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# SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE FIGHT AGAINST THE COVID19 PANDEMIC BY HEALTH WORKERS IN AUCHI, ETSAKO WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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**Abstract**

This study examined Social Media and the Fight against the Covid19 Pandemic by Health workers Auchi, Etsako West Local government area, Edo state. Three specific objectives and three research questions were raised to guide the study. The study employed a descriptive survey method and questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The population of this study consists of Eighty- one (81) health workers such as the doctors, nurses, pharmacists and laboratory technologists in two selected hospitals in Auchi of Edo state. The entire population for the study was used in this study because the population was relatively small. The data obtained from the copies of the questionnaires retrieved from the respondents were analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The study revealed that the that Unregulated/indiscriminate use of social media, [redacted] Misinformation/fake news, Social media causes unnecessary panic/stress/anxiety, poor /unreliable public power supply, Lack of awareness of social media services in the fight against COVID- 19 pandemic are the major Challenges Militating against the use of social media Tools for the Fight against COVID-19 Pandemic by Health workers Auchi, Etsako West Local Government Area.The study recommended that Arrangement should be

**Keywords:** Social Media, Covid19 Pandemic, Health Workers, Nigeria.



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made by the government and management of various hospitals for training and retraining of their personnels on how to use social media tools for awareness creation on the fight against COVID-19 pandemic.

## Introduction

An infectious illness known as COVID-19 is said to have first surfaced in Wuhan, China's Hubei province, in December 2019. It is now present in 210 nations worldwide. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) (2020) labelled it a pandemic and expressed concerns about it to the international public health community. More than 13 million people would have been impacted by this illness as of July 15, 2020. About 0.6 million fatalities have been documented up to this point. With a mortality ratio of 1.4%, it has proven to be significantly more lethal than other corona virus members (varying slightly among countries). The Chinese government reported the first incidence on December 31, 2019, and 44 further cases were reported to the World Health Organization between that date and January 3, 2020. (WHO). However, within the indicated time, the causative factor was not found. On January 7, 2020, the new corona virus was discovered, and its genome sequence was made public. On February 11, 2020, the WHO designated the illness as COVID-19 and the causing virus as SARS-CoV-2 (Anwar, et al, 2020). These scientists went on to say that the corona virus was given that moniker because of its genetic similarity to the corona virus that was responsible for the 2003 SARS outbreak. SARS corona virus SAR-CoV and MERS corona virus MERS-CoV are the other members of the family. Corona virus disease (COVID-19) infection has grown to be a serious public health concern on a global scale. Therefore, it is crucial to stop the pandemic from spreading in public and healthcare settings. With symptoms ranging from fever, coughing, and moderate breathlessness to severe desaturation leading to respiratory failure, the illness predominantly affects the respiratory system.

According to Anwar et al. (2020), there must be efficient channels for the sharing of knowledge if infectious and contagious diseases are to be prevented globally. Every time a new viral or bacterial illness appears, it first experiences limited transmission, amplification in the spread, and then, with effective treatment, remission. Every link in the chain is where the controlling actions are carried out. The final one is eradication. They consist of anticipating the expected widespread infection, early identification, effective containment, control, and mitigation methods. According to WHO, it entails minimizing communication hazards,

effective health information systems, and response coordination. Information is essential at every stage. There is evidence that social media may effectively address the requirements of both individuals and populations in terms of health knowledge, behaviour, and results.

Social media is a collection of trends and tools for accessing the Internet. These socio-technological advancements have made it possible for people all over the world to engage and learn from one another via practice and experience. In today's on-line environment, social media is playing a significant role. The globe today connects on social media websites instead of in the past as people used to do. It is a tool for communication that disseminates information and engages people while it does so (Daluba & Maxwell, 2013). They said that the current social media emerged in the early 1990s, and one of these websites, dubbed "Geocities," was established in 1994 and was well-known for a number of traits. Social media-based on-line counselling services proliferated and gained popularity as a result of their ability to securely link individuals in need with mental health professionals (Gowan, 2020).

Despite the many advantages and importance of social media in raising awareness of the corona virus, there are evident difficulties. On the one hand, social media, in the opinion of Wang et al. (2020), encouraged individuals to take important precautions. On the other side, due to the dissemination of false information and unsuitable pieces published on several social media platforms, some individuals began stigmatizing people with diseases.In their study titled "Use of Social Media Tools among Nigeria Undergraduates. Anyanwu, et al. (2013) discovered that the two biggest obstacles to successful social media use are a lack of ICT skills and the high cost of Internet connection (subscription). Chitumbo and Chewe (2015) identified the following issues: a lack of Internet access points, poor Internet connectivity, and bandwidth restrictions; a lack of knowledge of the social media tools by the majority of users; a lack of privacy; and an influx of too many social media tools. lack of a well-defined social media tool policy throughout adoption.Scholars both domestically and outside have conducted a number of research on social media and the Covid19 pandemic, but none have examined how these topics relate to the fight against the disease in Etsako West LGA, Edo State. This research will close this gap.

