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Media Dependency Preference of Medical and Nursing Undergraduates of Imo State University During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This study sets out to determine the media dependency preference of medical and nursing undergraduates in Imo State University, Orlu Campus during the first wave of the corona virus pandemic which resulted in a lockdown globally. It further sought to ascertain the perception of the respondents towards the use of social media for health communication vis-à-vis the pandemic. Using the purposive and available sampling technique, 250 students were sampled for this study from about 500 students which formed the population of the research

area while the media dependency and technological determinism theories provided the theoretical foundation. A major finding of the research was that most of the students depended on the social media platforms for news and information concerning the pandemic when compared to the conventional media. Another finding was that the respondents said that the social media played a positive role in the fight against the virus and thus, they subscribed to full and unrestricted use of the social media for health information and communication in any eventuality of future pandemic.

Keywords: Media Dependency, Technological Determinism, Social Media, Health Communication and COVID-19

Introduction

Health is wealth. It is one of the basic needs of man. It is the heartbeat of life. Little wonder the human race is always in continuous and perpetual search for innovations in the health sector so as to preserve and prolong life. However, sound health regrettably, is one of the things most underrated in contemporary society by those who have been fortunate to stay sickness free. But the truth remains that the importance of a healthy body cannot be overstated. Even for a nation prone to wars and other external confrontations, a healthy population is even more necessary to them than having a stronger and mightier army who is weak and fragile in health.

Batta (2008, p.97) asserts “because health is very important to all manners of people – child, man, woman, the young and old, health journalism is attracting the interest of media professionals and the attention of journalism scholars”. He further adds that “a cursory examination of the media of mass communication: television, radio, newspaper and magazines does show several areas of needs”. These needs represent a clarion call for more research in issues bothering on health reportage, coverage or communication. And there is no better time than now with the world battling a pandemic: the novel Covid-19.

The Covid-19 pandemic, a new viral disease, has taken the world by surprise and it has ravaged the world with reckless abandon. The virus, which was first detected on December 31st, 2019 in Wuhan Province in China, has since spread more than a wildfire across the world leading to the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11th, 2020 declaring it a pandemic. This declaration as well as the pandemic itself threw the

world into frenzy of panic. The need for information on what the virus was and the various ways to avoid and curb its rampaging spread grew unimaginably as would be expected.

Moreover, media dependency theory as enunciated by Sandra Ball-Rockeach and Melvin DeFleur in 1976 states that in times of emergencies or crises individuals tend to depend more on the media to reduce their anxieties or even confirm their fears. And the outbreak of Covid-19 was nothing short of a health emergency. Accordingly, focus was shifted to the mass media as the fourth estate of the realm which are expected and socially responsible for providing information to the society. However, this time unlike in the 1976s when the postulations were made, it was not only the conventional mass media in operation; the social media was well and truly alive.

Statement of the Problem

A lot of studies have documented the many advantages of the social media in particular and the new media in general. Indeed, the social media have reshaped the order of proceedings for all the right reasons in the world especially in the mass communication sector. Bradshaw and Rohumaa (2011, p.85) writing on the many windows of opportunities occasioned by the social media in journalism practise claim that the social media is ideal for posting updates on work, asking questions and inviting suggestions from readers. They added further that “because of the its ease of use and flexibility, it is perfect for getting quick updates from others in your field, about what is happening, spotting potential stories or finding contributors in particular locations or industries”.

In relation to this, during the peak of the pandemic, the World Health Organisa- tion and other relevant health authorities cautioned against the whirlwind of fake and unsubstantiated news that was shared and broadcasted on the various social media platforms. In fact, fake news was so rampant that some social media compa- nies like Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter issued warnings against posting and broadcasting unverified news about the pandemic. Some Covid-19 related posts were either brought down or the account and users suspended. The battle to contain and curtail fake news weighed side by side with the battle against the pandemic. It was indeed a fight.

But on the final analysis, it is important to apprise and assess the opinion of the upcoming frontline medical and health practitioners

namely the medical under- graduates bearing in mind the possibility of an outbreak of another pandemic in the future. It is important to establish the uses of the social media and the role it played in shaping the narratives of the fight against the pandemic in the heyday of the outbreak. Was the social media a part of the solution to the pandemic problem or a cog in the wheel of progress? This is the thrust of this research: to shade light and define what the role of the social media was in the fight against the spread of Covid-19 pandemic.

