Information Sharing and Evaluation as Determinants of Spread of Fake News on Social Media among Nigerian Youths: Experience from COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This study examined information sharing and evaluation as determinants of the spread of fake news among Nigerian youths on social media using experience from COVID-19 pandemic. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study and a Web-based questionnaire (Google Forms) was used to collect data for the study. The total responses of 278 were collected from the participants, which represents the unit of analysis. The finding of the study revealed that most Nigerian youths used Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram to share information on COVID-19. However, only a few Nigerians used LinkedIn and other types of social media to share information on COVID-19. It was also found that building a relationship with social media communities, enjoyment and risk taking, and political inclination influence the sharing behavior of Nigerian youths during the COVID-19 pandemic. Results show that social media handle/page found sharing of fake news on COVID-19 especially on the treatment, vaccines numbers of cases and symptoms. The study concludes that there is a positive relationship between information evaluation and the spreading of fake news on COVID-19 among Nigerians. Information sharing and evaluation should be done with the utmost level of objectivity and sincerity.

1. Introduction

In this age, social media has made information sharing seamless and effortless among people. Moreover, it is fast becoming a household means of both interpersonal and public communication in Nigeria and the world at large. Over time, social media has become part of human life as it allows remote creation of contents that keep people entertained and informed. Information sharing has become easier and faster since the advent of social media, and many individuals are now fond

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of relying heavily on information on social media. One of the common features of all social media is that it allows information sharing. The year 2020 heralded a very difficult time due to the outbreak of Corona Virus Disease 19 (COVID-19), which its first case was confirmed in Nigeria on February 28, 2020. Since then, there has been observed increased in the exploitation of various social media platforms to share information about the disease. COVID-19 was formerly was referred to as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV'.

The spread of fake news among people has created unnecessary panic, fear, distraction and tension in Nigeria, especially during the period of COVID-19 pandemic. In this troubling time, information and news are being spread to enlighten and keep people abreast of the latest about the disease. However, it was observed that many people share fake information and news which are inaccurate and unverifiable. Meanwhile, identification, searching, and evaluation are essential in the application or use of information by people. It has been observed however that people jettison the elements required to ascertain the veracity of information in their quest to be informed about the dastardly disease. Ultimately, this information behaviour is a hallmark that might have influenced the spread of fake news and misinformation. David (2017) notes that effective information behaviour enables people to make use of information sources and these skills are cognitive, affective and physical.

For the purpose of this study, the youth bracket is to be between 18-40 years. Meanwhile, Nigerian youths are perceived to be active social media users as a result of youthful exuberance and exposure to ICTs gadgets. Ocansey, Ametepe, and Oduro (2016) argued that youths use social media on an enormous scale mainly for communication purposes. Meanwhile, the use of social media to share information during the COVID-19 pandemic disease in Nigeria has become a concern as it has been observed that there is increased misinformation and fake news perpetrated through the media. Nielsen (2017) defines social media as computer-mediated technology facilitating the growth and sharing of ideas, awareness, career interest, information and other ways of expression through social network and virtual communities. Greg, Chika, and Edogor (2013) observed that social media by their nature have the power of educating, informing, entertaining and inflaming the audience and they create a contagious and outreaching influence, which the conventional media find difficult to provide. With all these benefits, however, there is still obvious misuse of social media. Ford and Ravansar (2017) observed that social media information sharing denoted web-based tools that permit people to interact with each other in some way of sharing information, opinion, knowledge and facts. This means that information sharing on social media deals with sharing of opinion, knowledge and facts about a particular event.

Information behaviour evaluation is becoming important in the use of social media (Hashim, & Kutbi, 2015; Chukwuere & Chukwuere, 2017). Therefore, the need to assess the behavioural tendencies of Nigerians in the use of social media for information sharing cannot be overemphasized. Social media is primarily built for the benefits of information sharing and behaviour evaluation is essential during such an event (Zhang & Kizilcec, 2014). Lee and Ma (2012) averred that prior research suggested that people share information using social media to receive attention and enhance their reputation and popularity among peers especially during the time of the serious situation. However, the social needs of people suppress the privacy that accompanies the content, as social media is witnessed by a large audience (Bernstein et al., 2011). Pew Research Center (2013) found

that 13% of American Internet users reported posting content online had caused trouble in their relationship.

