AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN VACCINE HESITANCY AMONGST STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS AND THE IMPERATIVES OF ENTERTAINMENT EDUCATION

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Abstract

Vaccine hesitancy among youths, especially students in tertiary institutions is a growing concern exacerbated by the pervasive influence of social media. This study explores the impact of social media on the Coronavirus vaccine hesitancy among students of Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, and the potential role of Entertainment-Education (EE) in addressing this issue. Using a mixed-methods approach, data was collected through surveys and focus group discussions involving students across various tertiary institutions. The study identifies entertainment education as a promising strategy to counteract vaccine misinformation. By integrating accurate health information into engaging and culturally relevant content, entertainment education has the potential to reshape attitudes towards vaccines among students. Findings from this study indicate a significant correlation between social media use and vaccine hesitancy, with misinformation and conspiracy theories spreading rapidly through online platforms. The implications of these findings underscore the urgent need for targeted educational interventions that leverage the popularity and reach of social media while harnessing the persuasive power of entertainment media. Recommendations include the development of evidence-based health communication campaigns and collaborations with content creators and influencers to promote pro-health messages effectively. In conclusion, this research contributes to understanding the complex dynamics of

vaccine hesitancy among students and advocates for innovative approaches that harness the power of social media and entertainment education to promote public health goals.

Keywords: Drama, Theatre, Entertainment-Education, Social Media, Cyber Theatre, COVID-19, Vaccine Hesitancy.

Introduction

The outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic necessitated an unprecedented global lockdown. This restriction across countries enhanced the indulgence in virtual spaces and information communication technology (ICT) as the available communication and social interaction platform. Sessa buttresses this view by asserting that the pandemic solidified the use of social media as a way to stay in touch during a period of social isolation and to gather information, which helped vaccine disinformation spread virally around the world (n.p). Heilweil also observes that several countries have been forced to regulate Coronavirus vaccine-related content on social media because of the influx of misinformation (n.p). While the undeniable power of ICT has positively shrunk the world into a global village, the pandemic, however, exposed the dire implications of social media on the youth population in countries like Nigeria. The spread of misinformation and the resulting infodemic about the Coronavirus and its vaccines on social media platforms have significantly amplified vaccine hesitancy nationwide. According to research by Johns Hopkins University, at the peak of vaccination in 2022, Nigeria was rated among the least vaccinated countries. As of June 2022, only 19% of the population were vaccinated while 81% remained unvaccinated (Johns Hopkins University). The advantages of social media

are presently being undermined by abuse, misinformation and infodemic. This has forced several governments across the world to contemplate restrictions on the use of social media platforms. Nigeria, for example, notably banned the use of X (formerly Twitter) in 2021 and proposed stringent regulation on the use of social media during the administration of Mohammadu Buhari (Iyorah n.p). Nevertheless, the development and availability of digital media and communication technology have provided an avalanche of possibilities for promoting key public health and development issues (Fayoyin 1).

According to 2023 research on social media patronage in Nigeria, approximately 31.6 million Nigerians actively share and access information on social media (Sasu n.p). This makes social media a breeding ground for the proliferation of infodemics vis-à-vis a viable platform for health education and campaigns. Islam et al. report that many social media users promote the idea that the COVID-19 pandemic was a population control scheme (5). The infodemic also includes conspiracy theories that explain COVID-19 as a bio-weapon which has been engineered by international agencies and created by scientists from China in preparation for biological warfare. A lot of youths and influencers do not only use social media for social interactions and entertainment but also the circulation of skits and promotion of businesses. This medium could also be explored by the government and health practitioners to educate and influence the behaviours of these youths in emergencies like the Coronavirus pandemic. It is therefore imperative to embrace the opportunities provided by Entertainment-Education to counter and ameliorate the obvious challenges created by digital media and social platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X

(formerly Twitter) and the likes. Social media's growing influence amongst students of tertiary institutions has amplified the spread of negative opinions and attitudes toward health behaviours and vaccinations. Richards believes that the rise of misinformation and disinformation campaigns on social media platforms has contributed to the scepticism and reluctance observed in students when it comes to accepting vaccinations. She opined that the failure of the government to devise efficient communication strategies to enlighten the public allowed the rumours and misinformation surrounding COVID-19 and the vaccination to fester (111). Understanding the factors that drive vaccine hesitancy amongst this specific demographic is crucial for developing targeted interventions and communication strategies.

