

COVID-19 HEALTH INFORMATION NEEDS AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF RIVER STATE POPULATION

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Abstract

The study examined the COVID-19 health information needs and seeking behaviour of River State population. The research design chosen for the study is a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised of entire River State population. An online survey using Google was conducted between 27 September to 30th October 2020 using social media platforms. On the 30th of October, a total of 1053 "Riverians" responded to the online survey and this was used for the study. A total data collected was analyzed using frequency distribution table, graph, percentage mean and standard deviation with the aid of SPSS version 23. The study revealed, Information on a diet during COVID-19 pandemic, Information on best physical exercise. Information is the best practice of hand washing, Information on how to wash locally made face masks among other things the COVID well as 19 health information needs of the studied population. Social media platforms asking friends and families are their major health information seeking behaviour. The study Identified Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), friends and family, Television, health worker NEDC website, Radio, and WHO website are the major sources of COVID-19 health information. Finally, the study revealed that social media is filled with fake news and misinformation, Insufficient due to access information on the web, Lack of confidence in the number of new cases reported in River Mate by NCDC, Unstable power to charge and power electronic equipment, Low Internet bandwidth to access the web and Lack of evidence on the number of news cases in Nigeria as the main Challenges inhibiting River State population from meeting their COVID-19 health information needs. The study recommended among other things that, Government of River State should make use of a loud loudspeaker approach in educating the masses on the prevention and management of COVID-19

Keywords: COVID-19, Health Information Needs, Health Information-Seeking behaviour, River State.

Introduction

COVID-19 is an emerging infectious disease caused by a novel coronavirus-SARS-CoV-2. The Corona Virus Disease of 2019, otherwise known as COVID-19, started in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, in December 2019, The World Health Organization (WHO), declared it a public health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020 and recognized it as a pandemic on 11 March, 2020. The pandemic led to severe global socio-economic disruptions, cancellations or postponement of sports, religious, business and cultural events etc., including a total or partial countries of the world (*Adayi, Idoko, Odeh and Ona, 2020*)

According to the Beijing Center for Disease Prevention and Control (2020), the Epidemiological features of COVID-19 are symptomatic cases at the presymptomatic or symptomatic course, symptomatic cases, direct contact or indirect contact with contaminated objects & surfaces, the virus persisted on surfaces up to several days up to 4 hours copper up to 24 hours.com cardboard and up to 2-1 days on plastic & stainless steel, Aerosol of high concentration in relatively closed space. Contamination of faeces or urine, incubation period, 3-7 (range: 1-14) days, among others. Its most common symptoms are fever, dry cough, tiredness, aches and pains, sore throats, diarrhoea, conjunctivitis, headache, loss of taste or smell, rash on the skin, or discolouration of fingers or toes among others.

On the African continent, Nigeria recorded her index case in February 2020, with an increasing number of cases every day. As reported by the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (2020) a total of 625,510 samples have been tested, most of which 62,691 cases were confirmed. 58,430 were discharged and only 1,144 deaths were recorded after about nine 191 months of the virus in the country River State is one of the first five states topping COVID 19 cases in the country, just behind states like Lagos, Abuja, Plateau and Oyo state. River State is the highest affected state in the South-southern geopolitical zone of Nigeria with 2,810 confirmed cases, 91 victims on admission, 2,660 discharged and 59 deaths as at 31 of October, 2020 (Nigeria centre for disease control. 2020). Since COVID 19 has no vaccine, the only measures to prevent the virus through understanding to guidelines to prevent the through health information dissemination.

Health information is a valuable resources required in any society, thus acquiring and using information are critical and important activities. Health Information can be defined as that knowledge, facts and news generated from various sources, necessary for the good physical and mental condition of a human being Uhegbu (2014) opines that health Information relates to those pieces of information that will make the user have physical and emotional stability.

