

TWITTER COVERAGE OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC: ANALYSIS OF FACTS, FEAR APPEAL AND FAKE NEWS

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ABSTRACT: After the pandemic hit Nigeria the Nigerian centre for disease control (NCDC) was given the responsibility to manage the virus. While carrying out this responsibility they used their twitter handles to share information to Nigerians. The importance and trend of the existence of the virus made it a viable topic and everyone in the country had an opinion regardless of their opinion. This study sought to analyse difference between the frames, likes and shares of the posts of NCDC and popular twitter handles. Using the content analysis method this study analysed the direction of coverage, language and tone of coverage, and the dominate frames used in these handles. The researcher content analysed post for Nigerian centre for disease control and selected popular twitter handles. The period of study was from the 27th of February to 30th of April because Nigeria recorded her first corona virus case on 27th of February 2020 and the population of study is 2,283. The census method was used. The coding sheet and coding guide was used. The researchers used the framing theory and the theory of planned behavior. The researchers therefore concluded that there was significant difference between the frames however, there was no much significance difference between the handles in the direction, tone and language of coverage. This paper therefore recommends that the Nigerian centre for disease control should endeavor to read the comments section to enable them know when to tone down on the fear factor during public health campaigns like the corona virus pandemic. Again Nigerian celebrities should continue to use their platforms to inform and persuade Nigerians to do the right thing on public health matters.

KEYWORDS: *News, fake news, fear, facts, comments.*

I. INTRODUCTION

On February 27th 2020, Nigeria recorded her first case of corona virus in Lagos. Naturally Covid 19 being a deadly disease the Nigerian federal government just like every other government commenced measures to curtail the spread of the virus in the country. The Nigerian centre for disease control (NCDC) is the multi sectoral corona preparedness group in charge of all emergency operations for corona virus cases. The body NCDC amongst other functions prevents, detect and control diseases of public health importance. It also collects, analyse and interpret data on diseases of public health importance (NCDC, 2020). It is vested with the responsibility of these functions under the federal ministry of health. The Body updates Nigerians on issues like number of confirmed cases, discharged cases and deaths. Apart from the conventional media NCDC uses the social media to communicate with Nigerians (Payton & Conley, 2014).⁽¹⁾

Presently, there have been massive adoptions of the internet in health communication. Health workers understand the effect of social media has it has aided health workers to inform and educate citizens about health issues. For instance an article titled "How twitter may have helped Nigeria contain Ebola" stated that lots of social media handles were used to create awareness and campaigns. Many tweets went viral aiding Nigerians to join the conversation on how to contain the disease in the country (Fayoyin, 2016).

NCDC as a body use twitter to create awareness and educate people (Nigerian Centre for Disease Control, 2020). Apart from the health body celebrities and popular politicians through memes use their own twitter handle to reach out to their fans and keep them abreast about the situation. Politicians and celebrities go beyond educating them but they also inform their followers about their status, giveaways (Tolu, 2020)⁽²⁾ and their personal opinion about covid 19.

Information disseminated by politicians and celebrities are understood differently by people. This difference in understanding has made Nigerians react to the news in various ways. This has led to misinformation. According to Olasupo (2020) NCDC has denied various information although some of these messages have the NCDC logo. The body has also used their twitter handle to warn people against fake news on the issues on corona virus. The director general of NCDC Chikwe Ikekweazu has urged Nigerians to receive information only from verified

accounts and websites to avoid fake news. According to BBC reality Check team (2020) most of the information posted on twitter is fake. According to them information causing uproar on social media that vaccines will be tested on Africans first is fake. There was another news about a preacher, David Kingleo, who posted of destroying corona virus became sick after going to China. The reality check team also said that the information was false and the picture trending on social media was an old picture. The constant sharing of fake news through memes has one way or the other adulterated facts and instilled fear amongst Nigerians (Guardian news, 2020)⁽³⁾. According to Ewubara (2020) as the federal government release new cases and increase number of cases Nigerians gets scared and begins to point fingers.

