

**Evaluation of *The Punch* and *The Nation* Newspapers' Reportage of COVID-19
Pandemic between 1st January and 31st December, 2020**

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State, Nigeria**

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Certification

This is to certify that this study was carried out by Sediku Musa Umoru with the Matric No. LCU/PG/001088 in the Department of Mass Communication and Media Technology, Faculty of Communication and Information science, Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State and that this work has not been previously submitted.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, the giver of life.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Lead City University Library for giving me the opportunity to use the library to access copies of *The Punch* and *The Nation* newspapers for this study. I also appreciate Lead City University (LCU) Ibadan for the privilege of passing through the academic citadel for my postgraduate programme. I am grateful to God Almighty for seeing me through the attainment of another important milestone in my search for knowledge.

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Although the above-mentioned institutions and persons have assisted in the process of this research work, I alone stand responsible for the errors, if any, found in the work.

Abstract

The media is known for its critical evaluation of issues such as COVID-19 outbreak to help the public understand concepts associated with news and events. Framing a news story in the newspapers can be influenced by different factors such as highlighting news angle that arouse reader's interest, economic motive of the reporter and competitive media debacle. Therefore, this study evaluated *The Nation* and *The Punch newspapers'* reportage of COVID-19 pandemic between January and December, 2020. The study was based on Framing Theory, Agenda Setting Theory and Social Responsibility Theory. Content analysis design was employed for the study. The population of the study consisted of editions of *The Nation* and *The Punch*, between 1st January and 31st December, 2020 with a total of 732 editions. The method of data presentation and analysis was descriptive and contextual analysis. The findings from the study showed that *The Punch* and *The Nation newspapers* reported above average on COVID-19 cases and developing stories on the pandemic. Both newspapers' report on COVID-19 were placed in the inside pages of their publications. While less stories were reported at the back page of the newspapers and most of COVID-19 reportage in *The Punch* covered a full page, while most in *The Nations* covered half page. The study recommends that as the watchdogs of the society, newspaper should constantly cover and report health matters so as to inform and educate the society on the dangers these discuss could pose to humanity. Also, as watchdogs and the fourth estate of the realm of the society newspapers reportage should go beyond just reporting health matters as they break, they should carry out surveillance by investigating into developing issues of such health issues.

Keywords: agenda setting, COVID-19 pandemic, Newspapers Reportage, Fourth Estate, Social Responsibility,

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List of Acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
COVID-19	Coronavirus
MERS	Middle East Respiratory Syndrome
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

The outbreak of Coronavirus in December 2019, in Wuhan Province, China created an avalanche of health issues and crises for various media outlets to report. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses capable of causing severe illness in animals or humans, the viruses are known to cause severe respiratory infection and other diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the coronavirus disease known as COVID-19 ¹. A cluster of pneumonia cases of unknown aetiology was reported in Wuhan as the causative agent of the novel coronavirus and the outbreak of the pandemic has truly engaged media organizations in a reportorial contest since its emergence ². Since the outbreak, the media (in all forms) have embarked on a reportorial spree to keep the public duly informed about the prevalence, fatalities and preventive measures. Such roles are the hallmarks of the media ³. The newspapers were not left out in the coverage of the pandemic.

The high number of deaths in countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and Brazil, made the reportage of the novel pandemic a delight for many newspapers all over the world. The COVID-19 news developed and spread across the world with newspapers through their reporters anchoring their analysis on frames such as health infrastructural deficit, poverty, economy, politics and business.

Providing news analysis anchored on various frames became the central focus of both conventional and newspapers counterparts across the world. The coverage of COVID-19 has been inflammatory, particularly across social media and other unsubstantiated sources, which are unfortunately taken as facts, looking at the health angle of the fight against the pandemic and

acknowledges that one of the most high-profile reasons on the situational analysis is the public health service's uneven and reportedly depleted resources for tackling this pandemic ⁵.

In Nigeria, the index case of the pandemic was an Italian national who arrived the country on 28th February, 2020 ⁶. Subsequently, the virus has continued to spread unabated in the country. In order to curb the spread of the virus, the Federal Government of Nigeria enforced a lockdown of Lagos state (the epicentre of the pandemic), Ogun State and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The approach adopted by newspapers in reporting the pandemic in Nigeria has been met with what most communication researchers termed '*infodemic*' ⁷. Federal and State governments in Nigeria intensify effort to identify how to contain the disease, the government was also worried about the spate of misinformation trailing the outbreak. Media outlets have adopted measures to satisfy the curiosity of their audiences by reporting all trajectories and effects of the pandemic ⁸.

“The virus has at the same time exposed the fecklessness of some political leaders and the incompetence of governments at all levels in the country” ⁹. All over the world, people's perceptions of health issues are not only shaped by their experiences and impression received from other people but also by news media reports on various issues relating to health ¹⁰. Media reports on various health issues can have overbearing effects on the populace over time. Several health communication studies have examined this domain and found that health information in newspapers affects the health behaviours of newspaper readers ¹¹.

The media is known for its critical evaluation of issues such as COVID-19 outbreak to help the public understand concepts associated with news events. Framing a news story in the newspapers can be influenced by different factors such as highlighting news angle that arouse reader's interest, economic motive of the reporter and competitive media debacle ¹². The understanding of

news frame from a handful of researchers look quite similar. News frames refer to the nuances, bias, opinions and meanings journalists introduce to stories with a view to breaking down complex reality for readers and viewers to assimilate¹².

The role of the press is very important in developing countries in informing the masses about public health-related issues, their role is quite visible in the fight against HIV/AIDS through the dissemination of messages aimed at informing the public about the dangers of HIV/AIDS and what preventive measures can be employed¹³. The mass media campaigns have significant effects in people's lives, especially in developing nations and they can work through direct and indirect pathways to change the behaviour of the whole society¹⁴.

The newspaper plays a huge role in affecting people's lives in the society and in addition to shaping general understanding, radio plays an important role in promoting public health. The newspaper "can be a delivery mechanism for getting the right information to the right people, in the right way and at the right time to promote behavioural change" and that "they can be a vehicle for increasing participation in civic and political life and social capital to promote social change"¹⁴. Consistent with this and in tandem with occurrences elsewhere, radio in Nigeria has been embarking on campaigns or programmes that are aimed at promoting public health and ensuring behavioural change.

This is very crucial considering that Nigeria, just like many developing African countries, is gripped with many health problems namely; Malaria, HIV, tuberculosis among others. Principal among these ailments is HIV prevalence which kills many in Africa¹⁵. And in 2020, COVID-19 is another global pandemic which has inflected more than six million people. There also seems to be a consensus that the mass media messages have the potency to set an agenda for an increase in the frequency of individual's partaking in public health-related discourse. From above, it can be

seen that the newspaper has been of great significance to humanity and still it plays its primary role of information dissemination since inception, educating the world about ailments such as malaria, HIV, tuberculosis and others, which some parts of the world are still afflicted with. Today the world is faced with COVID-19, a pandemic that has held the world hostage. It has put the world into confusion and chaos while crippling the global economy, plummeting foreign direct investments and plunging countries into recession.

The press are intensively engaged in public health globally. Vast sums are spent annually for materials and salaries that have gone into the production and distribution of booklets, pamphlets, exhibits, newspaper articles, and radio and television programmes. These media are employed at all levels of public health in the hope that three effects might happen; the learning of correct health information and knowledge, the changing of health attitudes and values and the establishment of new health behaviour¹⁶.

No doubt the press across the globe has been playing its role by creating awareness and promoting preventive measures to be followed to ease this global pandemic through talk shows, jingles, drama, etc.

Framing explains the power structure of the media to create news story items with predefined and narrow contextualisation to enhance understanding or used cognitive shortcuts to link stories to the bigger picture ¹⁷. The implication of this submission is that the media can influence news content by subtle submission to downplay the perceived negative effect of the story on the general public by choosing a particular frame pattern. The media can also through choice of frame aggravate the supposed subtle effect to more dire consequences on the general public. In a similar way, the volume of report given to an issue in the media explains the public knowledge, understanding and perception on the issue ¹⁸.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The main function of a newspaper is to tell its readers what is happening in the world, including the country, the state, the town or city and the locality of its operation. Newspaper is an information carrier as people believe strongly in what they read because a newspaper gives the truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of daily events in a context- which gives them meaning.

One of the essential services of mass media in critical situations of health challenges like the novel coronavirus pandemic, is to keep adequate surveillance of the event by regularly providing the public with updated information. The media uses various available channels including the newspaper platforms to inform, educate and sensitize the target audiences about the pandemic. Information on the pattern of frame, prevalent and dominant frames used by the newspapers in framing coronavirus pandemic in Nigeria is empirically lacking due to the regency of the pandemic. No known study in Nigeria has been able to fill this lacuna. An attempt to reduce this knowledge gap and provide empirical data for future researches, suffices for this study. Therefore, this study evaluated the *Punch* and the *Nation* newspapers coverage of COVID-19 pandemic between January and December, 2020.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to evaluate *The Nation* and *The Punch* newspapers reportage of COVID-19 pandemic between 1st January and 31st December, 2020. The specific objectives were to;

1. ascertain the frequency of COVID-19 reportage in *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between 1st January and 31st December, 2020;
2. ascertain the prominence given to COVID-19 reportage in *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between 1st January and 31st December, 2020;
3. find out the dominant news sources in COVID-19 reportage found in *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between 1st January and 31st December, 2020;
4. analyse story formats that were used in COVID-19 reportage by *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between 1st January and 31st December, 2020.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What is the frequency of COVID-19 reportage in *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between 1st January and 31st December, 2020?
2. What is the level of prominence given to COVID-19 reportage in *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between 1st January and 31st December, 2020?
3. What are the dominant news sources in COVID-19 reportage found in *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between 1st January and 31st December, 2020?
4. What are the story formats that were used in COVID-19 reportage by *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between 1st January and 31st December, 2020?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study will be of immense importance to both the media and the society due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The media is conventionally said to be the watchdog of the society that not only entertain but educate, enlighten and inform the society as the fourth estate of the realm.

The study is also of benefit to health sector that would help trace the cases of COVID-19

Pandemic. It will be of importance to governments as it will inform them of steps and decision to take to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, the findings of this research will serve as literature materials for both scholars and students who may want to carry out study on COVID-19 pandemic. It would serve as a reference point for them.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study assessed *The Nation* and *The Punch* newspapers reportage of COVID-19 pandemic between 1st January and 31st December, 2020. These two dailies were selected considering their national outlook. The study was centred on daily editions of *The Nation* and *The Punch* from Mondays to Fridays within the period of 1st January and 31st December, 2020 were chosen because it was this period that marked the peak of COVID-19 pandemic all over the world. The justification for the use of *The Nation* and *The Punch* newspapers is because both newspapers carried straight news, features, editorials, cartoons, columns that reflected on the issues in this period.

1.8 Limitation to the Study

The major limited encountered by the researcher during this study was the incomplete editions of *The Punch* and *The nation* newspapers in Lead City University library as the researcher was left without options than to visit other libraries.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

COVID-19 pandemic: in this study, coronavirus is a large group of viruses that resemble a crown. The word Corona is Latin meaning crown. There are different types of coronaviruses and people around the world commonly get infected with human coronaviruses 229E, NL63, OC43, and HKU1.

Media: The plural form of medium. Medium means that by which something is expressed. In this study, media is the same as mass media. The mass media are the channels of mass communication used to disseminate information to a very heterogeneous large number of people.

Newspaper: A newspaper is a serial publication containing news about current events, other informative articles about politics, sports, arts, and so on, and advertising. Newspaper can also be described as printed and unbound paper that has the content of news about current political, economic, socio-cultural, educational, environmental, scientific-cum-technological and sundry affairs, as well as other relevant information.

Newspaper coverage: The activity of gathering and reporting about an event, happenings or subject in newspapers with interest to the public, it can be news stories, opinion, letter to the editor, features etera.

Pandemic: is a disease outbreak that spreads across countries or continents. It affects more people and takes more lives than an epidemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic when it became clear that the illness was severe and that it was spreading quickly over a wide area.

Newspaper frequency: It is the nature of reportage which can be published daily, weekly, bi-weekly, or even just on weekends. Major national and regional newspapers typically publish daily, with increased coverage on weekends.

Newspaper prominence: the prominent nature in a newspaper publication has to do with the particular place the news item is located, news items at the front pages are seen as more important than other news items in the center or back page.

News placement: Location of a news item in a particular edition of a newspaper is referred to as the placement of a news item, such as front page, back page.

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Chapter Two

Literature Review

To provide empirical background to this study and also make this work comprehensive, the literature will be reviewed under the following sub-headings:

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

2.4 Summary of Literature Reviewed

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Concept of COVID-19 Pandemic

2.1.1.2 Response of Nigerian Government to Coronavirus' Outbreak

2.1.1.3 Science-based Communication during the COVID-19 Pandemic

2.1.1.5 The World and COVID-19

2.1.2 Conceptualisation of Mass Media

2.1.2.3 Types of Mass Media

2.1.2.7 Features of Mass Media

2.1.2.8 Functions of Mass Media

2.1.2.9 Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists

2.1.2.10 Ethical Standard of Media Practices in Nigeria

2.1.3 Newspaper Overview

2.1.3.1 The Societal Role of Newspaper

2.1.3.2 Newspaper Stories and Sources

- 2.1.3.4 News as a Commodity vs. News as a Public Good
- 2.1.3.5 News as a Commodity
- 2.1.3.6 News as a Public Good
- 2.1.4 Mass Media and Coronavirus Pandemic
- 2.1.5 The Nigerian Media Reportage of COVID-19 Pandemic
 - 2.1.5.1 Media and Health Communication during Pandemic
 - 2.1.5.2 Advantages of Mass Media with Respect to Health Issues
 - 2.1.5.3 Disadvantages and Negative Impacts of Mass Media on Health
- 2.1.6 Role of Media in COVID-19 Origin
 - 2.1.6.1 SARS-COV-2 Tracking Tools
- 2.1.7 Health Education and the Surveillance Role of the Mass Media
- 2.1.8 Improving the Performance of Mass Media
 - 2.1.8.1 Advances in Health-Care: E-Health
- 2.1.9 The Media, Health Behaviours and Health Policies

2.1.1 Concept of COVID-19 Pandemic

The novel Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), first identified in Wuhan China in December 2019, has rapidly spread to almost every region of the world. The disease is caused by a new and severe type of Coronavirus known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS- COV-2) ¹. The infection has no immediate treatment and vaccine, and it has become a worldwide pandemic causing significant morbidity and mortality ².

There are 1,603,428 confirmed cases, 356,440 recoveries from the illness and 95,714 deaths worldwide as of April 9, 2020 ³. On February 27, 2020, an Italian citizen became the index case

for COVID-19 in Nigeria and as at April 9, 2020, there were 288 laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Nigeria with 51 discharges and 7 deaths ⁴. To prevent further spread of the virus, civil societies and government agencies embarked on enlightenment campaigns for good hygiene and social distancing. Temperature screening was conducted at airports and those returning from countries with numerous confirmed cases of COVID-19 were implored to self-isolate. The NCDC in association with State governments also began tracking and tracking of possible victims and their contacts. On March 18, 2020, the Lagos State government suspended all gatherings above fifty people for four weeks and ordered all lower and middle level public officers to stay-at-home ⁵. Similarly, the Federal government, on March 30, 2020 introduced various containment strategies such as closing of the national borders and airspace, schools, worship centers and other public places, canceling of mass gathering events and placing the Federal Capital Territory, Lagos and Ogun states on lock down for an initial period of fourteen days ³.

COVID-19 testing laboratories were set up in Lagos, Abuja and Irrua in Edo State while State governments opened isolation centres and imposed dawn to dusk curfews in their territories. COVID-19, from the family of Coronavirus (others include Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) , Hemagglutinin Type 5 and Neuraminidase Type 1 (H5N1), Hemagglutinin Type 1 and Neuraminidase Type 1 (H1N1) and Middle East respiratory Syndrome (MERS), is a contagious respiratory illness transmitted through the eyes, nose, and mouth, via droplets from coughs and sneezes, close contact with infected person and contaminated surfaces. It has an incubation period of approximately one to fourteen days. The symptoms include cough, fever and shortness of breath, and it is diagnosed through a laboratory test. The contagion could lead to severe respiratory problems or death, particularly among the elderly and persons with underlying

chronic illnesses. Some infected persons however, are carriers for the virus with no symptoms while others may experience only a mild illness and recover easily³. As there is currently no cure or vaccine for the COVID-19; medical treatments are limited to supportive measures aimed at relieving symptoms, use of research drugs and therapeutics. Knowledge of infection pathways and relevant precautions to take is needed to control the pandemic. While the scientific community continues to research possible vaccines or drugs for the viral infection. It is expected that adequate knowledge will motivate individuals to make decisions which may prevent and curb the epidemics. Knowledge such as regular hand washing, using hand sanitizers, wearing face masks, respiratory etiquettes, social distancing and self- isolation when sick are vital to reducing widespread infection ³. Consequently, individuals may need to be informed about the potential risks of infections in order to adopt the right precautionary measures.

At early stages of a pandemic, precautionary measures are needed to protect against possible danger and curtail the disease spread. In line with this therefore, the Nigerian government (just like other governments around the world) introduced various containment strategies which have interfered with individuals' daily lives and have led to severe economic loss and social disruption. People were coerced to stay at home, businesses and offices were closed, exempting healthcare facilities / workers and essential commercial establishments. For Nigerians making a living in the informal economy, their livelihood is now threatened by the lockdown since much of their activities and businesses involve face-to-face contact.

In Nigeria there is no social safety net, no access to food stamps or unemployment benefits, most people earn their living on a daily basis. Regardless of this however, there has so far been a high degree of compliance with the government directives, Nigerians are engaging in vigilant hand washing, practicing social distancing and self-isolation, and avoiding going to work, school

or crowded areas. Even most religious leaders agreed to stop large gatherings, forbid the shaking of hands and directed church members to pray at home and use hand sanitizers ⁵. On the other hand, some Nigerians due to superstitions and ignorance of the science behind the infection prefer only to pray (even violating the social distancing rule by attending churches or mosques during the lockdown) and use anointing oils, talisman, herbs or rituals to prevent contracting and spreading the virus ⁶.

2.1.1.2 Response of Nigerian Government to Coronavirus' Outbreak

WHO warned countries across the globe to prepare for the pandemic as it spreads around nations of the world like wild fire. The Federal Government of Nigeria heeded the warning by setting up coronavirus preparedness team that operated under the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). It was this body that discovered the index case on February 27, 2020. To reflect the seriousness of the matter, Nigerian government thereafter set up the Covid-19 Presidential Task Force ⁷. This happened on March 9, 2020. All other Agencies relating to Covid-19 pandemic response teams are now operating under the umbrella of Presidential Task Force of Covid-19. Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 engages in several activities including but not limited to the following ⁸:

- i. Screening of travellers as they entered the country through Nigeria's major international airports as well as sea ports and land borders,
- ii. Contact tracing of potential patients,
- iii. Strengthening of the National Reference Laboratory with diagnostic capacity for epidemic-prone pathogens,
- iv. Training of healthcare workers, dissemination of information,

Further measure introduced by the government that were aimed at containment of the disease were:

- i. Nationwide lockdown, that is, restriction of movement within the country. For example, schools, religious gatherings, market places were shut down across Nigeria,
- ii. Nigerian borders were also shut down,
- iii. Creation of isolation centres for treatment of patients,
- iv. Enforcement of social or physical distancing,
- v. Wearing of masks and
- vi. Hand washing with soap/hand sanitizers.

