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## Communication strategies and rural dwellers' attitude towards Covid-19s' preventive measures in Osun state, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The study examined the influence of communication strategies on rural dwellers' knowledge and attitude towards Covid -19s' preventive measures. Three specific research objectives and questions were achieved and answered. Exploratory research design was employed, ten villages were purposively sampled and one-hundred (100) participants were selected with the aid of simple random sampling technique. In addition, self-developed questionnaire was used to obtain relevant information from the respondents and this was analyzed through descriptive statistical tools. The empirical findings revealed that print and broadcast media most especially radio, newspaper and television were some of the available and accessible communication strategies through which information pertaining to the Covid -19s' preventive measures were obtained by the rural dwellers. It was discovered that rural dwellers' attitude towards avoidance of social gathering and temporary suspension of religious activities as parts of Covid -19s' preventive measures were encouraging to a very high extent. Besides, there was no significant difference based on gender traits and age range in the rural dwellers attitude towards Covid -19s' preventive measures, while a significant difference was empirically established among respondents' attitude on the basis of religious affiliations which was in favour of those with Traditional religious practice. Recommendations made included dissemination of vital information through door-to-door campaigns by the approved serving health workers and provision of required facilities such as pipe-borne water and borehole to ensure rural dwellers' access to running water, hand sanitizers, face-mask amongst others.

**Keywords:** Communication Strategies, Rural Dwellers, Preventive Measures, Covid -19 Pandemic

## Introduction

Preventive measures for the deadly Covid -19 had been identified mainly as washing of hands with soap under a running water for about five minutes or use of sanitizer where there is no access to water. This was broadcast since the first occurrence in Nigeria. This measure is believed to be very vital in curtaining the spread of the pandemic. Prevention of this disease is very important, because those who invent vaccines or other preventive drugs are yet to find a clinical prevention or cure to combat the virus. Even, if there is a cure, prevention is always better than cure, as the virus can easily spread from one infected person to many people. Consequent on the importance of prevention for this pandemic, series of measures have been advertised using different communication strategies to reach out to people both in the urban and rural areas. These preventive measures as contained in the Federal Government of Nigeria Report on the Implementation Guidelines for Containment of Covid -19(2020) comprised maintenance of social distancing of minimum of two meters, use of non-medical facemask, use of sanitizers, constant washing of hands with soap under running water, compulsory isolation of person(s) arriving from outside the country for at least fourteen days, ban of religious and social gatherings, prohibition of mass gathering of more than twenty people outside of a workplace, restriction on all interstate travel except for essential goods and services (Like Agricultural products, Petroleum products, relief items, as well as other commodities related to the Covid -19 response) and imposition of night curfew from 8pm to 6am amongst others.

Despite the efforts of Federal Government of Nigeria and other bodies in creating awareness about the preventive measures of the contagious Covid 19, records from the National Center for Control of Contagious Diseases (NCDC) show a constant increase in the number of infected people per day.

|            | Confirmed Cases | Discharged Cases | Deaths | Active Cases |
|------------|-----------------|------------------|--------|--------------|
| 02/05/2020 | 2388            | 385              | 85     | 1918         |
| 01/05/2020 | 2170            | 351              | 68     | 1751         |
| 30/04/2020 | 1932            | 319              | 59     | 1555         |
| 29/04/2020 | 1728            | 307              | 51     | 1370         |
| 28/04/2020 | 1532            | 255              | 44     | 1233         |
| 27/04/2020 | 1337            | 251              | 40     | 1046         |
| 26/04/2020 | 1273            | 239              | 40     | 994          |
| 25/04/2020 | 1182            | 222              | 35     | 925          |
| 24/04/2020 | 1095            | 208              | 32     | 855          |
| 23/04/2020 | 981             | 197              | 31     | 753          |
| 22/04/2020 | 873             | 197              | 28     | 648          |
| 21/04/2020 | 782             | 197              | 25     | 560          |
| 20/04/2020 | 665             | 188              | 22     | 455          |
| 19/04/2020 | 627             | 170              | 21     | 436          |