**Statement of the Problem**

The global pandemic of the corona-virus 2019 (COVID-19) is a serious public health concern. Every nation in the globe is putting up great effort to stop the spread of

the epidemic and its devastating effects. The Nigerian government went above and above by establishing a presidential committee on COVID-19. Strict emergency protocols, including lock-down and preventative measures, were undertaken by the committee led by the federal government's secretary. All unlawful movement inside the nation, between its cities, and into foreign territory was halted. Interventions including physical separation were started. Universities, polytechnics, institutes of education, secondary and elementary schools, as well as businesses, hotels, and event venues, among other institutions, were shut down. To lessen the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic, organizations, institutions, and workplace social distance were established. However, the presidential committee undertook particular national disease control initiatives to stop the spread of the COVID-19 illness in Nigeria. This was done by raising Nigerians' level of awareness via the use of various media, including social media. Information on COVID-19 from the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control and the Minister of Health was also posted on social media. Social media networks offer useful socio-economic and climatic data. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic was stopped in large part by raising public awareness of it. It goes without saying that having thorough understanding of infectious illnesses will result in a decrease in the rate of contamination. In light of this, the study attempt to investigate Social Media and the Fight Against the Covid19 Pandemic by Health workers in Auchi Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria

**Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify the social media tools use mostly for awareness creation on the fight against COVID 19 pandemic in by Health Workers in Auchi
2. To ascertain the extent of use of social media tools for awareness creation on the fight against COVID 19 pandemic by Health Workers in Auchi
3. To access the challenges militating against the use of social media tools on awareness creation for the fight against COVID 19 pandemic by Health Workers in Auchi

**Literature review**

Social media as an on-line platform that focuses on building social relations among people, who share interests, background or activities. social media as a means of interactions among people of different ages in which they create, share and

exchange information and ideas in a virtual communities and network. Today it is true to say that, social media is increasingly importance and becomes more popular and even omnipresent. Various research projects have indicated a growth in social media use, and consequently, jump to the conclusion that people are now becoming increasingly engaged in on-line content creation and participation ( Madden & Zickuhr, 2011). To effectively utilise social medial for the creation of awareness in the fight against COVID 19 pandemic, there is need for social media literacy or competence. This is relevant, since they focus on the competences people need to appropriately deal with social media. Hence, being capable to handle these new media in a critical and conscious way is not an unnecessary luxury, but a necessity for all users of social media .

Users who are not able to appropriately use social media will therefore be excluded from a lot of possibilities and will be exposed to risks. Media literacy is not only a factor of digital inequality, but also an inequality in itself, since the digital inequalities undeniably lead to social inequalities or exclusion. Social media as that web-based application that creates functionality for sharing, relationships, group, conversation and profiles. More so, there are certain basic characteristics of the social media, one of the most noticeable feature is the seeming freedom that comes with the use of social media to the extent that users do no longer wait for the government to make official statements, instead, they turn into various social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook, to gain access, to provide or to share information.

Social media competences, must deal with the production, creation, communication, collaboration and transaction of media content. Therefore, using social media requires more action or active engagement of the user. The specific competences needed to deal with social media, however, are rarely or never actually operationalised. Zhao et al. (2020) studied 4056 topics from the Microblog hot search list and noted that the public emotions shifted from negative to neutral to positive over time and that five major public concerns existed: the situation of the new cases of COVID-19 and its effects, social media reporting of the pandemic and the measures of prevention and control, experts interpretation and discussion on the source of infection, medical services on the front line of the pandemic, and focus on the pandemic and the search for suspected cases.

Li, et al. (2020) did an observational info-surveillance study with a linear regression model by analysing social media posts. The results showed that the number of

social media posts positively correlated with the number of reported cases of COVID-19 in Wuhan. Additionally, the qualitative analysis classified the topics into the following four overarching themes: cause of the virus, epidemiological characteristics of COVID-19, public responses, and others. Some persons engagement through government social media refers to sum of shares, likes, and comments in this study, so the higher the sum, the greater the citizen engagement through government social media. Social media richness quantifies how much information that a sender transfers to a receiver via a medium and is based on the media richness.

