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CONTENTS

Gender Inequality as Constraint on Women Occupying Administrative Leadership Positions in Oyo State Civil Service	1
Ademuson Adefolake Olusola, Ph.D	
Newspapers and Social Construction of Man's gender: A study of two selected Dailies	27
Hashim Muhammad Suleiman, Ph.D	
An Evaluation of Naira redesign and its effects on Banditry in Lapai	43
Local Government Area, Niger State	
Aliyu Tanko Ahmed Ph.D & Nnajihi Lynda Marann	
A Comparative Analysis of Food Security status of Crop Farmers in Pre and Post insurgency periods in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States, Nigeria	64
'Sani, A. A', Oladimeji, Y. U', Sanni, S. A', Ahmed, B', Sulaiman, M2. Abdulrahman, S', & Hussaini, A.S.1	
Psychoactive Substance Consumption and Criminality among Commercial drivers in selected Motor parks in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State	81
Adeoti A. B' Oladipo Oluwaseyi Mary2 Oladoyinbo Lanre Olusola3	
Social estrangement among the elderly before and during covid-19 pandemic in host communities of the Niger Delta University, Nigeria	94
Endurance Uzobo, Ph.D and Victory B. Azebi	
Community Perceptions and Trust in Government Measures during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kwara State, Nigeria	118
Abdullahi Kayode Ibrahim, Habeeb Abdulrauf Salihu, Atiku Abdulateef Abiodun, Abdulbaqi Salihu Zakariya, Tejideen Toyin Olayinka & Abubakar Abdulsalami	
A Spatial Analysis of Knowledge and Preventive Practices of Coronavirus in Kaltungo Local Government Area of Gombe State, Nigeria.	139
Johnson Egbemudia Dudu Ph.D* and Abdullahi Umar Yusuf	
Assessment of vote buying and voting behaviour in the 2022 Governorship Elections of Ekiti State, Nigeria	158
Abdullahi Yunusa Ph.D and Shafiu Yahaya Mika'il Ph.D	

The role of religion in the:2019 gubernatorial Elections in Kaduna State: A study of Zaria Local Government Area

Yakubu Haruna Ja'e, Abdulnasir Umar & Abdulhadi Shuaibu

177

The Effects of Political Risk on Institutional quality in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA)

SOKUNBI Ghenro Mathew' & ADAMU Auwal Mohammed 2

194

Why Africa failed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): A Review and Assessment of Poverty Eradication and Rural Development in Nigeria

Kam-Selem Shehu ', Kyari Goni, Ali Bello³, Sadiq Muhammed Dikwa⁴.& Adam Musa⁵

210

Reviewing the Role of the United States in the China-Taiwan Crisis 1949-2022

Edgar Agubamah Ph.D

224

Awareness and Challenges of Online Education among School Dropouts in Sabon-Garí Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria

Abdulrahman Ibrahim', Akeem Olalekan Ayub², Hussaini Ibrahim Sule' & Muhammad Haruna Zailani'

244

Community Perceptions and Trust in Government Measures during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The spread of the novel Corona virus disease (COVID-19) has come and gone but not without casualties across the world, particularly, Nigeria. Nigerian Government, in collaboration with Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), has introduced different preventive measures to control and mitigate the scourge. The public health directives and regulations provided by the authorized agencies such as the NCDC, which includes measures such as regular hand washing, wearing of nose mask and maintenance of physical distancing has been met with some public criticism and as a result the directives were ignored and violated in Kwara state even in the face of law enforcement agents. Thus this study examines the community perceptions and trust in government measures during COVID-19 pandemic in Kwara State Nigeria. The research designs were both exploratory and descriptive using qualitative research method. In-depth interview (IDI) was used to generate qualitative data from forty (40) participants. The population of the study comprises participants such as Market men and women from three selected market areas, ATM users and highway drivers and passengers. Content analysis reveals factors which undermine government preventive efforts and these include, poor compliance attitude, myth and misconceptions, inadequate health facilities, distrust for government, as well as the general belief that the virus is not real but it was meant for the elites in Nigeria and beyond. The study recommends, among others, that there is need to ameliorate the adverse effects of COVID-19 misconceptions and myths through evidence-based campaigns using all sources of information.

