

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

syndrome known as 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The virus emerged around the end of December 2019, in a famous business city in Wuhan, China spreading around the globe like a wild fire. Virus is highly transmittable and pathogenic. Just after the first fifty days of the outbreak of the disease, the disease killed over 18,000 and infected more than 70,000 people<sup>1</sup>. The virus called COVID-19 by Chinese researchers is deadly compared to SRAS-CoV in 2003 that infected 8,098 individuals with a mortality rate of 9%, across 26 countries in the world. On the other hand, Coronavirus in 2019 infected 120,000 individuals with a mortality rate of 2.9%, across 109 countries. The virus was said to have been caused by a strange and novel severe type of Coronavirus typified as severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARSCoV-2)<sup>1</sup>. It was found that the infection has no immediate solution for cure and treatment as well as no vaccine. It became a worldwide pandemic causing significant morbidity and mortality. However, a few broad-spectrum antiviral medications evaluated against Coronavirus in clinical tests has significant consequences in clinical recovery. A record of 1,603,428 confirmed cases, 356,440 recoveries from the illness and 95,714 deaths worldwide as of April 9, 2020 were observed<sup>1</sup>.

In Nigeria, precisely on 27th February, 2020, an Italian citizen, who was on a business trip in the country became the index case for COVID-19<sup>1</sup>. As at April 9, 2020, there Was a record of 288 laboratory-confirmed cases of Coronavirus cases in Nigeria. Within this period, 51 patients were already discharged while 7 were dead. The need to look into the reports of coverage of the Coronavirus disease in the Guardian newspaper, being one of the oldest and most popular media,

and with advantages over radio and television, for the fact that it can be read at convenience, it is available all year round, can be stored for future reference is imperative. The choice of the Guardian newspaper for this study stems from the fact it is a very popular newspaper with wide area of coverage. It is not only accessible but also affordable. The Guardian is a national daily newspaper in Nigeria. During the heat period of the Coronavirus pandemic, The Guardian newspaper was found to be alive to the duty and responsibility of regular updates and coverage of the news about the pandemic<sup>2</sup>.

The media also known as the fourth estate of the realm with a long history in Nigeria dated to the establishment of the first newspaper, *Iwe Irohin* by a missionary, Rev Henry Townsend in 1859. In Nigeria, we also have the second newspaper establishment as the *Anglo-African* founded in 1963 by Robert Campbell. It was also the first paper published in Lagos. *The Lagos Times* was founded by Mr. Richard Olamilege Beale Blaize in 1880 seventeen years letter. These were the earliest newspapers in Nigeria. However, later in the history of the Nigeria's media industry, newspapers such as *The Guardian* newspapers 1983, *Vanguard* newspapers 1984 and *Daily Sun* newspapers 2001 were established. The significant roles played by Nigerian newspapers in propelling and enhancing an achievement of a sincere and responsible government in Nigeria cannot be controverted. This, they have been able to do by being candid and fearless voice about the social, economic, political, as well as health issues in the country <sup>2</sup>.

The Nigerian media have no doubt monitored and have become core health indicator for other areas of public health helping to explain the status in the process of achieving specific goals within the country. These include coverage of immunization for developing antigens, knowing if there is prevalence of risk factors for non-communicable diseases, identifying if there is

effectiveness of interventions against these diseases, as well as recording impoverishment of households through health payments.

The mass media may not be able to cure virus infection but can curtail its spread by massive campaigns and awareness creation. By constantly reporting health issues, the mass media carry out their agenda-setting function in the society, which has the primacy of focusing the attention of the audiences to their health and healthy living. Reporting of issues in the media is quite different from one content to the other. It is also different in the area of the methods, patterns and objectives of reporting. Differences also exist in the influence of each report, including the effects of the reports on the audience <sup>3</sup>. These differences in reporting are caused by certain factors, which range from the type of issues involved, the essence of the media, their motives, aims and objectives, the interests of the audience; all are seen as constituting pulling forces that shape the output and/or influence the outcome. The ability of the mass media in focusing attention to certain issues and not some others is not in doubt. However, some issues, which are seen as very important to the audience at a point makes the media to promptly give necessary attention to them by reporting them<sup>4</sup>. For instance, such issues as health outbreaks of international concerns in the likes of the present COVID-19 pandemic.

The role of communicating health related issues are expected to be more of social responsibilities that depict the mass media as information custodians for the wellbeing and development of the entire segments of the society. There is however a reflection of how the mass media manage health information on the public health awareness. It is also observed on their sensitivities to health challenges and needs. The situation of Nigeria's public health and the role that the media play to create health consciousness, which can make the citizens to get involved in persuasive

health campaigns do not seem corresponding. Perhaps, the competition for market share, which the media engage in, with the aim to boost economic gains for survival shapes and reflects the roles that mass media play in the health information delivery. In consideration of this situation in health information coverage and delivery, it is noteworthy therefore that it poses a concern on the role the media play in their contributions in a society free of shortfall in relevant health information<sup>5,6,7</sup>.

Newspapers play a very significant role in the society by reporting events, happenings, occurrences and serving as advocacy platforms by providing the channels for opinions as well as performing the watchdog function against the government, authorities and the ills in the society. Newspapers keep the society aware of their health hazards by providing adequate information regarding anything that is capable of threatening people's health. Thus, the Nigerian newspapers have the responsibility of reporting the deadly coronavirus pandemic ravaging the world for which Nigeria is not an exception<sup>7</sup>.

The volume of the messages on health matters carried by the media, no doubt reflects public health awareness and sensitisation, however, the angles they emphasise in the contents of the message are equally very important<sup>8,9,10</sup>. The aspects of the news emphasized are vital because they are seen as constituting a unique persuasive proposition. This is because they become noticeable, meaningful and memorable to the audiences and consequently influence public health decisions<sup>11</sup>. To emphasise certain news angle not only describes the role the media play in trying to achieve in health development, it also defines the interest the media prioritised in their pursuit of economic gain as against social responsibility function during health challenges. To determine

the problem of where the interest of the media lie in the event of health challenges becomes an unanswered, which is hidden in the contents of media health messages<sup>12, 13</sup>.

Difference in media reports describes the changes in language or wording of the highlights of a situation or an event could influence the way the public perceive the situation. Research shows that news dealing with pandemics and crises, like the COVID-19 influence public perceptions and concerns. When such events cause destruction in the society, it severely affects members in that community. Generally, those issues enable researchers to study the extent to which media select news and shape its content<sup>14</sup>.

The pattern of frames evaluated in a media content analysis is most times affected by the issue being investigated. This present research study dwells on a health crisis situation all over the world tagged a pandemic which is also prevalent in Nigeria and therefore seeks to evaluate the following frames: “cause and transmission”, “treatment and control/containment frame”, “fear and death frame”, “sabotage and conspiracy frame”, “government/political influence frame”, “effect frame”, “sensitisation/mobilisation frame”, “consolation and support/aid frame”, “rumour and misinformation frame”, “stigmatization/discrimination frame”. These measures for analysing frames in media coverage of health issues were developed<sup>5, 16</sup>.

The explanations of these frames are as follow: “causes and transmission frame” capture news items, which are seen within the context of the origin and mode of transmission of Coronavirus as well as its signs and symptoms; “treatment and control/containment frame” deal with news stories that reflect and dissect preventive measures of the virus and its spread, It also reflects the efforts to be made towards its treatment, as well as the level of its containment. “Fear and death

frame” comprise news stories, which is capable of raising tension consequent upon the number of infected cases including the rise in the death toll. “Sabotage and conspiracy frame” showcase news stories, which focus on individuals, bodies or government activities, capable of disrupting the effort towards containing the outbreak. They equally include information of the wrong means of gaining undue advantage in benefiting from the spread or effect of the outbreak. “Government/political influence frame” reflect the information about the actions and inactions of the government through its policies and political rivalry. “Effect frame” which are reports on the effects of the outbreak on economic, social-cultural interactions, education, health, International relations and diplomacy, sporting activities, entertainment industry and other areas of human development <sup>16</sup>.

Further explanations show that “sensitisation/mobilisation frame” reflects information on how to educate the public on the preventive measures to manage the virus. It also includes how to report cases or persons with symptoms to the appropriate bodies. “Consolation and support/aid frame” involve information that discusses the financial aids and supports given to contain the outbreak. They equally include information on how to console the victims and how to commend contributions made to curb the virus. “Rumour and misinformation frame” deal with information that could expose the misinformation, lies, rumours, myth, and form of improper messages spread around about the treatment or effect of the virus, gotten either from social media or from unscrupulous individuals. “Stigmatization/discrimination frame” reflect information on the stigmatization and discrimination against the victims, their relations and/or boycotting the affected communities, states or nations <sup>16</sup>. This study therefore seeks to assess Coronavirus reports in Nigerian newspapers with particular focus on the *Guardian* newspaper.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Newspaper coverage of disasters, outbreak of diseases, epidemics, health issues etc., in Nigeria has over time been a veritable source of understanding how people perceive and deal with public health problems. This, no doubt could enhance a more robust and broad-based attempt at dissecting media contents and highlighting their importance to the readers. However, a lack of studies on the media coverage of Coronavirus reports has created a lacuna in the understanding of whether the news media create enough awareness and influence public perception of the virus. Also, whether the Guardian newspaper was involved in frequent, up – to- date reportage of the Coronavirus pandemic was not known. This constitutes a problem and of course a gap-in-knowledge which this present study seeks to fill.

This study, therefore, sets out to assess Coronavirus reportage in the *Guardian* newspaper. To achieve this, the study will assess the patterns of frames used in reporting the novel Coronavirus in the select newspapers. It will also assess the volume, prominence, and frequency of coverage used in the coverage of the novel Coronavirus reports in the *Guardian* newspaper in Nigeria. This will help uncover public understanding of the disease and its short- and long-term effects; whether there are adequate information that can influence public perception of the virus, and also how, what and why decisions were made regarding the disease by key players involved in the issue which includes the government, industries representative, consumers and commerce. Thus, this study seeks to assess Guardian newspaper reportage of coronavirus between 28th February, 2020 and 27th January, 2021.

### **1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of the study is to assess Coronavirus reportage in Nigerian newspapers with a particular focus on the *Guardian* newspaper. Specifically, the study intends to evaluate the following objectives:

- i. Ascertain the extent of coverage of the Coronavirus reports in the *Guardian* newspaper within the period of the study.
- ii. Find out the prominence given to the coverage of the Coronavirus reports in the *Guardian* newspaper within the period of the study.
- iii. Identify the patterns of frames used in covering the Coronavirus by *Guardian* newspaper between 28th February, 2020 and 27th January, 2021.
- iv. Examine the level of conformity with ethical standards of newspapers in the *Guardian* Coronavirus reportage.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The study will answer the following research questions:

- i. What is the extent of coverage of the Coronavirus reports in the *Guardian* newspaper within the period of the study?
- ii. What is the prominence of coverage of the Coronavirus reports in the *Guardian* newspaper within the period of the study?
- iii. What are the patterns of frames used in covering the novel Coronavirus by the *Guardian* newspaper between 28th February, 2020 and 27th January, 2021?

- iv. What is the level of conformity with ethical standards of newspaper in the *Guardian* Coronavirus reportage?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is quite apt in many ways. It will contribute to readers' understanding of media's role in framing health issue in any society. The frightening dimension of the novel COVID-19 pandemic on the socio-political and economic lives in Nigeria, and the limited number of studies on the subject matter, provide sufficient justification for the study.

The outcome of the study will impact on newspaper readers' understanding on how to interpret salient issues in the society especially as concerning their health. The findings from the study will also contribute to literature in framing analysis especially on health matters. The findings from the study will also be instructive to the Nigerian media managers on the imperative of using frames on issues of monumental national importance to avoid throwing up panic among the citizens of Nigeria.

The study will further contribute to the body of literature for studies on framing of domestic and foreign events. The outcome of study will fill the gap-in-knowledge identified in the review by providing further empirical data to support the theory that framing is a prevalent measure in the print media's reporting of health issues.

### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study was limited to an analysis on how the *Guardian* newspaper reports stories on the novel Coronavirus. This is with the aim of understanding how the *Guardian*

newspaper conceive and package news stories on the novel Coronavirus. It also intends to know whether media framing can influence readers' perception of the virus. The scope therefore was limited to the *Guardian* newspaper reports of the novel Coronavirus between 28th February, 2020 and 27th January, 2021 in Nigeria. The choice of the *Guardian* newspaper is among others; its reach and availability, its national outlook and spread. Also, the period under study was significant because it actually started with the report of the index case of Coronavirus in Nigeria, when the media reported the visit of an infected Italian citizen on business trip to Ogun State, Nigeria.

### **1.7 Operational Definition of Terms**

**Assessment:** The process of breaking down of frames used in reporting Coronavirus stories in Nigerian Newspapers.

**COVID-19 pandemic:** Coronavirus disease discovered in 2019 in a Chinese city called Wuhan, described as very deadly by the World Health Organisation (WHO), which is reported in the *Guardian* newspapers.

**Framing:** How the *Guardian* newspapers package and present reports on COVID-19 pandemic

**National dailies:** Nigerian daily newspapers such as *Guardian* used in reporting stories on Coronavirus.

**Newspaper:** Nigerian national dailies such as the *Guardian*.

**Reportage:** News and information on Coronavirus generated and disseminated in Nigerian by The *Guardian* newspapers.

### Endnotes

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## **Chapter Two**

### **Literture Review**

This chapter provided empirical background to this study and also make this work comprehensive. Literature was reviewed under the following sub-headings:

#### 2.1 Conceptual Review

#### 2.2 Theoretical Review

#### 2.3 Empirical Review

#### 2.4 Appraisal of Literature

### **2.1 Conceptual Review**

#### **2.1.1 Overview of the Origin of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)**

The novel Coronavirus tagged (COVID-19) is a viral infection. It is caused by a painful acute respiratory syndrome known as 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The virus originated in Wuhan, China and spread around the world. Virus is highly transmittable and pathogenic <sup>1</sup>. The common source of origin and transfer of the novel Coronavirus to humans is not known. However, the rapid transmission of Coronavirus from human to human was confirmed widely. The confirmation held that there is presently no clinically approved antiviral drugs or vaccine available for use against COVID-19 <sup>1</sup>. However, a few broad-spectrum antiviral medications evaluated against COVID-19 in clinical trials, resulted in clinical recovery.

Approaching the end of 2019, Wuhan, a famous business city in China, had an outbreak of a novel Coronavirus. Within the first fifty days of the epidemic, the disease killed over 18,000 and infected more than 70,000 people. The novel virus called COVID-19 by Chinese researchers is deadly compared to SRAS-CoV in 2003 that infected 8,098 individuals with a mortality rate of 9%, across 26 countries in the world<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, the novel Coronavirus in 2019 infected 120,000 individuals with a mortality rate of 2.9%, across 109 countries. The transmission rate of SARS-CoV-2 is found to be higher than SRAS-CoV. The reason could be that genetic recombination event at S protein in the RBD region of SARS-CoV-2 might have enhanced its transmission ability<sup>3</sup>.

Also, the Chinese Government; towards the end of the year 2019, informed the World Health Organisation (WHO) about several cases of pneumonia with unfamiliar aetiology. The outbreak was initiated from the social seafood market in Wuhan city of China and rapidly infected more than 50 peoples. The live animals frequently sold at the social seafood market such as bats, frogs, snakes, birds, marmots and rabbits<sup>4</sup>. The National Health Commission of China in January, 2020, released more facts about the epidemic, which suggested viral pneumonia.

Initially, the patients infected with Coronavirus induced pneumonia in China were thought to have visited the seafood market. Further investigations, however, showed that some individuals, who contracted the infection, had not visited the seafood market. These discoveries showed a human to the human spreading capability of this infection. The same mode of transmission was reported in more than 100 countries in the world. The human-to-human transmission of the virus takes place as a result of close contact with an infected person, who had been exposed to

coughing, sneezing, respiratory droplets or aerosols. These aerosols can penetrate the human body (lungs) through inhalation through the nose or mouth <sup>5,6</sup>.

### **2.1.2 Coronavirus Case in Nigeria**

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 (SARSCoV-2). The infection has no immediate treatment and vaccine. It became a worldwide pandemic and has caused a significant morbidity and mortality<sup>7</sup>. The confirmed cases rose to 1,603,428 while there were 356,440 recoveries and 95,714 deaths from the illness worldwide as of April 9, 2020 <sup>8</sup>. On 27<sup>th</sup> Februarys, 2020, an Italian citizen on business trip to Nigeria became the index case for COVID-19 in Nigeria. In Nigeria, within the period of April 9, 2020, there was a recorded 288 laboratory-confirmed cases of Coronavirus with 51 discharges and 7 deaths <sup>8</sup>.

In an attempt to forestall further spread of the virus, various stake holders including civil societies and government agencies embarked on enlightenment campaigns preaching good hygiene and social distancing. More often than not, local broadcast stations of radio and television were deployed in the campaigns. At various points of entry such as airports, temperature screening was conducted and self-isolation was forced on those returning from countries with numerous confirmed cases of Coronavirus outbreak. Various state governments in association with the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control also began to trace and track possible victims and their contacts. In the same manner, the Lagos State Government from March 18, 2020, put a ban on all gatherings of people above fifty for four weeks. It also ordered all lower

and middle level public officers to stay-at-home<sup>9</sup>. In a similar situation, on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, the Federal government introduced various measures to contain the spread of the virus. These range from closing of the national borders and airspace, schools, worship centers and other public places, canceling of mass gathering events. Also, the Federal Capital Territory, Lagos and Ogun States were placed on lock down for an initial period of fourteen days<sup>10, 11</sup>.

The Federal government and various state governments have been involved in distributing food stuff, money and materials as palliatives to cushion the effects of Coronavirus in the country. Even, well-to-do individuals in the country have also given out palliatives to the needy and less – privileged. Some of them donated money to the various governments to assist in providing the enabling ground to combat the novel COVID-19 and its effects in the country. Similarly, institutions, companies and organizations have paid their dues in contributing palliatives to both individuals and governments in Nigeria. In effect, the Nigerian economy has been battered in the face of COVID-19 pandemic.

Presently, the spread of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Nigeria continues to record significant increase as the latest statistics provided by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control reveal Nigeria as at 19<sup>th</sup> of July 2020, has 36,663 confirmed cases. 15,105 cases have been discharged and 789 deaths have been recorded in 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. A total of 212,201 tests have been carried out as of July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020 compared to 209,446 tests a day earlier<sup>12</sup>.