Research Questions

- i. Which mass medium was relied on by medical and nursing undergraduates of Imo State University for genuine news and information concerning Covid-19?
- ii. What made a particular mass medium preferred over the other mass media in information-seeking by medical and nursing undergraduates of Imo State University for genuine news and information?

- iii. What role did social media play in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria?
- iv. What is the opinion of the medical and nursing undergraduates of Imo State University on the use of social media in future health emergency situations?

Social Media and Contemporary Mass Communication Practice

Social media have been defined in a variety of ways as there are many mass media researchers. According to Kapoor¹, Tamilmani, Rana, Patil, Dwivedi, and Nerur (2018), social media comprises communication websites that facilitate relationship forming among users from diverse backgrounds, resulting in a rich social structure. Boyd and Ellison (2008) define social media as a platform to create profiles, make explicit and traverse relationships. Specifically, social media refers to the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram etc. for the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions. This has given birth to the cultivation of large pools of audience which enables mass information gathering and dissemination.

According to Gupta (2016) social media refers to the web-based tools and media that allow users to personally and informally interact, create, share, retrieve, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social media includes social networking sites, blogs and micro-blogs, online forums, discussion boards and

groups, wikis, socially integrated text messaging services, videos and podcasts, and many more. The roots of social media stretch far deeper than one can imagine. Although it seems like a new trend, sites like Facebook are the natural outcome of many centuries of social media development (Hendricks, 2013). Social media evolved from direct electronic information exchange to virtual gathering place, to retail platform, to 21st-century marketing tool as it is seen today.

Social media has come to revolutionise the entire machinery and structure of communication. This revolution of communication system and apparatus has been total and holistic; no aspect of communication has been left untouched. All forms of human communication, except intrapersonal communication, have been significantly influenced by the emergence of social media. Interpersonal, group, public, organizational and mass communication systems have all been transformed for the positive reason. Nonetheless, as powerful a medium as social media is with widespread influence over communication systems, it is important to point out that social media is only a part of the digital revolution the world is currently witnessing

The focus of this study is on the influence of the social media in mass communication practice. Asemah (2009, p.9) describes mass communication as a process of sending messages from a source to a large heterogeneous audience through the use of technological devices like radio, television, newspapers and so on. He adds that through technological devices, it is now possible to reach people in distant places that would have been difficult to reach with interpersonal communication. The key words in the definition above are: large, heterogeneous and audience. These connote an audience that is diversified in kind and nature, composing of different sets and subsets. That is what is unique about mass communication.

But social media have indeed changed the face and the processes of mass communication for more positive reasons which cannot be ignored or denied. This is a direct result of the unique qualities of social media and what it has brought to mass communication practice. Generally, before the advent of the internet in media practice, mass communication was characterised by delayed feedback. And one cannot overstate the importance of feedback in communication processes whether it is personal, organisational, public or mass communication. This bad scenario was experienced in mass communication practice due to lack of, or delayed feedback. This is because even if the feedback is useful, it would be of no value if it comes to hand too late (Baran, 2012).

This particularly makes the entrance of the internet in general and social media in particular in all mass communication processes very

invaluable. Delayed feed- back now sounds very archaic, primitive, obsolete and inconceivable in contempo- rary mass communication practice all thanks to the social media and the internet. In this regard, Roberts (2016) claims that another characteristic of the social media is instant communication. Audiences do not have to wait for scheduled news broadcasts to receive information because reporters and media outlets can bring the news directly through social media platforms. Furthermore, people can easily share and post news content on their networks. The social media also foster a sense of interconnectivity and community by bringing people across the globe together online.

The key phrase in the citation above is “instant communication” and this is one strong attribute of social media communication which is undeniable. By implica- tion, the social media can offer quick and instant communication route for the rural dwellers as far as the communication of their development issues are concerned. This instant communication and feedback solution offers the best information gathering and dissemination channel when compared to the mainstream mass

media. Baruah (2012) states that one of the characteristics of the social media is its ability to bridge communication gaps. According to the author, “social media bridges the distance among different people. It offers platforms for online users to find others who share the same

interests and build virtual communities based on those shared interests. With the availability of social media technologies and services, content sharing and user interaction has become relatively easy and efficient.” This leads us to another unique feature of social media – interactivity.

