

Access to Covid-19 Awareness-Information by the Undergraduate Students of Edo State University Uzairue

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Abstract: The study was carried out to determine access to Covid-19 Awareness-information by the undergraduate students of Edo State University. The study was predicated on Agenda-setting function. The objectives were to evaluate how students of Edo State University, Uzairue, accessed Covid-19 information, and how they interpreted the information accessed, amongst others. The study adopted cross sectional survey research design, whilst questionnaire, as the data gathering instrument. A sample size of 300 was drawn from the population of the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, which, according to the University's record, stood at 2,500, using Krejcie & Morgan sample size determination table. Findings indicate, amongst others, that the students were aware and understood the Covid-19 information accessed through the Social media. Given the above, the study recommends, amongst other things, that information should be filtered and fact-checked properly so as to curb or stem, in no small measure, incidences of fake news often linked to the social media. As well, undergraduate students should strive to access information through the conventional media (Print and Broadcast media).

Keywords: Access, Covid-19, Awareness-Information, Undergraduate Students.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 is a global challenge and like any pandemic, it weakens health systems, costs lives, and also poses great risks to the global economy and security (Peng Zou, Di Huo, and Meng Li, 2020). Ngonso & Chukwu, (2020) posit in support, that COVID 19 pandemic has recalibrated the hitherto world order and subjected everybody to learning new methods of survival. It, also, introduced measures that made it impossible for people to indulge and engage in physical or interpersonal socialization. Some of those measures include, lockdowns, social distancing; and interpersonal communication, amongst others. Available data indicates that COVID 19 emanated in Wuhan, China, in 2019, and by the end of 2020, had spread to over 180 countries of the world, with a mortality figure of over three million, with infected-persons' figure standing at over 70 million world-wide.

Africa, according to figure from the Statista report, accounted for over 121,452 deaths, as at April 28, 2021. Loeffelholz & Tang, (2020); and Anton, Oyelola, Adeshina, Kazi, Emma, & Damon, (2020) quip that coronavirus (SARS-coV-2, previously known as 2019-nCoV), causes acute respiratory illness, amongst others, and belongs to the family of Coronaviridae and the genus *Betacoronavirus*. The role of the mass media, including, television, radio, print, and now, social media, has remained indispensable in teaming and eradicating pandemics. Information on positive

public health practices, such as social distancing, hand washing, respiratory hygiene and government policies in tackling outbreaks has often been disseminated via these media (Collinson, Khan, & Hefferman, 2015). Similarly, Chukwu, (2022) quips that Social media has the ability and capacity to engender interactions across every strata of the society.

Scholars agree that the media is one of the most powerful instruments of communication, that can be utilised and employed to promote the things germane to society survival and existence. Pradeep and Pandey, (2013) argue in support, that the media store and distributes information and views important to the society. Such as information pertaining and bothering on the Covid-19. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic a lot of preventive measures were put in place, especially, Lockdown, in order to manage the virus.

Further, during the lockdown period in Nigeria, the media was used strategically to provide information, education, and also, create awareness about the virus by sensitizing members of the public. Therefore, it is essential to ascertain how information on the virus was accessed during the pandemic, and how it has helped to manage the spread of the virus. Given the above, it is uncertain whether students of Edo State University, Uzairue, accessed information bothering and pertaining to Covid-19 during the pandemic, and how that

information was accessed given the fact that the school and educational sector in Nigeria was on full-lockdown. In other words, this study focuses on the extent of awareness, and how Covid-19 information was accessed during the pandemic by the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, amongst others.

Statement of the Problem

The society has witnessed an astonishing and unprecedented change due to coronavirus pandemic; it has affected the lifestyles of many people drastically, as well as, businesses and the education sector. COVID 19 pandemic's effect and the need to stem the spread, prompted the National University Commission (NUC), based on the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC)'s advice, to shut-down school, March 19, 2020. As a result of the above, tertiary institutions in Nigeria suspended classroom or In-person teaching and learning, whilst some switched to online or virtual teaching. This made all students to vacate the campus, inclusive of the students of Edo State University, Uzairue, who resorted to online learning. Also, to complicate and hamstrung physical socialisation, gatherings and congregation of people were restricted, and vehemently, prevented.

This, also, affected interpersonal and physical interactions amongst students and others, in a gargantuan proportion, and made access to Covid-19- information tedious. Given the enormity and importance of the Covid-19 information, at that time, it is essential to ascertain how information on the virus was accessed during the pandemic, and how it has help to manage the spread of the virus. Given the above, it is uncertain whether students of Edo State University, Uzairue, accessed information bothering and pertaining to Covid-19 during the pandemic, and how that information was accessed given the fact that the school and educational sector in Nigeria was on full-lockdown. In other words, this study focuses on the extent of awareness, and how Covid-19 information was accessed during the pandemic by the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, amongst others.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:

- Evaluate the channel to which undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue accessed Covid-19 information.