|            |     |     |    |       |
|------------|-----|-----|----|-------|
| 18/04/2020 | 542 | 166 | 19 | 357   |
| 17/04/2020 | 493 | 159 | 17 | 317   |
| 16/04/2020 | 442 | 152 | 13 | 277   |
| 15/04/2020 | 407 | 128 | 12 | 267   |
| 14/04/2020 | 373 | 99  | 11 | 263   |
| 13/04/2020 | 343 | 91  | 10 | 242   |
| 12/04/2020 | 323 | 85  | 10 | (238) |
| 11/04/2020 | 318 | 70  | 10 | (228) |
| 10/04/2020 | 305 | 58  | 7  | (240) |
| 09/04/2020 | 288 | 51  | 7  | (230) |
| 08/04/2020 | 276 | 44  | 6  | 226   |
| 07/04/2020 | 254 | 44  | 6  | 204   |
| 06/04/2020 | 238 | 35  | 5  | 198   |
| 05/04/2020 | 232 | 33  | 5  | 194   |
| 04/04/2020 | 214 | 25  | 4  | 185   |
| 03/04/2020 | 210 | 25  | 4  | 181   |
| 02/04/2020 | 184 | 20  | 2  | 162   |
| 01/04/2020 | 174 | 9   | 2  | 163   |
| 31/03/2020 | 139 | 9   | 2  | 128   |
| 30/03/2020 | 131 | 8   | 2  | 121   |
| 29/03/2020 | 111 | 3   | 1  | 107   |
| 28/03/2020 | 97  | 3   | 1  | 93    |
| 26/03/2020 | 65  | 3   | 1  | 61    |
| 25/03/2020 | 51  | 2   | 1  | 48    |
| 24/03/2020 | 44  | 2   | 1  | 41    |
| 23/03/2020 | 36  | 2   | 1  | 33    |
| 21/03/2020 | 25  | 2   | 0  | 23    |

Source: NCDC Covid -19 Situation Report (2020)

In Osun State, the number of confirmed cases rose from two (2) on 30th March to forty-two (42) as of 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2020. Despite this, the attitude of citizens after the ease of lockdown orders by the government did not in any way reflect compliance or knowledge of the preventive measures of the disease. Many citizens still behaved as if the disease is not a reality. They are quick to look for ways of breaking the interstate travel bans. Wearing of facemask in public places is yet to become a regular practice while many still violated social or physical distancing rules. There is therefore a need to examine how the availability and accessible communication strategies have influenced the attitude of the rural dwellers. Could the increase in the number of infected people be as a result of faulty or inadequate communication strategies for creating awareness about the preventive measures? Are people's knowledge and attitude towards some of the preventive

measures as directed by the government influenced positively by the use of existing communication strategies?

### **Diffusion of Innovation Theory**

Diffusion of innovation theory postulated by Rogers in 1962 is considered adequate for this research work. This theory originated in communication to explain how, over time, an idea or product gains momentum and diffuses or spreads through a specific population or social system. The end result of this diffusion is that, people as part of a social system; adopt a new idea, behaviour, product or practice. Adoption in this context means that a person does something differently than what they had previously done. This connotes actions like purchasing or using of a new product, acquiring a new skill and performing a new behaviour. The key to adoption is that the person must perceive the idea, behaviour, or product as new or innovative. It is through this that diffusion is possible. Adoption of a new idea, behaviour, or product (i.e., innovation) does not happen simultaneously in a social system; rather it is a process whereby some people are more apt to adopt the innovation than others. This theory embraced innovation of any kind which could be an object, idea, technology, or practice that is very new within a community. For this study, an innovation includes tangible item like new device or medicine needed to prevent the spread of Covid -19 virus. This as well involves intangible services such as a new design methodology or pedagogical technique. However, the way by which information on health and health related issues for people particularly rural dwellers can be acquired and utilized was embedded in the innovation-decision process of this theory.

This theory shows the process through which relevant information with respect to implementation and utilization of Covid -19s' preventive measures take place among the stakeholders of the rural communities. These involve the following stages:

### **Knowledge Acquisition Stage**

The innovation-decision process begins with the knowledge stage. This stage believes that rural dwellers cannot begin to implement and utilize Covid -19s' preventive measures facilities provided by either governmental or non-governmental bodies without having adequate knowledge about its existence within a given community. This stage encourages rural dwellers to be introduced to the availability of the relevant facilities toward preventive measures of this pandemic within their respective community and beyond, which may be as a result of seeing someone using the said facility in real life or being advertised on either broadcast or digital media. Even, a peer or mentor may inform the member of the society about it as well. Therefore, this stage is useful in providing information to rural dwellers about all the Covid -19s' preventive measures. This suggests that media (broadcast and digital) is an extremely powerful instrument, which is expected to exert direct, immediate and powerful effects on those who pay attention to its contents.