### **2.1.3 The Current Status of Coronavirus in Nigeria and the Universe**

The Nigeria Coronavirus situation and the rate of wide-spread of Covid-19 has attracted media attention and generated reports in the wee- hours of the outbreak. The Coronavirus epidemic started in Wuhan, China in December 2019 ended up as a pandemic. It affected the whole world and threw the world into a war-like situation. Thousands of deaths were recorded from all countries across the world. In most nations of the world, health systems were overwhelmed with handling of serious- sick patients in hospitals. Many of those seriously sick people were on ventilators and nursed in intensive care units (ICU). There worsening global and local economies with the period. The world economy was declared to be in recession by the World Bank and IMF, and eventually led to the deepest depression<sup>8</sup>.

Sadly, after the first case of Covid-19 confirmed on the 27th February, 2020 in Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital with a population of 21 million, a record of massive infection started. The index case, which arrived from Milan, Italy, which was then the fourth country with high incidence (371 cases), came into the country through Lagos Airport on 25 February 2020. As at then, there was nothing serious on ground to check or track new entrants into the country from suspected places with acute infections. The index case who came for a business meeting at the company's factory at Ewekoro, Ogun state, an adjoining state to Lagos works with the multibillion dollars multinational, Lafarge Cement Company. The case of the infection was flagged when he presented sick, and was sent for testing and confirmed Covid-19 at the Lafarge's medical centre in Ewekoro that<sup>8</sup>.

Discoveries of more cases were thereafter recorded with a good number of them being high ranking politicians and senior government officials. These include among others, President

Buhari's Chief of Staff, Abba Kyari; the Governors of Bauchi, Kaduna and Oyo States; the nation's Comptroller General and Head of Immigration; Deputy Speaker of Edo State House of Assembly and son of former Vice President Atiku Abubakar. These political elites clearly were found to have ignored the public health advice of social distancing and a minimum of 14-day self-isolation, a mandate stipulated for all recent travelers, which invariably led to infection of their contacts, and of course their contacts' contacts. This situation was what led to the leap in Covid-19 cases in Nigeria, which is the most populous country on the African continent with an estimated population of 200 million<sup>7</sup>. As at 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020, the country has 4641 confirmed cases of Covid-19 and 150 deaths. This record can be controverted owing to the fact that testing is not being carried out on a large scale. As earlier state by the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), the testing volume is 500 tests per day and hoped to increase this capacity to 1000 or more tests per day<sup>7</sup>.

The number of deaths recorded within a short period of time from the Covid-19 pandemic, remained unprecedented in modern times since the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic that affected 500 million of the then 1.5 billion world population, which also led to millions of deaths including hundreds of thousands of deaths in the then Nigerian population of 18 million people. The United States of America became the country with the highest number of Covid-19 confirmed cases with an incidence of over 500,000 cases and more than 23,000 deaths as at 12<sup>th</sup> April 2020. Following was Italy that had casualties with about 20,000 deaths from 160,000 cases. In Spain, it was a record of 17,000 deaths from 170,000 cases. In France, it was almost 12,000 deaths from 118,000 cases recorded while in China it was 3,339 deaths from 82,883 cases that was recorded<sup>8</sup>. As of 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2020, in 52 countries in Africa, the number of confirmed Covid-19 cases, is put

at 12,368 indicating a very small fraction (0.8%) of the world's total case of infections. The death toll in Africa is put at 632 (0.7%) of the world's coronavirus related deaths within the same period. South Africa had the highest number of confirmed cases at 1,934 with 11 related deaths.

It was observed that African countries closest to Europe and the Middle East had half of the Covid-19 cases on the continent. It was in the four North African countries of Algeria (1666), Egypt (1699), Morocco (1374) and Tunisia (643) with 80% (4 out of 5) that recorded the total Covid-19 related deaths in Africa. It was also clearly observed that there was no true preparation to arrest the earliest cases of importation of Covid-19 into the country. This could have been done at the points of entry into the country, especially at the international airports.

With effective quarantining of travelers into the country, since the Chinese outbreak became news in January, there could have been significant saves. Nigeria began placing travel ban on 13 countries with high incidence of the disease by 18 March 2020. The countries are United States, United Kingdom, South Korea, Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy, China, Spain, Netherlands, Norway, Japan and Iran. Also, the ban of all international flights into and out of Nigeria started on 23rd March 2020. It was also observed that this uncoordinated approach came rather late as many returnees had already melted into the communities. It was therefore understood within this context, that one way to keep in touch with our contemporary world was through the media.

As a vital component in human lives and existence, no society has been known to exist without communication, which is the exchange of ideas, views, information, experiences and the sharing of meanings between person, nation societies and cultures <sup>13</sup>. The media are often in liberal

theory referred to as the “Fourth Estate of the Realm” and the “watchdog of the society”, meaning that the media exist as an organ of information sourcing and dissemination, educational promotion, surveillance, social enlightenment, and mobilization<sup>13</sup>. These functions set the media apart as an important link or factor in the relationship between the government and the governed and make them a sine-qua-non to societal growth and development. Therefore, considering the trends and the dynamics of the media in handling the issue, it becomes imperative to examine the *Guardian* newspaper reportage of Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

#### **2.1.4 Media Framing in Perspective**

Media framing are usually done in different types of media contents. It constitutes important part of the media contributing to the shaping of audience perception and societal disposition to occurrences reported in the media<sup>14</sup>. Framing is a way in which the media organisations use in selecting and presenting their contents in order to produce various perspectives for the audience to select<sup>15</sup>. Framing enhances presentation of news content in various ramifications. It is also used in producing different versions of news contents for the purpose of emphasis or facilitating the salience of issues and happenings<sup>15</sup>. Emphasis on issue of methods where the media streamline and present news content are done through framing.

Media organizations use framing to simplify complex issues to make enhance audience’ easy understand of and to enable them form opinion about the issue through text, pictures or symbols<sup>16</sup>. The media often provide important information and knowledge which often influence public or audience opinion and decision through news frames<sup>15</sup>. Framing can be utilised to sway public opinion on an issue. This also has significant consequences for how the public view and

understand an issue, and they how respond to it <sup>16</sup>. Framing is also used by the media to showcase how societal issues are portrayed and the way messages are encoded with meaning and how they can be easily decoded in relation to existing ideas<sup>17</sup>.

The media determine what is or is not worth presenting, or what can be reported as news. The above sees framing as particularly involving selection and salience<sup>18</sup>. This means that framing is the act of selecting some aspects of a perceived reality, highlighting them as more important in a communicative text. By so doing, framing is used to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation or treatment recommendation for the item described<sup>18</sup>. The understanding of what framing is can be achieved by the categorization that can help provide specific perspectives on issues, which require large-scale text-data analysis beyond manual annotation alone.

Episodic and thematic frames are main types of frames that news media generally use. Episodic news frames are usually used by news media to highlight public issues in terms of concrete instances. It is also used in focusing on events involving individuals, who are located at specific places, and at specific times<sup>19</sup>. Thematic news frames are used in placing public issues in a broader perspective by making a highlight on general conditions<sup>20</sup>. And can also identify the factors that can influence the patterns of frames<sup>21</sup>. For example, the outbreak of a disease can be highlighted to create a pattern of frame. Studies have shown that media public attention broadens to a variety of dimension of causes and solutions in respect of frame dominant in the Nigeria media. Studies on framing has been achieved from some well-established frame categorizations which is generalized across issues<sup>22</sup>. For instance, episodic frames talk about specific incidents or cases which is different from thematic frames, which focuses on larger trends or context<sup>23</sup>. These

influence public attitudes or reactions. People who are exposed to stories about poverty which are framed episodically, which highlights are on unemployed individuals tend to blame poverty on individual failings. Also, people who are exposed to thematic poverty stories, which highlight national unemployment rates, tend to blame poverty on the government or other forces beyond an individual's control<sup>22</sup>.

There are other frame categories which are issue- specific. The issue-specific categories or schemes though, may not be used to examine patterns, they may however, be used to provide details. Another type of frame is the innocence frame, which emerged in the mid-1990, which is also accompanied by the emergence of frames related to evidence, due process, classism and racism - all gained attention on the platforms of the innocence frame<sup>22</sup>.

There is also a Policy Frames Codebook which highlights policy-based issues that intend to provide a general system for categorizing frames across policy issues. There are 14 categories of frame dimensions that are contained alongside "other" category intended to be applicable to any policy issue such as "abortion, immigration, foreign aid, etc., and in any communication -context including news stories, Twitter, party manifestos, legislative debates, etc<sup>22</sup>.

It becomes noteworthy that the Covid-19 reports could suitably determine the types of frames used by the selected media in this study. The outbreak of Covid-19 generated media reports which in turn also generated reactions from the public. How the media represented and shaped the discourse on Covid-19 was central to the media since it is an event that is tied to issue of a prolonged disease across the globe. Frames therefore can be described as keys in reporting whichever perspectives media organizations deem suitable.

### **2.1.5 Causes and Nature of the Novel Coronavirus Disease**

Coronavirus disease was first identified in Wuhan China in December 2019 and it rapidly got spread to almost every continent of the world. The disease caused by a new and severe type of Coronavirus known as severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARSCoV-2) has no immediate treatment and vaccine. It was declared a worldwide pandemic after causing significant morbidity and mortality<sup>7</sup>. As at April 9 2020, there were 1,603,428 confirmed cases, 356,440 recoveries from the illness and 95,714 deaths all over the world<sup>23</sup>. In Nigeria, an Italian citizen became the index case for COVID-19 On February 27, 2020. Also noteworthy was that as at April 9, 2020, there were 288 laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Nigeria with 51 discharges and seven deaths<sup>8</sup>.

Various stakeholders including civil societies and government agencies embarked on enlightenment campaigns for good hygiene and social distancing in a bid to prevent the spread of the virus. At various entry points in the country especially at airports, temperature screening was conducted. Also, those returning from countries with notably confirmed cases of COVID-19 were implored to self-isolate. Various State governments in collaboration with the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control also began to trace and track possible victims and their contacts. On 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the Lagos State government placed a ban on all gatherings of people above fifty for four weeks. There was equally an advice given to all lower and middle level public officers to stay-at-home<sup>9</sup>. In a similar vein, the Federal government introduced various measures to contain the virus. These measures include closing of the national borders and airspace, schools, worship centers and other public places, canceling of mass gathering events. There was also an

order placed on the Federal Capital Territory, Lagos and Ogun states to lock down for an initial period of fourteen days <sup>10</sup>. In Lagos, Abuja and Irrua in Edo State, Covid-19 testing laboratories were set up while at various state governments opened isolation centres as well as imposed dawn to dusk curfews in their territories.

Coronavirus, a disease from the family of SARS, H5N1, H1N1 and MERS is a contagious respiratory illness. It is transmitted through the eyes, nose, and mouth, via droplets from coughs and sneezes. It is also transmitted through close contact with infected persons and contaminated surfaces. With an incubation period of approximately one to fourteen days, the symptoms include cough, fever and shortness of breath. The virus is diagnosed through a laboratory test. The contagion, particularly among the elderly and persons with chronic illness could lead to severe respiratory problems or death. However, while some infected persons are carriers for the virus with no symptoms, others may experience only a mild illness and may recover easily <sup>24</sup>. Being that there is scarcely no cure or vaccine for the virus at first; medical treatments were limited to supportive measures aimed at relieving symptoms as well as the use of research drugs and therapeutics.

In this situation, there were need for appropriate knowledge of infection pathways and relevant precautions to take to control the pandemic. With the scientific community still carrying out research for possible vaccines or drugs for the viral infection, adequate knowledge to motivate individuals to make decisions are highly needed. This may prevent and curb the spread of epidemics. Knowledge of regular hand washing, using hand sanitizers, wearing face masks, respiratory etiquettes, social distancing and self-isolation if found sick, were adopted as a vital

measure to reduce widespread infection<sup>25</sup>. Results from studies have shown that the level of an individual's knowledge of an infectious disease variably makes him/her to behave in a way that can prevent infection<sup>26, 27, 28</sup>. It follows therefore that an individual needs to be informed about the potential risks of infections so that he/she can adopt the right precautionary measures<sup>29</sup>.

Precautionary measures are needed to protect against possible danger and curtail the spread of disease at early stages of a pandemic. Consequently, the Nigerian government like most other governments around the world introduced some effective measure to contain the virus which were found to interfere with individuals' daily lives. Some of the measures were also found to have led to severe economic loss and social disruption. Individuals and group of persons were coerced to stay at home, maintain some distances. Businesses and offices were closed with the exemption of healthcare facilities/workers and essential commercial establishments. Most Nigerians, who make a living in the informal economy, their livelihood was threatened by the lockdown because much of their activities and businesses involved physical contacts. There was no social safety net, no access to food stamps or unemployment benefits in Nigeria. Most people earned their living on a daily basis.

Despite all these severe conditions, there has been a high degree of compliance with government directives. Nigerians started engaging in compulsory hand washing exercises, practicing social distancing and self-isolation. They also started avoiding going to work, school or crowded areas. Almost all religious centres stopped large gatherings. There were no shaking of hands and churches directed their members to pray at home and use hand sanitizers<sup>30,31</sup>.

Due to elements of superstitious belief and ignorance some Nigerians prefer only to pray. Some of them even violated the social distancing rule by attending churches or mosques during the lockdown. They preferred to use anointing oils, talisman, herbs or rituals to prevent contracting and spreading the virus<sup>32</sup>. There are records of those who used social media platforms such WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to spread fear and project fake news concerning the source of the virus. Also, these social media platforms were used to promote prejudices against China. They were equally used to incite panic buying, proffer fake cures as well as undermine medical advice knowingly or unknowingly<sup>33</sup>. It was in their opinion that lockdown, self-isolation and social distancing are un-African solutions to the pandemic<sup>32</sup>.

Understanding the importance of knowledge of precautionary activities in curbing the spread of infectious diseases such as the novel COVID-19 is apt in researching people's health knowledge at this period of the pandemic. Reports also have it that knowledge among ordinary people about how to eliminate risks of contracting Ebola virus translated into a rapid drop in the number of cases infection in mid-2015<sup>34</sup>. In this study, it is hoped that to ascertain newspaper reportage of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria will enhance a good knowledge of the position of the media on the outbreak of the virus.

#### **2.1.6 Concept of the Mass Media**

Diverse definitions of the mass media show their diverse roles in the society. One of such definitions has it as any device that gathers information and takes them to a large number of people at the same time. Reading newspapers, magazines or books, listen to radio or watch TV, people are seen engaging in mass communication. The term mass communication describes the

academic study of diverse means through which people and bodies relay information to large segments of the population simultaneously through the instrumentality of the mass media<sup>13</sup>. Various, both mass media and mass communication can be used interchangeably or referred to as the same thing.

The term mass media refers to technology which intends to get to a mass audience at the same time. It is seen as the main element of the process of mass communication used to reach the vast majority of the general public. Newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet are the most common platforms for mass media<sup>35</sup>. People generally depend on the mass media to provide information regarding socio-political and economic issues, health issues, entertainment, and news. The responsibilities of the mass media as a social institution cannot be over emphasized, it is not therefore an over statement to point out here that the co-existence of the society and the functionality of government and its agencies are the reason the mass media exist. This means that the mass media have responsibilities that are meant to keep the society in peace, unity and progress. However, the mass media are charged with the responsibility for gathering and dissemination of information to the heterogeneous audience. The function of the mass media to the masses are information, education and entertainment responsibilities<sup>15</sup>. The mass media owe the society the duty of always upholding the principles, views, ideas and acts that promote stability, unity and mutual co-existence in the society. The mass media have two important sociological characteristics: first, very few people can communicate to a great number and, second, the audience has no effective way of answering back<sup>35</sup>.

Mass communication is by definition a one-way process. Media organizations are bureaucratic and Except in societies where all media are state controlled, corporate in nature. Media output is regulated by governments everywhere, but the restrictions vary from very light advisory

regulation to the most comprehensive forms of censorship in totalitarian societies. Early studies by some scholars seemed to show that media effects were indeed direct and powerful according to the so-called hypodermic model of influence. But more intensive research revealed that mass communications are mediated in complex ways, and that their effects on the audience depend on factors such as class, social context, values, beliefs, emotional state, and even the time of day<sup>35</sup>.

The mass media are aspects of the society and as such as are dependent on economic and power structure of the society and can be controlled or limited by those who own them<sup>35</sup>. Secondly by their content, media are assumed to have potentials for significant influence and that the particular ideas and values conveyed by the media can exert significant social change regardless of the nature of ownership. Going by the position of the second perspectives of the media, a clear indication suggests a great emphasis on the influence of media production and reception on social factors, suggesting that media messages function to influence its immediate physical environment. The media in performance of their traditional function of editorialising, information, correlation and socialisation, participates in the social life of the society<sup>14</sup>. This describes mass media as a means of communication that operates on a largescale, reaching and involving virtually everyone in a society to a greater or lesser degree. It is a large- scale medium<sup>35</sup>. Media is the plural form of medium which means a channel or instrument through which something information, message, and signals is transmitted or carried.

Every mass medium platform has its own content type, modus operandi, creative artists, technicians, and business models. For instance, the Internet, which is a harbinger of blogs, podcasts, web sites, and various other digital technologies is built atop the general distribution network. The Internet and mobile phones, which are the sixth and seventh media are more often than not referred to collectively as digital media while radio and television which are the fourth

and fifth media are referred to as broadcast media<sup>16</sup>. Studies have argued that video games have developed into a distinct mass form of media. Note also that telephone is a two-way communication device while mass media communicates to a large group. In the same manner, telephone has transformed into a cell phone equipped with Internet access. The question now is whether this makes cell phones a mass medium or simply a device used to access a mass medium, that is the Internet? In recent time, there is a system by which marketers and advertisers tap into satellites, and broadcast commercials and advertisements directly to cell phones, unsolicited by the phone's user. It is noteworthy that this transmission of mass advertising to millions of people has become another form of mass communication<sup>16</sup>.

Various types of mass media are the print media, which includes: magazines, newspapers and even billboards that we see everywhere around us. Electronic media, which includes television and radio. New age media, which includes mobile phones, computers, Apple TV, Play Stations etc.

People utilize the mass media as a source of information. For instance, most students use them for academic purposes. Those in business utilize them for business information and every adult utilize them for news and political updates. Various business outfits make use of the mass media for the promotion of products and services, which comes in the form of advertisements. The mass media is the biggest source of entertainment<sup>17</sup>. Everyone does not love stage and standing comedy shows, but studies have shown that 99% of the world population prefers TVs, Cinemas and computers for entertainment<sup>16</sup>.