The youth population in tertiary institutions represents a key demographic for vaccination campaigns, as such, promoting healthy behaviour and addressing vaccine hesitancy in this group are imperative for achieving and upscaling vaccine acceptance. By identifying the specific ways in which social media influences vaccine-related beliefs and behaviours among students, and by assessing the effectiveness of entertainment education in promoting accurate information, the study proffers an efficient strategy to mitigate the spread of misinformation among Nigerians, especially the youth population. The research examines the implications of social media on responses to Coronavirus vaccination by Students at Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State and University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State. It explores the potential of entertainment education as an effective tool in disseminating accurate information on social media platforms, countering misconceptions proliferated

through social media, and fostering positive attitudes towards wellbeing, safety protocol and the need for vaccination.

Objectives

This research aims to assess the implications of social media on vaccine hesitancy among students in tertiary institutions and explore the critical role of entertainment education in addressing and mitigating the challenges. The study fulfils the following objectives;

i. Quantify vaccine hesitancy levels amongst students in Nigerian Universities.

ii. Analyse social media impact on vaccine hesitancy amongst students in Nigerian Universities.

iii. Propose Cyber Theatre as an efficient communication strategy to mitigate the influence of social media on students in Nigerian Universities.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Communication is essential in providing effective health services. Communication technology such as social media, provides a far-reaching prospect for addressing health and development issues, occasioned by the rising levels of social media usage. The strength of this medium lies in its essential traits such as interactivity, dialogue, speed, multimodality, user-generated content, mass customisation, horizontal communication, and multi-directionality of information (Fayoyin 1). According to the U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, social media provides a positive community and connection to a good population of youths and serves as an efficient medium for communication, access to important information and a

conducive space for self-expression (6). Social media has presently expanded its reach and possibilities, helping out in various ways to meet the needs of users. It is a platform that allows people to exchange messages in the form of texts, photos, and videos and also allows audio-visual interactions.

The advancement of technology has also made it possible for users to be able to have live streams and hence have a fan base and followers (Ahmed and Umar 3). Researches has shown that social media platforms are accessed daily by Nigerian students, and these platforms have provided them with a free and direct communication channel to engage and entertain friends and families around the world (Ismail 3). In his study, Ismail however, noted that despite the advantages provided, content proliferated through social media has also pushed students and teenagers into various crimes, made them victims of crimes and encouraged students and teenagers to engage in various forms of risky and undesirable behaviours (6). To this end, Fayoyin notes that social and digital technology can transform negative behaviours by providing the right information. It is a proven pathway to health education, and if properly harnessed, could be an efficient tool for social and behaviour change communication (2). This makes it imperative to source for an efficient strategy to counter negative contents that influence students by providing alternative engaging, entertaining and influential content. The idea of drama and theatre has transformed over time, spanning from early human history through classical eras to today's postmodern era. Discussions about its definition have been extensive, often centred on whether to encompass solely Western theatrical forms or to acknowledge a broader spectrum of global theatrical experiences. Even now, the understanding of drama and theatre

continue to evolve. Nnamele and Nnalue describe it as a seductive method of communicating and questioning reality by expressing and evoking emotions (154). Elements of performance are present in diverse human activities, ranging from children's games and political campaigns to dances, religious ceremonies, traditional rituals, festivals, processions, sports, educational settings, and storytelling. It is what Nnamele and Idegu refer to as the "collective relatedness of a people which translates into actions and reactions in response to nature, daily existence and their survival (226). Advocates of theatre as a communication strategy contend that drama and theatre serve as social tools for exchanging ideas and fostering dialogue among individuals and groups. Drama and theatre as an art form possess the capacity to inform, educate, persuade, and stimulate thought. It can both replicate and strengthen established ideas and values while also introducing fresh perspectives, potentially leading to social change (Epskamp 109). Krasner avers that "while theatre has been linked to entertainment, it has traditionally provided a forum of intellectual engagement and philosophical exchange" (1). Drama and theatre have been validated for their utility in moral instruction. By harnessing the techniques and creative power of theatre, educators aim to offer children experiences that are deeply engaging, intellectually challenging, and sometimes provocative, serving as unparalleled stimuli for further exploration of the chosen subjects (Krasner 9, Jackson 1). Waters et al. point out that,

> Performance-based education is being applied to a wide range of educational topics with children which include environmental issues, substance abuse, accident prevention abuse, neglect abuse and

> bullying social issues, nutrition, disability awareness as well as medical and educational differences (4).

