AWARENESS, PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE OF MAJOR TRIBES IN NIGERIA TOWARDS COVID-19: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY OF SELECTED COMMUNITIES

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Abstract: *This study examines awareness, perception and attitude of major tribes in Nigeria towards covid-19. The objective of the study is to examine the level of awareness, perception and attitude of major tribes in Nigeria towards corona virus. The study seeks to answer three major questions in relation to covid-19 among the major tribes in Nigeria: (1) what is the level of awareness of major tribes in Nigeria about Corona virus? (2) what is the perception of individuals from major tribes in Nigeria about corona virus? (3) what is the attitude of individuals from major tribes in Nigeria towards prevention of Corona virus? The scope of the study covers four towns in Lagos and Ogun states where individuals who belong to the three major tribes in Nigeria reside. Descriptive research design was adopted for this study. The population consists of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba tribes. Purposive and systematic random sampling technique was used to draw sample elements. Data generated were analyzed using frequency distribution and percentages. The findings show that people are aware of myriads of information about corona virus. However, only 36.6% of respondents perceived that the virus is real. 81.3% of respondents observed that businesses are running at a loss. The study shows that people did not exhibit good attitude towards preventive health as only 36.4% of respondents are willing to be tested voluntarily for corona virus. The study therefore recommends the need to create more awareness and place emphasis on the need for preventive health.*

Key words: *awareness; perception; attitude; Covid-19; preventive health.*

1. Introduction

People all over the world began the New Year 2020 on a good note before the rapid worldwide spread of the novel corona virus disease (Covid-19) which was first reported to World Health Organization (WHO) in December 2019 in the capital of Hubei province in China. Nigeria recorded her first incidence of Covid 19 on February 27, 2020 (NCDC, 2020). From this period, the numbers of infected persons keep on increasing with a total of 42, 689 confirmed cases as at July 31, 2020 (NCDC, 2020). Recently, a sharp decline in the number of persons that tested positive to corona virus was recorded most especially in the month of September, 2020 as recorded on the website of Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC, 2020). Covid-19 a highly contagious disease also known as corona virus disease was caused by a member of the family of corona viruses named severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2) which emerged in Wuhan city, China (Shigemura, Ursano, Morganstein, et al., 2020). Corona viruses are the major pathogens of respiratory disease outbreak in recent years and represent an extended family of single-stranded RNA viruses, which causes illness ranging from common cold to severe symptoms such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) (Cascella, Rajnik, Cuomo et al., 2020). Historically, evidence has shown that the virus is transmitted

through birds and mammals, with human beings particularly vulnerable to infection and transmission of the virus (Schoeman, Fielding, 2019).

The initial reported cases in Nigeria were mainly from travelers returning from other countries and their contacts on arrival in Nigeria. However, within few weeks of the first incidence of the virus, community transmission of the virus became the order of the day and it was difficult to identify how some persons who had no travel history or contact with individuals who had travel history became infested with the virus. WHO Director-General (2020) reported that more than 80% of COVID-19 patients showed mild symptoms and recovered without any medical intervention, approximately 20% of infected cases had a severe illness such as shortness of breath, septic shock and multi-organ failure, and it has been reported that an estimated 2% of cases can be fatal. People who are old and individuals with underlying chronic diseases are more susceptible to the risk of the virus. Corona virus spreads from one person to another within about 6 feet of close contact with infected individuals through coughs, droplets of saliva while talking, sneezes, touching infected surfaces or objects (Huynh, Nguyen, Tran, Vo, Vo, Pham, 2020). The symptoms of Covid-19 include fever, fatigue, malaise, and shortness of breath among others. At the moment, there is no proven treatment or potent vaccine against Covid-19 (SARS-CoV-2). Hence, infection control measures are the basic means of minimizing the increasing spread of the disease (Li, You, Wang, et al., 2020). According to WHO (2020), covid-19 can be prevented through the use of face mask, washing hands with soap and water, isolating confirmed and suspected cases. In China, lessons learned from the SARS outbreak in 2003 suggest that knowledge and attitudes towards infectious diseases are associated with the level of panic emotion among the population, which can further complicate attempts to prevent the spread of the disease (Hung, 2003). Behaviors like underestimation, stigmatization, panic emotions, and false measures to avoid infection affect the battle against such an uncommon situation (Zhong, Luo, Li, et al., 2020). However, these studies did not examine tribal influence in the awareness, perception and attitudes towards infectious diseases.

