

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY:

Health communication is one of the most important aspects of the media's capacity for growth. "Development media communications, if organized and maintained over a long period of time, will ensure a smooth transfer of mass media policy to public agenda," according to (Ochonogor, 2009). The media is a major source of health-related knowledge, and it has the power to influence how we think about and debate health. Information, education, entertainment, and enlightenment are the primary functions of the mass media (Moyer, 1995; Alexander 2005; Thorson, 2006 cited in Rodney Ciboh, 2010). The influence of the different mass media (magazines, television, the internet, newspapers, etc.) to guide our attention to certain topics is apparent in the Agenda-setting theory of the mass media (Rodney Ciboh, 2010).

To be in good health, people need adequate information and knowledge on health matters. They need information on healthy lifestyle practices, preventive health measures, health conditions and diseases, and government health care programmes. The mass media should assist create awareness, speed up the flow of information and mobilise the population to achieve national objectives and ambitions to guarantee a complete change for society (Uwom, Oguchi Onyeizu, 2011).

With all these said the interest that the print media, especially newspaper gives to the environment in Nigeria in communicating environmental issues during the covid-19 pandemic, needs investigation.

This study therefore seeks to investigate newspaper contents with a view to ascertain whether or not, adequate coverage is given to covid-19 issues in Nigeria as an environmental and health issue.

Coronaviruses are a type of virus that can infect both humans and animals. SARS-CoV, a coronavirus, is an example of a **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)** virus strain. In the years 2002–2003, SARS rapidly spread. **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome**

coronavirus 2 is the name of the modern coronavirus strain (SARS-CoV-2) (Meryem Malik, 2021). Coronavirus disease is caused by the virus (COVID-19) SARS-CoV-2 spreads from person to person through close communities. If individuals with COVID-19 cough or breathe out, little droplets that carry the virus are expelled. These goutlets may enter someone's mouth or nose without the virus and cause an illness (Sahu KK and Mishra AK, 2019).

The most frequent method to transmit this disease is through intimate contact with an infected person. Close touch is around 6 feet away.

The illness is most infectious if the symptoms of a person are at their height. Someone with no symptoms may transmit the infection, though. Recent research indicates that 10% of infections occur without symptoms. (Aaron Kandola quoted G. 2020 in Meredith).

Virus-containing droplets may potentially fall on surfaces or objects nearby. Others may take the infection by contacting the surfaces or items. Infection is probable if you contact the nose, eyes or mouth of the individual.

It should be noted that COVID-19 is new and there is still a lot of research. The novel coronavirus may potentially spread in other ways. It is a worldwide challenge to find effective methods to limit the spread of SARS-CoV-2. Many viruses may be prevented by immunization against antivirals. However, it takes time for safe and effective vaccinations to be developed and distributed.

The best way to prevent the virus from spreading is by avoiding close contact with people with COVID-19 and washing the hands regularly.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Trusted Source recommend washing the hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds per time. This is particularly important after being in public places.

When soap is not available, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% Trusted Source alcohol. Avoid touching the face before washing the hands. (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Mar. 8, 2021*)

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM:

Despite the numerous media outlets shouting about the corona virus on different media platforms, no one has really discovered the precise role the newspaper had in the propagation of the message of Covid-19.

Though the emphasis of research was on the breakout of the pandemic, no known empirical study focused primarily on the coverage of the journal/framing of the epidemic. This is a gap to be filled in this research.

The fact that no empirical research was discovered in the existing literature on the new Nigerian epidemic of coronavirus underlines the necessity to address the identified gap. This is why this research evaluates COVID-19 framing of Nigerian newspapers in chosen national newspapers.

1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The main objective of this study was to determine how the media frame the economic impact of COVID-19 on commerce in Nigeria. It also intends to ascertain if the newspaper coverage is creating awareness and educating the masses on preventive measures to take. Focus was on two widely read newspapers in Nigeria: The Punch and Guardian. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To discover how frequently the Nigerian newspaper reported the covid-19 virus outbreak.
2. To assess the extent to which the newspaper gave prominence to issues relating to the covid-19 virus outbreak.

3. To find out which aspects of the covid-19 virus outbreak were focused on by the newspapers.

4. To ascertain the form (news, features and editorial) in which the Nigerian newspaper reported the covid-19 virus issues.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research study is poised at answering the following research questions:

1. How frequent were covid-19 issues covered by Newspaper in Nigeria?
2. To what extent did the newspaper give prominence to issues relating to covid-19?
3. What aspect of the covid-19 is most focused on in the newspaper?
4. In what form (news, features and editorial) were the covid-19 issues published more in Nigeria Newspapers?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is important because it intends to bring to light the coverage of covid-19 news in Nigeria. There has been diverse research on health issues, but covid-19 being a new virus affecting the masses globally, but this study will look into how the audiences are informed about the issue in Nigeria through newspaper as a means of disseminating the messages to the masses.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The study sought to investigate newspaper coverage of covid-19 issues in Nigeria. The two newspapers that constituted this study are *The Punch and The Guardian*. The study covered the covid-19 issues published in the selected Newspapers from February/March 2020 till January 2021. The health issue that is studied in this research is covid-19, also known as corona virus. The study covered all straight news, editorials, features or news analysis published on the area under study within the designated period.

1.7 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study, the following terms will be operationalized; covid-19, coverage, newspaper, media, pandemic, issues.

Covid-19 Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus.

Coverage the extent to which something deals with something else. Also known as the treatment of an issue by the media.

Newspaper a printed publication (usually issued daily or weekly) consisting of folded unstapled sheets and containing news, articles, advertisements, and correspondence.

Media the main means of mass communication (broadcasting, publishing, and the internet) regarded collectively.

Pandemic A 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 people.

Issues an important topic or problem for debate or discussion, which is covid-19.

Frequency of newspaper coverage in this research report, frequency of newspaper coverage is talking about the number of times the COVID-19 issues were reported in the newspapers of study.

Extent of prominence in the context of this study, extent of prominence refers to the contents covered or reported on the health issue under study. It the important aspect of the COVID-19 reported in the newspapers under study.

Newspaper focus in this study, the focus refers to the form in which the newspapers discussed the COVID-19 issues in Nigeria. Be it in straight news form, editorial form, advertorial, opinion, or features.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an insight into media coverage of news. It entails the conceptual framework, theoretical framework, empirical framework, summary and references of materials used in this study.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Information is a fundamental resource for citizens in our society. It is a valuable mechanism for guiding people, especially in highly complex situations such as the one generated by the Covid-19 pandemic. In this sense, information is a tool that can help reduce uncertainty and anxiety. Conversely, it might increase panic and chaos. *Casero-Ripollés, Andreu (2020)*.