2.1.1.3 Science-based Communication during the COVID-19 Pandemic

In times of pandemics, speeding scientific data to the public can be beneficial when it is accurate. Misleading scientific data can worsen the pandemic by promoting ineffective or harmful policies or by encouraging dangerous conduct, or both. In comparison with previous pandemics, researchers and health professionals published much more about COVID-19 in the early phase of the academic response than during the 2003 SARS outbreak ⁹. Preprints gained increased popularity. Researchers promptly posted their findings online without peer review or editorial validation, using servers such as bioRxiv and medRxiv. Several preprints shared quickly and widely on social media then appeared on live broadcasts by news outlets. Although preprints are becoming more acceptable in academic publishing, they remain works-in-progress. Policymakers should not consider them to be evidence-based science nor use them as the basis for public health decisions, as preprints have not undergone a rigorous process of peer review ¹⁰. Often, research that emerges from review is a much refined and a more robust version of the initial submission.

For example, observational studies reporting that the drug ‘hydroxychloroquine’ is linked to severe adverse events and mortality among patients with COVID-19 were found to be based on unsourced data, and the papers had to be retracted ¹¹.

2.1.1.4 Response and Implications of COVID-19

There has been a notable and global response to the COVID-19 infodemic by international organizations, governments, social media technology companies, and major science bodies. The United Nations (UN) responded to the infodemic by forming a UN Coronavirus (COVID-19) portal for public access to reliable and up-to-date information¹². The UN Office of Drugs and Crime published materials to promote cyber security to protect children from possible online abuse and hospitals from disruptive cyber-attacks. The UN Office of Information and Communications Technology conducted webinars on online safety for those conducting work remotely, away from their usual and more secure worksites. The WHO also launched a portal called “myth busters” to expose false data ¹³. Its designers arrange for each ‘busted myth’ to appear with its associated fact in a catchy info graphic that can be freely downloaded and shared on social media platforms. The WHO’s risk communication team established the WHO Information Network for Epidemics to share health information with specific target groups¹³. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) built a website for COVID-19-related updates and news. One page begins “Stop the Spread of Rumors: Know the facts about coronavirus disease” then emphasizes five clear points for coping with COVID-19 in daily life¹⁴.

Governments worldwide responded to both the pandemic and the infodemic. The policy tracker of the International Monetary Fund reported that 193 countries took economic measures and

adopted policy changes in response to the pandemic¹⁵. In addition to public health strategies to minimize the spread of the virus, such as enforcing lockdowns and promoting social distancing norms, government officials offered daily or weekly briefings to their constituents with major news channels covering these events live ‘on air.’ The officials usually related the number of cases and updated the public on the infection and its control, presenting facts and effective measures. Officials also engaged the public through social media. Twitter, specifically, proved to be a powerful tool for sharing health information. A content analysis of Twitter usage by Group of Seven (G7) world leaders in response to COVID-19 revealed that 82.8% of their COVID-19-related tweets were informative, 9.4% were morale-boosting, and 6.9% were political ¹⁶. Social media technology executives grasped the severity of the situation. Google established a campaign that provides preventive tips to the public to help slow down viral spread and authenticates information about COVID-19 spreading on its platform ¹⁷. Google also created an ‘SOS Alert’ on COVID-19 in many languages and exerted efforts to assure that WHO and its social media accounts would be the first sources of information the public would see when using the Google search engine ¹³. Amazon restricted and removed advertisements with false claims about protective equipment offered for sale¹⁸. Facebook, YouTube, Microsoft, and Twitter announced implementation of further restrictions on published content related to the pandemic and their intent to remove medically disproved claims¹⁴. Scientific and medical bodies acted to promote science-based knowledge on COVID-19. Medical and scientific journals took steps to ensure timely dissemination of scientific data. Journals and publishing companies formed resource centers on their websites to address COVID-19-related published material. Participants included major scientific journals (Nature and Science) and respected medical journals (the New England Journal of Medicine, JAMA, the BMJ, as well as the Lancet journals) along with

respected publishing bodies, including Elsevier, Springer, Oxford, and Wiley. Journals arranged for speeding peer review ('fast-tracking') to support prompt public health policymaking and benefit healthcare workers and the public with new discoveries and clinical trial results. Many publishers adopted open-access publication policies for material related to the pandemic to ease access to science-based evidence. Preprint server bioRxiv added a yellow banner to label all articles related to COVID-19, and to remind readers that papers posted there are preliminary reports, not articles having undergone peer review. This warned readers that the findings should not be judged as conclusive nor reported as established data¹⁹.

Still, more can be done. A study propose a 12-item Infodemic Response Checklist (IRC) as a comprehensive tool to overcome the challenges posed by infodemics. Officials responsible for health communication strategies and media policies can adopt several measures to overcome the COVID-19 infodemic, communicate valid information, and protect the global community against any future info/ pandemics. These may include:

1. Provide more exposure and airtime for medical professionals, scientists, and public health personnel to provide authentic, useful, and transparent information for the public. Direct and effective communication between scientists and the public on global concerns is essential to allay fear and prevent erroneous assumptions. While the role of scientific journals and institutions is important for dissemination of evidence-based science, scientists and medical professionals are uniquely positioned to empower people with facts through interviews, op-eds, podcasts, blogs, and social media²⁰. CNN and Facebook, for example, collaborated to host a global town hall during the outbreak, during which medical doctors and psychologists participated from the studio or via skype to answer people's questions. Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and

Infectious Diseases in the United States, has taken a leading role in the White House Coronavirus Task Force, participating in interviews, town hall meetings, and engaging journalists in person during daily press briefings.

2. Promote websites of public health organizations via search engines. Engines like Google and Yahoo must promote websites of official public health organizations to those seeking information on preventive measures on the internet. A recent study assessing health information about COVID-19 prevention on the internet revealed substantial differences regarding recommendations to wear masks or wash hands among websites of different countries affected by COVID-19²¹. Searches of keywords that relate to the infodemic must prioritize public health websites and list them prominently where viewers will see them at the start of a search.
3. Verify the accounts of public health personnel on popular social media platforms. Media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, where the public indulges heavily in social interaction must verify the accounts of those appearing to be medical professionals. This will make it easier for the public to know whether the claimed source is verified and authentic or not.
4. Promote the posts of public health and medical professionals. In times of crises, social media platforms can sponsor posts of health officers to make sure that the public exposure and understanding is guided by reliable sources and authentic information.
5. Monitor engagement on social media platforms to control the messages being delivered. During the Zika virus outbreak in 2016, a cross-sectional survey of public information officers at local public health departments across the United States revealed that

monitoring social media resulted in higher satisfaction with crisis management²². Thus, social media technology companies must closely review content shared on their platforms during pandemics to ensure false information does not promote harmful perceptions or practices.

6. Establish programs that help people cope with stress and address their mental health concerns. The media has a huge role to play in addressing the mental health aspect of the pandemic. Sick individuals may suffer from stress, anxiety, and fear. Quarantine and self-isolation may have severe psychological consequences and lead to difficulties in concentration, increased intake of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs²³. Lack of public knowledge on the virus can promote social stigma against individuals infected or suspected to be infected by the virus²⁴. Furthermore, closure of medical clinics and postponement of medical appointments and elective procedures can worsen chronic health conditions. Acknowledging these conditions and guiding the public on how to manage and contain them via broadcasting media programs or social media posts is essential to promote health and well-being.
7. Adopt an empathic style of communication to grab public attention and address health concerns. Empathy in communication is critical for managing public anxiety and promoting behavioral compliance with public health guidelines. In China, online users generally had low engagement with posts relevant to COVID-19 from government agencies. Public posts that attracted more engagement, were more personal, showed empathy to affected people, and expressed worry about the epidemic²⁵. Merely sharing updated information and policies may be insufficient to capture public interest in official communications.

8. Promote dialogue to understand people's perceptions and the motives behind their practices. Communication through town hall meetings and debate circles can address concerns raised and hesitancy to adhere to health measures ²⁶. Such communication can further strengthen societal adhesion and unity.
9. Share personal experiences on social media to combat misinformation. Promoting stories of people who have been affected by the disease can have a major impact on people's perception of the pandemic. To increase public confidence in HPV vaccines, Danish public health officials emphasized the risk of disease and promoted stories about people who had lost wives and mothers to cervical cancer. Ireland's social media efforts used similar tactics to rebuild HPV-vaccine confidence; numbers for 2018 showed an increase of 6% for vaccine uptake from 2017 ²⁷. Adopting a similar strategy for COVID-19 is important.
10. Direct health communication strategies towards minority populations and people of different classes, races, and ethnicities. In the United States, health professionals estimated that about a third of COVID19 fatalities are African Americans, even though African Americans constituted only 14% percent of the COVID-19 cases²⁸. Based on media reporting, in New York, African Americans died at twice the rate of their white peers; Latinos in the city were also falling to the virus at a much higher rate than white or Asian New Yorkers ²⁹. Media companies must design health awareness campaigns for influencers and role models of different racial and ethnic backgrounds to present to the public. This ensures that people who share similar race or eth- Leveraging media and health communication strategies to 417 nicety feel relevant and thus become aware of the reality of the pandemic and the importance of prevention strategies and

governmental efforts. In addition, governments and health officials need to direct health communication campaigns at highlighting the lack of access to healthcare facilities and services that certain populations might suffer from to drive corrective governmental health policies.

11. Develop educational material and speed the share of evidence-based science to address existing wrong perceptions, correct behaviors, and promote healthy practices. During outbreaks, people struggle with uncertainty and look for sources to fill their needs for information. Unfortunately, ordinary citizens and communication systems do not operate at the same pace as the scientific method, which often takes time to provide evidence-based results. As such, false information that are usually marginally believable lead to wrong conclusions and fake news reports²⁹. Public health officials need to be faster in filling the public void for information and in directing conventional and social media platforms to better comprehend what to be reported and how data should be portrayed. When conventional media provides evidence-based information to the general public, it will eventually be picked up on social media which will facilitate its rapid widespread among the public. This will ensure that the people will act effectively to control the disease and mitigate its impact. Awareness campaigns do not always achieve their desired impact because public health officials craft messages based on what they want to promote, without addressing existing perceptions.

12. Increase investment in the research and development of health communication to explore and understand strategic ways of targeting different populations. Health communication is a rising field in different parts of the world³⁰. Investing in the field is important to understand the psychological influences that affect the individual efforts in following

guidelines and seeking the right information. In addition, more research will be important to learn which health communication strategies will prove effective—through trials that assess communal perceptions of health communication and awareness campaigns.

2.1.1.5 The World and COVID-19

COVID-19 was first reported in the city of Wuhan in China in December of 2019. As at that time, it was largely regarded as a Chinese problem that was also going to end in China ²⁹. In an article which was published by Journal of the Chinese Medical Association, COVID-19 was first reported in late December in Wuhan and quickly spread to other places in China and eventually, other parts of the world. In Nigeria, COVID-19 was first confirmed on 27 February 2020. This was after the virus was reported in many other parts of the world like United States, Italy, Russia, among others. This means that Nigeria had ample time to prepare for the outbreak. There have been many global confirmed cases of COVID-19 with several fatalities. The World Health Organization says there is a total of 5 267 419 confirmed cases of COVID-19 as at 25 May 2020. It adds that a total of 341 155 have died of the virus. The situation, when compared with 1 month ago from May 25, is frightening. This is because as at 25 April 2020, there were only 2 710 948 confirmed cases globally and 187 844 deaths. These figures represent multiple increases in the number of cases. WHO also reported that in Nigeria, there were a total of 7839 confirmed cases and 226 deaths as at 25 May 2020. This figure represented an exponential increase because as at 25 April 2020, Nigeria had only 1095 confirmed cases with only 32 deaths, but a month later, these increased more than four times. COVID-19 has proven that the global health system is still vulnerable and that the world is not as advanced in science as the 21st century has made us to believe. COVID-19 has rather shown that the interconnectedness of global economy has made the world vulnerable such that what happens in one country can have a significant impact on the

entire world. COVID-19 has impacted significantly on almost every part of the world. It has grounded economic activities, schools are shut down, places of worship have been deserted, and international flights have been very limited, if not completely stopped³⁰. There is a near total lockdown as people are encouraged to stay at home. Governments of countries have placed restrictions on movement both locally and internationally. Peoples' sources of livelihood have been threatened. The world has many lessons to learn from COVID-19 both now and when it will finally be contained.

2.1.2 Conceptualisation of Mass Media

Mass media refers to media technologies used to disseminate information to a wide audience. The messages are communicated through television, movies, advertising, radio, internet, magazines, and newspapers. They are the means or channels that people bring to their utility in order to communicate with people and get information. When we watch the news or our favorite TV show on our TVs and listen to our favorite programmes on the radio, it is all possible because of the existence of mass media³¹.

Mass media is any source that sends information to public (masses). It can include channels like newspapers, magazines, internet, TV, radio etc. TV and radio are not mass media per se but they become mass media only when they have the connection and they are capable of accessing the media so they are the sources³².

There are diverse applications of mass media in the world today. However, it exists since ages. Back in older times, people used drums to invite the residents of a community where they would gather and then announce the news to them. This is how their mass media would be like. Then gradually when they could write, they would paste the news on the places where majority could read and update others. It became more advanced with the passage of time and today we have

internet and social media which is the most advanced form of mass media ³³. Mass media develops awareness among people regarding social and political issues. It's also a means to educate, entertain and connect. It has strengthened our modes of accessibility.

Most people use mass media as a source of information. For example, students use it for academic purposes, business tycoons for business information and all adults for news and political updates. Businesses make use of mass media to promote their products and services in the form of advertisements. It is the biggest source of entertainment. Not all people love stage and standing comedy shows where 99% of the world population prefers TVs, Cinemas and computers for entertainment ³⁴.

2.1.2.2 Types of Mass Media

Books, newspapers, radio, social media platforms, booklets, and streaming services are all various forms of mass media. However, we distinguish four main types of mass media.

- i. **Print Media:** It can range from billboards to coupons and is one of the easiest and oldest ways to reach the masses. Originally, print media refers to newspapers which were the main sources of information. Further, this type of media expanded to journals, books, and magazines.
- ii. **Outdoor Media:** Ambient marketing is a great example of modern outdoor media. Brands use unusual locations and items to promote their products. Let's take Folgers, for example. This brand of coffee used manhole covers to promote coffee in a unique and eye-catching way. So, places like bus stops, public transports, and buildings can serve creative companies as places for promotion.

- iii. **Broadcasting media:** With the help of an electronic broadcasting medium, audio and video content is distributed to a dispersed audience. Television, radio, video, and games appeal to heterogeneous audiences, people who differ in age, background, views, goals, and interests.
- iv. **Digital media:** In 2021, there are around 4.66 billion active internet users worldwide which means that the world is dependent on digital media. Today, brands promote their goods and services through sites, YouTube, podcasts, and more. Besides, companies often refer to Instagram marketing and Facebook advertising to pitch their products.

2.1.2.11 Features of Mass Media

- i. It can appeal to a wide target audience;
- ii. It communicates a public message;
- iii. There's a distance between a source of information and people who obtain it;
- iv. It can be transmitted through various channels: TV, the internet, radio, and newspapers;
- v. It has a heterogeneous audience; news or information communicated through TV, radio, and print media can't receive feedback.

2.1.2.12 Functions of Mass Media

The mass media serves several general and many specific functions. In general, the mass media serves information, interpretation, instructive, bonding, and diversion functions:

- i. Information Function:** We have a need for information to satisfy curiosity, reduce uncertainty, and better understand how we fit into the world. The amount and availability of information is now overwhelming compared to forty years ago when a few television networks, local radio stations, and newspapers competed to keep us informed. The media saturation has led to increased competition to provide information, which creates the potential for news media outlets, for example, to report information prematurely, inaccurately, or partially.
- ii. Interpretation Function:** Media outlets interpret messages in more or less explicit and ethical ways. Newspaper editorials have long been explicit interpretations of current events, and now cable television and radio personalities offer social, cultural, and political commentary that is full of subjective interpretations. Although some of them operate in ethical gray areas because they use formats that make them seem like traditional news programs, most are open about their motives.
- iii. Instructive Function:** Some media outlets exist to cultivate knowledge by teaching instead of just relaying information. Major news networks like CNN and BBC primarily serve the information function, while cable news networks like Fox News and MSNBC serve a mixture of informational and interpretation functions. The in-depth coverage on National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting Service, and the more dramatized but still educational content of the History Channel, the National Geographic Channel, and the Discovery Channel, serve more instructive functions.
- iv. Bonding Function:** Media outlets can bring people closer together, which serves the bonding function. For example, people who share common values and interests can

gather on online forums, and masses of people can be brought together while watching coverage of a tragic event like 9/11 or a deadly tornado outbreak.

v. **Diversion Function.** We all use the media to escape our day-to-day lives, to distract us from our upcoming exam, or to help us relax. When we are being distracted, amused, or relaxed, the media is performing the diversion function.

vi. **Surveillance Function:** An important function of the media is to keep up a surveillance of all the happenings in the world and provide information to the human society. The media has the responsibility of providing news and cover a wide variety of issues that is of some service to the society. Media help maintain social order by providing instructions on what has to be done in times of crisis, thereby reducing confusion among the masses.

2.1.2.5 Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists

A journalistic code of ethics refers to a set of principles of professional conduct that are adopted and guarded by journalists themselves. Nigerian journalists with approval of Nigerian Press Organization and Nigerian Press Council came up with new ethical code of journalism in 1996. The council claimed that the old code of ethics was deficient in many vital areas. The new code was adopted and ratified. The new codes are fifteen ranging from editorial independence to press freedom and responsibility ³⁵.

1. **Editorial Independence:** Decisions concerning the content of news should be the responsibility of a professional journalist.

2. **Accuracy and Fairness:** The public has a right to know. Factual, accurate balance and fair reporting is the ultimate objective of good journalism and the basis of earning public trust and confidence. A journalist should refrain from publishing inaccurate and misleading information. Where such information has been inadvertently published, prompt correction should be made. A journalist must hold the right of reply as a cardinal rule of practice. In the course of his duties a journalist should strive to separate facts from conjecture and comment.

3. **Privacy:** As a general rule, a journalist should respect the privacy of individuals and their families unless it affects public interest. Information on the private life of an individual or his family should only be published if it impinges on public interest.

4. **Privilege / Non-Disclosure:** A journalist should observe the universally accepted principle of confidentiality and should not disclose the source of information obtained in confidence. A journalist should not breach an agreement with a source of information obtained as “off- the-record” or as “back ground information.

5. **Decency:** A journalist should dress and comport himself in a manner that conforms with public taste. A journalist should refrain from using offensive, abusive or vulgar language. A journalist should not present lurid details, either in words or picture, of violence, sexual acts, abhorrent or horrid scenes. In case involving personal grief or shock, enquiries should be carried out and approaches made with sympathy and discretion. Unless it is in the furtherance of the public’s right to know, a journalist should generally avoid identifying relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime.

6. **Discrimination:** A journalist should refrain from making pejorative reference to a person's ethnic group, religion, sex or to any physical or mental illness or handicap.

7. **Reward and Gratification:** A journalist should neither solicit nor accept bribe, gratification or patronage to suppress or publish information. To demand payment for the publication of news is inimical to the notion of news as a fair, accurate, unbiased and factual report of an event.

8. **Violence:** A journalist should not present or report acts of violence, armed robberies, terrorist activities or vulgar display of wealth in a manner that glorifies such acts in the eyes of the public.

9. **Children and Minors:** A journalist should not identify, either by name or picture, or interview children under the age of 16 who are involved in cases concerning sexual offences, crimes and rituals or witchcraft either as victims, witnesses or defendants.

10. **Access to Information:** A journalist should strive to employ open and honest means in the gathering of information. Exceptional methods may be employed only when the public interest is at stake.

11. **Public Interest:** A journalist should strive to enhance national unity and public good.

12. **Social Responsibility:** A journalist should promote universal principles of human rights, democracy, justice, equity, peace and international understanding.

13. **Copyright:** Where a journalist reproduces a work, be it in print, broadcast, art work or design, proper acknowledgement should be accorded the author. A journalist should abide by all rules of copyright, established by national and international laws and conventions.

14. Press Freedom and Responsibility: A journalist should strive at all-times to enhance press freedom and responsibility.

