



NCDC'S MEDIA CAMPAIGN MESSAGES ON COVID-19 AND THE ESPOUSAL OF PRESCRIBED SAFETY LIFESTYLE AMONG BABCOCK UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES

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Abstract

Statistics by the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC), reveal that as at July 2021, about 167, 692 Nigerians were confirmed to be infected by the novel Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19), while 2,121 deaths have been recorded in all 36 states including the Federal Capital

Keywords: *COVID-19, NCDC, COVID-19 safety lifestyle, Media health messages, Adoption*

INTRODUCTION

The novel Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019 has rapidly spread to almost every region of the world. According to the *World Health Organization (WHO, 2021)*, the total number of COVID-19 cases globally currently stands at 181,930,736 confirmed cases and 3,945,832 deaths. The disease caused by a new and severe type of Coronavirus known as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) COVID-19 posed a major health challenge for which countries all over the world had to adopt unprecedented Infection Preventions and Control (IPC). COVID-19 was first reported

Territory (FCT). In a bid to curtail the virus, NCDC has adopted the intensive use of the mass media through health communication campaigns to disseminate information on the nature of the pandemic in Nigeria. Based on this premise, the study sought to determine the relationship between the NCDC's media campaign messages on COVID-19 and the practice of COVID-19 prescribed safety lifestyle among Babcock University undergraduates. Adopting a survey research approach, 340 respondents were sampled recording a 97.9% response rate. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between NCDC's media campaign messages on COVID-19 and the level of adoption of COVID-19 prescribed safety lifestyle among Babcock University undergraduates at $r=0.19$; $p\text{-value}=0.04$. The NCDC should continue to intensify its use of the mass media to communicate vital information on the nature of the virus in Nigeria.

by the WHO on 31st December, 2019 and announced as a global pandemic on 11th March, 2020. Safety measures such as: wearing a nose mask, washing hands regularly, sanitizing, social distancing, self-isolation for persons with symptoms were prescribed in a bid to curtail the spread of the virus. The surge of the virus led to global lockdown, as countries began to close their borders and mandate citizens to stay home. This was necessitated by the need to prevent further spread while public health experts sought to understand the Virus better and determine a possible treatment or cure.

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Nigeria was in February, 2020. According to the *Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC, 2020)*, The case was an Italian expatriate who returned to Nigeria from Milan, Italy where he contracted the virus. He was confirmed positive at the Virology Laboratory of the Lagos University Teaching Hospital, part of the Laboratory Network of the NCDC. This development led to immediate contact tracing of persons who had been in contact with him.

Since then, the NCDC has continued to guide the national public health response alongside the Presidential Task Force on covid-19 (PTF-COVID-19). Also, the NCDC in collaboration with state governments track possible victims who are tested and quarantined for 14 days. On March 18, 2020,

the Lagos State government suspended all gatherings above fifty people for four weeks and ordered all lower and middle-level public officers to stay at home (Ewodage, 2020). Similarly, the Federal government, on March 30, 2020 introduced various containment strategies such as the closing of the national borders and airspace, schools, worship centers and other public places, canceling of mass gathering events and placing the Federal Capital Territory, Lagos and Ogun states on lockdown for an initial period of fourteen days.

The media have been a major proponent for the dissemination of messages through numerous campaigns on COVID-19 by the *NCDC* as well as other bodies. Radio, television, online media, social media, and text messaging have all been deployed so as to reach all and sundry in society. The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between the *NCDCs'* media campaign on COVID-19 and the adoption of COVID-19 prescribed safety lifestyle among Babcock University undergraduates. The specific objectives include to;

1. Establish the awareness of the *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19 among Babcock University undergraduates.
2. Find out Babcock University undergraduates perception of the *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19 in Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the awareness of the *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19 among Babcock University undergraduates?
2. How do Babcock University undergraduates perceive *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19 in Nigeria?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

- H₀:** There is no significant relationship between awareness of *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19 and the practice of prescribed COVID-19 safety lifestyle among Babcock University undergraduates.
- H₁:** There is a significant relationship between awareness of *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19 and the practice of prescribed COVID-19 safety lifestyle among Babcock University undergraduates.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on the Social Learning Theory. It is a theory of behavioural change that provides a framework to understand how indices

such as: knowledge, skills, attitudes/cognitive factors, and environmental factors can influence desired behaviour or bring about desired change ([Robinson](#), [Aventin](#), [Hanratty](#), [Ruane-McAteer](#), [Tomlinson](#), [Clarke](#), [Okonofua](#) & [Lohan](#), 2021).