Corona viruses are a family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more serious diseases such as Extreme Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SAR) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), according to the World Health Organization (WHO) (*World Health Organization, 2020*). Coronavirus gets its name from the Latin word corona, which means crown or halo (*Martin, 2020*). The virus is called "corona" because it has a crown-like appearance when exposed to sunlight. There have been definitional mismatches and theorizations on the virus's origin since its outbreak in China's Wuhan province in 2019. (*C.G. Chidume, 2021*).

2.1.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF CORONA VIRUS

In Wuhan China in December 2019, the new Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) was first discovered. It has developed as a respiratory illness with serious concern for public health risks worldwide. Beginning with the first animal suspicion of human transmission for previous instances, the paradigm has moved to human transmission through droplets, contacts and fomites. The illness is caused by a new, more deadly form of coronavirus known as Coronavirus 2 serious acute breathing syndrome (SARS-CoV-2). By 21 May 2020, COVID-19 has impacted 213 countries and territories worldwide with about 5 171 936

instances worldwide. More than 2 068 371 individuals had recovered from the illness, while around 333 100 had died.

The first verified case was reported in Nigeria on 27 February 2020, when an Italian individual tested the virus positive in Lagos (Mustapha JO and Adedokun KA, 2020). On 9 March 2020, at Ewekoro, Ogun State, a second incidence of the virus was recorded involving a citizen of Nigeria who had contact with an Italian person (Ebenso B. and Out A.,2020). By 21 May 2020, 4,971 cases were recorded, 1070 recovered and 164 fatalities were reported by the Nigeria Disease Control Center (NCDC). NCDC was founded in 2011 to address the problems of crises in public health and to improve Nigeria's preparation and response to epidemics by preventing, detecting and controlling transmissible and non-communicable diseases (Mustapha et al, 2020).

2.1.2 NEWSPAPER AS NEWS MEDIUM

The first printing press in Nigeria was founded in 1854 by Rev. Henry Townsend, a Presbyterian Church missionary. It would print the country's first newspaper, "Iwe Irohin Fun Awon Ara Egba Ati Yoruba," five years later. "My goal is to encourage people to read and to instill in them the habit of finding knowledge by reading." Reverend Henry Townsend. While many believe that, contrary to his stated goal, the intention of Rev. Henry Townsend's newspaper was to promote Christian religious outreach at the time, it cannot be denied that the "Iwe Irohin" played a significant role in the history of Nigerian journalism.

The first edition of Nigeria's first newspaper, "Iwe Irohin," was published on November 23, 1859, according to history. The newspaper was published every fifteen days and cost 120 cowries, or a penny, to purchase. It would be well-received by Yoruba land's few literates. At the time, the paper had a circulation of about 3,000 copies. The newspaper's material included information about church services, religious dignitaries' arrivals and departures, and ordinations, among other things.

It can be expanded by including Abeokuta-related articles, as well as cotton and cocoa statistics.

From 1860, the newspaper would contain ads from local businesses and government agencies.

"Iwe Irohin" was published in two versions, one in English and the other in Yoruba, eight years later. The printing press was destroyed in 1867 due to cultural and political clashes between the Egbas and the British, which culminated in the expulsion of all Europeans from Egba land. As an outcome, Nigeria's very first newspaper came to an end.

Whatever the case may be, the aim for which the newspaper was founded has been realized, people's reading habits have evolved to the point that they now crave news following the demise of the "Iwe Irohin." Anglo-African was Nigeria's second newspaper. It was the first newspaper published in Lagos, and it was established in 1863 by Robert Campbell. The newspaper in those days could be described as the newspaper of its day. And, as the title suggests, it was created to help Africans better themselves by combining Western and African information systems.

The Lagos Times and Gold Coast Colony Advertiser, the third Nigerian newspaper, will not be published for another seventeen years. The Lagos Times and Gold Coast Advertiser was founded on November 10, 1880, by Mr. Richard Olamilege Beale Blaize and was edited by Mr. Andrew M. Thomas and Mojola Agbebi. It was sold for sixpence and printed every fifteen days. Unlike Rev. Henry Townsend "Iwe Irohin," the newspaper is said to have focused on important topics and events of the time.

According to records, one of The Lagos Times and Gold Coast Colony Advertiser's editions published in 1881 was the first to openly criticize the colonial government's extravagance.

However, on October 24, 1883, the newspaper ceased publication, only to reappear seven years later with little or no success.

The West African Pilot is another newspaper that has played a significant role in the development of Nigerian journalism. The West African Pilot was established in 1937 in Nigeria by Nnamdi Azikiwe ("Zik"), with the slogan "Show the light, and the people will find their way." It was also committed to the struggle for freedom from British colonial rule.

Nnamdi Azikiwe is said to have edited the West African Pilot himself from 1937 to 1947. (*Pulse.ng published February 6,2018*)

The print media of the press, which includes newspapers, is a fraction of one of the means of mass communication. Printed media, typically in the form of a folded book of articles, is circulated weekly or daily. The publication is usually divided into sections depending on the topic and material. On the front page of the newspaper, the most critical or interesting news will be highlighted. Advertisements, views, sports, and other general interest news can also appear in newspapers.

2.1.3 IMPORTANCE OF THE MEDIA ON COVID-19 COVERAGE

The media, like healthcare officers, has been working hard to keep the public informed about COVID-19's battle.

Journalists have also been on the front lines, reporting on outbreaks, death tolls, and precautions that the general public should take to prevent catching the virus. The media aims to influence public opinion about the pandemic's spread and the precautionary measures that may help to prevent it in addition to educating people about it (flatten the curve).

According to the available literature, some research, laboratory, and epidemiological studies on the outbreak have been conducted. Given the virus's novel nature, further research in this area is needed in the coming months and years. The media has a significant impact on public opinion and understanding of topics such as the virus outbreak. The way the media portrays the pandemic will influence how people respond to it and whether or not they take precautionary measures (McCloskey B, Heymann DL., 2020).

Public-interest events, such as health-related issues, inevitably draw media attention. This may be in the form of print, electronic, internet, or social media attention, or a combination of all of these. Whatever form it takes, the extent or effect of media interference in health crises, especially disease outbreaks, is what matters most. The media cannot cure a virus, but it can stop it from spreading (Adelakun LA, Adnan HM. 2016). This statement emphasizes

the importance of the media in health reporting, especially in preventing the spread of infectious disease outbreaks.

Scholars have stated that the media has the ability to affect health-related habits and attitudes (Leask J, Hooker C and King C. 2010). In Nigeria, the mass media is used in health promotion programs either alone or in conjunction with other methods to promote meaningful lifestyle changes (Wogu JO, Chukwu CO, Nwafor KA, Anikpe EA, Ugwuoke JC, Ugwulor-Onyinyechi CC. et al. 2020). As a result, the involvement of the media in health promotion and intervention entails more than just raising concern about a specific health problem or disease outbreak; it also entails emphasizing the angle or direction of reporting on that issue or outbreak.