Interactivity in its simplest sense in computer science means responding to the user. The conventional or old media have often been criticized for being one-way traffic – usually putting the audience on the receiving end of broadcasting. However, the social media are much more of two-way affairs which allow consumers and users to get more involved. It is much more of a two way form of communication than the old media. Increased interactivity can be seen in simple acts such as liking a Facebook post or commenting on news piece or blog. The social media seem to have fostered a more participatory culture in broadcasting, with more people involved and the roles between the consumer and the producer of media content becoming ever more blurred (Thompson, 2018).

Health Communication, Social Media and Covid-19 Pandemic

Health reporting or communication is not a new genre of journalism beat. It has been there and will continue to exist as long as human beings exist as well. It is obvious that the preponderance of health issues and problems offer enough rationale for journalism to take health seriously and push the issues to the front burner (Batta, 2008). According to James Lind Institute (2016), health journalism refers to publishing health related information and news through various media such as newspapers, magazines, television programmes, websites and so on. And surely the social media platforms deserve a mention too.

Regarding the importance of worldwide medical research, health journalism is considered a means of sharing the results. Through the dissemination of health news, results of medical research and health policies, mass media play a leading role in enhancing health status of the people. The influence of the media is so huge that sometimes people adopt new treatment due to the latest health news from the media (Keshvari, Yamnia, Adibi and Shahnazi, 2017). However, the practice of health reporting is not as simple as the definition given above and reporters in the field have always alluded to this.

Medical journalism is much more complex and daunting. It requires a journalist

to exhibit all the qualities of good journalism. Qualities like good news sense, alert-ness, diligence, initiative, curiosity, scepticism, patience, imagination, self disci-pline, tactful-ness among many others come in very handy in health communica-tion. This is because health communication is a combination of many genres of journalism; most important of them all- science and technology reporting. It also makes use of a combination of many types of journalistic writings such as investi-gative, narrative, straight-news etc. It is not an area for guinea pig journalism; it is a beat for seasoned and refined reporters.

Against this background, the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2017) cautions that “effective, integrated and coordinated communications” in

the healthcare are essential if the goal of achieving a healthier world will be realised. The use of the social media in medical education and healthcare prior to the Covid-19 situation has been controversial. Despite the increase in the number of healthcare professionals and organisations who are engaged on the social media platforms in recent years, there remains significant debate as to the merits of the social media in terms of the actual learning and improvement in the quality of care provided (Wong, Ho, Olusanya, Antonini and Lyness, 2020).

However, during the heat of the Covid-19 pandemic, the social media threatened to wipe out the long-held tenets and ethics of health reportage globally. Although the social media is an invaluable means of disseminating information to the citizenry, it is equally a powerful tool of propaganda. In lieu of the Nigerian situation, it acts as a two-edged sword as it allows citizens to be privy to information without impediments. However, this same tool has been used to misinform the populace and to circulate unverifiable and deceptive messages to citizens (Obi-Ani, Anikwenze and Isiani, 2020). And the Covid-19 pandemic magnified the problem of fake news and propaganda globally and in Nigeria specifically.

Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) state that social media platform such as Facebook has dramatically different structures than previous media technologies. Content can be relayed among users with no significant third party filtering, fact-checking, or editorial judgment. An individual user with no track record or reputation can, in some cases, reach as many readers as the Fox News, the CNN, or the New York Times. This problem of lack of editorial supervision from individually generated content for a large heterogeneous audience brings the problem of fake

news. Abbas, Wang, Su and Ziapour (2021) are of the opinion that the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic pushed people to using the social media more than usual because of the need for news and information for themselves and their loved ones.

