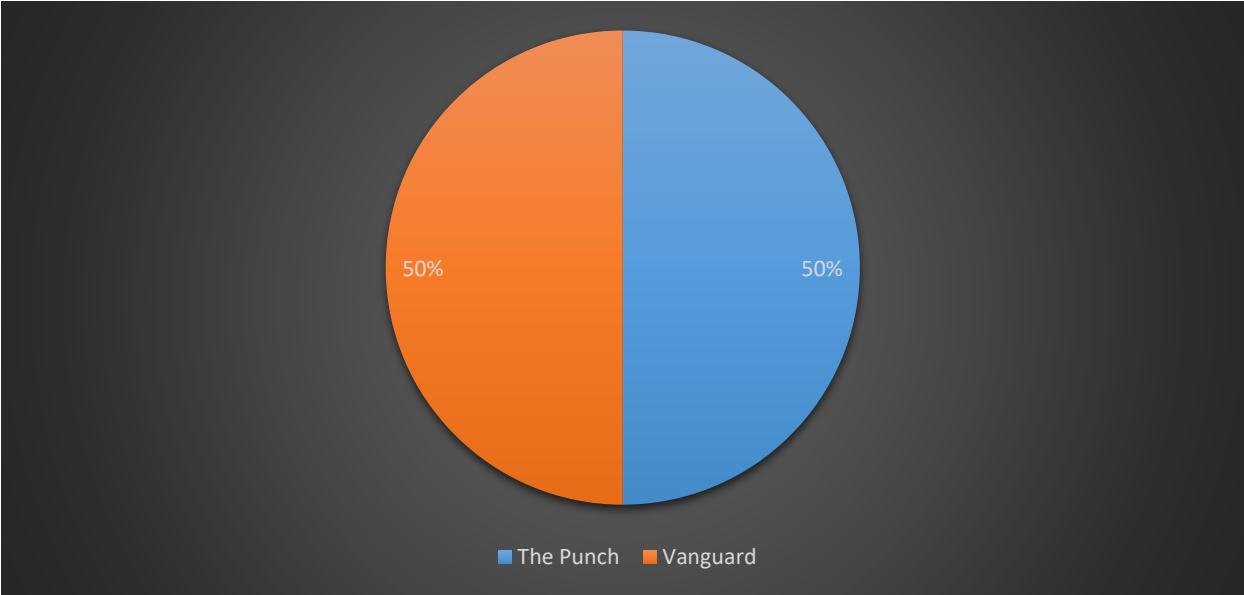
**Figure 4.1: Sex of Respondents**

Figure 4.1 above shows that 57.5% of the respondents are male while 42.5% are female. This result shows that majority of the respondents are males.