### **Persuasion Stage**

Once the rural dwellers are able to attain knowledge acquisition phase, then, the next stage which is persuasion stage would follow. This encourages rural residents to move beyond simple awareness of the new method of applying preventive measures against the spread of Covid -19 as contained in the first phase of the process. It is possible for rural dwellers to begin to show interest in the preventive measures facilities and conditions as well as seek out information about the facilities in terms of costs, features, user reviews, amongst others. It is at this point that rural dwellers begin to consider themselves as potential user of the facilities and start to actively consider whether or not to adopt the facilities into their regular activities in the main time.

### **Decision Stage**

At this stage, the rural dwellers make the choice on either to reject or adopt all or some of the Covid -19s' preventive measures as stipulated by the government. This process involves the weighing of advantages associated with the practice of preventive measures and disadvantages attributed to it, or trade it off. The decision not to adopt is an active choice not to acquire the technology or ever use it. Otherwise, the person begins to use and integrate the technology into his/her daily life. This suggests that if a particular news item on health or health-related matters is presented prominently and frequently by the press, the public will come to believe that it is important. Thus, the press does not necessarily need to tell listeners what to think, but it does tell them what to think about in terms of spelling out not only the consequences of violating government directives with respect to Covid -19, but also the implication of contracting the virus.

### **Implementation Stage**

This is the task of integrating an innovation into regular use by rural dwellers. This can be a slow and time-consuming process in nature. For the person involved, changes to their usual habits and practices may be necessary. The technology is also being evaluated at this time to see if it meets expectations for which it was created or provided. A whole series of factors be it cultural, social, psychological and so on operate at various stages to influence what is presented and how. Some journalists maintain that economic considerations often outweigh conceptions of public interest in determining what is reported. In accordance with the law of large numbers, the media present what people will find interesting in order to attract the largest audience possible.

### **Confirmation Stage**

Once the processes of integration and re-invention have been completed, the next stage is confirmation stage. At this point, persons finalize their decision regarding the adoption of the Covid -19s' preventive measures facilities and condition. One option is exactly that of adoption. At confirmation stage, the person is committed to using the facilities to the fullest potential it can serve in their life. Another option is a reversal of the original choice to use the facilities. This is essentially a delayed rejection.

### **Discontinuance Stage**

After the adoption of modern preventive measures facilities like usage of face mask, obeying the stay at home order, frequent washing of hands under running water, application of sanitizer among others, the rural dwellers may not always continue to use the facilities, though, after an initial period in which the gadget is used, the rural dwellers may abandon it. Such discontinuance can occur in various ways. Some technologies suffer from obsolescence because they have limited expectation for the duration of their use, or they have negative side effect, or a better technology emerged and is preferred.

This theory is relevant because as the spread of the Covid -19 become more prevalent in Nigeria, most people, especially rural dwellers, are likely to discontinue from those preventive measures and reject the use of facilities as recommended by the international communities, most especially lockdown order, usage of face mask, maintaining social distancing.

### **Methodology**

The exploratory research design was adopted for this study. This design encourages combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The triangulation mode of collecting data would allow the weaknesses of the one form of data collection to be offset by the strengths of other form and thereby enhancing the credibility of the research findings (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011).

The population of the study consisted of all the residents of the villages under Irewole Local Government Area of Osun state. This is because the local government under consideration has large number of villages and that majority of the people residing in those villages usually come to Ikire township once in a while either for business transactions or for festive purpose. Besides, some of these villages do not have regular access to basic amenities like electricity and pipe-borne water supply which make the communities to be regarded as rural area. Purposive sampling technique was used to select ten villages namely; Balogun, Agbora, Odeyinka, Bamidele, Oloowa, Ayetoro, Arinkinkin, Bamgbola, Fidiwo and Waasinmi. Ten participants were sampled per village with the aid of simple random sampling technique, totaling one-hundred (100). The rationale for using those villages was premised on the nature of their economic activities, which is basically on their dependence on agriculture as well as the poor condition of the infrastructural facilities.