Drama and theatre, therefore, functions as a societal watchdog, questioning existing norms and scrutinizing itself. Most playwrights believe that the essence of drama should not be merely to entertain, but should address social issues arising from the intersection of human emotions and circumstances (Betiang 25-26). Transmitting theatrical performances through technological and cyber spaces such as social media is a contemporary trend that has broken the confinement of theatre to a specific location to provide a limitless possibility to engage a theatre audience. The connubial between theatre and the digital space often goes by appellations such as cyber theatre, cyber drama, digital drama, digital theatre and cyber performance amongst others. Dixon avers that,

> All performance works where computer technologies play a key role rather than a subsidiary one in content, techniques, aesthetics, or delivery forms. This includes live theatre, dance and performance art that incorporates projections that have been digitally created or manipulated; robotic and virtual reality performances; installations and theatrical works that use computer sensing/activating equipment or telematics techniques; and performative works and activities that are accessed through the computer screen, including cyber theatre events, MUDs, MOOs and virtual worlds, computer games, CDROMs (3).

This form of theatre transformed cyberspace into a cyber stage to present live theatre performances across a wider online audience. Digital performances are a contemporary form of theatrical art distributed via internet applications and various

technological platforms for reproduction. This genre has recently emerged within the arts landscape. Similar to how television brought entertainment directly into homes, internet capabilities now enable digital performances, allowing audiences to access theatrical content anytime and anywhere through internet-enabled devices (Ekpe and Eze 30052-30053).

This work therefore seeks to advocate for the integration of entertainment education into social media content to create a form of cyber theatre that provides adequate information and promotes desired behaviour through social media. According to Fossard, Entertainment-Education drama has become a major component of multifaceted behaviour change projects (29). Singhal and Everett define "Entertainment-Education as the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate to increase audience members knowledge about an educational issue, create favourable attitude and change overt behaviour" (9). The efficacy of Entertainment-Education strategy has been proven to be successfully applied in health intervention programmes in several countries of various continents such as Latin America, Africa and Asia (283). Entertainment education involves the creative use of drama to mirror social problems and educate the audience while entertaining them. This was employed in assessing and influencing students' behaviour in the course of this study. Moyer-Guse explains that,

> To date, Entertainment-Education messages have been systematically evaluated across a variety of topics. For instance, one large-scale programme, soul city has used dramatic television programming to influence knowledge and attitudes towards HIV prevention, condom use, awareness of domestic violence, rape and

> social issues. Indeed, a variety of issues have been addressed with entertainment education across a variety of countries. Generally, speaking these and other studies have found that prosocial messages embedded in entertainment television programmes can influence viewers' awareness and attitudes towards the issues they cover (407-408).

Entertainment education provides the opportunity for individuals to evaluate their actions and also awaken the desire to aspire for a better life. According to Onuekwe, entertainment education has had a massive effect on audience attitudes and behaviour about HIV/AIDS avoidance and adoption of family planning methods" (17). Entertainment education has the power to question and bring into debate salient social issues before the public. It expedites a cognitive process that redefines existing assumptions to promote attitudinal and behavioural change.

The theoretical framework of this research was hinged on Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT). Bandura's theory captures four (4) human behavioural factors; attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Inspired by his "Bobo Doll" experiment in the late 60s and early 70s, Bandura concludes that people learn from observing others behave in a certain way. These behaviours are retained and reproduced at a given time when motivated (Nnamele 20). According to Bandura, social learning does not conform to the idea that inner forces or environmental factors coerce man into actions, rather 'reciprocal interaction between behaviour and its controlling conditions' accounts for man's psychological dispositions (2). His theory hinges on the importance of cognitive resonance as humans are believed to be natural imitators of experienced behaviours. This is relevant to this research because it

recognises the effect of external and internal influences on human behaviour. Participants in this study are therefore evaluated based on their exposure to the contents of the Coronavirus vaccine and the influence of such exposure on their subsequent behaviours.