Haynes (2001) observed that behaviour evaluation of individual on the situation based on behaviour al change demands manipulation and assessment. The rapidly evolving research area involves the application of social media to share information. COVID-19 pandemic disease has caused an undesirable change in the way people behave to others. Therefore, there is a need to ascertain the manipulation that this information sharing behaviour has engendered as regards new habits or thoughts among the Nigerian populace. Yates (2020) averred that social media connects the world together. It also exposes people to information from around the world. However, the abuse of such platforms in information sharing will bring about more damage. Moreover, the bad that accompanies the abuse of social media in information sharing, if care is not taking, may put a stain on the benefits.

Most times, it is difficult to determine the sources of information shared on social media as it has been observed that most information shared on social media does not come with a link to the source. In this pandemic crisis, it has gotten to the threshold of notoriety. It is normal to give opinions on social media or join the conversation on COVID-19 pandemic disease. However, it is disastrous to share information, which posits inaccuracy, misinformation and unverifiable. Social media feeds have a glut of COVID-19 posts from all sorts of sources, which have been confirmed to be inaccurate, misinformation and fake. This kind of information does not only confuse but also leads to fear among the populace. Before sharing a piece of information, it is advised that one should evaluate and consider the veracity of the information before sharing (Yates, 2020). Against this backdrop, this study examined information sharing and evaluation as determinants of the spread of fake news among Nigerian youths on social media using COVID-19 pandemic disease as a case study.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Social media is primarily for sharing information in order to exchange ideas, opinions, and knowledge. It has been observed that some people share fake information through social media to stir panic especially information relating to COVID-19 pandemic. In the fight against the dastardly virus, the fake information being shared has been observed to undermine the effort of various government and health agencies/bodies that are involved in the fight against the virus. An illustration of fake news that was peddled during the pandemic crises has widely shared the news on the efficacies of Chloroquine to cure COVID-19 without recourse to experts and specialists in the field. Many Nigerian youths, and all ages alike, as observed shared this information with so much enthusiasm. This was later discovered to have led to the abuse of Chloroquine where many were diagnosed to have abused the drug in a Lagos hospital. Soto (2020) indicated that two people were hospitalized in Lagos for Chloroquine overdoses; this was reported after U. S. Presidents Donald Trump praised the anti-malaria drug as a treatment for the COVID 19 and was spreading on social media. The purveyors of fake news or information do so possibly for their gain and people. Without being aware, the receivers of the information tend to take the fake news as genuine.

This is perceived to happen as a result of people taking information hook, line, and sinker without any form evaluation.

Moreover, it was observed during the pandemic crises that fraudsters are deploying social media to dupe unaware citizenry of Nigeria. This happens when information is shared on various social media that the Federal Government of Nigeria wanted to credit individual account with some token as a palliative measure to people to help them alleviate the hardship and difficulties that may arise from the stay-at-home order that was declared. With this information, some people exchange their account details on social media and eventually get defrauded. This happens due to the inability to verify the authenticity, accuracy and reliability of the sources of the information before sharing gleefully on social media. Howell (2013) noted that the spread of fake news has been identified as a global concern. Unknowingly to many, the information they share only help progress the dastardly efforts of fraudsters. Against this backdrop, the study examines information sharing and evaluation as determinants of spread of fake news among Nigerian youths on social media with experience from COVID-19 pandemic disease.

1.2 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine information sharing and evaluation as determinants of the spread of fake news among Nigerian youths on social media using COVID-19 pandemic experience. The specific objectives are to;

(a) Identify types of social media used by Nigerian youths to share information on COVID-19 pandemic disease.
(b) Assess information sharing behaviour of Nigerian youths about COVID-19 pandemic disease.
(c) Determine how Nigerian youths evaluate COVID-19 related information on social media.
(d) Ascertain the incidence of fake news among Nigerian youths about COVID-19 pandemic disease on social media.