2.1.2.6 Ethical Standard of Media Practices in Nigeria

1. **Editorial Independence** is a definitive prerequisite for media quality. Traditionally, editorial independence has been defined as a separation between decisions that are taken by media owners and those that are taken by editors. In reality, however, the interests of the editorial board and the media outlet's advertising, marketing and finance departments interweave, which means that the existing understanding of editorial independence at each media company is crucial³⁶.

Editorial independence is one of the most important principles in media operations, because at the level of the practices of media organisations, it reveals the way in which freedom of the press operates and how pluralism is ensured³⁷. Editorial independence is also a part of normative views about media operations in that it is linked to honesty, truth, neutrality, objectivity and a professional understanding of journalism. Several other terms have been used to describe editorial independence, including editorial freedom and editorial autonomy. Editorial independence or freedom usually means that editors-in-chief must have full authority over the editorial content of their media unit. Descriptions of editorial independence usually emphasise the right of the editor to be independent from the owners and top managers of the media organisations, whose decisions cannot have an effect on the selection and choice of media content, the editorial process, or the form of publications. For that reason, appropriate circumstances must be created at media outlets in accordance with the aforementioned principles. Editorial independence or freedom usually refers to the professional work of media professionals, while editorial autonomy refers to the structure of media organisations, in which the development of content at the management level is kept separate from co-operation with

advertisers or other business partners, as well as from the company's financial operations, marketing and other functions, which are essential in medial operations. The term also covers the autonomy of journalists³⁸.

In everyday situations, however, editorial independence is not something unambiguous and stable in terms of editorial operations, because the process of shaping content at media organisations is influenced both by external factors (sources of information, partners, advertisers) and by internal factors (business interests and the goals of the media owner and the managers of the outlet). Editorial independence depends on the business models of the media, as well as on the commercialised media environment of the present way – one in which many decisions are taken on the basis of their advantages and profit potentials³⁹.

Studies related to the media in Eastern Europe regularly identify violations of editorial independence because of the ability of politicians or political parties to influence media content²⁰. Editorial independence in present-day media practices can be evaluated on the basis of the extent to which the media outlet, its manager or editor and each journalist can collect, correlate and publish information, viewpoints and interpretations. There are three levels at which editorial independence can be evaluated in accordance with various players in the media environment – the level of the individual, the media organisation and the media industry.

Editorial independence at each of these levels, in turn, depends on self-regulation and media regulation mechanisms. Editorial independence is also influenced by the overall status of the media industry, the legal status of journalists, wage and compensation systems, and the operations of media regulators. There is always interaction among legal regulations, self-regulations and private regulations which apply to each specific media organisation. These and other issues are analysed in detail in the European Council's which finds that the greatest threats

against editorial independence relate to the liberal and commercialised media system. The study was focused on an analysis of media policies and media freedoms in the European Union, and it concluded that in countries with powerful traditions related to the education of journalists and with strong labour unions there are fewer problems with editorial independence and the autonomy of journalists.

Although editorial independence is an inviolable component of media policy and is of unquestionable importance, the fact is that editorial independence is not absolute in any country or any segment of the media world. Because of this approximate situation, a critical evaluation of the real manifestations of media practices leads to a situation in which the concept of editorial independence is seen as old-fashioned or as one which is not realistic and is more of a myth, because it sometimes reflects the desire of media professionals to avoid the changes which occur in the media environment. Editorial independence in a commercial media system, is understood as the obligation of the editor not only to ensure free media content and to be responsible for it, but also to satisfy the duties of media directors. This usually relates to specific ratings, the obligation of reaching a specific target audience, and the need to take responsibility for the financial results of the media content as the content is put together. In her blog, Michele McLellan has called for a true evaluation of the everyday nature of the media, writing that it is naïve to think that editors can fail to count on the business strategies of their media companies. An editor cannot act at the national level and spend money for this purpose if the relevant media outlet is focused on the local audience ⁴⁰.

Invariably, the editor cannot change the owner's attempts to develop or not develop content for the Internet audience, and editorial independence does not allow the editor to influence the place on the page where a specific advertisement will be placed alongside a specific article⁷⁷. In other

words, editorial independence is not similar to the Sunday-best suit of an editor. It changes and must be defended at all phases of creating media content. Editorial independence is discussed not just by the media, but also by specific publications such as scholarly journals in the field of medicine and other niche publications which link it to intellectual liberty ⁴¹. As the media system, policies related to media regulations, and the condition of the media business change, there are also alterations in views about editorial independence, interpretations of the concept and the use of the concept in the work of every media professional.

Events occurring during the first decade and the early part of the second decade of the 21st century offer good reason to analyse the situation with editorial independence. In many countries, the media industry has experienced an economic recession, finding it necessary to adapt to operations in the Internet environment, to seek out new business models, and to experiment with media content. Latvia's media environment lost more than 50% of its advertising investments over the past five years, and those investments are returning to the environment very slowly. Moreover, there have been ownership changes in all media sectors, and there has been an exacerbation during the period of economic difficulties of previously identified problems with media responsibilities their commercial orientation, and the use of hidden advertising in the business models of the media ⁴².

The Latvian media system is currently undergoing increased concentration in the media business. The nature of the work of journalists and editors is changing, and the modern communications environment means that editors have less and less of an opportunity to dictate media content. The job market for journalists is unstable and shrinking. The principle of editorial independence that was enshrined in Latvian law in 2010 is only declarative. Can we hope during this period of change that the situation with editorial independence has remained unchanged?

2. Truth and Accuracy: It is a journalist's top priority to report and write the truth, this is the reason why truthfulness and accuracy make up one of the most important standards in the code of ethics ¹⁹. Reporters are always anticipated to look for trustworthy sources and to be as accurate as they possibly can with the size of the project given to them. When editors come across different errors, it is important for the writers to correct them in the most accurate and true way possible. Most journalists' fact-check alongside another employee or writer to help verify everything is in line before submitting to the editor as well ⁴³.

When reporting on crimes or incidents, it is very important that journalists remember to consider that those under trial or being regarded as suspects are always innocent until proven guilty. If this is not followed, there is the possibility of wrongful conviction. The best word reporters use in this incident is "allegedly", until sentencing. Afterwards, the crimes can then be reported as fact.

A basic rule journalists follow is when there are two or more individual witnesses of an event, it can be reported as fact. If there is only one witness, the event is conveyed with acknowledgment to the witness. This also goes for controversial facts. Journalists cannot always guarantee 'truth', but getting the facts right is the cardinal principle of journalism. We should always strive for accuracy, give all the relevant facts we have and ensure that they have been checked. When we cannot corroborate information we should say so.

Fast is good, but right is better. We need the strongest possible commitment to accuracy and its close cousin, fairness. - Margaret Sullivan, public editor for the New York Times After news organisations, including the New York Times, wrongly identified the perpetrator of the Newtown school shootings in the US, Margaret Sullivan said a reader wrote to say "she had always believed that if 'I read it in the New York Times it's always true,' but her belief in that truth had

been shaken”¹⁷. Being accurate has always been a core tenet of journalism, but in an age of viral news, verification is an increasingly essential skill.

The sheer volume of material requiring verification is crippling news organisations whose budgets are shrinking. Writing in the *New York Times*, study claim “truth has never been an essential ingredient of viral content on the internet. But in the stepped up competition for readers, digital news sites are increasingly blurring the line between fact and fiction, and saying that it is all part of doing business in the rough-and tumble world of online journalism ⁴⁴.” Some media outlets are placing the responsibility for scepticism with the audience, thereby absolving the journalism outlet of the responsibility to fact-check because it’s physically impossible to keep up with the information deluge. “We assume a certain level of sophistication and scepticism of our readers,” says John Cook, editor-in-chief of Gawker.

Further, former BBC director of news and Cardiff University journalism professor, Richard Sambrook, also identifies that “some now believe the responsibility for assessing the accuracy and quality of information should switch from the providers of news to the consumers; that in an age of plenty the consumer has a greater role to play and responsibility for what they consume ⁴².” Others see this out-sourcing of fact-checking as a way to free up limited resources within a newsroom for other tasks. Those other tasks may include interpreting and contextualising the information, a skill that can move the trained journalist to a position of greater power. “The journalist has not been replaced but displaced, moved higher up the editorial chain from the production of initial observations to a role that emphasises verification and interpretation, bringing sense to the streams of text, audio, photos and video produced by the public ⁴³. This gets us into deterministic ‘truth’ versus probabilistic ‘truth’ territory. In other words, from: Here it is, take it or leave it, to: Here it is, subject to arbitrary on-going revision.

3. The Right to Privacy: Journalism is a public service that permits its practitioners to write and publish information about groups, governments and individuals. This places a high degree of responsibility on journalists. As a study has observed: Journalism is not a job for men and women who have no respect for the hard earned reputation of their fellow countrymen and women. Rather, it is a profession for sober and mature people who would act in the interest of society as a whole by treating every story with fairness and, of course, by obeying the laws that affect media practice.

It is a universal fact that news is all about human beings- their activities, actions, inactions, mistakes, foibles, achievements and others. However, in reporting these activities, the reporter must show a high level of professionalism and introspection so that an individual's reputation is not needlessly destroyed or his/her privacy unnecessarily invaded. This is because every individual deserves a measure of privacy, depending on the level of intimacy he/she has with other members of society. A person whose privacy is recklessly invaded is empty and even naked. This affects his/her mental and emotional stability, with negative consequences on his reasoning and by extension, productivity. Such a person is often not in a position to meaningfully contribute to national development efforts. Therefore, the careless use of personal information often provided by internet users. The need to protect the privacy of an individual has been widely acknowledged, perhaps all over the world, except in authoritarian regimes. The Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalist draws attention to the need to protect the privacy of an individual in the following words: As a general rule, a journalist should respect the privacy of individuals and their families unless it affects public interest: Information on the private life of an individual or his family should only be published if it impinges on public interest, publishing of such information about an individual as mentioned above should be deemed justifiable only if it is

directed at, exposing crime or serious misdemeanour; exposing anti-social conduct, protecting public health, morality and safety, preventing the public from being misled by some statement or action of the individual concerned. The above code of ethics clearly shows that the individual deserves privacy in his/her every activity but also provides the circumstances under which such protection could be vitiated or annulled. For instance, an armed robber, having shattered social harmony and caused perhaps bodily harm or economic adversity, loses his right to privacy, as he/she is paraded before television cameras. Even if such a person seeks legal protection, it is unlikely that he/she would have any legal reprieve.

4. **Privilege/Non-Disclosure:** Source protection, sometimes also referred to as source confidentiality or in the U.S. as the reporter's privilege, is a right accorded to journalists under the laws of many countries, as well as under international law. It prohibits authorities, including the courts, from compelling a journalist to reveal the identity of an anonymous source for a story. The right is based on recognition that without a strong guarantee of anonymity, many would be deterred from coming forward and sharing information of public interests with journalists.

Regardless of whether the right to source confidentiality is protected by law, the process of communicating between journalists and sources can jeopardize the privacy and safety of sources, as third parties can hack electronic communications or otherwise spy on interactions between journalists and sources. News media and their sources have expressed concern over government covertly accessing their private communications⁴⁴. To mitigate these risks, journalists and sources often rely on encrypted messaging.

Journalists rely on source protection to gather and reveal information in the public interest from confidential sources. Such sources may require anonymity to protect them from

physical, economic or professional reprisals in response to their revelations. There is a strong tradition of legal source protection internationally, in recognition of the function that confidential sources play in facilitating 'watchdog' or 'accountability' journalism. While professional journalistic practice entails multi-sourcing, verification and corroboration, confidential sources are a key component of this practice.

5. Taste, Decency and Acceptability: Audiences have different reactions to depictions of violence, nudity, coarse language, or to people in any other situation that is unacceptable to or stigmatized by the local culture or laws (such as the consumption of alcohol, homosexuality, illegal drug use, scatological images, etc.). Even with similar audiences, different organizations and even individual reporters have different standards and practices. These decisions often revolve around what facts are necessary for the audience to know.

When certain distasteful or shocking material is considered important to the story, there are a variety of common methods for mitigating negative audience reaction. Advance warning of explicit or disturbing material may allow listeners or readers to avoid content they would rather not be exposed to. Offensive words may be partially obscured or bleeped. Potentially offensive images may be blurred or narrowly cropped. Descriptions may be substituted for pictures; graphic detail might be omitted. Disturbing content might be moved from a cover to an inside page, or from daytime to late evening when children are less likely to be watching. There is often considerable controversy over these techniques, especially concern that obscuring or not reporting certain facts or details is self-censorship that compromises objectivity and fidelity to the truth, and which does not serve the public interest.

For example, images and graphic descriptions of war often depict violent, bloody, shocking and profoundly tragic. This makes certain content disturbing to some audience members, but it is precisely these aspects of war that some consider to be the most important to convey. Some argue that "sanitizing" the depiction of war influences public opinion about the merits of continuing to fight, and about the policies or circumstances that precipitated the conflict. The amount of explicit violence and mutilation depicted in war coverage varies considerably from time to time, from organization to organization, and from country to country. Implying that reporters have also been accused of indecency in the process of collecting news, namely that they are overly intrusive in the name of journalistic insensitivity. War correspondent Edward Behr recounts the story of a reporter during the Congo Crisis who walked into a crowd of Belgian evacuees and shouted, "Anyone here been raped and speaks English?"⁴⁵.

6. Discrimination and Disabled People: The fact that disabled people have a substantially poorer standard of living to that of non-disabled people is no longer in doubt. Orthodox medical explanations suggest this be because impairment has such a traumatic physical and psychological effect on individuals they are unable to achieve a comparable lifestyle by their own efforts. Disabled people and their organizations reject this view as a sound basis for understanding the problems associated with disability. They, along with a growing number of professionals and policy makers - particularly overseas, maintain that it is not impairment, which prevents people from achieving a reasonable lifestyle, but restrictive environments and disabling barriers. 'Disability', therefore, represents a complex system of social constraints imposed on people with impairments by a highly discriminatory society; to be a disabled person means to be discriminated against. The problem is worse for disabled members of the gay and lesbian communities, black people, and women with impairments.

Research by the British Council of Organizations of Disabled People (BCODP) focusing on 'Disabled People in Britain and Discrimination: A Case for Anti-Discrimination Legislation' shows that the type of discrimination encountered by disabled people is not just a question of individual prejudice; it is institutionalized in the very fabric of our society. Institutional discrimination - attitudes and policies which deny equal opportunities to disabled people - are evident in education, employment, the benefit system, support services, the built environment, the leisure industry, and politics⁴⁶.

7. **Violence:** Most studies on the effects of media violence have examined passive visual media (dramatic television and movies, television news, and music videos), in terms of the media that viewers observe only. However, there have also been a limited number of investigations of interactive visual media (video games and the Internet), media that viewers both observe and interact with. In this section, we examine both kinds of studies. Within each genre, it begins with experimental studies, in which cause and effect are unambiguous but the effects observed are short term. Of necessity, the outcomes in these experiments tend to be physical aggression that is not life threatening, or else verbal aggression, aggressive thoughts, or aggressive emotions. It then turns to surveys, or cross-sectional studies, that provide a snapshot of the relation at one point in time between individuals' habitual consumption of media violence and their aggressive behaviour²⁴. These surveys often deal with more serious forms of physical aggression, but this type of methodology by itself is not as conclusive about causation as experimental studies are. For genres for which longitudinal studies exist, we conclude our review by examining how youths' habitual consumption of violence affects their violent and aggressive behaviour later in life. Like cross-sectional investigations, longitudinal studies often examine serious physical aggression, but they generally provide better evidence about causal influences than can cross-

sectional studies. Because of space constraints, we provide illustrative examples of carefully selected key studies in each area, rather than an exhaustive review of the research literature. However, in addition to discussing these selected studies, we describe (if available) meta-analyses that have aggregated the results of most major investigations to reach overall estimates of effect sizes. A meta-analysis essentially averages the effect sizes of multiple studies, and allows the researcher to ask whether a particular factor (e.g., exposure to media violence) is significantly linked to a particular outcome (e.g., violent behaviour). There are several commonly used measures of effect size, any of which can be applied to experimental, correlational, and longitudinal types of studies. To provide a common metric for this discussion, we have converted all effect sizes to correlation coefficients (rs) ⁴⁷.

8. Access to Information is the ability for an individual to seek, receive and impart information effectively. This sometimes includes "scientific, indigenous, and traditional knowledge; freedom of information, building of open knowledge resources, including open Internet and open standards, and open access and availability of data; preservation of digital heritage; respect for cultural and linguistic diversity, such as fostering access to local content in accessible languages; quality education for all, including lifelong and e-learning; diffusion of new media and information literacy and skills, and social inclusion online, including addressing inequalities based on skills, education, gender, age, race, ethnicity, and accessibility by those with disabilities; and the development of connectivity and affordable ICTs, including mobile, the Internet, and broadband infrastructures ⁴⁸."

Michael Buckland defines six types of barriers that have to be overcome in order for access to information to be achieved: identification of the source, availability of the source, price of the

user, cost to the provider, cognitive access and acceptability⁴⁷. While "access to information", "right to information", "right to know" and "freedom of information" are sometimes used as synonyms, the diverse terminology does highlight particular (albeit related) dimensions of the issue⁴⁸.

While there has been an increase in countries with freedom of information laws, their implementation and effectiveness vary considerably across the world. The Global Right to Information Rating is a programme providing advocates, legislators, reformers with tools to assess the strength of a legal framework⁴⁸. In measuring the strength and legal framework of each country's freedom of information law using the Right to Information Rating, one notable trend appears²⁹. Largely regardless of geographic location, top scoring countries tend to have younger laws³⁰. United Nations Secretary General's 2017 report on the Sustainable Development Goals, to which United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) contributed freedom of information-related information, of the 109 countries with available data on implementation of freedom of information laws, 43 per cent do not sufficiently provide for public outreach and 43 per cent have overly-wide definitions of exceptions to disclosure, which run counter to the aim of increased transparency and accountability⁴⁹.

Despite the adoption of freedom of information laws; officials are often unfamiliar with the norms of transparency at the core of freedom of information or are unwilling to recognise them in practice. Journalists often do not make effective use of freedom of information laws for a multitude of reasons: official failure to respond to information requests, extensive delays, receipt of heavily redacted documents, arbitrarily steep fees for certain types of requests, and a lack of professional training⁵⁰.

Debates around public access to information have also focused on further developments in encouraging open data approaches to government transparency. In 2009, the data.gov portal was launched in the United States, collecting in one place most of the government open data; in the years following, there was a wave of government data opening around the world. As part of the Open Government Partnership, a multilateral network established in 2011, some 70 countries have now issued National Action Plans, the majority of which contain strong open data commitments designed to foster greater transparency, generate economic growth, empower citizens, fight corruption and more generally enhance governance. In 2015 the Open Data Charter was founded in a multi stakeholder process in order to establish principles for 'how governments should be publishing information'⁵¹. The Charter has been adopted by 17 national governments half of which were from Latin America and the Caribbean⁵².

9. **Freedom of the Press** is the principle that communication and expression through various media, including printed and electronic media, especially published materials, should be considered a right to be exercised freely. Such freedom implies the absence of interference from an overreaching state; its preservation may be sought through constitution or other legal protection and security. With respect to governmental information, any government may distinguish which materials are public or protected from disclosure to the public. State materials are protected due to either of 2 reasons: the classification of information as sensitive, classified or secret, or the relevance of the information to protecting the national interest. Many governments are also subject to "sunshine laws" or freedom of information legislation that are used to define the ambit of national interest and enable citizens to request access to government-held information.

The United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers ²⁹. This philosophy is usually accompanied by legislation ensuring various degrees of freedom of scientific research (known as scientific freedom), publishing, and press. The depth to which these laws are entrenched in a country's legal system can go as far down as its constitution. The concept of freedom of speech is often covered by the same laws as freedom of the press, thereby giving equal treatment to spoken and published expression. Sweden was the first country in the world to adopt freedom of the press into its constitution with the *Freedom of the Press Act* of 1766.

