

Perception and Utilization of Social Media Health Messages on COVID 19 among Undergraduate Students in Anambra State

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Abstract: Social Media is a crucial means of disseminating information to the general public; and as a result regarded as a powerful tool of propaganda. In the Nigerian sphere of communication, it acts as a double-edged sword in the sense that it permits citizens to be aware of certain information without restrictions. In the peak of the covid 19 pandemic in Nigeria, a lot of health information concerning this disease has been passed across through the social media. Studies have proven that Nigerian youths utilize social media especially for information and entertainment purposes. This study therefore sought to find out how undergraduate students in Anambra State who are youths perceive these social media information on covid 19 and if they actually utilize the covid health information they read on social media. The study interrogated the social media platform they utilize to get these health messages. The study adopted the Survey research design and the questionnaire was used as the research instrument of data collection. The study was anchored on the Channel Complementarity Theory which states that individuals who are motivated to acquire information about an issue will use all sources that are perceived to fulfill that information need. The study concludes that the significance of social media outlets cannot be overemphasized with recourse to information dissemination. It also purports that these platforms have been abused as people hide under its anonymity to spread fake messages and instigate panic amongst members of the general public but is still being used for accessing health messages on covid inspite of this negative trend.

Key Words: Perception, Utilization, Social Media, Health Information, Covid 19.

I. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the digital era of communication has brought about a lot of changes as regards information dissemination and acquisition. Prior to the arrival of new media, the major source of information dissemination especially that of health information were mostly done by health practitioners who are experts in the field. Availability of health information on social media has brought a modification to the existing situation as the social media presents more options for acquiring desired health information. Even the role of social media networks in healthcare has been depicted as crucial throughout a patient's journey by reason of its expansion on the habit of discussing healthcare with family and friends. Again, medical practitioners across several geo-political bearings have as well been enabled by the social media through the internet to

engage themselves in medical issues and diagnosis of complicated illnesses. These affirm to the potential of the social media to advance the delivery of healthcare services and patient care, together with the management of healthcare systems (Adeleke, I.T., Adejoke, A.S., Achinbee, M., Anamah, T.C., Zakari, I.B, Wasagi, M.H. (2015).

Arguably, most of the information that propels our daily lives is presented by the social media. Bradford, Hesse, Nelson, Kreps, Croyle, & Neeraj (2005) in a study of internet users in the United States reported that many who would want to consult a physician first on health-related issues these days as a matter of fact end up consulting the social media via the internet. With the coming and the popularity of portable smart phones, tablets and affordable internet access, utilization of social media, while it may not be common place among most adults, is so among youths. Just as the available means of seeking health information is increasing, the degree of social media use for seeking health information is adjusting too. Several studies like Morahan-Martin 2004; Pew Internet and American life Project, 2012; Fox & Duggan, 2013 can attest to this. In determining the perception and utilization of health information concerning COVID 19 in Anambra State, it is not out of place to beam the searchlight on illuminating a certain demographic segment of the society. This study therefore focused on the undergraduate youth population in Anambra State of Nigeria. More so, studies have explored the use of social media for seeking health information, but few have focused on the young adult population, a population that is known to have difficulties in accessing mainstream health services (Horgan, 2012). This accentuated the need to ascertain the perception and utilization of social media health information on covid 19 among a dominant youth population, undergraduate students in Anambra State.

Background to the Study

Before the advent of social media in Nigeria, the populace relied solely on medical professionals for information on certain health issues that have become pandemics. When pandemics hit a certain geographical area, the inhabitants or patients that have fallen victims to these diseases always fall back on their healthcare providers for information concerning those diseases. Such examples as the avian influenza, HIV aids, Measles and chicken pox had its health information

sourced directly from the medical professionals. The arrival of the social media has brought about a lot of changes in the area of dissemination and accessibility of health information to the public. The covid 19 pandemic in Nigeria is a typical example. The pandemic created panic among the Nigerian populace. Social media became awash with all sorts of information concerning these disease. Medical practitioners utilized social media to put across certain information on how the disease can be prevented and at the same time, individuals not well versed in health matters equally put out information concerning this disease, thus leading to disinformation, misinformation and information overload. Seeking of social media health information on certain illnesses may be perceived as patient's revolt against medical practitioners' seeming monopoly of health expertise. (Obiaso, 2013). Hardley (2019) notes that at the heart of medical autonomy are exclusive access to expert knowledge and the ability to define areas of expertise and practice, a posture which is been threatened by the democratization of health information by the social media. In present times, any individual with minute technical skills, access to a computer and internet connection can make an input to the body of health information accessible to the public on social media.

