

Mobile Messaging Campaigns on Covid 19 and Intermediation on Behaviour Change and Adoption Processes

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Abstract: The Covid 19 is one communicable disease that did not only get global attention, but, has reshaped lifestyles across the globe. As the disease persists, experts suggest that only behavioural adjustments and strict adherence to the safety protocols can curtail the spread of the virus and mitigate the fatalities it records daily. The MMC was designed by the National Orientation Agency (NOA) with support from UNICEF at the peak of Covid 19 lockdown to enhance knowledge and adoption of the safety guidelines on the pandemic among residents of Enugu State. The researchers monitored the implementation of the campaign in Ezeagu Local Government Area and thereafter conducted a survey to ascertain the extent of success of the campaign and as well to examine the mediating factors to the success of the Covid19 campaigns in Ezeagu LGA. The NPC (2006) population census figure -169,718 for Ezeagu LGA was adopted as the research population. The study reveals a low level of adoption of the safety protocols. Poverty, illiteracy and distrust of government are critical factors that shaped attitudes towards the safety protocols. It is recommended that the public should be constantly reminded of the severity of the Covid 19 and their susceptibility to the disease. Sometimes, fear appeal works faster and better in behavioural change communications.

Key Words: Covid 19, Mobile Messaging, Campaign, Behaviour Change, Lockdown.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The novel corona virus is one pandemic that caught the globe like a storm. Disease outbreak is not new to man, it occurs from time to time. Ebola virus disease, Bird flu and the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) are among the few pandemics witnessed in the last two decades. However, unlike these viral diseases that got the attention of world health bodies, Covid 19 has a global impact. As at 31st March 2021, statistics show that over 129 million people were infected by Covid 19, out of which 2.81 million deaths were recorded globally. The daily countdown also indicates that currently infected persons are over 22 million (support.google.com; www.worldometers.info).

With its origin traceable to Wuhan, China, the virus has spread to over 220 countries between December 2019 and April 2021. In Nigeria, from the index case in February 2020, there were 345 cases of Covid 19 as at April 13th 2020 with 10 deaths. Data available show that as at April 1, 2021, Nigeria has over 162 million cases and 2057 deaths (NCDC, 2021). Going by the population density, Nigeria is perhaps one of the countries that the Covid 19 is not spreading in geometrical proportion. Public health experts reveal that the weather in Nigeria and some African countries with a temperature above 25^oC makes it difficult for the virus to survive on. Notwithstanding other factors such as migration, change of weather and overcrowding exposes people to danger. Hence, in addition to the natural containment, the Nigerian government shut the Airports and closed her borders. Churches, markets and other public places were shut for about seven (07) months- from February 28 to September 2020.

The Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has also continued to educate the public on the nature of the Corona virus disease and the need to observe social distancing (physical distance) and or to self-isolate if one already had the symptoms. These among other safety protocols are intended to contain the virus from spreading within the country. Olawale and Ogundipe (2016) explain that diseases keep spreading when people are not knowledgeable about the disease, its causes, symptoms, treatment or management. The NCDC notes that maintaining social distance is a global best practice since researchers are yet to find cure to the pandemic (NCDC, 2020).

The NCDC made use of all the major broadcast stations, national dailies and the social media in sharing information on the pandemic. However, this communications may not be accessible to the over 70% of Nigerians living in rural areas (Idachaba, 1985, cited by Okenwa, 2020). In other words, a gap in access to information exists between the urban and rural dwellers. The urban dwellers are predisposed to better life and the urban centered media while the rural areas struggle to get information or access to modern life (Onyike, 2011). Based on this, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) with support from UNICEF initiated a Mobile Messaging Campaign (MMC) to reach rural/semi-rural communities in Enugu State.

The MMC is a behavior change communication intervention with the aim to enlighten the public and encourage them to stay safe throughout the Covid-19 period. It has two components – *Hand Washing* and *Staying At Home*. A preliminary study reveals that these two were the major challenges confronting the average rural dweller in Enugu State. In 2017, an evaluation of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme of UNICEF in Anambra, Cross River, Ebonyi, Imo and Benue states by a team of health communication scholars reveals that maintaining proper hygiene is still problematic in rural areas in Nigeria. For instance, handshake is a custom that the *Igbo* tribe upholds as a form of salutation and extension of goodwill. It is almost impossible for an average *Igbo* man to resist handshake from his neighbor. Hence, the campaign centers on hand washing to encourage them to wash their hands or apply hand sanitizer regularly or after contact with a person. Secondly, though the ‘lockdown order’ restricts movements, rural people gather in small groups; hold meetings, attend burials and other occasions within their neighborhood. The campaign also advocates for strict adherence to the stay-at-home order.