Individuals within any given society are led to accept a way of life (especially when it is prescribed) when there is an enabling environment to make it easier for practice. According to Johns Hopkins University (2016), social learning theory reiterates the importance of creating an enabling environment, in which desired behavioral change is made easier. For instance, seeing the behavior in practice and also depicted through different channels of mass media such as television, radio, newspaper, online can help reinforce acceptance and practice in society.

No doubt, the effective response to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic is dependent on public voluntary adherence to the prescribed rules and guidelines by authority ([Martela,Hankonen](#), [Ryan](#) and [Vansteenkiste](#), 2021). However, when they are frequently exposed to health communication messages via the mass media on the safety guidelines it is a crucial step in the right direction to attain voluntary adherence of COVID-19 safety lifestyle. In essence, COVID-19 prescribed safety lifestyles such as: wearing a nose mask, washing and sanitizing the hands, social distancing, amongst others are easier to practice when there is a constant reminder.

NCDC MEDIA CAMPAIGN ON COVID-19

The ability of the mass media to disseminate messages to a heterogeneous audience is perhaps one of its most important characteristics especially as it comes to the health communication messages such as that with COVID-19 pandemic. Governments world over have adopted the use of the various channels of mass media such as television, radio, print, online media to keep the citizenry abreast and regularly updated on the events and outcomes of the pandemic. According to Wogu, Chukwu, Nwafor, Ugwuoke, and Ugwulor-Onyinyechi (2019, p. 1), the mass media is a powerful means with which to create awareness and “influence health behaviours linked to viral transmission and infection”.

No doubt, information is key for survival during a public health crisis such as the COVID-19. When an audience is adequately informed about the risk factor to the virus, it is liable to have a psychological effect that will in turn lead to the adoption of prescribed COVID-19 safety measures. Also, [Martela,Hankonen](#), [Ryan](#) and [Vansteenkiste](#) (2021), concur to this as they posit that choosing an effective way to communicate messages “can play a

crucial role in determining the success of a national response to an epidemic or another type of crisis”.

The *NCDC* have utilized the mass media in various ways from the inception of the confirmation of COVID-19 in Nigeria. As part of its sensitization approach, it launched the *#TakeResponsibility* media campaign on radio, television, newspaper, social media, and text messaging in both English and the three major indigenous languages spoken in Nigeria (Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo).

The focal point of the *NCDC's* media campaign has been to provide Nigerians with information on the nature of COVID-19 within the country. Since the confirmation of the first case of COVID-19, the *NCDC* have diligently provided daily updates on the number of confirmed cases, deaths, recoveries by all 36 states and the Federal Capital City (FCT), prescribed safety guidelines, protocol for the reopening of public places, addressed misinformation especially on conspiracy theories about the pandemic, provided help line and help centers, promoted vaccination amongst other things.

Anorue, Ugboaja, Ayogu, and Okonkwo (2021 p.98), stated that:

On a daily basis, members of the public's mobile phones, social media platforms, television, newspapers and radio stations are inundated with a plethora of messages from the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and other health organizations on preventive measures to be adopted by members of the public in order to curb the spread of coronavirus in the country.

