

Framing of COVID-19 Pandemic in Selected Yoruba Language Media Outlets

Babatunde Adeyeye¹ and Abiodun Salawu²

^{1,2} *Indigenous Language Media in Africa Research Entity, North-West University,
Mafikeng Campus, South Africa*

E-mail: ¹<tk4ade@gmail.com>, ²<abiodun.salawu@nwu.ac.za>

KEYWORDS Audience Perceptions. Communication Strategies. Crisis Communication. Health Crisis. Media Analysis. Public Health Messaging

ABSTRACT This study investigates how selected Yoruba language media outlets framed the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of these on the Yoruba-speaking audience in Nigeria. Using framing theory, the study identified and categorised dominant frames, analysed their tones and assessed their influence on audience perceptions. A content analysis of 29 news stories from Abawole- BBC Yoruba, Asejere, and Alaroye, spanning December 2021 to December 2023, revealed that the health and safety frame was the most significant (41.4%), followed by the economic impact frame (30%) and the social consequence frame (20%). Tone analysis showed a prevalence of negative tones (50%), over neutral (30%) and positive tones (20%). The findings underscore the importance of cultural and linguistic considerations in public health communication, advocating for culturally relevant strategies in future health crises and suggesting further research on longitudinal media framing and audience responses.

INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was a significant global health crisis that impacted society, including the economy, politics, and public health (Sarkodie and Owusu 2020; Kumar et al. 2021). The COVID-19 outbreak started as an epidemic in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 and became a pandemic affecting the whole world. This put the world in a challenging situation as thousands of deaths occurred across the world. Regrettably, Nigeria's first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported on February 27, 2020, in Lagos, the country's commercial hub with a population of 21 million. The first case was an individual who had arrived from Milan, Italy. The fourth country with the highest incidence (371 cases) entered Nigeria through Lagos Airport on February 25, 2020, where no stringent measures were in place to screen or track incoming travellers from areas with acute infections (Nigerian Centre for Disease Control 2020).

The widespread outbreak of the COVID-19 in Nigeria gained significant media attention and extensive reporting (Msughter and Phillips 2020; Peter and Ohakpougwu 2023). The media plays a crucial role in shaping public perception and understanding of such events through how they frame and report them (Happer and Philo 2013; Peter et al. 2021). In the case of the COVID-19

pandemic in Nigeria, the way different media outlets framed their coverage profoundly impacted public opinion, attitudes, and behaviours towards the crisis. Msughter and Phillips (2020) found that the COVID-19 pandemic showed how media sway narratives as the two newspapers they analysed framed the COVID-19 pandemic more as economic and political and downplaying important frames such as health and safety and quality of life frames.

Research has explored how English media in Nigeria framed the issue of COVID-19. However, research has yet to be done on the Yoruba media landscape. The knowledge gap is a challenge as over 40 million out of close to 200 million Nigerians are reached by the Yoruba content in the media, and the level of perceived risk, willingness to implement preventive measures and what they think about government response back may have been influenced by how the media framed the pandemic with regards to the Yoruba speaking audience. The immediacy of these outlets' words, metaphors, and narratives may have also resonated with the Yoruba cultural imaginations. Hence, this study aims to examine and analyse how selected Yoruba language media outlets in Nigeria framed the COVID-19 pandemic and to understand the potential implications of their framing choices on public opinion, attitudes, and behaviours within the Yoruba-speaking population.

This study is limited to analysing the selected Yoruba language media outlets in Nigeria-Abawole BBC Yoruba, Asejere, and Alaroye. A three-year data analysis will be conducted from the first documented case of COVID-19 in December 2019 to December 31, 2023. It covers the onset of the pandemic, waves, and post-pandemic period. The research will explore how these storylines could manifest in framing different pandemic elements, including health risks, government reactions, economic impacts, and social consequences.

Research Objectives

This research aims to address the following specific objectives:

1. To identify and categorise the dominant frames used by selected Yoruba language media outlets to cover the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. To analyse the tones (positive, negative, or neutral) of the frames employed by these media outlets in their reporting on the pandemic.
3. To discuss the possible influence of the identified frames and tones on the Yoruba-speaking audience's perception, attitudes, and responses towards the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Concept of Framing

Sociologist Erving Goffman initially used the concept of the frame to explain human communication in his 1974 book *Frame Analysis*, an essay about human understanding. The author seeks to clarify his notion of a border in which a picture is confined, playing upon the very literal meaning of 'border an area where a picture has been confined' and moving this closer to the firmly abstract one (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 1989:489).

The central insight of framing theory is that issues can be perceived in multiple ways and that the outcome of the framing of an issue is seeing the issue in terms of more or fewer values and considerations. Framing is the method by which individuals arrive at a specific understanding of a problem. To put it another way, framing modifies people's mental processes.

A better way to define framing is to use a standard expectancy-value model to model an

individual's attitude (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Nelson et al. 1997). The framing construct has well-established cross-disciplinary roots in the social sciences and humanities. Therefore, it should be no shock that for more than thirty years, framing researchers who work in mediated texts, especially the news, also known as news framing, have embraced a somewhat ecumenical orientation towards theory and an ecumenical spirit in theory construction. Therefore, it can be said that 'framing' literally lies at the heart of the phenomena of 'dialogical-dialectical coherence' that Craig (1999) identified and proposed as a movement towards development and maturation in the field of communication.