In spite of the rate of transmission reported by Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and the numerous measures put in place by the government to curb and stem the tide of Covid-19, it seems as if a number of individuals are oblivious of the dangers of the novel virus to the society. So far, 502,545 samples have been tested as at September 28, 2020. There are 58,324 confirmed cases, the number of active cases is 7, 422. The total number of active cases declined from 22, 541 recorded on July 31, 2020. A total of 49, 794 persons has been discharged as against 19,270 discharged cases recorded at the end of July, 2020. The total number of death as at September 28, 2020 is 1, 108 as against 878 deaths recorded due to covid-19 complications at the end of July, 2020 (NCDC, 2020). This study therefore examines awareness, perception and attitude of the major tribes in Nigeria towards covid-19.

2. Statement of the problem

The emergence and the spread of covid-19 in Nigeria turned the means of livelihood of many persons upside down. The country was on lockdown for several weeks as places of work, recreation, religious worship among others were closed. At a point, there was a ban on interstate movement. Commercial vehicles were not allowed to operate but for vehicles providing essential services. People who survived on daily income find it difficult to feed and a lot of salary earners could not access their monies in Banks. The palliative measures provided by government did not get to the nooks and

crannies of the country as those palliatives in terms of food items were inadequate and were siphoned by some unscrupulous officials.

In the midst of these challenges, People advocated for the relaxation of the lockdown promising to abide by the preventive guidelines highlighted by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). Unfortunately, few days after the relaxation of lockdown, a lot of people could no longer keep up with the preventive guideline against the virus covid-19. They move around without face mask, they seldom wash their hands with soap and water or make use of hand sanitizer; observance of social distancing became a herculean task. One could easily notice similarities and slight differences in the reaction of major tribes to the preventive measures against covid-19 as some persons who are of the Hausa tribe seems unperturbed, they pay no attention to social distancing in commercial buses, lorries and during Salat prayers, people from Igbo tribe seems more concerned about their businesses and the need to avoid losses while the Yorubas in the market seems unconcerned with social distancing and the use of face mask. A good number of them canvassed for reopening of schools , worship centers and recreational centers saying covid-19 is not real.

From the foregoing, a study on the level of awareness, perception and attitude of the major tribes in Nigeria towards covid-19 cannot be overemphasized.

3. Objectives of Study
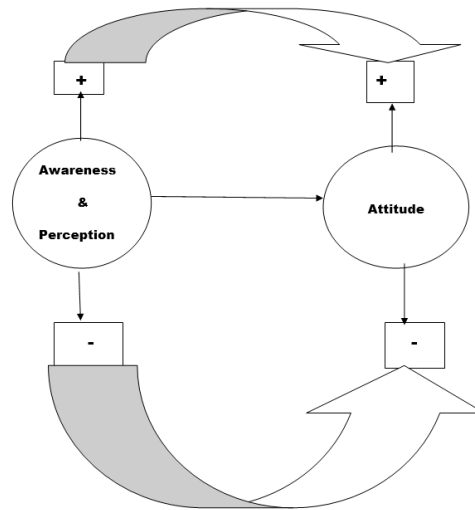The objectives of the study include the following:
1. To examine the level of awareness of major tribes in Nigeria about corona virus.
2. To examine the perception of individuals from major tribes in Nigeria about corona virus.
3. To examine the attitude of individuals from major tribes in Nigeria towards prevention of corona virus.

4. Research Questions
The study seeks to answer three major questions in relation to covid-19 among the major tribes in Nigeria:
1. What is the level of awareness of major tribes in Nigeria about Corona virus?
2. What is the perception of individuals from major tribes in Nigeria about corona virus?
3. What is the attitude of individuals from major tribes in Nigeria towards prevention of Corona virus?
4.

The conceptual model in Fig 1 shows the interplay between the independent and dependent variables of study. Awareness and perception has an implication on attitude of people to the effect that a positive awareness and perception level engenders positive attitude while a negative awareness and perception level bring about a negative attitude. This implies that the negative attitude displayed towards covid-19 is a function of negative awareness and perception level on covid-19.