Internet and Digitization technologies among other variables, lower the cost of and increase access to information production and dissemination (Marshall & Williams, 2016). Social media operations are without much oversight or editorial review. Despite the existence of many reliable medical and health related websites, reviews have shown that individuals may encounter potentially misleading or inaccurate information when navigating the streets of social media. Unlike most traditional publishing, information posted in the social media may not be subject to editorial processes, and often lacks traditional authority indicators, such as author identity or established reputation. Again, there are no universal standards for posting information online and digital information may be easily altered, plagiarized, misrepresented or created anonymously under false pretences. (Netzger, 2007). As more health information from more sources on covid 19 become available and easily accessible now more than ever, issues of credibility are bound to arise. This provides a background for gauging public perception and the utilization of health information on covid 19.

Statement of the Problem

It was observed that internet users seem to utilize social media to acquire quick and cheap hand-me-down information on a variety of issues including serious health concerns as covid 19. Access to social media health information has the capacity to impact user's health behaviours. It provides an opportunity for individuals to expand their knowledge and improve their involvement in their health care decision-making process. It also has the capability to change the doctor-patient relationship. Medical practitioners have to introduce strategies to deal with better or badly informed patients which is dependent on the quality of social media health information

on covid 19 accessed. However, the capability of social media health information to influence some section of covid 19 health information inquirers such as the undergraduate students is unknown. The curiosity that led to this study was therefore the need to ascertain the extent to which all sorts of health information on covid 19 available on social media has influenced the health behavior of the respondents of this study.

Purpose of the Study

Speedy circulation of internet technology within the public sphere has placed an extraordinary amount of information on covid 19 within the reach of general consumers. Just about anyone with access to social media can give health information concerning covid 19 to consumers. The need to ascertain the perception and utilization pattern of social media health information has required studies on perception and use of social media health information. Such studies carried out in Nigeria have often focused on health practitioners (Omolase, Ihemedu, Ogunleye & Omolase, 2010, Omolase, Balarabe, & Omolase, 2010, Nwafor-Orizu & Nwachukwu, 2012, Adeleke, Adejoke, Achinbee, Anamah, Zakari, & Vasagi, 2015) The justification for this study was to fill this perceived gap in literature, to determine what other demographics of social media users (undergraduate students in Anambra State) do with the abundance of information they are exposed to.

Objectives of the Study

The following specific objectives informed this study;

1. To ascertain respondents' level of social media use for the acquisition of health messages on covid 19.
2. To determine respondents' perception of the quality of social media health messages on covid 19.
3. To find out the respondents use of social media messages on covid 19.
4. To determine the dominant social media platform respondents use to access these social media messages on covid 19.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated for the study;

1. What is the respondents' level of social media use for the acquisition of health messages on covid 19?
2. What is the respondents' perception of the quality of social media health messages on covid 19?
3. How do respondents' utilize social media messages on covid 19?
4. What is the dominant social media platform respondents' use to access social media messages on covid 19?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Schater (2011) Perception is the organization, identification and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent or understand the environment. The perceptual systems of the brain enable individuals to see the

world around them as stable, even though the sensory information is typically incomplete and rapidly varying. Individuals have the ability to perceive when their environment and everything around them portends a negative or positive trend for them as the case may be. The use of the social media today, is so varied it possibly transverses all aspects of life including health. Media scholars began to observe that a significant number of people were using social media to seek health information in the late 1990s. Social media has seen growing number of users for the said purpose. This includes healthcare providers, who are known to visit social media channels to gain insight on patients' thoughts. (Verhoef, Van de Belt, Engelen, Schoonhoven & Kool, 2014). Various reasons have been adduced to possibly drive users to increasingly access health messages on social media. One is the difficulty physicians have in explaining complicated medical concepts to their patients, and the difficulty patients have in understanding them. Physicians use medical terms which patients may not understand, but which they would like to learn and which social media affords them the opportunity to learn at their convenience. (Castro, Wilson, Wang, & Schillinger, 2007). Another plausible reason given for the increasing use of social media for obtaining health information is the contention that users should make informed decisions about their health with the health messages posted on social media channels.