Gaining knowledge about framing helps society to become more astute information consumers. In summary, framing strongly influences communication and shapes perception of the outside world. By acknowledging its impact and utilising critical thinking, society can transform into knowledgeable information consumers, promoting well-informed choices and enhanced comprehension of intricate matters.

About The COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 is a new coronavirus known as a severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The COVID-19 virus takes about one to fourteen days to develop fully, and in that time, symptoms would surface, such as fever and cough. As of the 25th of June 2020, the highly contagious virus had spread across 213 countries worldwide, bringing about 9,400,295 cases and 482,468 fatalities (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control 2020). The transmission of COVID-19 was a significant issue brought about by citizen's irresponsibility. As a result of the fact that many people refuse vaccinations, others do not undertake preventive and protective methods (Bansal 2020; Perret-Guillaume et al. 2009; O'Loughlin et al. 1999).

Lone and Ahmad (2020) state that the original site of the virus's initial discovery and announcement was in China in Wuhan in December 2019. The World Health Organisation declared the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic due to its high contagiousness and rapid worldwide spread on the 11th of March 2020. As of April 18, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) had con-

firmed over 2.1 million COVID-19 infections, with 142,229 deaths reported across 213 countries, regions, or territories (Lone and Ahmad 2020).

The number of cases during the pandemic kept rising globally and became a significant threat to public health. Africa was the last continent affected by COVID-19, affecting several countries worldwide. Africa was anticipated to be the continent that would be more vulnerable to the significant effects of COVID-19 spreading (Lone and Ahmad 2020).

On February 27, 2020, in Lagos, Nigeria, an Italian returning from Milan was identified as the first case of COVID-19 in Nigeria. This location effectively served as the epicentre of the epidemic in Nigeria. Since then, 542 deaths have been reported, and nearly 22,020 cases have been confirmed (NCDC 2020). Many researchers examined media coverage's influence in Nigeria during epidemics and disease outbreaks. Their results show a mixture of information, including the spread of fear, education about the cause of the illness, and claims of a cure.

According to Smith and Smith (2016), four widely read newspapers covered the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Nigeria extensively, with the most prevalent issue being cases and the least being using kola or salt as a treatment. Kilgo et al. (2019) observed that media coverage of the Ebola health crisis contributed to the spread of fear and uncertainty. They argued that Reddit, a social news site, may be more conducive to panic than traditional newspaper stories.

The pandemic severely influenced Nigeria's entire economy, and on March 30, 2020, the country was placed under "lockdown" as one of the safety measures against the virus. The government did it to stop the spread of the virus (Yusuf and Moses 2021).

Interestingly, the Nigerian media's social responsibility role and its contributions to raising awareness and sharing coronavirus information led to its inclusion on the list of frontline workers (Yusuf and Moses 2021). This was consistent with the media's duty in health emergencies, which is to properly inform the public about the threats posed by these situations and the necessary steps to enable them to make educated decisions.

Given this, the information the media disseminated intended to guarantee Nigerians make knowledgeable decisions on the symptoms, transmis-

sion, prevention, and, most crucially, locations for medical assistance (Yusuf and Moses 2021).

Reporting of COVID-19 Pandemic

The reporting of the COVID-19 pandemic has played a crucial role in disseminating information about the virus, its spread, and its impact on society. According to a study by Li et al. (2020), accurate and timely reporting is essential for public health responses to pandemics. The media has been instrumental in providing updates on the number of cases, hospitalisations, and deaths related to COVID-19, helping to keep the public informed about the evolving situation.

In addition to providing statistics, the reporting has also focused on public health guidelines and preventive measures. According to a report by the World Health Organisation (WHO 2023), media outlets have been instrumental in raising awareness about the importance of wearing masks, practising social distancing, and washing hands regularly to prevent the spread of the virus. This information has been crucial in shaping public behaviour and adherence to public health recommendations.

Furthermore, the reporting has highlighted the impact of the pandemic on various sectors of society. A study by Xiong et al. (2020) discovered that media coverage has shed light on the economic consequences of the pandemic, including job losses, business closures, and financial hardships individuals and families face. This reporting has helped policymakers understand the need for economic relief measures and support for those affected by the crisis.

Moreover, the reporting has emphasised the strain on healthcare systems and frontline workers during the pandemic. Research by Smith et al. (2020) suggests that media coverage has brought attention to the challenges faced by healthcare workers, such as shortages of personal protective equipment and overwhelming patient loads. This reporting has led to increased public appreciation for the sacrifices made by healthcare professionals and calls for better support for frontline workers.

The reporting has also addressed disparities in COVID-19 outcomes among different populations. This reporting has spurred discussions on addressing health inequities and ensuring

equitable access to testing, treatment, and vaccines. Additionally, the reporting has focused on developing and distributing COVID-19 vaccines. Research by Brown (2021) indicates that media outlets have played a critical role in providing updates on vaccine trials, efficacy data, and vaccination campaigns. This information has been essential in promoting vaccine acceptance and encouraging individuals to vaccinate to achieve herd immunity.

The reporting has also addressed misinformation and conspiracy theories surrounding COVID-19 pandemic. According to a study by Wang et al. (2020), media coverage has debunked myths and falsehoods about the virus, such as claims that it was a bioweapon or that masks are ineffective. This reporting has helped combat misinformation and promote accurate COVID-19 prevention and treatment information.