Methodology

The study adopts a mixed methodology in data collection. Mixed-method allows the researcher to explore the complex relationship between research targets and the social environment, and blends qualitative and quantitative advantages to ameliorate possible limitations in a single method of data collection (Malina et al. 63, ElGeed et al. 12). This advances a systematic fusion or "mixing" of quantitative and qualitative data in a specific and sustained investigation (Wisdom and Creswell, 1). Data for this research was generated from selected Nigerian universities; Federal University Lokoja in Kogi State and University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State. The 500 target population of the study was drawn equally from the two selected schools through random sampling. Participation was voluntary, and only those who accepted to the terms of the research took part in the questionnaire session and the focus group discussions. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were used to collect the qualitative data while a questionnaire as a survey tool was employed for the quantitative data collection. Random sampling was also adopted in the selection of the 12 participants for each of the four focus group discussions held in the two universities. The discussions were guided by semi-structured questions designed to elicit Coronavirus vaccine-related information from the participants. The questionnaire for this research was designed according to the 7-point Likert scale

which has been described by some scholars as a more reliable design (Joshi et al. 398, Finstad 104). The qualitative data was transcribed, coded then analysed by the objectives of the research while the quantitative data was analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 23.0.

Data Presentation from the Selected Universities and Discussion

The quantitative data presented in the tables show the sources of information and the vaccination rate of the 500 respondents from both the Federal University Lokoja (FUL) and University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). The tables below (Table 1 and Table 2) represent a crosstabulation of students' information source against Question number 8 (Q8) which was to extract information on respondents' vaccination status.

Table 1. FUL Respondents Who Got Information from Social Media and Their Vaccination Status

Social Media *Q8 Crosstabulation

			Q8						
			strongly disagree	slightly disagree	disagree	neutral	strongly agree	agree	Total
social media	yes	Count	68	14	37	12	22	8	161
		% of Total	27.2%	5.6%	14.8%	4.8%	8.8%	3.2%	64.4%
	no	Count	4	13	68	0	3	1	89
		% of Total	1.6%	5.2%	27.2%	0.0%	1.2%	0.4%	35.6%
Total		Count	72	27	105	12	25	9	250
		% of Total	28.8%	10.8%	42.0%	4.8%	10.0%	3.6%	100.0%

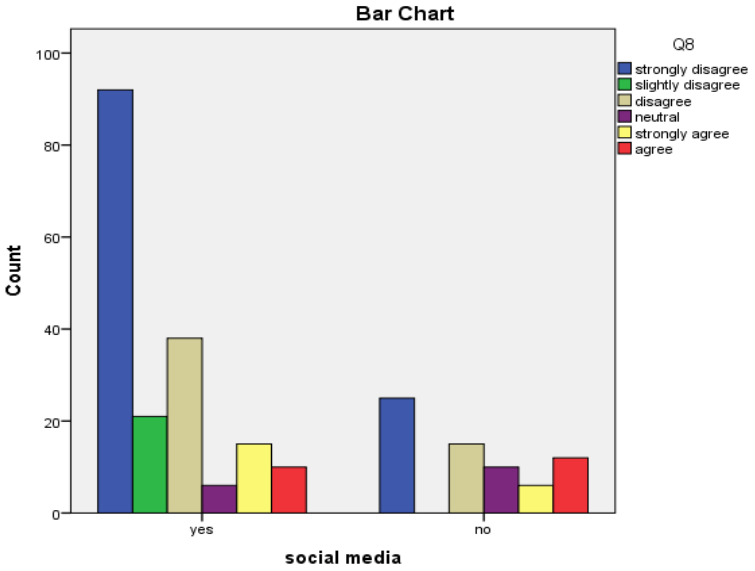


Figure 1.

The above table (Table 1) presents the cross-tabulation of responses of those who chose social media as their source of information and their vaccination status. From the table, a total of 151 respondents who chose social media as their source of information were not vaccinated while 25 respondents agreed to have received the COVID-19 vaccine. Respondents who did not declare their vaccination status were. This implies that among 182 students who got information about the vaccine from social media, only 13.7% of the respondents were vaccinated, 3.3% were neutral and 83% refused to be vaccinated.

