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**SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND THE CHALLENGES OF INFORMATION
DISSEMINATION DURING EMERGENCIES: EXPERIENCE OF LIBRARY
AND INFORMATION SCIENTISTS ON COVID-19 IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Corona virus is a form of respiratory ailment that ravaged human health and social interaction. Since its emergence and subsequent spread to various countries of the world, various governments, organisations, agencies and individuals have been making frantic efforts to curtail the disease using different media. Prominent among the media being used is social media. However, the preliminary investigation of the researchers indicated that the social media are being wrongly used to disseminate information on the emergence, causes, prevention and curtailment of the disease particularly in a developing country like Nigeria. The need to address these challenges and to drum home the contribution of Library and Information Scientists necessitated this study. Self-structured questionnaire administered at various online fora (NLA, NALISE and individuals) was the instrument used for the collection of data among the library and information scientists (librarians and library and information science educators). Total enumeration technique was employed to cover all the 201 respondents that participated in the survey monkey conducted. The study found that varying social media were being used to disseminate information about COVID-19. It was reported that library and information scientists are playing active role in enlighten masses on the danger of COVID-19, and has established an enduring relationship with the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) on the importance of library use as change agents. The need for Library and Information Scientists to sustain the use of social media while rendering information services especially in the time of pandemic such as COVID-19 was recommended.

Keyword: COVID-19 in Nigeria, Information dissemination, Library and Information Scientists, Social media use, NCDC.

Introduction

Since the World War II, no event has ravaged the human race, consuming life and actively halting human activities like the novel corona virus. Corona virus is described as a respiratory disease that affects human breathing, which may lead to loss of life if not properly managed. This novel virus that spreads sporadically from person-to-person emerged as a result of scientific incursion of China in December 2019 and has since swept the world, causing significant burden socially and economically, increasing the number of hospitalizations and death (Wu & McGoogan, 2020). The disease was indexed and code-named COVID-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a global disease affecting the humanity and social lives. The symptoms of the disease include dry cough, fever, sore-throat and shortness of breath. It is described as a pandemic that affects every social class irrespective of age, gender, country or region. Interestingly, it is not a

death sentence except in patients with underlying ailments such as diabetes, renal diseases, hypertension or patient that fail to present themselves promptly for the treatment. The disease can be contracted through three layers namely; index case, first contact and community spread. Index case is simply described as when an individual directly contract the virus, whilst the first contact implies when an individual or set of individuals that have direct contacts with the carrier of the virus. Now, the community spread explains the situation where a group of people contract the virus due to clustering or body contact with an infected person(s).

In Nigeria, like other parts of the world, the government, organizations, agencies and well-to-do citizens are still making frantic efforts to curtail the spread of the disease since first index case was reported in the country on 27th February, 2020. To best achieve this, a number of precautionary methods which include social/physical distancing, cough to elbow, periodic washing of hands (use of running water and soap or alcoholic-based hand sanitizer) sneeze on tissue papers and proper disposition of the paper, handshaking and hugging avoidance and self quarantine we're suggested. The Nigerian government (federal and state) has also put in place isolation centres and special health facilities to manage the disease in collaboration with the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). The government also constituted a Presidential Task Force to monitor, solicit funds/support from private and corporate organizations and work closely with the NCDC in line with international best practices. Part of the mandate of the committee is to communicate with citizens on measures being taken to curb the further spread of the virus while advising the federal government on the way out as regards to public health. As these efforts are on-going, information was spreading uninhibited over traditional and social media platforms at a strikingly rapid pace. Both the impact of the disease and the lack of information associated with it allowed medical misinformation to rapidly surface and propagate on various social media platforms. Social media as identified by Kapoor, Tamilmanni, Rana, et al (2017) are various user-driven platforms that facilitate the diffusion of compelling content, dialogue creation, and communication to a broader audience. The authors noted that social media is essentially a digital space created by the people and for the people and provides conducive environment for interactions and networking to occur at different levels. The term "social media" envisions a new type of

media that is shared and participatory in nature, involving others in the information lifecycle of creation, organisation, sharing, finding, and use. Examples of social media include WhatsApp, Facebook, Flickr, Youtube, Twitter, Quora among others. It is an important source of information sharing due to its immediacy. However, as valuable as the social media is, a number of challenges are affecting its deployment. Some of the challenges affecting its deployment include lack of privacy and misinformation that thread freely through the media. Misinformation is a “claim of fact that is false due to lack of scientific evidence or as a result of myth. The development has made social media a convenient mechanism for spreading false or personally tailored contents, particularly during times of public tension like the current COVID-19 pandemic (Zarocostas, 2020). It appears that the roles of library and information scientists as custodians of information and knowledge have been eroded. The realization of the need to correct this anomaly has put the information scientists on their toes towards ensuring that prompt and correct delivery of information about what the virus is and what the virus is not is achieved. The unregulated/indiscriminate use of social media has also had a negative toll on the duties of Library and Information scientists, thus, inhibiting the activities of the Library and Information Scientist. In attempt to understand the causes of this ugly development, the researchers observed that there is a lack of documented empirical evidence as regards the misuse of social media and the challenges confronting library and information scientists in Nigeria in the time of health emergencies such as COVID-19. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates the challenges of social media use for information dissemination by library and information scientists with reference to COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria.