In today's world, the Internet is the most used mass media in almost all the countries of the world. As social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter have assumed the largest online

platforms working as mass media. Newspapers and magazines referred as print media are now printing less and becoming more website based. Study held that 23% of people of the world get all their news from just one source that is Facebook<sup>20</sup>. Also, a similar study held that Twitter is the most popular mass media used by the politicians and all types of celebrities<sup>20</sup>.

There are a good number of mass media platforms for which various people use for their gratification with hindrance. Diverse people select the media messages according to their needs and intended gratification<sup>21</sup>. The primary roles of mass media are to inform, enrich, educate, entertain among others.

**Surveillance of the environment:** One of the most important major roles of mass communication is surveillance. This ‘watchman’ or ‘watchdog’ function means to monitor the behaviour of people as well as educate them on what is expected as normal behaviour in society. Sometimes, this function is called ‘social control’. The term ‘surveillance’ literally means ‘watching over’ it is more often than not used for all manner of observation or monitoring and not just visual observation. To engage on Surveillance of the environment involves seeking out and then transmitting information about the society. The mass media of communication keep watch on socio-political-economic events both within and outside<sup>18</sup>. More often than not, this is communicated as ‘news’.

**Information:** Most times, we hear that ‘information is power’. The more informed people become the more powerful they obtain. When people have access to information, they take advantage of it to their own advantage. The mass media of communication provide people with a plethora of information about the environment in which they live. News of war, danger, crisis,

earthquake, famine, are all information available to people via the mass media of communication. All these are important because they help us in taking appropriate steps to safeguard our interests.

**Entertainment:** Most people need entertainment to break the monotony in their lives and environment. The mass media are the chief provider of a variety of entertainment to audiences. This they do through films, TV shows, drama, dance, music, art, comedy, games, animation among others.

**Persuasion:** To persuade means to influence others. Persuading people is one of the most important functions of mass communication. Through persuasion, one invariably controls and governs others. However, note that one may resort to persuasion with a bad motive. People who receive messages in form of persuasion must be careful about the source of such information. The massive deployment of persuasive potential of mass communication is seen to be used heavily in both developing and developed countries. The extensive use of the mass media for advertising and sales promotion of consumer goods and services is quite obvious.

**Instruction:** The use mass media of communication for giving instruction, educating and socializing the members of the society is quite obvious. The mass media of communication are used in providing knowledge, expertise and skills, which enable people to operate as effective members of society.

**Correlation:** Mass media of communication can be deployed as a forum for the exchange of comments and criticism. The mass media arouse interests via articles and editorials in newspapers and magazines and news commentary, current affairs in radio and television among others. These measures are purposely aimed to improve the quality of usefulness of the

information for the citizen. This role of media enables the audience/readers to expand the scope of their understanding about the environment and happenings all around them.

**Debate and discussion:** Through debates and discussion in media, people clarify different viewpoints on issues of public interests and arrive at a general agreement on matters that concern majority of the people. In the same manner, people get the chance to present their views through debate and discussions in different mass media such as on radio phone-ins programmes.

**Cultural Promotion:** The mass media are used in educating the people toward better living and preserving the traditions of the society. People use the mass media to provide the opportunity for culture to be preserved and promoted. The mass media can present different cultures, beliefs and customs from different countries and help people to promote cultures in every part of the world. In this way, individuals come to know one another, understand and appreciate other people's ways of life as well as develop tolerance towards one another.

#### **2.1.7 Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists**

In journalism, a high degree of public trust is expected and emphasised extensively. It therefore becomes morally imperative for every journalist and every news medium to observe the highest professional and ethical standards to earn and maintain this trust<sup>22</sup>. In the exercising their duties, journalists ought to always have a healthy regard for public interest. It follows also that truth is the cornerstone of journalism and journalists ought to strive diligently to ascertain the truth of every event before reporting it. It is as a result of the consciousness of the responsibilities and duties of journalists as purveyors of information that Nigerian journalists, in concert give to themselves the Code of Ethics. It is therefore, the duty of Nigerian journalists to observe the provisions of this Code of Ethics.

1. Editorial Independence: This means decisions concerning the content of news should be the responsibility of a professional journalist.

2. Accuracy and Fairness: i. This means that the public has a right to know. It also means that factual, accurate balance and fair reporting is the ultimate objective of good journalism and the basis of earning public trust and confidence.

ii This means that journalists ought to refrain from publishing inaccurate and misleading information. In the event that such information has been unknowingly published, prompt correction should be made. Journalists ought to hold the right of reply as a cardinal rule of practice.

iii. While carrying out their duties, journalists ought to strive to separate facts from conjecture and comment.

3. Privacy: There are certain general rules which journalists ought to respect such as the privacy of individuals and their families unless it affects public interest.

i. Once the information is on the private life of an individual or his family, it should only be published if it impinges on public interest.

ii. To be able to publish such information about an individual as mentioned above should be deemed justifiable only if it is directed at;

a. trying to expose a crime or serious misdemeanor;

b. trying to expose an anti-social conduct;

c. trying to protect public health, morality and safety;

d. trying to prevent the public from being misled by some statement or action of the individual concerned.

4. Privilege/Non-Disclosure: i. Journalists ought to observe the universally accepted principle of confidentiality and should not disclose the source of information obtained in confidence.

ii. Journalists ought not to breach an agreement with a source of information obtained as “off-the-record” or as “back ground information.

5. Decency: i. Journalists ought to dress and comport themselves in a manner that conforms with public taste.

ii. Journalists ought to refrain from using offensive, abusive or vulgar language.

iii. Journalists ought not to present lurid details, either in words or picture, of violence, sexual acts, abhorrent or horrid scenes.

iv. Any case which involves personal grief or shock, enquiries should be carried out and approaches made with sympathy and discretion.

v. Except it is in the furtherance of the public’s right to know, journalists ought to generally avoid identifying relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime.

6. Discrimination: Journalists ought to 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: i. Journalists should neither solicit nor accept bribe, gratification or patronage to suppress or publish information.

ii. The act of demanding 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: Journalists ought not to 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: Journalists ought not to 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: Journalist ought to try 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: Journalists ought to strive to enhance national unity and public good.

12. Social Responsibility: Journalists ought to promote universal principles of human rights, democracy, justice, equity, peace and international understanding.

13. Plagiarism: Journalists ought not to copy, wholesale or in part, other people's work without attribution and/or consent.

14. Copyright: i. If journalists reproduce a work, be it in print, broadcast, art work or design, proper a be should be accorded the author.

ii. Journalist ought to abide by all rules of copyright, established by national and international laws and conventions.

15. Press Freedom and Responsibility: Journalists ought to strive at all-times to enhance press freedom and responsibility.

In modern democratic society, the mass media play important role as the main channel of communication. Individuals and groups of people depend on the news made available by the mass media as the main source of information and the basis on which they form their opinions. Selection of messages in the mass media have great effect on human society. It is noteworthy therefore that the news media are the most important channels for culture, ideas, and opinions. Through the instrumentality of the media, most people form their opinions. This they do by watching news and debates on television and Internet as well as listening to radio programmes<sup>35</sup>.

#### **2.1.8 Media Coverage of COVID-19 Pandemic: Between Issue Reportage and Public Health Promotion**

The mass media are windows to the world, which provide people the leverage to learn about the world outside their home countries. The window does not actually portray the world as it is, but it is the people who see the world within the frame of the window<sup>36</sup>. Once the frame of the window looks too small, there is the tendency that people will see a small part of the world. In message positioning to the audience, framing either as a media concept, principle, social phenomenon or a sociological discuss is very important<sup>37</sup>. Framing in media practice describes the direction to which media perceive or want people to perceive a news story. This is often achieved by making salient a news angle, based on its judgment of and reference to previous similar occurrences. This is also, often driven by editorial interest or ownership philosophy, which has significant relevance to how the public interpret and react to the entire story<sup>38</sup>.

Using media framing to influence audience is embedded in almost all media reports. This helps to foster and trill the overwhelming media audience to align with the interest emphasised in the

media. The use of media framing is to give reasons to believe or disbelieve, support or desist, involve or withdraw, change or persist, and influence or discourage<sup>39</sup>. This is achieved by twisting news stories in line with the media motive; give exegesis other than the right interpretations; as well as change, annotate or remove part of the content to influence the public judgement of events. As typified in many research works, the usage of framing cut across all facets of human endeavours, which include artificial and natural events<sup>39, 40, 41, 42, 43</sup>.

The outbreak of Coronavirus, being a major global concern since late 2019, became a wash and makes banner headlines in the world media and perhaps formed news angle of audience attraction in the Nigerian media space. Diverse captions, stories, editorials, photos and images, opinions, which include cartoons and comics on COVID-19 underlies major chunk of the space on the print media, and other news channels. They also allot more airtimes to health talks, radio and TV dramas as well as churning out information about Coronavirus issues than ever before. The outbreak also avails the great space for discussions in the social media. This invariably could be regarded as the apex of agenda setting of the media on health. To involve every Nigerian in “what” and “how” to be safe from the outbreak, various angles at which Nigerian media reported Coronavirus stories; the frequencies at which the stories were been reported in the media and the emphasis placed on it; the eagerness in the audience to know more in order to cast away rumours; and the aggression demonstrated by the policy makers to be on top of the outbreak were emphasised. The Nigerian media saw this as an opportunity to demonstrate its value and power not only to influence the audience on what to think, discuss or be concerned about but also set modalities on how to think about the concerned issue.

The concern of this study is to establish how the *Guardian* newspaper reported COVID-19 pandemic news items. The knowledge of this perspective would expose the most prioritized among the media objectives while reporting Coronavirus issue. The question here would be to know whether the newspaper report to sell by arousing the readers' interests? Or whether they report to fulfill their professional obligation to inform? Or whether they consider their social responsibility to save the public of the dreaded outbreak irreplaceable obligation? Each of the question is a factor that influences the media reportage of COVID-19 pandemic issues in Nigeria.

The interrelationship between media reportage of events and the main angles emphasised to breed corresponding effects becomes a fundamental and intricate issue at any time the world health is under any emergency health threats. Proper assessment of its importance is much visible as a result of 2019 outbreak of Coronavirus Disease, which rapidly spread all over the world like wild fire, with its multiplier effect, which recorded a significant number of casualties in the affected countries<sup>11</sup>.

Owing to the nature of the Coronavirus outbreak, it is possible that very few academic studies on media reportage of the outbreak could be cited. Notwithstanding, a good number of relevant academic studies and research efforts on media reportage, which have been conducted on public health issues was at low key compared to the COVID-19 pandemic experience <sup>44, 45</sup>. There has been studies conducted on the media reportage of other outbreaks such HIV/AIDS SARS, and Flu, perhaps none has been able to link the most salient news angle projected in the media reports to the interest that the media protect<sup>46, 47, 48, 49, 50</sup>.

Media framing and reportage of news items is not carried out except for reasons to fulfill a specific purpose This could be for information, education, entertainment, merchandising, or any

of other purposes upon which the essence of the message lies. The purpose underlying media a message to the audience most often determines the interest that the media intend to protect. This is whether overtly or covertly it could invariably influence how media frame and report such news item.

To find the relationship between the variables lays a concrete foundation for the establishment of how the public may perceive and respond to the media presentation of news stories on health issues most especially Coronavirus outbreak. The way the media present issues as news guides how people understand the message and how they visualise possible solutions to the problems presented by the media or respond to suggestions made. The way the public understand news items other than health issues might not be applicable to media framing of health issues. Descriptive analyses of the nature of news coverage of health issues provide very important insights into how the public understands issues. It can also describe how policy initiatives may fare<sup>51</sup>. Taking into account the analyses of previous studies on public health issues, the involvement of the media is well noticed in term of coverage and campaigns<sup>52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57</sup>. The effectiveness of the contributions is a subject of many considerations since factors much more than the media influence breeds to measure the effect in term of disease control or containment. Meanwhile, the impact of the media is measurable along the public sensitisation and behavioural influence to curb the spread of the virus and not to cure the virus.

### **2.1.9 Factors Responsible for Media Reportage of COVID-19 Pandemic**

Studies have identified that factors such as organizational pressures and constraints, social norms, journalistic routines, pressures of interest groups, and the ideological and political orientations of

journalists could influence how journalists cover an issue<sup>57, 58</sup>. Journalists ‘spin’ the story, taking into account their organizational and modality constraints, professional judgments, and other particular judgments about the public<sup>59</sup>.

To understand how stories about COVID-19 pandemic are framed and reported in the media by journalists and how it spread in Nigeria or its effect on people and society at large are germane. Also, why they write from the perspective they do, are important for several reasons among which is to understand the news sources as well as the person writing the story and his/her context in relation to the subject matter. It is equally to appreciate the journalists’ interpretations of COVID-19 pandemic, its effect and the people affected. Similarly, it is to weigh the objectivity along with the subjectivity in the framing of the story. Realising this understanding of journalists and their views which are reflected in the framing and reportage of Coronavirus stories became the focus to appreciate the foundation of how media reports are framed<sup>59</sup>.

On other element that shapes framing of news reports is the editorial philosophy and ownership influence of the news media. Editorial philosophy describes what a news media stands for. It also affects which information goes on air and ‘when’ ‘where’ and ‘how’ to make it. Researchers also discuss similar elements when analysing the four dimensions of media framing and reportage in some studies<sup>60</sup>. The dimensions according to them are the topic of a news item, presentation, cognitive attributes and affective attributes.

To take a decision on where a news item appears on the pages of newspaper and through which format, makes such story important. It holds that the important stories are usually placed at the top of each page. It also holds that the most pertinent stories of the day are located on the front

page<sup>61</sup>. The interest of the audience is usually drawn to how important issues are arranged in word placement, font size, and colour. All these provide references for a story's level of impact and salience. It can be concluded that these media techniques frame and report reality by providing cues and making certain types of events more important than others. Although, in some studies, media audience are assumed weak and being driven by the media messages in some studies, they are not all together passive. Note that it is not in all cases that the audience agree with what the media fed them with. The audience sometimes, also influence how media frame and report issues. This happens most especially if they depend much on their experiences or have access to some obvious facts which the media cannot help but make important. Notwithstanding, media audience select stories that satisfy their needs. They also deliberately sieve the stories they are exposed to not minding whether they must consume such information.

#### **2.1.10 Media Roles towards Promotion of Public Health**

Confirmation from some studies have shown that the mass media influence public attitudes and decisions <sup>62,63, 64 65</sup>. The rate of this influence is linked to how the media can structure news stories concerning health issues. This shows that how the media frame and report news items determine the impact of such stories and the expectations of the corresponding effects. A good example of this is noticed in how the audience reacted to media reports of the victims of AirAsia *Flight 8501* that crashed into Java Sea on Sunday 28, December 2014. The devastated relatives of the victims collapsed in grief. They were taken to hospital after an Indonesian television station showed disturbing images of bodies floating in the sea. The reportage attracted serious criticisms which is similar to the condemned media reports showing victims falling off Pentagon in September 11, 2001 attacked in America.

An increasing number of studies over the years have attempted to examine crisis or risk communication strategies as well as media message design during health emergency<sup>66,67</sup>. Some of these research efforts have also been channelled towards studying media roles in crisis and the public perceptions and reactions in that direction. Research evidences abound which have proved the potency of health communication via the mass media on the development and promotion of health issues especially as it concerns the outbreak of health hazards. The mass media are considered active players in the promotion of societal health both at micro and larger society. This, they have been able to achieve through awareness creation, public education and enlightenment, and supporting health development policies.

Therefore, researches have proved that the contributory roles of the media towards any development goal, which include health issues is to design, package and disseminate effective messages, to inform, educate and to some extent, reshape the behavioural tendencies of the targets towards controlling health hazards. It is also to combating health related challenges before they escalate to uncontrollable extent. For example, a scholar agrees that public health communication is naturally interventionist. It also seeks to promote and protect health through change at all levels of influence<sup>68</sup>. With a well-conceived, carefully implemented, and sustained over time, public health communication programs, the capacity to attract change among individuals and populations through raising awareness, increasing knowledge, shaping attitudes, and changing behaviours becomes obvious.

The WHO expert consultation on outbreak communications held in Singapore, 21–23 September 2004, also confirms media roles, where it was stated that it had great success in the last few years

in controlling outbreaks. It also stated that has recently come to understand that communications are as critical to outbreak control as laboratory analyses or epidemiology<sup>69</sup>. The involvement of the media in health issues has shown its dedication to public wellbeing by celebrating the salience of health in the developmental process of the society. This is more so as it is considered one of the indices used to measure the level of development of a country.

### **2.1.11 Communication: A Critical Tool for Effective Public Health Administration**

Over the last several decades, the application and study of communication and health have rapidly developed and expanded. Originally conceived in departments and schools of communication and medicine, courses in health communication are now found throughout the academy, from the liberal arts to the health sciences and at many points in between<sup>70</sup>. There is also an argument that the recent proliferation of health communication is evident in the field's significant accomplishments, including the establishment of 2 peer-reviewed health communication journals, the inclusion of a health communication chapter in Healthy People 2010<sup>71</sup>.

The funding of health communication centers of excellence by the National Cancer Institute, and the publication of 3 books from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) stressing the importance of health communication. Today's public health leaders have realized that promoting health and protecting the public require both sound science as well as effective public health communication. For instance, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP), has recognized the importance of public health communication and stressed that "public health

research, innovations in information technology, and advanced communications offer unprecedented opportunities for CDC to improve health in America and around the world”<sup>72</sup>.

Health communication was defined as “the art and technique of informing, influencing, and motivating individual, institutional, and public audiences about important health issues”<sup>71</sup>. Public health was also defined as “what we, as a society, do collectively to assure the conditions in which people can be healthy”<sup>73</sup>. If these two perspectives are integrated, the following new definition would emerge thus: “Public health communication is the scientific development, strategic dissemination, and critical evaluation of relevant, accurate, accessible, and understandable health information communicated to and from intended audiences to advance the health of the public.”

Public health communication can be drawn from numerous disciplines, including mass and speech communication, health education, marketing, journalism, public relations, psychology, informatics, and epidemiology. Despite being transdisciplinary in nature, the core principles of public health communication can be firmly anchored in the central tenets of public health. Communication, as an integral part of contemporary health management that<sup>74</sup>, has stated that, “the first strategic awareness is disease awareness,” usually achieved via the dissemination of relevant aspects of health problems to the targets. From the perspective of the challenges faced during polio immunization in urban and rural areas in Nigeria, it becomes imperative to look at health communication campaigns because they are the mechanisms for taking the messages of immunization to the people.