Table 2. UNN Respondents Who Got Information from Social Media and Their Vaccination Status

Social media *Q8 Crosstabulation

			Q8						
			strongly disagree	slightly disagree	disagree	neutral	strongly agree	agree	Total
social media	yes	Count	68	14	37	12	22	8	161
		% of Total	27.2%	5.6%	14.8%	4.8%	8.8%	3.2%	64.4%
	no	Count	4	13	68	0	3	1	89
		% of Total	1.6%	5.2%	27.2%	0.0%	1.2%	0.4%	35.6%
Total		Count	72	27	105	12	25	9	250
		% of Total	28.8%	10.8%	42.0%	4.8%	10.0%	3.6%	100.0%

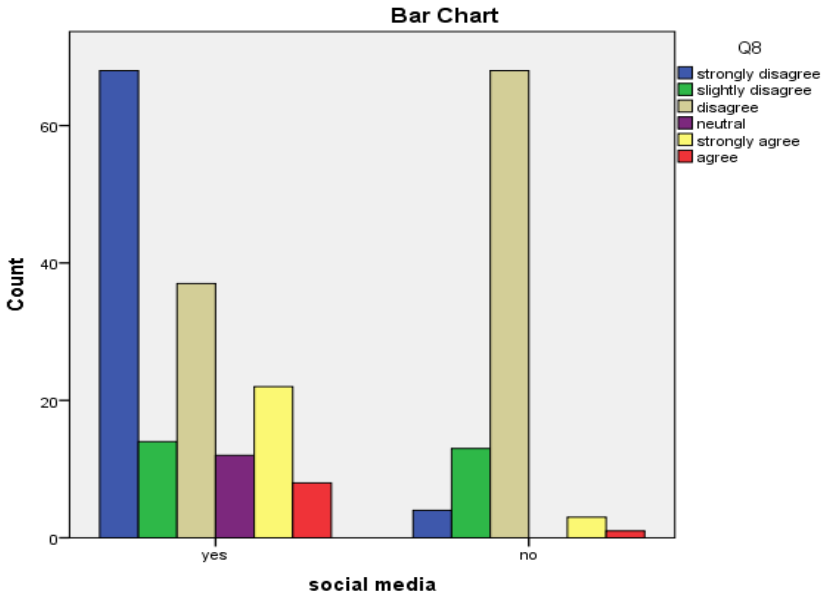


Figure 2.

Table 2 presents the cross-tabulation of social media as the information source and the vaccination rate of respondents. It shows that a total of 161 students from the 250 respondents at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka got their information on the Coronavirus vaccine from social media platforms. From this number, just 30 respondents were vaccinated. The number of students who rejected the COVID-19 vaccination was 119 while 12 refused to disclose their vaccination status. In percentage, the data reveals that 73.9% did not take the vaccination, 7.5% did not disclose their vaccination status, while the percentage of those who got information from social media and received the vaccine were just 18.6%.

The qualitative data from the two universities explains some of the reasons for the low vaccination rate. At Federal University Lokoja, four focus group discussions were held. Participants in the discussions shared similar perspectives on the Coronavirus and its vaccine. Some viewed the vaccine favourably, while the majority expressed concerns about its safety. Those sceptical of the vaccine mentioned seeing claims on social media, particularly Facebook. Most of the students alleged that there was evidence on social media that the vaccine emanated from the anti-Christ, contained a magnetic force harmful to humans and could shorten lifespans. Others cited fear of needles as a barrier to vaccination. Additionally, some participants reported seeing posts of individuals who testified on Facebook that they fell ill after receiving the first dose of the vaccine, which contributed to their hesitation. A participant insisted that there was nothing like Coronavirus in Kogi State. According to him "our Governor said there is nothing like Coronavirus in Kogi state." On enquiry about the source of the information the participant responded "I saw it on Facebook." On the other hand, individuals willing to be vaccinated raised issues such as crowded vaccination centres and challenges in completing the full dosage. Many students felt that sufficient measures to actively promote vaccination among staff and students were lacking. They emphasized that strict enforcement of vaccination policies and accessibility of the vaccine could increase uptake. Some students suggested employing religious bodies to bridge the gap between the vaccine and religious inclinations since most of the negative information circulated on social media about the vaccine was religion-based.