10. **Copyright:** The evolution of copyright has been closely linked to technological development. Whereas, most of the technologies made copyright protection more difficult, digital computers managed to alter the fundamental concepts behind copyright. Copyrights have a great influence on majority of library activities. They shape the type of services offered by libraries to their users and the conditions on which a library can offer access to materials protected by copyright. As a result, copyright affect the way libraries can function and conduct activities such as storing, protecting and making their collections available. Copyright is “a procedure whereby the originator of a piece of intellectual property (book, article, piece of music etc.) acquires a series of rights over the work created, including copying, publishing, performing, broadcasting and adaptation. The changing world and multiplicity of items led to substantial changes in copyright legislation and international agreements, current technological advances have put copyright law under stress again⁵³.”

11. **Plagiarism:** has always been a difficulty in publishing but the problem has aggravated with the unauthorized re-use of material found on the Internet. It can be intentional or no intentional. Harrod's Librarians' Glossary explains Plagiarism as "using another person's work and publishing it as one's own without payment or acknowledgement⁵⁴." Plagiarism is not the same as copyright infringement. While both the terms may apply to a particular act, they are different terms, and false claims of authorship may subject to plagiarism regardless of whether the material is protected by copyright or not. It is considered an ethical offense and can be harmful to one's academic reputation and honesty.

What is Plagiarism? Oxford English Dictionary defines Plagiarism as the "wrongful appropriation" and "stealing and publication" of another author's "language, thoughts, ideas, or expressions" and the representation of them as one's own original work. Plagiarism by mentioning various elements involved in it¹⁰²: Plagiarism occurs when someone: Uses words, ideas, or work products, attributable to another identifiable person or source, without attributing the work to the source from which it was obtained, in a situation in which there is a legitimate expectation of original authorship and in order to obtain some benefit, credit, or gain which need not be monetary The above definition clearly explains that plagiarism is mainly harmful because someone is trying to get credit for some work, ideas which he is not his own.

12. Children and Minors: Children are regarded as precious gifts from God. It is rather curious and unfortunate that these same children are subjected to abuses and neglect. Universally, childhood is recognised as a period of sensitivity requiring special care, attention and protection. Perhaps it is in recognition of this fact that a study opined that: Children's rights has been a world focus since 1979, when the United Nations designated that year as the International year of the child and developed a list of children's rights. Among the rights suggested are the rights to

love and understanding, adequate food and health, free education, play, an identity and special attention of handicapped regardless of colour, sex, religion and national or social origin. To further concretize global efforts and attention on child development and protection against any form of abuse or mistreatment, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was passed on November 20th 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly. The instrument which is in three (3) parts with fifty-four (54) articles opens with a preamble.

The preamble states the aims and objectives which the convention seeks to accomplish for the child. It states: Recognising that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. In Africa, the Organisation of Africa Unity (now African Union) at its Heads of State Summit in Addis Ababa in 1990 adopted a Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child. The charter which derives from the United Nations Convention takes cognisance of the sociocultural peculiarities of the African Child⁵⁴.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child notes: That the situation of most African Children, remains critical due to the unique factors of their socio-economic, cultural, traditional and developmental circumstances, natural disasters, armed conflicts, exploitation and hunger and on account of the child's physical and mental immaturity, he/she needs special safeguards and care. To further the mobilization of attention on the African Child, a reported noted that: The Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) subsequently proclaimed in Abuja 1991, the 1990s as the "Decade of the Africa Child" and set June 16 of every year as the "Day of the African Child". The documents also report that every child must be protected against all forms of exploitation, indecent or degrading treatment including child labour, abuse and torture, sexual exploitation, sale, abduction and drug abuse. It goes without saying that every nation who is a

signatory to the convention is expected to make concerted effort at protecting children against all forms of abuses, through the enforcement of relevant instruments⁵⁵.

Again, Section 34 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides for the right of every individual to dignity of his/her person. This section further prohibits “all forms of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, and slavery, forced or compulsory labour”. In other words, it ensures the child’s right to dignity of his/her person. Accordingly, children should not be subjected to any form of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment, forced or compulsory labour. Despite these provisions in the United Nations Convention and the Nigerian Constitution, children in Nigeria suffer cruelty, abuses, inhuman and degrading treatment, child labour and some are forced into prostitution. These saddening experiences have strong emotional impact on the victim. Often times, abused and neglected children are overwhelmed and shattered. This usually results in emotional imbalance which eventually manifest in delinquency and deviance⁵⁶.

In Nigeria, for instance, youth crime and breeding of street children are direct consequences of child abuse and neglect. But a situation where the government ratifies international conventions it cannot enforce locally is intolerable. A situation where the Child Rights Bill is passed and mere lip-service is paid to its implementation amounts to hypocrisy and apathy as far as issues of child abuse and neglect is concerned. A study observed that “It is common knowledge that children in Nigeria are bludgeoned into child labour and prostitution by highly placed persons under the guise of philanthropy⁵⁷.”

Given these circumstances, the average Nigerian does not seem to be aware of the provisions of the Child Rights Bill needless to say the instruments before it. It is even more worrisome in the light of the fact that most forms of youth violence, unrest, riots are linked with child abuse and neglect. The media are undoubtedly persuasive instruments in man’s struggle for self-liberation

and development. In line with this, it was advanced that the mass media select and bring to waiting multitudes a constant flow of detail related to those fruitful dialogues of differences and concordance upon which free societies thrive⁵⁸.

With respect to child rights issue, the media most especially television medium coverage has been used as weapon of awareness creation. In this regard, The United Nations Fund for Population (UNFPA) and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) have produced “I Need to Know” a drama serial which is shown weekly on most TV stations in Nigeria. In Oredo local government area of Edo State for example, the programme is a regular feature on Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS), Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and Independent Television (ITV). It addresses child rights, abuse, and welfare and issues. Similarly, Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF), at the instance of Mrs Titi Abubakar the wife of the then Vice President bankrolled the production of “Izozo” a drama serial on national television. This programme which shows weekly (NTA network service) is mainly on child labour and its evils.

14. Public Interest: The public interest means anything that is relevant to the lives and well-being of all of us, to society and our communities. It concerns the “common good”, meaning matters that affect our health, livelihoods, quality of life, security, and our governance. The public interest does not mean what the public might find interesting. Broadly speaking, the difference here is between what is relevant to members of the public, as opposed to what might merely entertain, fascinate or titillate some of them⁵⁹.

News journalism is reporting matters of societal relevance. Not gossip and titbits about well-known figures or about personal events and circumstances of others that do not affect broader

society, but which merely pander to voyeurism. A journalist with a brief to report news should therefore apply a public interest test before deciding whether to cover a story. In most cases it is clear what is and what is not in the public interest. But in some cases, such as stories concerning the private lives and actions of public figures in positions of power, the distinction is not clear.

The public interest is in having a safe, healthy and functional society. In a democracy, journalism plays a central role in that. It gives people the information they need to take part in the democratic process. If journalists are good at their job, they hold governments and other institutions to account. All serious journalism, then, contains a public service ethic. To fulfil this public service role, journalists must build and retain the trust of their audiences by behaving in an ethical and professional manner. A journalist must have compelling reasons to deviate from standard good practice: if it is the only way to bring an important subject to the public's attention.

For example, journalists should be honest about who and what they are; they should always give their names, and say for which news organisation they work. However, there are times when a journalist might have to go undercover and hide their true identity and the real reason for their actions. Such cases could include the investigation of crime or political wrongdoing. This is an act of deception, which is generally to be avoided, but if it brings justice and an end to criminal activity, it may be justified in the wider public interest.

Journalists should not intrude into people's private lives – but there might be a case for doing so if the person being investigated is a public figure whose private behaviour is at odds with what they advocate in public life, especially when their position can influence legislation. In this case, media intrusion – normally an objectionable practice – could expose hypocrisy and dishonesty. However, such intrusion must be clearly shown and clearly seen to be in the wider public interest.

Things become more difficult when the story in question may actually involve a journalist breaking the law, or encouraging someone else to do so. Here you need to have a serious discussion with colleagues about the circumstances, the public interest benefit in covering the story, the risks involved and the likely consequences. Some countries build “the public interest” into their legal systems. So if you want to publish a difficult or controversial item because it is “in the public interest”, you should check whether the legal framework gives you the protection you need in each and every case ⁶⁰.

In some countries, those in power might actively oppose journalists revealing information which, although in the public interest, might threaten their control of society. In such cases the public interest test takes on another meaning. How those in power define the public interest might be more about control than freedom of information. Here, extra care is required.

15. Violate: As a profession that serves the interest of the public. Journalist has degree responsibilities in the society. Every day, journalist face challenges that test their ethical values and responsibility to truth telling despite professional code of ethics, journalist may violate the rules by accepting bribes while covering news or features. This in some cases lowers the journalists’ credibility and undermines a professional career. Corruption is dangerous to society and can be extremely devastating to media ⁵⁸.

Therefore, while acknowledging the attempt by the federal government to fight corruption and economic and stake holder to adopt zero tolerance attitude to corruption in the media and indeed in the society at large. Some protagonists of African tradition have argued seriously that corruption in its presents would and character is part of our colonial heritage. Gratification is indeed a conkeralorm that has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria society. It is a most that all

sundry blame for the economic woe facing the country. This is because bribery and corruption is seen as one of the major impediments of the economic development of the nation. It is perhaps, the only reason why nothing seems to be working ⁵⁹.

Journalist may use the media for their personal ends or for greater social good to serve the public. As human needs are insatiable, there are chances were some may sacrifice the public interest for their selfish motives ignoring the social responsibility. Such miss behaviour damages journalists and the profession's integrity and reputations. A study poised that journalism practice involves the gathering packing and disseminating of news to general public, general in today's society the mass media are seem as veritable instruments of information dissemination, social mobilization and control ⁶³.

It is one of the means through which the public is educated and sensitized about important issues affecting the lives of people. And as such our ethical pitfalls like "brown envelope" money and favour journalist collect their source to journalists in the hope of attracting or shaping information. Such reporting may colour news content or brighter stories with hidden agenda ⁶⁴.

However, journalism practice as noble profession demands for discipline and ethical behaviour to uphold the crucial and dependency of the society on the mass media for survivals. A study poised the ethics should give the journalist a standard by which he can judge action to right or wrong, good or bed, responsible that journalist today needs to know their limitation so as not to abuse the power of the media in coronation of this view ⁶⁵.

Regrettably, communication in Nigeria is mainly influence by economic extremism on one hand and government pressure on the other hand, in developing nation like Nigeria, poverty debases

human dignity and causes the scale of honour and trust for money through gratification to influence news as opposed to editors of sense of too poor considering their enormous task they perform in sociality thereby making him or her to compromise ⁶⁶.

2.1.3 Newspaper Overview

A newspaper is a serial publication containing news about current events, other informative articles about politics, sports, arts, and so on, and advertising. Newspaper can also be described as printed and unbound paper that has the content of news about current political, economic, socio-cultural, educational, environmental, scientific-cum-technological and sundry affairs, as well as other relevant information ⁶⁷.

Newspaper is a print medium of mass communication, which was the first evolution in the global history of the mass media. Although, newspaper is a print medium, there are online versions of newspapers in this modern age. From the earliest times till now, newspapers have played an enormous role in keeping abreast members of the society with news and information of events, happenings and occurrences around the people and their environment. Newspapers have over the years, served as societal and human right activists by developing a platform for substantial advocacy through public opinions and editorials ⁶⁸.

Most traditional papers also feature an editorial page containing editorials written by an editor (or by the paper's editorial board) and expressing an opinion on a public issue, opinion articles called op-eds written by guest writers (which are typically in the same section as the editorial), and columns that express the personal opinions of columnists, usually offering analysis and

synthesis that attempts to translate the raw data of the news into information telling the reader what it all means and persuading them to concur.

Newspapers are circulated according to geographical areas; the ones that have national circulation are called national newspapers. Some newspapers are regionally circulated, while others are local or community based ⁶⁹.

2.1.3.1 The Societal Role of Newspaper

Newspaper plays a very significant role in the society by reporting events, happenings, occurrences in the society; serving as an advocacy instrument by providing the platform for opinions (letter to the editors, op-ed, editorials, etc.), as well as performing the watchdog function against the government, authorities and the ills of the society history⁵⁴.

The newspaper has a content that serves different people with different purposes ranging from news, information, entertainment, opinion, advertisements, sports, business, politics, education, and a host of others. It is further affirmed that the newspapers focus on the social and political evils in the society such as drinking, gambling, drug addiction, and a host of others ⁵⁴.

Some functions-cum-advantages of newspaper include but not limited to the following:

- i. Providing better interpretation or in-depth developmental stories that place developmental issues and facts in greater perspectives.
- ii. Having advantages of place and time of exposure and flexibility, which ensures easy comprehension and retention of media content.
- iii. Ensuring easier storage and retrieval for limitless repeat exposure any time, any day and anywhere.
- iv. Serving as viable tool for mass education and mass literacy by motivating and encouraging readership habits among illiterates and new literates in the society.

2.1.3.2 Newspaper Stories and Sources

Selection of news sources plays a vital role in the news production process⁵². News sources are essential in the construction of news stories given that journalists in most cases are not able to gather information firsthand as witnesses of news events. They have therefore to rely on people who witnessed the events for relevant information to build their stories⁵². In other cases, the nature of the stories in terms of how complex or how scientific they are will compel the journalists to seek for help in getting explanations of such complex issues⁵³. Based on this, environmental journalists capitalize on credible news sources to be able to produce reliable and trustworthy news for the public. The complexity and the scientific nature of environmental issues make it more prone to use of expert information in writing readable, understandable and relatable environmental stories.

This explains why journalists and news organizations seem to be in an endless symbiotic relationship with sources which enables them to explain facts to their audiences. Erickson et al. believe that the relationship that exists between sources and the press 'leads to a sharing of the core values in the dominant culture as news orientates towards society's governing political and social structures.'

If the above assertion holds true, it then implies that news sourcing is bureaucratically structured as journalists, as it were, have, in what Fishman calls a 'map of relevant knowers' for newsworthy topics. Thus the nature of event or issue covered by journalists will determine the relevant sources needed to be contacted for information given that the journalists are guided by bureaucratic knowers' compass⁵⁶. But how true does this map of relevant knowers compass

apply in environmental news sources? Does the complexity and scientific nature of environmental news imply that subsidiary news actors should not be sought as news sources?

In gathering, selecting and packaging news stories for public consumption, news sources play an immense role as the information they provide makes or mars the news⁵⁴. The impact of news source's information is underscored by its power to shape the news. In most cases emphasis on news production is usually centered on the journalists as the news agenda setter by the mere fact that they select, news. Little or no attention has been paid to the news sources in regard to the prominent role they play in providing journalists with relevant information which informs what the journalists purveys. Thus it could be said that news contents are not in most cases shaped by journalists, but rather by news sources who provide journalists with information in the first place.

2.1.3.4 News as a Commodity vs. News as a Public Good

Tension exists between the need for newspapers to ensure that productivity is kept high and that profits are maintained, on the one hand, and the need to maintain professionalism in the reporting of news given that news is a public good which is needed for democracy on the other. Serving commercial interests primarily over producing news accurately to serve society could impact on news quality given that there may be pressure to publish quicker and publish news stories that sell. In the midst of this, quality checks may be lost thereby undermining the credibility of media as an essential pillar to democracy.

Studies distinguishes between two types of press; one that is strictly dependent on the state and destined to serve it and the other that is constituted on the model of the for-profit commercial enterprise⁵⁴. Newspapers are economic enterprises directly subject to economic laws which often come into conflict with the imperatives of intellectual production; his presents a strong pressure

within journalism. It is important to note that although media has the role to serve the state and inform citizens appropriately in a democratic society, profitability tends to impose strong constraints on journalistic production. The state has power of ensuring that media performs its role of informing citizenry and enforces measures to oversee the way media operates, as in the case of the Protection of State Information Bill. Should the Bill become law it will limit information that journalists can expose to the public as the Bill seeks to regulate the classification, protection and distribution of state information. Thus, the state would be able to regulate what state information the media can or cannot bring to the public eye. This notion of state power over the media can be justified by drawing on the Marxist critique of the media as a bourgeois institution which represents the interests of the ruling class in society.

The tension between making profits and maintaining professionalism is therefore a difficult one to resolve given that newspapers' profitability models are under strain from other immediate and freely available news sources. In the end newspapers face a challenge of ensuring professionalism in news reporting while still remaining profitable. As Schoar argues, a major contradiction within the operation of the journalistic field lies in that the journalistic practices that best conform to journalism ethical codes are often not profitable⁶⁶.

2.1.3.5 News as a Commodity

News is a commodity given that it is produced for consumption by the public and also with the intention of newspapers making profit from its production. News has to sell as newspaper corporations are in business, moreover with the goal of profit making. Newspapers business model has been affected by the decommunitisation of news content as it is offered for free on the internet. This has brought newspapers' profitability model under pressure as they have to strive

to still remain in business. As a result, more emphasis has been placed on the need to make profits thereby sacrificing quality in news reporting in some instances ⁶⁷.

Researcher defines commercialisation of news as any action intended to boost profit that interferes with a journalist's or news organization's best effort to maximize public understanding of those issues and events that shape the community they claim to serve⁶⁸. As competition from other sources of news, primarily the immediacy of news offered freely on the internet, commercial interference has been on the rise. Newspapers thus compete to grab the attention of readers and to sell. As a result of this, more news is becoming sensationalized and made to sound interesting to readers, in the end accuracy is lost. There is a focus on news that can sell to the public which leads to the "dumbing down" trend whereby newspapers report more on what they find appealing to readers such as reporting more on celebrities and an overemphasis on the personal lives of politicians. News organizations may be faced with an additional pressure to avoid negatively reporting on large advertisers that bring in a lot of revenue. This results in a greater possibility of newspapers' accuracy being compromised by the need to continue bringing in revenue to their organizations.

2.1.3.6 News as a Public Good

Journalists play the role of being watchdogs on behalf of citizenry hence public interest has to be kept in mind in the production of news. As is argued by different scholars news has never been an ordinary commodity, news has a special status in facilitating a public sphere by providing the public with information to participate in a democratic life⁶⁹. High standards of news reporting should be maintained so that the public is accurately informed and can be able to make well informed decisions. It is also argued that the more newspapers prioritize on profit making at the

expense of professionalism in news reporting, then the less valuable news becomes as a resource for citizens. News is thus a public good that contributes to the pillars of democracy and it is of importance that it be produced professionally and ethically⁶⁸.

News cannot simply be consumed in any form; certain standards have to be observed. News has to be in the public interest, as media plays a crucial role in ensuring that citizens are well informed. The importance lies not just in how news is produced-to sell, but also on how it is received by the audience. Thus, standards of news reporting are set by the South African Press Code upon which newspapers are to adhere to ensure that news is produced in a manner that is reputable. The Press Code is the ethical Code to ensure the practice of responsible journalism in Nigeria. If news is defective, there are serious ethical consequences for newspapers and ultimately implications for democracy. Because print media has enormous influence, it is of vital importance that journalism be practiced in an accountable and responsible way⁶⁹.

Newspapers have built into the process of news production systems to check news stories and verify that news has been reported accurately and that it adheres to the standards that are set by the Nigerian Press Code. News stories go through various checking processes prior to being finalized for print. News editors, editors and subeditors go through the stories written by journalists to verify that the Stories have been written appropriately and accurately. In addition to this process, some newspapers have an accuracy form which is meant to be filled in by every journalist that writes a news story. In this form, journalists check that they have reported news accurately and followed all standards set by the Press Code. To sum up, these checking processes are in place to ensure that news as a public good is produced in the best way possible as is essential in a democratic society⁷⁰.