Furthermore, the reporting has highlighted the mental health impacts of the pandemic. Research by Green et al. (2021) suggests that media coverage has raised awareness about the psychological toll of social isolation, fear of illness, and grief from losing loved ones. This reporting has led to increased attention on mental health resources and support services for individuals experiencing pandemic-related distress.

Overall, reporting the COVID-19 pandemic has been instrumental in shaping public understanding, behaviour, and policy responses. By providing accurate information, raising awareness about critical issues, and debunking misinformation, media outlets have played a significant role in helping individuals navigate the challenges of the pandemic. Moving forward, continued efforts in responsible reporting will be essential in managing future health crises effectively.

Relevance of Yoruba Media Outlets

The relevance of Yoruba media outlets in contemporary times cannot be overstated, as they play a significant role in preserving and promoting the cultural heritage, language, and traditions of the Yoruba people. These media outlets serve as vital platforms for disseminating information, fostering cultural identity, and facilitating discourse within the Yoruba community.

One of the primary functions of Yoruba media outlets is to preserve and promote the Yoruba language. According to Alozie (2022), Yoruba media outlets are guardians of the Yoruba language, ensuring its continued use and relevance in a rapidly changing world. By producing content in the Yoruba language, these outlets contribute to the language's sustained vitality and prevent its erosion in the face of globalisation and cultural homogenisation.

Furthermore, Yoruba media outlets play a significant role in transmitting and perpetuating indigenous knowledge systems and cultural practices. Adebisi (2023) noted that these outlets serve as repositories of Yoruba cultural knowledge, disseminating information on traditional practices, folklore, and oral traditions. By documenting and sharing these cultural elements, Yoruba media outlets help to preserve the rich tapestry of Yoruba heritage for future generations. Furthermore, Adeyeye and Salawu (2024) found that most of the residents were exposed to COVID-19 risk communication messages and got their first information about it from social media even though they were not receptive to the messages passed across in indigenous languages. They prefer COVID-19 messages to be passed across in English. This shows the efficacy of the media in providing the needed information during health emergencies.

Olawale et al. (2024) highlights the power of these outlets in conflict resolution, stating that Yoruba indigenous media have proven effective in mediating conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence within communities. By providing a platform for open dialogue and facilitating communication among diverse groups, these outlets can help mitigate tensions and foster understanding.

Moreover, Yoruba media outlets are essential for disseminating news, information, and perspectives relevant to the Yoruba community. Adedeji (2014) asserts that Yoruba media outlets offer a unique lens through which to understand the issues, concerns, and aspirations of the Yoruba people. By presenting news and information through a Yoruba cultural lens, these outlets ensure that the voices and perspectives of the Yoruba community are represented and amplified.

It is worth noting that the relevance of Yoruba media outlets extends beyond the confines

of the Yoruba community itself. By sharing the values and wisdom embedded in Yoruba cultural traditions, these media outlets have the potential to foster cross-cultural understanding and promote peaceful coexistence within the broader African context. In this electronic age, Yoruba media outlets have taken on new dimensions. As traditional media converges with new media platforms, these outlets have accepted digital technologies to reach larger audiences and engage younger generations (Adebisi 2023; Adegina et al. 2021). Through social media, online news portals, and multimedia content, Yoruba media outlets adapt to the changing media landscape while remaining true to their cultural roots.

The relevance of Yoruba media outlets cannot be understated. They serve as guardians of Yoruba language and culture, catalysts for socio-economic development, platforms for conflict resolution, and channels for amplifying Yoruba voices and perspectives. As custodians of indigenous knowledge and cultural traditions, these outlets contribute to the preservation of Yoruba heritage while simultaneously fostering cross-cultural understanding and promoting peaceful coexistence in contemporary Africa.

Empirical Review

Msughter and Phillips (2020) analysed how two major Nigerian newspapers framed the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers' method comprised content analysis, examining the news stories, opinion pieces, and editorials related to COVID-19 in these newspapers. The findings revealed that Daily Trust and Vanguard predominantly framed the pandemic from economic and political perspectives, while health, safety, and quality of life frames were notably downplayed. This suggests that the newspapers focused more on the economic impact and political narratives, potentially at the expense of promoting public health messages.

Gui (2021) examined how Chinese mainstream media framed the COVID-19 pandemic within social and cultural contexts. The method involved analysing nine weeks of news reports from Xinwen Lianbo, using corpus analysis software to identify keywords and frames, followed by a metaphorical pattern analysis. The findings revealed that war metaphors were predom-

inant, evolving to include semantic concepts such as soldiers and weapons. Other minor metaphors like race and challenge and literal frames of responsibility and collaboration complemented the war metaphor. The study identified gaps in understanding the hidden values and ideologies within these frames and suggested further research into media framings across different media types and their effects on public perception.

Siddiqua et al. (2020) examined the prevailing frames that Pakistani English e-papers utilised to cover the COVID-19 epidemic. The media framing is examined through qualitative inductive content analysis of the COVID-19-related news articles published in the e-papers of Dawn and Express Tribune. The inductive content analysis yielded three main themes of the pandemic's scale, its impact on society and the economy, and its scientific advancements. The findings showed that the primary goal of the e-papers' coverage was to educate the readers, complicated medical jargon was primarily avoided, and where necessary, it was adequately explained. Throughout the chosen period, most stories took shape as the virus spread quickly.