Thus, the usage of the social media platforms has become a welcome relief in the health disaster and global crisis during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Technology advancement and the social media have created opportunities to keep people safe, informed and connected. However, the same tools have enabled and amplified the current global infodemic that has undermined the global response and jeopardized the measures to control the pandemic (WHO, 2021). Indeed, the social media platforms have provided easy access to health information, which empowered the people to evaluate health-related risks and manage global health concerns. Social media users typically produce and share health information available through local and international sources in response to a worldwide public health crisis (Abbas et al., 2021).

To better understand the global impact of the social media and appraise its role in the fight against the pandemic, the World Health Organisation (2021) undertook an international collaborative study between Wunderman Thompson, the University of Melbourne and

Pollfish of how young people were engaging with technology during the global communication crises. The study sampled approximately 23,500 respondents, aged 18 – 40 years old, in 24 countries across five continents. According to the study, “the unfolding of the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated how the spread of misinformation, amplified on the social media and other digital platforms, is proving to be as much a threat to global public health as the virus itself”. In collaboration, Togun (2020) observed that the social media was a major source of harmful information. There were viral messages recommending unverified medication for the treatment and prevention of Covid-19. Furthermore, conspiracy theories thrived. An influential religious leader, Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy, for example, linked Covid-19 to the deployment of 5G technology. These demonstrate that priority must be given to controlling the social media narrative. Again, available literature shows that the World Health Organisation (2017) foresaw this information pandemic taking place due to the increasing use of the social media for health communication.

“The constant evolution of the social media presents a significant challenge to the World Health Organization” according to (WHO 2017, p. 5).

Furthermore, since “the social media landscape is constantly evolving, the WHO headquarters is currently engaging social media subscribers on eleven social media platforms: Twitter, Facebook, Google+, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, Storify, foursquare, Vine, Ello, and Periscope. All the six WHO regions also have their presence on the Twitter and the Facebook and many country offices are devel-

oping the capacity to sustain social media presence as well. By participating in social media conversations and disseminating credible information through the social media, WHO can drive the traffic to the WHO website where more detailed and trusted content can be found (WHO, 2017). But even with these efforts, a lot of people were left exposed and vulnerable to fake news, propaganda and conspiracy theories which in one way or the other affected the fight against the pandemic either for the positive or negative reasons.

In a review of related studies, Abbas et al. (2021) studied the role of the social media during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study focused on exploring the adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on global public health and the indispensable role of the social media to provide the correct information on the Covid-19 health crisis in Pakistan. The study incorporated the narrative review analysis based on the existing literature. Findings showed that endless corona virus related news-feeds and the increased number of reported fatalities considerably increased global mental health issues. The social media provided positive and negative data about the COVID-19 resulting in a worldwide infodemic that has eroded public trust and impeded virus restraint, which outlived the corona virus pandemic itself.

In a qualitative approach, Wong et al. (2020) studied the use of the social media and online communication in the time of Covid-19 pandemic. They reviewed the use of the social media during the

pandemic and illustrated it using the experiences from the perspective of large medical organisations and also identified the common pitfalls that came with the use of the social media for health communication during the period. The researchers submit that the social media brings a new dimension to healthcare by providing a common channel for healthcare professionals and patients to communicate regarding health issues with the potential to improve health outcome. However, they cautioned that social media users should monitor the information exchanged for quality and reliability, and respect patient confidentiality when participating in clinical discussions.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on two theories of Mass Communication namely: the Media Dependency and the Technological Determinism theories. First, the Media Dependency otherwise known as Media System Dependency theory was enunciated by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur in 1976. The proponents explain that in times of emergencies, or crises individuals tend to depend more on the media to reduce their anxieties or even confirm their fears. This theory states that

the more dependent a person is on a particular media to meet his needs, the more important the media will become to that person. In relation to

this study, it can be argued that the outbreak of Covid-19 was a health emergency so it suffices to allude that people sort and resorted to the media to meet their health information needs.