Keywords: COVID-19; safety rules, violation, NCDC, frustration, aggression, Nigeria

Introduction

The novel Coronavirus disease -19 (COVID-19) emerged from Wuhan China in late 2019 and has spread rapidly to other parts of the world (WHO, 2020). The disease is caused by a new and severe type of Coronavirus known as severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS- CoV-2). The infection is still without remedial vaccines and has become a worldwide pandemic causing significant morbidity and mortality (WHO, 2020). COVID-19 is an acute respiratory infectious disease which is mainly transmitted through the respiratory tract (CCDC, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention 2020b). The disease is associated with common symptoms of dry cough, flu, fever and difficulties in breathing (WHO, 2020). The virus has infected about 20 million people worldwide, 13.5 million recoveries and about 732 thousand people are dead from the virus worldwide as of August 10, 2020 (Worldometers, 2020). The virus has affected every facet of human life as nations struggle with the health, economic and societal consequences of the pandemic (Graham, 2020, Celina, Docea, Petrakis, Egorov, Ishmukhametov, et al, 2020)

On February 27, 2020, the first case was recorded in Nigeria through an Italian expatriate who returned from Milan to Lagos, Nigeria on the 25th of February 2020 and as of August 10, 2020, there were 46,577 Laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Nigeria with 33,186 discharges and 945 deaths (NCDC, 2020). Since then, the Kwara state government has imposed measures such as the closure of all schools, stay at home order and total lockdown of local government areas with active transmission of COVID-19. While bans on inter-local government and inter-state movements were imposed by the Kwara state government and the Federal government respectively. However, following the announcement of the index case in Lagos on 27 February 2020 (which was an unnamed Italian citizen), and increase in the spread of the disease, the Federal Government of Nigeria announced series of measures intended to prevent or curtail the speed and rate of infection (Ikeyi, et al, 2020). The government of Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Health has been strengthening measures such as frequent media communication, improving public security and awareness of COVID-19 prevention to ensure an outbreak in Nigeria is controlled and contained. Lagos, Abuja and Ogun States were ordered to lockdown as from 30 March 2020 for initial fourteen days (Radio Nigeria, 2020).

There were orders on restrictions of all movements, apart from those exempted (such as health officials, the media, and security personnel, food vendors, and power generation, transmission and distribution companies among others) (PTF

Covid-19, 2020). With an increase in the spread of COVID-19, several other states ordered the lockdown of all activities, including movements, and social distancing, based on the argument that the effect of the rampaging disease will likely reduce when there is less human contact (Ferguson et al., 2020). Therefore, alternative strategies are recommended as an effective measure to reduce the spread of COVID-19 before vaccines are available. To curb the spread of this pandemic, there is complete agreement on the need for people to strictly follow World Health Organisation's (WHO) guidelines regarding frequent washing of hands, use of hand sanitizers and face masks, social distancing and if needed, as well as self-quarantine (Lunn et al., 2020). While the scientists and other relevant bodies continue to research possible vaccines or drugs for the viral infection, it is expected that adequate knowledge will motivate individuals to make decisions that may prevent and curb the epidemics.

Amazingly, all preventive and control efforts of Nigerian government following the outbreak, however, have been met with some public criticism and opposition particularly among Kwarans. Misconceptions are reported and observed in the State and unfortunately, majority of the people are of the view that the disease is not real in Nigeria, and that recommendations by the Nigerian government and medical experts shall not be followed. People's perception or interpretation of disease outbreaks influences their healthcare seeking behaviour (Geldsetzer, 2020). Some are of the view that COVID-19 is a conspiracy and have resisted the government order of hand washing, use of sanitizer, physical distancing, and nose mask use among others. Surprisingly, not everyone complies with these guidelines, at least not with the seriousness with which they need to be followed (van Bavel et al., 2020; Cummins, 2020; Pinsker, 2020).

Despite series of advocacy and warning from the government, media, religious bodies and other relevant authorities to adhere strictly to all public health directives and regulations provided by the competent authorized agencies such as the NCDC, people still ignored medical advice, deliberately or ignorantly (Hassan, 2020). On the other hand, some Kwarans laid claim to government's insincerity and its incessant thirst for personal aggrandizement at the expense of the public as the practice of using public office for private gains has grown exponentially hence; people do not have confidence in her. Given the importance of safety rules adopted in curbing the spread of infectious diseases such as the novel COVID-19, it is important to research on people's knowledge and attitude at this period of the pandemic. Therefore, in this study, we hope to ascertain the level of compliance of COVID-19 safety protocols among a sample of Nigerians.