It is worthy to note that there has been skepticism at varied levels among Nigerians on the credibility of the *NCDC* especially with regards to the authenticity of the number of cases declared. Abdullateef and Okonkwo (2021), in a study on the awareness, knowledge, and perceptions of Nigerians hesitance towards COVID-19 management by the *NCDC*, found that inconsistencies in reporting cases, secrecy about patient database, and perceived corruption tendencies were the three leading reasons for the distrust of the commission among Nigerian. The study further established the fact that for this reason, some Nigerians are not predisposed to adherence to prescribed COVID-19 safety lifestyle as they doubt the existence of the virus in the country.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the quantitative survey research design. 2,132 final year students of Babcock University were the study population (Office of

the President of 2021 Graduating Class). Using the Taro Yamane formula, 340 students were sampled. The available non-probability sampling technique was also adopted in that the study was limited to final year students on campus at the time. The research instrument was pretested and subject to Cronbach Alpha reliability testing, which revealed a 0.792 reliability. Copies of a structured questionnaire were distributed and retrieved by trained research assistants. The Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) was used to analyze data while correlation analysis was used for the hypothesis. Results are presented using simple statistical tools of frequency tables. gathered from the research instrument will be given to a data analyst for proper calculation and collation.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study recorded a 97.9% response rate. Of the 340 instruments distributed, 322 were returned. 168 (52.2%) of the respondents were female, while 154 (47.8%) were male. This reveals that female final year undergraduates of Babcock University constituted a majority of the study respondents.

Table 1: Awareness of NCDC's Media Campaign Messages on COVID-19

Statements	HA	A	NA	MEAN	S.D
<i>NCDC's</i> media campaign messages present statistics on COVID-19 cases across the states.	176 (54.7)	146 (45.3)	0 (0.0)	4.55	0.49
<i>NCDC's</i> media campaign messages present statistics on COVID-19 related deaths.	190 (59.0)	132 (41.0)	0 (0.0)	4.59	0.56
<i>NCDC's</i> media campaign messages present statistics on COVID-19 recoveries.	188 (58.4)	134 (41.6)	0 (0.0)	4.58	0.59
<i>NCDC's</i> media campaign messages present COVID-19 safety guidelines	179 (55.6)	143 (44.4)	0 (0.0)	4.56	0.49
<i>NCDC's</i> media campaign messages present information on COVID-19 vaccination	177 (55.0)	145 (45.0)	0 (0.0)	4.55	0.46
<i>NCDC's</i> media campaign messages present its activities for COVID-19 control	180 (55.9)	142 (44.1)	0 (0.0)	4.56	0.53
Average Weighted Mean				4.56	0.52

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Key: [HA] = Highly Aware, [A] = Aware, [NA] = Not Aware

Table 1 presents data on the awareness of the *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19. First, it is clear that there is a 100% level of awareness among respondents at strongly aware and aware levels. This implies that all 322 Babcock University undergraduates have been exposed

to the *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19. It also reveals that a majority of the respondents are highly aware, which implies that they have a high level of exposure to the *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19.

A mean score of 4.55 revealed that most respondents are highly aware that *NCDC's* media campaign messages present statistics of COVID-19 cases across the states in Nigeria. A mean score of 4.59 also showed that most respondents are highly aware of *NCDC's* media campaign messages on statistics of COVID-19 deaths across the states in Nigeria. Also, a mean score of 4.58 also showed that most respondents are highly aware of *NCDC's* media campaign messages statistics of COVID-19 recoveries across the states in Nigeria.

Similarly, a mean score of 4.56 also showed that most respondents are highly aware of *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19 safety guidelines. A mean score of 4.55 also showed that most respondents are highly aware that *NCDC's* media campaign messages present information on COVID-19 vaccination. In the same vein, a mean score of 4.56 also showed that most respondents are highly aware that *NCDC's* media campaign messages present its activities for COVID-19 control. With an average weighted mean of 4.56, it showed that the respondents' awareness of *NCDC's* media campaign messages on Covid-19 is very high.