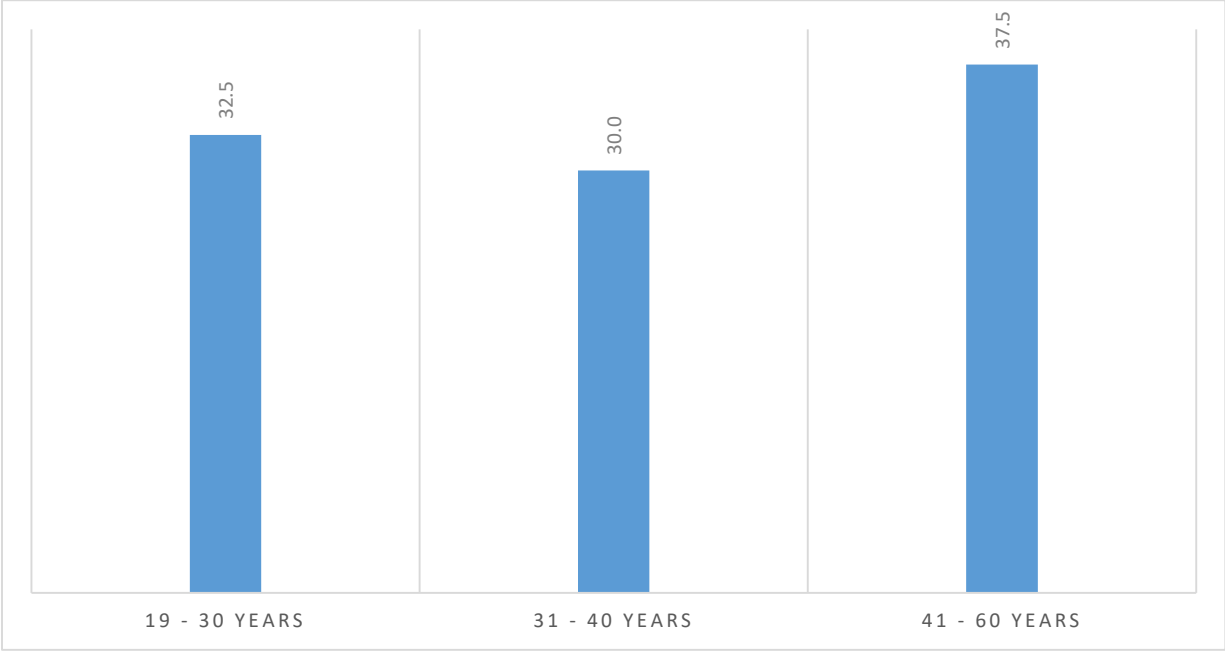
**Figure 4.2: Marital Status**

Figure 4.2 above shows that 42.5% of the respondents were single, 50.0% were married, none (0.0%) were separated/divorced and 7.5% were widowed,. This result shows that majority of the respondents were married.



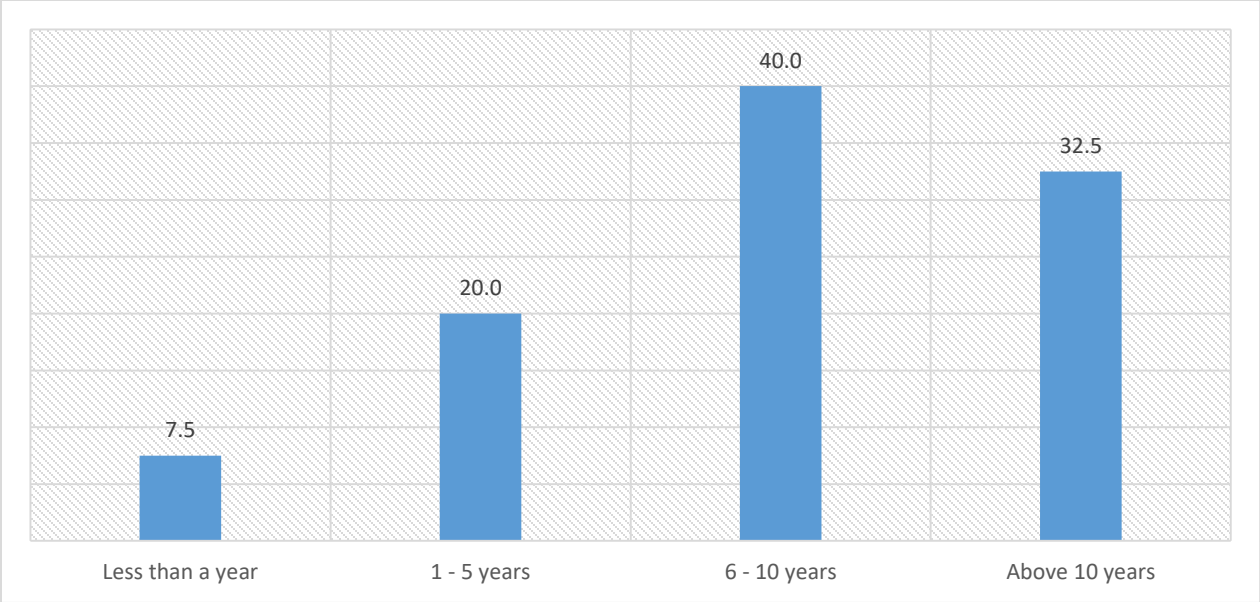
**Figure 4.3: Names of Newspaper Organization**

Figure 4.3 above shows that 50.0% were from the punch while 50.0% were from vanguard. Hence this result shows that respondents were selected equally from the two media organizations.



**Figure 4.4: Age**

On age, figure 4.4 above result shows that 32.5% of the respondents were between the ages of 19 and 30 years, 30.0% of the respondents were between ages 31 and 40 years and 37.5% of the respondents were between the ages 41 and 60 years. This result shows that majority of the respondents were between the ages of 41 and 60 years.