Statement of the Problem

A worldwide epidemic, the COVID-19 outbreak is negatively impacting millions of people's lives. There is a general agreement that people should strictly adhere to WHO's guidelines regarding regular hand washing, use of hand sanitizers and face masks, social distancing, and, if necessary, self-quarantine. However, there is still much to learn about the virus and how it works, and there is no vaccine or medication available (Lunnet al., 2020). Naturally, it should come as no surprise that not everyone follows these recommendations, at least not to the extent that it should be (van Bavel et al., 2020; Cummins, 2020; Pinsker, 2020). This sort of (non)compliance is an active decision predicated upon, at least, one influential variable, the accuracy with which an individual perceives his/her own likelihood of getting infected (loosely, her risk perception). Studies have indicated that loose adherence to these recommendations may contribute to the disease's spread. That means that if the disease is sufficiently contagious, a small number of positive cases could burst into a global pandemic. It impacts the entire community and could ultimately result in deaths. Thus, the frequent lack of trust and resentment towards public health intervention amongst peoples of Kwara State, Nigeria, may likely affect the country's control efforts against the spread of COVID-19. Consequently, it became pertinent to examine the perception of Kwarans towards compliance to Covid-19 safety protocols. The outcome of the study will guide further research in the area with the hope to identify key variables to make informed decisions in the fight against the outbreak of COVID-19 by the relevant authorities.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the community perception and trust in government measures towards Covid-19 pandemic in Kwara State, Nigeria. However, in attempt to achieve this, the research specific objectives are:

- i. To examine the knowledge, awareness and perception of Covid-19 pandemic in Kwara State.
- ii. To ascertain the safety measures imposed by the government in Kwara State
- iii. To identify reasons for non-compliance to Covid-19 safety directives by the government in Kwara State

Theoretical Explanations

Frustration-Aggression Theory

This study adopts the frustration-aggression theory as an explanatory tool for analyzing the violation and non-compliance to Covid-19 safety rules in Kwara

state, Nigeria. Frustration-aggression theory was developed by John Dollard and his research associates in 1939 (Anifowose, 2011). The basis of this theory hinges on the fact that unfulfilled needs trigger violent behaviour. It emphasizes on the difference between what people feel, what they want or deserve to what they actually get (Faleti, 2005). Where there is a discrepancy between expectation and attainment, the tendency of people to confront those they hold responsible for frustrating their ambitions is always very high. Frustration-Aggression theory posits that in a situation where the legitimate desires of an individual is denied either directly or by the indirect consequence of the way the society is structured, this may generate feeling of disappointment and may find expression through rejection and disbelief often directed at those he holds responsible or people who are directly or indirectly related to them. Many people in Kwara State reject the measures introduced by the government because they are frustrated and lack trust for the government. The general belief is that people in government are not trustworthy and their words could not hold water.

According to this theory, if a group of individuals experience any frustration collectively, and this is perceived to have been resulted from the policies and actions of the government, it may likely induce them to challenge and perhaps remove the source of discontent. The above analysis aptly captures the situation in Nigeria where people direct their aggression at the federal government they hold responsible for their plight. Political office holders often use the authority conferred on them by the virtue of their offices to allocate resources selfishly to enrich themselves at the expense of the masses. Looking at the country in general, the co-existence of the political office holders and their acolytes with their stupendous riches vis-à-vis the masses living in a poverty stricken condition cannot but result in aggression of policy rejection attitude directed towards the government hence, violating government policies and programs. The recent policy violation in Kwara should be an opportunity for the State as represented by federal, state and local governments in Nigeria to put some commitment in their statutory responsibility of providing basic social amenities for the people. Such will, of course, include creating an enabling environment for individuals to have access to good life and be able to actualize their aspirations.

Materials and Methods

Research Design:

The research designs were both exploratory and descriptive using qualitative data. The study was carried out in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. A qualitative method was adopted because of the nature of the target

population, as most of the participants particularly the ATM users, Inter-state drivers and passengers as well as the markets men and women are always on the move and not stable, hence, the qualitative method become imperative. The research also uses cross-sectional survey design because it is appropriate in gathering information from both small and large population within a limited time frame.

Study Participants

The study populations comprises of Inter-state drivers and passengers particularly members of National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), who ply Ilorin-Lagos highway, The ATM users of GTB bank and First bank who were found largely not complying strictly with the safety orders, as at the time of carrying out the research, and markets men and women as well as the customers in three (3) selected markets who obstructs or defy the safety protocols imposed by the government.

Study Areas

Ilorin is the capital of Kwara State. Kwara is in Western Nigeria located within the North-central geopolitical zone; with land mass of 36825km and population of 2.37 million (2006 census). To the North, the state is bounded to Niger state, to the South, Ekiti and Osun States, Oyo and Kogi states to the West and East respectively. Kwara State has sixteen (16) local government areas (LGAs) and one of the LGAs shares boundaries with the republic of Benin in the west. The primary ethnic group is Yoruba with significant population of Nupe (occupying mostly Kwara north), Bariba and Fulani minorities. Therefore, the research was conducted in Oja-Oba market, Oja-Tuntun market, Ipata market, Guaranty Trust Bank (GTB), First bank (FB) and Saw-Mill Motor Park. The study areas were purposely selected because the participants were commonly found in large numbers violating the safety measures imposed by the government. Banks customers particularly the ATM users as well as market men and women including the customers do not observe safety protocols even at the peak of the pandemic. The NCDC medical advice were rejected as many of the participants were seen without observing social distancing or using nose masks. The same is applicable to highway drivers and the passengers who were seen on several occasions with overloading. This does not conform to the safety measures imposed by the government.