In recent years, social media has become an operational technological tool in Nigeria; as well as a news and communication medium for the citizenry of Nigeria. Access to mobile telephony particularly among the technologically savvy youths has made dissemination of information easy within the blink of an eye. Lately, as the corona virus pandemic infringes on and debilitates world activities, social media platforms have been utilized as an information channel to citizens. Its relevance has gained more acceptances owing especially to the fact that the government at its onset, implemented a lockdown policy to control the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Hence, it has become an active tool for engagement and communication for the dissemination of credible information as well as incredulous (mis)information.

There is an increased body of literature on social media. An evaluative analysis shows change and continuity in communication and information technology. Let's examine below some of the issues. Social Media is an offshoot of the Internet and DiMaggio et al. (2001, p. 307) states that the Internet refers to the electronic network or networks that link(s) people and information through computers and other digital devices; thereby allowing for person-to-person communication and information retrieval. The Internet is a major tool that sprung up for the purpose of information dissemination; thus, the media acts as an information hegemon in terms of ascertaining what information is made available to people as well as the opinion people have on issues (Savrum & Leon, 2015). Largely, Social Media is the collection of websites and web-based systems that permit for mass interaction, conversation and sharing among members of

a network (Murphy, 2013, p. 3). These various media outlets and communication networks contributed to facilitating uprisings such as the Arab spring (AlSayyad & Guvenc, 2015, p. 2025). Its power lies in live pictures channeled through video recording of events as it unfolds. The international livestreaming of events is effective in mobilizing a vast population of citizenry for a positive or negative end. Furthermore, it has played a relevant role in hampering dictatorial regimes. Sadly, these various outlets have been mishandled as dubious people hide under its anonymity to defraud or disseminate false information. As the essence of social media is not lost on the general public for information engagement, its abuse in Nigeria particularly during the emergency period of covid 19 is not lost on any keen observer.

The Coronavirus (Covid-19) which is an infectious disease gives rise respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe respiratory challenges. It started from the Hunan seafood market at Wuhan, China where live bats, snakes, raccoon dogs, wild animals among others were sold in December 2019 (Shereen, M. Khan, S., Kazmi, A., Bashir, N., & Siddique, R. 2020, pp. 91–98) and was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020 (WHO, 2020). Since its recognition, the virus is said to have accounted for about 512,311 deaths globally out of a staggering statistic of 10,514,028 positive cases which unfortunately increases aggressively daily (WHO, 2020). The initial victim of the virus in Nigeria was an Italian man who arrived in the country on the 25 February 2020. He was admitted to an Isolation Centre in Yaba Lagos after manifesting symptoms of the virus (NCDC 2020).

Evidently, Nigeria tried to curtail the rapid spread of Covid-19 through immediate lockdown of the major axis of Lagos, Ogun, and Abuja: commercial and administrative hubs of the country; where there had been increase in coronavirus cases. Some state governors had also taken proactive actions by shutting their "borders" in a bid to reduce the spread of the virus. Other measures entail banning of mass gathering of people at churches, sports arenas and burials while schools were closed nationwide. The attainment of these feats can be ascribed not just to proper healthcare facilities but also to the influence of social media in the country. Its platforms: WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have become diverse means of communication and engagement by not just the government but by the general populace. (Obi-ani, Anikwenze & Isiani, 2020). On the other hand, social media is also utilized as a mechanism of propaganda in reporting news and information, which at most are based on assumptions and speculations.

Furthermore, DiMaggio (2011) asserts that the Internet changes society and this is reinforced by Bowd (2016) who posits that the advent of social media came with opportunities for news outlets to engage more people hence leading to an increased spread of information to a wider audience. Research conducted by Oginni and Motui (2015) examines

the engagements of Africans with the social media. These scholars opine that the engagement of Africans with social media is relatively low and that authors did not fully explore the influence of social media usage for civic engagements in individual countries or sub regions of the African continent. As a result, the pandemic has made Africans, particularly Nigerians to be more active in social media so as to keep pace with necessary information globally.

In essence, as the patterns as to what brought about the spread of previous pandemics are still being fully accentuated, the measures adopted by the government and by the populace to curb the pandemic and its challenges were pointed out by the above researchers, but insufficient attention have been given to the goal of social media in regard to global pandemics. In the Nigerian environment, social media is a means of keeping up with happenings all over the world and is used to elucidate the Nigerian situation. The infiltration of social media is quite substantial in Nigeria especially since the advent of cheap android smartphones telephony. The disturbing issue is how to filter authentic information from an avalanche of misrepresentations and false information available on social media networks. (Obi-ani, Anikwenze, & Isiani, 2020).