It contains such information as sanitation rules and regulation, family planning, prevalence and control of diseases. PTF drugs, immunization, location of good hospitals and clinic, laboratory centres etc. Health information may also include news about international bodies and agencies responsible for global health activities such as the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations fund for population Activities (UNFPA) etc. COVID 19 Health information are the knowledge, facts and news generated from various sources, necessary for effective prevention and management of corona virus from spreading rapidly from one person to another. It also include such information as a guideline for washing hands, wearing a face mask, face shield, social distancing, symptoms, quarantine among others COVID 19 Health information is indispensable for safety and healthy living in this pandemic period. Everyone needs information about the prevention and management of COVID 19 so as to stay safe, however, the ability to search the right and official sources determines the COVID 19 Health information individual access and utilize.

COVID-19 Health Information need la an individual or group desire to locate and obtain health information on the measures for preventing and managing the virus, most especially from attracting the virus.

COVID-19 Health Information need is gap between what an individual knows about COVID-19 and what an individual know to prevent himself and others from attracting the virus COVID-19 Health Information Needs of an individual or group motivates the desire to locate and obtain COVID-19 Health information to understand how to prevent or manage the virus. Health Information needs of people may vary according to their social group, age, education gender, economic status, interest groups and profession. This reflects their seeking behaviour.

Health Information seeking behaviour is a term encompassing the ways individuals articulate their Health information needs, seek, evaluate, select, and use Health information. It is the totality of the action and inaction as well as the reaction of an individual in the course of meeting their information needs That is, what we do and what we did not do in meeting our Information needs. Health Information Seeking Behavior (HISB) is broadly viewed as the ways by which individuals obtain information about health, illness, health promotion and health risks (Lambert & Loiselle, 2007). In the context of this study, COVID-19 Health Information seeking behaviour involves the totality of the reasons why we search for information on COVID-19, how we search for it, where we search for it, how we evaluate and use the health information to prevent and manage the spread of corona-virus and to continue to stay safe.

Health information needs and seeking behaviour, most especially about a virus that has no vaccine is paramount and indispensable as it is the only sure way to manage the spread of the virus thereby its potential damage and grave consequences. Since Rivers State has the highest number of COVID-19 cases in South-southern Nigeria, this study seeks to determine the COVID-19 health information needs and seeking behavior of River State population, since no similar study has been conducted in River State to the best knowledge of the researchers.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study is determine the COVID-19 health information needs and seeking behaviour of River Suite population. The specific purposes of the study are to:

1. Identify the COVID-19 Health Information needs of River State Population.
2. Determine the COVID-19 health information-seeking behaviour of River State population
3. Find out the Sources of information about COVID-19 among River state population
4. Identify the challenges inhibiting River State population from meeting their health information needs on COVID-19

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study: were

1. What are the COVID-19 health Information needs of River State population?
2. What are the COVID-19 health information-seeking behaviours of River State population?
3. What are the Sources of information about COVID-19 among River stale population?
4. What are the challenges inhibiting River State population from meeting their health information needs on COVID-19?

Literature Review

One effective way of preventing virus-like COVID-19 the transfer of health information by educating dead patients and encouraging them to search for similar health information Awareness of people information seeking behaviour can provide health and health information experts with valuable information used to improve people's health Although due to the prevalence of health information, it is easily possible to prevent some chronic virus, it is worthy of mention that, many people lose lives or suffer serious complications from these diseases due to lack of knowledge about prevention methods or even disinformation of the social media Therefore informing people about the progress of these pandemic and useful prevention methods is indispensable and paramount.

Most importantly, investigating health information seeking behaviour and identifying their information seeking patterns can provide us with useful strategies for the effective transfer of health information to the general population (Lalazaryan & Zare-Farashbandi, 2020)

Adenubi Adebawale, Oloye, Bankole, Ayoujayi & Akinloye (2020) study revealed that the sources of information on COVID-19 are TV/radio, social media, Friends, and Workplace Newspaper Demergazzi, Pastore, Bassani, Atasio & Lonati (2020) indicated that online resources were preferentially used by clinicians compared to offline sources for meeting their health information needs. Onwe & Felnke (2020) showed that students have a variety of health needs. It also found that the specific major health information needed by students was information about exercise, nutrition/diet and preventive health