Figure 1: Covid-19 Awareness, Perception and Attitude Model

*Source***:** Researcher's illustration (2020)

5. Methods

A descriptive research design was adopted for this study to examine the level of awareness, perception and attitude of major tribes in Nigeria towards Covid 19. Purposive and systematic random sampling was employed in the selection of elements from the population consisting of individuals from the three major tribes in Nigeria domiciled in Lagos and Ogun state. These two states were selected purposively due to their link with the first reported incidence of the virus in Nigeria and subsequent escalating cases of the virus. Furthermore, these two states in addition to the federal capital territory - Abuja were locked down for about four weeks before community transmission of the virus led to the lockdown of other states in Nigeria and a ban on interstate movement. Two communities were purposively selected from each state for this study namely, Ikeja the capital of Lagos state and Obalende while Abeokuta the capital of Ogun state and Ogere was equally selected. Systematic sampling was used to select sample element from different streets in the towns mentioned. A total of one thousand two hundred respondents were selected from the two states, three hundred respondents chosen from each town. Questionnaire was used to elicit response from respondents. Eight research assistants who are well trained were commissioned to assist in the data collection process. A combination of frequency tables and percentages was employed in the analysis of data.

6. Results

A total of one thousand one hundred and twenty four copies of questionnaire were retrieved out of a total of one thousand two hundred copies administered. Data generated were processed and presented as follows:

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of Respondents

Age	N	%	Education level	N	%
16 – 25	242	21.5	Primary	282	25.1
26- 35	382	34.0	Secondary	323	28.7
36 – 45	202	18.0	Tertiary	394	35.1
46 – 55	184	16.4	Illiterate	125	11.1
56 and above	114	10.1	Total	1,124	100
Total	1,124	100	**Tribal Affiliation**	**N**	**%**
Sex	**N**	**%**	Hausa	308	27.4
Female	449	39.9	Igbo	352	31.3
Male	675	60.1	Yoruba	464	41.3
Total	1,124	100	Total	1,124	100
Religion	**N**	**%**	**Marital Status**	**N**	**%**
Christianity	646	57.5	Single	308	27.4
Islam	442	39.3	Married	592	52.7
Others	36	3.2	Divorced	98	8.7
Total	1,124	100	Widow/ Widower	126	11.2
			Total	1,124	100

Source: Researcher's field work (2020)

Table 2: Respondents' level of awareness about Covid 19

	Yes	No	Not sure
The disease could be transmitted from persons with no signs of illness	414	189	521
The elderly are at greater risk of contracting the virus	549	174	401
A good vaccine is available for Covid 19	89	612	423
Effective drugs are available for the virus	532	468	124
Symptoms of Covid - 19 include:			
Fever	826	68	230
Body aches	502	86	536
Difficulty in breathing	921	23	180
Preventive measure against Covid -19 include:			
Regular hand wash	827	91	206
Maintaining social distancing	792	31	301
Proper use of face mask	714	28	382
Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth	645	78	401
Eating fruits rich in vitamin c	802	38	284
Eating hot foods	947	69	108

Source: Researcher's field work (2020)

Table 3: Respondents Perception of Covid-19

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Covid 19 is not real	411	389	324
The figures turned out by NCDC is inflated	332	368	424
Government officials are using covid-19 to siphon money	545	509	70
Covid 19 is an agenda of unbelievers to close religious centres	301	614	209
Businesses are running at a loss with covid-19	914	102	108
God's protection supersede corona virus	821	93	210
Infections and death is fatalistic	762	301	61
Media coverage about this disease is exaggerated	397	524	203

Source: Researcher's field work (2020)

Table 4: Respondents attitude towards Covid-19

	Yes	No	Not sure
I still greet people with a handshake	647	477	-
I sanitize and wash my hands regularly	613	475	36
I always use facemask to protect myself when going out	448	478	198
I will inform the health authorities if I have any symptoms associated with covid-19.	526	508	90
I wish to be tested for covid-19 voluntarily	409	601	114
I wish to start my work/ business irrespective of the rate of infection	817	151	156
I wish to start religious activities in Church/ Mosque	724	169	231