Data Collection

A qualitative method of data collection was utilized in this study, namely in-depth interviews (IDIs). This method was used to obtain adequate and valid data. Forty

(40) IDIs were conducted differently with respondents during the research. Ten (10) IDIs for Drivers of NURTW and five (5) for the passenger, Five (5) IDIs, in each of the market area including the customers and Five (5) IDIs in each of the Bank's ATMs. All interviews for less educated participants were conducted in Yoruba language, while those for educated participants were conducted in the English language. The IDIs were moderated by the lead researcher and shared with the assistance of a note taker and observer. Consent of the participants was obtained before conducting the interviews. Each of the IDIs had an average duration of 50 minutes and the interviews were recorded with the aid of a tape recorder with the consent of the participants. The recordings were transcribed and compared with the notes taken by the note takers and the interviewers to enhance the reliability of the data collected. The interviews were focused on eliciting information about community perception and trust in government's measures towards Covid-19 pandemic in Ilorin Kwara State, Nigeria.

Data Analysis

The recorded interviews and discussions were transcribed. The recordings done in Yoruba language were translated into the English language, and transcribed for subsequent analysis. The transcriptions were compared with the notes taken during data collection. Content and thematic analytical method of identifying and grouping of similar thoughts, or distinct opinions, expressed across the method adopted were carried out. This was done according to the objectives of the study. Information obtained was reported as phrases in quotes from the recorded expressions of participants. Internal validity was achieved by using data from the source, and by presenting responses from different participants to support the research objectives.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns are considered as an integral part of the research. Researchers are responsible for designing and carrying out research both knowledgeably and ethically. A consent form which was explained to all participants was signed to allow them voluntarily participate in this study. Participants were assured that their names and identities would remain anonymous for confidentiality.

Findings

The following themes and sub-themes emerged from the data collected on the violation and non-compliance to COVID-19 safety rules in Ilorin, Kwara State Nigeria.

Knowledge, Awareness and Perception of Covid-19 Pandemic Among Kwarans

The trend of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria is similar to what is happening in other African countries. Though the case is increasing on daily basis, but not as deadlier as what is happening in Europe, America and some parts of Asia (Shehu and Durga Rao, 2020). Nigerians had relatively high knowledge of the COVID-19, even though laden with several misconceptions; their knowledge of precautionary behaviour is very low despite the federal government's seriousness in curbing the spread of the virus. The virus is believed to have originated from China and had spread to other parts of the world. Nigerians, particularly, Kwarans believe that social media has aided the spread of information about COVID-19 as most of them got the information about the virus via the media. Traditional media provide vital information during outbreaks (Cheng, *et al* 2009). Other platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp were adopted by the Ministry of Health and NCDC, in addition to television and radio, to disseminate COVID-19-related information. Most participants were of the views that the virus is deadlier and many lives have been lost as a result. People believe that the virus is not real in Nigeria but rather a mere ploy by the people in government to enrich themselves at the expense of the masses. A participant recounted:

The virus was imported from Italy through an Italian traveler who came to Lagos, Nigeria. It started around February 2020 when the index case was discovered in Lagos Nigeria. It is a very deadly virus because of the incubation period which is 14 days to show up. An asymptomatic patient can simply infect other individuals before it begins to show up. It has not infected anyone that I know except those heard from the media. I believe the virus is real and I also believe about the figures if not more than that. Although, most people believe that the virus is not real but government has turned this virus into a money making venture. It's possible that some government agents or agencies might be using this as another ploy to siphon money and enrich themselves at the expense of the masses but there is no visible documented evidence to show that its actually so. (Male/35/Health worker/Ilorin/2020)

In a related development, another similar point was raised by a participant who narrated that social media has been the most important platforms by which Nigerians were informed about Covid-19 pandemic. A cloth seller at Oja-Tuntun market indicated among others that television channels, such as Aljazeera, is among the major transmitters of information about the virus. Although, she has

not seen an infected patient in Nigeria as those affected are largely foreigners, seen through the television. The participant shared her experience:

It is a virus that has ravaged the continents of the world particularly the countries such as Italy, China, USA, and Iran among others, I got to know about corona virus on social media and people have also been talking about it. I often watched it from the TV program Aljazeera that shows how the virus infected and affected people from different parts of the world particularly among the whites people, where patients were hospitalized and treated including dead bodies. The knowledge of covid-19 became widespread in Nigeria around March 2020 and since then I have never seen a single individual be it friends or families or any relatives that have been infected. I only heard of the infected people on radio and television particularly NCDC which give daily figure of the infected patients. (Female/25/Trader/Ilorin/2020)

In another dimension, another participant opined that the virus is a dangerous disease and can be contracted through hand shake, coughing, sneezing among others. The disease is associated with common symptoms of dry cough, flu, fever and difficulties of breathing (WHO, 2020). The respondent submitted that although the virus is widespread across the world but he has not seen physically or come across an infected individual(s) or an infected patient in Nigeria apart from the daily figures being released by the NCDC. According to the respondent, the virus is not real because there is no evidence to show that it has infected anyone in Nigeria. The state governments were believed to be using the pandemic as a pretext to enrich themselves. He explained further that:

I learnt it's a disease that kills within a short period of time. The virus is airborne and can be contracted through sneezing, hand shake among others. To me the virus is not real in Nigeria because I have not come across a carrier. Although, we often see daily figures being released by NCDC, but till now I have not seen an infected individual. The NCDC failed to educate the populace about the carrier and how they are infected. What we see is figures and nothing more. The virus has been used as a business strategy just to make money by our leaders. (Male/38/Trader/Ilorin/2020).

Implied in the above narration, it is apparent that there is high knowledge of covid-19 pandemic in Ilorin and Kwara State. This is because the social media platforms such as television, radio and others such as facebook, whatsapp, Instagram, and You-tube have been helpful in this regard. The perception of the

respondents' with regards to COVID-19 pandemic is that the virus is not real in Nigeria. Majority of the respondents are of the views that government at all levels are giving false figures via NCDC and as such enriching themselves at the expense of the masses.

Safety Measures Imposed by the Government

In attempting to halt the spread of the virus, COVID-19 in Nigeria, the arrival of the index case triggered extreme measures towards containing the spread of the disease, the Federal Government of Nigeria announced series of measures intended to prevent or curtail the speed and rate of infection through the NCDC (Ikeyi S, *et, al*, 2020). People have, therefore, been admonished to avoid the virus by frequent hand washing with soap and water, cleaning the hands with alcohol-based sanitizers, frequent use of face mask or shield, avoidance of face touching, and maintenance of social distancing to stem the spread (Recardo and Charles, 2020). Strict adherence to the order has been cited as a major factor in the outlook. In Kwara State, Nigeria, the response to safety measures has not been uniform because, while some citizens have expressed skepticism about it, others have observed unfairness in the concept as a restrictive measure, contrary to the reality on ground. Participants in this study were asked about their frequency of hand-washing and use of sanitizers and masks, their willingness to adopt the use of masks, their view about the social appropriateness of others' behaviour, their like/dislike of government responses. A respondent submitted that:

People are not really complying with the so called preventive measures such as the use of face mask, hand sanitizer and maintenance of social distancing. In fact, some are using face shield for fashion. People use face mask occasionally just to obey the rules of an organisation such as banks and as soon as they finished with the bank they remove it. Nigerian government is not being truthful about the virus. Our government will make promises particularly during campaign and election manifesto and at the end of the day, will not fulfill the promises they made before election. They promised to give palliatives to cushion the effect of the lockdown but nothing happened at the end. The government promised to provide relief fund but failed at the end. (Female/48/Trader/Ilorin/2020)

At the early stages of a pandemic, precautionary measures are needed to protect against possible danger and curtail the disease spread. However, there has so far been a less degree of compliance with the government directives. Nigerians are not engaging in vigilant hand washing, practicing social distancing and self-isolation, and have been going to work, or crowded areas. Even most religious

leaders do not agreed to stop large gatherings, forbid the shaking of hands and, in fact, some religious leaders refused to even adhere strictly to the stay-at-home order of government at an early stage of the virus as most of church goers were found and arrested at the church premises during the time of the virus (Makinde, Nwogu, Ajaja & Alagbe, 2020; Olatunji, 2020). A participant that complies strictly to the preventive protocols organised by the government opined that the strategy is imperative basically to control and contain the virus within the State and the country at large. According to him, the vast majority of people in Ilorin and Kwara State are not complying strictly with the order. Similar idea was shared by the participant:

The preventive strategy imposed by the government is good. Health is wealth. The use of nose mask is good for prevention against the virus. Hand sanitizer and maintenance of social distancing is also good. All these methods are enforced to contain and control the spread of corona virus. It is a common believe that covid-19 is airborne and it can be contained by the use of face mask, hand sanitizer and physical distancing among others. Unfortunately, majority of our people here in Kwara state are not observing the protocols at all. Many of our people believe the virus is not real. It is just a ploy by government to siphon our common wealth. For example in market places such as Oja-oba, Oja-tuntun, it's clearly evident that both the sellers and the buyers are not observing the protocols. People have lost interest in government because they are deceitful and not always sincere. They will make promises and fail to fulfill it so only few oblige. In fact during the lock down, they promised to distribute relief material such as palliatives but failed at the end. (Female/45/Trader/Ilorin/2020)

Another participant puts it this way:

The safety measures organized by the government through the national center of disease and control NCDC are regular hand washing, frequent use of hand sanitizer, face mask and maintenance of physical distancing among others. Although the preventive strategies are good but I comply with the rules to a certain extent because I often maintain physical distancing, use of hand sanitizer, washing of hands regularly but use of face mask is not convenient for me because of my breathing so I use it occasionally. Although majority of Kwarans are not complying probably because of their care free attitude. Some people still do not believe the virus is real so they ignore or violate the preventive protocols deliberately. People comply with the standards only when they want to have access to some facilities like banks but as soon as they are outside the bank

premises, they discontinue with the rules. In fact over ninety percent of people in Ilorin here are not complying with the rules. (Female/26/ATM User/Ilorin/2020)

A major challenge that undermined the control and prevention of COVID-19 in Nigeria was the issue of poor compliance (Ojoma, 2020). The response to COVID-19 prevention and control as reported in some states were below expectation especially on the side of the public. It was observed that most people, especially at the early stage of outbreak of the disease, demonstrated nonchalant attitude with total lack of commitment to preventive guidelines by the authorities (Ojoma, 2020). In some parts of the states, the compliance level was reportedly zero. People were seen going about their normal duties as usual without face masks, washing or sanitizing their hands as well as defaulting lockdown and social distancing directives. In order to ensure full compliance and adhere strictly with the safety measures imposed by the government, agencies of government were empowered to enforce compliance on the people. Agents such as the police officers, Civil defense officials and as well as the mobile courts were engaged to enforce the rules and punish violators. Unfortunately, the enforcement has not been effective as most law enforcers are also breaking it. A respondent (Highway Driver) reported that police officers who are supposed to enforce compliance to the use of face mask and physical distancing among travelers are often seen not complying with the rules and, at the same time, collecting bribes from violators.

The participant echoed that:

The government actually promised to start enforcing the rules on people with the help of task force comprising officials from the police, civil defense and as well a mobile court to put checks in place, but it's unfortunate that it has not been working as expected. Nobody has been arrested or punished. In fact, some highway police officers have turned it into money making venture by collecting bribe from the violators to set them free. Some task force officials have been caught not observing protocols particularly the use of face mask. Government has not been transparent and that is why it's very difficult for people to believe them. Despite the fact that violation of Covid-19 safety rules has been criminalized in Kwara State and Nigeria in general, people can still be found largely disobeying the safety protocols. (Male/34/Driver/Ilorin/2020).

Reasons for Non-Compliance to Government Directives

A very important challenging factor that affected COVID-19 control and prevention efforts in the country was the case of having to contend with COVID-19 myths and misconceptions amongst a good number of Nigerians (Lois, Christian, Nkiru, Patricia, Onyechi and Eunice, 2020). Consequently, high level misconceptions concerning COVID-19 which trended in the country may have contributed to the poor comprehension of the grievousness of the disease and essentiality of its preventive practices. This misconception comprises messages that lead to the erroneous understanding of the disease, unscientifically recognized solutions and imaginary explanations on the outcome of the spread of the disease (Greg, 2020). The general belief is that the virus is not real and the directives of the government will not be followed. Other reasons cited by the participants are as follows.

1. Elite Virus

Report across the states showed that people perceived that the disease is meant for the rich and politicians (BBC News, 2020). This misconception perhaps was deduced from the fact that most reported fatalities involved the rich and top government personalities. Most of the respondents were of the opinion that the virus is common only among the high profile individuals and political office holders. An Ilorin-Lagos highway passenger, who happens to be a polytechnic student, reported that the virus has infected only the governors and some member of national and state assembly. The respondent proclaimed thus.