Through health communication, it is possible to educate relevant publics about pressing health issues. Campaigns via health communication consist of the use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decisions that enhance health<sup>75</sup>. It creates a link between the domains of communication and health. This link is increasingly recognized as a necessary element in efforts at improving personal and public health. Health communication campaign from a broader perspective, refers to the art and technique of informing, influencing, and motivating individuals, institutions, and public audiences about important health issues through a strategic and targeted communication effort<sup>76</sup>. Disease prevention, health promotion, health literacy policy and the business of health care, as well as enhancement of the quality of life and health of individuals within the community are all embedded in the scope of health communication.

Health communication campaigns has the ability to contribute to all aspects of campaign strategies in respect of disease prevention and health promotion<sup>77</sup>. Health communication campaigns are therefore relevant in a number of contexts, which include:

- i. Individual's exposure to, search for, and use of health information,
- ii. Individual's adherence to clinical recommendations and requirement,
- iii. The design of public health messages and campaigns,
- iv. The passing of individual and public health risk information, that is, risk communication,
- v. Images of health in the mass media, and the culture at large.

### **2.1.12 Information Campaigns and Behavioural Change**

“When you are not informed, you are deformed” is a popular maxim which clearly demonstrates the vitality of information in the life of humans as social beings in nature. Looking beyond the

individual level, we can confidently argue that information fosters easy propagation of societal programmes, policies and values, and as a direct consequence, enhances understanding between leaders and the led. In recent times, critics have blamed the crisis which first rocked the recent Nigerian fuel subsidy removal and deregulation policies on poor mass awareness and sensitization of the potential benefits and short-run implications of the subsidy regime before implementing the programme. It follows therefore that to disseminate information to a geographically dispersed audience, there is need to use mass media because of their coverage capacity. Various studies have revealed that a long-term mass communication campaigns designed and executed according to sound principles can play a meaningful role in changing behaviour directly or by helping to bring about environmental change at the institutional, community or policy level<sup>78</sup>.

The modification of attitude, predominantly via the presentation of informative or persuasive messages is the key to changing behaviour<sup>79</sup>. Some scholars have blamed failed campaigns on seriously flawed design and execution due to poor planning and inadequate formative research. They claim that change results when people are led through a series of steps ranging from awareness to supports for sustaining change according to models of the behaviour change process. Meanwhile, it has been argued that awareness creation poised towards behavioural change has been on the high side over the years. There has been a tremendous effort to create awareness and promote behaviours that would prevent HIV/AIDS infection and stem the epidemic since the mid-1990s,<sup>79</sup>.

There are also proves to justify that mere information does not guarantee behavioural change. Reinforcing the above position, USAID advocates a mix of mutually reinforcing approaches including youth-friendly services, sexual health education, and social mobilization to sustain preventive behaviours such as delayed sexual debut by the youths<sup>80</sup>. This is a demonstration that information or awareness creation alone does not alter behaviour. For example, information campaigns that focuses on the negative consequences are not expected to have much impact on college students' alcoholism consumption<sup>108</sup>. Further to that, it was argued that students involved in high-risk drinking already know that alcohol misuse can lead to serious injury and death. Also, they are aware from their own experience that dire consequences.

According to a behavioural theorist, a person's behaviour is largely determined by factors that exist within the individual and that of the elements, which include; attitude, beliefs, emotions, feelings, actions tendencies. The elements also include pre-eminent importance in shaping behaviour and that the key to changing behaviour is in the modification of attitude, predominantly through the presentation of informative or persuasive messages<sup>80</sup>. The question which is to be answered here is, how easy is it to understand attitude given that human beings are the most complex elements of all the creatures? Based on the above, it can be argued that to alter behaviour is not just by disseminating informative or persuasive messages<sup>81</sup>. There is a saying that if people's actions were determined by knowledge alone, changing behaviour would be a relatively easy task<sup>82</sup>. Therefore, while acknowledging that situations may arise for a mere passage of information to lead to behavioural change, but it is doubtful that mere information dissemination alters social attitude. Finally, it can therefore be hypothesized that information campaigns have strong positive impact on behavioural change.

### **2.1.13 COVID 19 and Media Use in Spreading Information/Misinformation**

The media have been used by different news outlets, information platforms, organisations, and the general public to spread both valid information and misinformation about the Covid-19 pandemic<sup>83</sup>. The Centre for Disease Control (CDC), World Health Organisation (WHO), medical journals, and health care organisations have been used in updating and spreading knowledge across numerous platforms in collaboration with social media platforms such as Facebook, Google Scholar and Twitter<sup>84</sup>. COVID-19 conversations around disease states in America had increased 1,000% around healthcare professionals and 2,500% among consumers based on a social listening study from January 1 to March 19, 2020<sup>85</sup>.

Also, it has been observed that doctors have also joined groups on social media to share knowledge about treating the disease with the PMG COVID-19 Subgroup on Facebook, who reported to some 30,000 members worldwide by the end of March<sup>86</sup>. Similarly, Physician Moms Group, which started five years before the pandemic had so many people wanting to join them on Facebook. The groups allowed medical practitioners to collaborate, collect information, and also helped to direct supplies to hospitals that needed them<sup>87</sup>.

Furthermore, it was observed that medical practitioners use social media to educate the public on the effects of working in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for up to twelve-hour, using a method that showed their faces after their work periods, when they had removed their masks. Many people, who participated, were found with bruises, indents, redness and also band-aids covering blisters formed by the costumes sitting tight on their faces for hours<sup>88</sup>.

A review by MIT Technology, referred to COVID-19 pandemic as the first true social-media 'infodemic'<sup>89</sup>. Also, a report from the National Geographic observed that there is an increased level of "fake animal news" on social media in this COVID-19 pandemic period<sup>90</sup>. Earlier studies have shown how people have stopped getting their information from browsers, and other search methods in favour of social media platforms. One popular way of dispersing misinformation and propaganda as well as manipulating the opinions of people is through political bots<sup>91</sup>. In another view, cases of propaganda and misinformation can vary by country and that misinformation could be transmitted strategically<sup>92</sup>. However, sometimes, it can spread by accident. Misinformation has the potential to make the COVID-19 pandemic more dangerous than it already is<sup>93</sup>.

Based on the above submissions, there is no doubt that social media platforms have contributed to the spread of misinformation. This observation witnessed in Wuhan, China, showed that panic led to the spread of misinformation and even the disease itself. The report has it that misinformation has spread in the form of statements like "fireworks will kill the virus in the air" and "vinegar and indigo wood root could cure the infection." This misinformation spread through the messaging app WeChat<sup>94</sup>.

In comparison, a study stated that, local and national news sources were consulted for fact-checking before now because that had valid evidence for their reporting. It was opined that with an open platform that facilitates the expression of half-truths, innuendo, rumour, and gossip by amateur journalists and opinion writers nowadays, no more consultations for fact-checking.

In a similar vein, the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford held that roughly one-third of social media users in the United States of America (USA),

Argentina, Germany, South Korea, Spain and United Kingdom, published seeing false or misinformation about Coronavirus. The study observed that development is a problem with the media in general. It adds that a majority of respondents in every country hold that the news media have helped them understand the crisis and also explain what they can do in the circumstance<sup>94</sup>.

Reinforcing the above position, a scholar stated that the spread of misinformation is not new and that misinformation, harmful content, and privacy issues have been major challenges for social media platforms and to trust content is particularly critical because many people use social media for news and updates nowadays<sup>95</sup>. Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Reddit, and Twitter need to address misinformation about COVID-19 with seriousness<sup>96</sup>.

#### **2.1.14 Issues Arising from the Media's Coverage of COVID-19 Pandemic**

As the media world grapples with the grave challenges the COVID-19 pandemic poses to the social, economic, political, and spiritual wellbeing of the world, communities across nations are shut down. People dropped dead within days of showing traits of ill with the dreaded coronavirus disease. Within the period, healthcare facilities were overstretched and global trade got plummeted. The price of oil hit record lows, offices and places of worship were shut and evolved into virtual offices and churches<sup>97</sup>. Social interaction amounted to nothing as people huddled behind doors in the name of self-isolation and social distancing. The situation made it unable to relate to even neighbors as conventional wisdom taught over the years. The last time the world witnessed such a threat was a century ago during the period that influenza flu of 1918-1919 wiped out about 50 million lives.

The world began changing rapidly as we struggled to understand and dealt with it<sup>96</sup>. Being that reporting is the true account of important activities of people, the explanation of the course of events, developments, occurrences, and issues that affected our communities, COVID-19 represented huge news to the media. Its novelty, dimension and disruptive outcomes to life and living demanded the media's robust attention. The question which arose is, how well the media responded to this need given that the reality of the pandemic challenged such vigorous attention? Can the media help in solve the complexity that surrounds the subject of this disease that seems to bring distress at every turn?

So far, COVID-19 which is seen as a viral disease was caused by the most recently rediscovered coronavirus in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The World Health Organisation stated that COVID-19 virus spread primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when infected persons cough or sneeze. The symptoms include persistent dry cough, fever, and breathlessness. Some people may also experience aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat, as well as diarrhea<sup>97</sup>. The symptoms may take between six and fourteen days before it manifests. The virus, which is zoonotic in origin, has no cure yet. Its protocols of management, include isolation, quarantine, social distancing, and global lockdown. The fact that victims are sometimes asymptomatic, reveals its closeness to other flu. Also, it is a devious foe because of its discriminatory choice of targets in different climes (the elderly in China and the middle aged in the US) and its deadly strike on the lungs, heart, kidney and the nervous system<sup>98</sup>.

Following the complex nature of the pandemic the media found it difficult in understanding it. Therefore, the challenge of comprehending the advisories on how to avoid the disease became visible. A recommendation of the combination of personal hygiene, preventive, and management steps were made. These preventive and management steps ranged from physical or social

distancing, which stipulated keeping a minimum of one meter from the next person. It also included regular hand-washing with soap and water, using alcohol-based hand sanitizer where water is not readily available. The advisories included avoiding touching the face to prevent the virus being easily transferred as well as using a facial mask to cover nose and mouth in public. Also, included is isolation, which means separating infected people from others to stem the spread of the disease. This isolation may be at home (self) or in a hospital facility. Once, there is a noticeable symptom on someone, testing is carried out. Also, once the result is positive, an elaborate effort at tracing the contact is followed to stem further exposure. Also, the infected people are isolated. To quarantine means to separate and limit the movement of people who may have been exposed to the disease with aim of monitoring them to see whether they become ill. In addition to these is the conspiracy theories of its origin and the complex nature of the virus<sup>99</sup>.

#### **2.1.15 Western Medicine vs Alternate Medicine: Dictatorship of the Puritans?**

The contending and conflicting voices on research of the path medical care should take is another challenge facing the media. On a daily bases, there were competing claims between the time-tested orthodox western approach and the attractive offers of alternate medicine. Most times, popular posts claimed that increased water intake and tropical climate were shields against Coronavirus. The WHO informed the public that though the therapy may be useful, they will make sure that the virus is contained. The proclamations of the likes of Donald Trump on the efficacy of hydro chloroquine, made the eagerness for solution in the face of the slow, frustrating scientific way of verification more tempting. It was not helped by or the recommendations of others to use similar medications that treated Ebola for COVID-19. These were all reflected in the Nigerian media in addition to the confusion of how to frame the narrative of COVID-19<sup>100</sup>.

The misconception for herbal potion such as garlic, ginger, and turmeric as no more than a general advisory on good living was, going through a review before the Madagascar example of COVID-19 Organics, which offered a rare of hope in managing the disease. That seems prove that we have been facing the dictatorship of the puritans. The contending voices continued to challenge the staying power of the reporter on what should lead to be follow or be abandoned<sup>101</sup>.

The direct consequence of these struggles for understanding in the media is the burden our current reporting bears. What make a robust engagement of COVID-19 truly challenging include the confusion as a result of information, the reign of misinformation, the trivialization of subject matter, and the tabloidization of fear-inducing stats on the rising number of cases especially on the social media<sup>102</sup>.

#### **2.1.16 The Role of the Media in Information about Public Health and Medical Issues**

The central role that the mass media play includes among others, informing the public about health and medical issues<sup>103, 104 105</sup>. They empower readers to action and or to an alternative source by perform necessary functions of providing information that people rely on for health messages about new health risks, disease outbreaks, domestic and international alerts, and healthy living. People look to numerous sources which include newspapers, magazines, television, radio, the Internet, friends, relatives, and medical sources to learn about health.

The major sources of information about health issues are the news media. They are available for both the public and health professionals hence they have influence on decisions about health policies and medical care<sup>106</sup>. The media are recognised as powerful mechanisms to promote the awareness and education of public issues by serving as a forum in which the consideration and presentation of public health issues take place. Also, how the media construct shared

understandings of health problems in Nigeria and what health issues are presented and made more salient are emphasized. Similarly, how the public can promote awareness and educate the public on issues as well as influence decisions about health policies and medical care are the concerns of the mass media<sup>107</sup>.

Several evidences exist, pointing to the fact that the health sector in Nigeria has drastically suffered over the years as has other public services. The outcome of a study by the Amsterdam Institute for International Development (AIID) on Nigeria's health sector reveals that there has been a serious stagnation in Nigeria's health indicators. It also observes the sector worsened during the past decade. According to the findings, Life expectancy of 44 years, four than the African and developing country average, and infant mortality is almost double the developing country average. An estimate of 3.5 million Nigerians infected with HIV with minimal access to prevention, care and treatment. The myriad of healthcare financing problem laid mainly with individuals with private expenditures totaling 70 per cent of health expenditures and out-of-pocket expenditures equalling 90 percent of private expenditures<sup>108</sup>.

People who took part in the Nigerian National Health Conference held at Abuja Sheraton Hotel and Towers, 28 - 29 November, 2006, which was organised to develop health agenda for Nigeria in the 21st century also observed among others that Nigeria still has one of the worst health indices in the world. It equally state that Nigeria sadly accounts for 10 percent of the world maternal deaths in childbirth which represents 2 percent of the world population as at the year 2000. It also held that the Nigerian health system is dysfunctional and grossly underfunded and that the country lacks an integrated system for disease surveillance, prevention, and management. Similarly, it observed that social correlates of ill-health including hunger; poverty, illiteracy, lack

of clean water, poor sanitation, poor housing, gender disparity and unemployment are still prevalent<sup>109</sup>.

The three levels of government, including the federal, state and local governments, all are saddled with the responsibilities of providing healthcare in the society. The federal government is saddled with setting of overall policy goals, coordinating activities, as well as ensuring quality training, and implementation of sector programmes such as immunisation. Also, the states and local government areas are saddled with responsibilities of providing financial aspects of funding primary and secondary healthcare departments. These include personnel costs, consumables, running costs, and, capital investments. With communication levels poorly developed and data for planning purposes and management sparse, there is the tendency of the system rarely functioning effectively <sup>110</sup>. With available resources often not employed in a cost-effective manner where they would bring the highest benefit tends to make the situation a worst scenario.

Invariably, failing in the overall system of government, which is due largely to corruption, inefficiency, misplaced priority, and inadequate funding are noteworthy. A major problem resulting in scarcity of drugs, medical supplies, and deterioration of facilities is inadequate financial resources for the health sector in Nigeria. Notably, poor standards of facilities and care has been one of the main reasons for the very low utilization rates for public sector hospitals and clinics<sup>111</sup>.

A major effective media found to influence the reading public as well as opinion leaders on issues of public health has been the print media, particularly newspapers<sup>112</sup>. Also, newspapers are in some cases accessible and affordable sources of information. Despite revealing a very little

coverage of health matters in a report evaluating media coverage of HIV, AIDS, TB and malaria in five sub-Saharan African countries in the newspapers assessed, newspapers are found to be the best suited for explanations and in-depth analyses. This is because of the length allowed for in print and the relative ease of access<sup>113</sup>.

It is also noteworthy that because newspapers are fairly widespread in Nigeria, they are therefore germane for disseminating health information to a large population. Despite the fact that the role of the media in the health sector has frequently been criticized and questioned, not many systematic and critical assessments of coverage of the sector in Nigeria have been undertaken.

#### **2.1.17 Using the Media in Reporting Public Health Issues in Nigeria**

The use of the media in dealing with public health matters has been assessed extensively. To select news stories is a well-recognized as agenda setting function of the media. As a result of this, the media serve as a forum for the consideration and presentation of public health matters. Therefore, the media are seen as powerful mechanisms to promote awareness and educate the public on health issues<sup>114</sup>.

Past researches suggest that the media unarguably play a major role in the process formulating policies. This, they do by informing the public of relevant issues and shaping public thoughts surrounding those issues<sup>115</sup>. Print news for example, serve as an integral source of public policy information as well as a medium to influence public opinion. However, this depends on selection and presentation of the issues<sup>116</sup>. Media advocacy efforts also serve to increase news coverage of alcohol issues. They equally raise community awareness of drunken driving enforcement and are also used to heighten perceived risk of driving while -intoxicated<sup>117</sup>. In the same manner, it was

discovered that in urban areas with massive coverage by local newspapers, the media strongly influenced local decisions, especially those made by local politicians<sup>117</sup>.

It becomes imperative to note that in the area of health, the mass media play pivotal role in informing the public about health and medical issues. Reports held in the UK shows that daily national newspapers remained a primary source of information for clinicians and consumers with over 10 million newspapers sold daily<sup>118</sup>. Based on this fact, it is acknowledged that the mass media give the people alternative source of health information. Similarly, most psychologists equally acknowledged that the media are notably in the business of constructing shared-understanding of health<sup>119</sup>.

Various research studies have shown that, “print media’s dissemination of health information is important in shaping public beliefs and possibly behaviour”<sup>120</sup>. The media therefore are noted for playing a key role in shaping our understanding of medicine and science generally. They also lay emphases on the ways in which decisions about effectiveness and cost effectiveness are made <sup>121</sup>. The media thus, perform the useful functions in providing information to empower readers to take necessary actions. For instance, research found that people who were subjected to a high-level of cancer, focused on news actively sought -additional information about cancer<sup>122</sup>.

A well-designed mass media campaigns in Nigeria have shown their ability to increase the use of family planning. Television promotion of family planning in the cities of Ilorin, Ibadan and Enugu helped increase the numbers of new and continuing contraceptive users between 1985 and 1988<sup>123</sup>. In other African countries, research has confirmed strong association between exposure

to family planning media messages and contraceptive use<sup>124</sup>. For example, in the Kilimanjaro Reproductive Health Programme (KRIIP) in Northern Tanzania, use of radio was found to be an essential and powerful tool used to educate and mobilise communities for HIV preventive clinical trials. It was particularly valuable in promoting participation in the clinical trials<sup>125</sup>. Also, it was found that the mass media were used extensively by USAID and WHO for the expanded programme on immunisation campaigns in the dissemination of information and messages. They were equally found to be effective in reaching about half of the population<sup>125</sup>.

