

Imperatives of Negotiation in Managing Covid-19 Vaccination Hesitancy in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The paradoxical hesitancy to covid-19 vaccination amidst spread of the pandemic, especially the deadly Delta Variant, has remained a source of worry to the global community. Despite assurances of the security and adequacy of the immunizations and the jabs being publicly administered on top Nigerian political hierarchy, covid-19 vaccination has remained controversial in Nigeria. It appears that citizens' apprehensions about the side effects of the vaccines are yet to be overcome. This study investigated the grounds of Nigerian citizens' hesitancy to covid-19 vaccination. Among others, the study inquired the taking after question: What are factors that underlie Nigerian citizens' hesitancy to covid-19 vaccination? The quantitative study combined Social Cognitive and Diffusion of Innovations theories as theoretical cornerstone. Survey research design was adopted to study a population of 84, 004, 084 from which a test estimate of 384 respondents was drawn. Research results show that the reported side effects of covid-19 vaccines and citizens' distrust of Nigerian government and health system were leading factors to covid-19 vaccination hesitancy in Nigeria. NAFDAC's warning of fake covid-19 vaccines being circulated in Nigeria was also found as a factor that underlies hesitancy to vaccination. The study recommends, among other things, that national and international health authorities should address apprehensions generated by the reported side effects of covid-19 vaccines. It was also recommended that Nigerian political leaders should rise to bridge citizens' distrust in the government.

KEYWORDS

Covid-19 Vaccination; Covid-19 Vaccination Hesitancy; Eligible Nigerian Citizens; Public Policy Communication; Stakeholder Relations Perspectives

INTRODUCTION

Like other countries of the global community hit by covid-19 pandemic, the Nigerian authorities embraced vaccination, in addition to non-pharmaceutical measures, to contain spread of the deadly pandemic. Vaccination was considered the most appropriate pharmaceutical solution by the World Health Organisation (WHO) following the absence of a known cure for covid-19. The first phase of covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria was flagged off with the administration of AstraZeneca vaccine on Nigerian health workers in March 2021 (WHO AFRICA, 2021). President Muhammadu Buhari and Vice President Yemi Osinbajo received the first dose of covid-19 vaccines on live television on March 6, 2021 (Adebowale, 2021; Wahab, 2021; Oluwafemi, 2021). Public vaccination of the President and Vice President was to demonstrate the safety and efficacy of the vaccines. It

was to assure eligible Nigerian citizens that covid-19 vaccines were safe and efficacious to contain spread of the pandemic.

At the State level, many State governors and political appointees received the first dose of covid-19 vaccines in public. Some traditional and religious leaders also demonstrated faith in covid-19 vaccines by receiving the jabs in public. The Nigerian media were not left out in midwifing public acceptance of covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria, as several media stations played host to health workers who visited the stations not only to vaccinate eligible media workers, especially reporters whose news gathering function put at the risk of contracting covid-19 but also to seek partnership for mass vaccination in Nigeria. As critical stakeholders in public policy communication, partnership with the mass media was crucial to set a national agenda for wider acceptance of covid-19 vaccination by eligible Nigerian citizens.

The second stage of covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria was flagged off in August, 2021 with the arrival of Johnson and Johnson and Moderna vaccines. As was the situation during the first phase of vaccination, the second phase has remained controversial in Nigeria. There appears to be apprehensions to covid-19 vaccination by many eligible Nigerian citizens.

To arrest covid-19 vaccination hesitancy, the Nigerian authorities contemplates the enforcement of compulsory vaccination. The Executive Director of National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), Dr. Faisal Shuaib disclosed that the Federal Government might Sanctions eligible Nigerians who refuse to get the covid-19 vaccine when the vaccines have been made equitably available. Dr. Shuaib stated that the Federal Government might apply basic rule of law to engender compulsory vaccination in Nigeria (Ojerinde, Tolu-Kolawole, Naku, Adedipe and Nejo, 2021; Muanya, Onyedika-Ugoeze, Egbejule and Nwaoku, 2021).

Also, Edo State Government had threatened compulsory covid-19 vaccination ahead of flag-off of second phase of vaccination in the State. The State Government threatened to restrict unvaccinated citizens from public places which witness large gatherings, such as, worship centres, event centres and government offices and departments (Bello, 2021; News Agency of Nigeria, 2021). The controversial compulsory covid-19 vaccination policy in Edo State has been trailed with protests and litigations by some social right groups. On August 31, 2021, a Port Harcourt High court restrained Edo State government from the proposed compulsory covid-19 vaccination in the State (Agency Reporter, 2021; Enoghohase and Aliu, 2021; Olabimtan, 2021).