In the focus group discussions at the University of Nigeria Nsukka, most of the participants, like their

contemporaries at the Federal University Lokoja were also not vaccinated. The participants who shared their perspectives on the Coronavirus, the vaccine and its acceptance raised various concerns they or their acquaintances have regarding vaccination. One participant remarked that many Nigerians doubt the existence of the Coronavirus due to misinformation, which could hinder vaccine uptake. According to him, "We heard rumours that most of the vaccines in Nigeria are Aba-made (fake and substandard products).” Some participants emphasized the need for "living testimonies" to validate the vaccine's effectiveness. The students assert that they prefer to see real-time videos of individuals recovering and post-vaccination status as proof. They emphasized a belief in "seeing is believing." Additionally, one participant mentioned not having personally seen the isolation centres referenced by the government and expressed uncertainty about the vaccine's actual efficacy despite official claims.

Table 1. Data from Federal University Lokoja (FUL) reveals that among the majority of sampled students who got their information from social media, specifically 72.8% (182 students), a total of 151 students, which constitutes 83% of those who got information from social media did not receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Additionally, 3.3% (6 students) of the sampled population chose to remain neutral about receiving the vaccine. This neutrality could only imply doubt on the efficacy of the vaccine. Only 13.7% of students (25 respondents) had received at least one vaccine dose. With 72.8% of the respondents reporting to have obtained COVID-19 vaccine information from social media, the data thus highlighted social media as the primary source of COVID-19 information for a significant proportion of the students. Interestingly, television

and radio were also significant sources of information, with 59.2% (148 students) of respondents admitting to having also received information from radio and television. However, among these 148 students who also got the COVID-19 vaccine information from the conventional media (television and radio), 120 representing approximately 81% of the respondents were not vaccinated. The percentage appears alarming when compared to the just 16.8% of the respondents who had received the vaccine. These findings suggest a troubling association between information sourced from social media and television/radio, and lower vaccination rates among students. It becomes worrisome to note that the use of conventional media by the government and other bodies did not sufficiently deal with the misinformation found on social media by most of these students.

In the data from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka presented in Table 2, a total number of 161 respondents resenting 64.4% chose social media as one of their information sources for the Coronavirus and its vaccination. Among the 161 students, 119 (74%) respondents did not receive the COVID-19 vaccine while 12 (7.4%) chose to be neutral. Refusing to get vaccinated and choosing to declare neutrality on vaccination status buttresses the assumptions that the public did not receive sufficient and effective information to spur the acceptance of COVID-19 vaccination. Only 30 respondents representing just 18.6% of students who got information from social media agreed to have received at least a dose of the vaccination. Similar to what was observed in the data obtained from the Federal University Lokoja, social media was a significant source of information at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. By accounting for 64.4% of the total respondents, it emerged as a

great influence on students' attitudes towards the Coronavirus and vaccination. Television and radio which, surprisingly, turned out to have the highest number of respondents relying on it for information, turned out to be less impactful on students' behaviour towards COVID-19 vaccination. Among the 72% (180 students) of the respondents who chose television and radio as a source of information, only 33 respondents which represented 18.3% of the 180 students were vaccinated while 141 respondents which represented 78.3% of the population who chose television and radio reported not vaccinated. The 6 respondents (3.3%) who did not disclose their vaccination status could mean their lack of conviction on the safety of the vaccine. This also implies the ineffectiveness of the strategy adopted to enlighten the students at the University of Nigeria Nsukka and the general public in Enugu State.