**Figure 4.5: Years of active service with Newspaper**

As regard years of active services with newspaper, the figure above shows that 7.5% of the respondents have served in their organization for less than 1 year, 20.0% have served between 1 – 5 years, 40.0% have served between 6 – 10 years and 32.5% have served for 10 years and above. This result shows that majority of the respondents have served for 10 years and above.

#### 4.1 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY IMPORTANCE OF REPORTING THE PANDEMIC AND HEALTH RELATED ISSUES IN NIGERIA

**Table 4.1.1 The Newspaper Reports on Pandemic Cases were Important**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agreed	17	42.5
Agreed	13	32.5
Undecided	6	15.0
Disagreed	3	7.5
Strongly Disagreed	1	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**(Source: Field Survey, 2022)**

In terms of whether the newspaper reports on pandemic cases were important, table 4.1.1 shows that 42.5% of the respondents strongly agreed to it, 32.5% agreed to it, 15.0% were undecided, 7.5% disagreed and 2.5% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents strongly agreed.



**Table 4.1.2 The Newspaper Reports on Pandemic Cases were authentic in curbing the virus**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agreed	11	27.5
Agreed	15	37.5
Undecided	8	20.0
Disagreed	4	10.0
Strongly Disagreed	2	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**(Source: Field Survey, 2022)**

On whether the newspaper reports on pandemic cases were authentic in curbing the virus, table 4.1.2 shows that 27.5% of the respondents strongly agreed to it, 37.5% agreed to it, 20.0% were undecided, 10.0% disagreed and 5.0% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents agreed.

**Table 4.1.3 The Public became aware of health related issues as a result of media messages**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agreed	19	47.5
Agreed	9	22.5
Undecided	6	15.0
Disagreed	5	12.5
Strongly Disagreed	1	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**(Source: Field Survey, 2022)**

With regards to whether the Public became aware of health-related issues as a result of media messages, table 4.1.3 shows that 47.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 22.5% agreed, 15.0% were undecided, 12.5% disagreed and 2.5% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents strongly agreed.

**Table 4.1.4 Newspaper reports on pandemic cases helped in limiting the spread of the virus**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agreed	1	2.5
Agreed	2	5.0
Undecided	12	30.0
Disagreed	18	45.0
Strongly Disagreed	7	17.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**(Source: Field Survey, 2022)**

As regards whether the newspaper reports on pandemic cases helped in limiting the spread of the virus, table 4.1.4 shows that 2.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 5.0% agreed to it, 30.0% were undecided, 45.0% disagreed and 17.5% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents disagreed.

**Table 4.1.5 The Newspaper reports assisted the public in becoming extremely knowledgeable about the disease outbreak**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agreed	8	20.0
Agreed	8	20.0
Undecided	20	50.0
Disagreed	3	7.5
Strongly Disagreed	1	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**(Source: Field Survey, 2022)**

On whether the newspaper reports assisted the public in becoming extremely knowledgeable about the disease outbreak, table 4.1.5 shows that 20.0% of the respondents strongly agreed, 20.0% agreed, 50.0% were undecided, 7.5% disagreed and 2.5% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents were undecided.

## 4.2 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY CHALLENGES OF REPORTING THE PANDEMIC AND RELATED ISSUE IN NIGERIA

**Table 4.2.1 The Challenges of Lock down Affected Newspaper Reports on Pandemic Cases**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agreed	16	40.0
Agreed	7	17.5
Undecided	13	32.5
Disagreed	3	7.5
Strongly Disagreed	1	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Field Survey, 2022)

As regards whether the challenges of lock down affected newspaper reports on pandemic cases, table 4.2.1 shows that 40.0% of the respondents strongly agreed, 17.5% agreed, 32.5% were undecided, 7.5% disagreed and 2.5% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents strongly agreed.

**Table 4.2.2 the Reporters Faced Challenges in Interviewing Individuals Properly Due to Fear of Infection**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agreed	5	12.5
Agreed	19	47.5
Undecided	11	27.5
Disagreed	1	2.5
Strongly Disagreed	4	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**(Source: Field Survey, 2022)**

In terms of whether the reporters faced challenges in interviewing individuals properly due to fear of infection, table 4.2.2 shows that 12.5% of the respondents strongly agreed to it, 47.5% agreed to it, 27.5% were undecided, 2.5% disagreed and 10.0% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents agreed.