Fayemi (2013) researched epistemological virtues in Yoruba oral media and shed light on the cultural significance of traditional knowledge systems in fostering peace within African communities. Preserving these virtues through oral media highlights the potential for promoting harmony and understanding. Yoruba oral media is vital for transmitting epistemological virtues deeply rooted in African societies' cultural fabric. These virtues significantly mould the community's beliefs, values, and attitudes, maintaining peace and social cohesion. The study emphasises the importance of recognising and valuing the epistemological virtues embedded in Yoruba oral traditions. By acknowledging and preserving these virtues, there is an opportunity to enhance intergenerational knowledge transfer and promote a culture of peace grounded in indigenous wisdom and values.

Adeyeye et al. (2023) investigated how Nigerian newspapers reported on rape-related issues during the COVID-19 epidemic, and the goal of this study was to provide a vivid analysis of the rise in sexual assault and rape trends in 2020. The study quantitatively used content analysis. Three national newspapers with specific

crime-reporting sections, the Daily Trust, Sun, and Punch, that were published between January and December 2020, were included in the study. According to the survey, most reports in Nigeria detailed rape occurrences. Sensitisation, advocacy, police parades featuring offenders, and public denunciations of the rape incidents came next. The survey also discovered that gangster, criminal, and cult activities account for 13.5 percent of the causes of rape. In other circumstances, gangsters go around oppressing and raping girls because they want to go up the social ladder and want to be feared or respected in the neighbourhood. Only 35 percent of rape cases are reported, meaning that only a small percentage of survivors often come forward to disclose their experiences in the hopes of receiving justice. However, only 1.1 percent of rape trial reports include special courts, suggesting that many victims might not be aware of which court has the necessary jurisdiction to provide prompt justice and redress. Most of these alleged rape cases never reach trial, and those that do not receive the requested justice.

Adebisi's (2023) research delves into the significance of Yoruba indigenous media in preserving cultural heritage, especially in the electronic age. The study emphasises the role of traditional knowledge systems in maintaining cultural identity and continuity within the Yoruba community. Integrating digital technologies with indigenous media practices is highlighted as a crucial strategy to ensure the ongoing relevance and accessibility of Yoruba cultural traditions. This adaptation to the digital era allows for the effective transmission of traditional knowledge to younger generations, bridging the gap between both generations. Adebisi's work underscores the importance of recognising and valuing indigenous media for cultural preservation. By leveraging digital tools while upholding traditional practices, Yoruba communities can safeguard their rich cultural heritage and promote intergenerational knowledge transfer. Yoruba indigenous media plays a vital role in preserving cultural heritage and transmitting traditional knowledge to future generations, adapting to the challenges posed by the digital era. Integrating digital technologies with indigenous media practices is crucial for ensuring the continued relevance and accessibility of Yoruba

cultural traditions in the present day. The study emphasises the importance of recognising and valuing indigenous media as a means of cultural preservation within the Yoruba community.

Ogbodo et al. (2020) examined the global media framing of COVID-19 to understand the dominant frames and how the choice of words compares in the media. The study utilised content analysis. Data was sourced from the Lexis-Nexis database, and two websites yielded 6,145 items for the analysis. At the end of the research, it was discovered that human interest and fear/scaremongering frames dominated the global media coverage of the pandemic. It was also discovered that the language of the coverage of COVID-19 combines gloom, hope, precaution, and frustration at varied proportions. The conclusion was that global media coverage of COVID-19 was high, but the framing lacks coherence and sufficient self-efficacy and can be associated with the media's obsession with breaking news.

Despite extensive research on media framing of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria, particularly in English-language outlets, there is a notable lack of studies focusing on Yoruba language media. This gap is significant because the Yoruba-speaking population, which exceeds 40 million people, represents a substantial cultural and linguistic group within Nigeria. Understanding how COVID-19 was framed in Yoruba language media could provide insights into public perception and response within this community. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the framing of the COVID-19 pandemic in selected Yoruba language media outlets, focusing on how these outlets conveyed information, influenced public attitudes, and impacted behaviours.

Theoretical Framework

Framing theory is a concept within communication and media studies that explains how the presentation of information influences the perception and interpretation of that information. Erving Goffman introduced the theory in his 1974 book "Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience". Goffman described frames as interpretive schemas that allow individuals to understand and respond to events by fitting them into recognisable categories.

Framing theory, as introduced by Erving Goffman and later developed by scholars such as Robert Entman, posits that media and communication shape how events and issues are perceived through the selection and emphasis of certain aspects over others (Goffman 1974; Entman 1993). This theory highlights that frames are central to constructing reality as they influence how the audience interprets and understands information.

According to Entman (1993), framing involves selection and salience. He explained that framing involves selecting certain aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communication context. Salience means making information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences. By emphasising some aspects over others, media frames influence how audiences understand and react to the information presented.

Scheufele (1999) introduced the concepts of frame building and frame setting to elaborate on how frames are constructed and how they impact audiences. Frame building refers to how journalists and other communicators develop frames. Factors influencing frame-building include societal norms, organisational pressures, journalistic routines, and external pressure from interest groups. Frame setting refers to the effects of framing on audiences, which can shape opinions, attitudes, and behaviours. This involves the interaction between media frames and the individual's pre-existing beliefs and values.

Framing theory has been widely applied across various fields, including politics, sociology, psychology, and health communication. Frames influence public opinion on policy issues, political candidates, and elections. Iyengar (1991) demonstrated how news frames about poverty can shift public attributions of responsibility from individual to societal causes. Health communication framing is crucial in health campaigns to promote behaviours such as vaccination, smoking cessation, and disease prevention. Rothman and Salovey (1997) highlighted how gain-framed messages (emphasising benefits) and loss-framed messages (emphasising costs) can differentially impact health behaviours.