However, some Nigerians are very less concerned about covid 19. Due to the fact some Nigerians lack basic needs they care more about other things like making ends meet instead of the spread of the virus. As the case increases the Nigerian government announced a lock down (Ayeni, 2020)⁽⁴⁾ which did not go down very well with Nigerians because lots of people leave by their daily efforts (Aljazeera news 2020⁽⁵⁾; Mbah, 2020⁽⁶⁾). Apart from this Nigerians do not believe that the government is taking stringent efforts in fighting against corona virus in Nigeria because of certain attitude and comments towards covid19 issues. For instance members of national assembly refused to be tested for corona virus when they got back from their foreign trips (Kwen, 2020)⁽⁷⁾. There have been complaints about shortage in medical equipment as doctors do not have protective masks. Another jaw dropping shock was when the Nigerian health Minister Osagie Ehanira stated that he does not know if Nigerian doctors are paid hazard allowance for Covid 19. He also stated that Covid 19 is a standard job that doctors do every day in Nigeria (Asadu, 2020)⁽⁸⁾. All these issues are why Nigerians doubt if the Nigerian government are effectively doing their jobs. This has also made Nigerians believe that most of the information shared by politicians on their twitter pages is not factual. This has also affected what celebrities post on their handles.

Based on this, the narrative of NCDC, Nigerian Politicians and celebrities are very different. Although their posts are all for covid 19 they post using different memes and for different purposes. Therefore the researchers sought to compare the twitter memes of popular selected twitter handles and NCDC on covid 19. The aim of this comparison is to understand how these bodies disseminate information that is either factual, fake or information that appeals to fear. Knowing fully that all these information are targeted towards public consumption as most public either tend to follow celebrities, align their interest with politicians or believe in government day sources

This study analysed the official of NCDC twitter handle (<https://twitter.com/NCDCgov>), and 8 popular twitter handles. The owners of these handles are Reno Omokri (<https://twitter.com/reoomokri>), Shehu Sani(<https://twitter.com/ShehuSani>), Femi Kayode (<https://twitter.com/realFFK>), Bukola Saraki (<https://twitter.com/bukolasaraki>), Rudeboy P Square (<https://twitter.com/rudeboypsquare>), Funke Akindele(<https://twitter.com/funkeakindele>) and Burnaboy (<https://twitter.com/burnaboy>). These twitter handles were chosen because of their constant post on corona virus and their involvement directly or indirectly on giveaways and controversial statements. Again, their handles are verified as they have massive followership. Using the pictures, texts and videos on these twitter handles this study sought to identify the direction of their posts, the tone of the posts and the dominate frames of the posts. This study also sought to establish the significant difference between the frames, likes and shares of the posts of NCDC and popular twitter handles.

Facts, Fear Appeal and Fake News on Social Media

Social media are web based services that permits individuals to connect, interact, build conversations and share user generated content. (Hopkins, 2017)⁽⁹⁾ with this it has permitted individuals to become content creators where you share ideas using your own social media account for instance facebook, twitter, you tube e.t.c.

Due to the level of interactivity involved using social media in sharing ideas, social media has become an important platform for news production and dissemination (Brewer, 2008)⁽¹⁰⁾. This has really complimented the mainstream media. However, the content of the mainstream media can also be affected if facts are not checked and verified (Archana, 2018)⁽¹¹⁾ In terms of compliment somenational bodies like NCDC use social media to disseminate information so that it can compliment information also disseminated through the mainstream media. The idea is for the information to reach larger amount of audience and create a forum for feedback and interactivity (Caplehorne, 2018)⁽¹²⁾

Considering the fact that any individual as far they have their own social media handle or page can generate their content and most people tend to believe such content especially when the individual is a celebrity or a popular politician. This could lead to proliferation of fake news if the news/information was not verified before it was shared (Abuke & Omar, 2020)⁽¹³⁾ The idea of fake news is not just about telling lies on social media, fake news go as far as posting exaggerated article, article titles or news to probably make your news/information more catchy and attract more followers (Czerwca, 2017)⁽¹⁴⁾ The rise of fake news has raised doubts about