Source: Researcher's field work (2020)

7. Discussion of Findings

The result of data analysis really shows the level of awareness, perception and attitude of the major tribes in Nigeria towards Covid 19. First, the data collected shows that individuals from the three major tribes in Nigeria participated in the study as 27.4% of respondents are Hausas, 31.3% are Igbos while 41.3% are Yorubas. The age distribution shows that majority of respondents are well educated as illiterates only account for 11.1% of the respondents. The distribution of respondents according to sex does not mean that the population of males is generally more than the population of females; it only shows that the number of males going outside when the initial lockdown was relaxed was more than the population of females and this reflected in the number of persons selected for this study. The distribution of respondents according to

religion indicates that individuals from different religious background participated in the study.

Less than half of the respondents (414) believe that covid-19 could be transferred from persons with no sign of illness. This shows that in spite of the efforts of government officials, lot of persons are not aware of the basic information about the disease. 549 respondents believe that the elderly are at greater risk of contracting the virus. This also shows that the level of awareness is not as high as expected. Although efforts are being made in a number of countries to develop an acceptable and potent vaccine, a significant number of respondents (612) are aware that a good vaccine is not yet available for covid-19. They must have heard about the number of casualties overseas. It is surprising that 532 respondents noted that effective drugs are available for the virus. The assumption about availability of effective drugs may be due to high rate of recuperation from the attack of corona virus in Nigeria. It is logical for respondents to assume that patients who have been discharged from isolation centres make use of effective drugs, but this is not the case in the real sense. Majority of the respondents are aware of the symptoms and the preventive measures against covid–19 yet, they seemed undisturbed with the news of the virus. It is awkward to note that a large number of respondents (84.3%) believe that eating hot foods prevent the virus from thriving in the body. Locals in the areas covered by the study held an unsubstantiated claim that corona virus cannot thrive in Africa due to the relatively hot condition of weather in the tropics.

Furthermore, an analysis of the perception of respondents on covid-19 indicated that a large number of respondents assume that covid-19 is not real as only 411 respondents (36.6%) believe that covid-19 is real. A considerable number of respondents (545) assume that government officials are using covid-19 to siphon money from the coffers of government. 914 respondents constituting 81.3% noted that businesses are running at a loss with covid-19. 762 respondents posited that infections and death is fatalistic while a significant number of respondents (821) submitted that God's protection supersede corona virus.

The attitude of respondents towards covid-19 is not encouraging as 647 respondents constituting 57.6% still great people with handshake as much as a large number of the respondents wash their hands regularly. The number of respondents that make use of face mask is less than half 448 respondents (39.9%). Only 409 respondents (36.4%) are willing to be tested for covid-19. This shows a poor attitude towards preventive health. Majority of the respondents (817) are willing to start their businesses irrespective of the rate of infection. This may be due to the urge for survival and economic sustainability. 724 respondents which make up 64.4% are ready to start religious activities.

Conclusively, the level of awareness about Covid-19 among the people is relatively good. However, many persons find it difficult to believe that the virus is real as they could not point to a close relative who contracted the virus. People are not happy that businesses are running at a loss. The attitude of people towards covid-19 is not good enough as a lot of them no longer observe the preventive measures highlighted by the Nigeria Center for Disease Control.

8. Recommendations
The study recommends that more awareness should be created through the mass media on the dangers and detrimental effects of covid-19. Government and Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) should provide succor to those who lost their means of livelihood due to the rage of the virus. Continuous use of face mask, washing

of hands and social distancing should be encouraged among other preventive measures against the scourge of the virus. People should be made to understand the importance of preventive health services rather than curative services such that individuals will be willing to go for voluntary covid-19 test.

Ethical Issues
This study was conducted in line with the best ethical practice and standards. The researchers adhere strictly to the regulations of the Presidential Task Force on covid-19. Research assistants did not administer copies of questionnaire on days in which movements were restricted. Respondents' participation in the study was voluntary and the identity of respondents were protected.

Conflict of Interest and Funding
This study was conducted to provide more insight to policy makers on the management of covid-19 in Nigeria and to add to the existing body of knowledge on the pandemic. There is no conflict of interest in relation to the study. The study was funded solely by the researchers.

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