These media angles of addressing health problems take the form of media framing, which is used to manipulate public opinion and trigger an attitudinal reaction, which leads to positive behavioural changes.

However (Adelakun LA., 2014) research suggests that the degree of success or failure reported by the media in a specific health outbreak or health problem in comparison to the risks is often a source of controversy when it comes to media positions in health issues. (Tabbaa D., 2010) emphasizes that when an epidemic is rare in public health with uncertainty and a sense of urgency, strong communication through the media is critical, as the media works in tandem with health professionals to raise awareness.

Prioritizing novel diseases can be advantageous because unusual and dramatic incidents can serve as sentinels. Working with journalists and the media to help people understand science and epidemiology may improve public risk communication and minimise needless concerns and panic, particularly in a rapidly moving case (McCloskey et al., 2010).

Ed Wasserman, dean of UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism, stated that the way news was spread during the epidemic is good and terrible, and that public faith in the media is on line.

2.1.4 THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN COMMUNICATING PANDEMICS/CRISES

The media play an essential role in disseminating health information to the general population. Through media messaging, individuals learn about health problems. Many decades ago (Flora et al., 1989) proposed four functions that the media may play in communicating with healthcare. According to Flora et al., the first role is called the role of media as educator. This function needs the media to supply the general public with information about health problems.

In the framework of this research, media are required to educate the public about COVID-19 problems. Virus information may include symptoms, causes, prevention and treatment.

According to Flora et al. (1989), the second function is media support, here, attempts to limit harmful health effects are likely to be supported by the media. The media are required to assist efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19 in the context of this research.

The third is the media as the booster of the programme. Here, the media are expected to support initiatives to address health problems. From the viewpoint of the present research, efforts to fight COVID-19 are anticipated to be supported by the media.

In the perspective of (Flora et al. 1989) the final function is to complement the media. This needs the media to increase health advocates' efforts. The media may do this by covering health problems. It is worth mentioning that in most cases, the media may use a mix of tactics rather than a plan. (Kim and Noriega, 2019) concur that a mix of education and entertaining is one of the ways that media may play their part in conveying the health issue. Sometimes this is known as edutainment. This method guarantees the entertainment and education of health messages.

According to (Okim-Alobi and Okpara, 2017), the mass communications media provide public health information as a guidance for individuals to adopt life-saving behaviour. Coverage is one of the main ways in which the media may play its part in society.

(Gever and Ezeah, 2020) confirm that coverage is a crucial way for the media to play their part in disseminating health information to the public. Gever and Ezeah carried out research examining COVID-19 coverage in the media. They split the length of their research into two parts. The first phase was confirmed in Nigeria before COVID-19; the second phase was confirmed in Nigeria after COVID-19 instances. The investigators found that the media in Nigeria did not properly communicate the health issue since there are very few articles about the virus before cases are verified, indicating that the media did not provide adequate warning signals about the health. (Apuke and Omar, 2020), examine Nigerian COVID-19 media coverage and report on fewer frequency, less importance and volume of COVID-19 articles in comparison with other media problems during the same timeframe.

The media and economic progress, there is a significant association between the media and economic development. This is because the media have the capacity to promote economic activities. The relationship between the media and the economy is essential in three ways. Firstly, the media encourage trade through advertising. In this way, the media may be seen as instruments for consumers to learn about companies. Advertisers acknowledge the essential function of the media to raise awareness of their presence, therefore they constantly utilise the media to put message marketing so that customers may learn about current goods, talk to them or educate them of value added items (Ezeah & Gever, 2017; Gever & Olijó, 2017).

In addition, the media have the capacity to report challenges against economic advancements. Such reports may offer a comparable opportunity for warning information to ensure that such problems are dealt with promptly. In this sense, it may be stated that the media can monitor the risks to the economy and report them to society via their watch dog function. This may draw the attention of the relevant parties who can solve the issue.

Researchers (Gever, 2018; Gever et al., 2019) believe that the function of media monitoring is important in altering behaviour, bringing the public's attention to problems that pose social difficulties.

Politics is the third area in which the media may help to economic growth. This may happen in two ways. Firstly, the promotion of policies that already exist and have consequences for economic growth. (Isu, 2019) believes that the way the media reports on economic policies may shape people's way of seeing such a policy. It may also influence people's attitude towards such economic measures. The second element is political advocacy; the media may defend the creation of policies which affect economic growth. (Kostadinova and Dimitrova, 2012) carried out a research aimed at determining how the media portray economic problems. The researchers used several frameworks, from economic to human, thematic and episodic. Researchers also focused on Bulgaria's election years with particular focus on seven elections from 1990 to 2009. They examined a total of 543 news articles and concluded that economic concerns were influenced by the specific problems mentioned.

In addition, the number of times which an economic issue was reported was greatly determined by the issue reported. The study of Kostadinova and Dimitrova is useful to the current study because it provides empirical evidence regarding the manner in which the media frame issues relates to the economy. This information is essential because media framing of the economy has a corresponding implication on public perception and attitudes. This issue is explored, but not addressed by Kostadinova and Dimitrova's research (Damstra and Boukes, 2018). Damstra and Boukes carried out research to assess the relationship between economic news, public perception and the economy. To conduct the study, the researchers used a mix of survey research and content analysis. They carried out the study in two broad ways. In the first instance, the researchers determined how economic activities impact on the newspaper contents of Dutch newspapers. In the second phase of the study, the researchers examined how economic news in newspaper influences the perception of media audience. Their result revealed that economic activities influence newspaper contents. They also discovered that the way media describe economic activity influences public impression of economic activity.

(Boomgaarden et al., 2011) performed research to investigate how the media report on the economic crisis and how it affects the economic development expectations of the public. This has shown that when individuals are exposed to media messages about economic problems, they affect their expectations of the growth of the economies of countries. What

that implies is that media reports on the economic effect of COVID-19 may affect people's expectations for Nigeria's economy. Health and Economic Development, It is often said that health is wealth. Therefore, when a person has a health challenge, it has a corresponding impact on his or her economic status. Health challenges affect a person's economic status in two areas. In the first place, health challenges compel a person to spend money on treatment. Such money may have been used for other economic ventures. In the second place, health challenges make a person less productive. Such a situation also negatively impacts on their overall income, thus making them vulnerable to poverty. (Schofield et al., 2011) conducted a study to examine the impact of health challenges on the economy of individuals and reported that people who stop going to work because of challenges with their health have a significant lower income of \$218 in a week, unlike \$1,167 for their counterparts who are in full time employment.