Research equally confirms that the media as valuable, reliable and alternative sources information on which people rely on for health messages as well as for shared understandings of health matters. It is also noteworthy that the dissemination of health information by the media is germane in shaping public beliefs. It is equally used to nurture desired behaviour or empowering readers to act, think, interpret and view health matters via critical, accurate, and clear news presentation.

Nigeria as a nation, paints a very demeaning picture of health indicators below what would be expected for a country with its level of GDP. For example, HIV prevalence has skyrocketed over the last 10 years to an estimated five million individuals. Also, infant and child mortality rate is among the highest in the world. There is equally a record of socio-economic and regional differences, which suggests great inequalities in access to health care and private expenditures or out-of-pocket spending makes up 65 percent of total health spending. It is noteworthy that the media and journalists do use their huge potential in reclaiming the health sector in Nigeria. This, they do by improving discourse on health situations. They also engage in shaping beliefs and

empowering readers and spurring government to action. They are equally noted for providing critical, accurate and clear interpretation as well as serving the surveillance function.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.2.1 Framing Theory**

One of the theories upon which this study is anchored is the framing theory. The theory which is credited to Gregory Bateson was said to be first posited in 1972. Framing theory describes a platform whereby the media situate various perspective of an occurrence that is newsworthy. Sometimes referred to as second-level agenda-setting, describing its closeness or relationship to agenda- setting theory. Framing describes the process of how the media organize and present information to the public on certain issues, or event. This, they do by giving them particular context to sway interpretation, necessitating selective influence on the way members of the public see reality. Framing theory as a philosophical postulation, avails the opportunity for the explanation on how news content is typically shaped and contextualized by a media outlet <sup>126</sup>. As cognitive structures, frames are used to guide the representation of events <sup>127</sup>. The media use framing to devote volume of coverage to a particular issue. With the use of framing, the media make an issue salient and direct audience attention to specific issues, ideas and individuals while making unimportant what lies outside the frame<sup>128</sup>. In terms of frame tone, variety of media coverage highlights more of negative than the positive<sup>129</sup>. In respect of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is noticed that media highlighted the consequences and focused more on the dangers of the spread of the virus across countries and continent. Based on this context, there is a noticeable nexus between the study and the theory. This is because the media frame stories and such stories or words depend on the content producers, which portend to issues like Covid-19 pandemic.

The framing theory popularised by Goffman in 1974, states that the media select and highlight certain items of an event or issue over others, thus elevating them in importance to the audience<sup>130</sup>. Framing is employed here to explain the way mass media promote a particular definition of an issue through selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration<sup>131</sup>. Framing refers to an active process of creating, selecting, and shaping the frames<sup>132</sup>.

There are several literatures on framing theory<sup>133, 134</sup>. It becomes imperative to note that journalists place figurative picture frames around a target of event and action. This enables them to focus attention on particular issues, opinions, ideas and individuals while obscuring what lies outside the frame<sup>135</sup>. Frames are quite germane because they constitute an exercise (knowingly or, most times unknowingly) of powers of journalism<sup>135</sup>. Frames are used in drawing attention toward and as well as confer legitimacy upon a specific angle of reality while deemphasizing other aspects. Framing enhances the study of how media coverage of events is conceived and presented<sup>136</sup>. Findings from previous studies have discovered sufficient evidence that the mass media have the power to select and package events, and thus, to influence the way consumers perceive the surrounding reality<sup>137, 138, 139</sup>.

As a media effects theory, framing is largely utilized to analyze the way mass media filter information and thus, influence public reactions to a whole range of external stimuli<sup>140</sup>. Also, Framing evaluated the way public attitudes are conditioned due to media framing of a subject<sup>141</sup>. There are two factors which enhance the adoption of frames are: the accessibility of an issue, and the correlation between a subject and the audience's pre-existing opinions. On the basis of the above observation, the effects of framing are not independent<sup>141</sup>.

Also, it has been found that preexisting attitudes and knowledge before exposure to the media play a crucial role in determining the framing effects<sup>141</sup>. The use of framing theory as an anchor to this present study becomes necessary since it focuses on how newspapers use frames to highlight and influence readers' understanding of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. It follows therefore that the way newspapers frame stories on the novel Coronavirus may influence the readers' perception, understanding and handling of the deadly virus.

### **2.2.2 Social Responsibility Theory**

The social responsibility theory was developed in 1947 from the report of the Hutchin Commission set up to check the excesses of a free press, which the Libertarian theory availed the mass media earlier on<sup>142</sup>. The basic tenet of the theory is that the press is a public trust and should be responsible to the society. The theory states as much as the press should have the freedom to carry out their duties, such freedom should have a level of obligations and responsibilities, they should be guided by self-regulation and government regulation where necessary<sup>143</sup>. The theory emphasizes that as much as the press should be free, the public do also have the right to a free press and the rights of the public take precedence<sup>142</sup>.

It was the lapses of the Libertarian theory that gave birth to the social responsibility theory. This is because while the Libertarian theory gave unfettered freedom to the press, the social responsibility theory added obligation to that freedom. This actually means that a truly socially responsible press has to first of all enjoy a level of liberty to be responsible to the society. The social responsibility theory recognizes the need for a free and responsible press, which equally emphasise the need for media practitioners to carry out their duties in a manner that would be devoid of government control<sup>143</sup>. The following are thrust of the social responsibility theory:

- Media ownership is a public trust and therefore, the media have obligations to the society.
- News media ought to be truthful, accurate, fair, objective and relevant.
- The media ought to be free but self-regulating.
- The media ought to follow agreed codes of ethics and professional conduct.
- Government may need to intervene to safeguard the public interest under some circumstances.

Social responsibility theory explains the responsibility of the press in preserving democracy and that government intervention in form of regulatory bodies could be necessary to protect and promote public interest<sup>144</sup>. This approach holds that the press has a right to criticize government and other institutions of democracy by properly informing the public and by responding to society's needs and interests. The press does not have the freedom to do as it pleases; it is obliged to respond to society's demands. The government may involve itself in media operations by issuing some regulations if the public interest is not being adequately served.

One of the major criticisms of the social responsibility theory is, not considering the prevailing factors exerting a great deal of influence on the media environment in most developing nations including Nigeria. Social responsibility theory advocates self-regulation, state regulation and high professional standards. The practices thrive realistically when certain conditions such as good and regular salary for journalists, good working conditions such as provision of money for expenses incurred by journalists in the exercise of their duty. Absence of the above conditions, create forces that put so much pressure on media journalists. This makes it difficult to adhere to the principles of social responsibility theory. Otherwise, how can the journalist who is not well paid, including the journalist whose salary is irregular be motivated to engage in self-regulation

and professional standards. Studies have shown that journalists in Nigeria for instance are poorly paid<sup>145, 146</sup>. What this condition does is to force the journalist to seek out other ways to make ends meet to the detriment of professionalism and social responsibility to the society<sup>147</sup>.

The foregoing therefore presupposes that the coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic may have been compromised such that the news stories reported cannot be said to be highly objective. Thus, the expected influence on readers' perception of the virus may be in doubt. The situation of compromised coverage can also be the reason for continued escalation of misinformation in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Nigeria press cannot be said to operate in the best conditions to be able to give an unbiased report or coverage of the novel Coronavirus disease especially when viewed vis-à-vis ownership and interest. The social responsibility theory therefore is apt to this study. This is because the unrealistic nature of the social responsibility theory in a nation like Nigeria where the media are poorly managed should be considered when carrying out a study such as newspaper framing of COVID-19 pandemic and its influence on readers' perception of the virus.

### **2.2.3 The Agenda Setting Theory**

The agenda setting theory was postulated by Macombs and Donald L. Shaw in the year 1972. The major assumption of the theory is that the media set the agenda for what issues the people considered important for discuss at a given time in a society. In the view of the theory there is a relationship between what the media presents as news and information and the level of importance the public gives to news and events in the society. Again, the theory further notes that, the media do not have the power to determine what the society actually thinks, but they do

have the power to determine what the society thinks about. The above can be linked to the work of Benard-Cohen who notes that the press “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about”<sup>148</sup>. Supporting the above, “the press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about”<sup>149</sup>. This means that, different individual sees ideas, issues and personalities form different perspectives based on the information at their disposal. Hence, as an extension, we tend to decipher the meaning of realities not from our personal interest but also based on the map drawn for us by writers, editors, newsroom staff and the publishers of the materials we fall back to in our quest for information<sup>150</sup>.

Public discussion always goes around the issues that are consistently and frequently on the news media and the way the media highlights these issues influences the opinion members of the public forms about such issues. There are certain elements involved in agenda setting theory. These are; the quantity of frequency for reporting, prominence given to reports through headlines, display, pictures and layouts of newspaper, degree of conflict generated in the reports and the cumulative media specific effects overtime<sup>151</sup>. Rather than directly tell the people to consider one issue as more important than another, the media set agenda by giving preferential treatment to issues in their coverage. Hence, in choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff and broadcaster play an important part in shaping political reality, readers learn not only about a given issue, but how much importance to attach from the amount of information in a news story and its position<sup>152</sup>. The relevance of the Agenda Setting Theory to the contemporary media parlance could be understood from the strength of the theory, that is, the theory focuses on the audience interaction with the media and as such empirically demonstrating links between media

exposure, audience motivation to seek orientation and audience perception of public issues and also integrate a number of similar ideas including priming, story position and story vividness<sup>153</sup>. In the same vein, the media cue the public to see certain issues as important by the prominence such issues are given and by both the extensiveness of stories in a given day and duration of coverage over time<sup>154</sup>.

The process through which media agenda begins and leads to public agenda can be seen in the followings:

1. The press which in this context include the news media, in general, selects a number of issues, topics and events from its constant surveillance of the environment which they process and report daily as “the news”.
2. Due to limited space and time, as well as journalists’ conviction as to what is “news worthy”, many issues and topics are ignored and are not regarded as newsworthy to become part of the news.
3. The press offers each selected news stories greater or lesser prominence in its reports. This they do by assigning it a particular position, or giving it more or less space or time in its print or broadcast news presentations.
4. The selected stories presented are done with their different levels of prominence, space and time form the news agenda of the press.
5. When the public attends to these news reports, they will perceive the order of prominence assigned by the press in its agenda of stories and therefore, will use it to decide on a parallel personal ranking of importance of the issues and topics that make up the news<sup>154</sup>.

Again, apart from setting agenda for public discuss, it has been observed that the media also directly or indirectly set agenda which help policy makers in their respective function to society.

Hence, the media can establish the nature, sources and consequences of policy issues, determine the attention paid to those issues, and at the same time, influence the type of policy solutions that will be adopted<sup>152</sup>.

The agenda setting theory is relevant to this study, in that, the media sets the agenda of issues that the public see as important to them. The dominant frames highlighted in the news media would help to build public perception, understanding and the opinion they would form on the novel COVID-19 pandemic. More so, the agenda setting theory is relevant to the study to the extent that the agenda set by the press can play a vital role in directing the audience towards understanding the how novel Coronavirus can be contained without further spread.

### **2.3 Review of Empirical Literature**

A Study of *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard Newspapers* in Nigeria revealed that the wide-spread of coronavirus (Covid-19) in Nigeria in the last few months has attracted media attention and generated reports<sup>155</sup>. The study held that the disease which causes respiratory illness like the flu with symptoms such as cough, fever and in more severe cases, difficulty in breathing has been ravaging the country. It stated that since the Nigerian Government announced the first confirmed novel coronavirus pandemic in the country on February 27th 2020, the media in Nigeria have been giving extensive coverage on the issue using different frames. The study sought to determine the types of frames, the tones of the frames, the dominant frames, considering the selected newspapers are based in the two ends of the geographical cardinal points of the country (North and South). The study is limited to only newspaper frames and not the audience perspective of the issues of framing. The study examined the ways *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard* framed Covid-19 and the implication of the frames on government interest. The study further

looked at the possible implication of the frames on government interest in respect of the virus. Through content analysis, a census of dataset of articles, representing the coverage of Covid-19 is used for the study. The study was anchored on the theoretical lens of Framing Theory which hinged on the premise of philosophical postulation that provides explanation on which news content is typically shaped and contextualized by media outlet. The findings of the study indicated that the media narratives within the study period tilted more on economic and political frames. The tones of the frames of both newspapers were more of negative frames than positive and neutral on the Covid-19 pandemic. The study concluded that *Daily Trust* and *Vanguard* newspaper framed the Covid-19 pandemic more of economic, political and downplaying important frames such as health and safety and quality of life frames.

Content analysis method was employed in carrying out a study of the coverage of COVID-19 pandemic in the online versions of highly circulated U.S. daily newspapers<sup>156</sup>. Content analysis method was employed in carrying out the study. Articles about coronavirus published in online versions of USA Today online, Wall Street Journal online and NYTimes.com between January and March 2020 were identified. Only articles where the search terms appeared in the headline were included as it was considered a more effective approach to understanding the health communication trends for this outbreak. A total of 7,158 articles on this topic, which were published during the first three months of 2020 formed the population. The frequency of all the identified themes, which appeared in the reviewed articles were counted in addition to the excerpts used in the illustration of the specific theme. In summary, the five most common themes, which appeared in the reviewed articles were “financial impact of COVID-19” (11.6%), “stories of affected individuals” (7.0%), “death and death rates” (6.8%), “precaution recommendations

for public” (6.2%), and “quarantine” (5.9%). The sampled newspapers not only report the numbers, which include; number of infections, ventilators, deaths, economic losses, they also reported the context of the pandemic, which also include; impact on economy, efforts to slow the spread of infection, switch to working from home. The newspapers equally reported the presence of health disparities, scientific search for reliable COVID-19 tests, and effect on supply chains.

In another related study on Critical assessment of the ambivalent potentials of social media use in COVID-19 pandemic campaigns, observed that the threat created by the novel Coronavirus in the world today and the manner social media spread all manner of information (misinformation, disinformation, memes, innuendos, half-truths, lies etc.) about its cure and prevention has created a situation of uncertainty<sup>157</sup>. The development is more disturbing since none of the claims in social media platforms regarding the therapies and recipes (solutions) for the cure or prevention of COVID-19 has been approved or certified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) or the Centre for Disease Control (CDC). It seems, however, that only the prevalence of social media can suffice for the provision of adequate, regular and up-to-date information on the pandemic. The development can also explain the reason for leveraging social media platforms to enhance fast and wide diffusion of knowledge about Coronavirus all over the world. By its nature, social media allows for information to be readily shared – a role it has seemingly played in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic - and unlike traditional news outlets, there is no filter, no fact-checking and often a lot of bias. It becomes imperative to assess the ambivalent potentials which social media display in the face of COVID-19 pandemic vis-à-vis the impacts they have on the consumers of the information. The paper adopted the library research approach in which relevant conceptual literature and empirical studies analysed to ascertain whether social media display

ambivalence in the campaign against the spread of COVID-19. The paper found, among others, that the ambivalent potentials of social media use in the battle against COVID-19 were glaring. It recommends, among others, that consumers of social media products in this period should listen more to and, or check for updates by governments and other authorised agencies such as WHO and CDC rather than relying on unwholesome information from social media platforms.

Also, the study of Media framing of Ebola outbreak in Nigerian newspapers observed that the mass media do not have the ability to cure virus but, they can however cure its spread<sup>158</sup>. To framing news stories in the Nigerian news media is greatly influenced not only by the economic motives of the journalists but also by the act of picking news angle that arouses readers' interests with the aim to sell greater number of copies in the keen competitive media market. A litmus test of how Nigerian media framed health issues is the 2014 Ebola outbreak, which depicted the news perspective that interest them most. With the use of content analysis of two daily newspapers reports of Ebola outbreak in Nigeria, this study revealed the framing patterns employed in the reportage as well as the dominant frames used. The finding was used to justify the priority upheld between the media social responsibility towards containing the outbreak and the competing newspapers interests to make profit. To portray the newspapers purposive interest to free the society of the outbreak, the much capitalisation on treatment/containment frame was deployed. This is a reflection of its social responsibility role. The priority posed no threat on the professionalism of the journalists as it was not only much appraised but also, recommended the involvement of all media in the reportage of crisis.

Similarly, the study of Framing of Avian Influenza coverage by Nigerian newspapers assessed among others; the framing pattern, the direction of portrayal, the space allotment and the

placement pattern used in reporting Avian Influenza news in selected Nigerian dailies, which include; *The Vanguard*, *Punch*, *Guardian*, and *Tribune* purposively selected between the periods of February 1st to August 31st, 2006. Findings revealed that majority (52.56%) of Avian flu disease stories were reported in February and that *Guardian* newspaper recorded the highest frequency of reports (69.2%). Analysis of the frames used indicated that, public awareness (21.15%) was the dominant frame used in the reportage. Also, news stories on Avian Influenza in addition to other agricultural related issues recorded low number of placement patterns in most of the newspapers sampled. The findings equally revealed that *Vanguard* newspaper recorded the highest frequency of reports of Avian flu on the front pages (23.1%). It also found that *The Guardian* recorded the highest percentage (56.4%) of positive stories. The findings equally held that there was no significant difference in space allotment among the selected newspaper ( $F = 0.526, p > 0.05$ ). In the same manner, it held that there was no significant difference between space allotment and placement pattern ( $t = 0.40, p > 0.05$ ). Finally, the study concluded that all the four selected newspapers sampled stressed public awareness, industry crisis and government responsibility as national issues in reporting the cases of Avian Influenza in Nigeria<sup>159</sup>.

A study of Newspaper framing of health Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria highlighted that the role of the press in communicating development messages cannot be over-emphasised<sup>159</sup>. The study contended that how these messages were 'framed' within the readers frame of mind is as germane as the messages. The study focused on how newspapers framed the Millennium Development Goals on Health in Nigeria. It determined among others; the frequency of coverage, the angle MDGs on Health was framed, the level of prominence given to MDGs on health, the challenges that faced the reportage of MDGs on Health stories. With the use of content analysis,

survey and textual analysis methods, the manifest contents of communication of four randomly selected national newspapers (from January 2015 to December 2015) were examined. The results were analysed with interview responses from Journalists who cover these events. The findings reveal that Health MDGs stories recorded more frequency of coverage but low prominence in terms of placement. Ownership influence and profit motive of newspaper institutions were among the challenges facing the reportage of Health MDGs in Nigeria. The researcher recommends, among other things, that public interest should be a determining factor for prominence in newspaper reportage of any issue. Also, Journalists should endeavour to frame news contents towards promoting positive attitudes in the people towards government institutions in the country.