As a mobile campaign, the MMC team was provided with a vehicle, a public address system [PAS] and an audio message coded in the three main languages of communication in Southeastern Nigeria- Igbo, Pigeon and English languages. There were stop points in each community. Stop-points are catchment areas in communities where the PAS can be stationed to allow the loudspeaker blare for a while before the vehicle moves to another stop point. These stop points are designated in such a way that ensures that within the interval the MMC lasts in a community, it must have made a crisscross of the entire community.

The first stage of the campaign was carried out in ten (10) local government areas (LGAs) of the state. Ezeagu was one of the LGAs where the campaign was executed. The choice of a mobile campaign is to avoid crowding of people in one place. With the PAS and lockdown in place, people will pay attention to the messages. The campaign was carried out in the following communities *Akama, Amansiodo, Amankwo, Iwollo, Neke, Oyoyo, Awha-Imezi, Aguobu Owa, Aguobu Umana and Aguobu Umumba* respectively.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The outbreak of the *Covid 19* in Nigeria met the country unprepared for a health emergency. The fact that the virus does not have any known cure created a lot of tensions and anxiety in the society. The situation was heightened by the lack of trust on the country’s health system or ability of the government to handle the situation. In fact, most health facilities stopped admitting patients especially those patients that demonstrate the symptoms of the viral disease. By implication, the rate of susceptibility was very high. The only remedy was to avoid contracting the virus.

Among the many enlightenment campaigns to mitigate the pervasiveness of the *Covid 19* was Mobile Messaging Campaign (MMC) in rural and semi-urban communities in Enugu State. The MMC was initiated to educate the public especially those in rural areas who because of their economic status may not gain access to the mass media. In Ezeagu LGA, the campaign was monitored by the researchers. Consequently, they sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign. The effectiveness of the MMC can only be measured by observable attitudinal or behavioural adjustments. Since, this was not observed; the researchers sought to investigate mediating factors to the advocated behavioural adoption as a prevention mechanism against *Covid 19*.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

- To ascertain the extent of adoption of the safety protocols advocated by MMC.
- To ascertain the relationship between trust of the government and adoption of the proposed change among the respondents
- To examine the relationship between respondents’ economic status and adoption of the behavior change proposed by the MMC
- To examine the perceived influence of illiteracy and ignorance on acceptance and adoption of the *Covid 19* safety protocols
- To examine the perceived influence of family, friends and neighbors on attitude towards adoption of the *Covid 19* safety protocols

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Technological Determinism Theory (TDT). The theory was propounded by Marshall McLuhan in 1962. The theory helps to explain how innovation in modern technology helps to engineer some forms of change in society or in the ordering of things. Baran and Davis (2006, p.302) noted that "McLuhan's theory is actually a collection of lot's of intriguing ideas bound together by some common assumptions. The most central of these assumptions is that changes in communication technology inevitably produce changes in both cultural and social order... McLuhan seemed ready to accept whatever changes were dictated by and inherent in communications technology... Technology inevitably causes specific changes in how people think, in how society is structured, and in the forms of culture that are created".

McQuail (2010, p.103) listed the basic assumptions of this theory as follows:

1. Communication technology is fundamental to society.
2. Each technology has a bias to particular communication forms, contents and uses.
3. The sequence of invention and application of communication technology influences the direction and pace of social change.
4. Communication revolutions lead to social revolutions.