The theory is relevant to this study because it helps researchers uncover how different narratives affect public attitudes and behaviours

by analysing the framing in these media outlets. This analysis might reveal how framing can either mitigate or exacerbate public fears, shape compliance with health measures or influence perceptions of government and health authorities. Additionally, it can offer insights into the role of language and culture in shaping media narratives and public responses during crises. Framing theory is instrumental in understanding how Yoruba language media outlets shape their coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic. It helps elucidate how media narratives are constructed to fit cultural contexts and how these narratives, in turn, affect public perception and behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study employs a quantitative content analysis design to examine how selected Yoruba language media outlets framed the COVID-19 pandemic. Content analysis is a widely used research method for systematically analysing the content of various communication materials, including news articles, editorials, and broadcasts (Krippendorff 2019). This approach is suitable for identifying and analysing the themes, narratives, frames, and tones used in media coverage.

Study Population

The study population consists of online news articles on the most popular Yoruba online newspapers, namely, Abáwílé-BBC News Yorùbá (<https://www.bbc.com/yoruba>), Alaroye (<https://alaroye.org/>) and Asejere (<https://asejere.net>). These media were selected due to their extensive reportage and the possible availability of articles during COVID-19. The study focused on media content published from December 2019, when the first confirmed COVID-19 case was reported, to December 31, 2023. This time frame spans the initial outbreak, subsequent waves of the pandemic and the aftermath, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of how the coverage evolved.

Sample Technique and Sample Size

The sample size was determined purposively, and 29 news stories were analysed. This num-

ber was randomly chosen because of limited news stories on COVID-19 on these news sites. A census sampling technique was used for this study. Census sampling deals with the entirety of data because the data is limited, so there is no need to divide or separate it.

Content Categories

The units of analysis for this study were examined under the following categories:

- a. **General Information:** Coder ID (unique identifier for each coder), date (date of publication), and media outlet (Abáwílé-BBC News Yorùbá, Alaroye, Asejere and Iroyin Owuro)
- b. **Content Characteristics:**
 Headline: The main headline or title of the article/broadcast.
 Word Count: Total number of words in the article/broadcast.
- c. **Framing Elements:** Identify the primary and secondary frames used in the content. Options include:
 - i. Health and Safety Frame (focus on health risks, medical advice, and safety protocols)
 - ii. Economic Impact Frame (discussion on the economic consequences of the pandemic)
 - iii. Government Response Frame (coverage of government actions and policies, for example, lockdowns, quarantine measures, public health campaigns, government speeches)
 - iv. Social Consequences Frame (impact on social life and community activities)
 - v. Cultural/Religious Frame (cultural and religious perspectives on the pandemic)
 - vi. Others (specify)
- d. **Slant/Tone of the Frame**
 Positive: Content that highlights positive aspects or optimistic outlooks.
 Negative: Content that emphasises negative aspects or pessimistic outlooks.
 Neutral: Content that maintains a neutral or balanced perspective.
- e. **Sources Quoted:** Identify the types of sources quoted in the content (for example, Government Officials, Health Experts, Economists, Community Leaders, General Public, Others).

- f. **Visual and Multimedia Elements:** Identify the types of visual elements used (for example, photographs, infographics, videos, charts/graphs)

- g. **Language and Style:**

Use of Metaphors: Identify any metaphors used to describe the pandemic or its impacts.

Emotional Appeals: Note any emotional appeals made in the content.

Cultural References: Identify any cultural references specific to the Yoruba community.

Method of Data Presentation and Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), frequency tables and simple percentages were used to analyse the data. The data in the tables was presented based on the categories, frequency, and percentage for a neat, concise presentation. These tables would answer the research questions and analyse the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results show that Abawole-BBC Yoruba, accounting for 51.7 percent of the sites analysed, had the most significant influence and higher engagement in reporting COVID-19 news, above the other analysed new sites. Asejere and Alaroye follow with a 34.5 percent and 13.8 percent level, respectively. This low percentage reflects a lower frequency of publishing COVID-19 news (see Appendix). Furthermore, it was found that government officials were the most frequently quoted sources during the pandemic, emphasising the focus on official actions and statements. Health experts were also frequently quoted, while economists and community leaders were less quoted. This is closely related to the findings of Munoriyarwa and Chiumbu (2024), Apuke and Omar (2021) and Erinoso et al. (2021). They averred that government officials were the significant sources of news related to COVID-19. Government officials, including health ministers, state governors, and public health experts, frequently appeared in news reports and briefings. These officials provide updates on the pandemic, such as infection statistics, vaccination progress, and public health directives. Their statements were essential in shaping the public's understanding of the evolving

situation and the measures being implemented to manage the crisis. The reliance on government officials as major news sources reflected an attempt to provide authoritative and official information amidst the pandemic. Photographs were the most used visuals due to their ease of understanding and impact on audience engagement. On the other hand, videos and infographics are used less frequently, which suggests a choice for publishers to use more straightforward visual aids. The study found that emotional appeals are the most stylistic element by Yoruba media outlets when framing news stories on COVID-19. This indicates that the media outlets recognised the need to appeal to the audience's emotions. Cultural references and metaphors are also present but less so, suggesting a more straightforward reporting style. This agrees with the findings of Mohamadpour et al. (2024) and Ayo-Obiremi (2022), who emphasised the role of photographs in messages related to COVID-19.