According to Nangsarigna & Vroom (2019), the search for health information via the Internet is ass growing among all health stakeholders Olapegba Ayandele, Kalaule Ombayo Gandi, Dangiwa, Otti & forfa (2020) found out that mass media, social India, intermesh, health workers, family and friends and government institutions (NCDC, WHO WHO etc.) are the main wares of health information on COVID-19,

Alwi & Morad (2018) study revealed that the internet is continuously accessed to seek health information and there are a variety of sources, including search engines, health websites, and social networking sites. Jung (2014) opines that health information is obtained from diverse sources, such as the media Odium & Yoon (2018) found out that, due to ongoing health information deficiencies, resulting in fear and frustration due to the outbreak of Ebola virus, social media was at times an impediment and not a vehicle to support health information needs, because of the prevalence of fake information. In a study carried out by Gavgani, Qeisari & Jafarabadi (2013) the finding revealed that health information seekers in Iran are passive information seekers rather than active ones, Television and internet resources such as social media official websites, among others, are major sources of health information. Dastani, Mokhtarzadeh, Nasirzadeh & Delshad (2019) found out that, individuals and searchers use the Internet and the web for their information they also revealed that the health information needs of the sample vary according to the outbreak of disease

Baker's (2011) study showed rural women in Malaysia mainly use mass media such as newspapers, magazines, TV and radio for their health information.

In another study, Zare Gavgant et al., (2013) showed that users of public libraries in Qazvur showed the met resources to seats for health information "TV" and consult with others similarly, LaJoie et al (2009) on student information-seeking behaviour showed that students often get their information from friends, then the media and especially the internet. Also, in this regard. Riahi (2015) concludes in his study that consultation with family, friends and relatives is one of the most important channels for obtaining health information for immigrants in Iran

Methodology

The research design chosen for the study is a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised of entire River State population. Rivers State, also known simply as Rivers, is one of the 36 states of Nigeria. Its capital and largest city, Port Harcourt, is economically significant as the centre of Nigeria's oil industry.

Result

Rivers States are bounded on the south by the Atlantic Ocean, to the North by Imo, Abia and the Anambra States, to the East Akwa Ibom State, and to the West by Bayelsa and Delta states. It is home to many ethnic groups: Ijaw Subgroups: Ikwerre, Ekpeye Etche etc. subgroups of the Igbo people and other ethnic groups. The people from Rivers State are known as "Riverians". According to official census data released the state has a population of 5,198,718 The online survey using Google form conducted between 27 September to 30th October 2020 using social media platforms On the 30th of October, a total of 1053 "Riverians" responded the online s and this was used for the study. A total Data collected was analyzed using a frequency distribution table, graph, percentage, and standard deviation with the aid of SPSS version 23.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents based Highest Educational Qualification.

S/N	Highest Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentages
1	Tertiary Education	618	58.7%
2	Secondary Education	386	36.7%
3	Primary School	49	4.6%
4	No Former Education	0	0
	Total	1053	100%

From the table above, out of 1053 Riverians who responded to the survey, 118(58.7% attended tertiary education. 386(36.7%) attended only secondary school. 49(4.6%) have only primary school certificate, and none of the respondents did not receive former education

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents based on Occupation

S/N	Occupation	Frequency	Percentages
1	Farmer	09	0.9%
2	Trader	272	25.9%
3	Civil Servant	294	27.9%
4	Housewife	18	1.7%
5	Student	413	39.2%
6	Fisher Man	15	1.4%
7	Artisan	32	3%
	Total	1053	100%

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents based on occupation. From the results of 1053 respondents, 9 (0.9%) are farmers. 272(25.9%) are traders. 294(27.0%) are civil servants 18(17%) are housewives 413(39.2%) are students, 15 (14%) are fishermen While 320390 are artisans.