Literature review

The social media has continuously being used as convenient media for information dissemination in today’s world. The media is also being used to communicate, share and interpret information of any kind. Thus, social media is described as a platform that comprise several actors, all working in the communication process. It involves new strands of media involving interactive participation (Manning, 2014). According to Boyd and Ellison (2008) social media can be described as the computer-mediated tools and

platform designed to create profiles, make explicit and traverse relationships. From the above it is clear that once the term social media comes to mind, certain keys thoughts such as a medium for online interaction among others. This is why, Kietzmann et al., (2011) views social media as that web-based applications 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 Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, blogs to gain access, to provide or to share information. Today, especially with the presence of the novel corona virus, a day hardly goes by without the emergence of a new case, the development that gives rise to the use of blogs and others to provide information about the pandemic. Notwithstanding, for authorities that has for long been using traditional method to communicate citizens, the use of social media emerged with several challenges, as information moves in through several actors and spaces creating several volumes of this information, as against the traditional one-way they are used to. What this implies is that the usual verified and factual information being released to the public via the traditional method is greeted with a lot misinformation that characterise the social media.

To ensure that correct and accurate information reaches the public through the social media, the role of library and information scientists become rather indispensable. This is so because, libraries as social institutions have the responsibility for making sure that the awareness on public health is adequate, providing daily pieces of information. The place of the social media in public health cannot over emphasized, this is why George, Rovniak, Kraschnewski and Dangers (2013) stated that social media had created a wild range of global networks that makes it very easy for information spread and the mobilization of large number of users of this media to facilitate greater progress all in a bid ti attain higher public health goal. It then implies that social media remain a powerful tool for managing public health through public education and advocacy. (Farnan, Snyder, Worster, et al, 2013). It would be interesting to know that some states' public health departments use the Twitter App and other social media for these aforementioned

purposes. (Househ, 2013). More so, other public health organizations employ the social media in obtaining keyword content from Twitter and other social networks, which has proven to be very helpful in combining with location-tracking technologies, to respond rapidly to emergencies and to check the health and welfare of the public. With the large use of social media, it has influenced public health behaviours and goals through social reinforcement (George DR, Rovniak LS, Kraschnewski JL. Dangers, 2013). This is so because by the our nature as human beings, we are a highly social species, as Aristotle puts it, “man is *zoo politikun*”; this means they are often influenced by their friends, as well as by friends of friends (George DR, Rovniak LS, Kraschnewski JL. Dangers, 2013). One remarkable example of the influence of the social media in managing public was seen after Facebook decided to allow users to post their organ-donor status in their profile. Donate Life America, reported that after a week of this feature’s introduction, the registries of online state organ-donor recorded a 23-fold surge in donor pledges, this was presumably due to this social-networking effect (George, Rovnia, Kraschnewski, & Dangers, 2013). Social media has also been adopted to create awareness on public health through formulation of Google Trends to ascertain the correlation between the volume of searches and topics that are related to COVID-19. Thus, with this tools at the beck and call of librarian, he/she is expected to exploit them as much as possible and leaving the rest challenges associated with COVID-19 information dissemination to the technical know-how of the library and information scientists (Bare, 2020). Since outbreak of this pandemic, the Nigerian libraries and other associations are faced with a rather more crucial role in the face of the prevailing global pandemic. It is very clear how fake news and misinformation have created more confusion and subsequently, producing even more difficulties to every effort aimed at curtailing the spread of the virus. In this regard, the social media comes again as a handy tool for academic, special and public libraries in Nigeria as a medium for them to provide and share information swiftly, in the best possible fashion and in the shortest possible time using it as a strategy in the response to COVID- 19 pandemic through their social networking pages like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn (Ladan, Haruna & Madu, 2020). As stated earlier, the nature of the modus operandi of social media comes with certain challenges. These challenges could be managed depending on the users or recipients of such information. It is in the

light of this, that efforts must be cautiously deploy to understand the behavioural patterns underlying the use of social media, the roles of library and information scientists and the challenges confronting library and information scientists in the use of social media for management of information particularly during public health emergency such as COVID-19.