Questionnaire which was translated into local environment language (that is Yoruba language) and designed with varieties of Likert scale was used to elicit information from the respondents with respect to the available and accessible communication strategies, coupled with the knowledge and attitude toward such a knowledge towards Covid -19s' preventive measures. In terms of validity of the instrument, the researchers ensure that the items enumerated within the instrument are relevant in the attainment of the specific research objectives, which was done to

ensure content validity. Besides, the same instrument was administered on thirty rural dwellers selected from neighbouring communities in Isokan Local Government Area of Osun State. Split-half technique was used in testing the reliability of the research instrument which produced reliability coefficient of 0.69. This indicated that the research instrument was adequate, suitable and reliable. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents by the researchers and five trained research assistants who were familiar with the terrain of the sampled communities. The quantitative data collected were analyzed using statistical tools of pie and bar charts, simple percentages, mean and standard deviation and t-test.

## Results

### Analysis Based on Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents.

**Table 1: A Pie-Chart Showing the Distribution of Respondents by Gender**

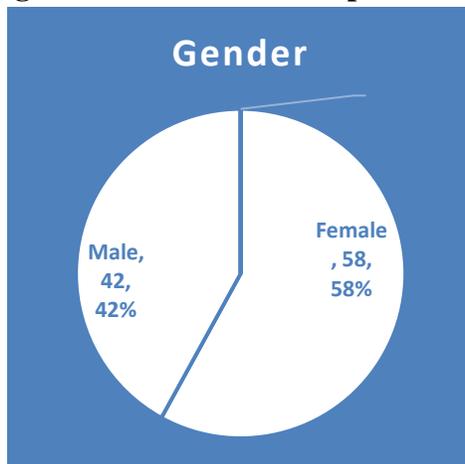


Table 1, that is, pie chart is expressed in percentage form. It revealed that 58 per cent were female in terms of their gender characteristics, while the remaining 42 per cent were male. It can be deduced that majority of the rural dwellers within the studied areas were females as having 58 per cent representation.

**Table 2: Bar-Chart Showing the Distribution of Respondents by Religion Practice**

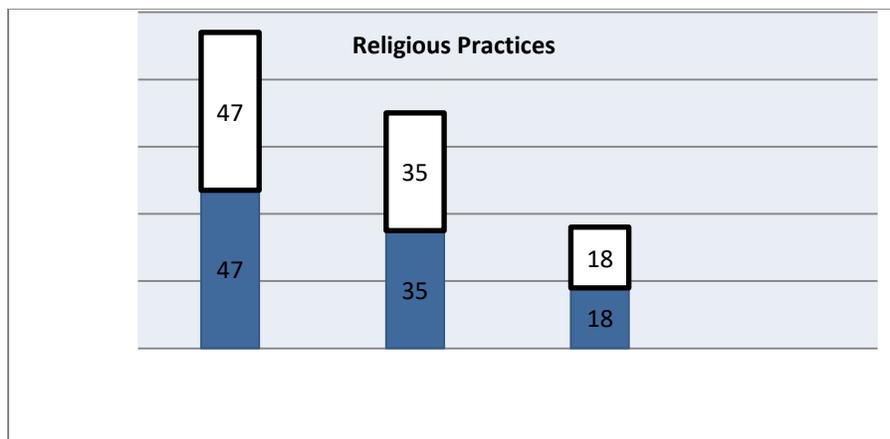


Table 2, that is bar-chart showed the distribution of respondents on the basis of their religious practice. It revealed that 47 per cent of the sampled respondents claimed to be Muslim, 35 per cent of them are Christians by their claim, while 18 per cent of the total participants are Traditional worshippers. It is inferred that majority of the participants involved in the research are Muslim as having 47 per cent of the overall respondents, followed by Christian, while the least participants are Traditional worshippers.

