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Available online at [www.equijost.com](http://www.equijost.com)  
Equity Journal of Science and Technology, 2021 8(1): 105 - 108  
ISSN 2354-1814; E-ISSN 2682-5961

*An Official Publication of Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero, Nigeria*

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## Role of social media in the Delay of Corona Virus (COVID-19) Spread in Kebbi State

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Received: Apr 23, 2021; Accepted: Jun 21, 2021; Published Online: Jul 30, 2021

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### Abstract

A mysterious pneumonia outbreak has been announced by the World Health Organization on 31 December 2019, which was later known as COVID-19. COVID-19 is a novel virus that was then declared as pandemic due to its threat to the entire world from its nature of transmission. Since the outbreak, the world has experienced an unexpected threat with countless loss of lives across the globe. Despite the danger of COVID-19, many parts of the world received insufficient or no information regarding the virus; its transmission prevention and effective handling once someone is caught with the virus. Although various media sources such as newspapers, televisions, online forums, and social media have been filled with abundant information related to COVID-19, hence, the need to investigate the contributions of these media sources in the delay of spread of the virus through proper dissemination of COVID-19 related information. This research aims at exploring the role of social media in controlling the COVID-19 pandemic in Kebbi state, Nigeria. A survey method was employed in gathering and analyzing data. The results revealed that, majority of the Kebbi state citizens received educational information on the virus and its various preventive measures through social media. The people of Kebbi state are fully aware and proactive towards the major preventive measures against COVID-19 spread.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Social media, Pandemic, Virus, ICT

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### 1. Introduction

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease originated from a new type of virus. The International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV) declared it as "severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)" on 11 February 2020. The disease causes respiratory illness (similar to flu) with symptoms such as a cough, fever, and in more severe cases, difficulty in breathing [1]. The virus has spread from Asia to virtually every corner of the world, affecting millions of people. In Nigeria, the first infection case was recorded in February 2020, which has later on spread to the entire country. This phenomenon has tremendously affected the country sociology, politics and economy negatively [2]. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, various forms of media have been engaged to raise awareness among the citizens to delay or reduce the spread of the virus. 'Media' refers to an instrument of communication, like the internet while TV, radio, and newspapers are the examples of more traditional forms of media [3]. Meanwhile, social media is broadly defined as the online communication and interaction channel; a mechanism for content sharing and collaboration. Currently, Facebook remains the most popular means of communication, with other platforms of social media showing a rapid increase of usage [4]. Social media has become one of the preferred methods of social interaction and has been extensively used particularly among youth and college students [5]. Despite the popularity of social media in Nigeria, its contribution in the dissemination of information related to

COVID-19 to reduce or delay the spread of the virus is yet to be discovered. This paper investigated the impact and effectiveness of social media in the delay of spread of the novel pandemic COVID-19 and its control, despite fake news and misleading information regarding the virus going viral on popular media platforms.

### 2. Literature Review

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged in an era where the use of social media is at its exponential stage. Social media has become one of the most important aspects of today human lives. Every day, various social media sites are receiving new users who add up to the existing huge number of active users. Because of its popularity, social media has been used by the government and individual parties as one of the major tools to spread information related to COVID-19. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019, many researches have been carried out globally aiming to investigate the impact of social media in controlling the spread of the pandemic. This section reviews some previous works by researchers on the role of social media in the control of the pandemic COVID-19 spread.

The impact of social media in inducing panic during the COVID-19 outbreak was investigated by [8]. In this work, the respondents reported that social media has a significant influence in spreading fear and panic among the Iraqi Kurdistan citizens due to the COVID-19 outbreak, with potential negative influences on mental health and psychological well-being. It was also revealed

that Facebook was the major social media network responsible for the spread of panic on the COVID-19 outbreak in Iraq. Moreover, majority of the youth aged 18-35 years were facing psychological anxiety due to the COVID-19 spread.