Table 3: Responses on the COVID-19 health information needs of River State population

S/N	Covid-19 health information needs	Frequency	Percentages
1	Information on a healthy diet during covid-19 pandemic	871	82.7%
2	Information on best physical exercise	901	85.6%
3	Information on the best practice of hand washing	813	77.2%
4	Information on the current state or places under lockdown	1003	95.2%
5	Information on how to practice safe social distance	1042	99%
6	Information on how to practice self-quarantine after travelling to a place where covid-19 case was discovered.	1019	96.8%
7	Information on how to contact NCDC when there is a suspect case	941	89.4%

8	Information on how to wash locally made face mask	872	82.8%
9	Information on NCDC hotlines	1032	98%
10	Information on proper ways to conduct in public places.	1051	99.8%
	Total	1051	99.8%

Table 3 shows the responses on the COVID-19 health information needs of River State population. From the result, the COVID-19 health information needs of Riverians are, Information on how to wash locally made face masks, Information on the current states or places under lockdown, information on NCDC hotlines, Information on proper ways to conduct in public places, Information on how to contact NCDC when there is a suspected case, Information on how to practice self-quarantine after travelling to a place where COVID 19 case was discovered, Information on the best practice of hand washing, information on best physical exercise as well as Information on a healthy diet during COVID 19 pandemic.

Table 4. Responses on the COVID-19 health information-seeking behaviour of State population
ANCOVID-19 health information seeking behavior

S/N	COVID-19 Health Information Seeking Behaviour	Frequency	Percentages
1	Searching on social media Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter etc.	1053	100%
2	Searching on the WHO website	601	57.1%
3	Searching on NCDC website	735	69.8%
4	Asking family and colleagues	916	87%
5	Asking family members	1034	98.2%
6	Reading newspapers	418	39.7%
7	Watching television programme	821	78%
8	Listening to radio	1009	95.8%
9	Asking health workers	846	80.3%

Table 4 above shows the responses to the health information-seeking behaviour of River State population. From the result, 1053 (100%) of the respondents searched on social media (Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, etc.) for COVID-19 health information, 1034 (98.2% family members about COVID-19 health information. 1009/95.8%) Listens to radio, 916 (87%) Ask

friends and colleagues. 821 (78%) Watch television programmes. 846(80.3%) ask health workers about COVID-19 health information, only 418(39.7%) read the newspaper

Table 5: Responses on the Sources of health information about COVID-19 among River State population

S/N	Sources of Health Information about COVID-19	Frequency	Percentages
1	WHO Website	668	63.4%
2	NCDC Website	820	77.9%
3	Social media Facebook, Twitter	1053	100%
4	Television	1009	95.8%
5	Radio	703	66.8%
6	Newspapers	496	47.1%
7	UNICEF website	103	9.8%
8	From Friends and Family	1044	99.1%
9	From Health Worker	902	85.7%
10	From Church or Mosque	143	13.6%

Table 5: above the major sources of health information about COVID-19 among River State population are Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), from friends and family Television, from a health worker, NCDC website, Radio, and WHO website. The least sources of health information about COVID-19 among River State population are churches or mosques UNICEF website.

Table 7 Responses on the Challenges inhibiting River State population from meeting their COVID-19 health information needs.

S/N	Challenges inhibiting River State population	Frequency	Percentages
1	The social media is filled with fake news and misinformation.	1047	99.4%
2	Insufficient data bundle to access information on the web.	1053	100%
3	Lack of confidence on the number of new cases reported in Rivers State by NCDC.	1006	95.5%
4	Unstable power supply to charge and power electronic equipment.	1053	100%
5	Low internet bandwidth to access the web	1009	95.9%
6	Lack of evidence on the number of news cases in Nigeria.	1053	100%

From Table above the major challenges inhibiting River State population from meeting their COVID-19 health information needs are, Insufficient data bundle to access information on the web, Unstable power supply to charge and power electronic equipment, Low Internet bandwidth to access the web, Lack of evidence on the number of new cases in Nigeria, Lack of confident on the number of new cases reported in River state by NCDC and that the social media is filled with fake news and misinformation.

