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# **Daily Sun Newspaper as a Vehicle for Covid-19 Pandemic Awareness Creation in Nigeria: Analysis of Content from March – May, 2020.**

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## **Abstract**

This study explored the awareness frequency and theme coverage of the “Daily Sun” Newspaper on COVID-19 Pandemic. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of study comprised 92 editions of the “Daily Sun” Newspapers from March to May 2020. The sample size of 3 months (March, April and May, 2020) editions of the “Daily Sun” Newspaper was purposively adopted to represent the entire year of publication of the newspaper covering the arrival year of Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria (March 2020 to December 2020). Data was collected through review of contents in Daily Sun Newspaper on Covid-19. A content analysis method was adopted as a useful method to analyze the totality of news, articles and other information on COVID-19, published by “the Daily Sun” Newspaper for the period under review. The finding showed that in the month of March, the “Daily Sun” Newspaper was able to publish 161 news articles, 79 feature articles and 15 Public service announcements on COVID-19 awareness. In April 2020, the result revealed that 172 news stories, 73 feature articles and 27 public announcements on Covid-19 pandemic were published in “Daily Sun” Newspaper while in the month of May 2020; 188 news stories, 81 feature articles and 19 public announcements on Covid-19 pandemic were published in the “Daily Sun” Newspaper. In conclusion, the “Daily Sun” Newspaper was discovered to have played an active role in disseminating COVID-19 information to the masses.

**Keywords:** Daily Sun, Newspaper, COVID-19, Pandemic, Awareness, Content Analysis, Nigeria

## **Introduction**

From generation to generation, humanity have faced several severe health hazards including diseases, plagues and other biological or health challenges. Despite the proliferation of scientific advances in medicine, the world has recorded deaths from various diseases and some of which have defied medical solution. COVID-19 as one of the toughest virus ever witnessed by man has emerged as a respiratory infection with significant concern for global public health hazards. Starting with initial suspicions of animal to the human transmission for earlier cases, the paradigm has shifted towards human-to-human transmission via droplets, contacts and fomites (Sahu, Mishra and Lal, 2020)

World Health Organization (2020) describes coronavirus as Zoonotic which signifies that it is a virus communicable between animals and people. It was revealed that this virus has not been previously found in human beings. Some coronaviruses can be transmitted from person to person, usually after close contact with an infected patient, for example, in a household, social gathering or health care setting. Several known coronaviruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans. Corona virus (COVID-19) was further defined by the WHO as illness caused by a novel corona virus called severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2(SARS-CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV), which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan city, Hubei province, China. It was initially reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 31, 2019. On January 30, 2020, the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency. On March 11, 2020 the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020).

During the first stage of COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria, in March 2020; stories were springing up worries and induced panic. Most common topics were coverage of cases in Nigeria, death rates and concerns about Nigeria's preparedness. Public sensitization and education were sparingly covered. Ethics healthcare workers could adhere to received minimal attention. The media focused more on sensitizing and educating the public on the necessary steps to take in curbing the virus. NCDC was in close communication with the World Health Organization who closely monitored the situation globally (NCDC, 2020).

The remarkable performance Nigeria demonstrated during the COVID-19 scourge and the courage and commitment of health workers providers in supporting government in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic cannot be minimized. All this however, received citizen's support, courage, cooperation and result through the creation of awareness by the media. Anyim (2021a) discovered ways COVID-19 awareness campaign could be delivered including community outreach, public relation, community orientation, sharing of video on coronavirus, email subscription, social media, online reference services and short messages notification.

The coronavirus awareness campaign during the early stage of the outbreak was to ensure that people were informed about the virus and to take responsibilities for preventing coronavirus diseases outbreaks in their areas. However, awareness campaign going spreads across the communities, markets, and other flashpoints in the council area. The public information

commitment is aimed at strengthening the awareness and prevention of coronavirus diseases (Obidike, 2020). It was posited that media content can have a direct effect upon audiences and trigger particular social responses in terms of behavior and attitudes (Haralambos and Holborn, 2013). The Daily Sun Newspaper is one of the most popular newspaper in Nigeria, which has been in circulation for two decades. The COVID-19 awareness campaign was widely circulated through this print media. It appears the frequency and theme coverage of this paper on the area of COVID-19 has not been empirically provided. Therefore, it is imperative to examine the frequency and theme coverage of the newspaper during the first three months of the COVID-19 arrival in Nigeria.

### **Objective of the Study**

The general objective of the study is to find out the awareness effort of Daily Sun Newspaper on Covid-19 pandemic from March to May 2020.