[10] investigated the impact of social media in controlling the spread of COVID-19. The study disclosed that most platforms were used to deliver relevant news, guidelines, and precautions to people regarding COVID-19. A huge amount of data from Twitter was leveraged to perform an extensive analysis, where over one million COVID-19 related tweets were collected over a period of two months. The analysis revealed the importance of social networks in a global pandemic crisis through the engagement with credible users of various occupational backgrounds, content developers, and influencers in specific fields. This shows that social media plays a vital role in the control of the pandemic spread.

In another work by [9], the impact of social network services on the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic spread in the sub-Saharan Africa was investigated, where the use of social media in the spread of information related to COVID-19 cannot be overemphasized. Social media has been as significantly beneficial as it was during the previous disease outbreaks in the region. In this study, a systematic sharing system of genuine messages through official Facebook and Twitter accounts, and the conception of tailored web tools dedicated to the verification of circulating information were suggested.

[6] demonstrated the significant role of social media in the dissemination of information related to COVID-19. Social media has tremendously aided in the distribution and sharing of protocols on the treatment of COVID-19, the proper personal protective equipment required, and even proposals for fair allocation in scarce medical resource for treating COVID-19 patients. However, the abovementioned works represented a global perspective. Due to the complex and diverse nature of the world today, it is difficult to conclude on such topic based on the data collected and analyzed from different countries.

In a work done by [7], the role of social media to either curtail or aid the spread of news on the pandemic across Nigeria was evaluated. It was concluded that social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, among others have contributed immensely in the dissemination of information related to COVID-19. In addition, this study has also purported that these platforms have been misused as tools to spread fake messages and instigate panic amongst members of the general public. However, the limited sample data and the location covered for analysis are insignificant to reflect the situation across the country.

This research exclusively investigates the impact of social media in the control of COVID-19 pandemic spread in the Kebbi state of the Northwestern part of Nigeria.

### 3. Methodology

This section provides the step-by-step procedure carried out in the research. The current research adopted a quantitative survey methodology of commonly used survey technique using questionnaire [10]. Respondents had completed an online questionnaire distributed using Google forms, where 86.5% of them were males, 11.5% were females, and the remaining 2% preferred not to specify their gender. The questionnaire is divided into two categories; the first category is related to the social media platforms that the respondents received information on COVID-19 from, and the second category evaluates the respondent’s awareness against COVID-19.

### 4. Results and Discussions

This section presents the results obtained from the two categories of the questionnaire filled by different respondents in Kebbi State.

#### 4.1 Knowing the reliable platform in getting helpful updates

There are different types of media platforms through which people receive day-to-day updates of local and global happenings. In this section of questionnaire, 3 different questions were directed to the respondents to ascertain the best media platform to obtain reliable updates on COVID-19. The related questions and their survey results are presented in Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 accordingly.

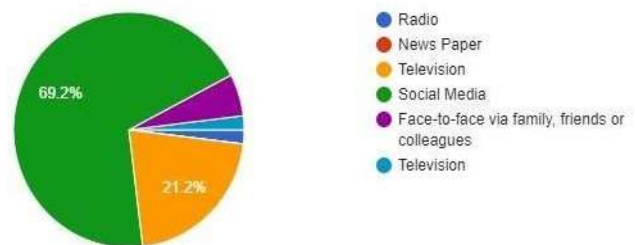


Figure 4.1: Survey Question “Where do you get to know about COVID-19?” and its results

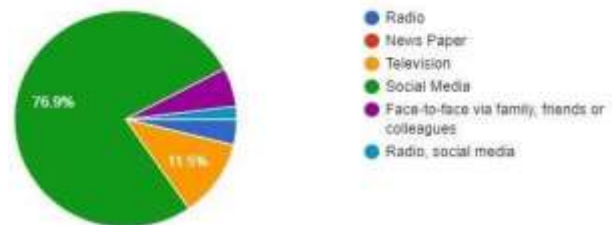


Figure 4.2: Survey Question “Where do you often get updates about COVID-19?” and its results