The paradoxical refusal of covid-19 vaccination amidst devastations caused by the pandemic appears to be assuming a global dimension. Across Europe, America and parts of Africa, citizens' hesitancy to covid-19 vaccination is widely reported. Covid-19 vaccination hesitancy is mainly due to reported side effects of the vaccines which has been acknowledged by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and said to be normal and recoverable. Notwithstanding controversies regarding covid-19 vaccine side effects, some countries have recorded high rate of vaccination. For instance, by the end of September 2021, Portugal had recorded full vaccination of over 85% of her eligible citizens (Harlen and Alberti, 2021). According to the head of Portugal's Covid-19 Vaccination Task Force, Vice Admiral Henrique de Gouveia e Melo, the country achieved the vaccination feat by adopting a stakeholder collaborative approach, which involved the engagement of Mathematicians, health experts, analysts and strategic experts from the country's Army, Air Force and Navy. Vice Admiral Melo further disclosed that Portugal achieved the vaccination feat by keeping politics outside the exercise (Nunes, 2021).

The controversies over covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria presents the relevance of negotiating the quagmire. This is not only due to the continuous spread of the pandemic with increasing cases and related deaths but also due to avoidable crises that may result from forceful vaccination. Thus, the burden of managing covid-19 vaccination hesitancy towards containing spread of the pandemic in Nigeria serves as the motivation to this study.

With the devastating impacts of covid-19 pandemic on Nigeria's economic and health systems, eligible citizens were expected to embrace vaccination with open arms. Public vaccination of President Muhammadu Buhari, Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo and other notable personalities was also expected to raise Nigerian citizens' confidence on the safety and effectiveness of the covid-19 vaccine despite the acknowledgement of probable side effects. It seemingly appears that these assurances are yet to overcome the clouds of apprehensions, suspicions and rumours built around covid-19 vaccination. It is the monstrous cloud of controversy surrounding covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria that serves as motivation to this study. Thus, research problem can be summarised in the following question: What are factors that underlie covid-19 vaccination hesitancy in Nigeria despite the assurances of the safety and efficacy of the vaccines by local and international health authorities?

Operational Definition of Terms

The taking after terms were characterized as they pertained to this study and not their lexical meanings.

Covid-19 Vaccination: This entails the ongoing vaccination of eligible citizens in order to contain spread of covid-19 pandemic. The first phase of covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria began in March, 2021 with the introduction of AstraZeneca vaccines. The second phase of vaccination was flagged-off in August, 2021 with the arrival of Johnson and Johnson and Moderna vaccines.

Covid-19 Vaccination Hesitancy: This is the refusal of covid-19 vaccines by eligible Nigerian citizens. Covid-19 vaccination hesitancy is reported around Nigeria, forcing the government contemplate the enforcement compulsory vaccination.

Eligible Nigerian Citizens: These are Nigerian citizens who are expected to receive covid-19 vaccines. The Federal Ministry of Health and affiliate covid-19 management authorities define eligible Nigerian citizens for vaccination as adults between 18 and 60 years old.

Public Policy Communication: This is a communication model that is directed at diffusing a social phenomenon. It is communication that is directed at motivating citizens to embrace and to participate in an innovation. Public policy communication has the feature of integrating isolated communication media, such as, mass media, new media, oramedia and interpersonal networks to diffuse an innovation.

Stakeholders: Stakeholders are people and bunches that are influenced by covid-19 vaccination exercise in Nigeria. Some covid-19 vaccination stakeholders are eligible Nigerian citizens, Nigerian government and Nigerian health authorities.

Stakeholder Relations Perspectives: This can be the application of open relations approaches in overseeing a circumstance, especially a controversial situation. Stakeholder relations perspectives embrace negotiation or dialogue in managing stakeholder conflicts rather than the application of force. The process exploits the control of communication to reach a compromise. It does not disregard or weaken the conditions that underlie a struggle or emergency which must be settled in arrange to set up enduring arrangements and honest to goodness partner participation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The argument of the study was hinged on Social Cognitive and Diffusion of Innovations theories. Other related concepts were reviewed to highlight the focus of the study.