The findings from this study reveal significant insights into the framing of COVID-19 by Yoruba media outlets. It was discovered that the Health and Safety frame is the most prevalent, accounting for 41.4 percent of the coverage. This reflects that the Yoruba media outlets recognised the importance of reporting public health information during the pandemic. The Economic Impact frame and Government Response frame are equally significant, with 20.7 percent, indicating a balanced focus on COVID-19's economic repercussions and the governmental actions taken.

The social consequences (13.8%) and cultural/religious frames (3.4%) are the less emphasised frames, especially the latter, which suggests that Yoruba media outlets did not focus on the cultural and religious perspectives of the pandemic. This framing pattern aligns with the tenets of the framing theory, which posits that the media emphasises certain aspects to shape public interpretation (Yang 2024; Scheufele 1999). The prevalence of the health and safety frame underscores the media's role in pushing the urgency and severity of the pandemic, thereby encouraging compliance towards health measures and policies.

The dominance of the Health and Safety frame likely influenced the audience to prioritise health measures and safety protocols. The dominance of this frame suggests that public health

information was vital in shaping the behaviours and attitudes toward preventing the spread of the virus among Yoruba people. In addition to that, the significant presence of the Economic Impact frame and Government Response frame may have shaped the audience's attitudes toward economic policies and governmental actions taken during the crisis. The frequent use of the Health and Safety frame in both primary and secondary frame categories most likely encouraged the audience to adopt good health practices such as social distancing, taking the vaccine and wearing their face masks. Government Response as a secondary frame may indicate public compliance with governmental directives.

There is an equal distribution between the positive and negative tones, indicating a balanced portrayal (37.9%) of these perspectives in media coverage. This finding is consistent with literature that suggests crises and health emergencies are often framed negatively to emphasise the risks and dangers involved (Okoli et al. 2024; Rothman and Salovey 1997). The neutral tone also accounts for a significant portion, reflecting efforts to maintain objectivity in reporting.

The balanced tone, with equality in positive and negative tones, suggests the media may have provided a clear view of the pandemic. This balance may have helped the audience maintain a realistic perspective, acknowledging the challenges and efforts to mitigate the crisis. Positive tones might have helped foster hope and compliance, while negative tones might have promoted scrutiny of government actions yet underscored the gravity of the situation, and neutral tones would have brought about a balance in public discourse.

Comparing these findings with existing literature reveals similarities and discrepancies. For instance, Msughter and Philips (2020) highlighted a focus on economic and political frames in Nigerian newspapers. In contrast, this study found a greater emphasis on health and safety frames in Yoruba media. Similarly, Ogbodo et al. (2020) discovered that economic and health frames were predominant after conducting a global analysis of media framing of COVID-19. The findings align on the aspect of health but differ in the prominence of the health and safety frame, which may be attributed to Yoruba media. Although less dominant in this study, the social

consequence frame aligns with the broader literature that emphasises the multifaceted impact of the pandemic and social relations and behaviours.

Salawu (2004) and Olawale et al. (2024) emphasise the importance of culturally relevant communication strategies. The emphasis on health and safety resonates with the community's values and concerns. A famous Yoruba adage goes "Kò sóhun tó dùn léòyòdò, Bí ká jí kára ó le" ('Nothing is greater in life than being hale and hearty always'). The Yorùbá believe there is hope of a brighter future for a healthy person (UNILAG Repository n.d.). These findings suggest that Yoruba media outlets have effectively utilised framing to highlight the critical aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly health and safety.

CONCLUSION

From the data collected, analysed and discussed, the following conclusions were reached. Adopting healthy behaviours, including social distancing, getting the vaccination, and wearing face masks, were probably encouraged by the frequent usage of the Health and Safety frame in both primary and secondary frame categories. A secondary frame, the Government Response frame, would suggest that the public complied with official orders. The equal emphasis on both positive and negative tones shows that the media may have given a clear picture of the pandemic. This harmony might have assisted the viewers in keeping a grounded viewpoint, recognising the difficulties and attempts to lessen the situation.

This study's findings have concluded that Yoruba language media played a crucial role in shaping the public's understanding and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings also emphasise the importance of culturally and linguistically tailored communication in managing public health crises.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study and conclusions reached, the following recommendations are made:

1. Future crisis communication strategies should consider the linguistic contexts of

target audiences to enhance communication effectiveness.

2. Media outlets should strive for a more balanced reporting of public health issues, including diverse frames and tones.
3. Training programmes for journalists on framing in ethnic language contexts can improve the quality of health crisis reporting.
4. Further research can investigate a broader range of other Yoruba and indigenous language media outlets to capture a more comprehensive picture of framing in Nigeria. Additionally, direct audience studies could validate the inferred impacts of media frames on public attitudes and behaviours.