**Table 4.2.3 Maintaining social distance and having to wear a face mask affected reporters' ability to gather news accurately**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agreed	3	7.5
Agreed	15	37.5
Undecided	13	32.5
Disagreed	7	17.5
Strongly Disagreed	2	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**(Source: Field Survey, 2022)**

As regards whether maintaining social distance and having to wear a face mask affected reporters' ability to gather news accurately, table 4.2.3 shows that 7.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 37.5% agreed to it, 32.5% were undecided, 17.5% disagreed and 5.0% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents agreed.

**Table 4.2.4 The Restriction of Vehicular Movement had a Negative Impact on News Reporters**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agreed	21	52.5
Agreed	11	27.5
Undecided	5	12.5
Disagreed	2	5.0
Strongly Disagreed	1	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**(Source: Field Survey, 2022)**

On whether the restriction of vehicular movement had a negative impact on news reporters, table 4.2.4 shows that 52.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 27.5% agreed, 12.5% were undecided, 5.0% disagreed and 2.5% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents strongly agreed.



### 4.3 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY FREQUENCY AND DEPTH OF COVERAGE OF THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN THE SELECTED NEWSPAPERS

**Table 4.3.1 The Readers Took the Reported Covid-19 Outbreaks Seriously**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agreed	1	2.5
Agreed	2	5.0
Undecided	6	15.0
Disagreed	8	20.0
Strongly Disagreed	23	57.5
Total	40	100.0

**(Source: Field Survey, 2022)**

In terms of whether the readers took the reported COVID-19 outbreaks seriously, table 4.3.1 shows that 2.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 5.0% agreed, 15.0% were undecided, 20.0% disagreed and 57.5% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents strongly disagreed.

**Table 4.3.2 The Newspaper Reports Have Difference Stories**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agreed	2	5.0
Agreed	1	2.5
Undecided	7	17.5
Disagreed	20	50.0
Strongly Disagreed	10	25.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**(Source: Field Survey, 2022)**

On whether the newspaper reports have difference stories, table 4.3.2 shows that 5.0% of the respondents strongly agreed to it, 2.5% agreed to it, 17.5% were undecided, 50.0% disagreed and 25.0% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents disagreed.

**Table 4.3.3 Newspaper Reports on Pandemic Cases were published on Time**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agreed	10	25.0
Agreed	20	50.0
Undecided	6	15.0
Disagreed	2	5.0
Strongly Disagreed	2	5.0
Total	40	100.0

**(Source: Field Survey, 2022)**

With regard to whether newspaper reports on pandemic cases were published on time, table 4.3.3 shows that 25.0% of the respondents strongly agreed, 50.0% agreed, 15.0% were undecided, 5.0% disagreed and 5.0% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents agreed.

**Table 4.3.4 All Health-Related Emergencies, Including Covid-19, Were Covered in the Newspaper Reports**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agreed	15	37.5
Agreed	11	27.5
Undecided	6	15.0
Disagreed	5	12.5
Strongly Disagreed	3	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**(Source: Field Survey, 2022)**

As regard whether all health-related emergencies, including COVID-19, were covered in the newspaper reports, table 4.3.4 shows that 37.5% of the respondents strongly, 27.5% agreed, 15.0% were undecided, 12.5% disagreed and 7.5% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents strongly agreed.

**4.4 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY WAYS TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES OF REPORTING THE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY ISSUES IN NIGERIA**

**Table 4.4.1 The Newspaper Organizations can do more in Reporting Pandemic Outbreaks Concisely**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agreed	20	50.0
Agreed	14	35.0
Undecided	3	7.5
Disagreed	2	5.0
Strongly Disagreed	1	2.5
Total	40	100.0

**(Source: Field Survey, 2022)**

With regard whether the newspaper organizations can do more in reporting pandemic outbreaks concisely, table 4.4.1 shows that 50.0% of the respondents strongly agreed to it, 35.0% agreed to it, 7.5% were undecided, 5.0% disagreed and 2.5% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents strongly agreed.