Social Cognitive Theory

The Social Cognitive theory was propounded by Albert Bandura in the 1960's (DeFleur, 2010). The theory is concerned with factors that underlie human behaviour in relation to the acceptance and adoption of a new idea. That is, the adoption of new forms of behaviour does not occur in isolation, but it is a consequence of certain interacting factors which exert influences on humans. This is opposed to the notion that individuals could perform new activities possibly by chance.

Agreeing to Bandura (1989), the social cognitive hypothesis portrays a energetic (on-going) prepare in which a number of components connected and impact each other, subsequently inciting the person to attempt an activity or inaction. Such variables incorporate: individual (instinctual, drive, characteristics and other motivational powers); environmental (events, happenings, hazards and changes); and social (cultural orientations). These factors interact and affect how individuals perceive social phenomena. Thus, DeFleur (2010) describes the social cognitive philosophy as an critical key to get it how individuals procure other ways and to reply to their environment. It goes to say that people's actions are often governed by reason, including apprehensions. These reasons form the basis upon which individuals adopt or disregard new ideas. Lerner (1982) argues that people are neither simply driven by inner forces nor are their actions shaped by the environment. Instead, these factors interact with each other and exert some influence on the individual which results in the motivation to participate in a social cause or otherwise (Bandura, 1989).

The problem with development messages, such as covid-19 vaccination, is not just in the dissemination of the message but the effort it requires to stir motivation, which stimulates the senses of urgency to behave as required. According to Lin, Bragley and Koops (2003), the purpose of the dissemination of messages targeted at changing people's attitude does not only consist in the presentation of the message through a medium but also "displaying compelling contentions that pass on a sense of criticalness for activity whereas making the proposed activity irresistible" (p.12). What makes a message irresistible is the sense of urgency it conveys. However, this sense of urgency which results in the adoption of new ideas does not come in isolation. It is the function of the understanding of the extent of damage or other consequences which could unavoidably result due to negligence. This is the step that beckons to stimulate mass covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria. It is to demonstrate the implications of vaccination and hesitancy through knowledge sharing, rather than the application of force which may continue to warrant resistances.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The postulation of Diffusion of Innovations is credited to Everett Rogers, in his book *Diffusion of innovations* in 1962 (Baran and Davis, 2009). Diffusion of innovations interrogates the processes by which an thought (development) diffuses and spreads through a target populace over time in order to gain acceptance. The theory interrogates the circumstances that underlie the situation where different People welcome and receptive to new ideas in different ways and at different times. The diffusion paradigm is based on differences in variables, such as, differences in people's psychological frame, cognition, perceptual differences, environment, association and world-view (Miller, 2002). Following the differences that resonate in people's disposition towards social phenomena, Okorie and

Ekwamu (2012) state that to possibly communicate solutions to social problems, awareness of people's perception and attitude towards social phenomena should be certified in order to ensure realisation of intended benefits of a policy.

The prior contention presents the truth that accessibility of a modern thought may not after all decipher into its appropriation and utilize by individuals of the target populace. It is conceivable that certain mediating factors might whittle the seen changes resultant from a unused thought, thereby making its adoption challenging. Roling, Ascroft and Chege (1976), cited in Nwanmereni and Ochonogor (2020), observe that:

Propagation is generally considered to be a self-governing process that, by God's will, ensures the flow of income-generating and welfare-generating ideas and thus ensures their distribution among members of the community. Until the 1970s, there was evidence of this expectation that the diffusion process could distribute the benefits of new technology, disrupting economic growth... However, instead of traditional tribes and peoples isolated village as the main target of broadcasting programs, we have a large number... of people whose lack of opportunity, rather than their resistance to change, seems to be the main impediment to development develop (p. 64).

What this means is that the introduction of an intervention to solve a social problem requires immediate and continuous adoption and application assessment. This is because the consolidation of a social intercession may not essentially decipher into selection and acknowledgment by the target populace. It also means that an innovation must be advantageous and devoid of adverse consequences for the target audience. DeFleur (2010) identifies relative advantage as a critical component that enhances the adoption of an innovation. He observes that any innovation that is disadvantageous may be resisted by the target audience. This is the seeming situation of covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria where the suspicion of the side effects of the vaccines poses a challenge to mass vaccination. The diffusion paradigm is foundational in managing scepticisms surrounding covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria.