**Table 3: Bar-Chart Showing the Distribution of Respondents by Age Range**

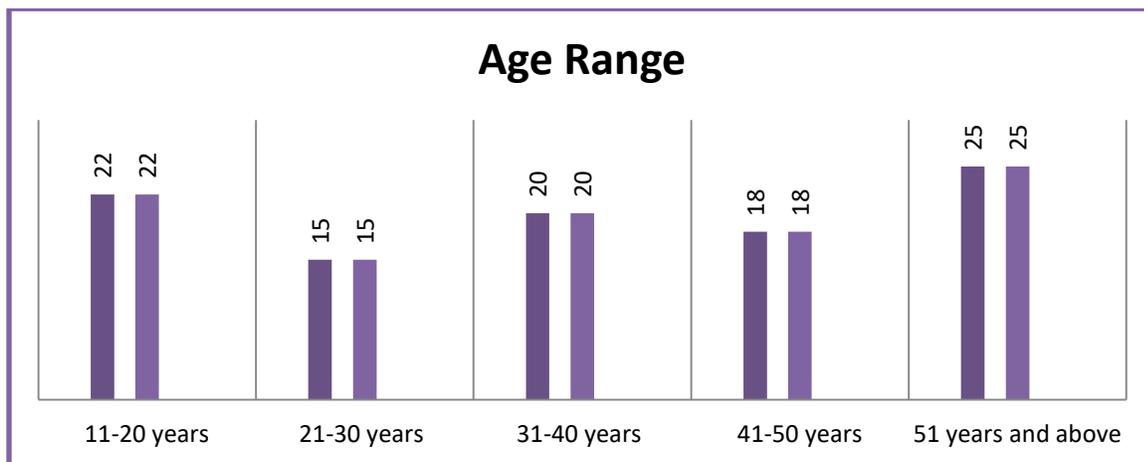


Table 3, that is bar chart showed distribution of respondents with respect to their age range. It indicated that 22 per cent of the respondents are between 11-20 years of age, 15 per cent of them are between 21-30 years of age, 20 per cent, 18 per cent and 25 per cent of the participants are between 31-40 years, 41-50 years and 51 years and above respectively. It was revealed that majority of the respondents were within 51 years and above, followed by those within 11-20 years of age. This was attributed to the closure of schools which made majority of school going age children to migrate to rural areas, so as to help their parents.

#### **Analysis Based on Research Questions**

**Research Question I:** What are the available and accessible communication strategies for the rural dwellers towards Covid -19s' preventive measures in Osun State, Nigeria?

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics showing the available and accessible communication strategies facilities for the rural dwellers towards Covid -19s' preventive measures in Osun State, Nigeria**

|       | Percentage |
|-------|------------|
| Radio | 88%        |

|                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Paper                   | 19% |
| Television              | 39% |
| SMS                     | 43% |
| Facebook                | 21% |
| WhatsApp                | 22% |
| Twitter                 | 00  |
| Instagram               | 00  |
| House to house campaign | 00  |
| Market campaigns        | 00  |

Table 4 employed dropdown technique in which respondents are allowed to select more than an option that was in connection with the availability and accessibility of the communication strategies within their rural domain. The empirical outcomes indicated that 88 per cent of the participants which was majority claimed that they had access to information on Covid -19s' preventive measures through radio programs while the remaining 12 per cent said that they did not have access to such information over radio. It was deduced that cost of acquiring and maintaining radio gadgets was affordable by most of the rural dwellers which made them to access vital information through it.

Also, minority of them, that is, 19 per cent had access to print media. This is to say that skills required by most of the rural dwellers to comprehend the information worded in the print media like newspaper may be lacking which may in turn discourage them from getting the information from it despite its availability and accessibility.

Besides, thirty-nine per cent, forty-three per cent, twenty-one per cent and twenty-two per cent of them had access to Covid -19s' preventive measures through television, short messages services (SMS), Facebook and WhatsApp respectively. While none of the participants had access to information through some of the social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram. House to house campaign and market campaign means of disseminating relevant information concerning the preventive measures were not the order of the day as stay at home directive was put in motion for some period of time. This was considered as one of the ways by which the spread of this global pandemic would be prohibited.

**Research Question II:** What is the degree of Covid -19 preventive measures' knowledge acquired by rural dwellers through available and accessible communication strategies in Osun State, Nigeria?