Objectives of the study

The study set to specifically achieve the following:

1. determine the type (s) of social media being used to disseminate information on COVID-19 by Library and Information Scientists in Nigeria;
2. examine the relationship between Library and Information Scientists use of social media and COVID-19 information dissemination in Nigeria; and
3. examine the challenges associated with the use of social media for information dissemination among Library and Information Scientists during COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design of the correlational type was adopted for this study. The population comprised library and information professionals (librarians and LIS educators) in South-west geo-political zone, Nigeria. Self-structured questionnaire was administered at various online fora (NLA, NALISE and individuals) for the collection of data among the library and information scientists (librarians and library and information science educators) with the aid of survey monkey. Total enumeration technique was employed to cover all the 201 respondents that participated in the survey monkey conducted. The return rate of the instrument indicated that 201 copies were usable for the study. The instrument for the study was based on the use of social media for disseminating COVID-19 information. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the data. The results were presented with the use of Tables and graphs.

Table 1: Social-demographic characteristics of the respondents

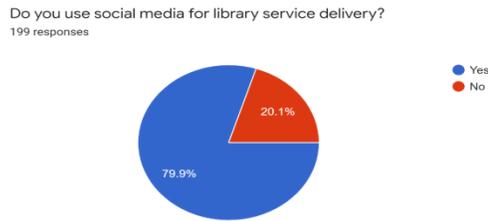
Background Information	Categories	Aggregate (N=201)
	Categories	Frequencies
Type of Library	Public	24.4%
	Academic	40.0%
	School	17.4%
	National	-
	Special	-
	Library School	7.8%
Gender	Male	51.2%
	Female	48.8%
Marital status	Married	79.9%
	Single	21.1%
Age range	21 – 30	46.8%
	31 – 40	26.4%
	41 – 50	19.9%
	51 – 60	6.0%
	61- 70	1.0%
	Doctoral degree	7%
Educational Qualification	MLS	50.7%
	BLS	25.9%
	Diploma in LIS	16.4%
Length of working experience	1 – 5 years	23.2%
	6 – 10 years	51.6%
	11 – 15 years	14.4%
	More than 15years	10.8

The analysis revealed that 40.0% of the respondents work in academic libraries while only 7.8% are from library schools in the region. On the gender ratio of the respondents, the analysis showed that 51.2% were male while the rest are female 48.8%. It is obvious that there are more male than female librarians in these groups. The majority of the respondents were 79.9% with fairly professional experience. In terms of educational/professional qualifications of the respondents, the analysis revealed that 50.7

percent of the respondents had Master’ degree in Library and Information Science. This implies that a large numbers of the respondents are professionally qualified.

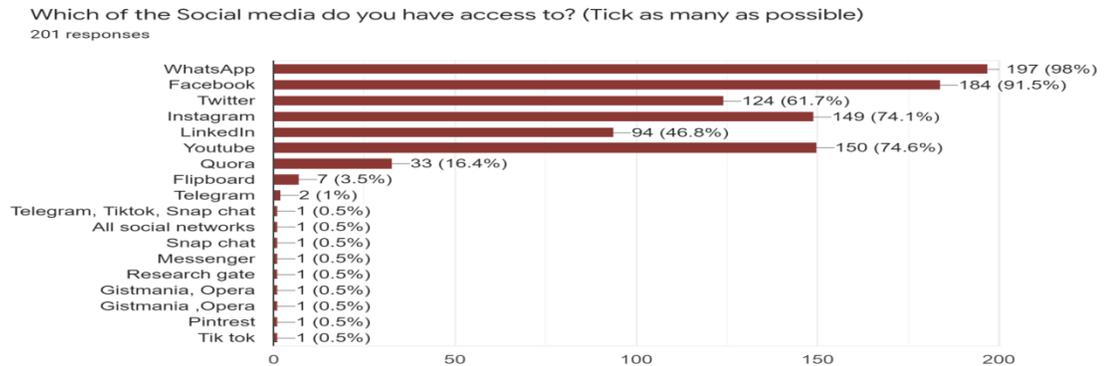
Access to Social Media

In terms of access to social media, the analysis of the response as presented in the chart indicated that 79.9% of the respondents claimed to have access to the social media. The responses imply that sufficiently, the respondents possess social media access.



Types of social media access and use

The respondents were asked to state their access to social media. The graphical analysis showed that 197(98%) of the respondents have access to WhatsApp, 184 (91.6%) have access to Facebook with only 7(3.6%) have access to Flipboard. The response indicated that the two most popular social media among the respondents are WhatsApp and Facebook.



The respondents' sources of information were analyzed and revealed that 181(90%) of the respondents claimed that television is their main source of information, 173(86.1%) rely on telephone as their source of information. Some respondents opined that they relied on colleagues (156, 77.8%) while only 145(72.1%) made use of radio as their source of information. The implication of these findings is that a sufficient number of respondents are making use of the available sources in gathering information on COVID-19.