In a similar manner, a study on preliminary assessment of novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) knowledge and perceptions in Nigeria carried out in 2020 assessed knowledge and perceptions about COVID-19 among the general public in Nigeria during the initial week of the pandemic lockdown in the country<sup>160</sup>. From March 28 to April 4, 2020, this cross-sectional survey used an anonymous online questionnaire to collect data from respondents within Nigeria. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit 1357 respondents, aged 15-70 years, from 180 cities and towns within Nigeria. Study data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Approximately more than half (57.02%) of the respondents were male with high level of education (48.86% bachelor's degree or higher). Approximately half of the respondents (46.94%) opined that COVID-19 was -a biological weapon designed by the Chinese government. About 94% of the respondents identified -contact with airborne droplets via breathing, sneezing, or coughing as the most common mode of transmission; most respondents associated COVID-19 with coughing (81.13%), shortness of breath (73.47%) and fever (62.79%). Regular hand

washing and social distancing was selected by most respondents (94.25%) as a way of preventing infection whereas 11.86% reported consuming gins, garlic, ginger, herbal mixtures and African foods/soups as preventive measures against COVID-19. Majority of the respondents (91.73%) thought COVID-19 is deadly; and most respondents (84.3%) got 4 or more answers correctly. It was also observed that the traditional media (TV/Radio) are the most common source of health information about COVID-19 (93.5%). Findings revealed that Nigerians have relatively high knowledge, mostly derived from traditional media, about COVID-19. Their perceptions of COVID-19 bear implications across public health initiatives, compliance with precautionary behavior as well as bilateral relations with foreign nations. Evidence-based campaign should be intensified to remove misconceptions and promote precautionary measures<sup>160</sup>.

Similarly, a study on the use of mass media campaigns to change health behavior observed that mass media campaigns are widely used to expose high proportions of large populations to messages through routine uses of existing media, such as television, radio, and newspapers. Exposure to such messages is, therefore, generally passive. According to the study, such campaigns are frequently competing with factors, such as pervasive product marketing, powerful social norms, and behaviours driven by addiction or habit. The study discussed the outcomes of mass media campaigns in the context of various health-risk behaviours (eg, use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, heart disease risk factors, sex-related behaviours, road safety, cancer screening and prevention, child survival, and organ or blood donation). It concluded that mass media campaigns can produce positive changes or prevent negative changes in health-related behaviours across large populations. Finally, it proposed areas for improvement, such as

investment in longer better-funded campaigns to achieve adequate population exposure to media messages<sup>161</sup>.

Another study on newspaper coverage of health issues in Nigeria was carried out in which a health content analysis of four newspapers for a period of two years in Nigeria was held. It sought to find out how newspapers constructed understanding issues and problems of health, how the problems and issues were defined, what solutions were proffered, and whether newspaper articles were written such a way as to empower readers to attain greater health. The study found that HIV-AIDS, cardiovascular maladies, cancer reproductive health, problems of health policies and management as well as high cost of medicines, and fake and adulterated drugs topped the agenda of newspapers during the period, In addition, most newspaper articles provided readers with information and knowledge base on health which they could use in their daily lives and also endorsed scientifically proven natural health remedies for the management of diseases and ailments in spite of obvious limitations, the study has shown that Nigerian newspapers pay attention to issues and problems in the health sector and their coverage can mitigate different health, conditions with the knowledge they create, and the choices they offer: The study suggested further research in magazines for a better assessment of the role the print media play in the promotion of health<sup>162</sup>.

A further study on Content Analysis of Tweets during the 2009 H1N1 Outbreak was also carried out, which used survey as a popular method to measure public perceptions in emergencies. The study suggests and evaluates a complementary “intelligence” approach using Twitter during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic. The study aimed to: 1) monitor the use of the terms “H1N1” versus “swine flu” over time; 2) conduct a content analysis of “tweets”; and 3) validate Twitter as a real-time content, sentiment, and public attention trend-tracking tool. Tweets using “H1N1”

increased from 8.8% to 40.5% ( $R^2 = .788$ ;  $p, .001$ ), indicating a gradual adoption of World Health Organization recommended terminology. 5,395 tweets were randomly selected from 9 days, 4 weeks apart and coded using a tri-axial coding scheme. To track tweet content and to test the feasibility of automated coding, the researchers created database queries for Tweets between May 1 and December 31, 2009, and archived over 2 million Twitter posts containing keywords “swine flu,” “swineflu,” and/or “H1N1.” using Infovigil, an intelligence system. Content analysis indicated resource-related posts were most commonly shared (52.6%). 4.5% of cases were identified as misinformation. News websites were the most popular sources (23.2%), while government and health agencies were linked only 1.5% of the time. 7/10 automated queries correlated with manual coding. Several Twitter activity peaks coincided with major news stories. Our results correlated well with H1N1 incidence data<sup>163</sup>.

Also, in a study of South African newspapers' coverage of HIV and AIDS pandemic and audience attitudes in Limpopo Province used mixed method research approach and design, incorporating quantitative and qualitative research methodologies was employed in this research. Quantitative research method was used to collect data (desk research with content analysis) from twelve months editions of five national newspapers stratified as tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. A random sampling technique was used to select a study sample (5 national newspapers) out of the two categories as classified above. A total of 366 days or editions of the sampled mass media were therefore studied South African mass media communicated high quality HIV and AIDS news stories to the public in the year 2010. In the analysis of the quality of media content, the six variables that were used to assess the media HIV and AIDS news reports, in both analyses (simple descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA analyses), showed

that the media reports were technically competent (99%). Overall, the result indicated that multiple sexual partnership ranked the highest HIV and AIDS problem of concern in the society, followed by poverty, rape, STIs, alcohol and drugs, and unplanned teenage pregnancy<sup>164</sup>.

Similarly, a study analyzing trends in press coverage of hypertension in Nigeria held that health communication has relevance on virtually every aspect of health and well-being including disease prevention, health promotion and quality of life. The Newspaper may not tell people what to think but can tell its readers what to think about thereby influencing how audience perceive and understand issues. This study assesses Newspaper coverage of hypertension in Nigeria. Methods: Coverage of hypertension in three Nigerian newspapers between 2011 and 2013 was done using article counts, space, location, story type and source. This study was done in year 2013. The study was studied to evaluate the trend and level of improvement on Hypertension coverage. Three papers (Guardian, This Day, and Vanguard) were selected using simple random sampling from a list of twelve renowned national journals with widest circulation. Month of May was purposively selected for the study as the world marks hypertension day on the 17th of May every year. Results: There were 48 (47.5%) opinion/ feature stories, 39 (38.6%) straight news stories and no editorial on Hypertension. Most, 86 (85.1%) stories on Hypertension were covered by staff. The newspapers carried no stories on the front and back pages. However, 88(87.1%) were illustrated. Majority, 32 (31.7%) of the stories were 16-30 inches in length. Messages on Hypertension carried by the newspapers increased from 27 (26.7%) stories in 2011 to 41 (40.6%) stories in 2013. Out of 28992 stories the newspapers had in the period studied, 101 (0.34%) stories were on hypertension. Conclusion: The Newspapers have made some committed effort in the coverage of hypertension but they did not give much prominence or frequent coverage to stories on issues on hypertension<sup>165</sup>.

Furthermore, another study on the role of social media in the coverage of Coronavirus (COVID 19) pandemic was carried out, which stated that social media have off late, emerged as one the most important tools for dissemination of information. The expansion of Internet in India has contributed immensely to the use of the social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook etc. According to a report the number of active social media users in the country stood at 330 million in December 2019. This number is likely to increase to 448 million in 2020. Given the wide of reach of the social media, it is only natural to expect that it can distribute any information within minutes to millions of users. During the ongoing COVID 19 outbreak also the social media witnessed unprecedented traffic. Information virtually flooded the social media platforms though it also included unauthentic and unsubstantiated claims about the disease. The research paper tried to ascertain the role of the social media in the pandemic in India. For this purpose, the researchers have used both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Responses were elicited from 104 respondents drawn from varied sections of the society, who were social media users, and they were analysed using statistical tools to arrive at logical conclusions<sup>166</sup>.

Similarly, a study on the influence of Newspaper Framing of Covid-19 Pandemic on Readers' Perception of the Virus was carried out in 2021, which investigated the influence of newspaper framing of Covid-19 pandemic on readers' perception of the virus. The thrust of the study was to ascertain whether the way newspapers select, package and present news stories on the novel Coronavirus affected the way readers of *Daily Sun*, *Vanguard* and *National Light* newspapers in Awka Metropolis view the virus. Specific objectives of the study are among others to: access the patterns of frames used in reporting stories on Covid-19; ascertain respondents' frequency of exposure to newspaper reports on COVID-19; know whether the way newspapers report COVID-19 pandemic creates the desired awareness against the spread of the virus; ascertain

respondents' perception of newspaper reportage of COVID-19; find out whether the way newspapers select, package and present (frame) stories on COVID-19 influenced respondents' views about the virus. The study was anchored on agenda setting theory. The mixed research design was adopted in carrying out the study. This entails using both the survey and content analysis methods. For the survey method, 386 respondents were selected from the projected population of Awka Metropolis. For the content analysis method, 264 editions were randomly selected from the three select newspapers. Findings from the study revealed among others that: seven patterns of frames were used in reporting stories on Covid-19 by the three select newspapers within the period of the study; a more than two-thirds of the respondents had high exposure to newspaper reports of COVID-19; majority of the respondents accede that the way newspapers report stories on COVID-19 creates awareness against its spread; majority of the respondents had positive perception on newspaper reportage of COVID-19 and finally, majority of the respondents accede that the way newspapers report COVID-19 influenced the way they view the virus. The study concludes among others that way the media frame issues has the ability to influence audience perception of a particular event and that selection and packaging of the novel Coronavirus enjoys positive reactions in the media. The study recommends among others that: that the Nigerian press should endeavour to select appropriate news angles in reporting public health stories to stem the tendencies of creating rumours and misinformation. This also has the benefit of causing the polity to trust the media in their interpretations of health situations<sup>150</sup>.

Furthermore, a study on the content analysis of infographics on Covid-19, which used content analysis technique. The study collected infographics published in The Hindu and The Times of

India from 1 January to 21 March 2020, till the day of announcement of „Janata curfew“, which was the initial period of the virus outbreak. The study identified n=42 in The Hindu (TH) and n=143 in The Times of India (TOI) newspaper using a consecutive sampling method. After employing inclusion and exclusion criteria, i.e. only infographics on COVID-19 health-based, n=36 and n=97 were identified in TH and TOI. The selected infographic was categorised based on date, size of the infographic, headline, the level and type of infographic. The study identified the percentage of coverage, different levels and types of infographics and message characteristics of infographics. The study found that response and self-efficacy related infographics were primarily less in number compared to severity and vulnerability<sup>167</sup>.

Also, a study carried out on Media coverage of Ebola Virus Disease in Nigeria using Guardian and Punch Newspapers, which used content analysis method in carrying out the study. *The Guardian* and *The Punch* newspapers were critically analyzed along the lines of their news report; feature stories, articles, opinion, advertorials as well as editorial write up in order to ascertain how well media coverage helped in stemming the tide of Ebola. Two Nigerian newspapers –*The Punch* and *The Guardian* were selected for the study. The study covered a period of four months - from the period of July 20th, 2014 when the first Ebola virus was recorded in Nigeria to 21st October, 2014 when Nigeria was finally declared Ebola free by the world Health Organization. It was observed that both newspapers paid close attention on the Ebola Virus Disease. The Ebola Virus Disease was nothing short of an epidemic seen to not only be horrific but terrified not only Nigerians but Africa and the world at large<sup>168</sup>.

A similar study on the content analysis of press coverage during the H1N1 influenza pandemic in Germany 2009–2010. The study was a comprehensive analysis of the press coverage during the

H1N1 pandemic conducted in two steps. First, a temporal analysis was carried out of newspaper articles over the entire course of the pandemic, a total of 15,353 articles. The newspaper articles were obtained from the database Nexis. The total number of articles about the influenza pandemic during each individual week was plotted against the number of incident influenza cases during that week. Second, a quantitative content analysis of 140 newspaper articles from selected dates was conducted. This study indicated that media awareness seems to be strongly related to the actual situation in the pandemic, because changes in the number of infected people were associated with nearly identical changes in the number of newspaper articles. Few articles contained information on the agent of the influenza or support measures. Information on vaccination was included in 32.9% of all articles. Almost half of the articles (48.6%) used case reports. Fear appeals were used in only 10.7% of the newspaper articles; 32.9% of the articles contained the message characteristic “self-efficacy”<sup>169</sup>.

Also, a study on the content analysis of newspaper coverage of COVID-19 pandemic for developing a pandemic management framework. This paper intended to develop a pandemic management framework through an automated content analysis of local newspaper coverage of COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. To fulfill the aim, 7,209 newspapers articles are assembled and analyzed from three popular local newspapers named “bdnews24.com”, “New Age”, and “Prothom Alo English” over the period from January 1, 2020 to October 31, 2020. Twelve key topics are identified: origin and outbreak of COVID-19, response of healthcare system, impact on economy, impact on lifestyle, government assistance to the crisis, regular updates, expert opinions, pharmaceutical measures, non-pharmaceutical measures, updates on vaccines, testing facilities, and local unusual activities within the system. Based on the identified topics, their

timeline of discussion and information flow in each topic, a four-stage pandemic management framework is developed for epidemic and pandemic management in future. The stages are preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation<sup>170</sup>.

Similarly, a study of the *Guardian*, *Daily Sun* and *Vanguard Newspapers* on framing analysis of Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria was carried out. The study contended that though the mass media cannot cure a virus viral disease but can curb its spread. The framing of news stories in the Nigerian media (newspapers) is much more influenced by the economic motive of the journalists which results in their picking news angle that arouses readers' interests in order to sell more copies in the keen competitive media market. The COVID-19 pandemic is a litmus test of how the Nigerian media frame health issues, which depict the news perspective most interesting to them. Through content analysis of three daily newspapers reports of the novel Coronavirus in Nigeria, this study established the framing patterns employed while reporting as well as the dominant frame used. The outcome is used to justify the priority upheld between the competing newspapers interests to sell and the media social responsibility towards containing the pandemic. The much capitalisation on treatment/containment frame portrayed the newspapers purposive interest to free the society of the virus, a reflection of its social responsibility role. The priority, which poses no threat on the professionalism of journalism, was not only much appraised but also recommended for all media involvement in crisis reports<sup>123</sup>.

Another study on the assessment of the influence of Delta Broadcasting Service programmed "Your Health" in creating awareness against the spread of coronavirus in Asaba Metropolis was carried out. The study assessed the influence of Delta Broadcasting Service (DBS) programme

“Your health” in creating awareness against the spread of coronavirus in Asaba Metropolis. The thrust of the study was to understand from the stand point of empiricism whether indeed DBS programme “Your Health” created awareness against the spread of coronavirus. The study reviewed related conceptual literatures and relevant empirical studies with the aim to fill the knowledge gap. The study adopted dual theoretical framework, which included the uses and gratifications and agenda-setting theories. The survey research method was used in carrying out the study. A sample size of 400 was randomly selected from the population of Asaba Metropolis of Delta State. The questionnaire was used as the instrument for gathering data for the study. The study found among others that the DBS “Your Health” programme has helped in creating awareness against the spread of COVID-19 in Asaba Metropolis. The study recommends among others that government at all levels should take advantage of the effectiveness of radio programme as a strategy in seeking behavioural change of their citizens at all time<sup>171</sup>.

Also, a study on Leveraging local broadcast stations in campaigning against the spread of Coronavirus in Anambra State, with Anambra Broadcasting Service as the case study, examined the strategic advantage and capacity to disseminate effective and reliable information which local broadcast stations offer the society in the face of the rampaging COVID-19 pandemic. The thrust of the study is to highlight the fact that the people need not only verifiable sources of information about Coronavirus but also should rely absolutely on the information from the local media sources without being apprehensive. The paper adopted the library research approach in which relevant conceptual literature and empirical studies were analysed to ascertain the primacy of using local broadcast stations in the campaign against the spread of COVID-19. It concludes among others that local broadcast stations are more reliable with information about the cascading Coronavirus in the world today. Also, the Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS) has effectively

and reliably carried out its social responsibility and agenda-setting functions in the campaign against the spread of Coronavirus in Anambra State. The paper recommends, among others, that people should seek information about the deadly Coronavirus mainly from local stations rather than relying on unwholesome information from various social media platforms without filter and fact-checking<sup>145</sup>.

In a similar study on the Impact of COVID-19 on Subjective Well-Being: Evidence from Singapore carried out in 2021, provided novel evidence on how the COVID-19 global health and economic crisis is affecting overall life satisfaction and domain-specific satisfaction using data from a monthly longitudinal survey of middle-aged and older Singaporeans. Using a difference-in-differences framework, we document large declines in overall life satisfaction and domain-specific satisfaction during the COVID-19 outbreak, except satisfaction with health. These declines coincide with the introduction of a nationwide lockdown, with life satisfaction remaining below its pre-pandemic levels even after the lockdown is lifted. We also find that individuals who report a drop-in household income during the COVID-19 outbreak experience a decline in overall life satisfaction almost twice as large as those who do not report any income loss<sup>172</sup>.

Another study on COVID-19 New Variants and Host Demography with a Comprehensive Overview on COVID-19 and Future Perspectives, was carried out in 2021, which held that the outbreak of COVID-19 has proven to be an unprecedented disaster for the whole world. The virus has inflicted billion of lives across the globe in all aspects—physically, psychologically, as well as socially. Compared to the previous strains of  $\beta$ -CoV genera- MERS and SARS, SARS-CoV-2 has significantly higher transmissibility and worst post-recovery implications. A frequent

mutation in the initial SARS-CoV-2 strain has been a major cause of mortalities (approx. 3 million deaths) and uncontrolled virulence (approx. 1 billion positive cases). As far as clinical manifestations are concerned, this particular virus has exhibited deleterious impacts on systems other than the respiratory system (primary target organ), such as the brain, hematological system, liver, kidneys, endocrine system, etc. with no promising curatives to date. Lack of emergency treatments and shortage of life-saving drugs has promoted the repurposing of existing therapeutics along with the emergence of vaccines with the combined efforts of scientists and industrial experts in this short span. This review summarizes every detail on COVID-19 and emphasizes undermining the future approaches to minimize its prevalence to the remaining lives<sup>173</sup>.