Defining Covid-19 Vaccination Project Stakeholders

Arrangement partners are people or bunches who can attest either legitimate claims of proprietorship or other shapes of stake in a approach (Kotler, Maon and Lindgreen, 2012). Agreeing to Heath (2005), partners can be found inside and exterior a social or natural framework. Within the arraignment of Nigeria's covid-19 inoculation extend, distinguishing proof of the interface of partners, such as, the government, local and international health authorities, ethnic and regional traditional authorities, opinion leaders, eligible Nigerian citizens, religious organisations, civil society organisations and other accomplices is pivotal to accomplishing victory. The list of extend partners has been extended to incorporate future eras, non-human species (creatures) and the common environment (Heath, 2005; Kotler, Maon and Lindgreen, 2012). The consideration of future eras, creatures and the common environment within the list of venture partners is based on the significance of protecting the soil and its bolster framework. This account for the definition of economical improvement by the World Commission on Environment and Improvement as development that meets the wants of the show era of the occupants of the soil without compromising the well-being or welfare of future eras (Asadu, 2009).

Wheeler and Sillanpaa (1997), cited in Kotler, Maon and Lindgreen (2012), have categorised venture partners into: essential and auxiliary partner bunches; and social and non-social partner bunches. Primary-social stakeholders with respect to covid-19 vaccination are groups, such as, eligible Nigerian citizens, Presidential Task Force on

Covid-19, government, local and international health agencies. Secondary-social stakeholders involve groups, such as regulatory authorities (NAFDAC), civil society organisations, civic educate, weight instigators, the mass media and scholarly commentators. On the non-social partition, Wheeler and Sillanpaa (1997) recognize essential non-social partners as the characteristic environment, future eras and non-human species (creatures). Auxiliary non-social classification includes natural intrigued bunches, such as, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace and animal welfare organisations, such as, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

The problem with stakeholder relationships is the urgency that a non-core stakeholder group, such as a civil society organization, can assume the position of a central stakeholder. heart. This occurs because of the urgency of the claim asserted by a stakeholder about the leadership role of a social system or organization. In other words, a secondary non-social agent can replace a primary agent because of the urgency it requires to respond to a group request or agitation. Kotler et al (2012) stated that a group of secondary stakeholders, for instance, can quickly become a primary or core stakeholder when the urgency of a claim takes precedence over the legitimacy of such a claim. For instance, the urgency it required to manage protests against compulsory vaccination moves in Edo State made the civil society organisations that led the protests primary stakeholders. This means that the legitimacy of the claim as asserted by a stakeholder is not important. Indeed, the urgency of attention required to process or respond to such a complaint can far outweigh the legitimacy of a complaint on an ordinary day. The implication of the urgency of a claim can be asserted by a group that the leadership of a social system or organization must respond appropriately to the urgency of a claim.

Nigerian Citizens' Perception of Covid-19 Vaccination

Recognition can be characterized as the diverse ways diverse people and bunches think around or get it a marvel. What this implies is that distinctive people or individuals can see a specific thought totally different ways. McCombs and Shaw (1972) characterize discernment as the diverse ways individuals see and translate a specific thought based on contrasts in mental cosmetics, ideological build, world see, environment, introduction and other factors (Ndimele and Guiltless, 2006). It goes to say that individuals who have a comparable introduction or involvement are likely to see and decipher a specific wonder in a comparable way.

A few social researchers don't don't share the idea that people with a similar encounter or introduction may well be consensual in their recognition of a given marvel. The contention is that diverse people have distinctive mental develops which serve as a guard instrument that channel data to influence people's one of a kind see of marvels. Baran and Davis (2009) in this way characterize recognition as a particular handle that underlies the elucidations individuals agreement a given marvel. To this conclusion, two people can see a given thought unlike in spite of the resemblance of their encounter or preparing. Perception accounts for differences in Nigerian citizens' view of covid-19 pandemic and vaccination. It also seemingly accounts for difference in covid-19 vaccination stance by different State governments in Nigeria.

Discernment serves as a tactile jolt that underlines individual's characteristics. Usually why the recognition may be a significant calculate that must be taken into thought by Nigerian government and health authorities in the implementation of covid-19 vaccination project. Perception can result in the success or failure of the project. This is especially since the procurement of vaccines may not translate into acceptance of vaccination by eligible citizens. What this means is that it is precautionary to understand Nigerian

citizens' perception of covid-19, since citizen perception of the pandemic can affect vaccination. It too implies that Nigerian citizens' recognition of the government can bolster or weaken the realisation of covid-19 vaccination implementation.