2.1.4 Mass Media and Coronavirus Pandemic

The important role of the media during national emergency is in their capacity to enlighten the populace. Mass media cannot cure virus but can cure its spread”. Even though several health science researchers link media exposure during national emergency with negative consequences such as cycle of distresses culture of fear and anxiety problem with psychological wellbeing and suicide tendency but many researchers also believe that mass media play a significant role in enlightenment of the populace ³¹. Fear emanated from British press reportage of the coronavirus pandemic assisted in communicating the danger of the disease and unpreparedness of British government at containment of spread of the virus ³².

2.1.5 The Nigerian Media Reportage of COVID-19 Pandemic

The mass media, are generally referred to in liberal theory as the “fourth estate of the realm” and the “watchdog of the society”. The mass media exist as an organ of information gathering, processing and dissemination, as well as educational promotion, surveillance, social enlightenment and mobilization ³³.

Even though the Nigerian media failed to provide early warning messages before the index case of COVID-19 pandemic was reported in the country they swung to full action immediately the virus reached the shores of Nigeria ³⁴. Nigerians have relatively high knowledge of the disease and that 81.5 percent of the sampled population sourced their information about COVID-19 from the traditional (conventional) media ³⁵.

2.1.5.1 Media and Health Communication during Pandemic

The pandemic of Covid-19 has proven to be a grueling test of healthcare systems and resources worldwide. The toll on December 3, 2021, stands at 263,563,622 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 5,232,562 deaths, as reported to World Health Organization (WHO) ¹³. The event affecting common people's lives on a global scale was unprecedented in current times. Considering the rapid advance of world transportation through air, land, and water in the twentieth century, the digital communication explosion of the 2000s, and a highly contagious and lethal virus emerging in 2019, and we can safely declare that the pandemic is posing challenges that were unimaginable in the previous centuries. The virus initially spread worldwide through international travelers, and the myriad channels of mass communication including traditional and social media exploded with frenzy about the nature of the virus and the ensuing pandemic. In this scenario, information regarding its origins, transmissibility, precautions, treatment, and care has been competing with misinformation for public's attention since the very beginning. WHO is leading the worldwide efforts to fight the pandemic. It is also working to fight the conspiracy theories and misinformation that are bound to arise in such a situation. The abundance of media outlets and the phenomena of social media have created a world in which misinformation travels just as quickly as information ²⁰. Social media organizations have made efforts to step up to the challenge by adopting strategies for curbing misinformation and unverified claims from their sites ²³. The response is however, varied across websites. In a country like Pakistan, where politicians dominate the headlines and prime time slots, mass media outlets adapted to the dynamic situation by bringing healthcare personnel at center stage. For almost a year, health communication became a consistent concern instead of the cursory attention it usually received propelled by government actions and politicians' opinions ²⁴. This development

needs to be seen in the context of an unstructured media industry that has experienced massive growth and is driven by the commercial interests of the owners. Health reporting has never been considered profitable in mainstream media evidently obsessed with politics and entertainment for securing advertising revenues. Continued programming and specialists' opinions regarding the fast changing situation of the virus and its treatment, helped in creating an environment of support for the vaccination efforts of the government which has so far recorded 51,163,078 fully vaccinated people⁷⁵. However, this constitutes only 33% of the total population which demands consistent efforts to raise awareness among the masses and counter the myths and conspiracy theories regarding vaccines and the virus itself. New variants of the virus continue to emerge, the larger portion of the country's population remains unvaccinated, and booster doses are becoming essential. Therefore, the need for sustained interest in health communication through mass media is far from over. Importance of specialised health communication has been demonstrated fully during this pandemic. Health communication helps public understand the threat and make informed choices about the preventive measures and treatment⁴⁶. Done effectively, it can produce behaviour change prevent panic and ensure the participation of populations in governments' public health measures⁴⁷. Mass media outlets need to devote significant portions of their time and resources to creating behaviour change and building support for the governments' measures to fight the pandemic. Specialized courses for reporters covering health should be a common goal for media outlets and medical education institutions. Information seminars and sessions to explain developments in the course of the pandemic and its response by the authorities need to be organized with relevant specialists' and data scientists' participation. Healthcare sector possesses the necessary knowledge to impart this

information to the media industry which is largely unstructured and learning from experiences. Therefore, the healthcare sector needs to communicate effectively with the mass media representatives in order to influence the population in adopting and continuing healthy behaviour to fight the pandemic.

2.1.5.2 Advantages of Mass Media with Respect to Health Issues

Mass Media can turn Negatives to positives: The mass media change the negative behavior of people into positive behavior regarding the health issues. It can dismiss the negative thoughts about health issues in the minds of people and create awareness about the various health issues and solutions. Reaching out to large population, the mass media has a wide range of scope in reaching to the masses. A survey by Grilli, et al. reveals that 70% of the people are positively affected by mass media related to health behavior ⁷¹. Sharing of involvement in the community, the health care organizations get into partnership with their communities and present the health issues and health care via various forms of media. Raising issues and concerns through media, the common man can also raise the health issues via media and present it to the masses. New ideas and advancements in the health field can be exposed through the mass media. Thus, the role of mass media is to focus the problems of people and come up with solutions ⁷².

2.1.5.3 Disadvantages and Negative Impacts of Mass Media on Health

Studies have found that mass media advertising that portrays negative messages or negative scenes about the health consequences affects the audience behavior that is targeted in a better

way than the other messages and advertising forms. We can take the example of the scenes of tobacco, smoking, consumption of alcohol, drugs in the advertisements and movies which depict a negative behavior on the audiences. This leads to a change in the behavior and addiction to such harmful substances since the audience is more inclined to the negative advertisements according to psychological studies conducted in the past. Mass media can change the psychological behavior and can lead to aggression, eating disorder and ways are provided to reduce the negative impact on the children and adults ⁷³. The teenagers are the biggest victim of such negative behavior due to the mass media. The negative scenes and actions in the mass media forms affect the teens in a negative manner and cause adverse health effects such as addiction to harmful substances, obesity, inactiveness, more unhygienic and junk food consumptions, change in the behavior, greed and various other psychological changes in the child. These problems can lead to lung problems, cardio-vascular problems, depression, high blood problems, diabetes and other severe problems. The children are exposed to violence, substance abuse and sexual indications due to mass media forms. They tend to get addicted to media and become inactive. There are high chances of people interpreting a certain message on the media in a wrong way and hence it affects their health.

2.1.6 Role of Media in COVID-19 Origin

In December 2019, the reports of patients with viral pneumonia in China surfaced. The origin was related to the Huanan Seafood's whole market. Researchers established that the disease has most likely originated from bats, mutated to infect humans, and transmitted by droplet routes among humans. Since the origin occurred in a wet market, the media criticized the Chinese for consuming live animals like bats, snakes, and dogs. Previously known as "Wuhan virus" and

“China coronavirus,” it was subsequently called 2019-nCoV, and then finally, on February 11, the World Health Organization (WHO) gave the disease an official name, "Covid-19". In spite of this, renowned world leaders ignorantly kept calling it “Chinese virus” which left concerning effects in international communities⁷⁴. Asian people were stigmatized and called by the name ‘Corona’ on the streets. Many reported incidents of such racial slurs which exaggerated already existing prejudices among people. This happened in SARS 2003 in Toronto which caused the xenophobic reaction, and similarly, was repeated with the coronavirus pandemic. It had a significant impact, leading the Chinese government to order the closure of all farmer’s markets and put a ban on eating live animals. This was an essential step in halting the spread of the virus. However, it also created a false sense of security among the rest of the world, and no one took the necessary precautions when the cases were limited to China. Another news was that the ongoing bioweapons research in Wuhan universities has led to the emergence of the virus. It resulted in tweets about USA army troops bringing the virus to Wuhan while attending military games in Oct 2019. The use of media to spread rumors has been happening for a long time. For example, in 1985, the CIA was blamed for manufacturing the AIDS virus, prompting similar reactions in the public’s perception of the spread and handling of the virus. Such conspiracies create differences among nations, form unseen boundaries, and hinder the collaboration of scientists throughout the world in finding solutions. This recurred in the development of the COVID-19 vaccine as well, and the task became a competition for innovation and technology between Washington and China, rather than a solution for public well-being. Thus, the goal of the world’s two largest economies became to win the battle of supremacy and achieve ultimate power⁷⁵.

Social media usage has increased manifold and thus, has a number of available platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and Reddit, along with their Chinese equivalents WeChat, Weibo, Tencent, Tik Tok, and Toutiao. People have become accustomed to posting every aspect of their lives on social media. This includes their achievements, worries, and travels on a daily and hourly basis. Since the lockdown, there has been an 87% increase in social media usage by the people⁷⁶. People started gathering information posted on the groups and unknown pages and believing them. Religious pages also started attracting people amid crises by spreading unscientific information regarding the prevention and treatment of the virus. The implausible claim of the virus affecting the geriatric population made the young vulnerable. This ultimately resulted in a large number of young affected by the virus. This unscientific and unproven fact spread like wildfire in the media and made the elderly go through many psychological and physical terrors. There were reports of old people being removed from family homes, and increased emotional abuse cases among them. This changed the public's perception of the elderly population and caused increased depression among them based on society's prompt reactions. In contrast, the millennials, college students, and high schoolers made their way to beaches to party in anticipation of their annual Spring Break Weekend, which later proved hazardous. Social media spread this spurious information regarding the virus that played with the minds of people who started refuting the importance of social distancing. Moreover, disruption in professional lives and sticking to social media in all this free time, highlighted the problems like racism and wealth inequality. Many cases of domestic violence were also reported. This further adds to the already growing depression due to quarantine. Stress is the normal physiological response of human beings to variable unfavorable situations occurring in life. Those who are unable to control it go through anxiety or phases of

depression. Depression can present itself in physical and psychological forms, which vary from person to person. To overcome it, some behavioral changes or medications may be required. The critical role of the media is to keep people connected, well informed, and entertained. The positive impact of the media was shown in the COVID-19 crises in promoting emotional stability among people. Pages and groups on platforms like Facebook and Instagram started posting videos regarding physical and mental health. Many relaxation exercises were advertised, and books were made accessible free of charge. Scholastic ensured free and feasible book attainability for young kids⁷⁷. There were many other similar examples. Many people related to institutions started free online educational activities for kids of various ages. Numerous groups were formed, encouraging people in homeschooling with daily postage of worksheets for kids. Activities for toddlers helped guardians at home to a level that they stayed assimilated in healthy exercises daily. Moreover, stores also started selling educational toys on huge discounts with widespread advertisements through the media. The CDC's many beneficial guidelines for preventing COVID-19 were reinforced among people through prominent advertisements on commonly used social media platforms. Facebook, Instagram, and television media posted the importance of 'social distancing' and 'stay at home' through free of cost and frequent, widespread ads. The printed media was utilized by supermarkets to promote their stores following the social distancing protocols. During road and air travel, there is continuous mention of ads like 'Stay home, stay safe,' 'Face covers mandatory in public,' 'COVID-19: less is more, avoid gatherings', 'give extra space with each other and on the road,' and 'wash your hands, stay healthy, avoid COVID-19'. This repetition is essential to consolidate the role of them in preventing the disease spread. This campaign was run extraordinarily by the media using all resources and its subtypes. Telemedicine Telemedicine is a service provided remotely to patients

for health-related advice, solving queries, and monitoring diseases via a secure connection, thus maintaining patient-doctor confidentiality. However, historically, the telemedicine service has remained under-utilized. In 2017, a survey study in the USA showed that 82% of people do not use this service⁷⁸. The underlying cause may be related to limited availability, especially in rural areas of the world or cultural reasons. However, the government has always employed this in cases of tornadoes or disaster management. It uses a wide array of technologies like audio-video sessions, telephonic discussions, and integrated clinical information systems to help deal with problems faced by sick people in the community ⁷⁹. In the COVID-19 era, telemedicine has become the backbone of clinical practice. Virtual treatment of patients started at the beginning of the pandemic. People became scared of going to hospitals even for major problems. A helpline was also set up, enabling people to decide whether their symptoms accounted for COVID-19 testing. Media was used to promote it and hence, maintain norms of the lockdown. No checks were maintained initially, and many “fake doctors” started using prominent social media platforms for this purpose. This specifically did the damage of spreading erroneous information regarding the virus and additionally persuaded beliefs in simple enigmatic treatments, thus causing people to become careless and assist the spread of the disease. For instance, rumors were spread about the use of humidification and steam for thwarting the disease and a video was aired on Facebook live lasting 40 minutes explaining the use of ‘steam inhalation’ as a way of killing the virus. In the video, a ‘technician’ elucidated the usage of boiled water mixed with sea salt and citrus peels for 15 minutes which was viewed 2.4 million times ⁸⁰. This provides only symptomatic relief during a common cold, and can seriously damage eyes, face, and airways through the heated water vapors. Steam inhalation was just the beginning; many other local treatments appeared on social media and spread 2020 Anwar et al. *Cureus* 12(9): e10453. DOI

10.7759/cureus.10453 3 of 9 swiftly via messages. COVID-19 has no cure yet, and consequently, any potential cure has been shared without genuine medical research. It was widely emphasized to take vitamin C to boost immunity and strengthen the body as a preventative measure against the disease. Vitamin C is highly effective in combating the common cold. A meta-analysis showed the role of prophylactic intake of vitamin C in reducing the duration of disease but no effect on incidence and severity⁸¹. Vitamin C only improves resistance against pathogens by enhancing the immune system. The precise role of Vitamin C is not known, which can incite indiscreet practices in individuals to accept that it is more potent than it is. A clinical trial is being conducted at Cleveland Clinic to study the role of vitamin C as a supplementary medication for shortening the duration of COVID-19⁸¹. In this time of psychological crises, various mental health organizations have developed a comprehensive approach for managing the rapidly rising mental disease load. Loneliness due to social isolation, anxiety about disease uncertainty among affected, financial losses due to business closures, despair due to discrimination, and insomnia from boredom are some of the psychological problems faced by people. There has been an increase in the number of suicides. Domestic violence is on the rise. Also, grief and bereavement of losing known people are being recognized. An expert team has been formed to serve in this situation. Online mental health services are working to combat mental diseases, and psychiatrists and psychologists on the internet provide free consultations. Social media is contributing to mental health education for the public.

2.1.6.1 SARS-COV-2 Tracking Tools

Amidst all the chaos and panic created by the virus, news channels played no less of a role in spreading panic. Different news channels started giving inconsistent information regarding the

virus, number of cases and deaths worldwide. At this time of trouble, the map created by the John Hopkins Center of Systems Science and Engineering came as a shining light. It established a record-based data of affected people and deaths. Professor Lauren Gardner and her graduate student built the dashboard, which provided a tool for public health authorities, researchers, and the general public to track the reported cases and deaths in a friendly manner⁸². This was posted online on the internet for public use on Jan 22, 2020. Mapping the virus spread across the world helped with the uncertainty about its geographic spread and therefore, facilitated governments of various countries to adopt and begin timely actions. This shows how the internet can play a positive role in crises and what it did in COVID-19. It paved the way for others to form tracking systems. Worldometer is another example, giving us live statistics and updated news regarding coronavirus⁸³. It paved the way for others to form tracking systems and enable a common person to maintain their own excel data and use it for research or knowledge.

Graphical representation of new COVID-19 cases and deaths per week from the first to 28th week of 2020, (Jan 1, 2020 - Jul 15, 2020). Data taken from the Worldometer. WHO has unveiled its Arc Geographic Information System (ArcGIS) Operations dashboard for COVID-19 on Jan 26, 2020, which maps and lists the number of cases and deaths⁸⁴. It shows an epidemic curve that represents the number of cases by date of reporting. It also has a section that provides links to additional authentic information regarding COVID-19. The main goal is to map the worldwide spread of misinformation and confusion. This breakthrough of media helped the countries predict how this outbreak is going to unfold and, hence, enabled them to put up necessary measures at appropriate times. This also made it possible for scientists and researchers to develop different prediction models regarding the pandemic's course by formulating and guiding about the peak of cases and deaths at each place. Additionally, it provided hope in this

grave situation by showing the number of recoveries. Now, computer-based spatial analyses integrating physioepidemiological methods for identifying new likely outbreak centers are also being done. 2020 Anwar et al. *Cureus* 12(9): e10453. DOI 10.7759/cureus.10453 4 of 9

Publicity of Chloroquine Media is the primary source of information and plays a vital role in educating the masses. However, when overly eager sources spread information without proper verification, not only can it be harmful but it can have unintended consequences. The hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) example fits the scenario. HCQ, a lysosomotropic agent, is an approved drug to treat malaria and some autoimmune diseases. Its propensity to fight certain viruses is explained by its role in blocking the function of lysosomes. It is postulated that at an acidic pH, certain viruses, after being internalized through the plasma membrane of cells, can fuse with lysosomal membranes, thus entering the cells and replicating. Chloroquine being a weak base, enters into lysosomes and raises the pH of the lysosome. As the pH rises, lysosomal enzymes fail to function, and viruses requiring acidic pH can no longer enter the cells. The productive role of chloroquine against SARS-CoV-2 has been demonstrated *in vitro*⁸⁵. The efficacy of HCQ in humans is yet to be determined. Several deaths were reported from chloroquine misuse, following Trump's endorsement of this drug as a "game changer"⁸⁶. The first trial was done by Chinese investigators, followed by the French, which showed the drug's efficacy in the duration of symptoms, radiological picture, and hospital stay. These trials were limited, nonrandomized, and done on a small scale. Based on these limited trials, ICMR (India Council of Medical Research) recommended using chloroquine in healthcare workers and asymptomatic contacts without significant data. However, the CDC's clinical guidance on the use of chloroquine for prophylaxis was lacking because of the absence of results from Randomized Control Trials (RCTs). Currently, several big pharmaceutical companies are pursuing the treatment and prevention of

the novel coronavirus. However, aside from remdesivir created by Genentech, we do not have a promising drug for COVID-19 treatment. Thus, when chloroquine appeared as a hope, it sparked the interest of the media as a potential cure. Some politicians created hype and promoted chloroquine by declaring it effective against the novel coronavirus and referred to it as the ‘biggest game-changer in the history of the world’⁸⁷.

This misstep or honest mistake proved hazardous for the public. Hydroxychloroquine is inexpensive, easily available in malaria-endemic regions, and became highly sought after following its publicity on several media platforms. It disappeared from the market like a ghost, prices skyrocketed, and vendors started stocking up on it. This created a supply chain deficit and its shortage left a profound impact on people using it as a management for their autoimmune diseases. Healthcare providers noted increased number of lupus disease flare ups and a spike in rheumatoid arthritis cases. Moreover, many deaths were reported because of its overuse. Chloroquine can have many adverse effects, the vast majority of which represent electrical arrhythmias in the heart like ventricular tachycardia, long QT syndrome, torsades de pointes, and sudden death. Also, without the results of studies, a safe dosage in COVID-19 was unknown. In Nigeria, at least two people were reported to have overdosed from the drug, and a man in Arizona died after taking it as self-medication, while his wife got critically ill⁸⁸. Chloroquine gained all this attention after a small non-randomized clinical trial of just 36 patients from France⁸⁹. However, a subsequent randomized clinical trial using high dose chloroquine was halted in phase 2b due to the lethal effects of the drug observed⁹⁰. The FDA also had to issue a warning against chloroquine for COVID-19 after the results of the study were shared⁹¹. In just a small period, chloroquine was portrayed over social media as a wonder drug with a coronavirus cure, misleading the public about its effectiveness and rendering negative consequences. This shows

that politicians should not be allowed to provide scientific information to the general public, especially using the media as a platform.