**Table 4.4.2 Newspaper Organizations Should Provide Timely and Accurate Information about Health-Related Issues**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly Agreed	24	60.0
Agreed	14	35.0
Undecided	1	2.5
Disagreed	1	2.5
Strongly Disagreed	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Field Survey, 2022)

In terms whether Newspaper organizations should provide timely and accurate information about health-related issues, table 4.4.2 shows that 60.0% of the respondents strongly agreed to it, 35.0% agreed to it, 2.5% were undecided, 2.5% disagreed and 0.0% strongly disagreed. Hence, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents strongly agreed.

#### **4.5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The study examined the challenges of reporting the pandemic issues in Nigeria (A study of journalists in punch and vanguard newspapers). The specific variables were to investigate the importance of reporting the pandemic and related issues in Nigeria, understand the challenges of reporting the pandemic and related issues in Nigeria, find out the frequency and depth of

coverage of the COVID-19 outbreak in the sampled newspapers and recommend practical solutions on the ways to overcome the challenges of reporting pandemic issues in Nigeria.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF REPORTING THE PANDEMIC AND RELATED ISSUES IN NIGERIA?**

Data collected and analyzed revealed that journalists from Punch and Vanguard Newspapers faced four major challenges in covering the Covid-19 pandemic: health, transportation, security, and salary slash. Journalist safety is a global concern because they are constantly exposed to various challenges in the course of carrying out their social responsibility.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 2: WHAT IS THE FREQUENCY AND DEPTH OF COVERAGE OF THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN THE SELECTED NEWSPAPERS?**

According to the research data, all health-related emergencies, including covid-19, were covered in the newspaper reports, and pandemic case reports were published on time. According to the research findings, readers did not take the reported covid-19 outbreak seriously. Another observation is that due to the involvement of newspaper reports and the rapid spread of media messages, the public became extremely knowledgeable about the disease outbreak.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION 3: WHAT ARE THE WAYS TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES OF REPORTING THE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY ISSUES IN NIGERIA?**

In order to combat fake news about the virus, the final findings also revealed that newspaper organizations should provide timely and accurate information about health-related issues. The findings indicated that the Nigerian government should educate the masses through various agencies on how to verify news before posting it on public platforms, as this will aid in the fight against fake news. Another observation is that the federal government should assist media organizations during pandemics by providing necessary protective kits so that they can move freely while reporting news updates.

#### **4.5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The findings of the study are;

- Majority of the respondents (75%) confirmed that the newspaper reports on pandemic cases were important.
- Most of the respondents (70%) were of the opinion that the public became aware of health-related issues as a result of media messages.
- Majority of the respondents (62.5%) disagreed that the newspaper reports on pandemic cases helped in limiting the spread of the virus.
- Most of the respondents (51.1%) were undecided as regards whether the newspaper reports assisted the public in becoming extremely knowledgeable about the disease outbreak.



- Majority of the respondents (57.5%) believe that challenges of lock down affected newspaper reports on pandemic cases.
- Majority of the respondents (60%) stated that the reporters faced challenges in interviewing individuals properly due to fear of infection.
- Most of the respondents (80%) were of the opinion that the restriction of vehicular movement had a negative impact on news reporters
- Majority of the respondents (77.5%) confirmed that the readers did not take the reported COVID-19 outbreaks seriously
- Most of the respondents (85.5%) believe the newspaper organizations can do more in reporting pandemic outbreaks
- Virtually all the respondents (95.0%) believe newspaper organizations should provide timely and accurate information about health-related issues.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The study examined the challenges of reporting the pandemic issues in Nigeria (A study of journalists' in punch and vanguard newspapers). Fear appeal theory and direct effects theory was highlighted and expounded on to explain and anchor the study. Also, the method through which the study was conducted and the design which informed the study was given. The study employed a qualitative research method. The non-probability sampling technique was adopted in the selection of respondents for the study, specifically; the convenience sampling technique was adopted due to the special nature of the respondents for the study and the peculiarity of the location where they can be found. Data gathered from the study were analyzed using simple percentage.