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics showing the rural dwellers' knowledge of Covid -19 preventive measures through available and accessible communication strategies.**

| <b>Items on knowledge of Covid -19 preventive Measures</b>                          | <b>SA</b> | <b>A</b> | <b>SD</b> | <b>D</b> |
|---|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Frequent washing of hands under running water                                       | 41%       | 33%      | 10%       | 16%      |
| Use of hand sanitizer while in public   | 43%       | 34%      | 13%       | 10%      |
| Application of cloth face mask in the public place                                  | 47%       | 33%      | 5%        | 15%      |
| Maintain social distancing of at least two feet                                     | 49%       | 36%      | 10%       | 5%       |
| Stay at home directive  | 54%       | 40%      | 2%        | 4%       |
| Use of elbow when sneezing instead of hand  | 39%       | 44%      | 11%       | 6%       |
| Avoid social gathering of more than twenty people                                   | 40%       | 45%      | 7%        | 8%       |
| Temporary suspension of religious activities  | 77%       | 25%      | 9%        | 9%       |
| Travelers from other states/countries should embark on fourteen days self-isolation | 30%       | 39%      | 16%       | 15%      |

Table 5 contained the rural dwellers' knowledge of Covid -19s' preventive measures through available and accessible communication strategies. With respect to frequent washing of hands under running water, 41 percent and 33 per cent strongly agreed and agreed that they were aware of it through the available and accessible communication strategies within the rural communities while 10 per cent and 16 per cent of them strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement. This implies that majority of rural dwellers had knowledge about frequent washing of hands under running water as a means of preventing the spread of Covid -19 virus.

Moreover, with respect to the use of hand sanitizer while in public, 43 per cent of the participants strongly agreed and 34 per cent agreed to the statement while 13 per cent and 10 per cent strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. Also, 77 per cent of them which was majority acknowledged the awareness of relevant and application of hand sanitizer while in public as announced in the media. Furthermore, the findings indicated that the awareness about that application of cloth face mask in the public place was guaranteed by the available and accessible communication strategies as having 47 per cent and 33 per cent of them strongly agreed and agreed respectively.

On social distancing, 49 per cent of the entire respondents strongly agreed, 36 per cent of them agreed, 10 per cent strongly disagreed and 5 per cent disagreed. In addition, majority of the respondents were of the view that information relating to stay at home directive, use of elbow when sneezing, avoidance of social gathering of more than twenty people, temporary suspension of gathering for religious activities and isolation of people traveling from other states or countries were obtained from the available and accessible communication strategies as having 94

per cent, 88 per cent, 85 per cent, 82 per cent and 69 per cent support respectively. This implies that majority of the rural dwellers were aware of the preventive measures through the available and accessible communication strategies.

**Research Question III:** What is the attitude of the rural dwellers towards Covid -19s' preventive measures in Osun State, Nigeria?

**Table 6: Descriptive statistics showing the respondents' attitude towards Covid -19s' preventive measures in Osun State, Nigeria**

| Items on attitudes towards COVID-19 preventive Measures | Mean | SD   |
|---|------|------|
| Washing of hands under running water                    | 1.09 | 0.33 |
| Use of hand sanitizer while in public                   | 2.52 | 0.51 |
| Application of cloth face mask in the public place      | 2.63 | 0.56 |
| Maintain social distancing                              | 1.03 | 0.29 |
| Stay at home directive                                  | 1.52 | 0.37 |
| Use of elbow when sneezing instead of hand              | 1.09 | 0.33 |
| Avoid social gathering of more than twenty people       | 4.02 | 0.81 |
| Temporary suspension of religious activities            | 3.89 | 0.75 |

N= 100 Very High Extent (VHE) = 5, High Extent (HE) = 4, Moderate Extent (ME) = 3, Low Extent (LE) = 2 and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 Decision Region: Weak = 0.00 – 2.00 Moderate = 2.01 – 3.00 High = 3.01 – 5.00