The second is the Technological Determinism theory formulated by Marshal McLuhan in 1964. The theory posits that the media does not only change or alter the environment and perceptions, but the very message it conveys. The basic axiom of the theory is users of the media and audience learn, feel, think and behave the way they do because of the messages they receive through the current technological devices available to them. In relation to this study on the role of the social media in the fight against Covid-19 and the perception of the Nigerian medical practitioners, this theory helps to explain the much habitual changes experienced in media dependency during crises and emergencies such as the Covid-19 pandemic as a result of digitisation and the social media.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study was sampled among nursing and medical students of Imo State University, Orlu Campus. This population was considered appropriate to this study because they are considered informed enough to know the proper medium to seek health information as students of nursing science and medicine. The purposive and available sampling technique was employed and 250 students were sampled. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. It was designed in such a way that it was easily understood by the respondents. The first part of the questionnaire was on the demographics of the respondents, while the

second part was on the research questions. The analysis was done with simple percentages and tables.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Mass medium (media) platform relied on for genuine news and information concerning Covid-19?

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Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Conventional Mass Media:	74	30

radio, television, newspaper etc.		
Social Media Platforms: Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp etc.	147	59
Medical Journals and Publications both online and print	18	7
Colleagues, Family and Friends	11	4
Total	250	100

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 1 above indicates that a little above average of the respondents (59%) relied on social media platforms for news and information concerning the pandemic while 30% depended on the conventional mass media.

Table 2: Reason for the preference of the medium ticked in question 1 over other mass media in information-seeking during Covid-19 pandemic?

Variables	Frequenc y	Percenta ge
Trust and Reliability.	93	37
Cost Factor	-	-
Easy Availability	64	26

Convenience and Accessibility	93	37
Total	250	100

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 2 shows that 37% used trust/reliability and convenience/accessibility factors as the reasons for their choice of the medium while 26% made their choice based

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on the easy availability of the medium.

Table 3: Role played by the social media in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Good.	157	63
Very Good	71	28
Bad	6	3
Very Bad	-	-
Indifferent	16	6

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Total	250	100
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Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 3 shows that 63% of the respondents said that the social media has played a good role in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria while 28% said that it played a very good role.

Table 4: Subscription to the full and unrestricted use of the social media for healthcare related news and information in case of another pandemic out- break

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes.	173	69
No	5	2
Cautious Use	25	10
Undecided	47	19
Total	250	100

Source: Field Survey 2021

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From table 4 above, majority of the respondents (69%) agreed to the full and unrestricted use of the social media for information and health related news in the event of another pandemic outbreak while 19% were undecided.

Discussion of Findings

Question 1: During the outbreak of the pandemic, what mass medium (media) platform did you rely on for genuine news and information concerning Covid-19?

Table 1 provides the answer to this question. 145 (59%) respondents relied on social media platforms for news and information concerning the pandemic while 30% depended on the conventional mass media. The media dependency theory which this study draws its strength from states that in times of emergencies or crises, individuals tend to depend more on the media to reduce their anxieties or even confirm their fears. This finding tallies with the theory. However, Nnanne (2017) who similarly studied media dependency and information seeking behaviour of electorates during the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria and also discovered a shift of dependency from the conventional mass media to the social media platforms argues that when the media dependency theory was enunciated by Melvin DeFleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach in 1976, they did not envisage the emergence, popularity and ubiquity of the social media.

These findings only solidify and not invalidate the theory because the social media have become an integral part of contemporary mass media. This findings collaborates Volkmer (2021) who stated that the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed that global big tech platforms and the social media are core sites for continuous engagement with crisis content for young citizens. Furthermore, Obi-Ani, Anik-wenze and Isiani (2020), Ekezie1 and Bosah (2021) all in Nigeria and Ahmad, Ahmad, and Murad (2020) in Iraq have reported a significant dependence on the social media for news and information during the hit period of the pandemic.

Question 2: Why did/do you prefer the medium you ticked in question 1, over other mass media in information-seeking during Covid-19 pandemic?

Table 2 provides the answer to the question; albeit, the result is split in average. The table shows 37% of the respondents relied on the social media for news and information during the first wave of the pandemic because of trust/reliability and conve-

nience/accessibility factors while 26% made their choice based on the easy availability of the medium. No respondent

relied on the social media due to cost factor. This finding on trust/reliability is an aberration from the findings of many such as Venegas-Vera, Colbert and Lerma (2020) and González-Padilla and Tortolero-Blanco (2020) who argued that the social media exacerbated the infodemic crises and was a cog in the wheel of progress during the first wave of the pandemic. In another study, Rahnavard (2016) submits that the social media is cheap and easy to access and these are the factors that influence audience preferences for it. However, none of the respondents in our study alluded to choosing the social media because of cost factor which was rather surprising. In addition, 30% said they preferred the social media due to its convenience. This finding tally with Fraustino, Liu and Jin (2012) who argued that convenience is a huge reason why the public uses the social media compared to the other mass media.