information shared on social media handles to the extent the Nigerian government decided to pass a social media bill (Paquette, 2019).⁽¹⁵⁾ In 2014, social media played a crucial role during the Ebola virus case in the West African sub-region that led to the death of thousands in Africa (Fayoyin, 2016). However, there were lots of misconception and misinformation during that period because social media users repackaged information received (Otu, Ameh, Dawdu, Alade, Ekuri & Idris, 2016).⁽¹⁶⁾ Lots of misconceptions were posted some of them included 1. Anti biotics can treat Ebola 2. Bathing daily with hot water and salt 3. Drinking salt water 4. Eating bitter kola (Adebimpe, Adeyemi, Faremi, Ojo & Efuntoye, 2015).⁽¹⁷⁾ These misconceptions led to other issues during this period and this even is almost playing again as the director general of NCDC has taken to his twitter handle to discourage Nigerians from believing that certain mixtures can cure the corona virus or prevent them from contracting the virus.

In reference to the Zika virus and Ebola virus it is an established fact that social media is an effective platform for public health communication (Ali, Ul-Abdin & Li, 2019).⁽¹⁸⁾ During a public health campaign health practitioners use social media to try and elicit a change in behavior to suit the present situation and manage the virus/disease (Wakafield, Loken, Hornik, 2019).⁽¹⁹⁾ However, individuals do not just change or modify their behavior and act according to messages received. There are mediating factors that can make individuals to ignore or water down public health messages received from the media (Heldman, Schindelar & Weaver, 2013).⁽²⁰⁾ The case of corona virus in Nigerians messages received on social media stated that people should “stay home and stay safe”. However, Nigerians could not because some people cannot just stay home since they live on their daily struggle (Mbah, 2020).⁽⁶⁾ Therefore, to make public health communication effective health practitioners use the fear factor during a public health campaign to elicit the required behavior from the audience (Jobs, 1988). The fear appeal usually attempts to change or modify individual behavior by creating anxiety on people after receiving these fearful messages (Simpson, 2017).⁽²¹⁾ Jannis and Feshbach (1958)⁽³³⁾ explained the need for moderate fear during public health campaigns. In relation to this study it is important to establish which of the actors (NCDC, popular twitter account or user generated content) used the fear appeal in their tweets. The tweets from NCDC or popular twitter handles can elicit the fear appeal however, it is important to note that their (NCDC and popular twitter handles) posts can elicit comments from users that portrays fear and anxiety (Schein, Wilson & Keelan, n.d).⁽²²⁾

Gap in Literature

Corona virus originated from Wuhan without any direct association with an animal. The symptoms of this virus are fever, cough, fatigue, diarrhea, pneumonia, muscle pain, shortage in breathing (Adhikari, Meng, Mao, Ye, Wang, Sun, Sylvania, Rozelle, Raat, & Zhou, 2020).⁽²³⁾ 2019-nCoV is a zoonotic virus without any animal source, with human to human transmission through droplets (Yazdanpanah, 2020).⁽²⁴⁾ Presently there are no stated cures for the virus however, it could be managed through social distancing, wearing face masks, good hand hygiene practice (Harapan, Itoh, Yufika, Winardi, Keam, Te, Megawati, Hayati, Wagner, & Mudatsir, 2020).⁽²⁴⁾ The outbreak could be controlled through epidemiological studies, virus natural history, transition and diagnostics, clinic management (World Health Organisation, 2020).⁽²⁵⁾ The outbreak tends to affect political, economic, socio-mental activities globally (Tedros, 2020).⁽²⁶⁾

The emergence of corona virus has led to loneliness due to social distancing and self isolation. This at the long run result to fear, anxiety and at some point suicide because individuals' interactivity has been affected and people believe that they are alone. The fear of contracting the virus and sometimes dying from the virus can lead to uneasiness and when not properly treated can lead to mental illness (Holmes, O'Connor, Perry, Tracey, Wessely, Arseneault, Ballard, C., Christensen, H., Silver, R.C., Everall, I., Ford, T., John, A., Kabir, T., King, K., Madan, Michie, Przybylski, Shafran, Sweeney, Worthman, Yardley, Cowan, Cope, Hotopf, & Bullmore, 2020).⁽²⁶⁾ In terms of global economy, the corona virus led to the shutting down of some manufacturing activities, service rendering, and turn down in oil price. This has affected the global cash flow (Lee, 2020).⁽²⁷⁾ In Nigerian for instance there have been decline in consumption due to inactivity, decline in investments, increment of government expenditure due to the purchasing of health facilities and decline of net exports due to border closure to unnecessary trade (Onyekwena & Ekeruche, 2020).⁽²⁸⁾ The corona virus has become a threat to global politics and the practice of democracy in the world leading to centralization of power (Brown, 2020).⁽²⁹⁾ One would think that the virus can booster the argument that Xi and Putin can remain in power for a longer period of time since President Putin for instance, is moving a constitutional referendum to remain the president for extra two terms (Gzero, 2020).⁽³⁰⁾ It is therefore no doubt that the corona virus has its implications on daily activities apart from physical health. Countries all around the world are still finding it difficult to curtail the virus and at the same sought out the economic, social, mental and political degradation caused by the virus. However, countries are beginning to relax the lock down so as to salvage the situation of the economy.