1.3 Hypotheses

The following hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance;

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between information evaluation and sharing of fake news among youths in Nigeria

2. Literature Review

In this study, fake news is also referred to as "false news" or "misinformation". Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) described fake news as "news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers". Fake news is generated when information is adulterated or fabricated to create

tension and fear. The consumers of fake news may take no measure to ascertain the accuracy of the news as far as suits partisan opinion or alignment. Hence, it takes a balanced and objective mind, to a great extent, to be able to ascertain whether the news is fake or not. However, it is quite difficult for most humans to be balanced in analysis and opinion. This is maybe a reason why fake news festers easily among Nigerian youths and people in general. Shao et al. (2017) examined the spread of fake news on social by social bots. In the study, over 14 million messages spreading 400 thousand claims on Twitter during the electioneering of the 2016 U.S. presidential election were examined. It was found that special bots played a key role in the spread of fake news. These automated bots are automated accounts, which are usually active in the early stage of spreading viral claims.

In recent years, fake news has become ever-increasing and festers on various social media platforms. Flintham et al. (2018) opined that people make hasty and face-value judgment of information they digest on social media. The authors investigated attitudes to news delivered by social media, and the evaluation of the same news. The results have shown one-third of the respondents had come across fake news, which they initially it is true. It was revealed that most of the respondents judge the credibility of news by subjective personal determination of the information sources and journalistic style. The implication of the study findings was that the fight against fake news on social media is a difficult task. It can be deduced from the findings of the study that there exists a serious concern as to the spread of fake news, which has become a menace on social media space.

News related to COVID-19 is generally on health issues and therein there is medical news as many sought for the treatments/vaccines that cure the virus. Waszak, Kasprzycka-Waszak, and Kubanek (2018) carried out a pilot quantitative study on the spread of medical fake news in social media. It was found in the study that fake, misleading, and over-interpreted health news in social news is a potential threat to public health. Moreover, it was shown in the findings that news on the common disease in 40% of cases contained misinformation and was shared by 451,272 times in the period 2012-2017. The study findings show that most fallacious content concerning vaccines, while news about the cardiovascular disease was, in general, well-sourced and informative. It was concluded in the study that social media should be continuously be examined for the spread of fake medical news and action should be taken against any defaulting pages or handles polluting medical information.

Goswani (2018) studied fake news and cyber propaganda from the perspectives of manipulation and abuses on social media. The study findings revealed that fake news thrives most on Twitter among all social media sites. It was shown that the feature of share, like and follow allow for the exponential spread of fake news with little effort. Evidence from the study suggests that means to identify fake news are usually espoused by cyber and media experts; however users still get themselves caught in the web of fake news and misinformation. It was concluded that the general intention of fake news is not for the better of the general populace but the good of the few that are propagating it. Hence, the spread of fake news should be mitigated to cut the self-centered benefits to the few pushing the spread of it.

Moravec, Minas, and Dennis (2019) examined fake news on social media from the perspective of people's sentient as regards the news. They conducted an experimental study with 83 social media users. It was found that the presence of a fake news flag triggered increased cognitive activity and

users spent more time considering the headline. However, it was shown that the flag had no effect on a judgment about truth; flagging headlines as false did not influence users' beliefs. A posthoc analysis shows that confirmation bias is pervasive, with users more likely to believe news headlines that align with their political opinions. This indicates that the spread of fake news sometimes hinges on the subjective sentiments of an individual. The openness and objective assessment of news by people can help mitigate fake news stories.

Hussain, Loan, and Yaseen (2017) found that most students use social media to share information in order to promote social, religious, political, and environmental awareness. Leeder (2019) investigated how college students in the United States of America evaluate and share fake news stories. The findings of the study revealed that college students were asked to identify fake and real news stories and answered a survey about their information behaviours. It was also shown that students identified that 64.29% of fake news and 60.58% of real news stories. Moreover, the study findings show that high-performing students demonstrated stronger critical evaluation behaviours and greater use of verification strategies. The findings further revealed that students were not able to accurately assess their level of skill in evaluating fake news stories. The study concludes that willingness to share news stories was unrelated to trustworthiness evaluations and accuracy of identifications.