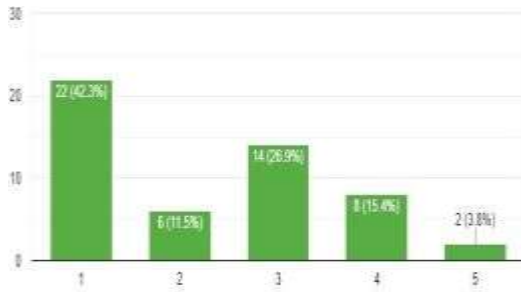


Figure 4.3: Survey Question “Was the selected platform helpful in protecting yourself against the virus?” and its results

It is noteworthy from Figure 4.1 that 69.2% of the respondents got to know about the novel pandemic COVID-19 through social media while 21.2% from television. Figure 2 shows that 76.9% and 11.5% of the respondents received daily updates about the pandemic on social media and television, respectively. Analysis of the survey revealed that 42.3% of the respondents strongly believe that the updates they acquired from the selected platform were helpful in protecting them from the virus, while 26.9% neither agree nor disagree, and 3.8%, which is very insignificant, strongly disagree with the statement.

#### 4.2 Knowing how knowledgeable people are about the virus

In this questionnaire section, one question was addressed to the respondents in order to evaluate their knowledge on the various available protective measures against COVID-19.

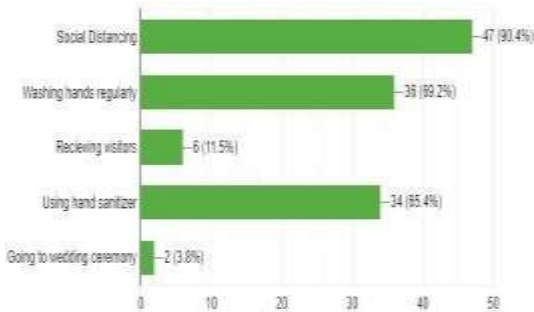


Figure 4.4: Survey Question “To protect yourself against the virus, please select the statements you believe to be true.” and its results

From Figure 4.4, the respondents are proven to be knowledgeable about COVID-19. Majority of them believed the following statements to be true in order to be protected from COVID-19:

- i. Social Distancing (90.4% of the respondents)
- ii. Washing Hands Regularly (69.2% of the respondents)
- iii. Receiving Visitors (11.5% of the respondents)
- iv. Using Hand Sanitizer (65.4% of the respondents)
- v. Going to Wedding Ceremony (3.8% of the respondents)

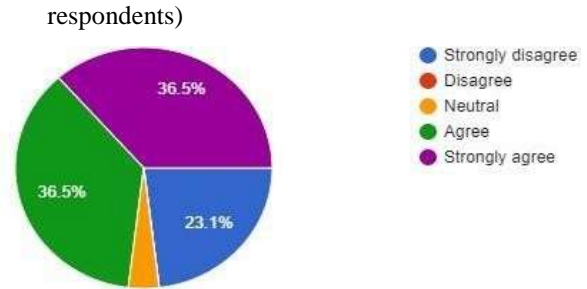


Figure 4.5: Survey Question “Do you agree that social media plays a major role in managing COVID-19?” and its results

Figure 4.5 illustrates the respondents view on the role of social media in managing COVID-19. 36.5% and 23.1% of the respondents strongly agree and strongly disagree with the statement, respectively. In addition, some respondents left comments on how they think social media is playing its role in managing the virus.

Respondent A mentioned ‘Social media is playing a vital role through fighting this pandemic because a lot of people were aware of it through the media and how to protect themselves from it’. Respondent B on the other hand commented ‘The social media is playing a greater role in creating awareness on how deadly the novel COVID-19 is, with the signs and symptoms of a confirmed coronavirus case

to be fever, cough, or difficulty in breathing, and also the ways to protect yourself from the pandemic are by washing hands regularly, using hand sanitizer, and social distancing’.

#### 5. Conclusions

This research investigated the impact of social media in the control or delay of spread of COVID-19. It was found that social media plays a great role in the delay of spread of COVID-19 in Kebbi State. Majority of the people in Kebbi state received educational information on the virus and its various preventive measures through social media. In conclusion, the people of Kebbi state are fully aware of the necessary major preventive measures against COVID-19.

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