Table 6 contained the information about attitude of the rural dwellers towards Covid -19s' preventive measures in Osun State, Nigeria. The empirical outcomes revealed that the attitude of rural dwellers towards frequent washing of hands under running water, maintenance of social distancing, stay at home order and the use of elbow when sneezing instead of hand as some of the Covid -19s' preventive measures were weak to a very high extent as having mean values of 1.09, 1.03, 1.52 and 1.09 respectively as shown in the decision value region. Besides, use of hand sanitizer while in public and application of cloth face mask in the public place receive moderate attitude from the rural dwellers under consideration as having 2.52 and 2.63 mean values. The findings indicated further that the attitude of rural dwellers towards Covid -19s' preventive measures like avoidance of social gathering of more than twenty people and temporary suspension of religious activities were adequate to a very high extent as having mean values of 4.02 and 3.89. It is therefore inferred that rural dwellers' attitude towards stay at home order was so weak, this is because, the order did not prevent them from engaging in their day-to-day economic activities within their immediate rural community. Rural dwellers' moderate attitudes towards the use of hand sanitizer while in public and application of cloth face mask in the public

place seem to be as a result of compulsion for them to be able to access some public places like banks, markets among other.

**Research Question IV:** What is the attitude of the rural dwellers towards Covid -19s’ preventive measures on the basis of gender attributes, age range and religious affiliation in Osun State, Nigeria?

**Table 7: T-test result showing the rural dwellers’ attitude towards Covid -19s’ preventive measures on the basis of gender quality**

|          | Gender | Number | Mean | S.D  | DF | T-Cal | T-Tab |
|----------|--------|--------|------|------|----|-------|-------|
| Attitude | Male   | 42     | 28   | 2.05 | 98 | -2.25 | 2.576 |
|          | Female | 58     | 29   | 2.37 |    |       |       |

Two-Tailed Test at 1% Level of Significance

Table 7 contained empirical outcomes with respect to rural dwellers’ attitude towards Covid -19s’ preventive measures based on gender qualities. The empirical results revealed that there was no significant difference between the attitude of female and male rural dwellers towards Covid -19s’ preventive measures, as t-calculated value of -2.25 in absolute term was less than t-tabulated value of 2.576 at one per cent level of significance.

**Table 8: T-test result showing the rural dwellers’ attitude towards Covid -19s’ preventive measures on the basis of Religious affiliation**

| Variable | Religious Affiliation | Number | Mean | S.D  | DF | T-Cal  | T-Tab |
|----------|-----------------------|--------|------|------|----|--------|-------|
| Attitude | Islam                 | 47     | 30   | 2.23 | 80 | 2.029  | 2.576 |
|          | Christianity          | 35     | 29   | 2.19 |    |        |       |
|          | Islam                 | 47     | 30   | 2.23 | 63 | -3.153 | 2.576 |
|          | Traditional           | 18     | 32   | 2.31 |    |        |       |
|          | Christianity          | 35     | 29   | 2.19 | 51 | -4.557 | 2.576 |
|          | Traditional           | 18     | 32   | 2.31 |    |        |       |

Two-Tailed Test at 1% Level of Significance

Table 8 contained empirical outcomes with respect to rural dwellers’ attitude towards Covid -19s’ preventive measures on the basis of religious affiliation. The empirical findings revealed significant difference in the rural dwellers’ attitude towards Covid -19s’ preventive measures between respondents with Islamic and Traditional orientation as well as between participants with Christianity and Traditional doctrine. As the t-calculated values of 3.153 and 4.557 in absolute term were higher than t-tabulated value of 2.576 at one percent level of significance.

This was in favour of Traditional worshipers, as having mean value of 32 which was slightly higher than the mean values of 30 and 29 obtained by the respondents with Islamic and Christianity orientations respectively.

**Table 9: T-test result showing the rural dwellers’ attitude towards Covid -19s’ preventive measures on the basis of Age range**

| Variable | Age Range          | Number | Mean | S.D  | DF | T-Cal | T-Tab |
|----------|--------------------|--------|------|------|----|-------|-------|
| Attitude | 30 years and below | 37     | 32   | 2.51 | 98 | 1.935 | 2.576 |
|          | 31 years and above | 63     | 31   | 2.47 |    |       |       |

Two-Tailed Test at 1% Level of Significance

Table 8 contained empirical outcomes with respect to rural dwellers’ attitude towards Covid -19s’ preventive measures on the basis of age range. The empirical results revealed that there was no significant difference in the attitude of rural dwellers towards Covid -19s’ preventive measures on the basis of age range, as t-calculated value of 1.935 which was less than t-tabulated value of 2.576 at one per cent level of significance.