Also carried out in 2021 is a study on the Impact and Role of Mass Media During the Pandemic, which showed that the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) has created a global health crisis that has had a deep impact on the way we perceive our world and our everyday lives. Not only the rate of contagion and patterns of transmission threatens our sense of agency, but the safety measures put in place to contain the spread of the virus also require social distancing by refraining from doing what is inherently human, which is to find solace in the company of others. Within this context of physical threat, social and physical distancing, as well as public alarm, what has been (and can be) the role of the different mass media channels in our lives on individual, social and societal levels<sup>174</sup>.

The study also held that the mass media have long been recognized as powerful forces shaping how we experience the world and ourselves. This recognition is accompanied by a growing volume of research, that closely follows the footsteps of technological transformations (e.g. radio, movies, television, the internet, mobiles) and the zeitgeist (e.g. cold war, 9/11, climate change) in

an attempt to map mass media major impacts on how we perceive ourselves, both as individuals and citizens. Are media (broadcast and digital) still able to convey a sense of unity reaching large audiences, or are messages lost in the noisy crowd of mass self-communication? Do social media provide solace or grounds for misinformation, (de)humanization, and discrimination? Can we harness the flexibility and ubiquity of media technologies to increase the public's adherence to the safety measures suggested by global health organizations to combat the spread of COVID-19? How can different media industries and channels for mass communication promote adaptive responses to foster positive health attitudes and adherence to preventive measures? How media impact the dynamics in the private domain (e.g. strengthen family bonds versus domestic conflict and violence).

In another study on COVID-19 infection: Emergence, transmission, and characteristics of human coronaviruses, carried out in 2020, held that coronavirus disease 19 (COVID-19) is a highly transmittable and pathogenic viral infection caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which caused global pandemic that led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide. Genomic analysis revealed that SARS-CoV-2 is phylogenetically related to severe acute respiratory syndrome-like (SARS-like) bat viruses, therefore bats could be the possible primary reservoir. The intermediate source of origin and transfer to humans is not known, however, the rapid human to human transfer has been confirmed widely. There is no clinically approved antiviral drug or vaccine available to be used against COVID-19. However, few broad-spectrum antiviral drugs have been evaluated against COVID-19 in clinical trials, resulted in clinical recovery. In the current review, we summarize and comparatively analyze the emergence and pathogenicity of COVID-19 infection and previous human coronaviruses including severe as cute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and middle east

respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV). We also discuss the approaches for developing effective vaccines and therapeutic combinations to cope with this viral outbreak<sup>175</sup>.

Similarly, a literature review on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) was carried out in 2020, which held that in early December 2019, an outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), caused by a novel severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), occurred in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. On January 30, 2020 the World Health Organization declared the outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. As of February 14, 2020, 49,053 laboratory-confirmed and 1,381 deaths have been reported globally. Perceived risk of acquiring disease has led many governments to institute a variety of control measures. We conducted a literature review of publicly available information to summarize knowledge about the pathogen and the current epidemic. In this literature review, the causative agent, pathogenesis and immune responses, epidemiology, diagnosis, treatment and management of the disease, control and preventions strategies are all reviewed<sup>176</sup>.

Another study on the most important research questions about SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 carried out in 2021, held that Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is an ongoing global health emergency. The 2019-nCoV causes an ongoing outbreak of lower respiratory tract disease called novel coronavirus pneumonia (NCP) by the Chinese government initially. The disease name was subsequently recommended as COVID-19 by the World Health Organization. Meanwhile, 2019-nCoV was renamed SARS-CoV-2 by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses. The study highlighted nine most important research questions concerning virus transmission,

asymptomatic and presymptomatic virus shedding, diagnosis, treatment, vaccine development, origin of virus and viral pathogenesis<sup>177</sup>.

Also, in 2021 a study on A pragmatic analysis of visual message content used in Centre for Disease Control (CDC) Covid-19 prevention infographics was carried out, *the study is a qualitative and quantitative research that sought to pragmatically investigate the visual message content used in the Centre for Disease Control Covid-19 prevention infographics. The theoretical framework is a blend of Austin's Speech Act to account visual acts, Serafini's work to account for the Kress and Leeuwen's socio semantic approach for the explication and description of the observable visual clues. Data was collected purposefully from CDC Covid-19 infographics. The study discovered that out of the five visual acts adapted and adopted for this analysis, visual contents performed three acts comfortably albeit at different categories. The most performed acts are the directive and expressive at 39% respectively. The findings hold that visual contents used in infographics communicate meanings that transcend that which words communicate through the use of models of various genders, social significance, logos, aesthetics and colours. Therefore, just as Austin's Speech Acts, the CDC Covid-19 prevention infographics perform a number of visual acts whose illocutionary forces are to appeal to and change the viewers' mindset, attitude and habits towards the Covid-19 disease*<sup>178</sup>.

Another study on the effect of social media as a channel for advertising during Covid-19 lockdown in Ondo State, Nigeria was carried out in 2021. The study was based on the effects of social media as a channel of advertising during Covid-19 lockdown in Nigeria. It was anchored on the uses and gratifications theory. It employed quantitative method of research. Survey

method was used and longitudinal design approach was employed to determine how Facebook users in Ondo State make use of the social media for advertisement during Covid-19 lockdown. 400 respondents randomly selected from three local government areas, one each from the three senatorial zones of Ondo State formed the sample of the study using Taro Yamani's formula. The questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. The findings revealed that Facebook served as a successful channel of advertising during Covid-19 lockdown in Ondo State. The study recommended that social media should be considered as a valid medium for advertising goods and services because it is much easier to get or place orders with a reliable means of delivery. Also, the public should verify any online advertisement in order to avoid deception<sup>179</sup>.

Further study on social media users' perception of Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)'s daily updates on Covid-19 cases was carried out in 2021. The study held that the emergence of Coronavirus has been a threat to global community and many have diverse perceptions about the novel virus. The Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has been sharing information about the daily status of Coronavirus in the country. With the efforts of the NCDC, what do Nigerians think of Covid-19? Hence, this study analyses the perception of social media users on NCDC's daily updates on Covid-19 cases. In conducting the study, survey method was adopted and online questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data for the study. Three hundred and eighty-four respondents who were selected using snowball sampling method participated in the study. After the analysis, the findings revealed that a majority of the respondents were exposed to NCDC's daily updates on Covid-19 cases to a high extent. The result equally showed that a significant majority of the respondents perceived the daily updates

as political, deceptive, and aimed at instilling fear or causing health panic in the society. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the government should intensify effort in sensitizing the general public to change their perception concerning the reality of Coronavirus in Nigeria and daily updates of cases<sup>180</sup>.

## **2.4 Summary of Literature Review**

In a public health context such as the COVID-19 pandemic, conceptual framework shall in the best of universal concerns serve two equally useful purposes: First it will guide empirical work to enhance our understanding of factors and mechanisms of the prevalence of the topic of inquiry vis-à-vis the dependent and independent variables. Secondly, it will guide policy making to or illustrate entry point for interventions and policies. This study pursues an excellent and comprehensive discussion of conceptual framework for Coronavirus issues in Nigeria, how Nigerian newspapers cover the Coronavirus pandemic and how the audience perceive the virus. For this purpose, a content analysis of newspaper editions was undertaken to analyse the framing pattern used in covering the Coronavirus pandemic, the dominant frame used, the volume, frequency, prominence and slant of the coverage.

The outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has created a global health crisis that has had a deep impact on the way we perceive our world and our everyday lives. Not only the rate of contagion and patterns of transmission threatens our sense of agency, but the safety measures put in place to contain the spread of the virus also require social distancing by refraining from doing what is inherently human, which is to find solace in the company of others. Within this context of physical threat, social and physical distancing, as well as public alarm, what role has the mass media (newspapers) played at the individual, social and societal levels?

As past major epidemics have shown, significant shifts in viewpoints and perceptions inevitably form from collectively experienced events. The global flu epidemic of 1918 helped create national health services in many European countries. The twinned crises of the Great Depression and the second world war set the stage for the modern welfare state<sup>160</sup>. But those are shifts in governmental policy and social safety nets. In this framework, we want to postulate how behavior will be impacted, and if that impact will vary by age.

In terms of COVID-19, or the novel corona-virus-19, the general populace of each country reacted within roughly two weeks of being aware of the virus's presence in their country, to begin a stock-up mentality. As this mentality of preparedness kicked in, the following categories became a priority: medical supplies, rubbing alcohol, antibacterial wipes, first aid kits, antiseptics, cold and flu remedies, and cough remedies<sup>161</sup>. With many people feeling "caught off guard", it could be seen as a precursor to items that will be kept in ready supply by the population in the future. As the population satisfied emergency health supplies, the social patterns turned to isolation. As countries have progressed into a "new normal", many patterns of behavior have changed, such as using online for food deliveries, more personal isolation than previously, and a shift to less togetherness, and any closeness where a virus can be transmitted.

Another source confirms the scale of the coronavirus crisis calls to mind 9/11 or the 2008 financial crisis events that reshaped society in lasting ways, from how we travel and buy homes, to the level of security and surveillance we're accustomed to, and even to the language we use"<sup>161</sup>. In terms of the potential changes in people perception either driven by, or in response to, changes in social relationships, hospitality, and those settings which

proved to be the most vulnerable or the most essential during the pandemic, we are suggesting the following changes will be seen as the public reemerges from quarantine into a post-pandemic existence. This study therefore intends to develop a pandemic management framework through a content analysis of local newspapers coverage of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

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## Chapter Three

### Methodology

This chapter deals with the research method that will be adopted by the researcher in carrying out this study.

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopted content analysis research design. This design is considered appropriate because it is seen as a research technique found relevant when dealing with research topics on the coverage or reportage of various issues by the press. Newspaper contents and information which have no original control with respect to how they were collected are systematically accumulated and classified. Content analysis has also been seen as a sure-recipe for planning and executing communication research project.

Content analysis being a quantitative method helped the researcher to answer the questions raised in this study. The manifest content of the *Guardian newspaper* including news stories, articles, editorials, cartoons, illustrations were carefully examined, coded, and analyzed with a view to establishing how the various issues which arose from newspaper reports on Coronavirus in Nigeria were presented and interpreted. Hence, the method helped in making justifiable inference on the manner of coverage given to the Coronavirus reportage in the *Guardian newspapers*.

#### 3.2 Population of the Study

The population for this study was the *Guardian newspaper* in Nigeria. The study presented the *Guardian newspaper* environment as constituting the universe from which the samples were

selected for analysis. The target population consisted of all the issues/editions (including weekends, since the updates on Coronavirus were also carried out during the weekends) of the Guardian newspaper. However, editions of the Guardian newspaper between 28th February, 2020 and 27th January, 2021 constituted the actual population of the study.

The periods under study were between 28th February, 2020 and 27th January, 2021. This gave us 12 months (52 weeks, 366 days). The duration enabled the researcher to have a well-defined period for evaluating the Guardian newspaper reports of Coronavirus in Nigeria. This means that the actual population for the study is 366 editions of the Guardian newspaper.

### **3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

The sample size for the study is all the population of the study (366 editions), which consisted of all the publications of the Guardian newspaper between 28th February, 2020 and 27th January, 2021. The study adopted the census sampling technique. The rationale for the choice of the 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 (28th February, 2020 and 27th January, 2021) were purposively acquired. While the motive to study the total editions (census) was based on the assertion that, if the period of the study is within a short period of time, the entire content could be studied so as to ensure reliability of data.

### **3.4 Description of the Research Instruments**

The coding sheet was used in collecting data for the study. Coding is the assignment of number of qualitative responses to represent such data for ease of analysis. It is also placing a unit of

analysis into a content category. The coding sheet was adopted to bring the real manifest contents of the *Guardian* newspaper on Coronavirus. The code was constructed based on the unit of analysis and content categories. In addition, the choice of the coding system is because it has an advantage of converting data generated into easily specified attribute of given variables.

Coding will enable the researcher to group responses into a limited number of classes or categories for easy analysis. The major instruments for data collection in this study will be coding guide and coding sheet (see appendix I1). A coding guide will help in developing the coding sheet and the number of content categories employed in the study.

#### **3.4.1 Unit of Analysis**

The unit varies with the nature of data and the purpose of the research. Thus, it might be a single word, a letter, a character, themes items, a symbol, a theme (a single assertion about a subject), a news story, a short story, a character, the theme, article and news contents of the newspaper under study will be adopted as units of analysis for the study.

#### **3.4.2 Content Category**

They are coded as follow:

##### **a) Frequency of Reports**

- a. daily intervals
- b. weekly intervals
- c. monthly intervals

## **b) Prominence given to Reports**

- a. Front page
- b. Inside page
- c. Back page.
- d. Centre page

## **c) Patterns of frames used in Coronavirus Report:** They are coded as:

“causes and transmission frame” captured news items which came under the context of the origin and mode of transmitting Coronavirus and its signs and symptoms;

“treatment & control/containment frame” deal with news stories which discussed how the virus could be prevented from spreading, efforts made towards its treatment, and the level of its containment;

“fear and death frame” comprised of news stories that raised tension as a result of number of infected cases and rise in death toll;

“sabotage and conspiracy frame” included news stories whose contents focused on individuals, bodies or government activities, which disrupted the efforts toward containing the outbreak. It also included reports on unwholesome way of benefiting from the spread or effects of the outbreak; “government/political influence frame” is the reports about government activeness or otherwise via its policies, political rivalry among others;

“effect frame” comprised reports on the effects of the outbreak on economic, socio-cultural interactions, education, health, international relations and diplomacy, sporting activities, entertainment industry as well as other areas of human development.

#### **d) Ethical Standards**

- a. Editorial Independence
- b. Accuracy and fairness
- c. Discrimination.
- d. Reward and gratification
- e. Privilege/ Non-disclosure of source
- f. Decency

#### **3.4.3 Content Coding Sheet:** Content analysis checklist on Coronavirus Reportage (CACCR).

The study assigned numbers to the categories to organize the data according to their homogenous subset as they were being collected. The design for the content code sheet of this study is as follows:

##### **1) Frequency (A)**

Daily intervals	A1
Weekly intervals	A2
Bi weekly interval	A3
Monthly intervals	A4

##### **2) Prominence (B)**

Front page	B1
Inside page	B2
Back page.	B3

##### **3) Frames (C)**

Courses and transmission frame	C1
Treatment and control/containment frame	C2
Fear and death frame	C3
Sabotage and conspiracy frame	C4
Government/political influence frame	C5
Effects frame	C6

#### **4) Ethical Standards (D)**

Editorial Independence	D1
Accuracy and fairness	D2
Discrimination	D3
Privilege/Non-disclosure	D4
Reward and gratification	D5
Decency	D6

### **3.5 Validity of the Research Instrument**

The coding sheet instruments were subjected to content and contextual validity by the researcher's supervisors and other lecturers in the Department of Mass Communication and Media Technology, Lead City University, Ibadan. The lecturers will examine the instruments with regards to their relevance in terms of items, clarity, appropriateness of contents and representativeness of the various areas of the study.

### **3.6 Method of Data Analysis**

The method of data presentation and analysis will be descriptive and contextual analysis in essay form.

#### **3.6.1 Method of Data Collection**

The researcher collected data for the study through content analysis. The researcher visited the morgue in the university library in Leads City University Ibadan and examined copies of the *Guardian* newspaper for a period of 366 days between 27th February 2020 and 28th January 2021. The total number of the editions for the select newspaper were 366 (100%). They were all found to contain publications of Coronavirus reportage as the period was in the heat of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Chapter Four

### Results and Discussion of Findings

The chapter depicts a descriptive analysis of the information collected in the course of the study. Further, the data gotten from the examined newspaper were discussed by using them to find answers to the research questions.

The researcher visited the University of Ibadan Library and examined copies of the *Guardian* newspaper for a period of 366 days between 27th February, 2020 and 28th January 2021. The total number of the editions for the select newspaper were 366 (100%). They were all found to contain publications of Coronavirus reportage as the period was in the heat of the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### 4.1 Demographic Data Analysis

**Table 4.1: Total Number of Publication for the Guardian Newspaper**

Year	Total Number of Publication	Total Number of Publication used	Total Number of Publication unused
27th February, 2020 to 28th January, 2021	366	366	0
Total	366	366	0

**Source: Content Analysis, 2022**

**Table 4.1** shows that between 27th February, 2020 to 28th January, 2021, the *Guardian* newspaper had 366 publications.

## 4.2 Presentation of Data

In this section, the four research questions asked in chapter one of this study were answered. The information was collected from the *Guardian* 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 published by the *Guardian* newspaper between 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2020 and 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2021 including the Saturday and Sunday editions, making a total of 366, which were sampled using the census sampling technique.

### 4.2.1 Research Questions

**Research Question One:** What is the frequency of coverage of the Coronavirus reports in the *Guardian* newspaper within the period of the study?

**Table 4.2.1:** Frequency of reportage of Coronavirus stories in the *Guardian* Newspaper according to frames between 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2020 and 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2021

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Causes/Transmission frame	20	5.4%
Treatment/Containment frame	112	30.6%
Fear/Death frame	125	34.1%
Sabotage/Conspiracy frame	10	2.73%
Effect frame	14	3.8%
Government/Political frame	22	6.0%
Rumour/Misinformation	63	17.1%
Total	366	100%

**Source: Content Analysis, 2022**

Table 4.2.1 shows that the *Guardian* newspaper used Causes/Transmission frame 20 (5.4%) between 27th February, 2020 and 28th January, 2021, Treatment/Containment frame 112 (30.6%), Fear/Death frame 125 (34.1%), Sabotage/Conspiracy frame 10 (2.73%), Effect frame 14 (3.8%), Government/Political frame 22 (6.0%), whereas Rumour/Misinformation frame 63 (17.1%).

**Research Question Two:** What is the prominence of coverage of the Coronavirus reports in the *Guardian* newspaper within the period of the study?

**Table 4.2.2:** Prominence/placement of Coronavirus stories in the *Guardian* between 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2020 and 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2021

Prominence/Placement	Frequency	Percentage
Front page	192	52.5
Inside page	102	27.9
Back page	72	19.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Content Analysis, 2022**

Analysis of data in Table 4.2.2 shows that the *Guardian* newspaper published 192 (52.5%) front page stories, 102 (27.9%) Inside page stories and 72 (19.6%) back page stories within the period of the study.

### Research Question Three

What are the patterns of frames used in covering Coronavirus by *Guardian Newspaper* between 27th February, 2020 and 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2021?

**Table 4.2.3:** Patterns of frames used in reporting Coronavirus stories in the *Guardian* newspaper between 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2020 and 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2021.