Based on this premise, one can realize that various studies have been carried out by scholars on corona virus. These scholars explained corona virus, symptoms and preventive measures. Other scholars discussed the implication of the virus on the global economy, politics and mental health of individuals. However, very little study analysed how social media can be a forum for dissemination of information that can instill fear, give out facts or be a forum for fake news on corona virus.

Furthermore, before the existence of corona virus, countries have been suffering from various kinds of virus and these viruses have been managed. For instance there have been various studies on social media and Ebola virus. Nduka (2015)⁽³¹⁾ explained the usage of social media during the ebola virus explaining the challenges faced and the way forward in using the social media platform for public health communication. Relatively Balami and Meleh (2019)⁽³²⁾ in their study explained the misinformation on social media that led to Nigerians drinking and bathing salt water. They found out that these misinformed messages were shared mainly on Whatsapp and on facebook pages. Again Otu, Ameh, Idris, Alade, Dawodu and Osifo-Ekuri(2017)⁽¹⁶⁾ while giving an account of the Ebola virus disease in Nigeria explained how the Nigerian government handled the virus at the time. The scholars also mentioned the effectiveness of the public health enlightenment programs using various media outlets and communication strategies. Therefore the scholars recognised the presence of social media during the Ebola virus outbreak. Adebimpe, Adeyemi, and Efuntonye (2015)⁽¹⁷⁾ explained the importance of social networking in the prevention of Ebola virus. However, these scholars did not fail to indicate the dangers of social media on public health as they explain the misconceptions that spread through the spread media during that period.

Zika was another virus that created lots of public health concerns. The social media is yet another platform that was used to curtail the virus. Chandrasekara, Gresick and Curry (2016) in their study explained how social media was utilized in providing information on Zika virus. They went further to explain that information received on social media during that period was used to modify the behavior of the public. Relatively, Gui, Wang, Kou, Reynolds, Chen, Mei, and Zeng (2017)⁽³⁴⁾ carried out another study explaining how Zika virus related information circulated on twitter. They further identified the patterns of popular tweets and tweets from public health authorities. Yang, Dillard and Li (2018)⁽³⁵⁾ explained how personal, interpersonal and the media can lead to fear of Zika virus. According to the authors fear of an infectious disease can motivate people to protect themselves. However, they explained that it is not media that cause the fear rather over exposure to the media content can cause fear and anxiety to the individual.

Tasnim, Mazumder and Hossan (2020)⁽³⁶⁾ discussed the impact of unverified information on corona virus disease. They stated that the dissemination of unverified information on social media has led to more health challenges.

There have been various studies on social media and Ebola virus and Zika virus. However, there have been limited studies on social media and corona virus. Although some articles have tried to discuss the roles and implication social media on corona virus but this present study tends to move forward to discuss how certain variables like fear, facts and fake news influence social media content about corona virus news.