Li, et al. (2020) carried out a study on Google Trends, Baidu Search Index, and social media Index. Lag correlation method was adopted. The finding showed a maximum correlation between trend data and the number of diagnoses at 8–12 days before for laboratory confirmed cases and 6–8 days before for suspected cases. Li et al also investigated social media messages. 599 participants gathered data via social media, then followed up with telephone call; statistical analysis taken with Fisher exact test; rates of death calculated with Kaplan-Meier method; multivariate Cox regression used to establish risk factors for mortality. Older age (69 years), diffuse pneumonia, and hypoxemia are factors that can help clinicians to identify patients with COVID-19 who have poor prognosis; aggregated data and social media was found to be comprehensive, immediate, and informative in disease prognosis.

Qin et al. (2020) investigated China Baidu Search Index and Social media search index for dry cough, fever, chest distress, corona virus, and pneumonia from Dec 31, 2019, to Feb 9, 2020; data for new suspected cases of COVID-19 Subset selection; forward selection; lasso regression; ridge regression; elastic net Case numbers of new suspected COVID-19 correlated significantly with the lagged series of social media search index; social media search index could detect new suspected COVID-19 cases 6–9 days earlier than could laboratories. Zhu et al (2020) studied 1101 social media posts related to COVID-19. Attention to COVID-19 was low until China openly admitted human-to-human transmission and attention quickly increased and remained high over time through social media.

Basch, et al. (2020) carried out study on YouTube 100 most widely viewed videos uploaded in January, Descriptive analysis: frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation Percentage of each of the seven key prevention behaviour that are listed on the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website that were

covered in the 100 videos varied from 0% (e.g., use a face mask for protection if you are caring for the ill) to 31% (avoid close contact with people who are sick); overall, videos that covered at least one prevention behaviour accounted for less than one-third of the 100 videos.

Wang, et al. (2020) investigated randomly selected social media posts that were related to COVID-19 through an unsupervised Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Tran's formers model for sentiments and a term frequency-inverse document frequency model for topic modeling. The authors identified four public concerns: the virus origin, symptom, production activity, and public health control in China. Xi, et al (2020) examined 241 topics with their views and comments via social media and temporal analysis and noted that older adults contributing to the community was the most frequent theme in the first phase of COVID-19 in China. The theme of older patients in hospitals was most frequent in the second and third phase using Wilcoxon tests.

Su, et al. (2020) examined posts from 850 social media users and 14 269 tweets from Italy. The findings showed that Italian people paid more attention to leisure, whereas Chinese people paid more attention to the community, religion, and emotions after lockdowns. Analysing the top 200 accounts from WeChat via regressions and content analysis, Ma, et al (2020) showed that both non-medical and medical reports had positive effects on people's behaviours. Xie, et al (2020) investigated relations among the Baidu Search, social media attention Index, daily Google Trends, and numbers of COVID-19 cases and deaths. Daily Google Trends were correlated to seven indicators, whereas daily Baidu Search and social media Index was correlated only to three indicators. Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) outlined, Lack of awareness, Bandwidth problem, Technophobia Unreliable power supply and Lack of training as challenges to effective utilization of social media tools.

**Research Methods**

This study employed a descriptive survey design to investigate the Social Media and the Fight against the Covid19 Pandemic by Health Workers in Auchi, Etsako West Local government area, Edo state. A descriptive design would be considered appropriate because it studies both large and small population by selecting and studying samples chosen from the population to discover the relative incidence and distribution. It also help to determine the current state of the Social Media and Awareness Creation of the Fight against the Covid19 Pandemic in Auchi. The

population of this study consists of all the Health workers such as the doctors, nurses, pharmacists and laboratory technologists in two selected hospitals in Auchi. The hospitals are Hope and Cottage hospitals. The total population for the study is Eighty- one (81). The total enumeration sampling is used when the entire population is small and shares well-defined features, as using only a fraction of it may not measure what is desired; it can eliminate any possible bias which can arise from sampling technique (Canonizado, 2021). The entire total population for the study is Eighty- one (81) will be used in this study because the population small. The research instrument used for data collection is questionnaire. The questionnaire entitled "Social Media and the Fight against the COVID19 Pandemic by Health workers in Auchi, Etsako West LGA, Edo state Questionnaire (SMFACPHWAQ)" was used as the instrument for data collection in this research. The questionnaire is made up of two parts. The first part consists of biographical data. The second part consists of four sections which contain structured statements aimed at eliciting data on Social Media and the Fight against the COVID19 Pandemic by Health workers in Auchi, Etsako West LGA, Edo state. Copies of the questionnaire will be administered to the respondents in their respective offices in the hospitals. The researcher will personally visit hospitals to administer the questionnaire and will also employ the services of research assistants to help cover and retrieve the questionnaire from the sections or departments she may not be able to visit personally. The data to be obtain from the copies of questionnaire retrieved from the respondents was analysed using simple statistic analysis of frequency counts and percentage to answer research questions