Specifically, the study intended to:

1. Determine the awareness frequency of the Daily Sun” Newspaper on Covid-19 during the period in review.
2. Identify the theme coverage in “Daily Sun” Newspaper on Covid-19 during the period in review.

### **Research Question**

1. What is the awareness frequency of “Daily Sun” Newspaper on Covid-19 during the period in review?
2. What is the theme coverage in “Daily Sun” Newspaper on Covid-19 during the period in review?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Print Media and Society**

In addition to serving as sources of information, the print media influence our attitudes toward social issues, the ways that we view people, and even our self-concept. The tools for mass media—such as newspaper, magazines, television, radio, the internet and mp3—introduce their audiences to a variety of people, including sports figures, newsmakers, cartoon characters, politicians, Government leaders, actors disc jockeys, and musicians. Some audience segments become so emotional attached to these figures that they count themselves as fans following celebrities’ lives, desiring the products celebrities endorse, and otherwise seeking to emulate them or live vicariously

through them (Ferrante, 2011). Because the media significance shapes public opinion, all governments, attempts to influence them. The transfer of information from one individual or group to another, whether in speech or through the mass media times- is thus crucial to any society.

From the outset, the newspapers have been people's ombudsman - asking difficult questions, demanding answers, asking difficult questions, demanding answers, and bringing public attention to pertinent discussion. Newspapers, on the other hand, have an active network of legitimate sources, expert reporters and authoritative editors who look at every piece of news before it goes out and impacts the audience. While this does not guarantee 100% efficiency, it does minimize the risk of large-scale misinformation by bringing in accountability (TIMESOFINDIA, 2020)

Given the continued quest for information, the average Nigerian reader looks up to the media in terms of the dissemination of news information, adverts and other related forms of print materials. The print, one of the forms of news sources has a dynamic way of attracting readership loyalist by its style of news reporting, judging from the past the newspaper industry in Nigeria has contributed immensely to the growth of the nation. It is the earliest form of journalism in which nationalists and the country's founding fathers used to agitate their followership which led to the country's independence (Anyim, 2021: b). The printing of the bible altered religion, for instance, while the publication of political broadcasts and newspapers altered politics. From the beginning, a series of intervention-from radio and movies to television and the microchips- has made media an increasing powerful force. (Henslin, 2010).

### **Media and Awareness Campaign on Covid-19 in Nigeria**

Effective public awareness and sensitization through the provision of health information by the information Centre about coronavirus is a vital strategy for checkmating coronavirus and the associated challenges. Educating people about covid-19 symptoms, causes and experiences of victims through health information materials such as fliers, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, journals, books, social media, blogs, and websites could help people become more aware, enlightened and assist in self-management to some extent (Ilogho et al, 2020).

The remarkable performance Nigeria recorded during the COVID-19 scourge and the courage and commitment demonstrated by the health-care providers in supporting government in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be minimized. All this, however, received support, courage, cooperation and remarkable results through the creation of awareness by the media. In addition is the media network which is one of the best technological innovations that have gained worldwide acceptance for information services of the 21st Century and both the libraries and information seekers can use the social media platforms for information dissemination about covid-19 (Anyim, 2020).

Dissemination health information through newspaper can contribute to awareness creation and also sharing of views among the stakeholders on a single platform and engaging criticisms (Chandelier, Steuckardt, Mathevet, Diwersy and Gimenez, 2018). Print media also show pictures on how to prevent and control the disease as well as ‘care’ efforts and claims by the World Health Organization (WHO), International and national health institutions, etc. Contrary to the projections of some foreign opinion molders that by now bodies would have littered the streets of Nigeria and indeed, many parts of Africa, as a result of the stings of the Covid-19 pandemic; Nigeria, like many African Countries has thus far defied the odds and also has done relatively well in managing the pandemic since it erupted.

Newspapers cover the point of views of the experts extensively on every aspect of pandemic, including identification of fundamental individual actions to confine the transmission, performance of drugs and vaccines, zoonotic to human-to-human interaction of virus, risks of vulnerable communities, the association of COVID-19 with past epidemics like Malaria, SARS, etc., reproduction period of the virus, cross-cutting issues with the outbreak, preparedness to tackle the second wave, local and global healthcare response, progress and criticisms of treatment facilities, and precautionary measures to overcome the situation (Nuzzo, 2020).