This theory is relevant to this study because all forms of development communication on mobile messaging campaigns on *covid 19* were brought about by the invention of new technology. Though, the invention of new technology has promoted mobile messaging campaigns on *covid 19*, people still differ when it comes to risk-taking and their willingness to try and adopt a new method of receiving health information as a result of social interactions which may help in the forming of opinion about the credibility of the campaign messages.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The novel Corona virus has been adjudged one of the greatest pandemics to hit universe by world health bodies. Although the rate of pervasiveness may differ from environment to environment, the disease affects every human irrespective of age, gender, education, economic status or race. The corona virus otherwise known as *Covid 19* is caused by a new and severe type of Corona virus known as severe acute respiratory syndrome Corona Virus 2 (SARSCoV-2). The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the *Covid 19* a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January, 2020 and on March 11, it was declared a pandemic (Oyenyin, Adeloje, Odewumi and Oyenyin, 2020). It was first identified in Wuhan, China in December, 2019 and swiftly extended to almost every part of the world (Olapegba, Ayandele, Kolawole, Oguntayo, Gandi, Dangiwa, Ottu & Iorfa, 2020).

Covid 19 is a variant of other corona diseases (e.g. SARS, H5N1, H1N1 and MERS). It is a contagious respiratory illness transmitted via droplets from cough, and sneezes from an infected person through the eyes, nose, and mouth. It can also be contracted by close contact with infected person and contaminated surfaces (Ladan, Haruna & Madu, 2020; Eniang, 2020). The WHO (2020) explains that the symptoms include fever, dry cough, tiredness, shortness of breath, pains and aches, sore throat, and diarrhea (in few persons), nausea or a runny nose. Currently, the infection does not have any known cure. Recently, the vaccines manufactured by *Pfizer* and other pharmaceutical firms for the prevention of the disease are yet to be fully certified as an antidote for the viral disease, although, administration has been in force as an emergency.

Health messages on *Covid 19* centre on awareness and knowledge of the disease and preventive procedures. The media can play a central role in promoting the knowledge of people on issues of health as well as shaping our understanding of medicine and science in general (Moyer, 1995, p. 147 161) cited in (Diedong, 2013, p.47). The *Covid 19* safety protocols include 'wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth', 'stay six feet apart from people who don't live with you', 'get a *Covid 19* vaccine if available to you' 'avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces', 'wash your hands often with soap and water (use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available)' 'sneeze or cough into your elbow' and 'avoid contact with infected persons or surfaces', etc (WHO, 2020). These messages are transmitted to the public through the mass media and other communication channels.

Onyike (2019, p. 58) notes that "one of the tasks of the media is the promotion of knowledge on health issues". Media projections are important in shaping the knowledge and perception of health issues. Thus, knowledge of *Covid 19* by the public is enhanced by exposure and attention to messages on the disease. According to Grilli, Ramsay, and Minozzi, (2002, p. 2), "the current emphasis on consumerism in the delivery of healthcare highlights the potentially important role of the mass media in increasing the public awareness and promoting the utilization of effective and efficient health services".

However, the current media democracy and the attendant information explosion make access to multiple channels of communication possible. This trend allows citizens to seek understanding of health issues through multiple sources. These may include the mass media, social media, the Internet, opinion leaders and influencers. Studies show that the public relied on many sources of information in addition to updates from the mass media on *Covid 19*. Social media has gained acceptance as a platform for searching, updating and breaking health information. Sahni and Sharma (2020, p. 70), assert that "social media serves to provide an important informal source of data to identify health information that has not been reported to medical officers or health departments and to uncover or share perspectives on any life-threatening health-related issues".

According to the authors, "despite the importance of rapid access to information, poor comprehension or inaccurate or false information in the format of rumors or unreliable news can lead to misunderstanding in the community, which makes the situation worse" Sahni and Sharma (2020, p. 70).

The WHO laments the propagation of uncontrolled conspiracy theories and propaganda which spreads faster than the *Covid 19* pandemic itself. This creates 'infodemic' and thus causes psychological panic, misleading medical advises and economic disruption (Mourad, Srour, Harmanani, Jenainati, and Arafah, 2020). According to the Director-

general of WHO “coronavirus Infodemic” is a blend of "information" and "epidemic" that typically refers to a rapid and far-reaching spread of both accurate and inaccurate information about something, such as a disease”.

Apart from panic, infodemic can affect the credibility of factual information on *Covid 19* and cause dissonance from the desired behavioural adjustments or change promoted as a measure to curtail the spread of the virus in the society.