(Okediji et al., 2017) conducted a study to examine the impact of sickness on the income of households and found that a household whose income was \$335.84 before illness earns \$318.01 after illness. The result further showed that \$137.72 was the cost of treating severe sickness while 79% of the respondents spend 10% of their monthly income on health. In addition, 18.9% was the total loss of productivity as a result for health for patients while their caregiver's loss 5.1% of productive time. In addition, the researchers reported that 44.7% of respondents reported borrowing because of health challenges, 5.0% sell assets to raise money for treatment. The second level of impact is on nations. The outbreak of public health emergencies will have significant economic impact on nations. This is because monies that are meant to invest for the development of countries' economies will be used for fighting health issues.

The World Health Organization (2006) corroborates that health challenges have serious economic implications on nations' economies. The world health body carried a study to determine the impact of healthcare challenges on economic growth and reported that many countries of the world lose significant amount of money because of deaths that are caused by severe diseases such as stroke, diabetes, heart diseases, among others. W.H.O reveals further that China, for example, lost a huge sum of \$18 billion dollars due to health challenges, Russian Federation lost \$11 billion for the same reason, India lost \$9 billion while Brazil lost

\$ 2.7 billion. Also, the report reveals that countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, Pakistan as well as Nigeria lost varying degrees of amount because of health crisis. The implication of the result of W.H.O is that there exists an association between health and economic progress of nations.

(Som, et al., 2019) conducted a study to determine the link between healthcare and economic prosperity in Africa. The researchers gathered data from 48 African countries from the time frame of fifteen years (2000-2015). The results of the study showed that healthcare challenges are areas such as childcare and maternal health negatively impact on economic progress in Africa. The result of the study revealed further that where there is a 4-year increase in life expectancy, it will result to 1 per cent increase in real GDP per capita. The researchers also revealed that spending on healthcare limit advancements in economy. They noted that where there is a 10 per cent increase in health spending, it results to an increase of 0.24 percent yearly average real GDP per capita.

Earlier studies by (Huang et al. 2010); (Wilson, 2004); (Mayer, 2001); (Mehrara et al., 2011); (Elmi and Sadeghi, 2012) also reported that a significant association exists between healthcare and economic advancements of countries. The implication here is that COVID-19 is having serious economic impact on nations. (Maliszewska et al., 2020) carried out a preliminary study, ascertain the impact of COVID-19 on economic development. In doing so, the researchers paid attention to gross domestic product, in addition to trade, utilizing a standard world computable general equilibrium model. Reduction in the use of labor and capital, an increasing cost of in international trade, a reduction in travel services, and less attention to business activities that require human interactions. The result of the study showed that instead of GDP growing by 2.5 percent, it falls by 2 percent as a result of COVID-19.

2.1.5 AWARENESS CREATED ON COVID-19

To contain the spread of COVID-19, public awareness among migrant travelers, the provision of hygiene products, and social distancing are all highly recommended. Prior to February 27, 2020, when COVID-19 was first identified in Nigeria and the first recorded case in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), which is responsible for detecting and managing infectious diseases in Nigeria, developed a very insufficient public awareness campaign for COVID-19.

The index case was an Italian who returned to Nigeria from Italy (a COVID-19 epicenter in Europe). Following the confirmation of the first COVID-19 case, the NCDC issued a series of guidelines and began purchasing medical equipment with the goal of identifying travelers who arrived with COVID-19 symptoms, particularly high fevers at airports, and tracing individuals who had contact with these travelers. People who had been exposed were advised to isolate themselves and contact the NCDC. The NCDC will then monitor these individuals for COVID-19 signs, collect samples, and send them to testing laboratories.

These were the suggested steps for halting the disease's spread across the world. However, most travelers/migrants returning to Nigeria from abroad (including other African countries) refused to be screened and given false information about themselves, making it difficult for the NCDC to track them down and those who had contacted them. It's likely that the majority of these travelers were SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, were asymptomatic carriers. As a result, the NCDC is unable to account for travelers who pose a direct threat to the Nigerian population's public health.

The COVID-19 regulation in Nigeria went into force on March 30, 2020, placing three of the country's 36 states (Abuja, Lagos, and Ogun) on lockdown. This was not a complete lockdown, however, since certain employees are permitted to travel for at least 14 days, in addition to the critical worker exemption. The justification for a 14-day lockout stemmed from a WHO guideline that stated that infected patients would become symptomatic within 14 days. The incubation time for COVID-19, on the other hand, has been reported to be as long as 24 days.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to the literature review sections, the research is anchored on two theories; Agenda Setting Theory and Framing theory of Mass Communication.

2.2.1 AGENDA SETTING THEORY

This theory posits that the mass media determines the issues that are regarded as important at a given time in a given society. That means that the press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion; and though it may not be able to tell its readers what it thinks, it does successfully tell them what to think about. In other words, our view of the world depends not just on our own interests but also on the map created by the media for us. The agenda setting hypothesis is confirmed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972). They argue that: editors, newsrooms and broadcasters have an essential role in creating political reality when selecting and presenting news. Readers will learn not only about a certain topic, but also how much significance it attaches to the facts in a news article and its stance. The mass media are ideally placed to identify the significant topics, which are the media's agenda.

The components of the agenda include:

- Reporting quality or frequency.
- Prominence given to reports—shows, layout, radio and television time.
- The level of disagreement in the reports produced.
- Time-specific cumulative media impacts.

According to Baran and Davis, there is an important connection between media reporting and public rankings, according to the hypothesis. The idea correlates the rate of coverage by the media with the value that a person places on such a story. This shows that the media decide what problems society should regard to be more significant. This is achieved through the frequency of the reports, the prominence of the reports via a headline display, photos, the

layout in journals and periodicals. In summary, when the mass media allocate importance to an issue, it can influence the importance people assign to an issue, which can, in turn, determine their reaction to it. Relating this theory to the study, the prominence the media gives to COVID-19 can influence peoples' opinions and reactions towards the pandemic. This would increase their awareness and inform them about the precautionary measures to adopt. Thus, this work set out to examine Nigerian newspaper publishers' coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic, implication for awareness and prevention.

2.2.2 FRAMING THEORY OF MASS COMMUNICATION

While framing is linked to the practise of establishing agendas, it broadens the scope of study by concentrating on the core of the problems at hand rather than on a specific subject. The premise of framing theory is that the media directs attention to certain occurrences and then contextualises them. Framing is a critical subject since it may have a significant impact, and therefore the idea of framing has extended to include organisations.

In essence, framing theory postulates that the way something is presented to an audience (referred to as "the frame") has an effect on the processing decisions made by individuals. Frames are abstractions that help organise and shape the meaning of messages. The most frequent use of frames is in terms of the context in which the news or media present information. They are believed to have an effect on how the audience perceives the news, which may be seen as a kind of second level agenda-setting — they not only inform the audience what to think about (agenda-setting theory), but also how to think about it (second level agenda setting, framing theory).