Table 2: Perception of *NCDC's* Media Campaign Messages on COVID-19

Statements	SA	A	SD	D	U	MEAN	S.D
<i>NCDC's</i> media campaign messages on COVID-19 help Nigerians stay safe	171 (53.1)	151 (46.9)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.53	0.56
<i>NCDC's</i> media campaign messages on COVID-19 provide useful information on the pandemic	199 (61.8)	123 (38.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.62	0.49
<i>NCDC's</i> media campaign messages on COVID-19 have been effective.	174 (54.0)	148 (46.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.54	0.55
The use of numerous mass media channels by the <i>NCDC</i> to communicate health messages on COVID-19 have been effective.	180 (55.9)	142 (44.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.56	0.54
<i>NCDC's</i> media campaign messages on COVID-19 are easy to comprehend.	168 (52.2)	154 (47.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.52	0.57
<i>NCDC's</i> media campaign messages on COVID-19 are comprehensive.	170 (52.8)	152 (47.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.53	0.55
Average Weighted Mean						4.55	0.54

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Key: [SA] = Strongly Agree, [A] = Agree, [SD] = Disagree, [D] = Strongly Disagree, [U] = Undecided

Table 2 presents the perception of *NCDC's* media campaign messages on Covid-19 by Babcock University undergraduates. All the respondents had a positive perception as they all strongly agree or agree to the itemized statements. A mean score of 4.53 revealed that most respondents strongly agreed that *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19 have helped Nigerians stay safe, mean score of 4.62 shows that most respondents strongly agreed that *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19 have provided useful information on the pandemic.

Furthermore, a mean score of 4.54 implies that most respondents strongly agreed that *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19 have been effective. Similarly, a mean score of 4.56 also showed that most respondents strongly agreed that the use of numerous channels of communicating health messages on COVID-19 has been effective, mean score of 4.52 reveal that most respondents strongly agreed that *NCDC's* media campaign communication messages on COVID-19 are easy to comprehend. In the same vein, a mean score of 4.53 also showed that most respondents strongly agreed that *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19 are comprehensive. With an average weighted mean of 4.55, the findings reveal that the perception of *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19 among Babcock University undergraduates is positive.

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

Table 3: Relationship between awareness of NCDC's media campaign messages and the level of adoption of COVID-19 prescribed safety lifestyle among Babcock University undergraduates.

Variable	Level of Adoption N=322	
	R	p value
Awareness	0.19	0.04*
Adoption	0.14	0.000*

Significant < 0.05

The result of the correlation analysis showed that there is a significant relationship between *NCDC's* media campaign messages and the level of adoption of COVID-19 prescribed safety lifestyle among Babcock undergraduates ($r=0.19$; $p\text{-value}=0.04$). Majority of the respondents have adopted the practice of wearing a face mask, hand washing and sanitizing, social distancing and even getting vaccinated because of *NCDC's* media campaign messages.

Therefore the null hypothesis of there is no significant relationship between awareness of *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19 and the practice of prescribed COVID-19 safety lifestyle among Babcock University undergraduates is rejected, while the alternate hypothesis of there is no significant relationship

between awareness of NCDC's media campaign messages on COVID-19 and the practice of prescribed COVID-19 safety lifestyle among Babcock University undergraduates is accepted.

The findings of the study lends credence to the position of Wogu, Chukwu, Nwafor, Ugwuoke, and Ugwulor-Onyinyechi (2019), which states that the mass media is a powerful means with which to create awareness and "influence health behaviours linked to viral transmission and infection". The high level of awareness of the *NCDC's* media campaign messages on COVID-19 among respondents is as a result of the utilization of the various channels of mass communication as well as the frequency of use. This also exemplifies [Martela,Hankonen, Ryan and Vansteenkiste](#) (2021), which states that choosing an effective way to communicate messages "can play a crucial role in determining the success of a national response to an epidemic or another type of crisis".

The study also makes findings which further authenticate the tenet of social learning theory in that respondents' adopted the practice of prescribed COVID-19 safety lifestyle which is a behavioural change mostly because of the awareness and knowledge of *NCDC's* media campaign messages as well environmental factors such as: the enforcement of compliance at public places such as the school, hospital, and religious gatherings.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is evident that the use of the various channels of mass media for the communication of media campaign messages on COVID-19 by the *Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC)*, have been of positive influence on the awareness and adoption of prescribed safety lifestyle among Babcock University undergraduates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the fact the COVID-19 pandemic is still ongoing; it is imperative that the NCDC continues to intensify its use of the mass media to communicate vital information on the nature of the virus in Nigeria. This is crucial to keep society in check as to the fact that the pandemic is not over and as such the prescribed safety lifestyle is still of necessity.

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