The virus is circulating only among the rich people particularly politicians in Nigeria. There was news recently that some State Governors were infected. They are Nasir El-rufai (Kaduna State), Okezie Ikpeazu (Abia State), Bala Mohammed (Bauchi State), Kayode Fayemi (Ekiti State), Rotimi Akeredolu (Ondo State) and some members of State and National Assembly. Those that died as a result of the complications are Abba Kyari (Chief of Staff to the President) and Abiola Ajimobi (Former Oyo State Governor) among others. Apart from these people, I have not heard or seen a single person that has been infected. The figures being circulated by NCDC is fake and cannot be relied upon.
(IDI/Male/22/Passenger/Ilorin/2020)

In a related version, it was also reported that COVID-19 was imported by Government functionaries who have access to government facilities and who are rich enough to travel overseas. A student who was interviewed at the ATM center submitted that it is only prevalent among those that can afford to travel outside the country and not the common man. He responded and mentioned that:

Majority of our politicians often travel outside the country for either medical attention, for vacation, shopping, education including that of their children but when they die, they prefer to be buried in their father land Nigeria. If you are not rich enough or occupy a political position in Nigeria, you will hardly travel outside for anything of such. (IDI/Male/25/ATM User/Ilorin/2020)

2. People's Lack of Trust in the Government/Quest for Financial Gain

Due to decades of nonchalant attitude towards the needs of the people, the political class in Nigeria has always been faced with the challenge of winning the trust of the citizens. This was particularly the case with the arrival of COVID-19 in the country (Donnelly, 2020 cited in Lois, Christian, Nkiru, Patricia, Onyechi & Eunice, 2020). When the index case was initially declared, most Nigerians due to misconception felt it was a political scam aimed at attracting international fund. For some people, arrival of COVID-19 presented a big opportunity for politicians to defraud the country's treasury (Ejimabo, 2020). A phone accessories business woman in Oja-Oba market reported that the compliance is low in Kwara state, because to her and to most people in Ilorin, the virus is not real and that governors are only using the medium to attract funds from federal a government and international donors for selfish interest. She stated that:

The level of non-compliance is high here in Ilorin. You hardly see people observing the measures because government has not been so fair to the people. They are more or less interested in enriching themselves at the expense of the masses. They are not trust worthy and that's why the preventive protocols are not followed. The government, particularly state governors are using this medium to make money for themselves. They keep on increasing the figures so as to attract more funds from federal government and foreign donors. (IDI/Female/40/Trader/Ilorin/2020)

The opinion of the majority of the respondents are that COVID-19 figures were been falsified by the state governors in order to partake in the fund mapped out to suppress the pandemic in the country. They were declaring nonexistent number of cases so as to enrich themselves. This distrust was made worse when the government through poor distribution of relief materials was unable to adequately account for the financial support given to the country by donor agencies, philanthropists and the international organizations. This lack of trust influenced negatively, compliance to preventive measures in the country. A participant put it this way:

Nigerians are not complying because of their belief. People believed that the virus is not real or the figure has been doctored. Our government is very dubious and they are ready to increase the figure unscrupulously just to make money and enrich themselves. Corruption is very high in this part of the world. Both the leaders and the followers are corrupt. (IDI/Male/24/ATM User/Ilorin/2020)

3. Poor Health Facilities/Death Rate

In an attempt to contain COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria, the country was particularly challenged by already existing weak health sector (Adejoke, 2020). Available health facilities and equipment to contend with the virus were grossly inadequate (Adeoye, 2020). It is incredible that Nigeria with poor health facilities and less number of health professionals recorded less COVID-19 fatalities, while US and other first world countries with the best health facilities and professionals have higher number of infections and COVID-19 death rate. It was also reported that there were no television footage of COVID-19 patients in Nigeria and patients were being discharged in numbers from the isolation centers. These are part of the reasons a participant is not complying with the safety protocols as COVID-19 figure is confusing in Nigeria. A participant believed that NCDC officials are not being truthful with the figures.

Over ninety percent of Kwarans do not comply with the safety measures. The COVID-19 low death rate in Nigeria is also an eye opener to the fact that the virus is not real in Nigeria. Thousands of people died as a result of corona virus complications in Italy and U.S.A despite the availability of sophisticated medical facilities but with poor medical facilities in Nigeria covid-19 patients are surviving. It is unbelievable to note that, there was a day that over 11,000 patients were said to have recovered and released from isolation centers here in Nigeria. (IDI/Male/20/ATM User/Ilorin/2020)

Another participant submitted that:

Nigerian government has never for once showed the television footage of COVID-19 patient from the isolation centers from Nigeria to Nigerians. What they do often is to display covid-19 patients on sick bed from Europe and America. It's disheartening to note that the only time government shows television footage of covid-19 patients in Nigeria was so deceitful. Many of this patients were seen playing games, dancing, eating. In fact some of this patients were seen proclaiming that they did not have the virus but malaria. (IDI/Male/30/ATM User/Ilorin/2020).