Negotiating Controversial Covid-19 Vaccination

In corporate communication, negotiation is synonymous with terms, such as, dialogue and bargaining. According to Griffin and Moorhead (2007), negotiation includes the method by which two or more parties attempt to reach an understanding on an issue indeed in spite of the fact that they have distinctive suppositions regarding the issue. It may be a formal setting at which disputants make exertion to settle their contrasts (Mill operator, 2006). What this implies is that transaction involves discussions between bunches in a struggle. In other words, arrangement isn't a coercive prepare. Galvin and Terrell (2001) in this way characterize arrangement as "a formal problem-solving handle in which individuals intentionally examine their contrasts, work out a settlement and come to an understanding"

The crucial element of that precedes and proceeds negotiation is compromise. This is because parties involved in a conflict must accept the process first and foremost before negotiation can take effect. Breit (2004) and Hames (2012) state that negotiation involves a formal process by which interdependent groups in a conflict determine how to work together. What this means is that there is always a compelling condition that constrains interdependent parties to negotiate. The burden that constrains negotiation in covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria is the spread of covid-19 pandemic, especially the deadly Delta Variant, despite citizens' hesitancy to vaccination. The avoidable crisis that may result from forceful vaccination also beckons stakeholders to negotiate covid-19 vaccination project in Nigeria. McQuarrie (2003) argues that apart from the impacts of a prolonged conflict on a social or organic system, the danger of escalation of conflict underscores the place of dialogue. Breit (2007) observes that negotiation is instructive when heading of a social or natural framework understands that the cycle of stakeholders' resistance to a phenomenon can only be addressed through genuine stakeholders' cooperation.

Singh (2008) has identified the characteristics of negotiation as follows: (1) have two or more parts; (2) there is a conflict of needs and wants between two or more parties; (3) the parties negotiate at their option; and (4) when we negotiate, we expect a give-and-take process that underlies the definition of negotiation itself (p. 132). The interpretation is that negotiation is not a combative process. It is actually a give and take exercise. That is, negotiation thrives through compromise. Galvin and Terrell (2001) state that negotiation provides disputants the opportunity to state what they want, state their feelings, advance reasons for their differences, understand the plight of the other person or group, plan to resolve a conflict and to choose an option for continuous collaboration and progress. Udoudo (2009) argues that negotiation should provide an atmosphere that encourages frank expression of people's views on a phenomenon. This is the democratic atmosphere that is required to engender mass covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria. Genuine stakeholder engagement as opposed to forceful vaccination may provide the opportunity for Nigerian government and health authorities to set aside the apprehensions that underlie citizens' hesitancy to covid-19 vaccination.

RESEARCH METHODS

The nature of this ponder required the appropriation of study investigate plan. Overview is the think about of the characteristics of a test which can be credited to the bigger populace from which the test was drawn (Ihejirika and Omego, 2011; Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). The population of the study was 84, 004, 084. This is the official figure of

registered voters in Nigeria, which was embraced as the populace of the think about being the populace of grown-up citizens of Nigeria (Independent National Electoral Commission, 2019). The distribution of registered voters in Nigeria’s six geo-political zones is presented as follows:

- North- East: 20, 158, 100 (24%)
- South-West: 16, 292, 212 (19%)
- North-Central: 13, 366, 070 (16%)
- South-South: 12, 841, 279 (15%)
- North-East: 11, 289, 293 (14%) and
- South- East: 10, 057, 130 (12%)

A combination of enlisted voters within the six geo-political zones put the populace of the think about at 84, 004, 084. From this populace, a test measure of 384 respondents was drawn based on the examining framework of Keyton (2001).

The multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted to administer copies of questionnaire to the sample. The primary arrange presented cluster inspecting strategy which was utilized to separate Nigeria’s six geo-political zones into clusters. The moment organize presented proportionate inspecting framework which empowered the allotment of tests to distinctive clusters based on their rate representation within the generally populace of the ponder. Thus, Nigeria’s six geo-political zones received samples as follows: North-West: 92 samples; South-West: 73 samples; North Central: 61 samples; South-South: 57 samples; North East: 54 samples; and South East: 47 samples. Convenience sampling technique was used to reach the sample. Six research assistants were briefly trained and used to administer and retrieve copies of questionnaire. Data were presented in tables using simple percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data were presented in statistical tables using percentages.