Framing Theory

This study sought to find out and analyze how NCDC, the Nigerian politicians and celebrities share information on twitter from the 2th of February 2020 to 30th April 2020. These processes can be referred as framing (Hallahan, 2008). Framing can be explained as a process at which people familiarize their thoughts about an issue (Chong & Duckman, 2007)⁽³⁷⁾. The framing theory is closely connected to the agenda setting theory. However, the framing theory goes beyond the agenda setting theory because this theory explains how the media focuses events on a particular meaning using frames (Bajarchnya, 2018).⁽³⁸⁾

A frame in the field of communication makes sense of events by describing series of events shown in the media by putting forth a specific explanation or interpretation about an event (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Shah, 2002).⁽³⁹⁾ A frame can only be connected to a particular issue or event. For instance the frames of Covid19 cannot be the same frames for xenophobic attacks (Entman, 2004).⁽⁴⁰⁾ Considering the numerous definitions of frames Arowolo (n.d) explained that there is a chance of having problems with operationalizing frames. Therefore, the researchers used the dimensions of frames; media frames VS individual frames to operationalize the frames for this study (Scheufele, 2020).⁽⁴¹⁾

These frames explain that the media shape the public opinion in a certain manner. Going by Abren's (2005) explanation media frames are constructed by utilizing media assets like texts, images, videos to arrange a story that can point out Entman's (1993)⁽⁴⁰⁾ analysis of "definition of problem, interpretation of cause, moral assessment and recommendation treatment". However, the individual frames are to understand real life activities

but it does not create physical frame like the media frames (Text, videos and pictures) rather it can manipulate their attitude and behavior of individuals.

Theory of Planned Behavior

This theory is based on understanding, predicting, changing and modifying human behavior (Ajzen, 2012).⁽⁴²⁾ This theory explains various health behavior which in turn depends on both intention and behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991).⁽⁴³⁾ The theory of planned behavior is said to have predicted lots of behaviors either social, health, gambling, sexual behaviors (Cameron, Ginsburg, Westhoff & Mendeze, 2012). These behaviors that this theory was able to predict identified that behavioral change is predicted by one's intention which are in turn predicted by the perception (Ajzen, 1991).⁽⁴³⁾ The intentions of an individual is determined by what motivates them because the stronger the intention to act in a certain way the more the individual is likely to act accordingly (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).⁽⁴⁴⁾ Messages received one way or the other is expected to make people perceive an idea(s) differently and change or modify their action(s). However, there are some internal or external factors that can affect the desirable response (Doll & Ajzen, 1992).⁽⁴⁵⁾

In connection to this study the lots of messages are being on shared on social media to elicit a certain behavior amongst Nigerians. Most messages from NCDC informed the audience about the virus and tried to sell the idea of "sit at home". Their messages implied that if Nigerians have an intention of staying alive and healthy that the law on lockdown should be strictly obeyed and adhered to. The behavior of Nigerians could not totally change judging from the information gotten from the comment session indicated that there were major factors that made Nigerian unable to change or modify their behavior.

II. METHODOLOGY

The research questions were answered using the quantitative content analysis. The official reports about corona virus were given by the Nigerian centre for disease in control (NCDC). Through their twitter handle @ncdc.gov they share information to the people. The researchers chose to study the NCDC posts and compare it with selected popular twitter handles in Nigeria to find out the difference in tone and direction of tweets. The researchers also analysed the comments to understand how audience accepted the tweets. The researchers also sought to find out how the audience reacted to these tweets through their comments. The researchers chose to study from the 27th of February to 30th of April because Nigeria recorded her first corona virus case on 27th of February 2020.

When the researchers compared the different posts the researchers realized that the selected popular twitter handles studied used mostly text for their posts and all the pictures and videos shared were all accompanied with texts. Again the researchers also realized that the comments were mostly done with texts too. Most of the pictures and videos were accompanied with text and the little maps and graphics in the comments session were mostly retweets from the NCDC posts. In the case of NCDC, all posts were accompanied with text, however, they used lots of pictures, videos, graphs, tables and table representatives to inform and educate their audience. All posts studied were captured through screen shots. Therefore all results were based on the posts screen shot from the 27th of February 2020 to the 30th of April 2020.