(Goffman, 1974) asserts that main frameworks are divided into two categories: natural and social. Both assist people in interpreting facts. To enable their experiences to be contextualised within a broader societal framework. The distinction between the two is purely functional.

Natural frameworks characterize events as physical happenings, taking natural quotations literally and without assigning them to any social causes. Social frameworks see events as socially determined occurrences caused by the desires, objectives, and manipulations of

other social actors (people). Natural frameworks serve as the foundation for social frameworks. These frameworks and the frames they generate in human communication have a significant impact on the way data is perceived, processed, and conveyed. Goffman's fundamental premise is that people are capable of daily usage of these frameworks. Whether or whether they are aware of them.

In many respects, framing is inextricably linked to Agenda Setting theory. Both examine how the media directs the public's attention to certain issues — in this manner, they create the agenda. However, framing takes this a step further by establishing a context for the news. This is often a deliberate decision on the part of journalists — in this instance, a frame refers to the manner in which the media as gatekeepers arrange and display the ideas, events, and subjects they cover.

The way a communication source defines and builds each item of transmitted information is referred to as framing. Framing is an inherent aspect of human communication - everyone of us brings our own frames to our interactions.

2.3 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

In the research study titled “Newspaper coverage of covid-19 issues in Nigeria, a case study of four Newspaper” by way of *Apuke and Omar* 2020. Prior research has shown that news source plays a significant role in assigning importance to certain aspects of an issue. In this view, we found that the highest source cited was the NCDC, followed by other government officials, health sector, medical experts (e.g. Virologists) and WHO/United Nations. In contrast, the society and victims of COVID-19 were sparingly cited. A probable reason for citing the NCDC more in the newspapers could be because they are responsible for controlling infectious disease in Nigeria. They announce new infectious disease, death rates and any other related cases including COVID-19 infections. We observed that the least cited sources were newspaper reporters/editors themselves.

Asaolu et al. (2016) showed that reporters/editors and medical professionals were the most often referenced sources in Nigerian Ebola coverage. There is a possibility that politics

influenced reporting on the COVID-19 epidemic in Nigeria since several articles quoted government officials, including ministers, senators, representatives, and presidential spokespersons. Tobechukwu said in a publication that the Nigerian media has failed owing to its active partisan politics.

The research showed that most reports on COVID-19 in Nigeria were frightening and caused fear, focusing on the rising cases, mortality rates, and worries about Nigeria's readiness. Only few stories were reassuring and comforting, suggesting that COVID-19 is not a death sentence but could be managed and prevented when the appropriate measures are followed. The media might have focused on the alarming tone to increase the readiness of the Nigerian government as well as increase the awareness among the populace. However, public sensitization and education were sparingly covered. Ethics healthcare workers could adhere to received minimal attention. More emphasis was placed on death tolls and cases than proffering solutions. Though their efforts may be commendable, it is still inadequate given the fact that infections are increasing in Nigeria. It could be argued that the Nigerian media has created awareness of the outbreak but has not been very effective in reporting preventive measures. Drawing from the agenda setting theory, it could be said that the more the media demonstrate preventive measures to the public, the more they will see that as important. However, concentrating more on panic reporting may destabilize the public and create more chaos. This will increase confusion and public anxiety leading to adoption of practices just as in the case of Ebola, many Nigerians drank and bathed with salt water due to fear, which led to several deaths.

Finally, an observation by (Apuke et al, 2020), it was seen that the media in Nigeria paid attention to the issue of the COVID-19 outbreak. However, the coverage was not in-depth; most stories were short and were mostly straight news. Longer stories accord a topic with a level of depth that is simply impossible with a shorter story. Furthermore, the media quoted the NCDC and government officials more often. They also used health sector and medical experts as sources. Most of the stories were alarming and induced panic. Only a few stories were reassuring. More emphasis was placed on death tolls and cases of COVID-19 than proffering solutions.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH GOAL

The aim of this study is to understand the awareness created by the newspaper under study on the issues of COVID-19 in Nigeria. Also, the purpose of this study is to examine how widely the newspaper covered COVID-19 related issues in Nigeria.

3.2 RESEARCH METHOD

The design that was used in this study was quantitative research design. The choice of quantitative research design was to assist the researcher assign values to the units that were coded in the study. The researcher examined two newspapers in this study. The newspapers, The Guardian and The Punch and all other newspapers are privately owned because there is no government owned newspaper in Nigeria with national circulation that publishes daily.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND FOCUS

The design that was used in this study was quantitative research design. Two widely read newspapers in Nigeria were selected for this study. The newspapers are The Punch and The Guardian. These newspapers were selected for their national reach and readership. The coverage period is from February 2020 to January 2021. This period was selected because the first reported COVID-19 case in Nigeria was reported on 27 February 2020 and it became more alarming from March 2020.

3.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The sampling technique that was used in this study was simple random sampling. The International Media Newspapers (2016) say there are a total of 28 national dailies in Nigeria. Therefore, the researcher did ballot to select two newspapers that were used for the study. The duration of the study was February 2020 to January 2021. This duration marks a time when COVID-19 cases were confirmed in Nigeria.

3.5 SAMPLING STRATEGY

The sampling strategy that was used to select the stories was motif approach. In the views of Gever (2018) motif sampling strategy is the utilization of key words to retrieve data from the websites of media outfits. Consequently, the researcher made use of motif.

3.6 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is a process of collecting information from all the relevant sources to find answers to the research problem, questions and evaluate the outcome. A Research assistant was employed to collate the data through online platform.

3.7 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The units of analysis for this research are news stories on COVID-19 found in feature articles, opinions, editorial comments, interviews, columns and letters to the Editor.

3.8 CONTENT CATEGORY

The categories includes the followings, frequency of report, prominence, placement of story and themes (issues covered): palliative, vaccination, isolation, positive testing, death rate, preventive measures, government actions and supports, medical personnel and activities, recovery rate, traditional remedies for COVID-19, Foreign news e.t.c.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA REPRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 DATA ANALYSIS

4.1.1 How frequently the Nigerian newspaper reported the COVID-19 virus outbreak.

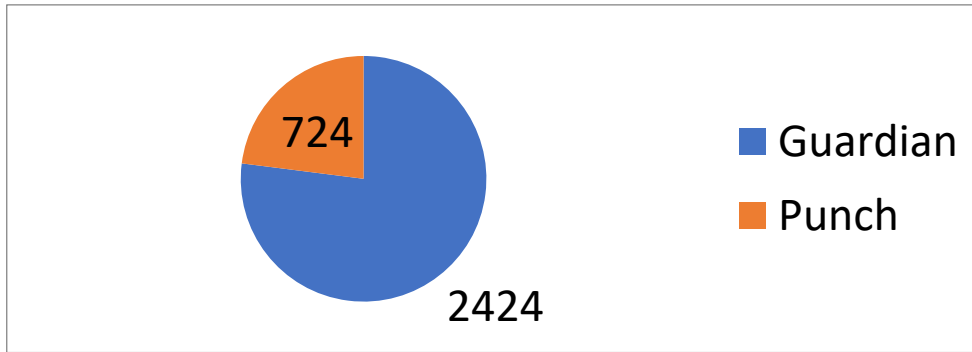
This study investigated the frequency of COVID-19 outbreak of newspaper coverage in Nigeria. Within the period from February 2020 to January 2021, a total of 3,148 articles were published in The Guardian and The Punch. However, the articles were considered to be useful for analysis after eligibility check (see Tab. 1). Comparatively, there was a substantial variation in COVID-19 coverage.