Social media information sharing has two behavioural categorizations, which include frequency of information sharing behaviour and level of online private information revelation (Salehan & Kim, 2012). Salehan, Kashipaz, and Xu (2013) assessed information-sharing social media and the issue of trust and its consequences. It was found in the study that trust is a significant factor in information sharing on social media. Results also show that personal factors (such as privacy concerns, trust propensity and social presence) and website characteristics are significant predictors of trust in information sharing on social media. Osatuyi (2013) carried out an exploratory study on the use of social media for sharing information. The findings of the study revealed that information producers use different cues to indicate the credibility of the information they share on different social media sites. It was recommended based on the study findings that organizations should exploit social media to share information with their targeted engagement. This corroborated that fake news sharing on social media is likely targeted towards the identified target.

Jain (2017) investigated information sharing on social media by students and found that they have been spending more time on various social media sites for the purpose of entertainment and fun. This suggests that people share and use the information for the purpose of fun and entertainment and as such, they take most of the information therein are taken on face-value. Chen et al. (2019) studied the impact of familiarity and anonymity on information sharing behaviour and the mediating role of intrinsic motivations on WeChat. The findings of the study revealed that the influence of perceived anonymity on information-sharing behaviour. The findings of the study show that there are important ways to promote attention and share information on social media, which involves building a familiar relationship with communities and equipping oneself with offline relations. The implication of the study findings shows that information sharing on social media sites can lead to a relationship outside of the social media sites.

Rafique (2017) assessed the personal information sharing behaviour of students on social media sites by the University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan, and found that most of the students supply

fake information social media owing to cyber-stalking, information theft, and other dreaded situations that may arise. Koohikamali and Sidorova (2017) examined information re-sharing on social network sites in the age of fake news and found that attitude towards using social media and intention to re-share information on social media is influenced by perceived information quality, which includes enjoyment, relevance, and reliability. It was also shown that risk-taking and enjoyment influence the intention to re-share information on social media in a positive direction. Okoh and Lucky (2014) found that students mainly use social media to share photos.

To be an informed person in this age, people must be able to evaluate the information they are exposed to on the Internet (McGrew et al., 2018). Kiernan (2017) stated that with the increasing rate of fake news on social media sites, people should be more aware and educated in their ability to properly evaluate the information that they are being exposed to. It was stated further that the CRAAP (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose) method employed by researchers can be used to test the veracity of news seen on social media. Kim, Yoo-Lee, and Sin (2011) noted that unlike library sources, social media provides information that can be contributed by verified and unverified users whose credibility may be unknown or difficult to evaluate. Hatlevik (2016) found that there is a positive relationship between strategies use for information evaluation and skills employed in the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). McGrew et al. (2018) found that students struggled to evaluate information sources.

Kim and Sin (2016) carried out a comparative study on the use and evaluation of information from social media in the academic context between students and librarians. It was found that the two groups demonstrated similarity in terms of social media sites use for information seeking and also the main purposes of using them. Results however revealed that there was a significant gap in the strategies adopted by students and librarians in the evaluation of information from social media. Kim, Sin, and Yoo-Lee (2014) revealed that social media users evaluate the quality of information from the perspectives of physical characteristics of the information (length of post and quality of images/videos), style or tone of the writing, which can help determine the neutrality of the author, logical or illogical and so on. Kim and Sin (2015) found that people only evaluate news seen on social media occasionally. Based on the foregoing, this study provides insights on how information sharing and evaluation behaviour determine the spread of fake news on social media, more crucially among youths.