## **Research Method**

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of study consists of 92 editions of “Daily Sun” Newspapers from March to May 2020. The sample size of 3 months editions of “Daily Sun” Newspaper was purposively adopted to represent the entire year of

publication of the newspaper covering the period the Covid-19 Outbreak in Nigeria. (March 2020 to December 2020). Data was collected through review of contents in Daily Sun Newspaper on Covid-19. A content analysis was carried out for a period of three months - from March 2020 to May 2020. It was adopted as a useful method to analyze the totality of news, articles and other information on COVID-19 published by the “Daily Sun” Newspaper for the period under review.

## Result

Presentation awareness frequency of “Daily Sun” Newspaper on COVID-19 awareness campaign during the period in review (March to May, 2020).

3. **RQ 1:** What is the awareness frequency of the “Daily Sun” Newspaper on Covid-19 during the period in review?

**Table 1:** Awareness frequency of “Daily Sun” Newspaper on Covid-19 in March, 2020

Publication Frequency		Awareness Frequency		
Month	Year	News stories	Feature article	Public service announcements
March 1	2020	2	1	0
March 2	2020	9	1	0
March 3	2020	5	1	0
March 4	2020	4	0	0
March 5	2020	4	4	0
March 6	2020	1	3	0
March 7	2020	1	0	0
March 8	2020	1	2	0
March 9	2020	4	1	0
March 10	2020	1	1	1
March 11	2020	2	2	0
March 12	2020	2	1	1
March 13	2020	2	1	0
March 14	2020	3	0	0
March 15	2020	3	0	0
March 16	2020	5	11	0
March 17	2020	3	1	9
March 18	2020	4	0	0
March 19	2020	10	0	1

March 20	2020	8	1	0
March 21	2020	14	1	0
March 22	2020	5	5	1
March 23	2020	7	7	0
March 24	2020	16	4	1
March 25	2020	20	4	0
March 26	2020	5	7	1
March 27	2020	9	3	5
March 28	2020	1	2	1
March 29	2020	7	5	0
March 30	2020	1	6	2
March 31	2020	2	4	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>161</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>15</b>

**Source:** Content Survey

From the table above this represents the content of Daily Sun Newspapers for the month of March 2020. This table shows that Daily Sun Newspaper published 161 news stories, 79 feature articles, 15 public service announcements on COVID-19 Pandemic.

**Table 2:** Awareness frequency of “Daily Sun” Newspaper on Covid-19 in April, 2020

Publication Frequency		Awareness Frequency		
Month	Year	News stories	Feature articles	Public service announcement
April 1	2020	10	5	1
April 3	2020	4	1	1
April 4	2020	2	1	1
April 5	2020	6	0	0
April 6	2020	4	2	1
April 7	2020	1	0	3
April 8	2020	3	8	1
April 9	2020	8	3	0
April 10	2020	7	0	0
April 11	2020	4	0	0
April 12	2020	5	5	1
April 13	2020	1	7	3



April 14	2020	13	0	2
April 15	2020	5	0	0
April 16	2020	3	1	1
April 17	2020	1	1	1
April 18	2020	12	4	0
April 19	2020	2	3	4
April 20	2020	20	5	1
April 21	2020	14	3	0
April 22	2020	5	2	0
April 23	2020	13	2	1
April 24	2020	9	2	1
April 25	2020	3	2	1
April 26	2020	1	2	1
April 27	2020	5	1	0
April 28	2020	2	4	1
April 29	2020	5	4	0
April 30	2020	6	5	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>172</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>27</b>

**Source:** Content Survey

From the table above this represents the content of Daily Sun Newspapers for the month of April, 2020, this table shows that Daily Sun Newspaper published 172 news stories, 73 feature articles, 27 public service announcements on COVID-19 Pandemic.

**Table 3:** Awareness frequency of “Daily Sun” Newspaper on Covid-19 in April, 2020

Publication Frequency		Awareness Frequency		
Month	Year	News Stories	Feature articles	Public Service Announcements
May 1	2020	12	1	0
May 2	2020	9	2	0
May 3	2020	1	1	1
May 4	2020	13	5	0
May 5	2020	20	0	0
May 6	2020	7	7	0
May 7	2020	4	5	3
May 8	2020	0	0	0
May 9	2020	13	7	1
May 10	2020	9	0	0

May11	2020	4	2	0
May 12	2020	1	7	0
May 13	2020	7	0	0
May 14	2020	4	4	2
May 15	2020	0	0	1
May 16	2020	5	8	3
May 17	2020	1	4	0
May 18	2020	1	1	1
May 19	2020	3	1	0
May 20	2020	7	4	2
May 21	2020	16	2	1
May 22	2020	9	7	1
May 23	2020	3	2	0
May 24	2020	8	2	2
May 25	2020	2	1	0
May 26	2020	4	1	0
May 27	2020	1	0	1
May 28	2020	3	5	1
May 29	2020	11	0	0
May 30	2020	6	1	1
May 31	2020	4	1	0
<b>Total</b>		<b>188</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>19</b>

**Source:** Content Survey

From the table above this represents the content of Daily Sun Newspapers for the month of May 2020, this table shows that Daily Sun Newspaper published 188 news stories, 81 feature articles, 19 public service announcements on COVID-19 Pandemic.