Table 4.1: Frequency Distribution of COVID-19 coverage between February 2020 and January 2021.

Newspaper	No. of stories covered	Frequency %
The Guardian	2424	77%
The Punch	724	23%
Total	3148	100

Source: Fieldwork (2021)

Below is the figure representing this data: Fig.1



Source: Fieldwork (2021)

4.1.2 To assess the extent to which the newspaper gave prominence (contents covered) to issues relating to the COVID-19 virus outbreak

Findings show that both the Guardian and the Punch newspaper gave prominence to issues relating to the COVID-19 virus outbreak.

According to the data, it can be seen that out of 2,424 COVID-19 stories published by the Guardian newspaper, only 847 stories were given prominence. Also, the same applies to the Punch newspaper, out of 724 stories published relating to COVID -19 outbreak, only 238 stories were given prominence.

Mainly the publications have chosen a containment framework. The predominance of the containment framework highly depicts the media role played by persistent coverage, monitoring and reporting by relevant agencies for the control or control of the spread of the virus in containing infectious disease, thereby confirming the earlier finding by other scholars that mass media cannot curate diseases, but can help educate the masses on the precise (Adelakun LA., 2016).

The second major newspaper framework was the frame of fatality. The dominance of this framework in reporting is undoubtedly a result of the growing fear and tension resulting from reports of persistent growth in the number of confirmed cases and deaths due to the disease of coronavirus and its effects on members of the public, for example, one of the suspected suicides in Nigeria, possibly due to fear of being more than any other application,

Punch's adoption of the effects framework indicates a high degree of recognition and representation of the effects of this outbreak not only on the national, regional or global economy but also on health, social, political, cultural and all aspects of human development. The result is that this framework adds to the dread, worry and stress already created by fatality in the headlines.

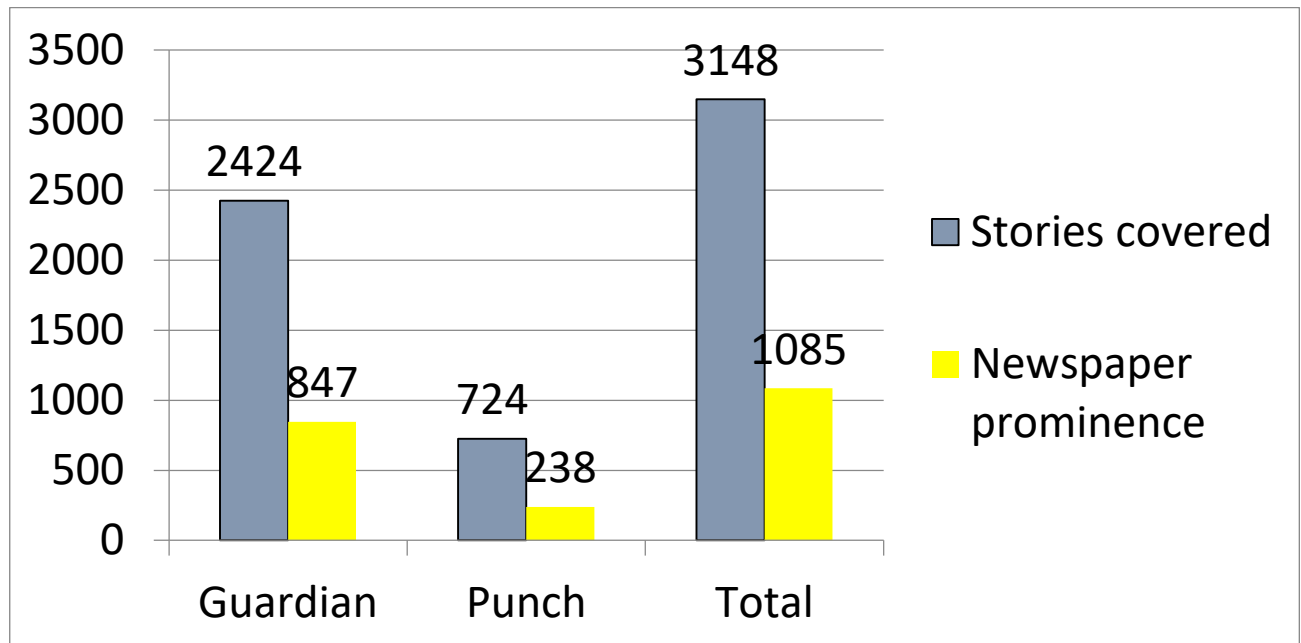
Research has shown that "widely accessible channels of communication may contribute to the dissemination, the reduction of unjustifiable fears and the decision-making process to decrease exposure and susceptibility.'" consistent with the results and say further, while the report is high in the media, it has exacerbated popular anxiety. However, fear may assist to halt the spread of the pandemic indirectly, Basch finding supports this notion.

The Guardian has taken a larger framing of disinformation than other publications. This is because it strongly depressed disinformation, falsehoods, rumors, misconceptions, etc. about the spread, treatment or impact of the social media pandemic inundating the research period. This is a fundamental duty of the media that the journal has presented in its findings, but not usually enough in comparison to increasingly high levels of disinformation and false coronavirus news. The establishment of a newspaper support/assistance framework is especially important since it has helped promote or appreciate money and material assets given to control the infection by interested, charitable, patriotic people or corporates.

Table 4.2: The frequency of news articles given prominence.

Newspaper	No. of stories covered	Newspaper prominence
The Guardian	2424	847
The Punch	724	238
Total	3148	1085

Below is fig.2 showing the prominence.



Source: Fieldwork (2021).

4.1.3 To find out which aspects of the covid-19 virus outbreak were focused on by the newspapers.

The table below summarizes the main emphasis utilized for COVID-19 coverage in Nigeria. Results show that most articles on COVID-19 had an alarming tone, which means that there was no substantial change in media use. Overall, there were just a few comforting and impartial tales. However, it was noted that northern publications were more frightening. The table was calculated to address some of the main COVID-19 subjects in Nigerian media.