**Results and Discussion**

**Table 1 Analysis of returned and unreturned Questionnaires**

| Returned/Unreturned | Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Returned Questionnaire** | **78** | **96.3** |
| **Unreturned Questionnaire** | **3** | **3.7** |
| Total | 81 | 100 |

**Table1 shows the returned rate of the questionnaire. Out of the 81 questionnaire distributed, 78 were filled and returned completed and were considered good for the study. This represented 96.3% return rate.**



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| Table 2: Biographical Data of Respondents | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Sex** | **No of respondents** | **Percentage (%)** |
| **Male** | **31** | **39.7** |
| **Female** | **47** | **60.3** |
| **Total** | **78** | **100** |

Table 2, shows 47 respondents representing 60.3% are females while 31 respondents representing 39.7% are males. This indicates that the female health workers are more than the male counterparts.

**Table 3: Status**

| Status | No of respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Doctors** | **17** | **21.8** |
| **Nurses** | **40** | **51.3** |
| **Pharmacists** | **10** | **12.8** |
| **Laboratory technologists** | **11** | **14.1** |
| Total | 78 | 100 |

Table 3 shows the status of health workers in Etsako West Local government areas. Health workers with Nurses 40 (51.3%), Doctors 17(21.8%), Laboratory technologists 11 (14.1%) and Pharmacists 10 (12.8%).

**Table 4: Social Media Tools Use to Fight Against COVID-19 Pandemic**

| Social Media Tools Use | A | | D | | U | | Total | | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | |
| Facebook | 64 | 82.0 | 6 | 7.7 | 8 | 10.3 | 78 | 100 | 2 |
| Twitter | 26 | 33.3 | 23 | 29.5 | 29 | 37.2 | 78 | 100 | 3 |
| YouTube | 12 | 15.4 | 33 | 42.3 | 33 | 42.3 | 78 | 100 | 5 |
| Instagram | 18 | 23.1 | 29 | 37.2 | 31 | 39.7 | 78 | 100 | 4 |
| WhatsApp | 71 | 91.0 | -- | -- | 7 | 9.0 | 78 | 100 | 1 |

**(A – Agree, D – Disagree, U– Undecided)**

Table 4 Social Media Tools Use to Fight against COVID-19 Pandemic Health Workers in Etsako Etsako West Local government areas. WhatsApp ranked first (1) with 71(91.0%) agree. Facebook ranked second (2) with 64(82.0%) agree. It was

discovered in this study that WhatsApp and facebook are the most used social media tools by health workers in Etsako West local Government Areas.

**Table 5: Extent Health Workers used Social Media Tools to Fight against COVID-19 Pandemic**

| Extent of use Social Media | VGE | | GE | | ME | | SE | | Total | | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | |
| Facebook | 64 | 82.0 | 6 | 7.7 | 8 | 10.3 | -- | -- | 78 | 100 | 2 |
| Twitter | 20 | 25.6 | 23 | 29.5 | 29 | 37.2 | 6 | 7.7 | 78 | 100 | 3 |
| YouTube | 12 | 15.4 | 20 | 25.6 | 33 | 42.3 | 13 | 16.7 | 78 | 100 | 5 |
| Instagram | 9 | 11.5 | 29 | 37.2 | 31 | 39.7 | 9 | 11.5 | 78 | 100 | 4 |
| WhatsApp | 71 | 91.0 | -- | -- | 7 | 9.0 | -- | -- | 78 | 100 | 1 |

**(VGE -Very Great Extent, GE–Great Extent, ME–Moderate Extent, SE–Small Extent)**

Table 5 reveals the Extent Health Workers used Social Media Tools for Awareness Creation on the Fight against COVID -19 Pandemic in Etsako West Local Government Areas. WhatsApp ranked first (1) with 71 (91.0%) VGE, Facebook ranked second (2) with 64(82.0%)VGE. This study revealed that WhatsApp and Facebook are the Social Media Tools used mostly by Health Workers to a very great extent for the Fight against COVID- 19 Pandemic in auchi, Etsako West Local Government Areas.