**RQ 2:** What is the theme coverage in “Daily Sun” Newspaper during the period in review?

Table 4: theme coverage

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Description</b>
COVID-19 cases in Nigeria	This includes reports of those who have contracted COVID-19 in Nigeria, States with the highest cases and those being treated.
Global COVID-19 Report	This includes reports on the number of those who have contracted COVID-19 and death toll.
Treatment and Control	This involves reports on cases of recovery from COVID-19.
Rate of Death	This includes recorded number of death patience from the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria and other countries

Lockdown and Quarantine	This involves restriction of interstate movement, border, School, Church and other sectors of the economy and that of other countries
Government, NGOs and other Volunteers:	This includes the involvement/responses of WHO, NCDC, Presidential Taskforce on COVID-19 and other international and non-governmental agencies
Test Facilities	Diagnostic Centers and other laboratory facilities
Sensitization and Public Enlightenment	This included news articles, public announcement, public education and stories on the COVID-19 pandemic. information on the following is passed: mode of spread, signs, symptoms, risk factors as well as where and when to report for test and treatment. It also includes precautions that the public can take to reduce chances of exposure to COVID-19, such as using face masks, washing of hands, using hand sanitizers and social distancing
Funding/cost of fighting COVID-19	This includes funds and other financial related assistance needed or provided to fight COVID-19.
Potential risk to healthcare workers	This includes risk involved in treating patients
Stigmatization	This includes all forms of discrimination against infected persons
Public panic and anxiety	Emotional responses on COVID-19 across the country
Ethics	ethics of treating those with COVID-19, and measures to reduce its transmission (e.g., social distancing, quarantine etc.).

**Source:** Content Survey

Result in table 4 revealed the theme coverage of “Daily Sun” Newspaper on COVID-19 from March to May, 2020. It shows that the theme covers information on the report cases of the COVID-19, death rate, treatment and control, lockdown, quarantine etc.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Result from the content analysis revealed the frequency of the “Daily Sun” Newspaper on COVID-19 awareness for the period of March 1<sup>st</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup>. During the month of March, the “Daily Sun” Newspaper was able to publish 161 news articles, 79 feature articles and 15 Public service announcements on COVID-19 awareness. The publication frequency also covered the month of April (from 1<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>) and also the month of May (from 1<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>). In March 2020, result showed that 161 news stories, 79 feature articles and 15 public announcements on Covid-19 pandemic were published in the Daily Sun” Newspaper. In April 2020, the result revealed that 172 news stories, 73 feature articles and 27 public announcements on Covid-19 pandemic were published in the Daily Sun” Newspaper while 188 news stories, 81 feature articles and 19 public announcements on

Covid-19 pandemic were published in the “Daily Sun” Newspaper. The analysis justifies the claims of Akpan (2020), who posits that journalists through news media have demonstrated unflinching commitment to amplify Covid-19 awareness campaign as part of their contributions to contain the spread of the virus. The result also reveals the central theme of the content on Covid-19 in the “Daily Sun” Newspaper includes information such as Lockdown and Quarantine; WHO, NCDC, Presidential Taskforce on COVID-19 International, National and NGOs etc.; Sensitization and Public Enlightenment; Test Facilities; Funding/cost of fighting COVID-19; Potential risk to healthcare workers; Stigmatization; Public panic and anxiety and Ethics.

### **Conclusion**

It is no longer surprising how print media has become a great asset in creating awareness against the spread and effects of Covid-19 pandemic. The Daily Sun Newspaper was not left out in ensuring that the masses are sensitized and educated on the COVID-19 Pandemic – the spread of the virus, preventive measures and general information on the virus. The study showed that “Daily Sun” Newspaper worked closely with the government, healthcare institutions and other stakeholders to obtain authoritative and verifiable information which they pass to the public on daily basis. This laudable effort justifies the print media as a strong vehicle for COVID-19 awareness creation. From the evidence in this study, it could be said that the “Daily Sun” Newspaper is among the print media in Nigeria that have played an active role in disseminating COVID-19 information to the masses.

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