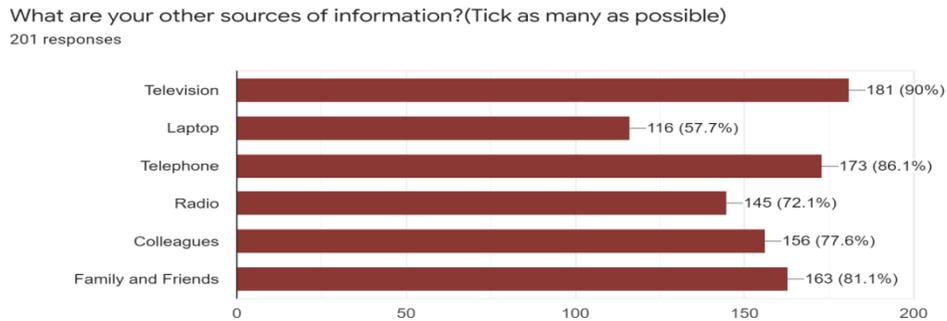


Table 2: Dissemination of COVID-19 information via Social Media

Dissemination about COVID-19 and other exigencies via social media platform	Yes	90.5%
	No	9.5%
Fascinating qualities of social media	Yes	96.5
	No	4.5%
Social media use as an immediate mechanism for accessing and sharing information on COVID-19	Yes	92.0%
	No	8.0%
Believe about the use of social media to reach and obtain information from places on pandemic such as COVID-19	Yes	94.5%
	No	5.5%
Believe that social media use has enhanced library services and improve knowledge about COVID-19	Yes	90.4%
	No	9.1%

The results of the use of social media for information dissemination as presented in Table 2 showed that the media is being used for disseminating information about COVID-19 and other exigencies (90.5%). The analysis further showed that 92% of the respondents adopted social media as an immediate mechanism for accessing and sharing information on COVID-19, 94.5% of the respondents believed that the use of social media helped them to reach and obtain information from places on pandemics such as COVID-19 while 90.4% of them suggested that social media use has enhanced their library services and improved users' knowledge about COVID-19.

Table 3: Role of libraries and social media use

Items	VT	T	ST	NT
Social media has been a very active medium for disseminating false information and myth about COVID-19 in Nigeria	41.3%	43.7%	9.5	5.5
I believe most Nigerians are ignorant of the right medium of getting information about COVID-19	25.6	46.7	13.8	13.8
Social media has been a very active medium of spreading false information and myth about the virus	43.7	43.1	12.1	2.7
Low knowledge of technicality involved affect my use of social for dissemination information about pandemic	18.8%	28.9	33	19.3
I believe there is synergy between libraries and social media in disseminating information about COVID-19	56.9	19.6	15.1%	8.4%
I use social media platform to spread information about COVID-19 more than any other professionals	56.9	15.1%	19.6	8.4%

The roles of libraries and social media were analyzed and the results showed that 85% of the respondents opined that social media has been a very active medium for disseminating false information and myth about COVID-19 in Nigeria. The analysis further indicated that 76.5% of the respondents opined that synergy exists between libraries and social media in disseminating information about COVID-19. The results revealed that 72% of the respondents claimed that they make use of social media platform to spread information about COVID-19 more than any other professionals.

Table 4: Relationship between library and NCDC

Items	VT	T	ST	NT
Libraries can work in conjunction with NCDC in disseminating information about COVID-19 using various social media platforms	52.3%	10.4%	33.8%	18.4%
Libraries and social media are critical tools for conveying fear and myth about the COVID-19	28.4%	41.1%	13.7%	16.8%
I believe libraries and NCDC will have relationship even after the COVID-19	33.8%	43.7%	13.3%	3.7%
Libraries do no rely onn social media due to inability	36.4%	50.0%	11.6%	

to very sources of information and hindered its effective use in dissemination information about COVID-19

The relationship between the agency that is, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and libraries were further discussed. The analysis showed that 62.7 per cent claimed that libraries work in conjunction with NCDC in disseminating information about COVID-19 using various social media platforms. 69.5% of the respondents opined that libraries and social media remain critical tools for conveying fear and myth about the COVID-19, while 86.4% of them claimed that libraries do not rely on social media due to inability to verify sources of information and hindered its effective use in dissemination information about COVID-19. Generally, the analysis of the responses indicated that a virile relationship exist between libraries and NCDC through the use of social media for information dissemination

Conclusion

The study demonstrated that libraries are taken lead in the use of social media for managing and disseminating information about COVID-19. This implies that the Library and Information Scientists have identified the efficacy of social media use as a significant source of information provision and dissemination. It is noted that significant number of respondents maintained libraries will have an enduring relationship with the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) even after the pandemic. Therefore, there is need for Library and Information Scientists to sustain the use of social media while rendering information services especially in the time of pandemic such as COVID-19.

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