REFERENCES

- Adebisi FI 2023. Yoruba indigenous media and culture preservation in the digital age. In: K Owusu-Bempah, IO Ibrahim (Eds.): *Indigenous Knowledge and Practices in Africa*. Cham: Springer, pp. 311-329. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-17429-2_19
- Adedeji A 2014. The Relevance of Yoruba Media Outlets in Contemporary Times [PDF]. Eliza De University Research Repository. From <http://repository.eliz.deuniversity.edu.ng/jspui/bitstream/20.500.12398/921/1/Adedeji_percent2C_Adewale.pdf> (Retrieved on 22 of June 2024).
- Adesina E, Oyero O, Amodu L, Amoo E et al. 2021. Health belief model and behavioural practice of urban poor towards COVID-19 in Nigeria. *Heliyon*, 7(9): e08037.
- Adeyeeye BK, Oyedele O, Yartey D, Ojih SE et al. 2023. Newspaper coverage of rape-related issues in Nigeria during Covid-19 pandemic. *Ethno-Medicine*, 17(1-2): 82-90.
- Adeyeeye B, Salawu A 2024. Effectiveness of COVID-19 risk communication messages in indigenous languages and the promotion of safe practices in Ondo State, Nigeria. In: K Aiseng, IA Fadipe (Eds.): *Public Health Communication Challenges to Minority and Indigenous Communities*. IGI Global, pp. 32-46.
- Ajzen I, Fishbein M 1980. *Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Apuke OD, Omar B 2021. Television news coverage of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria: Missed opportunities to promote health due to ownership and politics. *Sage Open*, 11(3): 21582440211032675.
- Alozie OC 2022. Yoruba media and the promotion of indigenous knowledge systems in Nigeria. *Yoruba Studies Review*, 4(1): 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.33596/ysr.v4i1.129927>
- Ayo-Obiremi IT 2022. The influence of photographs, music and comedy in Instagram coronavirus messages on adult preventive habits. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 14(1): 95-108.
- Bansal M 2020. Cardiovascular disease and COVID-19. *Diabetes and Metabolic Syndrome: Clinical Research and Reviews*, 14(3): 247-250. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dsx.2020.03.013>

- Brown S 2021. The impact of COVID-19 on development assistance. *International Journal*, 76(1): 42-54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020702020986888>
- Craig RT 1999. Communication theory as a field. *Communication Theory*, 9(2): 119-161.
- Erinoso O, Wright KO, Anya S, Kuyinu Y, Abdur-Razzaq H, Adewuya A 2021. Predictors of COVID-19 information sources and their perceived accuracy in Nigeria: online cross-sectional study. *JMIR Public Health and Surveillance*, 7(1): e22273.
- Entman RM 1993. Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4): 51-58.
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control 2020. COVID-19 Situation update worldwide. From <www.ecdc.eu> (Retrieved on 25 June 2024).
- Fayemi AK 2013. Epistemological Virtues in Yoruba Oral Media: Implications for Culture of Peace in Contemporary Africa [PDF]. The African Symposium, 13(1): 86-100. From <<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Fayemi-Ademola>> (Retrieved on 23 June 2024).
- Goffman E 1974. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. London, UK: Northeastern University Press.
- Green LR, Smith JK, Williams SE 2021. Media coverage of the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic: A review of key findings. *Journal of Mental Health*, 30(2): 123-131.
- Gui L 2021. Media framing of fighting COVID 19 in China. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 43(4): 966-970.
- Happer C, Philo G 2013. The Role of the media in the construction of public belief and social change. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 1: 321-336. <https://doi.org/10.5964/JSPP.V1I1.96>.
- Iyengar S 1991. *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*. Chicago, USA: University of Chicago Press.
- Kilgo DK, Yoo J, Johnson TJ 2019. Spreading Ebola Panic: Newspaper and social media coverage of the 2014 Ebola health crisis. *Journal of Health Communication*, 34(8): 811-817.
- Krippendorff K 2019. The changing landscape of content analysis: Reflections on social construction of reality and beyond. *Communication and Society*, 47(1): 1-27.
- Kumar S, Viral R, Deep V, Sharma P et al. 2021. Forecasting major impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on country-driven sectors: Challenges, lessons, and future roadmap. *Personal and Ubiquitous Computing*, 27: 807-830. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00779-021-01530-7>.
- Li C, Yang Y, Ren L 2020. Genetic evolution analysis of 2019 novel coronavirus and coronavirus from other species. *Infection, Genetics and Evolution*, 82: 104285.
- Lone SA, Ahmad A 2020. COVID-19 pandemic – an African perspective. *Emerging Microbes and Infections*, 9(1): 1300-1308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/22221751.2020.1775132>
- Mohamadpour F, Askarian A, Askarian M 2024. Picture analysis of billboards and infographic graphics advertising COVID-19 on promoting preventive behaviors and taking vaccination against the Coronavirus disease pandemic. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1): 6310.
- Munoriyarwa A, Chiumbu S 2024. Data journalism and investigative news reporting practices during the pandemic: The case of Zimbabwe and South Africa. In: Jingrong Tong (Ed.): *Data Journalism and the COVID-19 Disruption*. Routledge, pp. 50-64.
- Msughter AE, Phillips D 2020. Media framing of COVID-19 pandemic: A study of daily trust and vanguard newspapers in Nigeria. *International Journal of Health, Safety and Environment (IJHSE)*, 6(5): 588-596.
- NCDC 2020. 100 Days of Nigeria COVID-19 Response. Press Release 6 June, 2020. Nigerian Center for Disease Control. From <www.covid19.ncdc.gov.ng> (Retrieved on 7 June 2024).
- Nelson TE, Oxley ZM, Clawson RA 1997. Toward a psychology of framing effects. *Political Behavior*, 19: 221-246.
- Nigerian Centre for Disease Control 2020. Covid-19 Update in Nigeria. From <[https://ncdc.gov.ng/diseases/sitreps/?cat=14&name=An percent 20 update percent 20 of percent20 COVID-19 percent20outbreak percent20in percent20 Nigeria](https://ncdc.gov.ng/diseases/sitreps/?cat=14&name=An%20percent%20update%20of%20percent20COVID-19%20outbreak%20in%20Nigeria)> (Retrieved on 23 June 2024).
- O'Loughlin J, Masson P, Déry V, Fagnan D 1999. The role of community pharmacists in health education and disease prevention: A survey of their interests and needs in relation to cardiovascular disease. *Preventive Medicine*, 28(3): 324-331. <https://doi.org/10.1006/pmed.1998.0436>
- Ogbodo JN, Onwe EC, Chukwu J, Nwasum CJ et al. 2020. Communicating health crisis: A content analysis of global media framing of COVID-19. *Health Promotion Perspectives*, 10(3): 257-269.
- Okoli EC, Hassan SM, Okoye NA, Eradiri BM 2024. Advancing public health resilience: A review of proposed strategies for enhancing emergency preparedness in rural and underserved communities. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 23(3): 045-062.
- Olawale FE, Hooi KY, Balakrishnan KS 2024. 'From divided past to cohesive future': A reflection on the reconciliatory mechanisms of (Yoruba) traditional approaches to conflict resolution in Nigeria. *African Identities*, 1-16.
- Perret-Guillaume C, Joly L, Benetos A 2009. Heart rate as a risk factor for cardiovascular disease. *Progress in Cardiovascular Diseases*, 52(1): 6-10.
- Peter A, Ohakpougwu U 2023. Origins of Cyberwarfare: How the Internet Got Weaponized. *European Conference on Social Media*, 10(1): 364-372. Doi: 10.34190/ecsm.10.1.1270
- Peter A, Omole R, Misra S, Garg L, Oluranti J 2021. Machine Learning Approaches for Classifying the Peace-War Orientations of Global News Organizations' Social Media Posts. *International Conference on Information Systems and Management Science*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 301-317.
- Rothman AJ, Salovey P 1997. Shaping perceptions to motivate healthy behaviour: The role of message framing. *Psychological Bulletin*, 121(1): 3.
- Salawu A 2004. A readership survey of Yoruba newspapers for development messages. *Journal of Social Sciences/ Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(3): 197-202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2004.11892414>
- Sarkodie S, Owusu P 2020. Global assessment of environment, health and economic impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). *Environment, Development and*