**Table 6: Challenges Militating Against the Use of Social Media Tools in the Fight against COVID-19 Pandemic in the Etsako West Local Government Areas**

| Challenges | S A | | A | | D | | SD | | Total | | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | No | % | |
| Social media causes unnecessary panic/stress/anxiety | 66 | 84.6 | 12 | 15.4 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 78 | 100 | 3 |
| Misinformation/fake news | 68 | 87.2 | 10 | 12.8 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 78 | 100 | 2 |
| Unregulated/indiscriminate use of social media | 71 | 91.0 | 8 | 10.3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 78 | 100 | 1 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Poor /unreliable public power supply | 53 | 68.0 | 12 | 15.4 | 13 | 16.7 | -- | -- | 78 | 100 | 5 |
| Lack of awareness of social media services in the fight against COVID 19 pandemic | 58 | 74.4 | 10 | 12.8 | 10 | 12.8 | -- | -- | 78 | 100 | 4 |

(**SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree, D – Disagree, SD – Strongly Disagree)**

Table 6 reveals the Challenges Militating against the Use of Social Media Tools for Awareness Creation on the Fight against COVID-19 Pandemic in Etsako West Local Government Area. Unregulated/indiscriminate use of social media ranked first (1) with 71 (91.0%) strongly agree. Misinformation/fake news ranked second (2) with 68 (87.2%) strongly agree. Social media causes unnecessary panic/stress/anxiety ranked third (3) 66(84.6%) strongly agree. Lack of awareness of social media services in the fight against COVID 19 pandemic ranked fourth (4) with 53 (74.4.0%) strongly agree and poor /unreliable public power supply ranked fifth (5) with 53 (68.0%) strongly agree. Unregulated/indiscriminate use of social media, Misinformation/fake news, Social media causes unnecessary panic/stress/anxiety, Poor /unreliable public power supply and Lack of awareness of social media services the fight against COVID 19 pandemic are the major Challenges Militating against the Use of Social Media Tools for the Fight against COVID-19 pandemic Etsako West Local Government Area.

**Discussion of Findings**

It was discovered in this study that WhatsApp and facebook are the most used social media tools by health workers in Etsako West local Government Areas.Social media as that web-based application that creates functionality for sharing, relationships, group, conversation and profiles. More so, there are certain basic characteristics of the social media, one of the most noticeable feature is the seeming freedom that comes with the use of social media to the extent that users do no longer wait for the government to make official statements, instead, they

turn into various social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook, to gain access, to provide or to share information.

It was discovered in this study that Health Workers used WhatsApp and facebook to a very great extent for the Fight against COVID- 19 Pandemic . The finding is in congruence with Zhao et al. (2020) who reported in their studied 4056 topics from the Microblog hot search list and noted that the public emotions shifted from negative to neutral to positive over time and that five major public concerns existed: the situation of the new cases of COVID-19 and its effects, social media reporting of the pandemic and the measures of prevention and control, experts interpretation and discussion on the source of infection, medical services on the front line of the pandemic, and focus on the pandemic and the search for suspected cases.

It was also discovered in the study that Unregulated/indiscriminate use of social media, Misinformation/fake news, Social media causes unnecessary panic/stress/anxiety, Poor /unreliable public power supply, Lack of awareness of social media services in the fight against COVID 19 pandemic are the major challenges militating against the use of Social media tools for in the Fight against COVID-19 Pandemic in Etsako West Local Government Area. This finding corroborates the study of Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) who outlined, Lack of awareness, Bandwidth problem, Technophobia Unreliable power supply and Lack of training as challenges to effective utilization of social media tools.

**Conclusion**

The use of social media tools for the fight against COVID-19 pandemic by Health Workers in Etsako West Local government area cannot be overemphasized. There is no doubt that social media literacy level of the health workers is very high. WhatsApp, and Facebook are the most used social media tools for awareness creation in the fight against COVID-19 Pandemic. WhatsApp and Facebook are used to a very high extent for creating awareness and spreading news and opinions for the fight against COVID-19 pandemic. However, health workers use of social media tools for the fight against COVID-19 pandemic was limited by unregulated/indiscriminate use of social media, misinformation/fake news, social media causes unnecessary panic/stress/anxiety, poor /unreliable public power supply and lack of awareness of social media services in the fight against COVID 19 pandemic


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## Recommendations

The following recommendations were stated as follows.

i. Government should enact a law prohibiting the indiscriminate use of social media tools in order prevent the spread of fake news and eliminate unnecessary panic, stress and anxiety from the society.

ii. Nigerian government should proffer adequate and permanent solution to the problem of poor and unreliable public power supply to enable health workers in Auchi make judicious use of social media tools for awareness creation.

iii. Arrangement should be made by the government and management of various hospitals for training and retraining of their personnels on the use of social media tools for awareness creation.

iv. Internet service providers should improve on their network and bandwidth in Etsako West Local Government Area to enable health workers effectively and efficiently use social media tools to create awareness on the fight against COVID -19 pandemic.

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