Behavioural adoption and change campaigns are value oriented messaging. Studies have shown that acceptance or otherwise of a message targeted at the value system of a person or group are subject to critical factors which may relate to level of awareness, education, source credibility, trust, interpersonal relationships, economic status and other exogenous environmental dynamics. In the area of health, infectious diseases outbreaks have led to losses to human lives and the economy of nations. Consequently, a wide range of tools, including mass media, have been deployed in the effort to control and eliminate epidemic diseases (Onyike, 2019, p.80).

There is widespread use of media campaigns to inform the general public about health messages; ranging from discouraging smoking in young people to the promotion of sun protection. A recent survey found 75% of respondents rely on media coverage when making health care decisions. Few other options exist apart from the use of mass media with potential to alter and influence social attitudes and norms, although altering awareness and beliefs within the population may not automatically lead to changes in health care behaviour. A systematic review concluded that mass media interventions have an important role in influencing the use of health care services (Barker, Lowe & Reid, 2006, p.7).

In a related study, Kandrack, Grant and Segall conducted a research on the topic, “ Gender differences in health related behavior: some unanswered questions” to investigate the socio-medical approach to gender differences in health related behavior among males and females in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. The study found that women take health services and information more seriously than the men. The findings also tried to offer justification for what accounted for the discrepancies between male and female morbidity rates and healthcare utilization patterns. Nonetheless, the findings fell short of presenting conclusive data as to the causes of variations in morbidity and health services use between women and men. Though, the researchers made an attempt to identify the relevance of social role and related social status characteristics (e.g. labour force participation) in accounting for variation in health, illness and sick role behavior.

Olapegba, Ayandele, Kolawole, Oguntayo, Gandi, Dangiwa, Ottu and Iorfa (2020) cited by Addeh (2020) carried out a preliminary assessment on the knowledge and perceptions of Nigerians on *Covid-19*. The cross-sectional survey adopted purposive and snowball sampling techniques. It was identified that Nigerians have relatively high knowledge, mostly derived from traditional media, about *Covid-19*. Their perceptions of *Covid-19* bear implications across public health initiatives, compliance with precautionary behaviour as well as bilateral relations with foreign nations. It was recommended that evidence-based campaign should be intensified to remove misconceptions and promote precautionary measures (Olapegba, Ayandele, Kolawole, Oguntayo, Gandi, Dangiwa, Ottu & Iorfa, 2020).

In the study, “health-protective behaviour, social media usage and conspiracy belief during the COVID-19 public health emergency”, Allington, Duffy, Wessely, Dhavan, and Rubin (2020) examined how social media usage and conspiracy belief during the COVID-19 public health emergency affect health protective behavior. The study consisted of three online surveys of media use, conspiracy beliefs and health-protective behaviours with regard to COVID-19 among UK residents. One of the studies adopted a self-selecting sample ($N = 949$) while the other two used stratified random samples from a recruited panel ($N = 2250$, $N = 2254$).

All three results of this study found a negative relationship between COVID-19 conspiracy beliefs and COVID-19 health-protective behaviours, and a positive relationship between COVID-19 conspiracy beliefs and use of social media as a source of information about COVID-19. Studies 2 and 3 also found a negative relationship between COVID-19 health-protective behaviours and use of social media as a source of information, and Study 3 found a positive relationship between health-protective behaviours and use of broadcast media as a source of information. Based on this, the researchers concluded that when used as an information source, unregulated social media may present a health risk that is partly but not wholly reducible to their role as disseminators of health-related conspiracy beliefs (Allington, Duffy, Wessely, Dhavan, & Rubin, 2020).

Obi-Ani, Anikwenze, and Isiani, (2020) in their study, “social media and the Covid-19 pandemic: Observations from Nigeria” examined the advantages and disadvantages of the social media as a source of information about the COVID-19 pandemic. The qualitative study explored social media outlets such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *WhatsApp*, *blogs*, online newspapers, and *YouTube* where the contestations about the pandemic are most pronounced. The researchers conclude that the significance of social media outlets cannot be overemphasized with recourse to information dissemination. Nevertheless, these platforms have been abused as people hide under its anonymity to spread fake messages and instigate panic amongst members of the general public.