3. Methodology

Raosoft sample size calculator, the sample of 385 was selected for the study. Owing to the effort to the difficulty in accessing populace physically, a web-based questionnaire was designed using Google form and generated link was shared for Nigerians. The link was shared on various groups of Nigerians youth via WhatsApp and Telegram groups. The questionnaire link was shared and responses were collected for two weeks. The total response from the survey is 278 and that was the unit of analysis for the study. The responses collected were automatically analysed by Google Forms. However, Pearson's product-moment correlation (PPMC) was carried out on Microsoft Excel.
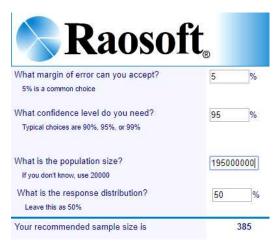
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Fig.1 Source: Raosoft (2020)

4. Results

All data collected were automatically analyzed on Google Forms with descriptive statistics of frequency count and simple percentage. The hypothesis was tested using Microsoft Excel.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Respondents

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	176	63.3
Female	102	36.7
Total	**278**	**100**
Occupation		
Students	148	53.2
Civil or public servant	33	11.9
Self-employed	52	18.7
Private company employee	40	14.3
Others	05	1.8
Total	**278**	**100**

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2020)

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents on demographic information with 176 (63.3%) of the respondents being male and 102 (36.7%) of respondents were female. This shows that about two-thirds of Nigerians who participated in the study were male. On the occupation of respondents, it can be observed that 148 (53.2%) of respondents were students, 33 (11.9%) were civil or public servants while 40 (14.3%) were private company employee and 5 (1.8%) were others. This reflects that overwhelming Nigerians that participated in the study were students. It is an indication that

most Nigerian youths are students.

Table 2. Types of Social media used by Nigerians Youths to share information

Types of Social Media	Yes (%)	No (%)
Facebook	234 (84.2%)	40 (15.8%)
Twitter	263 (94.6%)	16 (5.4%)
LinkedIn	57 (20.5%)	221 (79.5%)
WhatsApp	273 (98.2%)	5 (1.8%)
Instagram	163 (58.6%)	115 (41.4%)
Other	12 (4.3%)	266 (95.7%)

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2020)

Table 2 shows responses on the types of social media used by Nigerians Youths to share information with 234 (84.2%) of respondents using Facebook to share information on COVID-19 and 40 (15.4%) did not. This reflects that most social media users used Facebook to share information on COVID-19 in Nigeria. It can be seen in the table that 263 (94.6%) of respondents used Twitter to share information on COVID-19 and 16 (5.4%) did not. This denotes that most of the respondents used Twitter to share information on COVID-19. It also observed in Table 2 that 57 (20.5%) of respondents used LinkedIn to share information on COVID-19 in Nigeria while 221 (79.5%) did not. It was also revealed in the table that the majority of respondents are not aware of LinkedIn to share information on COVID-19 on social media.

Table 2 also indicated that 273 (98.2%) used WhatsApp to share information on COVID-19 pandemic disease in Nigeria while 5 (1.8%) did not. The Table shows that most of the respondents were using WhatsApp to share information on COVID-19 on social media. Moreover, it can also be seen in the Table that 163 (58.6%) of respondents used Instagram to share information on COVID-19 in Nigeria while 115 (41.4%) did not. This revealed that more than half of the respondents used Instagram to information on social media. Finally, Table 2 shows that 12 (4.3%) of respondents used other types of social media to share information on COVID-19 in Nigeria while 266 (95.7%) of respondents did not. The implication of all this is that overwhelming Nigerians are using Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram to share information on COVID-19 pandemic disease and only a few Nigerians used LinkedIn and other types of social media to share information on COVID-19 pandemic disease in Nigeria.

Table 3 shows response on the information sharing behaviour of Nigerian youths about COVID-19 on social media with 248 (89.2%) of the respondents agreeing that they build a relationship with social media communities while 12 (4.1%) of respondents were neutral and 18 (5.4%) of respondents have disagreed. This denotes that building relationship with social media communities influence information sharing behaviour. It is also seen in Table 3 that 205 (73.7%) of the respondents agreed that enjoyment and risk-taking influence information sharing behaviour, 10 (3.6%) were neutral and 63 (22.5%) disagreed. Besides, the majority of information users agreed that enjoyment and risk-taking influence social media users on information-sharing behaviour. However, it is observed

in Table 3 that 264 (95.0%) of the respondents agreed that political inclination influence information sharing behaviour, while 2 (0.7%) were neutral and 14 (4.3%) of respondents disagreed. The table indicates that most of the respondents are of opinion that political inclination influence information sharing behaviour.