An analysis of the sources of information and responses to COVID-19 vaccination underscores the weaknesses of the conventional media (television and radio) and the imperative of the government and university administrations to devise an alternative strategy for mass communication and public enlightenment. According to the data acquired from the two universities, 343 of the total respondents (68.6% of the students) agreed to have obtained information from social media platforms. Among these 343 respondents, 270 students which represented 78.7% of the total number reported not to have been vaccinated against COVID-19. Just a relatively low number, 55 respondents (16%) from the two universities whose source of information included social media agreed to have taken at least a dose of the vaccine, while 5.3% of the students (18 respondents) expressed neutrality regarding their vaccination status. These figures implicated the social media platforms as a major source

of misinformation and vaccine hesitancy among students in Nigerian universities. Social media has evolved into a fertile environment where accurate information and misleading narratives coexist, enabling the proliferation of false stories and conspiracy theories. The data presented indicates that a significant percentage of individuals exposed to social media were unvaccinated, underscoring the imperative for focused initiatives to counter misinformation and enhance trust in vaccines, especially within the realm of social media.

Conclusion

The assessment of the implications of social media on vaccine hesitancy among students in tertiary institutions highlights significant challenges and opportunities for public health education. The pervasive influence of social media in shaping attitudes towards vaccination accentuates the urgent need to explore targeted communication strategies such as entertainment education to combat misinformation and enhance vaccine confidence among the youth population. The focus group discussions show that most of the students who found COVID-19 information on social media chose to act according to the misinformation they watched. This assertion is supported by the quantitative data from the four universities. Analysis of vaccination rates among respondents from the four schools, classified according to sources of information, reveals insights into how social media and the conventional media influence students' behaviour towards the COVID-19 vaccine. It also highlights the diminishing impact of conventional media such as radio and television, which are increasingly overshadowed by activities on social media platforms. Previous researchers acknowledge the influence of social media and the

"psychological perception factors" that influence vaccine hesitancy, and believes that coordinated efforts to regulate social media contents and combat intentional disinformation campaigns against vaccinations originating abroad would reduce the impact of social media on vaccine hesitancy (Wilson and Wiysonge 6; Zhang et al. 13). They however have not considered the possibilities of social media enhancing vaccine acceptance through the circulation of educative information. This study, besides providing evidence that social media influences vaccine hesitancy, provides an alternative strategy to convert the negative influence of social media on vaccination to a positive role in enhancing vaccine acceptance. Data from this research underscores the imperative to develop targeted intervention contents aimed at countering misinformation and bolstering vaccine confidence, especially among young people who heavily rely on social media for knowledge and entertainment. The conclusion that entertainment education offers a more pragmatic and viable alternative to counter misinformation on social media and promote healthy living is reinforced by students' claims that "If there's proof, like visible proof of the vaccine working and not having any side effect, I think that will boost people's desire to take it," witnessing a live testing of patients and a "living testimony" as evidence and making "a video of them giving the vaccines and a week after making videos of the patient's responding to the vaccine" would have encouraged the acceptance of the COVID-19 vaccination reinforce the conclusion that Entertainment-Education offers a more pragmatic and viable alternative to counter misinformation on social media and promote healthy living. Entertainment education could serve as an efficient alternative strategic approach to effectively engage and educate students through

compelling narratives and engaging content. By recognizing the influence of social media, health authorities can develop effective strategies to promote vaccination and mitigate the harmful effects of misinformation on majority of the population, especially students in tertiary institutions during public health emergencies. This strategy would propagate desired behaviour that the social media audience would learn from and possibly imitate.

Recommendations

1. Concerted efforts should be made to foster collaboration between educational institutions, government agencies, media influencers and stakeholders to harness the potential of using social media and entertainment education in fostering informed decision-making and promoting public health resilience against infectious diseases. Embracing this innovative communication strategy tailored to the digital age will be pivotal in navigating the evolving landscape of vaccine hesitancy and ensuring a healthier future for all, especially the youths who majorly acquire information from social media platforms.
2. The government should establish an agency to monitor and promptly respond to health-related misinformation on social media with accurate audio-visual contents in times of pandemic. This could involve setting up dedicated social media accounts or chatbots to address common fears and concerns expressed by the public and social media users.
3. Finally, the research, while affirming the influence of social media on community behaviour, proposes the use

of social media as a platform for entertainment education to promote health-seeking behaviour and influence audience behaviour and attitudes towards safety protocol. This will go a long way to mitigate the spread of fear and infodemic that make people averse to vaccination and other health-related measures.

Acknowledgement

The study was supported and sponsored by TETFund Institution-Based Research (IBR) grant 2020/2022/2024 (merged).

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