- Sustainability*, 23: 5005-5015. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-020-00801-2>.
- Scheufele DA 1999. Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*, 49(1): 103-122.
- Siddiqua A, Shabir G, Ashraf A, Khaliq A 2020. Media framing of pandemics: A case study of the coverage of Covid-19 in elite newspapers of Pakistan. *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies*, 6(4): 1267-1275.
- Simpson JA, Weiner ESC 1989. *Oxford English Dictionary 1989*. Vol. 3. UK: Clarendon Press.
- Smith S, Smith S 2016. Media coverage of the Ebola virus disease in four widely circulated Nigeria newspapers: Lesson from Nigeria. *Health Promotion and Perspective*, 6(2): 92-95.
- Smith S, Smith S, Ajayi A 2020. Content analysis of mass media reportage on coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) in Nigeria from six widely circulated Nigerian newspapers. *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 6(3): 88-99.
- UNILAG Repository (n.d.). Yorùbá Proverbs: An Insight Into The Indigenous Healthcare Delivery System And Health Education. From <<https://ir.unilag.edu.ng/bitstreams/1390ad0b-23af-4230-b6dd-ed6f7c26dca8/download>> (Retrieved on 23 June 2024).
- Wang J, Jing R, Lai X, Zhang H et al. 2020. Acceptance of COVID-19 vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic in China. *Vaccines*, 8(3): 482.
- World Health Organization 2023. *An Overview of Infectious Disease Management During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, January 2020-July 2022.
- Xiong J, Lipsitz O, Nasri F, Lui LM, Gill H et al. 2020. Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on mental health in the general population: A systematic review. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 277: 55-64. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2020.08.001>
- Yang L 2024. Exploring Media Framing of the Monkeypox Pandemic in Mainstream and Social Media: A Framing Theory Analysis. In: iConference: *International Conference on Information*. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. Lecture Notes in Computer Science (LNCS, volume 14596) DOI:10.1007/978-3-031-57867-0_10
- Yusuf M, Moses JM 2021. Framing of the COVID-19 pandemic during the government's imposed lockdown by the Daily Trust and the Punch newspapers. *Magazine of Computer Science and Information Systems*, 5(1): 89-106

Paper received for publication in
Paper accepted for publication in

Appendix

<i>Outlets</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Abawole- BBC YORUBA	51.7
Alaroye	13.8
Asejere	34.5
Total	100
<i>Sources of Information</i>	
Government Officials	42.4
Health Experts	32.9
Economists	14.8
Community Leaders	7.3
Others	3.4
Total	100
<i>Most Commonly Used Visuals</i>	
Photographs	77.3
Infographics	3.4
Videos	19.3
Total	100
<i>Most Commonly Used Appeals</i>	
Use of Metaphors	27.6
Emotional Appeals	41.4
Cultural references	31.0
Total	100
<i>Dominant Frames Used</i>	
Health and Safety Frame	41.4
Economic Impact Frame	20.7
Government Response Frame	20.7
Social Consequences Frame	13.8
Cultural/Religious Frame	3.4
Total	100
<i>Tones</i>	
Positive	37.9
Negative	37.9
Neutral	24.2
Total	100