Table 3. Information sharing behaviour of Nigerian about COVID 19

Items	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Disagreed
Building relationship with social media communities	129 (46.4%)	119 (42.8%)	12 (4.1%)	4 (1.4%)	14 (5.0%)
Enjoyment and risk taking influence information sharing behaviour	182 (65.5%)	23 (8.3%)	10 (3.6%)	51 (18.3%)	12 (4.1%)
Political inclination influence information sharing behavior	202 (76.7%)	62 (22.3%)	2 (0.7%)	10 (3.6%)	4 (1.4%)
Trust is a factor consider behaviour sharing information	76 (27.3%)	34 (12.2%)	2 (0.7%)	152 (54.7%)	14 (5.0%)
Demographic factors influence information sharing behaviour	39 (14.0%)	29 (10.4%)	10 (3.6%)	182 (65.5%)	18 (6.4%)

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2020)

Table 3 reflects that 110 (39.6%) of the respondents agreed that the trust factor influence information sharing behaviour, 2 (0.7%) were neutral and 166 (59.7%) disagreed. However, it is revealed in the study that the trust factor also influences the information sharing behaviour of Nigerian during COVID-19 pandemic. It is also observed in Table 3 that 68 (24.5%) of the respondents agreed that demographic factors influence information sharing behaviour, 10 (3.6%) were neutral and 200 (71.9%) of respondents disagreed. The implication of this is that overwhelming Nigerians information sharing behaviour during the COVID 19 is influence by building a relationship with social media communities, enjoyment and risk-taking influence, and political inclination influence information sharing behaviour. However, trust and demographic factors did not influence information sharing behaviour of Nigerians using social media during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 4 shows a response to the evaluation of COVID-19 related information on social media by Nigerians. Table 4 shows that 239 (86.0%) of the respondents agreed that they used the currency of information as an evaluation measure of COVID-19 related information on social media, 2 (0.7%) were neutral and 37 (13.35%) disagreed. This denotes that most Nigerian youths on social media evaluate COVID-19 related information based on currency. It can be seen in Table 4 that 230 (82.7%) of respondents agreed that relevance of information is an evaluation measure taken by the respondents on COVID-19 related information on social media, 11 (4.0%) were neutral and 37 (13.3%) disagreed. This shows that most of the respondents evaluate COVID-19 related information based on relevance. It can also be seen that 229 (74.4%) of the respondents agreed that they used the authority of information as an evaluation measure of COVID-19 related information on social media, 9 (3.2%) of respondents were neutral and 17 (6.1%) of respondents disagreed. This shows

that most of the respondents evaluate COVID-19 related information based on the authority of information.

Table 4. Evaluation of COVID-19 related information on social media by Nigerians

Items	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Agreed
Currency of information	187 (67.3%)	52 (18.7%)	2 (0.7%)	34 (12.2%)	3 (1.1%)
Relevance of information	107 (35.5%)	123 (44.2%)	11 (4.0%)	7 (2.5%)	30 (10.8%)
Authority of information	151 (54.3%)	78 (20.1%)	9 (3.2%)	23 (8.3%)	17 (6.1%)
Accuracy of information	135 (48.6%)	35 (12.6%)	3 (1.1%)	61 (21.9%)	44 (15.8%)
Purpose of information	133 (47.8%)	109 (39.2%)	20 (7.2%)	12 (4.3%)	4 (1.4%)

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2020)

Moreover, it can be seen in Table 4 that 170 (61.2%) of the respondents agreed that they used accuracy of information as an evaluation measure of COVID-19 related information on social media, 3 (1.1%) of respondents were neutral and 105 (37.7%) disagreed. It is also noted in the Table that the majority of the respondents evaluate COVID-19 related information using the accuracy of information. It also observed in Table 4 that 242 (87.0%) of respondents agreed that they adopt the purpose of information as an evaluation measure of COVID-19 related information on social media, 20 (7.2%) of respondents were neutral and 16 (5.7%) disagreed. The implication of all these is that most of the Nigerian youths on social media evaluate COVID-19 related information using currency, relevancy, authority, accuracy, and purpose of information.