- Find out how undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue interpreted Covid-19 information.
- Determine the frequency to which undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, received Covid-19 information.
- Assess whether the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, encountered challenges, whilst accessing Covid-19 information?

Research Questions

1. What channel did undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, utilized to access Covid-19 information?
2. How did the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, interpret Covid-19 information?
3. What is the frequency of receipt of Covid-19 information by the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue?
4. What are the challenges encountered by the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, whilst accessing Covid-19 information?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted cross sectional survey research design, whilst questionnaire, as the data gathering instrument. A sample size of 300 was drawn from the population of the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, which, according to the University's record, stood at 2,500, using Krejcie & Morgan sample size determent table. A Google Form questionnaire with 8 semi-structured questions were designed for this study, and a link sent to all the 300 students selected for this study via their various departmental WhatsApp platforms. But, only 195 students, representing 70%, which is sufficient for the reliability of the result, responded to the questionnaire sent. Analytical and statistical software that use numerical and mathematical figures (Fischler, 2020), as well as, the Google Form analysis, which is designed to afford the researcher an understanding of the trends of the data generated from the filled questionnaire, were utilised. Flowing from the above, the sample size for this study is 195.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data elicited from the respondents selected for the study are presented in the tables below, and utilised for the analysis, as well.

Research Question (1): What channel did undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, utilized to access Covid-19 information?

Table 1: Awareness of Covid-19

Respondents	Yes	No	Percentage %
195	195	Nil	100
Total	195	-	100

The table shows that the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, were aware of Covid-19.

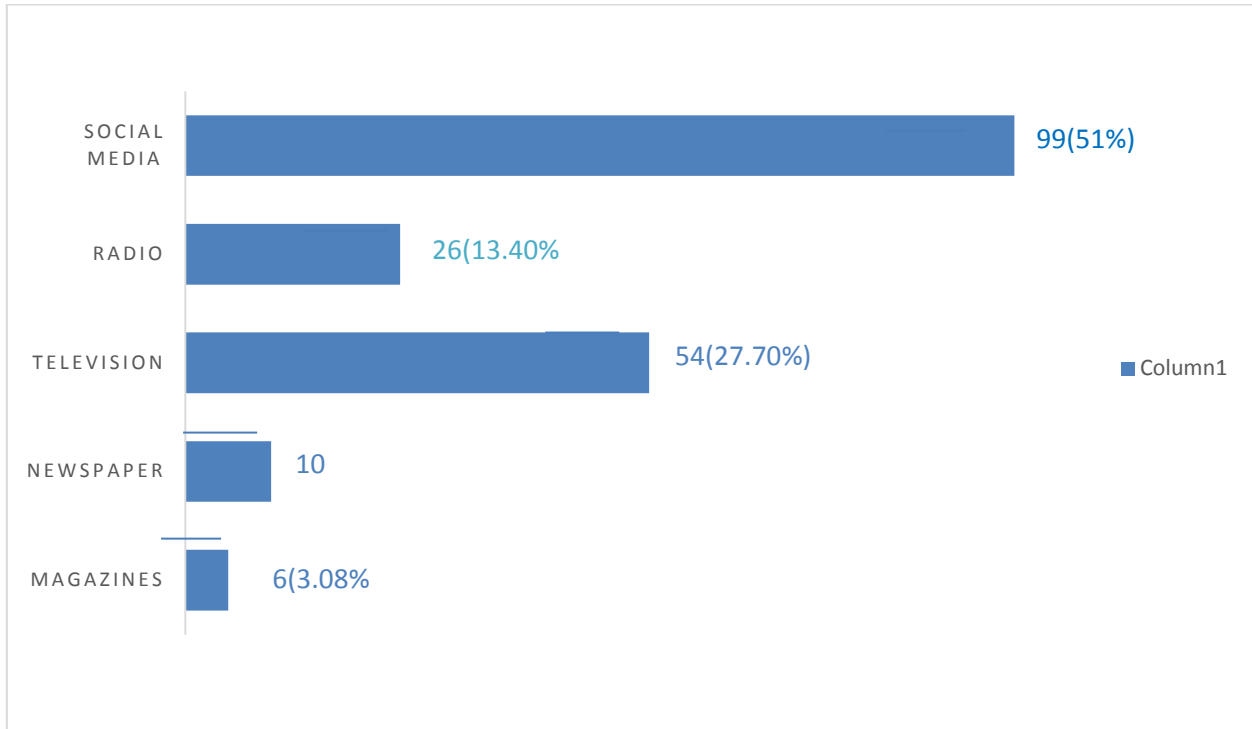


Figure 1: Distribution of the channel through which Covid-19 information was accessed

The above indicates that majority of the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, accessed covid-19 information through the social media.