Content of the 3148 articles from Punch and Guardian Newspaper

Contents of News articles covered in both Newspapers.	Numbers	Percentage %
Cases in Nigeria (those who have contracted COVID-19 in Nigeria or those who are being treated)	873	27.73
Death rates in Nigeria (number and death rates from the COVID-19 scourge)	892	28.33
The risk to healthcare workers (risk of treating patients)	153	4.86
The dread of handling COVID-19 patients; concerns about leaky interstate border control systems; worries about inadequate isolation and treatment centers and reservations about some hospitals' capacity to conduct the COVID-19 test)	51	1.62
Government/Institutional measures and response (lockdown, closure of schools and other sectors of the economy)	50	1.58
Public enlightenment and education (media messages in the mode of spread, signs, symptoms, risk factors, face mask, washing of hands, using hand sanitizer and social distancing)	182	5.78
Treatment and control (cases of recovery from COVID-19)	198	6.28
Funding/cost of fighting COVID-19 (funds needed or provided to fight COVID-19)	398	12.64
Helpers/volunteers (involvement/responses of other countries, international and non-governmental agencies)	351	11.14

Showing the distributions according to each Newspaper.

Contents covered	The Guardian	Percentage %	The Punch	Percentage %
Cases in Nigeria (those who have contracted COVID-19 in Nigeria or those who are being treated)	856	27.19	17	0.54
Death rates in Nigeria (number and death rates from the COVID-19 scourge)	820	26.05	72	2.28
The risk to healthcare workers (risk of treating patients)	85	2.70	68	2.16
Concerns about Nigeria's preparedness (fears expressed by healthcare workers about their readiness to handle COVID-19 patients; complaints about porous interstate border control systems; worries about inadequate isolation and treatment centers and reservations about some hospitals' capacity to conduct the COVID-19 test)	33	1.05	18	0.57
Government/Institutional measures and response (lockdown, closure of schools and other sectors of the economy)	35	1.11	15	0.48
Public enlightenment and	108	3.43	74	2.35

education (media messages in the mode of spread, signs, symptoms, risk factors, face mask, washing of hands, using hand sanitizer and social distancing)				
Treatment and control (cases of recovery from COVID-19)	99	3.14	99	3.14
Funding/cost of fighting COVID-19 (funds needed or provided to fight COVID-19)	201	6.38	197	6.26
Helpers/volunteers (involvement/responses of other countries, international and non-governmental agencies)	187	5.94	164	5.21

As shown in the table above, different topics were covered. The most common topic was the coverage of COVID-19 cases in Nigeria, followed by death rates, risks faced by health workers, concerns about Nigerian preparedness and government institution measures and response. Public enlightenment and education were the fifth most common topic in the media. Topics that covered fear, panic and anxiety among the population took the sixth slot. The ethics of treating those with COVID-19, and measures to reduce its transmission was ranked seventh most recurring topic in the media. This was followed by cases of recovery from COVID-19. These topics accounted to 3148 stories.

4.1.4 To ascertain the form (news, features and editorial) in which the Nigerian newspaper reported the covid-19 virus issues.

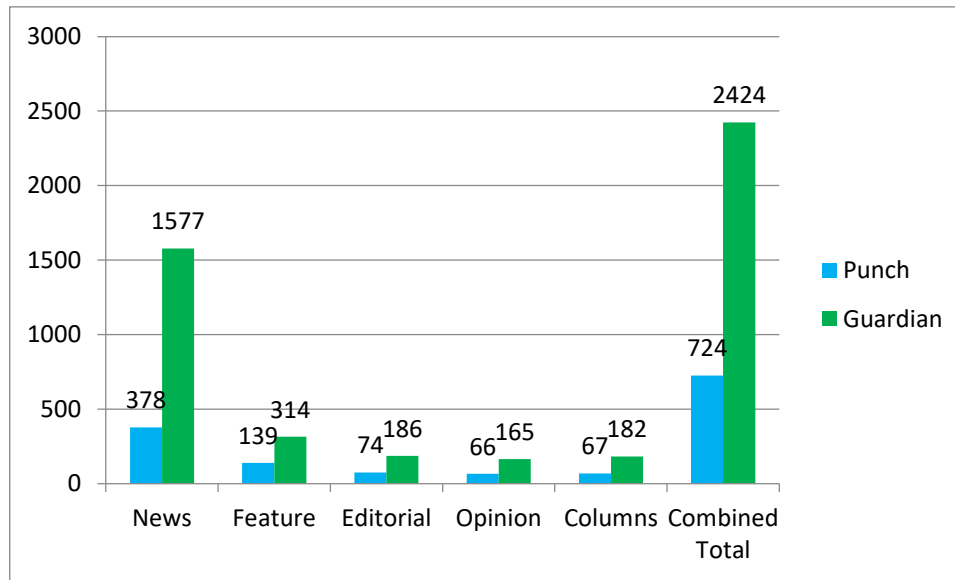
The table below shows a significant variation in story format. More than half of COVID-19 information in the selected newspapers were presented as news stories. A trivial number of feature articles also constituted a common source of COVID-19 information, while editorial, opinion and column news articles were the least.

Table 4.3: Forms (news, features, editorial, opinion, columns) the Nigerian Newspapers reported the COVID-19 virus outbreak.

Newspapers	News %	Feature %	Editorial %	Opinion %	Columns %	Combined Total %
Punch	378 (12.01)	139 (4.42)	74 (2.35)	67 (2.13)	66 (2.09)	724 (23)
Guardian	1577 (50.1)	314 (9.97)	186 (5.91)	182 (5.78)	165 (5.24)	2424 (77)

Source: Fieldwork (2021)

Fig.3 shows the data in a graphical form.



Source: Fieldwork (2021)

4.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The researcher analyzed COVID-19 coverage in Nigeria newspapers of The Punch and The Guardian (February 2020 to January 2021). As for the frequency of coverage, the researcher discovered that over 3000 articles on the COVID-19 epidemic has been published by the selected newspapers between February 2020 and January 2021.

The newspapers had fewer articles during the first month (February) of the epidemic in Nigeria. During the second month (March), media interest increased. Instead, a major news surge started the third month (April).

The researcher observed that The Guardian reported more COVID-19 issues than The Punch, this is because, some stories were later debunked and said to be untrue or misconceptions around the virus, by the alleged sources. It may thus be inferred that the Nigerian media have raised their interest in the viral reporting. One explanation may perhaps be that the epidemic increased in March. This result contradicts the finding by (Vasterman,

2009) which showed that the Netherlands media focused more on Dutch flu in 2009 from the very first stage and less on its end stage.