2.1.7 Health Education and the Surveillance Role of the Mass Media

To educate the general public about health issues, the media need to first monitor the environment and identify potential life-threatening health issues and provide adequate information that will enlighten the masses on the issues. Health education is an essential aspect of public health and health promotion⁹². They add that the goal of health education is to have positive influence on health behaviour of people through information and instruction. That is to say that media coverage is an essential strategy of health education. This is because, through media coverage, the general public will be informed and instructed on issues related to public health issues. The means also that the surveillance role of the mass media is essential in the study of media coverage of health issues. The surveillance role of the mass media requires that they monitor the society and provide information to members of the society on pending dangers. This function is an expression of the 'watchdog role' of the media. This is because when a dog watches over an area, it makes efforts to let people know each time there is a perceived danger. The dog barks and this typically attracts the attention of the public with a corresponding possibility for eliciting actions to avert the danger. Therefore, the surveillance role of the mass media means that they constantly scan the society, evaluate events and highlight areas that pose potential danger to the general wellness of the society. In this sense, the media have a duty to make sure that people are adequately warned of dangers. A study must have been referring to the surveillance function of the mass media when they submitted that knowledge is an essential condiment that people need to take informed decisions⁹³. This assertion makes a strong case for

media workers to constantly monitor the society and provide relevant and sufficient information to members of the general public. The idea behind the surveillance function of the mass media is attributed to Lasswell⁹⁴. The mass media typically plays three roles to the society. These are as follows: the surveillance of the environment, the correlation of the different components of society in responding to the environment and the passing societal heritage from generation to generation. When this assertion is explained within the perspective of COVID-19, it can be said that the mass media in Nigeria have a responsibility to examine the spread of COVID-19 and coordinate both government and the citizenry on how best to respond to the global health crisis. Based on the surveillance perspective, when the virus broke out in China and was fast spreading to other countries, Nigerian media needed to draw the attention of both the government and Nigerian people on the need to act proactively. For the government, the emphasis could have been on taking policy decisions that will avoid the spread of the virus into the country while also making adequate provision to contain it in case of an outbreak. For the citizenry, the focal point could have been educating them about the virus in areas like symptoms while also encouraging them to imbibe preventive health behaviour. Media performance of its surveillance role has been examined in literature⁹⁴. A study was carried out to determine how the media perform their surveillance function within the context of conflict. Their results showed that the conflict between farmers and herdsmen only appear in the media when it is happening. As soon as the conflict reduces, no media reports are made available, no warning sign and news about the conflict disappears in the media⁹⁵. A study look at how to determine public perception of how the broadcast media in Nigeria have fulfilled their surveillance role within the context of security. Their results showed that the public perceive media performance as below expectations. Generally, the media are very important stakeholders in every society. They need to keep vigil of

the society, analyze them and draw the attention of the public and the government on the implications of the issues reported. In the process, the media can recommend preventive measures. The overall aim is to make the society a better place ⁹⁶.

2.1.8 Improving the Performance of Mass Media

An awareness regarding how to deal with the media is necessary for communicators of health. The media researchers should get cue on specific and precise medicines that are the new focus of the health community in order to understand the role of the specific medicine and its target. The balancing of competing and different aims has been always tried by the health-related journalists. They should convey the best and trusted sources regarding the health issues and doctors. The medical reporters should have proper technical knowledge, power, and ability to focus on major problems and the appropriate source channels. The health communicators should have an awareness of way of working with the mass media. This means that they should understand the journalists since the journalists should be available and must provide with proper resources and build good relations with the reporters of health ⁹⁷.

2.1.8.1 Advances in Health-Care: E-Health

The health-care service provided by the means of electronic processes is E-Health. E in E-Health stands for electronic that indicates that the health is promoted electronically and via communication. The mass media plays a vital role in these recent advances. The electronic devices and mass media help to promote E-health. The technology types that are being used are apps, video conferencing, websites, Virtual reality (VR) and wearable technology. Applications can be easily downloaded on electronic devices and the patient can keep a check on the physical

activities. The videoconferencing is a form of mass media in which the patients can communicate with the doctors from any corner of the world via the Internet video calling. The World Wide Web plays a vital role in spreading the information related to health-care and medicine management. The wearable technologies include the devices that are linked with various apps and can be used by the patients to keep knowledge about their health. Virtual reality is used in the medical settings and helping the patients to overcome fear. Mass media help in enhancing this knowledge about E-health and health-care effectively. Car reported that the health-care is an emerging field and hence faces many challenges in the medication belief and management of medicines ⁹⁸. The effectiveness of medication is determined by medication adherence that plays an important role in improving the outcomes of health-care and E-health. E-health helps in changing the management of medicines of for patients. It affects the complete journey of medicine management starting from the appointment of the doctor to the consultation and medicine management learning. It increases the belief and trust of the patient towards medication and health-care. The advances in E-health can be understood by studying its present and future. E-health increases the efficiency of health-care by decreasing the gap between the doctors and patients via various different techniques. The E-health has potential to enhance the reach of medication and the access to various health-care facilities and treatments thus enhancing the economic development of the developing countries. The quality and services offered by health-care can be improved by E-health in the developed countries ⁹⁹.

The provision of health-care via mobile phones and wireless devices is called M-Health. The mobile device helps in giving the information about health-care and medical facilities to the patients and helps the doctor to monitor the patients. A proper review of the interventions of M-

health will give us an idea of the advantages of communication technologies as well as mobile computing in order to improve the health services⁹⁹.

The mixture of information technology and telecommunication to promote health-care is telemedicine. The use of telemedicine is crucial in case of emergency, overcoming the barriers of health-care promotion and gap between the doctor and patients. Telemedicine also provides with education related to medicines, medicine management and health-care⁹⁶. The systems of telemedicine can be divided on the basis of information transferred and the ways to transmit this information. Telemedicine is beneficial in situations when there is problem in transfer of ready information between the doctor and patients due to physical barrier as well as when the medical management completely relies on provision of information⁹⁷. Other advances include Medical Informatics and Cyber medicine. Medical Informatics is the science of utilizing the analytics tools in order to develop algorithms and solutions to the increasing health issues. Cyber medicine is delivering the health-care services, drug prescriptions and consultation via Internet.

2.1.9 The Media, Health Behaviours and Health Policies

As canvassed by the agenda setting theory, the media are primary factors that shape the society. In the process of performing their functions as ascribed to them in relevant laws (in Nigeria, it is contained in section 22 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria), the media play a role in influencing health behaviour and shaping government policies and programmes in the health sector. The media of communication such as newspaper, magazine, radio, TV and Internet based media are important agents of any society. It is also in consideration of the important role of the media that they are regarded as the fourth estate of the realm, after the executive, judiciary and legislature. The three important issues in health communication are as

follows: health behaviour, health policies and health programmes. Three areas that the media of communication can be useful for health promotion to include public information, social marketing and media advocacy⁹¹. Through public information, the media educate the general public on health issues. With the use of social marketing tactics, the mass media of communication engage with the general public and trigger them to accept and apply certain health behaviour in their daily interactions. Finally, the study that with the application of media advocacy strategy, the mass media of communication can raise awareness on health policies with a view to improving the wellness of the general public. It is noteworthy that the three strategies are typically used in combination when using the media for health promotion⁹². Health behaviour is any action that a person engages in that has an implication on his or her health. This explanation is broad because health behaviour has two perspectives. The first angle is health behaviour that is beneficial to a person's health⁹³. This behaviour can be regarded as positive health behaviour. Such behaviour within the context of COVID-19 may include regular hand washing, social distancing, avoiding touching one's face with unwashed hands, staying at home, among others. On the other hand, there are health behaviours that are dangerous to a person's health. Such behaviour makes a person vulnerable to diseases and ailments. Examples of such behaviour, within the context of the current study, include going to crowded places, shaking hands indiscriminately, among others. Media coverage of health issues is also likely to elicit changes in policies and programmes of government or the introduction of new ones. The government of every country is usually at the forefront of improving the health sector through budgetary provision and other interventions that will make the health sector viable. Over the years, media coverage of health issues and how such coverage impact on behaviour has been examined. A study examined the impact of radio programmes on the utilization of anti-malaria

commodities and reported that people who are exposed to radio messages on the benefits of utilizing antimalaria commodities are likely to modify their health behaviour based on the media content than those not exposed⁹⁵. A study was carried out to ascertain how the media report health issues and found that both electronic and print media gave less attention to health matters when compared with other issues like crime, politics and entertainment⁹⁶. A study found that even though health issues were well reported in the media, they appeared mostly as straight news story with less prominence given to health issues among the media examined⁹⁷. Another study examined how media contents on hand washing influence health behaviour⁹⁸. Their result showed that there was no significant link between media messages and hand washing among the sample studied. A study ascertain the link between media messages and the utilization of treated bed net in Cameroon and reported that a significant association exists between both variables. The point to make here is that the mass media of communication are essential in health promotion, health behaviour and policy advocacy. Studies examined above paid less attention in looking at the role of time as moderators of media coverage of health issues in general and infectious diseases in general ⁹⁹.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Framing Theory

The study is anchored on Framing Theory. This theory is believed to have been popularised by Erving Goffman in 1974. Frame theory is an expansion of the agenda setting theory of the press. The theory, besides accepting that the media focuses attention on certain issues they consider topical and thereby drawing the attention of the masses to it, also posits that the way, manner and language with which such issue is presented to the masses largely influence the masses

perception of it⁸³. In essence, framing theory opined that how a matter is presented to the audience influences the choices they make about such a subject matter⁸⁴. The theory suggests that people interpret what is going on around their world through their primary framework. These primary frames are made up of natural and social frames through which an individual is able to interpret the communication stimuli coming his way on a daily basis. The theory, makes four major assumptions: journalists select the topics they will present and still bear the professional responsibility of deciding how the selected topics would be presented to the audience. This means that framing theory believes that the media not only determines the issues audience think about but also influences how the audience think about the issue; and interpret information through their own frame. Audience frames may overlap or contradict the media frames, media frames are reinforced every time they are evoked, whether positively or negatively and frame building is a systematic process that occurs over time.

Therefore, frame is simply the way a communication source defines and constructs any piece of communicated information or message with a view to subtly swaying the mind of the audience towards a predetermined sentiment. The theory is relevant to this study because the framing of newspapers on Covid-19 is a major factor that can either make or mar the individual and collective efforts to contain the virus in Nigeria.

2.2.2 Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory describes the “ability [of the news media] to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda⁹⁰. That is, if a news item is covered frequently, the audience will regard the issue as more important. In reality, mass media only shows the audience what it comprehends as an important issue. Print or broadcast news will then take away the audience’s

ability to think for themselves. Agenda setting occurs through a cognitive process known as “accessibility”⁹¹. Accessibility implies that the more frequently and prominently the news media cover an issue, the more instances that issue becomes accessible in the audience’s memories. The agenda-setting effect is not the result of receiving one or a few messages, but is due to the aggregate impact of a very large number of messages all dealing with the same general issue. Mass-media coverage in general and agenda setting in particular also have a powerful impact on what individuals think that other people are thinking, and hence tend to allocate more importance to issues that have been extensively covered by mass media.

The notion of Agenda setting started with Walter Lippmann’s observation that the mass media mediate between the world outside and the picture in our heads Lippmann 1922. Cohen 1963 asserted that the press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. Cohen restated that the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling readers what to think about Cohen 1963. Lippmann and Cohen’s submissions were results of their personal observations which lacked empirical footing. However, McCombs and Shaw established an empirical link between media agenda and public agenda in their studies McCombs and Shaw 1964.

McCombs and Shaw opined that the mass media have the ability to transfer the salience of items on their news agenda for the public agenda. People judge important what the media judges as important. The media does that by deciding what to place emphasis on in their news pages thereby the media set the agenda of the day⁹¹. McCombs and Shaw furthered their argument that the mass media set agenda for public discussion using the outcome of their study of an American presidential election to a theory which has generated critical and sustained attention from researchers. Central to the Agenda setting theory is the idea that the media influences the level or

importance people attach to what they see, read or hear from the mass media. This suggests that the mass media shapes how the audience construct social reality. For example, through selecting certain events and ignoring others and by determining how the selected events are reported, this influences the perception of social reality by the public.

2.2.3 Social Responsibility Theory

Social responsibility is ethics that guide any action, be it in media or other organizations, which put an obligation towards environment, society, culture and economy⁹². The media like any other sector should not harm, but should promote environment and socio-cultural aspects in relation to the economy of the place.

Social Responsibility theory of mass media is relatively a new concept which started in the mid-20th century and is used mostly by developing and least developed countries. The theory started from Europe and took a shape with the Commission on the Freedom of Press that happened in United States in 1949. The model was designed formally by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm in 1956 in their book. It encourages total freedom to press and no censorship, but it should be regulated according to social responsibilities and external controls. Content is also filtered through public obligation and interference. The theory replaced libertarian theory with the view that libertarianism was outdated. The theory also incorporates some aspects of authoritarian theory. After the emergence of this theory, professionalism in media started to be taken seriously.

The social responsibility theory of mass media changed the way press published news from objective reporting to interpretative reporting. Before this theory, facts were presented without any interpretation. The audience interpreted it the way they wanted to. This caused problems as interpretation was not based on reality and it affected the social order. Interpretative reporting

and investigative reporting started to uncover the reality behind every case. In Social Responsibility Theory, the press is taken to be for the people and society. The tasks of the press is to make a code of conduct and follow it, to develop a standard in journalism, to make journalism better, to protect journalists and to have penalties if any journalist violates the code of conduct.

This way, the facts provided by the press are analyzed and interpreted so that the people get true information and understandable news. This helps maintain social harmony by revealing social evils like corruption and discouraging other bad conducts. The media is taken as a place for the voiceless to have a voice and develop public opinions where each and every person has the right to speak, express and publish. . It is considered not an end but a tool for social development. Therefore, the objectives of media are stated to inform, document, analyze, interpret, mediate and mobilize by creating and finding solutions.

Also, while writing on media surveillance as a social responsibility function, scholars asserts that, “People need to know if the streets are blocked or dangerous, some of those planning to drive or walk through the area of a disturbance may choose another route if they are told what is happening”. They further warned that, “A news blackout sets a dangerous precedent. Word-of-mouth rumours are likely to be even less accurate than the mass media and if serious grievances have festered to the point of a riot, the public has a right to know ⁹⁵. If the Nigerian broadcast media responsibly play their surveillance role of warning the masses including the security agents of an impending/imminent danger, then it will help to initiate proactive steps to forestall such danger in the country, thus, engendering national security.

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

There is no doubt to the fact that the outbreak of the rampaging coronavirus dubbed COVID-19 took the world aback. As highlighted earlier, conspiracy theorists believe that the dreaded virus escaped from the Wuhan Medical Laboratory in China, but scientists warn against such beliefs¹⁰⁰. At first, the virus got hold of the Wuhan city and later spread to other parts of the world like wild fire. As the world woke up to the harsh reality of combating the dreaded virus, so many questions needed to be answered, and many more are popping up. For instance, the world needed to know how the Chinese Government and the World Health Organisation (WHO) handled the outbreak in the first time. So many questions about the medical chemistry of the virus, its modes of transmission, incubation period, life span, environmental adaptation and many more needed urgent informed answers.

Consequently, many conspiracy theorists have emerged to add to the conflicting narratives about the virus¹⁰¹. Fortunately, newspapers at the global, regional and national levels have taken up their traditional responsibility of creating awareness, educating, sensitizing and mobilizing people against the pandemic. Indeed, it suffices to say that the world is relying on the media for a must-win war against the virus. This implies high expectations of social responsibility from the media organisations as they frame the messages about COVID-19 pandemic. “The mass media cannot cure the attack of Ebola virus disease (EVD), but can cure its spread”¹⁰². Earlier on, a study said that whatever the audience makes of media information or messages is determined by the way and manner such messages and information are mediated or framed and disseminated to them¹⁰³.

Empirical studies have indicated that media have the potentials to prevent the spread of infectious diseases by encouraging good personal and public health practices. In their study of

the influence of radio Lassa fever messages on the residents of rural communities of Ebonyi State, a study maintained that media message frames are critical to the people's dispositions towards public health campaigns, and their eventual acceptance or rejection of such campaigns. According to the study, the frames can give hope as well as create fear or apathy in the people ¹⁰⁴. Consequently, it found that the Lassa fever radio campaign message clashed with the cultural belief and values of the people; thus, the failure of the campaign to stop the people from eating rats in parts of the state ¹⁰⁴.

In an earlier study, the study also suggest that *Wall street Journal* of January 2016 story by Gbenga Akingbule gave hope to Nigerians by stating that Lassa fever is more benign than Ebola virus and that only about 1% of Lassa virus infected persons die from the illness ¹⁰⁵. They also reported that their second finding suggests that *Vanguard*, *Premium Times* and *Saturday Punch* were respectively professional in their reportage of the outbreak in the country.

By and large, studies on media frames thrive highly on the principles of scientism/empiricism. Frame study should not be subjective and judgemental. Manifest contents must be reduced into realistic variables for systematic investigation. As such, a study announced that their study on newspaper framing of Monkey pox outbreak in South-Eastern states of Nigeria was aimed at ascertaining the genre of the story, the prominence, kind of frames, dominant frames and influence of the frame on the people ¹⁰⁶. To execute the study; *Guardian*, *The Punch* and *Vanguard* were purposively selected for the period of September 1st to December 31st 2017. The results from the mixed research methods (content analysis and survey) show that the newspapers used the straight news format most in reporting the outbreak, the outbreak was given prominence, especially in terms of placement, the transmission/causes frames was the most dominant and this

raised fear in the Nigeria media audience. However, the analysis of media frames (newspapers) is dependent on the objective (s) of the study.

Media message frames can be probed on the basis of people's expectations of role played by the government, people or agencies and media biases in favour or against a certain issue, government, institutions, person or persons. A study reveal that their investigation of the newspaper coverage of Ebola virus outbreak in Nigeria shows that the dominant theme or focus of the papers (24.1%) was government, and institutional measures/responses to the outbreak ¹⁰⁷. This was followed by the news report on cases of outbreak in parts of Nigeria. They concluded that newspaper reportage of the Ebola outbreak had implication for its prevention and control. Similarly, a study had reported that their study of the media reportage of outbreak of avian influenza in Nigeria shows that all the selected newspapers stressed public awareness, industry crisis, and government responsibility in tackling the outbreak¹⁰⁸.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be inferred that media frames of outbreak of diseases are reflections of multifaceted factors that impinge on the editorial policies, values and activities of each media outlet especially newspapers. These intervening factors include, but not limited to ownership influence, economic and political interest, culture, legal framework and professional competence. For example, a study examine the framing of Ebola virus outbreak in Nigeria by *The Sun* and *The Guardian* newspapers between July 20 and Oct. 20 2014 ¹⁰². In the course of the study, they looked at the following dominant frames: cause and transmission, treatment and control/containment, fear and death, government and political influence, effect, sensitization/mobilization, consolation and support, rumour/misinformation and stigmatization/discrimination. Furthermore,

the following as be identified as factors that shaped the newspapers' framing of the outbreak: organizational pressure/constraints, social norms, journalistic routines, pressures from interest groups, ideological and political orientation of the journalists, editorial policy and ownership influence. In conclusion, the authors found that framing of Ebola outbreak by the Nigerian national dailies was significantly influenced by economic and political motives aggravated by the stiff competition in the industry ¹⁰².

Drawing inspiration from the above researches, this study is interested in probing the newspapers' framing of the current outbreak of the novel coronavirus. The quest for this investigation is further heightened by the number of conspiracy theories dotting the attempt to figure out the variegated issues surrounding the pandemic both at the national and global levels. As the doubt among many Nigerians about the realistic existence of COVID-19 in the country gave way for personal and public containment measures as championed by the government, the agonies of either partial or full lockdown in parts of the country followed. As the lockdown cast the majority of Nigerians with the double jeopardy of COVID-19 and "*HungerVid-20*", the prudent management of the emergency fund realised for the battle and transparent distribution of palliatives became louder. Also added to the plenteous salient issues competing for the attention of the newspapers in their coverage of the outbreak was the alleged China-centric posture of the Federal Government of Nigeria in the search for solution and the political intrigues and local efforts of the respective state governors and supervisory role of the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). A study favours an empirical investigation of the Nigerian media reportage of the pandemic as his finding suggests that newspapers often employ stereotypically offensive language when reporting disability stories ¹⁰⁹.