This research examines undergraduates' perception of social media health messages on covid 19 from the context of receiving and disseminating information. This study explores the impression undergraduates in Anambra State who are predominantly youths have about social media health messages disseminated on covid 19. It further explores their utilization of those covid 19 health information they have access to on various social media platforms. This study depicts this in line with the fact that social media is awash with lots of messages on covid 19 which could inform or misinform its users depending on the source such information emanates from.

The Covid-19 and the lockdown policies instituted by the government compelled people to be solely dependent on the media, thus the impact media had at the period have not been attained in any other pandemic era. The populace has not fully acknowledged the extent to which they are influenced by the news spread through social media, which happens mostly unknowingly.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Channel Complementarity Theory which was propounded by Dutta-Bergman in 2004. This theory states that individuals will use as many available sources as possible that satisfy their need for content. It holds that the degree to which sources (media) provide similar content is the degree to which users would use them in a complementary manner. Hence, people consuming one particular medium to gather information in one particular area are likely to consume other media that contain information in that specific area (Dutta-Bergman, 2004, p.48) In other words, individuals who are motivated to acquire information about a

topic or issue will use all sources that are perceived to fulfill that information need.

Four complementarity characteristics of health information sources that function as a basis for source use during information seeking. The four complementarity characteristics were tailored specifically to health information sources. They are; the degree to which a source is convenient, anonymous, provides tailored information, and offers access to medical expertise. Accordingly, sources that possess relatively greater amounts of each of the four characteristics are used complementarily during the process of acquiring health information.

Applying this theory to the study, it is posited that undergraduate students of tertiary institutions use different social media platforms in seeking health messages on covid 19. Just like researchers have found evidence consistent with the theory, this study will expectedly confirm the viability or otherwise of this theory among undergraduate students in the context of health information seeking on the covid 19 pandemic.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was designed as a survey. The undergraduate students of the two universities that offer undergraduate programmes in Anambra state; Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Uli, a state university and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, a federal university respectively make up the population of study. Undergraduates were chosen as the respondents for this study because of their heavy usage of social media in accessing information which has been proven by media scholars. The population of Unizik undergraduates sourced from the university registry is 36,650 while that of COOU undergraduate students according to the university registry is 16,700. The totality of both population of the respondents is 53,350.

Sample size and Sample technique

The sample size for the survey was decided by referring to sample sizes for various population ranges as worked out by krejcie and Morgan (1970). The sample sizes are seen in the table below;

Populations and sample sizes at 5% Error Margin, 95% Confidence Level

Population Size	Size
100	80
500	217
1,000	278
10,000	370
100,000	383
500,000	384
1 million and above	384

Therefore, since this study population is 53,350, the researcher settled for 370 as the sample size. Thus, the sample size of 370 is adopted at 5% error margin and 95% percent confidence level. The sample selection involved a multi-stage procedure. In other to ensure spread, four faculties were randomly selected through a lucky dip from each of the universities as follows: Nnamdi Azikiwe University (Management Sciences, Education, Arts and Engineering Faculties) and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu (Education, Basic medical sciences, Physical sciences and Enviromental sciences). At the second stage, two departments were randomly selected from each faculty as follows; Unizik Faculty of Management sciences (Public administration and Accountancy) Unizik Faculty of Education (Educational Management and Policy and Early Childhood) Unizik Faculty of Arts (Linguistics and Religion) Unizik Faculty of Engineering (Civil Engineering and Mechanical Engineering).COOU Faculty of Education (Education Foundation and Library & Information science) COOU Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences(Anatomy and Physiology) COOU Faculty of Physical Sciences (Computer Science and Mathematics) COOU Faculty of Enviromental Sciences (Urban& Regional Planning and Architecture). The third stage, the researcher randomly selected a predetermined number of respondents from each of the departments mentioned above. The number selected from each department is based on the number of sample allotted to each university as determined using the following formula to ensure proportionality:

$$R = \frac{I \times S}{N}$$

Where R=number of respondents allotted to an institution

I=Student population of the institution

N=Total population of the two institutions sampled

S=Sample size

Nnamdi Azikiwe University; $\frac{34,650 \times 370 = 240}{53,350}$

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu; $\frac{16,700 \times 370 = 116}{53,350}$

Hence, 230 students were randomly selected from Nnamdi Azikiwe University and 116 students selected from Chukwemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University. The selection is (as far as mathematically possible) distributed proportionally across the various faculties and departments selected.