Discussion of the Findings

The finding revealed that Information on a healthy diet during COVID-19 pandemic. Information on best physical exercise, on the best practice of hand washing, Information on how to wash locally made face masks, Information on the current states or places under lockdown, Information on how to practice safe social distance, Information on how to contact NCDC when there is a suspected case, Information on how to practice self-quarantine after travelling to a place where COVID 19 case was discovered, Information on NCDC hotlines, and Information on proper ways to conduct in public places as the major COVID-19 health information needs of River State-population studied This implies that the population has varieties of health information needs due to the desire to prevent and manage COVID-19 Virus from infecting them. The findings partially correspond with the assertion of Odlum & Yoon (2018) that the outbreak of Ebola virus has tremendously increased the health information needs of people who out of fear and curiosity want to stay safe from contracting the virus. Also, Dastani, Mokhtarzadeh, Nasirzadeh & Delshad (2019) study revealed that the health information needs of the sample vary according to an outbreak of disease.

As regards the COVID-19 health information-seeking behavior, the findings revealed that, searching on social media (Facebook. Whatsapp, Twitter, etc.), Searching on WHO website, Searching on NCDC website, Asking friends and colleagues, Asking family members. Reading Newspapers, Watching television programmes, listening to radio, and asking workers the totality of the way, methods, and strategies of sourcing COVID-19 health information among River State population studied.

The finding is by that of Dasianti Mokhtarzadeh, and Nasirzadeh, (2019) who found out that, individuals and searchers mostly use the Internet and the web to seeking their health information

The finding revealed that Social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.), friends and family NCDC website, health workers WHO website, Television. Radio and Newspapers are the major sources of health information about COVID-10 among River State population. Online information is the most sourced for health information on COVID-19. The finding further validates that of Adenubi Adebawale, Olove, Bankole, Ayoajavi & Akinloye (2020) whose study revealed that, the common sources of information on COVID-19 are TV radio, social media, Friends, and Workplace Newspaper Also, with that of Demergazzi. Pastore, Bassani, Arosio & Lonati (2020) whose study indicated that online resources were preferentially used by clinicians compared to offline for meeting their health information needs.

Finally, the study identified that, the social media is filled with fake news and misinformation, Insufficient data bundle to access information on the web, Lack of confident on the number of new cases reported in River state by NCDC, Unstable power to charge and power electronic equipment. Low Internet bandwidth to access the web, and Lack of evidence on the number of news cases in Nigeria as the major Challenges inhibiting River State population from meeting their COVID-19 health Information needs. This partially agrees with that of Odlun & Yoon (2018) who found out that, due to ongoing health information deficiencies, resulting in fear and frustration due to the outbreak of Ebola virus, social media was at times an impediment and not a vehicle to supper health information need because of the prevalence of fake Information

Conclusion

The study determined the COVID 19 health information needs and seeking behaviour of River State population. Since COVID-19 has vaccine and most African countries has no adequate health infrastructures to cater for the wellbeing of victims, the most effective measure is to provide adequate health information on COVID-19 so that the River Suite population can practice the guideline us advised by health institutions and organizations like NCDC, WHO and so on River State is one of the first five states with the highest case of COVID-19 in Nigeria The study concluded that River State population has many COVID-19 health information needs which must be met if the number of new cases will reduce. Also the study concluded that searching on social media platforms is the major health information seeking behaviour of River State population when seeking information on COVID-10 followed by television, asking friends and Families. Searching NCDC, WHO websites are least sources of health information of COVID-19 as the population prefers social media news and information which sometimes

are disinformation and misinformation Finally, the study concluded that, social media is filled with fake news and misinformation, Insufficient data bundle m access information on the web, Lack of confident on the number of new cots reported in River state by NCDC, Unstable power supply to charge and power electron equipment. Low Internet bandwidth to access the web, and Lack of evidence on the number of news cases in Nigeria as the m Challenges inhibiting River State population from meeting their COVID-19 heal information needs.

Recommendations

Based in the findings of the study, the following recommendations were suggested

1. Government of River state should make use of loud speaker approach in educating the masses on the prevention and management of COVID-19.
2. Churches and mosques should use 10 to 20 minutes of their worship time to educate the people on the prevention and management of COVID 19
3. NCDC should be sending vital information on the prevention and management of COVID-19 to all registered SIM in Nigeria.
4. Supply of steadily power for watching TV programmes and charging of phones
5. The Internet service provider should subsidies cost of data subscription.

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