Media frames that emphasise frailty, charity, disparity and derogatory labels leave room for stereotypes, prejudices and stigmatization of people living with disability in Nigeria ¹⁰². A study observed that newspapers coverage of the Nigerian Governor's Forum election crisis failed to promote peace building process but encouraged the crisis ¹⁰³.

The irony is that in times of crisis or outbreak of dreaded epidemic or pandemic as being experienced now, the media/press becomes the “*watcher*” and the “*watched*”. Nigerians expect the press especially the newspapers to educate them on how to avoid contracting the Coronavirus ranging from proper hand washing and use of hand sanitizer, putting on face mask in public places to social distancing as shown in the above pictures.

Besides, the press should give Nigerians information on how to access food aid/palliatives from the governments, agencies and individuals, and as well, the number of infected persons, the dead and recoveries. As part of its social responsibilities, the media can extend its report to investigating government spending and ensure equitable distribution of palliatives to the vulnerable persons. On the other hand. The Nigeria press watches the governments and the people's compliance to NCDC laid down rules, regulations and protocols on the containment of the virus. This is in addition to monitoring of governments' responsiveness, actions, transparency, prudence and diligence in handling the crisis situation. All these and others are easily ascertained through systematic investigations as exemplified by this study ¹⁰².

An article emphasizing that mass media presenting topics related to health is a leading information source of health-related issues and are used by the people who want to create an impact on the behavior of patients and doctors ¹⁰¹. The main objective is to analyze the mass media effects on health services utilization. Tools used to study the effects are: clinical trials that

are controlled, randomized trials, mass media interventions controlled studies. Data was collected and analyzed by two reviewers who extracted the data independently and examined the quality of the twenty studies performed. In their study, out of the twenty studies, except one all other studies were successful in showing that mass media is effective. Although there was a lack of information and accessible primary research, this form of communication has a very important role in the use of health care interventions. Hence, they conclude that mass media is an important tool in creating an impact of health care and health issues to the masses. However, the other research article by Redman lists the disadvantages as well as advantages of mass media on health care development ¹⁰³. The effects of programs of mass media to modify the use of safety restraint among adults or the behavior of cardiovascular risk have been examined. The author states that this research of effect of mass media has been failed a number of times since mass media does not affect the health behavior to large extent. Hence the article concludes that mass media causes a very less or no impact on health and further studies and research is required on this topic. The research study conducted by Griffiths W, Knutson AL, it is stated that mass media has a very important role in public health ¹⁰⁵. The mass media are applied to all the stages of public health so that a few effects occur such as new behavior in health is created, right information regarding health is being learned and change in the attitude and values of health. Then the authors also emphasize the point that the mass media creates a right impact on a specific people rather than all the people. They have reviewed a lot of studies and concludes that mass media plays an important role in public health awareness. A study added that the role of mass media campaigns in influencing the physical activities of the masses ¹⁰⁴. The campaigns reach a wide range of the population in fewer costs. They have reviewed over 15 campaigns with a special emphasis on the physical activities. It showed that 70% of the people were aware of the campaign and its benefit

in increasing the health-related awareness. The ways to bring a long-lasting impact on people due to campaigns have been studied. A study emphasized the role of mass media campaigns to promote health related topics and health issues¹⁰⁵. It studies on the impact of these campaigns studied over past 10 years and the article conclude It a proper, well-arranged health mass media campaign can create an impact on not only knowledge about health but also fields like behavior, attitude, beliefs impacting a wide range of people due to the vast reach of mass media. Similarly, the other article by Randolph starts with a study of the planning of campaigns and the improvements in the campaigns ¹⁰⁶. The factors that the planners of campaigns should consider during campaign planning are identified. The studies of 5 years on health-related campaigns and their applications and uses in the future campaigns are showcased. It focuses on how campaigns are conducted and then their success or failure reasons. Hence the article is of utmost importance to the researchers and professionals of public health to indicate marketing of health through campaigns of mass media. However, a study analyzed the recent experiences of mass media role in medical treatment by the case study on supply in Italy ¹⁰¹. A new treatment that was unproven was focused by media, initially claimed to be a good treatment for various types of cancers. The Italian media changes over the past 20 years have been focused. This brings us to a conclusion that the mass media has a strategic role in spreading exact and accurate information on health issues. A study concentrate on the adverse effects of alcohol consumption and how mass media helps to increase this alcohol side-effects awareness among college students ¹⁰⁵. They suggest that information campaigns on high-risk of alcohol consumption are helpful in bringing awareness among students to a high extent. The author categorizes the mass media campaigns on student drinking into 3: advocacy, information and marketing of social norms. It is suggested that a proper and systematic procedure should be followed for organizing campaigns in order to

create impact on the students. The campaigns in the future should integrate the 3 types namely advocacy, information and marketing of social norms for creating support from the colleges, institutions and organizations to eliminate the consumption of alcohol by the students. A clear distinction between the mass and targeted audience is done by Flora and the methods used by mass media to promote the mass and the target audiences have been surveyed.⁶ The audience is categorized into 4: communities, organizations, individuals and networks and then discusses the mass media role at these 4 levels of audiences. The goals of promoting health in this article include both the outputs of the intermediate process and ultimate interest. Hence the article concludes that mass media is of utmost importance to all the four levels of audiences. The impact of campaigns on mass media in the context of health risk behaviors like addiction to drugs, alcohol and tobacco, physical intercourse related behaviors, cancer-related topics, heart-related problems, blood and organ donation is analyzed thoroughly. The survey indicates that mass media have a huge impact in bringing a positive behavior on the masses or prevent a negative behavior with respect to health. The various features of mass media that bring this positive change in the behavior of masses are discussed in the article. The article also proposes their own methodology to improve in this field of mass media impact on health such as large and funded investments in order to get more exposure to the media campaigns and messages of the media ¹⁰⁷.

Role of media in health promotion Media is a powerful avenue for the dissemination of wellness education ¹⁰¹. It plays a fundamental role in the public response to a pandemic, as it serves as a portal for communication between governments, health institutions, and people. The ‘invisible’ nature of pandemics dictates an important role for media as the “eye” of the public. Media channels become windows through which the public looks for accurate information, scientific sound facts, government decisions, and reactions of the general public. Input that people collect

as 'receivers' shape their actions and reactions to the pandemic. Media also contributes substantially to health awareness and promotion, making it an essential mediator for health communication. It plays an important role in changing attitudes and intentions, and in influencing health behavior. 'Health communication' is a broad term, defined as the study or use of communication techniques to improve the health sector ¹⁰². Media's effectiveness in health communication lies in strong written, verbal, and visual communication strategies that can impact public views and perceptions ¹⁰². Media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic Since the outbreak of the virus, international and local news networks promoted awareness and decreased anxiety among the public through live coverage of news briefings, press conferences, and town halls. Health officials and many others posted and explained health guidelines and governmental instructions on websites, in journals, magazines, and on social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. In the age of social media dominance, monitoring all published posts related to the pandemic poses a difficult challenge. The phenomenon of spreading misinformation during outbreaks has been known to occur since the Middle Ages ¹⁰³. However, social media amplify it considerably. Unverified sources posting on platforms play central roles in reporting incorrect numbers of cases and inaccurate guidelines, and advertising unapproved treatments and remedies as antiviral cures. Such misinformation led to an increase in public anxiety about health, and resulted in chaos, fraudulent schemes, financial abuse, and fear. In the United States, for example, promoters of misinformation sent text messages in the early stages of the outbreak about lockdowns, upcoming governmental regulations, and economic collapse, spreading their messages widely through the population ¹⁰⁴. The National Security Council acted to clarify which circulating text messages were false, to reduce fear and panic among residents ¹⁰⁴. Claims that drinking hot water, snake oil, or silver, and burning incense

leaves would cure coronavirus became popular ¹⁰⁵. Advertisements run by Amazon for protective masks spiked prices and increased hoarding of medical equipment, in times when the medical community worldwide was in dire need of supplies ¹⁰⁶. Many social media accounts fueled conspiracy theories about COVID-19 as a biological weapon and directed readers and viewers to buy vitamins and other products from stores ¹⁰⁷. Posts that falsely linked 5G, a wireless communication technology that supports cellular data networks, to COVID-19 also spread widely¹⁰⁷. Anti-vaccine movements exploited the outbreak, using social media accounts opposing vaccines to lure a surge in views and followers ¹⁰⁴. The Director-General of the WHO called the phenomenon an ‘infodemic.’ It explained that fake news spread faster and more easily than the virus, and is just as dangerous ¹⁰³. The WHO later made an announcement that it would be working closely with social media platforms and search engine companies like Facebook, Google, Pinterest, Tencent, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, among others, to deter the spread of rumors and misinformation.

2.4 Summary of Literature Reviewed

Literatures reviewed in this study indicate that the novel Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), first identified in Wuhan China in December 2019, has rapidly spread to almost every region of the world. The disease is caused by a new and severe type of Coronavirus known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS- COV-2) ¹. The infection has no immediate treatment and vaccine, and it has become a worldwide pandemic causing significant morbidity and mortality². There are 1,603,428 confirmed cases, 356,440 recoveries from the illness and 95,714 deaths worldwide as of April 9, 2020 ³.

The literature reviewed in the study, suggested that WHO warned countries across the globe to prepare for the pandemic as it spreads around nations of the world like wild fire. The Federal Government of Nigeria heeded the warning by setting up coronavirus preparedness team that operated under the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). It was this body that discovered the index case on February 27, 2020. To reflect the seriousness of the matter, Nigerian government thereafter set up the Covid-19 Presidential Task Force ⁷.

Literature reviewed further showed that there has been a notable and global response to the COVID-19 infodemic by international organizations, governments, social media technology companies, and major science bodies. The United Nations (UN) responded to the infodemic by forming a UN Coronavirus (COVID-19) portal for public access to reliable and up-to-date information ¹². The UN Office of Drugs and Crime published materials to promote cyber security to protect children from possible online abuse and hospitals from disruptive cyber-attacks.

It is further revealed that Governments worldwide responded to both the pandemic and the infodemic. The policy tracker of the International Monetary Fund reported that 193 countries took economic measures and adopted policy changes in response to the pandemic ¹⁵. In addition to public health strategies to minimize the spread of the virus, such as enforcing lockdowns and promoting social distancing norms, government officials offered daily or weekly briefings to their constituents with major news channels covering these events live ‘on air.’

The reviewed works, among other things suggested COVID-19 was first reported in the city of Wuhan in China in December of 2019. As at that time, it was largely regarded as a Chinese problem that was also going to end in China ²⁹. In an article which was published by Journal of the Chinese Medical Association, COVID-19 was first reported in late December in Wuhan and

quickly spread to other places in China and eventually, other parts of the world. In Nigeria, COVID-19 was first confirmed on 27 February 2020.

Literature reviewed further showed that mass media is any source that sends information to public (masses). It can include channels like newspapers, magazines, internet, TV, radio etc. TV and radio are not mass media per se but they become mass media only when they have the connection and they are capable of accessing the media so they are the sources³². Equally, literature reviewed further showed that the provision of health-care via mobile phones and wireless devices is called M-Health. The mobile device helps in giving the information about health-care and medical facilities to the patients and helps the doctor to monitor the patients. A proper review of the interventions of M-health will give us an idea of the advantages of communication technologies as well as mobile computing in order to improve the health services⁹⁹.

From the foregoing, one would observe that, not much attention has been given in a comprehensive manner to the reporting style of COVID-19 pandemic, therefore, the need for research on pattern of reportage of COVID-19 pandemic among national newspapers.

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Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter deals with the research method that was adopted by the researcher for this study.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a content analysis design. Content analysis is a systematic method of analysing past recorded work. Since the topic of the research is on analyzing Nigerian newspapers, therefore, only content analysis was employed in generating quality results.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of the editions of *The Nation* and *The Punch* newspapers, between January and December, 2020 and the total number of editions in the study period was 732 editions.

3.3 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

3.3.1 Census Size

The study adopted the census technique. The rationale for the choice of method is because it provides a true measurement of the population (no sampling error) from which a benchmark data may be obtained for future studies. Detailed information about this period (between January and December, 2020) was purposively acquired. While, the motive to study the total editions (census) was based on the assertion that, if the period for the study is within a short period of time, the entire content could be studied so as to ensure reliability of data.

3.3.2 Content Categories

They were coded as follows;

a) **COVID-19 Pandemic report:** It was coded as

i. Yes

ii. No

b) **Extent of COVID-19 Pandemic report:** coded as

Number of newspaper editions with COVID-19 Pandemic report

Location of COVID-19 Pandemic report in *The Nation and the Punch*: coded as

i. Front page

ii. Inside page

- iii. Back page
- iv. Centre spread
- c) Page location
 - i. Over Full Page
 - ii. Full page
 - iii. Over Half Page
 - iv. Half page
 - v. Less than Half Page
- d) **Sources of COVID-19 Pandemic report**
 - i. Media
 - ii. NCDC
 - iii. Other Govt. Officials
 - iv. Medical Personnel
 - v. International Org
 - vi. Patients/ Parents
 - v. Others
- e) **Format of COVID-19 Reportage in the sample Newspapers**
 - i. Straight News
 - ii. Feature
 - iii. Editorial
 - iv. Opinion
 - v. Column
 - vi. Letter
 - vii. Special Report

3.4 Description of the Research Instrument

The instrument that was used for this study was the Coding Sheet. The coding sheet was adopted to bring the real manifest contents of *The Nation* and *The Punch* on COVID-19 pandemic. The code was constructed based on the unit of analysis and content categories. In addition, the code sheet was filled based on the coding instruction. The coding instructions were properly articulated in the content code sheet below to guide the coder in the coding of the contents of communication.

3.4.1 Content Coding Sheet: Content analysis checklist on COVID-19 pandemic reportage (CACCCPR). The study assigned numbers to the categories to organise the data according to their homogenous subset as they were collected. The design of the content code sheet of this research is as follows:

They were coded as follows;

a) COVID-19 Pandemic report: they were coded as

i. Yes

ii. No

ii. Extent of COVID-19 Pandemic report: coded as

Number of newspaper editions with COVID-19 Pandemic report

Location of COVID-19 Pandemic report in *The Nation and The Punch*: coded as

vi. Front page

vii. Inside page

viii. Back page

ix. Centre spread

iii. Page location

i. Over Full Page

ii. Full page

iii. Over Half Page

iv. Half page

v. Less than Half Page

d) Sources of COVID-19 Pandemic report

i. Media

- ii. NCDC
- iii. Other Govt. Officials
- iv. Medical Personnel
- v. International Org
- vi. Patients/ Parents
- vii. Others

e) Format of COVID-19 Reportage in the sample Newspapers

- i. Straight News
- ii. Feature
- iii. Editorial
- iv. Opinion
- v. Column
- vi. Letter
- vii. Special Report

3.5 Validation of the Research Instrument

The Code Sheet instruments was validated by the researcher's supervisor and other lecturers in the Department of Mass Communication and media Technology, Lead City University, Ibadan.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The method of data presentation and analysis was descriptive and contextual analysis in essay form through percentage tables.

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Chapter Four

Results and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Data Presentation

In this chapter, the researcher collected data for the study through content analysis. This chapter depicts a descriptive analysis of the information collected in the course of the study. Further, the data gotten from the selected newspapers were discussed by using them to find answers to the research questions.

The researcher visited the morgue in the University library of Lead City University, Ibadan and examined copies of the daily newspapers for a period of a year between 1st January and 31st December, 2020. The total number of weekly and weekend editions for this period was 732.

4.1.1 Data Presentation

Table 4.1: Total Number of Publications in *the Punch*

Years	Total Number of	Editions with COVID-	Editions without
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	Publications	19 reports	COVID-19 reports
January , 2020	31	11	20
February, 2020	29	20	9
March, 2020	31	21	10
April, 2020	30	22	8
May, 2020	31	24	7
June, 2020	30	23	7
July, 2020	31	21	10
August, 2020	31	17	14
September, 2020	30	19	11
October, 2020	31	16	15
November, 2020	30	23	7
December, 2020	31	12	19
Total	366	229	137

(Source Field: 2022)

Table 4.1 shows that between January 1st and December 31st, 2020, the *Punch* newspaper published 366 editions, 229 editions of *The Punch* newspaper have stories on COVID-19, while 137 editions of *The Punch* newspaper do not have stories on COVID-19.

Table 4.2: Total Number of Publications in *the Nation*

Years	Total Number of	Editions with COVID-	Editions without
--------------	------------------------	-----------------------------	-------------------------

	Publications	19 reports	COVID-19 reports
January , 2020	31	9	22
February, 2020	29	12	17
March, 2020	31	17	14
April, 2020	30	24	10
May, 2020	31	16	15
June, 2020	30	13	17
July, 2020	31	23	8
August, 2020	31	18	13
September, 2020	30	19	11
October, 2020	31	21	10
November, 2020	30	24	6
December, 2020	31	14	17
Total	366	210	156

(Source Field: 2022)

Table 2 shows that between January 1st and December 31st, 2020, *The Nation* newspaper published 366 editions, 210 editions of *The Nation* newspaper have stories on COVID-19, while 156 editions of *The Nation* newspaper do not have stories on COVID-19.

4.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this section, the four (4) research questions asked in Chapter One of this study were answered. The information were collected from the newspaper publications through the content analysed. These were arranged and analysed simultaneously in line with the research questions. The newspaper content analysis presentation involved a tabular form of analysis as published by *The Punch* and *The Nation* between January 1st and December 31st 2020.

4.2.1 Re-statement of Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the frequency of COVID-19 reportage in *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between January and December, 2020?

Table 4.3: Frequency of Publications on COVID-19 in *The Punch*

Frequency of Publications	No of Publications	Percentage%
Number of newspapers examined	229	62.6%
Number of newspapers unexamined	137	37.4%
Total	366	100

(Source Field: 2022)

Table 3 shows that 229 (62.6%) editions of *The Punch* newspapers was examined in this study, while 137 (37.4%) editions of *The Punch* newspapers was not examined.

Table 4.4: Frequency of Publications on COVID-19 in *the Nations*

Frequency of Publications	No of Publications	Percentage%
Number of newspapers examined	210	57.4%
Number of newspapers unexamined	156	42.6%
Total	366	100

(Source Field: 2022)

Table 4 shows that 210 (57.4%) editions of *The Nation* newspapers was examined in this study, while 156 (42.6%) editions of *The Nation* newspapers was not examined.

Research Question Two: What is the level of prominence given to COVID-19 reportage in *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between January and December, 2020?

Table 4.5: Placement of COVID-19 Reportage in *the Punch*

Placement	No of Publications	Percentage%
Front Page	57	24.9
Inside Page	134	59.3
Back Page	26	11.4
Centre Spread	12	5.2
Total	229	100

(Source Field: 2022)

Table 5 shows that in *The Punch* newspapers between January 1st and December 31st, 2020, 57 (24.9%) of *The Punch* editions on COVID-19 were placed on the front page of the newspaper, 134 (59.3%) of *The Punch* editions on COVID-19 were placed on the inside page of the newspaper, 26 (11.4%) of *The Punch* editions on COVID-19 were placed on the back page of the newspaper, while 12 (5.2%) of *The Punch* editions on COVID-19 were placed on the centre spread page of the newspaper.

Table 4.6: Placements of COVID-19 Reportage in *the Nation*

Placements	No of Publications	Percentage%
------------	--------------------	-------------

Front Page	56	26.7
Inside Page	103	49.0
Back Page	34	16.2
Centre Spread	17	8.1
Total	210	100

(Source Field: 2022)

Table 6 shows that in *The Punch* newspapers between January 1st and December 31st, 2020, 56 (26.7%) of its editions on COVID-19 were reported on the front page, 103 (49.0%) were placed inside page, 34 (16.2%) were reported on the back page, 17 (8.1%) were placed at the centre spread.