Isik, Aytar, Cevik, Emektar and Balikci (2019) studied “the impact of social media news on the health perception of society”. The study examined the impact of health news at social media on the health perception of society,

among healthcare related and non-healthcare related participants, under the subheadings of reliability of that news, doctor-patient relationship, patient health attitudes and health advertising and marketing. The researchers adopted cross-sectional survey that consisted of two sections. The first section was based on the demographic data and second section consisted of 25 questions about the attitudes related to social media and internet news to be answered using the Likert scale. Statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS version 22.0.

This survey revealed that perception attitudes of the society formed by health content shares on social media were significantly different between the two groups. The healthcare related population was more conservative and had a critical approach on this issue, while, the non-healthcare related population was more frequently impressed by that kind of shares and tends to accept them directly. Based on this, the study concluded that social media has some benefits on health communication such as more accessible, shared health information; but also has some limitations such as lack of reliability, confidentiality, and privacy. Hence, misinformation through these platforms may lead the society to gain wrong health attitudes (Isik, Aytar, Cevik, Emektar & Balikci, 2019).

The study by Yusuf, Gusau and Maiyaki (2020) tracked and modeled public perceptions towards the reality of Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The participants were selected from various social media platforms and the data was analyzed in three phases: tracking, modeling and forecasting. The findings revealed that public perceptions towards the reality of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria fall under seven thematic constructs: 'scam', 'fake', 'politics', 'business-venture', 'exaggeration', 'real', and 'real-but manipulated'. The pattern of analysis suggested that public perceptions towards the reality of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria will remain relatively unchanged over the next three month period.

3. METHOD:

This study adopted the survey research method as its design and questionnaire as the measuring instrument. This is because the universe of discourse revolves around the perceptions, inclinations and demographic factors that surround a people's reception and adoption of safety measures against *Covid 19*. The area of study was Ezeagu Local Government Area, Enugu State. According to the 2006 Census, *Ezeagu* LGA had a population of 169,718 (NPC, 2006). A sample of 383 was selected through an online sample calculator (<http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>).

The study adopted multistage cluster sampling technique which allowed the target to be studied in clusters. The ten (10) communities where the campaign took place are already existing clusters in Ezeagu. In each of them, the researchers identified the villages as smaller clusters and stratified random sampling procedure was used to select three villages each (30 villages in all). Systematic sampling procedure was used to select both the households and respondents in each cluster. Since, the study centers on a pandemic that affects everybody irrespective of age, education, gender or economic disposition, the respondents comprised of persons from ages 15 and above.

This survey used an anonymous online questionnaire to collect data from respondents. Potential respondents were purposively sent the link via Social media (Whatsapp and Facebook posts) and asked to participate in an online survey.

4. DISCUSSION:

Research Question 1: What is the extent of adoption of the safety protocols advocated by MMC among the respondents?

The fundamental purpose of the MMC was to encourage the acceptance and adoption of the safety guidelines needed to end the spread of Covid 19 in Nigeria. Hence, the essence of this research question was to evaluate the level of compliance to the safety measures among the respondents. Data in *Table 1* was used for this purpose. The data shows that majority (35.4) of the respondents observe the safety protocols to a low extent, although a slightly high percentage (27.4%) observe the safety protocols against Covid 19 to moderate extent. This data reveals a poor adoption of the safety guidelines. In other environments, the provision of adequate enlightenment on Covid 19 leads to a high level of behavioural change as can be seen in Al-Hanawi, Angawi, Alshareef, Qattan, Helmy, Abudawood, alqurashi, kattan, kadasah, Chirwa, and Asharqi (2020). They revealed that "almost 95% of respondents refrained from attending social gatherings, 94% avoided crowded places and 88% avoided shaking hands. Respondents adopted and safe practices, as a result of Saudi Arabia's health authorities providing education and outreach materials, to increase public understanding of the disease, and influence behavioural change".

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between respondents' trust of the government and adoption of the proposed safety protocols?

Behavior change communication is usually targeted at the value system of an individual or group. Source credibility is at the centre of the success or otherwise of such communication. As regards the Covid 19 pandemic, the government initiated a number health communication interventions including the MMC aimed at mitigating the continued spread of the virus which is contracted majorly through human to human communication. Hence, the

researchers examined the correlation between trust of the government and respondents adoption of the message. Information in *Table 2* was used for the analysis.