The data collection instrument is questionnaire. The questionnaire contains only structured questions framed to generate quantitative data in line with the variables mentioned in the study. The method of data analysis is quantitative. Answers extracted through the questionnaire is recorded as numerical data. The frequency of each answer is found and the percentage computed accordingly. Statistical tables are employed for the presentation of these data.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Response Rate of Respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Returned	364	98.38%
Not Returned	6	1.62%
Total	370	100

Data in table 1 shows that 98% of the distributed questionnaire was returned while the remaining 1.62% was not returned. This indicates that majority of the questionnaires were returned and adequate data gathered for the study.

Demographic Data

Gender of Respondents

Respondents' Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	155	42.6
Female	209	57.4
Total	364	100

Data in table 2 indicates that 42.6% of the respondents are males while 57.4% are females. This shows that the majority of respondents are females.

Age Distribution of Respondents

Respondents' Age	Frequency	Percentage
15-20 years	205	56.4%
21-25 years	116	31.7%
26-30 years	43	11.9%
Total	364	100

Data in table 3 shows that 56.4% of the respondents are in the age bracket of 15-20 years, another 31.7% of the respondents are in the age bracket of 21-25 years while the remaining 11.9% are in the age bracket of 26-30 years. This data indicates that majority of the respondents are in age bracket 15-20 years.

Level of Study of Respondents

Respondents' level of Study	Frequency	Percentage
100 Level	122	33.5
200 Level	96	26.4
300 Level	63	17.3
400 Level	83	22.8
Total	364	100

Data in table 4 shows that 33.5% of the respondents are in 100 level of their study, another 26.4% are in 200 level, 17.3% of the respondents are in 300 level while the remaining 22.8% of the respondents are in 400 level of their study. This data indicates that majority of the respondents are in 100 level of their study.

Respondents' use of social media platforms for the acquisition of health messages on covid 19

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Frequently	95	26.1%
Sometimes	245	67.3%
Rarely	24	6.60%
Total	364	100

Table 5 shows that 26.1% respondents frequently use social media platforms for the acquisition of health messages on covid 19, 67.3% use it sometimes to search for covid 19 health messages while 6.60% of respondents rarely use social media for the acquisition of health messages on covid 19. This data indicates that a majority of the respondents actually make use of social media often to keep themselves updated on the covid 19 disease. The implication is that a major quarter of the respondents are conversant with the use of social media for acquiring health information on covid 19 which keeps them constantly updated on issues concerning the virus.

Respondents' perception on the quality of health messages on Covid 19

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	66	18.1%
High	156	42.9%
Low	86	23.7%
Very Low	56	15.3%
Total	364	100

Data in table 5 shows that 18.1% of respondents perceive the quality of the health messages on covid 19 in social media as very high, 42.9% of respondents perceive it as being of high quality, while 23.7% view the messages as being of a low quality, the remaining 15.3% perceive it as very low in quality. This data indicates that a majority of the respondents perceive social media health messages as credible enough for them to keep themselves abreast on covid 19 health messages via social media.

Respondents' utilization of Social media messages on Covid 19

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Often	230	63.2
Seldom	100	27.5
Never	34	9.34
Total	364	100

Table 5 shows that 63.2% of respondents utilize social media messages on covid 19 often, 27.5% respondents seldom utilize social media messages on covid 19 while 9.34% never make use of the health messages on social media concerning covid 19. This finding shows that a majority of the respondents use the social media health messages on covid 19 to probably enhance their knowledge of the disease or to adhere to the information concerning the disease therein.