Research Question 3: What role do you think social media played and has played in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria?

Table 3 provides the answer to this question. The table shows that 63% of the respondents said that the social media has played a good role in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria while 28% said that it played a very good role. On the whole, majority of the respondents said that the social media contributed positively to the fight against the pandemic in Nigeria. Several studies have collaborated this finding. Wong,

Ho, Olusanya, Antonini, and Lyness (2020) submit that the social media brings a new dimension to healthcare by providing a common channel for healthcare professionals, patients and the public to communicate regarding health issues, with the potential to improve health outcomes.

On the other hand, Abbas et al. (2021) saw the role of the social media differently from the above findings. The researchers argue that the social media brought about the worldwide infodemic that has eroded public trust and impeded virus restraint, which outlived the corona virus pandemic itself. Several studies support this assertion: in Nigeria, Obi-Ani, Anikwenze and Isiani (2020) said that the social media acts as a two-edged sword as it allows citizens to be privy to information without impediments. Adding that, this same tool has been used to misinform the populace and to circulate unverifiable and deceptive messages to citizens. Ekezie¹ and Bosah (2021) reported misinformation by the social media during the pandemic. Whereas, González-Padilla and Tortolero-Blanco (2020) and Venegas-Vera,

Colbert and Lerma (2020) said it played both positive and negative roles in United States of America and Spain

respectively.

Question 4: In case of another pandemic outbreak, would you subscribe to full and unrestricted use of social media for healthcare related news and information as it happened in Covid-19?

From table 4 above, majority of the respondents (69%) agreed to the full and unrestricted use of social media for information and health related news in the event of another pandemic outbreak while 19% were undecided. This implies that the majority of the respondents do not have any reservation for continuous and future use of the social media for news and information needs even in an event of another pandemic outbreak in the future. However, the World Health Organisation calls for restraint and caution to avoid information overload and the propagation of fake news. Furthermore, the social media brings a new dimension to healthcare by providing a common channel for healthcare professionals, patients and the public to communicate regarding health issues, with the potential to improve health outcomes (Wong, Ho, Olusanya, Antonini, and Lyness, 2020).

Conclusion

Undeniably, the social media has expanded the frontiers of information and communication in the 21st century. This is evident even as the world grapples with the monster of Covid-19 pandemic. The world was in a lockdown in the first quarter of year 2020. And

the social media, from the findings of this study, played a crucial role in the fight against the pandemic. It could be seen that the majority of the respondents relied and depended on the social media for news and information during the first wave of the pandemic. This was because they trusted their social media sources of information. Accordingly, the respondents said that they would subscribe to full and unrestricted use of the social media for information and health news in the eventuality of another pandemic outbreak in the world. These findings are ground breaking in new media studies. The social media, the advantages notwithstanding, has been criticised for fake and unsubstantiated news reports through citizen journalism. This has been as a result of freedom and unrestricted access to the cyberspace for non-media professionals. A lot of concerns have been raised and users of social media messages have always been cautioned to be selective of what they receive and accept. However, during the peak of the pandemic which naturally increased the media dependency, there was reliance on the social media for news about the pandemic as well as the subscription that the social media can be used for reliable news and information in future health emergencies.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Due to convenience, low cost, accessibility etc., people

between the ages of 18 to 40 years are more dependent on the social media for news and information concerning their wellbeing. Therefore, more media literacy education is needed for citizen journalists and the general public. This will help stem the tide of fake news that emanates from the social media platforms as was observed during the peak of the pandemic.

2. Since there is trust and reliability on the social media news, government, non-governmental and corporate organisation can exploit and leverage on this opportunity when the need arises for public mobilisation towards a particular course of action; example, the call for more vaccination against covid-19 pandemic. The social media should be heavily employed in driving home the message of mass vaccination against the virus.

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