Table 4.7: Page locations of COVID-19 Reportage in *The Punch*

Page locations	No of Publications	Percentage%
Over Full Page	5	2.2
Full page	96	41.9
Over Half Page	21	9.2
Half page	69	30.1
Less than Half Page	38	16.6
Total	229	100

(Source Field: 2022)

Table 7 shows that 5 (2.2%) of the editions in *The Punch* covered over a full page, 96 (41.9%) were full page stories, 21 (9.2%) of the editions covered over half page, 69 (30.1%) cover half page, while 38 (16.6%) of the editions covered less than half page.

Table 4.8: Page locations of COVID-19 Reportage in *The Nation*

Page locations	No of Publications	Percentage%
Over Full Page	11	5.2
Full page	47	22.4
Over Half Page	52	24.8
Half page	89	42.4
Less than Half Page	11	5.3
Total	210	100

(Source Field: 2022)

Table 8 shows that 11 (5.2%) of the editions in *The Nations* newspaper covered over full page of the newspaper, 89 (42.4%) covered full page, 52 (24.8%) covered over half page, 42 (22.4%) of the editions covered half page, while 11 (5.3%) covered less than half page of the newspaper.

Research Question Three: What are the dominant news sources in COVID-19 reportage found in *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between January and December, 2020?

Table 4.9: Sources of COVID-19 Pandemic report in *The Punch*

Sources	No of Publications	Percentage%
News Agency of Nigeria	47	20.5
NCDC	104	45.4
Other Govt. Officials	21	9.2
Medical Personnel	28	12.2
International Org	12	5.2
Patients	17	7.4
Total	229	100

(Source Field: 2022)

Table 9 shows that 47 (20.5%) of the report sources are from the News Agency of Nigeria, 104 (45.5%) of the reports are from the NCDC, 21 (9.2%) are from other Govt. Officials, 28 (12.2%) of the reports are sourced from medical personnel, 12 (5.2%) are sourced from international Organisation, while 17 (7.4%) are sourced from patients

Table 4.10: Sources of COVID-19 Pandemic report in *The Nation*

Sources	No of Publications	Percentage%
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News Agency of Nigeria	27	12.9
NCDC	124	59.0
Other Govt. Officials	12	5.7
Medical Personnel	23	10.9
International Org	11	5.2
Patients	13	6.2
Total	210	100

(Source Field: 2022)

Table 10 shows that 27 (12.9%) of the reports in *The Nation* newspaper were sourced from News Agency of Nigeria, 124 (59.0%) were sourced from NCDC, 12 (5.7) were sourced from Other Govt. Officials, 23 (10.9%) were sourced from Medical Personnel, 11 (5.2%) of the reports in *The Nation* were sourced from international Organisation, while 13 (6.2%) were sourced from patients.

Research Question Four: What are the story formats that were used in COVID-19 reportage by *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between January and December, 2020?

Table 4.11: Format of COVID-19 Reportage in *The Punch*

Format	No of Publications	Percentage%
Straight News	101	44.1
Feature	24	10.5
Editorial	44	19.2
Opinion	21	9.2
Column	17	7.4
Letter	22	9.6
Total	229	100

(Source Field: 2022)

Table 11 shows that 101 (44.1%) COVID-19 reportage in *The Punch* were straight news formats, 24 (10.5%) of the COVID-19 reportage were features, 44 (19.2%) were editorials on COVID-19, 21 (9.2%) were opinions, 17 (7.4%) were column and letters to the editor were 22 (9.6%).

Table 4.12: Format of COVID-19 Reportage in *The Nation*

Format	No of Publications	Percentage%
Straight News	112	53.3
Feature	14	6.7
Editorial	37	17.6
Opinion	17	8.1
Column	12	5.7
Letter	18	8.5
Total	210	100

(Source Field: 2022)

Table 12 shows that 102 (53.3%) of coverage of COVID-19 were straight new, 14 (6.7%) of the report on COVID-19 were features, 37 (17.6%) of the reports were editorials, 17 (8.1%) were opinions, 12 (5.7%) were column, while 18 (8.5%) letters to the editor were written on COVID-19.

4.3: Discussion of Findings

This research was guided by four objectives from which for research questions were formulated

Research Question One: What is the Frequency of COVID-19 Reportage in *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between January and December, 2020?

From the data gotten from the coding, 229 (62.6%) editions of *The Punch* newspapers had COVID-19 stories, while 137 (37.4%) editions of *The Punch* newspapers did not report any stories on COVID-19 between January 1st and December 31st, 2020. 210 (57.4%) editions of *The Nation* newspapers carried stories on COVID-19, while 156 (42.6%) editions of *The Nation* newspapers did not report on COVID-19 between January 1st and December 31st, 2022. Also the findings shows that *The Punch* newspaper reported 229 (62.6%) on COVID-19 than 210 (57.4%).

Hence it can be said that both The Punch and The Nation newspaper reported above average on COVID-19 cases and developing stories on COVID-19 under the period reviewed. The findings from this study can be supported with a study which stated that newspaper plays a very significant role in the society by reporting events, happenings, occurrences in the society; serving as an advocacy instrument by providing the platform for opinions (letter to the editors, op-ed, editorials, etc.), as well as performing the watchdog function against the government, authorities and the ills of the society history¹. Also another study stated that even though the Nigerian media failed to provide early warning messages before the index case of COVID-19 pandemic was reported in the country they swung to full action immediately the virus reached the shores of Nigeria². Nigerians have relatively high knowledge of the disease and that 81.5 percent of the sampled population sourced their information about COVID-19 from the traditional (conventional) media³. Likewise another study stated that whatever the audience makes of media information or messages is determined by the way and manner such messages and information are mediated or framed and disseminated to them¹⁰³.

Research Question Two: What is the level of Prominence given to COVID-19 Reportage in *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between January and December, 2020?

Data generated from the coding, *The Punch* newspaper reported 57 (24.9%) about COVID-19 on the front page, 134 (59.3%) on COVID-19 were placed in the inside page, 26 (11.4%) on COVID-19 were placed on the back page of the newspaper and (5.2%) of *The Punch* editions on COVID-19 were placed on the centre spread page of the newspaper. *The Punch* newspapers between January 1st and December 31st, 2020, 56 (26.7%) of its editions on COVID-19 were reported on the front page, 103 (49.0%) were placed inside page, 34 (16.2%) were reported on the back page, 17 (8.1%) were placed at the centre spread.

5 (2.2%) of the editions in *The Punch* covered over a full page, 96 (41.9%) were full page stories, 21 (9.2%) of the editions covered over half page, 69 (30.1%) cover half page, while 38 (16.6%) of the editions covered less than half page. 11 (5.2%) of the editions in *The Nations* newspaper covered over full page of the newspaper, 42 (22.4%) covered full page, 52 (24.8%) covered over half page, 89 (42.4%) of the editions covered half page, while 11 (5.3%) covered less than half page of the newspaper.

Thus, in answering the level of prominence given to COVID-19 by *The Punch* and *The Nation* under the period reviewed, it can be said that both newspapers reported most reports on COVID-19 in the inside page of their publications. While less stories were reported at the back page of their publications. Most of COVID-19 reportage in *The Punch* cover a full page, while most in *The Nations* covered half page. The findings from this study can be supported with a study which stated that In line with the above findings, the Agenda Setting Theory (Agenda Building) shows that the media can give prominence to news stories through layout (front, inside, centre spread and back pages) in the newspapers as it is stated that media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues. In the same vein, the Social Responsibility Theory imposes on them an obligation to be socially responsible in discharging their duties, which were fulfilled by showcasing the incidents and happenings around the nation in the paper's publications.

Therefore, if placement of stories at strategic areas on the newspapers can make them famous than another, it might be right to posit that "The media lack powers to suppress concern. But they can do more than stimulate interest. By directing attention to these concerns they provide, a context that influences how people will talk about these matters... the media more than direct attention to a problem; they influence how people will think about it" ⁵.

Research Question Three: What are the dominant news sources in COVID-19 reportage found in *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between January and December, 2020?

The Punch sourced 47 (20.5%) from the News Agency of Nigeria, 104 (45.5%) of the reports are from the NCNC, 21 (9.2%) are from other Govt. Officials, 28 (12.2%) of the reports are sourced from medical personnel, 12 (5.2%) are sourced from international Organisation, while 17 (7.4%) are sourced from patients. 27 (12.9%) of the reports in *The Nation* newspaper were sourced from News Agency of Nigeria, 124 (59.0%) were sourced from NCDC, 12 (5.7) were sourced from Other Govt. Officials, 23 (10.9%) were sourced from Medical Personnel, 11 (5.2%) of the reports in *The Nation* were sourced from international Organisation, while 13 (6.2%) were sourced from patients.

Thus it can be said that NCDC was the major source of news for both *The Punch* and *The Nation* newspapers. News Agency of Nigeria was the next major source of news for both newspapers. While international organisations was the less source of news on COVID-19 for *The Punch* newspaper, COVID-19 patients were the less source of news on COVID-19 for *The Nation* Newspapers. The findings can be supported with studies which stated that news sources are essential in the construction of news stories given that journalists in most cases are not able to gather information firsthand as witnesses of news events. They have therefore to rely on people who witnessed the events for relevant information to build their stories⁵². In other cases, the nature of the stories in terms of how complex or how scientific they are will compel the journalists to seek for help in getting explanations of such complex issues⁵³.

Research Question Four: What are the Story Formats that were used in COVID-19 Reportage by *The Nation* and *The Punch* Newspapers between January and December, 2020?

Drawing from the coding, 101 (44.1%) COVID-19 reportage in *The Punch* were straight news formats, 24 (10.5%) of the COVID-19 reportage were features, 44 (19.2%) were editorials on COVID-19, 21 (9.2%) were opinions, 17 (7.4%) were column and letters to the editor were 22 (9.6%). 102 (53.3%) of coverage of COVID-19 were straight new, 14 (6.7%) of the report on COVID-19 were features, 37 (17.6%) of the reports were editorials, 17 (8.1%) were opinions, 12 (5.7%) were column, while 18 (8.5%) letters to the editor were written on COVID-19.

Hence it can be said that, both *The Punch* and *The Nation* reported more straight news formats, followed by editorial for both newspapers, the Punch had more features than column and opinion and the Nation had more letters to the editor than other formats. In line with the above findings, the Agenda Setting Theory (Agenda Building) shows that the media can give prominence to news stories through layout (front, inside, centre spread and back pages) in the newspapers as it is stated that media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues. In the same vein, the Social Responsibility Theory imposes on them an obligation to be socially responsible in discharging their duties, which were fulfilled by showcasing the incidents and happenings around the nation in the paper's publications.

Therefore, if placement of stories at strategic areas on the newspapers can make them famous than another, it might be right to posit that "The media lack powers to suppress concern. But they can do more than stimulate interest. By directing attention to these concerns they provide, a context that influences how people will talk about these matters... the media more than direct attention to a problem; they influence how people will think about it" ⁶⁹.

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Chapter Five

Conclusion

This chapter presents the summary of the study, conclusion and recommendations based on the findings from the study. It subsequently states the contributions to knowledge and suggests areas for further study.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The Punch newspapers reported 229 (62.6%) editions of had COVID-19 stories, while 137 (37.4%) editions did not report any stories on COVID-19 between January 1st and December 31st, 2020. 210 (57.4%) editions of *The Nation* newspapers carried stories on COVID-19, while 156 (42.6%) editions of *The Nation* newspapers did not report on COVID-19 between January 1st and December 31st, 2022. Also the findings shows that *The Punch* newspaper reported 229 (62.6%) on COVID-19 than 210 (57.4%).

The Punch newspaper reported 57 (24.9%) about COVID-19 on the front page, 134 (59.3%) on COVID-19 were placed in the inside page, 26 (11.4%) on COVID-19 were placed on the back page of the newspaper and (5.2%) of *The Punch* editions on COVID-19 were placed on the centre spread page of the newspaper. *The Punch* newspapers between January 1st and December 31st, 2020, 56 (26.7%) of its editions on COVID-19 were reported on the front page, 103 (49.0%) were placed inside page, 34 (16.2%) were reported on the back page, 17 (8.1%) were placed at the centre spread. 5 (2.2%) of the editions in *The Punch* covered over a full page, 96 (41.9%) were full page stories, 21 (9.2%) of the editions covered over half page, 69 (30.1%) cover half page, while 38 (16.6%) of the editions covered less than half page. 11 (5.2%) of the editions in *The Nations* newspaper covered over full page of the newspaper, 42 (22.4%) covered full page, 52 (24.8%) covered over half page, 89 (42.4%) of the editions covered half page, while 11 (5.3%) covered less than half page of the newspaper.

The Punch sourced 47 (20.5%) from the News Agency of Nigeria, 104 (45.5%) of the reports are from the NCNC, 21 (9.2%) are from other Govt. Officials, 28 (12.2%) of the reports are sourced from medical personnel, 12 (5.2%) are sourced from international Organisation, while 17 (7.4%) are sourced from patients. 27 (12.9%) of the reports in *The Nation* newspaper were sourced from News Agency of Nigeria, 124 (59.0%) were sourced from NCDC, 12 (5.7) were sourced from Other Govt. Officials, 23 (10.9%) were sourced from Medical Personnel, 11 (5.2%) of the reports in *The Nation* were sourced from international Organisation, while 13 (6.2%) were sourced from patients.

Drawing from the coding, 101 (44.1%) COVID-19 reportage in *The Punch* were straight news formats, 24 (10.5%) of the COVID-19 reportage were features, 44 (19.2%) were editorials on COVID-19, 21 (9.2%) were opinions, 17 (7.4%) were column and letters to the editor were 22 (9.6%). 102 (53.3%) of coverage of COVID-19 were straight new, 14 (6.7%) of the report on COVID-19 were features, 37 (17.6%) of the reports were editorials, 17 (8.1%) were opinions, 12 (5.7%) were column, while 18 (8.5%) letters to the editor were written on COVID-19.

5.2 Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it is concluded that *The Punch* and *The Nation* newspapers reported above average on COVID-19 cases and developing stories on COVID-19 under the period reviewed.

The Punch and *The Nation* newspaper under the period reviewed, it can be said that both newspapers reported most reports on COVID-19 in the inside page of their publications. While less stories were reported at the back page of their publications. Most of COVID-19 reportage in *The Punch* cover a full page, while most in *The Nations* covered half page.

NCDC was the major source of news for both *The Punch* and *The Nation* newspapers. News Agency of Nigeria was the next major source of news for both newspapers. While international organisations was the less source of news on COVID-19 for *The Punch* newspaper, COVID-19 patients were the less source of news on COVID-19 for *The Nation* Newspapers.

The Punch and *The Nation* reported more straight news formats, followed by editorial for both newspapers, *the Punch* had more features than column and opinion and *the Nation* had more letters to the editor than other formats.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. As the watchdogs of the society, newspapers should constantly cover and report health matters so as to inform and educate the society on the dangers cause by the activities of health matters.
2. Newspapers as a matter of agenda-setting, should always give importance to health matters as the media filter and shape reality and make public to perceive issues as more important than other issues based on media concentration.
3. Newspapers should constantly bear in mind their professional ethics in covering and reporting health related issues as sources of news will ensure credibility and accuracy of news so has not misled the society as the media owned the society factual information.
4. Newspapers as watchdogs and the fourth estate of the realm of the society should go beyond just reporting health matters as it breaks, they should carry out surveillance by investigating into developing issues of such health issues.

5.4 Contributions to Knowledge

The study evaluates how *Nation* and *the Punch* Report COVID-19 Pandemic between January, 1st and December 31th, 2020. Publications of this newspapers were content-analysed, looking at the frequency, prominence, pattern, sources of news. From this study, there are significant contribution to literature, theories, research, practices and policies.

The findings of this study also contributed to Agenda Setting Theory, Framing Theory and Social Responsibility Theory. The findings reinforced the assumptions of these theories. The findings from this study show that *The Nation and The Punch* newspapers set agenda as it frequently reported COVID-19 and placed importance on COVID-19, as they are placed at strategies pages. In addition, the findings showed that *The Nation and The Punch* newspapers performed their duties responsibly and focus on development by providing updates, warning and ways to prevent COVID-19.

The findings of this study has given insight into COVID-19 padenmic reportage. This would help media organisation to do more in times of global pandemic like COVID-19 in order to perform more surveillance function, since the findings shows that *The Nation and The Punch* newspapers performed less of surveillance function.

This study will constitute a valuable document and useful data as it will help in formulating and planning appropriate policies that will be used to address health related cases in the nation.

5.5 Suggestion for Further Research

It is practically impossible for a study to cover the entire available field in its area or scope. As such, the following are suggested for further study;

1. Further research could make use of other case studies or more case studies.
2. Further research can be conducted using another year for a study.
3. Other research techniques and methodologies can be adopted to evaluate media reportage of COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Further research should be carried out on the correlation between media coverage and reportage on COVID-19 pandemic.

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Appendix I

Coding Sheet

Total number of *The Punch* Newspapers Examined during the Period under Review

Years	Total Number of Publication	Editions with COVID-19 reports	Editions without COVID-19 reports
January , 2020			
February, 2020			
March, 2020			
April, 2020			
May, 2020			
June, 2020			
July, 2020			
August, 2020			
September, 2020			
October, 2020			
November, 2020			
December, 2020			
Total			

(Source Field: 2022)

Total number of *The Nation* Newspapers Examined during the Period under Review

Years	Total Number of Publication	Editions with COVID-19 reports	Editions without COVID-19 reports
January , 2020			
February, 2020			
March, 2020			
April, 2020			
May, 2020			
June, 2020			
July, 2020			
August, 2020			
September, 2020			
October, 2020			
November, 2020			
December, 2020			
Total			

(Source Field: 2022)

Placement of COVID-19 Reportage in *The Punch* and *The Nation*

Placement	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Nation</i>
Front Page		
Inside Page		
Back Page		
Centre Spread		
Total		

(Source Field: 2022)

Page location of COVID-19 Reportage in *The Punch* and *The Nation*

Page location	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Nation</i>
Over Full Page		
Full page		
Over Half Page		
Half page		
Less than Half Page		
Total		

(Source Field: 2022)

Format of COVID-19 Reportage in *The Punch* and *The Nation*

Format	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Nation</i>
Straight News		
Feature		
Editorial		
Opinion		
Column		
Letter		
Total		

(Source Field: 2022)

Sources of COVID-19 Pandemic report in *The Punch* and *The Nation*

Sources	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Nation</i>
Media		
NCDC		
Other Govt. Officials		
Medical Personnel		
International Org		
Patients/ Parents		
Total		

(Source Field: 2022)

Years	Total Number of Publication	Editions with COVID-19 reports	Editions without COVID-19 reports
January , 2020	31	11	20
February, 2020	29	20	9
March, 2020	31	21	10
April, 2020	30	22	8
May, 2020	31	24	7
June, 2020	30	23	7
July, 2020	31	21	10
August, 2020	31	17	14
September, 2020	30	19	11
October, 2020	31	16	15
November, 2020	30	23	7
December, 2020	31	12	19
Total	366	229	137

(Source Field: 2022)

Years	Total Number of Publication	Editions with COVID-19 reports	Editions without COVID-19 reports
January , 2020	31	9	22
February, 2020	29	12	17
March, 2020	31	17	14
April, 2020	30	24	10
May, 2020	31	16	15
June, 2020	30	13	17
July, 2020	31	23	8
August, 2020	31	18	13
September, 2020	30	19	11
October, 2020	31	21	10
November, 2020	30	24	6
December, 2020	31	14	17
Total	366	210	156

(Source Field: 2022)

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- (a) Akpekpe Model Primary School, Auchi Edo State
First School Leaving Certificate 1992
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NABTEB 2002
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BSc. Mass Communication & Media Technology 2013
-

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- ❖ Certificate of Participation, ICT National Conference
at School of Information & Communication Technology,
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University Compliance Certificate

This is to certify that this thesis by Sediku Musa Umoru with Matric No LCU/PG/001088 in the Department of Mass Communication and Media Technology, Lead City University Ibadan is in full compliance with the approved University format and style

Signature

Date

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