### **Discussion of findings**

The study revealed that the knowledge acquired by rural dwellers about Covid -19s’ preventive measure was predicated on the availability and accessibility to some of the communication strategies such as radio, television and newspaper. Besides, the attitude displayed towards avoidance of social gathering of more than twenty people and temporary suspension of religious activities were encouraging. This was in tandem with submission made by Akinyooye and Aransi (2020) in which mass media was noted to have played a great role in the creation of awareness about the developmental projects, most especially, those that are within the purview of attaining SDG 1 (that is, ending poverty). It has further been acknowledged that mass media awareness is necessary but not sufficient condition to the attainment of the sustainable development goal one. This means that this strategy can only serve as a means of preventing no contacted individual from contracting it but not for providing cure. Megan (2010) supported this by arguing that using interpersonal communication, in conjunction with other appropriate modern strategies-mass media, would give the highest success rate in health campaigns in developing countries like Nigeria. In addition, Saraf and Balamurugan (2018) concurred that awareness about various serious health issues like HIV, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, etc., can be promoted via mass media which will help a lot of people to get aware of such health oriented problems and diseases. Beyond this, Omoregie and Baruwa (2018) opined that new media are driving new practices that are profoundly affecting many aspects of life and learning and these media have called to question the trust of online information and relationships. This means new media cannot be used in isolation of day to day interaction of people.

In another development, the empirical outcome revealed that the rural dwellers' attitude towards some of the Covid -19s' preventive measures which comprised frequent wash of hand under running water, use of elbow when sneezing, stay at home directive and maintenance of the required social distancing were not encouraging. Furthermore, there was no significant difference in the attitude of rural dwellers towards Covid -19s' preventive measures on the basis of age ranges and gender qualities. Sanni and Aransi, (2020) supported this by acknowledging that the problems associated with health oriented issues was insignificant of demographic characteristic like gender traits. While, significant difference existed based on the religious affiliation of the respondents which was in favour of those practicing Traditional religious. This could in part be attributed to the fact that Traditional religious activities might not be so affected by the temporary suspension of religious activities and avoidance of social gathering of more than twenty people as some of the preventive measures to curtail the spread of Covid -19, as the Traditional religion believers' means of worshiping are not so scheduled like that of Muslims and Christians who usually converge at a given venue and particular period of time (most especially Jummat Congregation for Muslims on Fridays and Church service for Christians on Saturdays for seven days doctrine and Sundays for others).

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

The attitude exhibited towards avoidance of social gathering and temporary suspension of religious activities were encouraging. On the contrary, the study revealed that discouraging attitude was placed on frequent wash of hand under running water, use of back hand when sneezing, stay at home directive and maintenance of the required social distancing. In the light of the empirical findings, the following recommendations were suggested for the concerned stakeholders.

1. The head of the village (tagged *Baale*) and other stakeholders like religious leaders within a particular rural community should create more physical facilities and a forum for few people to meet at a time. Then, these people will be the one to disseminate information obtained by them from any of the available and accessible communication strategies and get it across to all members of their community. This will enhance the community members who do not have required gadgets to access the information to become aware of it.
2. Health officers serving within the rural communities should be permitted and reinforced by concerned agents, to embark on house-to-house campaigns in order to complement the information that rural dwellers obtain from the available and accessible communication strategies. This will be a useful means of enlightening and orientating rural dwellers about the implications of contracting the said virus and practical ways of observing those preventive measures. This should be done without breaking or violating any of the prescribed preventive measures.
3. Governmental and non-governmental organisations should work individually and collectively to provide appropriate and required facilities necessary for the

- observation of some of the Covid-19s' preventive measures such as face mask, sanitizer and running water for people in the rural communities.
4. After the provision of the facilities and unhindered accessibility of the people to it, then the government can prohibit offenders by using the community leaders such as village heads and religious leaders.

**Limitation of the study:** This study faced the grave challenge of lockdown from Covid 19 pandemic especially in the state of the research. That is why the sample of hundred was used. Also, preventive measures of Covid 19 experienced rapid changes in the belief of the people about it. The wearing of face mask has become a permit rather than the preventive measure. Another question which still needs to be answered is how suitable and preventive are the face masks used in the rural areas. Unfortunately, the scope of this study does not cover such questions. Observation revealed that some rural dwellers used any type of cloth to cover their mouth as matter of acceptance and not prevention.

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