Table 5. Fake news on COVID-19 on social media

Items	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed	Strongly Agreed
Some recognized social media handle/page are often found to share fake news	159 (57.2%)	76 (27.3%)	7 (2.5%)	21 (7.6%)	15 (5.4%)
I have come across fake news which I initially taught it was genuine	201 (72.3%)	53 (19.1%)	10 (3.6%)	11 (4.0%)	3 (1.1%)
There is large number of fake news on treatment and vaccines of COVID-19	181 (65.1%)	62 (22.3%)	15 (5.4%)	18 (6.5%)	2 (0.7%)
There is large number of fake news on COVID-19 number of cases in Nigeria	161 (58.0%)	65 (23.4%)	13 (4.7%)	9 (3.2%)	30 (10.8%)
There is large number of fake news on symptoms of COVID-19 on social media	97 (34.9%)	145 (52.2%)	20 (7.2%)	12 (4.3%)	4 (1.4%)

Source: Author's Fieldwork (2020)

Table 5 shows the responses of respondents on the frequency of fake news of COVID-19 on social media. The table shows that 235 (84.5%) of the respondents agreed that they recognized social media handle/page that is often found of sharing fake news, 7 (2.5%) of the respondents were neutral and 36 (12.6%) disagreed. This shows that overwhelming Nigerian youths recognized

social media handles/pages are often found to share fake news during COVID-19 pandemic disease. It is also seen in the Table that 254 (91.4%) of the respondents agreed that they have come across fake news which they initially thought was genuine while 10 (3.6%) were neutral and 14 (5.1%) disagreed. This implies that the majority of the respondents have come across fake news which they have initially thought it was genuine. This means that most of the respondents have been misinformed at a point with fake news before realizing it.

Table 5 shows that 243 (87.4%) of the respondents agreed that there is a large number of fake news on treatment and vaccines of COVID-19, 15 (5.4%) were neutral and 20 (7.3%) disagreed. This reflects that most of the respondents agreed that there was fake news on treatment and vaccines of COVID -19 pandemic disease. It also reflects in the Table that 226 (81.3%) of the respondents agreed that there is a large number of fake news on COVID-19 number of cases, 13 (4.7%) were neutral, and 39 (14.0%) of disagreed. This indicates that majority of the respondents agreed that fake news was spread on the number of COVID1-19 cases in Nigeria. Finally, 242 (78.1%) of the respondents agreed that there is a large number of fake news on symptoms of COVID-19 on social media, 20 (7.2%) were neutral and 16 (5.7%) disagreed. The implication of all this is that most of the respondents recognized social media handle/page found sharing of fake news on COVID-19 especially on the treatment, vaccines numbers of cases and symptoms. However, it is shown that most Nigerian youths come across fake news which they initially thought it was genuine.

4.1 Test of Hypothesis

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between information evaluation and spread of fake news among Nigerian youths

Table 6. Relationship between information evaluation and spread of fake news

Variables	N	Df	*r*-value	*p*-value	Remark
Information evaluation Spreading of fake news	278	276	.776**	0.02	Sig⋯

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2020)

Table 7 shows that r-value of 0.776 has a high positive relationship between information evaluation and the spread of fake news among Nigerian youths. With a p-value of 0.02, this is lesser than the common alpha value of 0.05 and the null hypothesis will hereby be rejected. Hence, this shows that there is a significant relationship between information evaluation and the spread of fake news among Nigerian youths on COVID-19 pandemic disease.

5. Discussion

Results show that most Nigerian youths used Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram to

share information on COVID-19 pandemic disease. However, only a few Nigerian youths used LinkedIn and other types of social media to share information on COVID-19. This may be owing to the fact that LinkedIn and other types of social media are mainly by job hunting for sharing of information relating to available work. It is noteworthy however that Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram were mostly used to share information on COVID-19 pandemic among Nigerian youths. The findings of this study supported the findings of Goswani (2018) that Twitter is the most used type of social media meant for spreading news especially those that related to fake news.