Regarding the extent of coverage, while there were many articles from the Nigerian newspapers under study on the COVID-19 epidemic, most pieces were nevertheless brief and suggested a lack of in-depth written information about the virus. Journalists are under pressure to produce information fast in the modern digital news environment, and it may be the reason why most newspapers had shorter articles (de Veen L, Thomas R., 2020). Previous study has demonstrated that the news source has a major influence in emphasizing specific elements of a problem. This outcome is consistent with a research by (Smith. S, 2016) that investigated media coverage of Ebola in Nigeria, which reported that most stories are in straight news. Therefore, the researcher maintain that Nigeria newspapers use more of straight news format because, they are more concerned with delivering the news on COVID-19 first hand to the public.

The Researcher observed that different contents were covered by the newspapers, in the aspect of prominence. The study found that most of the stories were alarming and induced panic in the contents covered under cases in Nigeria. With number of cases and death rates which has 873 and 892 coverage respectively. The focus on the increasing cases in Nigeria, death rates and concerns about Nigeria's preparedness creates fear in the minds of the populace.

Only a few stories were reassuring and comforting, suggesting that COVID-19 is not a death sentence but could be managed and prevented when the appropriate measures are followed. The media might have focused on the alarming tone to increase the readiness of the Nigerian government as well as increase the awareness among the populace.

The research showed that the Punch covered 63 news articles on palliative, while the Guardian reported 20, as in case of the content category.

The research showed that most articles in Nigeria are frightening and panic-inducing with significant emphasis on the growing cases in Nigeria, mortality rates and worries about Nigeria's readiness, in relation to the main tones and themes utilized in covering COVID-19.

Only a few tales were encouraging and reassuring, which showed that COVID-19 is not a death sentence but may be administered and avoided when adequate precautions are taken.

The media may have emphasized on the frightening tone to make the Nigerian government more ready and to raise public awareness. However, public awareness and education were addressed sparsely. Ethics health professionals may stick to get minimal attention.

There was more focus on mortality rates and instances than providing remedies. Although their efforts are laudable, the fact that infections are rising in Nigeria is still insufficient. The Nigerian media has raised awareness of the epidemic, but has not been very successful in publicizing preventative actions. From the agenda-setting theory, it could be stated that the more preventative steps the media show to the public, the more essential it is. But focusing more on panic reports may destabilize the public and cause greater turmoil/problem. These increases misunderstanding and public concern leading to behaviors such as many Nigerians drank and bathed with saltwater in the case of Ebola, because of fear and this resulted into many fatalities. This is evident in (Kilgo DK, Yoo J, Johnson TJ., 2019).

The research shows that the Punch reported 378 news stories on COVID-19 with 12.01%, under Features 139 with 4.42%, 74 Editorial of 2.35%, Opinion 66 with 2.09% and Columns had 67 with 2.13%. All the Punch reported on COVID-19 sums up to 724 with 23%.

Respectively, the Guardian reported 1577 news stories with 50.1%, which shows a substantial variation from the Punch reportage of 378. Features covered by the Guardian was 314 with 9.97%, for Editorial, 186 stories was recorded with 5.91%, Opinion having 165 with 5.24% and lastly, Columns having 182 stories covered with 5.78% respectively.

This outcome is consistent with a research by (Smith. S, 2016) that investigated media coverage of Ebola in Nigeria, which reported that most stories are in straight news. Therefore, the researcher maintain that Nigeria newspapers use more of straight news format because, they are more concerned with delivering the news on COVID-19 first hand to the public.

This finding shows that Nigerian Newspapers reports more straight news stories because of the media role to inform the audience, than articles which demands more research which requires in-depth investigation and analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 SUMMARY

This study searched the coverage of COVID-19 issues in Nigeria viewing two Newspapers. It checked whether the Newspaper coverage of the COVID-19 issues in Nigeria was properly done, and also checked the frequency of the coverage, which also points out the differences in the coverage of the issue by the two Newspapers under study. It was discovered from the study that 3148 COVID-19 stories was covered by the newspapers for the duration of 12 months, with higher frequency done by The Guardian newspaper. The Guardian covered 2,424 stories and 724 stories were covered by The Punch. The stories were found in editorial, column, opinion, features and news respectively.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Based on these results, this research indicates that Nigerian newspapers have successfully fulfilled their role in social responsibility by reporting on events around the epidemic, in particular containment measures and the knowledge of the disease. In news selection the newspapers also identified the location of closeness by covering the epidemic in Nigeria more often than a remote breakout of comparable illness elsewhere.

The coverage was nonetheless not thorough, because most items were straight news. Longer tales will need a theme with a depth that with short stories is just unattainable.

Nevertheless, the newspapers caused great tension, anxiety and terror among the people by often adopting their fatality framing. If allowed to continue, this scenario may potentially cause more fatalities than the virus itself, which would exacerbate the bad effect of the epidemic on the audience. A research carried out by (Basch et al.) showed that broad access to communication channels may contribute to the dissemination of knowledge, decrease needless fears and improve decision-making to reduce exposure and vulnerability. Although the news was high in the media, mortality was therefore accentuated by popular anxiety.

However, dread may indirectly assist to inspire fear among the population and prevent the epidemic from spreading.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Since this study examined the Newspaper coverage of the pandemic in Nigeria studying two Newspapers, subsequent research can look beyond the Nigerian newspapers and extend the content analysis to other countries newspapers to offer a more robust understanding of the similarity or dissimilarity in the reportage of the pandemic in two different countries.
- People's perception can also be surveyed to allow for generalization in a global scale and in audience view.
- Also as recommendation for policy making, this study has opened a new conversation for both researchers and policymakers. For policymakers and media establishments, the findings markedly differ from existing studies that tend to blame the media for creating panic in the public through sensational reportage. Nigeria newspapers adopted a pattern of coverage that helped Nigerians to take precautionary measures against the pandemic. Media organizations can sustain this tempo in covering further health crises and other related issues to keep the public duly informed.
- The Nigerian newspapers should tilt more of their reports on the outbreak towards positive direction of allaying fear/tension rather than heightening it while trying to contain the spread of the virus; this can be achieved by reporting more of news analysis/features, opinions and editorials on the outbreak.

The newspapers should go beyond merely creating awareness to mobilizing the people to be more proactive in containing the spread of the virus.

5.4 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The limitation of this study is based on the non-availability of the Nigeria Newspaper at the disposal of the Researcher. The Researcher opted for online gathering of data, which was quite difficult to retrieve and filter. The research only focused on Newspaper, which implies that further studies could be carried out on other medium like Radio, Television coverage of COVID-19 issues in Nigeria.

The reliance on content analysis limits the researcher understanding of the reportage of the pandemic. Employing questionnaire would have broadened the researcher understanding of audience reaction to the reportage of the pandemic. The reason is that, questionnaire offers respondent's opportunity to give their means of getting information, and how they react to the information.

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