The data reveals that 48.7% of the respondents can't say whether the government is fighting hard to stop the spread of Covid 19 in Nigeria or not, 59.8% revealed that they don't have confidence in government's capacity to tackle the pandemic, although, majority (39.4%) of them observes every rule proposed by the government to end Covid 19 in Nigeria.

The findings further shows that majority (49.5%) of the respondents stated that they don't observe safety protocols because politicians and government officials don't. This lack of confidence may have fuelled suspicion of the government actions, thus, 69.4% believe that Covid 19 has a political undertone, whereas 68.1% perceives the NCDC's daily updates on Covid 19 cases to be deceptive and cannot be trusted. This agrees with the observations of Yusuf, Gusau and Maiyaki (2020) whose research revealed that public perceptions towards the reality of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria fall under seven thematic constructs: 'scam', 'fake', 'politics', 'business-venture', 'exaggeration', 'real', and 'real-but manipulated'. It can therefore be concluded that the poor adoption of the Covid 19 safety protocols is significantly related to the perceived credibility of the source- the government.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between respondents' economic status and adoption of the behavior change proposed by the MMC

Although public health experts see prevention as a more affordable means of reducing the pervasiveness of communicable diseases, many people still find it difficult adapting to changes that necessitates reduction in their income or that increases their expenditure. This usually happens among any group that leaves below the poverty index. Based on this, the researchers sought to find out how respondents' economic status interacts with their adoption of the safety protocols. Data in *Table 3* shows that the attitude of majority (30.1%) of the respondents towards the Covid 19 is influenced to a moderate extent by their income; this is closely followed by 29.8% of respondents who can't say whether or not their income had implications on their adoption of the Covid 19 safety protocols. In his study, Onyike (2019) found that "poverty is a critical factor in accepting or rejecting health communication interventions and campaigns to end diabetes in South-East, Nigeria, as it has been shown to pose a major hindrance to adopting proper dieting and engaging in regular blood sugar monitoring.

Research Question 4: What is the perceived influence of illiteracy and ignorance on acceptance and adoption of the Covid 19 safety protocols?

Table 4.1 shows only 26.1% of the respondents had high knowledge of Covid 19; 19.4% had a moderate knowledge, and 36.7% had low knowledge of Covid 19. The researchers couldn't determine the level of knowledge of 17.8% of the respondents. By implication, a significant majority of the respondents had low knowledge of Covid 19 and this may be responsible for their negative attitude towards adopting the safety protocols. Onyike (2019) found that illiteracy is a factor that has affected the reception of the end diabetes campaign as illiterates may not be able to differentiate between foods or how to ensure a balance diet.

Research Question 5: What is the perceived influence of family, friends and neighbors on attitude towards adoption of the Covid 19 safety protocols?

The essence of the research question was to ascertain the extent opinions of family, friends and neighbors affect attitude towards adoption of the Covid 19 safety protocols. To analyze this, data in Tables 5 and 6 was used. Majority (52.7%) of the respondents agree that opinions of friends, neighbours and family members affect their attitude towards adoption of the Covid 19 safety protocols; 49.2% reveal that opinions of friends, neighbours and family members affects their attitude towards adoption of the Covid 19 safety protocols to a large and moderate extent respectively. On the contrary, Onyike (2019) found that "cultural practices, religious belief and opinion of friends and family members do not pose a hindrance to the reception and acceptance of messages on diabetes.

5. ANALYSIS:

Although 383 copies of the questionnaire was sent out, 376 was returned usable, 7 copies suffered mortality. In other words, the data analysis was based on the 376 copies of the questionnaire.

Table 1: The extent of adoption of the safety protocols among the respondents

S/n	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	High extent	67	17.8%
2	Moderate extent	103	27.4%
3	Low extent	133	35.4%
4	Can't say	73	19.4%
	Total	376	100

Source: Researchers' fieldwork 2021

From Table 1 above, the data reveals that majority (35.4) of the respondents observe the safety protocols to a low extent. This notwithstanding, 27.4% observe the safety protocols against Covid 19 to moderate extent.