Respondents' dominant social media platforms used in accessing social media health messages on Covid 19

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Twitter	57	15.7%
Facebook	89	24.5%
WhatsApp	126	34.6%
Instagram	44	12.1%
You-tube	48	13.2%
Total	364	100

Data in table 6 indicates that 15.7% of the respondents state that the dominant social media platform used for accessing health messages on covid 19 is the Twitter platform, 24.5% say it is the Facebook platform, 34.6% respondents agree that it is the WhatsApp platform while 12.1% opine that it is the Instagram platform. 13.2% of the respondents assert that the you-tube platform is the platform they use in accessing covid 19 health messages. It therefore appears that majority of the respondents get more covid 19 health messages through the WhatsApp platform which implies that the WhatsApp platform is the dominant social media platform undergraduate students access covid 19 health messages.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings for the research question one which probes the level of social media use for the acquisition of health messages on covid 19 indicate that majority of the respondents who rate 67.3% use social media to acquire health information on covid 19 sometimes. This implies that most of the respondents are not totally dependent on social media for information acquisition on covid 19 but check in at their convenience or when the need arises. Castro, Wilson, Wang & Schillinger (2007) in their study agrees with this finding as they state that social media usage had increased over time and had afforded users the opportunity to learn new things at their convenience or when they feel the need to.

The finding for research question two which sought to find out respondents' perception on the quality of social media health messages on covid 19 show that majority of the respondents who rate 42.9% agree that the quality of social media information on covid 19 is high. This by implication indicates that despite the misrepresentations, mis-information and overload of information on messages related to covid 19, users who in this study are undergraduate students of anambra state still find quality information on the covid 19 disease. But this is not without some form of apprehension as the respondents that rated social media high were more than those that rated it very high showing that respondents still have some level of misgivings as regard the quality of information received from social media as regards covid 19. Obi-ani, Anikwenze, & Isiani agrees with this finding as they stated in their study that social media has loads of information on covid 19 but the disturbing issue being on how to filter authentic information from an avalanche of mis-representations and false information available on social media networks.

For research question three which sought to ascertain respondents' utilization of social media messages on covid 19, findings indicate that majority of respondents who rate 63.3% often utilize covid 19 information they get on social media, 27.5% of the respondents hardly use the information while 9.34% do not use information they get on social media regarding covid 19. This shows that majority of the respondents still believe in the authenticity of information they get on social media as they apply such information in improving their health as the case may be. Verhoef, Vande belt, Engelen & Kool (2014) corroborates this finding in their study as they observed that a significant number of people were using social media to seek information on certain health matters and as such utilize such information to improve their health.

Findings on research question four which sought to determine the dominant social media platform respondents use to access social media health messages on covid 19 show that 34.6% of respondents who are in the majority use the WhatsApp platform to access health messages regarding covid 19 on social media. This finding indicates that the dominant platform used is the WhatsApp platform. This points to the fact that all social media platforms like twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube are used in accessing health messages but this study has found out that the WhatsApp platform dominates. Obi-ani et al (2020) corroborates with this finding when they stated in their study that twitter, Facebook, you-tube and WhatsApp have become diverse means of communication and engagement by the general populace in respect to covid 19.

V. CONCLUSION

The essence of this study was to determine the perception and utilization of social media health messages on covid 19. From the results of the survey, it was inferred that undergraduate students in Anambra state tend to use social media to a large extent, for seeking health information on the covid 19 pandemic. They tend to perceive social media health messages on covid 19 as credible enough for them to keep themselves informed on issues concerning covid 19 and they utilize the social media messages on covid 19 to extent. The WhatsApp platform appears to be the most utilized platform for sourcing for covid 19 health messages. The study therefore concludes that social media plays a key role in the dissemination of covid 19 information and the undergraduates in Anambra state utilize this media channel to keep themselves informed and updated on the covid 19 pandemic regardless of the many false information and misrepresentations found therein.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study and the discoveries made from literature review, the following recommendations are made;

1. As a result of the many mis-representations on social media concerning covid 19, the study recommends that information surrounding the pandemic be

corrected where need be and verified by the right sources through the same media the mis-information was passed across to the public. This is to assure users about the reliability of social media inspite of the fake messages disseminated on covid 19.

2. The study equally recommends that it is important that social media users are enlightened on the need to be cautious in forwarding unverifiable messages on covid 19 and consuming every information they access from social media as a blue print for their actions.
3. Social media users are advised to conduct personal researches from authentic sources that are online such as the National Orientation Agency and the NCDC who are government bodies that have been mandated to provide the public with verifiable information on the covid 19 pandemic.
4. Measures need to be put in place by the government to ensure the sanctioning of any individual or religious body that disseminates unverified teachings on covid 19 to the public. This study has proven that social media is utilized for accessing health information on the covid 19 pandemic and should not be tainted by the false information disseminated by unscrupulous elements.

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