The findings show that building a relationship with social media communities, enjoyment/risk-taking and political inclination influence sharing behaviour of Nigerians during the COVID-19. This shows that Nigerian youths share information on social media to amass online relationship and that political inclination can influence their information-sharing behaviour. More so, it is shown that Nigerian youths share information for enjoyment. This finding of this study corroborated findings of Koohikamali and Sidorova (2017) that enjoyment and risk-taking influence information sharing behaviour on social media. Meanwhile, it was also revealed in the study that trust and demographic factors do not influence information sharing behaviour of Nigerian youths during the COVID-19 pandemic disease. This means that trust does not influence the sharing behaviour of most Nigerian youths. Moreover, the demographic factor was found to not have an influence on information sharing behaviour of Nigerian youths. The finding of this study is contradicted to the finding of the study by Salehan, Kashipaz, and Xu (2013) that people tend to share information on social media with the influence of social presence and trust.

The findings of the study show that currency, relevancy, authority and purpose of information were considered by overwhelming Nigerian youths in the evaluation of information about COVID-19 on social media. This finding of the study is line with the finding of a study by Kiernan (2017) that currency, relevance, authority, accuracy and purpose were the method employed by the researcher to test the veracity of information seen on social media. Moreover, the findings of this study also supported the finding by Kim, Sin, and Yoo-Lee (2014) that social media users evaluate the quality of information from the perspective of physical characteristics of information(length of post and quality of images/videos) and style or tone of the writing. The findings of this study indicate that most Nigerian youths adhere to information evaluation measures that would preclude them from sharing fake information. This means that it will be difficult for fake news to spread among Nigerian youths during the COVID-19 pandemic disease.

The findings on the frequency of fake news on COVID-19 on social media revealed that most Nigerian youths recognized social media handle/page fond of sharing fake news on COVID-19 especially on the treatment, vaccines, numbers of cases and symptoms. This shows that most Nigerian youths could easily identify those that are in the perpetual habit of spreading fake news on treatment, vaccines, number of cases and symptoms. The issue of vaccine is particularly dangerous as that could lead to unapproved dosage for the disease. Furthermore, the findings of the study show that most Nigerians come across fake news which they initially thought it was genuine. This means that most of the times, Nigerian youths fall into the trap of fake news during the COVID-19 pandemic period before they realize. This could be a dangerous trend as many would have taken the decision based on the fake news before realization. Moreover, the study also revealed that there is a positive relationship

between information evaluation and spreading of fake news during COVID-19 among Nigerian youths. This shows that if the information is well examined and appraised, the spread of fake news among Nigerian youths would be strictly reduced. This is because information with thorough scrutiny would entrench valid and reliable information.

6. Conclusion

It is established in the study that Nigerian youths share information on social media using Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic disease. The study also concludes that an overwhelming number of Nigerian youths share information on social media in order to build relationships with the online communities, have fun and develop a political friendships. Furthermore, it was demonstrated in the study that Nigerian youths evaluate the authenticity of COVID-19 related information before sharing on social media. It was established that some Nigerians do share fake news on social media about COVID-19 disease. However, it was reached that most people do find out such information to be untrue after sometime. It was established that there is a high positive relationship between information evaluation and spread of fake news on social media. In conclusion, many Nigerian youths are influenced by subjective factors in sharing information on social media. However, they give consideration to some evaluative factors before they divulge information. It was concluded that information sharing and evaluation should be done with the utmost level of objectivity and sincerity.

7. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

(a) Nigerian youths should be wary of fake news as to vaccines and treatment of disease during a period of the pandemic.

(b) National Orientation Agency (NOA) should support Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) in providing adequate information on the disease in order not to make Nigerians fall victim to drug abuse because of fake news.

(c) Nigerians should not let subjective factors influence their information sharing behaviour.

(d) Information sharing behaviour and evaluation should always be done with high level of objectivity and sincerity.

(e) Nigerians should tarry in believing every story or news on social media without verifiable or credible source.

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