#### **5.1 CONCLUSION**

The media play a significant role in disseminating health-related information. Despite the need of providing accurate and proper writing and communication on health-related issues (especially pandemic issues), faulty and incorrect information regarding health-related issues, including COVID-19, continues to be disseminated. As a result, individuals are frequently deceived, and the situation may even worsen. This work seeks to examine the hurdles that news organizations and their reporters have while seeking to gather news during pandemics and other public health emergency scenarios in order to determine how these impediments impact the outcomes of news

articles and recommend practical solutions that could help curb or eradicate the aforementioned issues

## **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that the National Broadcasting Commission should come up with awareness campaigns online and offline to constantly sensitize the population on the need stay update with health-related news, as this will help in preventing several issues that might arise from deadly diseases like COVID-19 and the likes.
- It is also recommended that the Nigerian government should educate the masses through several agencies on how to verify news before sending them to public platforms as this will help in curbing the menace of fake news.
- It is further recommended that the spreaders of fake news, should be arrested and made to face the law, as this will serve as a deterrence to others trying to do the same.
- The federal government should also support media organizations during pandemic, so they will be able to move freely and report news updates as they come in.

## **5.3 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

It is strongly recommended that further research should be embarked upon to examine other factors related to the challenges of reporting the pandemic issues in Nigeria as this study is by no means exhaustive of the subject matter.

## **5.4 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

- I. **Time:** there is limited time in carrying out this work.

- II. **Material:** relevant materials on this work are relatively scarce.
- III. **Finance:** at the time of carrying out this research there was no enough money to explore the internet and travel as many as possible to the study area.

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Appendix 1

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE CHALLENGES OF REPORTING THE PANDEMIC ISSUE  
IN NIGERIA; A CASE STUDY OF PUNCH AND VANGUARD NEWSPAPERS**

Department of Mass Communication,  
Mountain Top University,  
Km 12, Lagos Ibadan Expressway,  
Ibafo, Ogun State.

August 2022.

Dear Respondents,

My name is Tolu David, a Final year student of Mountain Top University, Ibafo Ogun State, Nigeria. And I have prepared this questionnaire to support my research into “the challenges of reporting the pandemic issue in Nigeria; a case study of punch and vanguard newspapers” in partial fulfilment of the award of a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree in Mass Communication. Kindly tick and fix in your sincere responses. All answers will be treated with strict confidentiality and used only for academic purposes. Thank You.

**Please read this before you answer.**

During the covid-19 pandemic, mankind was imposed to compulsory Lockdown to prevent the spread of the virus and during this period people contacted the virus and were isolated while others fell ill and were labelled COVID -19 patients also with several information on the media which were mostly unverified.

**SECTION A: (Please tick the appropriate option)**

Sex: Male ( ) Female ( )

Marital Status: Single ( ) Married ( ) Separated/Divorced ( ) Widowed ( )

Name of Newspaper Organization: ( ) The punch ( ) Vanguard

**Age: 19 to 60.**

19 -30 ( ) 31-40 ( ) 41- 60

Years of Active service with Newspaper: Less than a year ( ) 1-5 years ( ) 6-10 years ( ) above 10 years ( )

## SECTION B

**INSTRUCTION:** Please tick (√) against your chosen option and express your view where necessary. The Likert 5 Point scale is used in construction of the questionnaire to raise your responses on each statement. The adopted options and scales are as follow: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D) and strongly Disagree (SD)

	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD
1	The newspaper reports on pandemic cases were important					
2	The newspaper reports on pandemic cases were authentic in curbing the virus					
3	The public became aware of health related issues as a result of media messages.					
4	Newspaper reports on pandemic cases helped in limiting the spread of the virus.					
5	The newspaper reports assisted the public in becoming extremely knowledgeable about the disease outbreak.					

	<b>STATEMENT</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
6	The challenges of lock down affected newspaper reports on pandemic cases					
7	The reporters faced challenges in interviewing individuals properly due to fear of infection					
8	Maintaining social distance and having to wear a face mask affected reporters' ability to gather news accurately.					
9	The restriction of vehicular movement had a negative impact on news reporters.					

	<b>STATEMENT</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
10	The readers took the reported COVID-19 outbreaks seriously					
11	The newspaper reports have difference stories					
12	Newspaper reports on pandemic cases were published on time.					
13	All health-related emergencies, including COVID-19, were covered in the newspaper reports.					

	<b>STATEMENT</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
14	The newspaper organizations can do more in reporting pandemic outbreaks concisely					
15	Newspaper organizations should provide timely and accurate information about health-related issues					

**IF YES, HOW CAN THE CHALLENGES BE OVERCOME? (KINDLY SPECIFY)**

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