Research Question (2): How did students of Edo State University, Uzairue, interpret Covid-19 information?

Table 2: Interpretation of Covid-19 Information

Responses	Respondents	Percent
Understood the information	99	50.78.%
Confused	50	25.64%
Without understanding	32	16.42%
Did not interpret the information	14	7.16%
Total	195	100

Table 2 shows that majority of the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, understood the various Covid-19 information disseminated through the media.

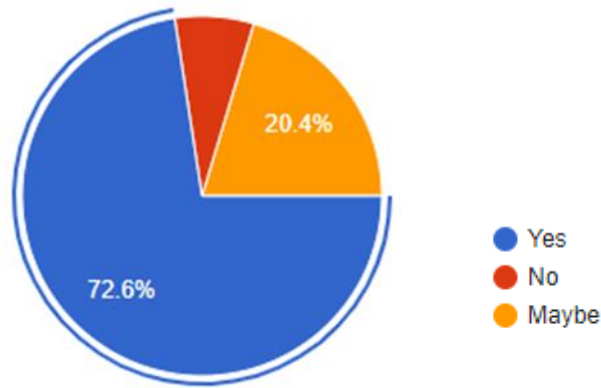


Figure 2: Distribution of the respondents’ responses on whether Covid-19 exist in Nigeria

Figure 2 indicates that majority of the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, agree that COVID-19 exists in Nigeria.

Research Question (3): What is the frequency of receipt of Covid-19 information by the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue?

Table 3: Frequency of receipt of Covid-19 Information by the respondents

Responses	Respondents	Percent %
Often	111	56%
Very often	59	31%
Rarely	20	10.2%
Once	5	2.8%
Total	195	100

The table shows that majority of the respondents received Covid-19 information often.

Research Question (4): What are the challenges encountered by the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, whilst accessing Covid-19 information?

Table 4: Challenges encountered by undergraduate students of Edo State University, whilst accessing Covid-19 information

Challenges	Respondents	PERCENT
Interpretation of the messages; Poor internet network; Paucity of electricity supply; High cost of internet subscription; un-verifiability of the information.	181	93%
Nil	14	7%
I do not know	Nil	-
There is no challenge	Nil	-
Total	195	100

The table indicates that undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, encountered challenges, whilst accessing Covid-19 information.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of this study proves that social media was the medium mostly used by the undergraduate students of Edo State University, Uzairue, in accessing coronavirus information. This research shows that COVID 19 information were frequently disseminated to these students, through the social media platforms. The findings, also, indicate a high-extent awareness of the Covid-19, and the

undergraduate students interpreted and understood the various Covid-19 (coronavirus) information disseminated, to a great extent. The above results imply that curtailing of the spread of Covid-19 in the Institution is possible, given the fact that the undergraduate students have the requisite knowledge and awareness required to stem the tide or up-surge of the dreaded virus. This corroborates with the available evidence, which shows that,

despite the fact that the University did not shutdown academic activities (Online) during the Covid-19 pandemic, there was no incidence of positive diagnosis Covid-19 in the Institution, as at today (2022). It, also, in no small measure, assisted the University to implement, without decent, the various preventive measures outlined by the World Health Organisation (WHO), despite the tediousness and the discomfoting nature of the Measures, which includes – Wearing of facemask, Regular washing of hands, and Social distancing, amongst others.

Further, it (findings) reveals that the undergraduate students encountered the following challenges - Interpretation of the messages; Poor internet network; Paucity of electricity supply; High cost of internet subscription; un-verifiability of the information, whilst accessing the Covid-19 information. The implication of the above is that, despite the high-extent of awareness and understanding of the Covid-19 information, challenges abound, which may require serious intervention and mitigating, given the fluid nature of the Covid-19 mutation already witnessed across the globe.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the above, the study concludes that the undergraduate students of Edo State University Uzairue were aware and accessed Covid-19 information through the social media; and recommends that information should be filtered and fact-checked properly, before disseminating same through the social media, due to the students' reliance on the medium.

Further, the study concludes that Covid-19 information disseminated were received, interpreted and understood by the undergraduate students of Edo State University, and that this assisted, in no small measure, in the implementation of the preventive measures outlined, in order to curb the spread of Covid-19. The study thus recommends, as well, that utmost priority be extend information to be disseminated to the people – albeit, to ensure full grasp of the content and knowledgeability. As this, by extension, will ensure that the desired or anticipated responses are elicited. It is further

recommended that undergraduate students should not limit their access to Covid-19 information to the social media, but to, also, leverage other media – Print and Broadcast, to access Covid-19 information.

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