The population of this study is 2,283. The census method was used in this study. This means that the researchers studied all the 2,283 posts. Therefore, no sample size was needed for this study. Most of the posts were text. For NCDC all pictures, maps, graphs, table representatives, tables, cartoons, videos and text graphics were accompanied with texts. The text in all the posts amounted to the number of the posts which is 899. However, NCDC used text (n=562; 62.5%), pictures (n=179;19.9%), maps (n=16;1.8%), table (n=5;0.5%), cartoons (n=13;1.4%), videos (n=20;2.2%) and text graphics (n=104;11.7%). In comparison with the selected popular twitter handles most of their posts were texts and most texts were not accompanied with pictures, videos, graphs e.t.c. most of the text came alone. The total population of tweets from popular twitter handles is 295. Therefore text (n=254; 86.1%), pictures (n=24;8.1%), videos (n=17;5.8%) all graphs and table represented were retweets from the NCDC posts. In terms of comments from the audience that were threads. It was mostly texts and just like the selected handles not all texts were accompanied with pictures, texts or graphs. The population of the tweets from comments is 1426 This amounted to text (n=1,334;93.5%), pictures (n=63;4.4%), videos (n=15;1.1%), Graphs (n=10;0.7%), graphics (n=4;0.2). the NCDC post has at least 10 retweet for each post and they also have at least 32 shares and likes for each of their posts during the period of study.

The coding guide and coding sheet was used to collect data. The units of analysis are contents that talks about corona virus and they include pictures maps, graphs, number of cases were represented in tables, table, cartoons, videos and text graphics. As for the content categories, the researchers tend to compare the direction of coverage (neutral, favourable and unfavourable), tone of coverage (harsh, neutral and friendly) and the dominant frames (competent government (Palliatives, media equipment) lockdown, update of number of cases and deaths). 298

contents were coded for the inter coder reliability. The 298 contents constituted 10% of the posts from NCDC, selected popular twitter handles and comments. The Pearson r was used to test the level of agreement and difference in the coded contents. The results include direction (CR=0.8), tone (CR=0.8), dominant frames (CR=0.8). The data was done through cluster analysis.

III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Analysing the Direction of Coverage.

Data gathered from tweets on the NCDC twitter handle revealed that their tweets were neutral. This means that it was not favourable or unfavourable to the Nigerian government. Also the popular twitter handles concentrated so much on trying to get people informed about the virus instead of ridiculing the government. Nigerians, although gave the Nigerian government backlash about how they managed the pandemic, their comments were also neutral to the Nigerian government.

This finding was closely related to the framing theory which as earlier discussed is an offshoot of the agenda setting theory. Due to the situation of the virus in the country, the major thing talked about during that period was the pandemic. Most of the information shared on social media was on the virus thereby giving Nigerians the opportunity to familiarize their thoughts about the corona virus pandemic as a topic or as a national health issue.

Analysing the Language of Coverage

The tweets from the NCDC handle shows that the language of coverage was calm. NCDC were calm in disseminating information thereby trying hard to eliminate fear amongst Nigerians. As NCDC tweets were calm the Nigerian popular selected twitter handles were calm as well. This is because NCDC used Nigerian celebrities and their platforms to inform and educate Nigerians about the virus.

However, this is not the same based on the comments of Nigerians. Rather tweets from Nigerian revealed fear. Nigerians were scared that the virus was spreading by the day and that the Nigerian government does not have the facilities needed to help curb the virus. Another thing that instilled fear amongst Nigerians at first was the rising number cases by the day as recorded by the NCDC twitter handle. At first comments under these tweets expresses fear amongst Nigerians.

This finding from comments by Nigerians are closely related to the findings of the study carried out by yang, Dillard and Li (2018)⁽³⁵⁾ who revealed that personal relations, interpersonal relations and the media can lead to fear of Zika virus. This particular finding by these scholars were made evident in this present study as the presence of the Nigerians on social media made them follow tweets from NCDC causing them to have fear of contracting the virus.

The findings of the study is also related to the findings of Adebimpe, Adeyemi and Efuntoye (2015)⁽¹⁷⁾; who revealed that media is a platform used to provide health related information like Zika virus, Ebola virus, HIV/AIDS and other virus. This is closely related because NCDC used their social media handles as a tool for informing people about the virus, prevention and number of cases.

Analysing the Tone of the Coverage

Tweets from the NCDC and popular twitter handles were neutral to the government. However, tweets from Nigerian through their comments from these handles were rather sad then neutral. It is also important to note that the gap between the number of tweets that were neutral and sad on popular twitter handles were very little. Therefore, Nigerian twitter handles also expressed high level of sadness as well.