Table 2: Relationship between respondents’ trust of the government and adoption of the proposed safety protocols

S/no	Responses	True	False	Can’t say	%
1	Government is fighting hard to stop the spread of Covid 19 in Nigeria	102 (27.1%)	91 (24.2%)	183 (48.7%)	100%
2.	I observe every rule proposed by the government to end Covid 19 in Nigeria	148 (39.4%)	110 (29.3%)	118 (31.4%)	100
3	I trust government’s capacity to tackle to pandemic	71 (18.9%)	225 (59.8%)	80 (21.3%)	100
4.	I don’t maintain safety protocols because politicians and government officials don’t	186 (49.5%)	56 (14.9%)	134 (35.6%)	100
5	Covid 19 has a political undertone	261 (69.4%)	39 (10.4%)	76 (20.2%)	100
6	The NCDC’s daily updates on Covid 19 cases is deceptive and cannot be trusted	256 (68.1%)	31 (8.2%)	89 (23.7%)	100

Source: Researchers’ fieldwork 2021

Table 2 show that 27.1% of the respondents agreed that the government is fighting hard to stop the spread of Covid 19 in Nigeria, 24.2% disagreed whereas 48.7% can’t say. By implication, majority of the respondents neither agree or disagree with the claim that the Nigerian government is fighting hard to stop the spread of Covid 19. On the other hand, the study reveals that while 39.4% of the respondents observe every rule proposed by the government to end Covid 19 in Nigeria, 29.3% don’t. However, 31.4% can’t say whether they do or not.

On whether they have confidence in government’s capacity to tackle the pandemic, 59.8% revealed that they didn’t trust the government, while 21.3% can’t say. However, 18.9% trusts government’s capacity to handle the pandemic. Table 2 further reveals that 49.5% of the respondents stated that they don’t observe safety protocols because politicians and government officials don’t, whereas 35.6% couldn’t say. 69.4% believe that Covid 19 has a political undertone while 10.4% of the respondents think otherwise. Majority (68.1%) of the respondents perceives the NCDC’s daily updates on Covid 19 cases to be deceptive and cannot be trusted; 8.2% thinks that it is not deceptive while 23.7% can’t say. What this implies is that the respondents feel that the Covid 19 figures are unreliable

Table 3: On whether there is relationship between respondents’ economic status and adoption of the safety protocols

S/no	Responses	To a large extent	To a moderate extent	Low Extent	Can’t say	Total (%)
1	My attitude towards the Covid 19 has relationship with my income	73 (19.4%)	113 (30.1%)	78 (20.7%)	112 (29.8%)	100

Source: Researchers’ fieldwork 2021

Table 3 shows that the attitude of 30.1% of the respondents towards the Covid 19 is influenced to a moderate extent by their income; this is closely followed by 29.8% of respondents who can’t say whether or not their income had implications on their adoption of the Covid 19 safety protocols.

Table 4: On perceived influence of illiteracy and ignorance on acceptance and adoption of the Covid 19 safety protocols

Responses	True	False	Can’t Say
Covid 19 is a rich man’s disease, it cannot affect me	141	173	62
2 It cannot affect me, I’m a child of God	106	169	101
3 It only affects people in Lagos and other big cities	222	113	41
4. Covid 19 is transmitted through blood transfusion	133	179	64
5 It cannot be transmitted through handshake	69	177	130
6 maintaining physical distancing can prevent Covid 19	116	168	92

Source: Researchers’ fieldwork 2021

Table 4.1: Weighting Factor

Table 4.1 below is a rating analysis done by the researchers in order to ascertain the perceived influence of illiteracy and ignorance on acceptance and adoption of the *Covid 19* safety protocols. In doing this, the six questions in *Table 4* was relied on. The questions will help the researchers to judgment their level of ignorance of Covid 19 since direct question cannot elicit an appropriate response that addresses the research question.

Therefore, respondents who could correctly answer 4 questions and above out of the 6 were regarded as having high knowledge; those who could answer 3 to 4 questions were classified as moderate; while those who could answer below 3 questions were classified as low. For the respondents that opted for can't say in more than 3 questions, the researcher records can't say for the person.