News/ Papers	Cause/ Transmi ssion frame	Treatment/ Containment Frame	Fear/ Death frame	Sabotage/ Conspiracy frame	Effect frame	Govt./Pol. frame	Rumour/ Misinformation Frame	Total
Guardian	20	112	125	10	14	22	63	366
Total	20	112	125	10	14	22	63	366

**Source: Content Analysis, 2022**

Table 4.2.3 shows that the *Guardian* newspaper used Causes/Transmission frame 20 times between 27th February, 2020 and 28th January, 2021, Treatment/Containment frame 112 times, Fear/Death frame 125 times, Sabotage/Conspiracy frame 10 times, Effect frame 14 times, Government/Political frame 22 times, whereas Rumour/Misinformation frame 63 times.

**Research Question Four:** What is the level of conformity with ethical standards of newspaper in the *Guardian* Coronavirus reportage?

**Table 4.2.4:** Accuracy/Fairness of the *Guardian* publication on Coronavirus between 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2020 and 28th January, 2021

Placement	Frequency	Percentage
Official/Government Reports	172	46.8
Hospital Reports	101	27.6

Other Media Sources	67	18.4
Individual victims/Relatives	26	7.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Content Analysis, 2022**

In achieving fairness and accuracy as stated by the code of ethical standard of media practice in Nigeria, 172 publications on Coronavirus stories involved accounts for official/government reports, 101 publications included hospital reports, 67 publications comprised other media sources whereas 26 publications indicate individual victims or their relatives' reports. There were however, no report without any of the above parameters.

**Table 4.2.5: Editorial Independency of the *Guardian* Newspaper**

340 hard and feature news items on Coronavirus reported by the *Guardian* were written professional journalists as they all carried by-lines at the top of each of the reports, 20 of the editorials on Coronavirus published by the *Guardian* newspaper were presented as the viewpoints of the newspaper.

**Table 4.2.6: Privilege/Non-Disclosure of Sources by the *Guardian* Newspaper**

In the 340 hard and feature news items on Coronavirus all maintained high level of confidentiality of their sources as names of sources were not mentioned in the publications, the writers used terms like "according to the source", "an anonymous source" to protect their sources of information.

**Table 4.2.7: Decency of Publications by the *Guardian* Newspaper**

The 366 publications of the *Guardian* newspaper on Coronavirus reviewed were not in any way offensive, abusive or contain vulgar languages.

**Table 4.2.8: Abuse of Victims privacy by the *Guardian* Newspaper**

Reading through the reports as published by the *Guardian* newspaper in the publications under review, it did not in any way violate victims' right to privacy as faces of the victims involved were not shown on the pages of the newspaper.

**Table 4.2.9: Misinformation, Propaganda, Fake News by the *Guardian* Newspaper**

None of the reports as published by the *Guardian* newspaper in the publications under review was found with misinformation or propaganda neither was there any fake news as they all indicate sources of their news. It also presented its reports in a clear, balanced manner by making enquiries from every party involved in the incidents.

### **4.3: Discussion of Findings**

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

**Research Question One: What is the frequency of coverage of the Coronavirus reports in the *Guardian* newspaper within the period of the study?**

Data gotten from the coding in research question two show that the *Guardian* newspaper used Causes/Transmission frame 20 (5.4%) between 27th February, 2020 and 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2021,

Treatment/Containment frame 112 (30.6%), Fear/Death frame 125 (34.1%), Sabotage/Conspiracy frame 10 (2.73%), Effect frame 14 (3.8%), Government/Political frame 22 (6.0%), whereas Rumour/Misinformation frame 63 (17.1%).

The analysis shows an indication that there was proper coverage of Coronavirus issues within the period of the study in terms of frequency or the number of times the newspaper was able to carry news stories about the pandemic within the period of the study. This finding is supported by an earlier submission as reported in the literature reviewed in the study, which maintains that the press is expected to constantly draw the attention of the audience to the problems around them<sup>1</sup>. The attention will not only keep the citizens abreast of the happenings but will prepare them on how to manage its menace. Given the frequency of coverage of Coronavirus epidemic, it can be said that the *Guardian* newspaper has not failed in their responsibilities within the period under review.

**Research Question Two: What is the prominence of coverage of the Coronavirus reports in the *Guardian* newspaper within the period of the study?**

Data gathered from the coding in research question three show that the *Guardian* newspaper published 192 (52.5%) front page stories, 102 (27.9%) Inside page stories and 72 (19.6%) back page stories within the period of the study. In line with above finding, the Agenda Setting Theory shows that the media can give prominence to news stories through layout (front page, inside page centre page and back page) 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<sup>2</sup>. Accordingly, the *Guardian* newspaper directs their readers' attention to issues of Coronavirus.

This means that readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much important to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position in the newspaper.

Similarly, the Social Responsibility Theory imposes on the press an obligation to be socially responsible in discharging their duties, which were fulfilled by showcasing the incidents and happenings around the country in their publications<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, if placement of stories at strategic areas in the newspapers can make them prominent than others, it can be said that the media do more than stimulate interest. By directing attention to these concerns, the media provide a context that influences how people will talk about these matters. The therefore, more than direct attention to a problem, they also influence how the people think about the problems.

**Research Question Three: What are the patterns of frames used in reporting Coronavirus by *Guardian* newspaper between 27th February, 2020 and 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2021?**

From the data gotten from the coding of research question one, it shows that the *Guardian* newspaper used Causes/Transmission frame 20 times between 27th February, 2020 and 28th January, 2020, Treatment/Containment frame 112 times, Fear/Death frame 125 times, Sabotage/Conspiracy frame 10 times, Effect frame 14 times, Government/Political frame 22 times, whereas Rumour/Misinformation frame 63 times. This is evident as contained in Table 4.2.3 of the study, where frames were recorded. The seven frames identified during the coding of the newspaper contents of the novel Coronavirus from the select newspaper are summarised thus:

1. **‘Causes and transmission frame’**: news items that fall within this category of the frame discuss the origin and mode of transmission of the novel Coronavirus as well as its signs and symptoms;

2. **‘Treatment & control/containment’ frame:** news stories within this category discuss how the virus could be prevented from spreading, effort made towards its treatment, and the level of its containment;
3. **‘Fear and death frame’:** this category comprises news stories that raised tension as a result of number of infected cases as well as the rise in the death toll;
4. **‘Government/Political influence frame’:** it is the reports about government activeness or otherwise through its policies, political rivalry;
5. **‘Effect frame’:** it comprises reports on the effect of the outbreak on economic, social elation and cultural interactions, education, health, international relations and diplomacy, sporting activities, entertainment industry and other areas of human development;
6. **‘Sensitisation frame’:** it comprises reports on the education of the public on ways to prevent and manage the virus as well as how to report cases or persons with symptoms to the appropriate bodies;
7. **‘Rumour & misinformation frame’:** stories grouped in this category are those that expose the misinformation, lies, rumours, myth, and form of ingénue information about the spread, treatment or effect of the virus, either from social media or from unscrupulous individuals.

The above findings are in tandem with the literature reviewed in the study which stated that frames are cognitive structures that guide the representation of events. In framing, the media devote volume of coverage to a particular issue<sup>4</sup>. The media through framing make an issue salient and direct audience attention to specific issues, ideas and individuals while downplaying what lies outside the frame. Also, much of media coverage tilt towards the negative than the positive. It is noticeable that media in respect of the Covid-19 hyped the consequences focusing

more on the danger of the spread of the virus across countries and continents. In this context, there is a nexus between the study and the theory because the media frame stories and such stories or words depend on the content which portend to issues like Covid-19 pandemic. This indicates that the press can set agenda for the wellbeing and health of the citizens by conscientiously and effectively reporting health issues such as the Coronavirus epidemic<sup>2</sup>. The media consistently scan the environment and convey salient information, issues or mediated messages to the audience in order stem uncertainties and consequently react to the situation in a responsible manner.

**Research Question Four: What is the level of conformity with ethical standards of newspaper in the Guardian Coronavirus reportage?**

Data from the coding show that 172 publications on Coronavirus stories involved accounts for official/government reports, 101 publications included hospital reports, 67 publications comprised other media sources whereas 26 publications indicate individual victims or their relatives' reports. There were however, no report without any of the above parameters.

It was also gathered that 340 hard and feature news items on Coronavirus reported by the *Guardian* were written professional journalists as they all carried by-lines at the top of each of the reports, 20 of the editorials on Coronavirus published by the *Guardian* newspaper were presented as the viewpoints of the newspaper. In the 340 hard and feature news items on Coronavirus all maintained high level of confidentiality of their sources as names of sources were not mentioned in the publications, the writers used terms like “according to the source”, “an anonymous source” to protect their sources of information. It was found that the 366 publications

of the *Guardian* newspaper on Coronavirus reviewed were not in any way offensive, abusive or contain vulgar languages.

Also, findings show that reading through the reports as published by the *Guardian* newspaper in the publications under review, it did not in any way violate victims' right to privacy as faces of the victims involved were not shown on the pages of the newspaper. Finally, none of the reports as published by the *Guardian* newspaper in the publications under review was found with misinformation or propaganda neither was there any fake news as they all indicate sources of their news.

From the above analysis, it can be said that the *Guardian* newspaper is fair, balance and accurate in its publications on Coronavirus within the period under review. It can be further said that the *Guardian* publications observed the ethical standard by the Nigerian Press Council by not showing faces of victims of persons involved. The newspaper observed editorial independence as all the publications were written by media professionals, the newspaper protected the confidentiality of their sources. The publications were not in any way offensive, abusive neither did it use vulgar languages. The findings were in line with code of ethics for Nigerian journalists under the Nigerian Press Council, which stated that journalism entails a high degree of public trust<sup>5</sup>. To earn and maintain this trust, it is morally imperative for every journalist and every news medium to observe the highest professional and ethical standards. Also, in a study reviewed in the literature, 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<sup>6</sup>.

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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**

Data gathered also show that the *Guardian* newspaper used Causes/Transmission frame 20 (5.4%) between 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2020 and 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2021, Treatment/Containment frame 112 (30.6%), Fear/Death frame 125 (34.1%), Sabotage/Conspiracy frame 10 (2.73%), Effect frame 14 (3.8%), Government/Political frame 22 (6.0%), whereas Rumour/Misinformation frame 63 (17.1%).

Findings also show that the *Guardian* newspaper published 192 (52.5%) front page stories, 102 (27.9%) Inside page stories and 72 (19.6%) back page stories within the period of the study. show that 172 publications on Coronavirus stories involved accounts for official/government reports, 101 publications included hospital reports, 67 publications comprised other media sources whereas 26 publications indicate individual victims or their relatives' reports. There were however, no report without any of the above parameters.

Findings indicate that the *Guardian* newspaper used Causes/Transmission frame 20 times between 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2020 and 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2020, Treatment/Containment frame 112 times, Fear/Death frame 125 times, Sabotage/Conspiracy frame 10 times, Effect frame 14 times, Government/Political frame 22 times, whereas Rumour/Misinformation frame 63 times.

It was also gathered that 340 hard and feature news items on Coronavirus reported by the *Guardian* were written professional journalists as they all carried by-lines at the top of each of the reports, 20 of the editorials on Coronavirus published by the *Guardian* newspaper were presented as the viewpoints of the newspaper. In the 340 hard and feature news items on Coronavirus all maintained high level of confidentiality of their sources as names of sources were not mentioned in the publications, the writers used terms like "according to the source", "an anonymous source" to protect their sources of information. It was found that the 366 publications of the *Guardian* newspaper on Coronavirus reviewed were not in any way offensive, abusive or contain vulgar languages.

Finally, findings show that reading through the reports as published by the *Guardian* newspaper in the publications under review, it did not in any way violate victims' right to privacy as faces

of the victims involved were not shown on the pages of the newspaper. Finally, none of the reports as published by the *Guardian* newspaper in the publications under review was found with misinformation or propaganda neither was there any fake news as they all indicate sources of their news. It also presented its reports in a clear, balanced manner by making enquiries from every party involved in the incidents.

## 5.2 Conclusion

From the findings in this study, it is concluded that the *Guardian* newspaper used seven frames in reporting the Coronavirus stories. The newspaper used more of Fear/Death frame 125 (34.1%) between 27th February, 2020 and 28th January, 2021, followed by Treatment/Containment frame 112 (30.6%), Rumour/Misinformation frame 63 (17.1%), Government/Political frame 22 (6.0%), Causes/Transmission frame 20 (5.4%), Effect frame 14 (3.8%), whereas Sabotage/Conspiracy frame 10 (2.73%). This shows that the *Guardian* newspaper reported more frequently the Fear/Death stories during the period under study.

The newspaper showed a high level of prominence in reporting the Coronavirus stories as it published more of front page and back page stories. It also had more of hard news stories.

The seven frames are: Causes/Transmission frame between 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2020 and 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2021, Treatment/Containment frame, Fear/Death frame, Sabotage/Conspiracy frame, Effect frame, Government/Political frame, whereas Rumour/ Misinformation frame.

The newspaper performed more correlational functions by reporting the news as it breaks without carrying out much surveillance or investigative functions to discover more stories behind the news. The newspaper was fair, balance and accurate in its publications on Coronavirus within the period under review.

It also observed the code of ethics for Nigerian journalists under the Nigerian Press Council by being fair and accurate in publishing official/government reports, hospital reports, not showing the faces of victims involved in the incidents, protecting the confidentiality of its sources, none usage of offensive, abusive or vulgar languages.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

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

- As the Fourth Estate of the realm and the watchdog of the society, journalists should constantly cover and report cases of Coronavirus in order to inform and educate the society on the dangers of the spread of Coronavirus in Nigeria.
- As part of their Agenda Setting function, journalists should give importance to health issues especially that of Coronavirus pandemic as the media are saddled with the responsibility to filter and shape reality and to make the public perceive issues as more important than other issues based on media concentration.

- Journalist while carrying out the social responsibility function, should go beyond just reporting cases of Coronavirus as the break, they should carry out surveillance by investigating issues behind such incidents.
- Journalists should constantly address the issue of professional ethics stipulated by the Code of Ethics for Nigerian journalists under the Nigerian Press Council in covering and reporting Coronavirus as this would help accurate and fairness in their reportage.

#### **5.4 Contributions to Knowledge**

The study evaluated how the *Guardian* newspaper reports Coronavirus disease in Nigeria between 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2020 and 28th January, 2021. Publications of the *Guardian* were content-analysed, and looked at the patterns of frames used in the reports, frequency, prominence and ethic standard observed in the reports. From the study, there are significant contributions to literature, theories, research, practice and policies.

Findings from this study also contributed to Framing Theory, Agenda Setting Theory and Social Responsibility Theory. The findings reinforced the assumptions of these theories. The findings equally show that the *Guardian* newspaper set agenda as it frequently reports health issues related to Coronavirus and placed them on the front burner of national discuss thus conferring importance on them.

The findings from this study has not only given insight into Coronavirus disease reportage, but has also conferred importance on it. This would help other media organisations to do more in

reporting the health hazard and life- threatening pandemic by performing more surveillance function.

The study will constitute a valuable document and useful data as it will help in formulating and planning appropriate health policies that will stem the spread of Coronavirus disease in the country.

### **5.5 Suggested Areas for Further Research**

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

- 1). Further research can be carried out on Coronavirus disease and media effects on public perception.
- 2). Further research can be conducted to find out how the media audience perceive media framing of the novel Coronavirus stories.
- 3). Further study can be carried out to know what impact Coronavirus framed stories have on the attitudinal and behavioural change of the media audience.
- 4). Also, further research should be conducted on the relationships between media framing of Coronavirus stories and the containment of the outbreak in Nigeria.
- 5). Other research techniques and methodologies can be used to evaluate media reportage of Coronavirus disease.
- 6). Further study should be carried out on the correlation between media coverage and reportage on Coronavirus.

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**Coding Sheet**

**APPENDICES**

**Total Number of Publications from Guardian Newspaper**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Number of Publications</b>	<b>Total Number of Publications Used</b>	<b>Total Number of Publications Unused</b>
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February 28 <sup>th</sup> 2020 to December 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2020			
January 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2021 to January 27 <sup>th</sup> 2021			
<b>Total</b>			

**Total Number of Publications from Guardian Newspaper Examined during the Period under Review**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Publications containing Coronavirus Reports</b>	<b>Publications without Coronavirus Reports</b>
February 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2020 to December 27 <sup>th</sup> 2021		
January 1 <sup>st</sup> 2021 to January 27 <sup>th</sup> 2021		

<b>Total</b>		
--------------	--	--

**Frequencies of Coronavirus stories in Guardian Newspaper according to themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Guardian Newspaper</b>
Causes/Transmission frame	
Treatment/Containment frame	
Fear/Death frame	
Sabotage/Conspiracy frame	

Effect frame	
Government/Political frame	
Rumour/Misinformation frame	

**Placement of Coronavirus Reports in Guardian Newspaper during the Period under Review**

<b>Placement</b>	<b>Guardian Newspaper</b>
Front Page	
Inside Page	
Back Page	

Centre Spread	
<b>Total</b>	

**Patterns of Frames used in Coronavirus Reports in Guardian Newspaper according to themes**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Guardian Newspaper</b>
Causes/Transmission frame	
Treatment/Containment frame	

Fear/Death frame	
Sabotage/Conspiracy frame	
Effect frame	
Government/Political frame	
Rumour/Misinformation frame	

**Ethical Standards in Guardian Newspaper Reportage**

<b>Ethical Standards</b>	<b>Guardian Newspaper</b>
Accuracy/Fairness	
Editorial Independence	

Privilege/Non-disclosure of Sources	
Decency	
Abuse of Victims	
Misinformation/Propaganda/Fake News	
<b>Total</b>	

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## **Bio-Data**

### **A. Personal Data**

---

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Date of Birth: February 8th, 1991

Place of Birth: Abia State

Nationality: Nigerian

Marital status: Married

## **B. Education Background**

---

### **Educational Institutions Attended with Date**

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Bachelor of Science in Mass Communication

2012– 2016

Federal polytechnic, Nekede, Imo State

National Diploma in Library and Information Science

2008 – 2011

Comprehensive Development Secondary School, Owerri

Senior School Certificate Examination

2002- 2008

Geotina Motessori Nursery and Primary School

Primary School Leaving Certificate

1993

**C. Extra-Curricular Activities:**

---

Cooking

Exercising

Watching Movies

**D. References**

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Available on Request

---

Signature

---

Date

**University Compliance Certificate**

This is to certify that this thesis by Ezinne Precious IDIH with Matric No LCU/PG/001243 in the Department of Mass Communication and Media Technology, Lead City University Ibadan is in full compliance with the approved University format and style.

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Signature

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Date

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