This finding therefore disputes the framing theory which explained that by describing series of events and by putting forth specific explanation and interpretation (frames) audience will at the long run think and perceive those frames exactly the way the media has presented it. This is because the media frame was neutral but Nigerians did not buy such frames or narrative rather there expressed sadness which is totally different narrative from what has been presented to them. This could be because the media itself is contradictory in the messages they sent to the audience. The presentation of facts as the NCDC twitter handles revealed caused fear and panic as it can be seen on the tweets by Nigerians.

Analyzing the Dominate Frames

The dominated frames of NCDC twitter handles was update on new cases, deaths and recovery. Another major frame was fake news. NCDC used their twitter handles to combat the spread of fake news by constantly reminding Nigerians that they should endeavor to receive information from verified pages and news stations. Medical equipment was another major frame as NCDC kept on informing Nigerians on the medical equipment

purchased for the management of the virus. In terms of popular twitter handle the dominate frame included bad governance, lockdown, palliative and social responsibility. Popular twitter handles did not hesitate to call out the Nigerian government for not managing the pandemic properly as citizens were suffering due to the lockdown. During that period the palliative situation erupted and the inability of the government to effectively and peacefully share the palliative caused another uproar making Nigerian celebrities regard the Nigerian government as irresponsible. The dominate frame of the Nigerian celebrities are not so farfetched from the dominate frame of Nigerians as revealed in the comment sections. Nigerians were concerned with the lockdown as it affected them so much although they obliged to a large extent they did not hesitate to share how the lockdown affected them. Another major frame was bad governance. In the processes of twitting about bad governance another frame that was revealed was the frame of mockery. For instance, the daily update by NCDC that once caused fear became a thing of mockery by Nigerians as they questioned the updates NCDC regarded as core facts.

This finding was related to the theory of planned behavior. This is because information shared online made people to stay at home due to the lockdown. The increasing number of cases caused people to obey lockdown rules at least for the first three month of the introduction of the virus in Nigeria.

The frame of combating fake news is also related to the findings of Nduka (2015)⁽³¹⁾; Balami and Meleh (2019)⁽³²⁾; Tasnim, Mazunder and Hossan (2020)⁽³⁶⁾ who discussed how social media has caused misinformation due to fake news in health communication.

IV. CONCLUSION

The pandemic caused series of mixed feeling from the different handles analysed in this study. NCDC used their handles to inform and educate Nigerians on the corona virus pandemic. Popular twitter handles also used their handles to educate Nigerians about the virus. It is also important to note that NCDC collaborated with most celebrities and individuals with lots of twitter followers to pass on Corona virus information. This was the reason the NCDC and popular twitter handles shared almost the same narratives especially in the direction of coverage and the language of coverage. NCDC also used their platform to discourage Nigerians from accepting fake news rather receiving information from verified sources. However, Nigerians began to believe that the update given by NCDC were fake creating an avenue for lack of trust between the Nigerian centre for disease control and Nigerians. Furthermore, social media being a platform for user generated content gave people platform to express themselves which sometimes cause fear since most of the users do not understand the knitty gritty of journalism. These information causes fear, panic and proliferation of fake news in the society. This study therefore concludes that based on the findings there was major differences between the likes and comments between NCDC posts and posts by Popular Nigerians.

Recommendations

This study therefore recommends that

1. Given that NCDC, Nigerian and Nigerians were neutral to the Nigerian government, this paper therefore recommend that they should continue to be neutral to help in objectivity and balance while carrying out their functions.
2. Given that regardless of the fact that tweets from NCDC were calm, Nigerians were still expressed fear. Therefore NCDC should consider messages that express hope instead thereby reassuring Nigerians that there is hope for the survival of the virus. Nigerian celebrities continue to use their platforms to inform and persuade Nigerians to do the right thing on public health matters.
3. Given that the tone of the coverage from the NCDC post were neutral, this paper therefore recommends that the tone of coverage should remain neutral if and only if the neutrality of their tone is not politicized.
4. Given that the dominate frame of the NCDC were update which at the long run caused fear and anxiety in the society. It is therefore necessary to read the comments section to enable them know when to tone down on the fear factor during public health campaigns like the corona virus pandemic. This study also recommends that Nigerians should try and receive information from verified accounts to help curb health hazardous actions.

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