Table 4.1: Rating the perceived influence of illiteracy and ignorance on acceptance and adoption of the *Covid 19* safety protocols

s/n	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	High	98	26.1%
2	Moderate	73	19.4%
3	Low	138	36.7%
4	Can't say	67	17.8%
	Total	376	100

Source: Researchers' fieldwork 2021

Table 4.1 shows only 26.1% of the respondents had high knowledge of Covid 19; 19.4% had a moderate knowledge, and 36.7% had low knowledge of Covid 19. The researchers couldn't determine the level of knowledge of 17.8% of the respondents. By implication, a significant majority of the respondents had low knowledge of Covid 19 and this may be responsible for their negative attitude towards adopting the safety protocols.

Table 5: On whether opinions of friends, neighbours and family members affects attitude towards adoption of the *Covid 19* safety protocols

s/n	Opinions of friends, neighbours and family members affects attitude towards adoption of the <i>Covid 19</i> safety protocols	Frequency	percentage
1	Yes	198	52.7%
2	No	135	35.9%
3	Can't say	43	11.4%
	Total	376	100

Source: Researchers' fieldwork 2021

The data in Table 5 shows that 52.7% of the respondents agree that opinions of friends, neighbours and family members affect their attitude towards adoption of the *Covid 19* safety protocols; 35.9% thinks otherwise whereas 11.4% can't say whether opinions of friends, neighbours and family members affect attitude towards adoption of the *Covid 19* safety protocols.

Table 6: On the extent opinions of friends, neighbours and family members affects attitude towards adoption of the *Covid 19* safety protocols

S/n	The extent opinions of friends, neighbours and family members affects attitude towards adoption of the <i>Covid 19</i> safety protocols	Frequency	Percentage
1	To a large extent	96	25.5%
2	To a moderate extent	89	23.7%
3	To a low extent	13	3.5%
4	No extent	119	31.7%
5	Can't say	59	15.7%
	Total	376	100

Source: Researchers' fieldwork 2021

The data in the table above shows that 25.5% of the respondents believe that opinions of friends, neighbours and family members affects their attitude towards adoption of the *Covid 19* safety protocols to a large extent; 23.7% went for moderate extent while 3.5% went for low extent. However, a slight majority (31.7) of the respondents believe that opinions of friends, neighbours and family members does not affect their attitude towards adoption of the *Covid 19* safety protocols, whereas 15.7% could not say whether it does or not.

6. FINDINGS:

Based on the analysis of the data, the researchers came up with the following findings:

1. That the poor adoption of the Covid- 19 safety protocols is significantly related to the poor level of perceived credibility of the source of information which is the government.
2. A significant majority of the respondents had low knowledge of Covid -19 and this may be responsible for their negative attitude towards adopting the safety protocols.
3. Majority of the respondents agree that opinions of friends, neighbours and family members affect their attitude towards adoption of the *Covid 19* safety protocols.
4. Majority of the respondents perceived the NCDC's daily updates on Covid -19 cases to be deceptive and cannot be trusted.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS:

The government on their part should be seen to be serious in their handling of the Covid- 19 pandemic by ensuring that they respect all the Covid-19 safety protocols and offenders among government officials duly punished. Also, there should be an effective and aggressive awareness campaign of the devastating nature of the virus through all the mass media channels using local languages.

8. CONCLUSION :

The emergence of the Covid 19 forced a lot of changes on the world, to combat it public health authorities initiated safety guidelines which if observed could mitigate the spread or pervasiveness of the epidemic. Because of limited knowledge of the safety guidelines among Nigerians, the government with support from development agencies embarked on enlightenment programmes (Mobile Messaging Campaign is one). The agenda was to target rural or semi-urban areas in Enugu State where media reception may be hampered by demographic factors. This study was an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign in *Ezeagu* LGA and to ascertain mediating factors to the acceptance and adoption of the safety protocols.

Based on the findings, the researchers conclude that there is a poor adoption of the safety protocols in *Ezeagu* LGA because the Covid 19 seemed to be politically manipulated. Politicians and government officials don't keep social distancing, or obey the lockdown order. A dichotomy exists between what the government preached and what it practiced. Poverty is a critical factor also. The lockdown imposed a lot of restrictions and economic hardships on people. Observance of the stay-at-home and other policies was ineffective because the study established an association between economic status and adoption of the safety protocols.

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