4. Weather Condition/Use of Local Herbs and Concoction

Other misconception that leads to the poor and erroneous understanding of the disease is that people believed that the virus cannot thrive in Africa because of its hot climate and thus felt immune to its infection (Omaka-Amari, Aleke, Obande-Ogbuinya, Ngwakwe, Nwankwo, and Afoke, 2020). People believed that the weather condition in Nigeria is hotter enough to consume or overpower the virus from infecting Africans. Some were of the views that African skin is stronger and thicker and virus such as COVID-19 cannot easily infect the way it does in other continents. An Ilorin-Ibadan highway driver submitted that, he personally does not believe the virus is real in Nigeria because the weather here in Nigeria is too hot for the virus to survive for a day. The respondent retorted that he has not been making use of nose mask and others because he cannot be infected:

To me our weather condition is very hot so Coronavirus cannot live here for more than one minute. It can only thrive and last longer in colder areas like Europe and America. I have not been observing the preventive order of the governments because to me the virus is not real and the task force in charge have not been arresting people for violating the order but do take bribes (IDI/Male/35/Highway driver/Ilorin/2020)

Due to ignorance and superstitious beliefs in Africa, some Nigerians on the other hand prefer only to pray (even violating the stay at home order by attending religious gathering during the lockdown) and use anointing oils, talisman, herbs or rituals (Abati, 2020). Some people have been found praying, using and consuming different local herbs and concoction to ward off the virus even without any verifiable test and symptoms. A participant of Christian faith (Deaconess) who happens to be a customer at "Ipata" markets stated that she will not be infected "In Jesus name". She opined that since the virus came to Nigeria, she has been praying fervently for herself and the family and with her prayers the family is covered and nothing of such virus will infect any members of his family even without observing preventive order. The deaconess stated thus:

I know my family and I are covered with the blood of Jesus so Coronavirus has no place in my family. I don't need to fear because we pray every day against all evils including Coronavirus. I have not been using the mask because Jesus is enough for me and my family. No evil shall before me (IDI/Female/38/Customer/Ilorin/2020)

Another participant says thus.

Apart from water and salt that I use every day to bath, I often chew bitter cola and original honeybee and other local herb prescriptions by herb

sellers; with these items I believe I am safe from the infection. I heard people also drink and consume items such as ginger tea, gin, hot water, pepper, lemon, garlic among others to reduce the chances of contracting the virus. There is no need to use nose mask. It is not even good for me. It affects my breathing sometimes. (IDI/Male/33/Customer/Ilorin/2020)

The narratives above revealed the experiences and people's perception regarding the prevention of COVID-19 that gave rise to different practices such as, prayers and incessant use of herbs perceived to prevent the disease. It was also noted that some individuals refused to report to the hospital and resort to self-medication with chloroquine, a malaria drug, due to the misconception that such could be used to treat the disease (Olapegba, *et al*, 2020). It is thus clear to note that if these misconceptions and misunderstanding are not corrected, they will continue to hinder preventive and control efforts in the country (Aworinde, 2020).

Conclusion

The prevention of people from the dreaded Coronavirus forms an essential aspect of governance of any nation. The Nigeria government is also doing its best in this regard to contain and control the virus by introducing various preventive and safety measures through NCDC. The violation and non-compliance to COVID-19 safety rules has become very high and challenging in Kwara State. The study revealed that a large proportion of the study participants are aware and knowledgeable about the COVID-19 pandemic and that the media is their major source of information about the virus. Kwarans had relatively high knowledge of the COVID-19, even though laden with several misconceptions. The response to COVID-19 prevention and control as reported in the state were below expectation. At the early stage of outbreak of the disease, people demonstrated nonchalant attitude with total lack of commitment to preventive guidelines put forward by the authorities.

People are found to be less concerned about wearing of nose mask, use of hand sanitizer, social distancing, inter and intra states restriction movements order is regularly violated, markets men and women as well as commercial motor transporters and the passenger failed to abide by the government order and security agencies are shortchanged and some of them are reported compromising their work by collecting bribes from the commuters to allow them pass. Numerous factors were found to be responsible for poor compliance attitude, which includes people's lack of trust in government, government quest for money, elite's nature of the virus, poor medical facilities and weather condition in

Nigeria. Consequently, more awareness is needed through electronic media to curtail the spread of the disease. Government officials must be trust worthy and religious leaders must play their part in ensuring strict adherence to the NCDC directives.

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