Table 1. Nigerian Citizens’ Perception of Covid-19

S/N	Questionnaire Items	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	What is your perception of covid-19 pandemic?		
	a. The pandemic is real and still spreading in Nigeria.	336	87%
	b. Nigeria is now covid-19 free.	19	5%
	c. Covid-19 never came to Nigeria.	29	8%
	Total	384	100%
2.	I believe that there is covid-19 in Nigeria because I have seen an infected person.	Agreed 39	10%
		Disagreed 345	90%
	Total	384	100%
3.	I believe that covid-19 never came to Nigeria because I am yet to meet an infected person.	Agreed 43	11%
		Disagreed 341	89%
	Total	384	100%
4.	I know a neighbour/friend/colleague/ relative who contracted covid-19.	Agreed 68	18%
		Disagreed 316	82%
	Total	384	100%

The presentation in Table 1 shows that many Nigerian citizens were aware of the spread of covid-19 in the country. This is based on 87% respondents who acknowledged the spread of covid-19 in Nigeria.

Table 2. Eligible Nigerian Citizens' Acceptance of Covid-19 Vaccination

S/N	Questionnaire Items	No. of Respondents	Percentage
5.	I am willing to get vaccinated when the vaccines are equitably available.	Agreed 28	7%
		Disagreed 356	93%
		Total 384	100%
6.	I have received first dose of covid-19 vaccine.	Agreed 9	2%
		Disagreed 375	98%
		Total 384	100%
7.	I have received first and second doses of covid-19 vaccine.	Agreed 0	0
		Disagreed 384	100%
		Total 384	100%

Data presented in Table 2 show that many eligible Nigerian citizens were hesitant to covid-19 vaccination. This report is based on 93% respondents who were opposed to vaccination, even when covid-19 vaccines become equitably available in Nigeria. The presentation in the same table also shows that 98% respondents were yet to receive first dose of covid-19 vaccine.

Table 3. Factors that underlie Covid-19 Vaccination Hesitancy in Nigeria

S/N	Questionnaire Items	No. of Respondents	Percentage
8.	I am hesitant to covid-19 vaccination because: a. I do not believe that there is covid-19 in Nigeria. b. Due to reported side effects of the vaccines. c. NAFDAC's warning of fake covid-19 vaccines in circulation in Nigeria. d. Unavailability of a vaccination centre around my community/workplace. e. Nigeria is now safe from covid-19. f. Absence of commitment by Nigerian health authorities to respond to vaccine side effects. g. I have no trust in Nigerian government and health system.	0	0
		235	61%
		39	11%
		0	0
		0	0
		28	7%
		82	21%
		Total 384	100%

The presentation in table 3 shows that the reported side effects of covid-19 vaccines and citizens' distrust of the Nigerian government and health system were leading factors to covid-19 vaccination hesitancy in Nigeria. This report is based on 61% and 21% responses obtained by items 9(b) and 9(g), respectively. Data in the same table also show that warning of circulation of fake covid-19 vaccines by the *National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control* (NAFDAC) and response of Nigerian health authorities to covid-19 side effects were other factors that underlie Nigerian citizens' hesitancy to covid-19 vaccination. This is based on 11% and 7% responses obtained by items 9(c) and 9(f), respectively.

Discussion

Discussion of findings was based on the research questions.

Research Question 1: How do Nigerian citizens perceive covid-19 pandemic?

Determining Nigerian citizens' perception of covid-19 pandemic is foundational since the acceptance or otherwise of vaccination depends on perception of the pandemic. Research question 1 investigated Nigerian citizens' perception of covid-19 pandemic. The presentation in Table 1 indicated that many Nigerians were aware of the spread of the pandemic in Nigeria. This report is based on 87% respondents who acknowledged the spread of covid-19 in Nigeria.

Ordinarily, citizens' acknowledgement of the spread of covid-19 should constrain mass and voluntary vaccination in order to eradicate the pandemic from the Nigerian territory. This is rather not the case, suggesting that Nigerian citizens' acknowledgement of the spread of covid-19 pandemic in the country is yet to result in the expected action of accepting vaccination to contain spread of the pandemic. Bandura (1989), in articulating the Social Cognitive theory, observes that people's knowledge or awareness of a phenomenon may not directly translate into participation in the phenomenon. This is due to several factors that interact to provoke action or inaction in individuals. Bandura (1989) observes that people's actions are governed by reason, including apprehensions which represent cognitive disequilibrium. Until this cognitive disequilibrium is taken off the way, citizens' participation in a social action as well as the expected benefits of such an action may be deadlocked. This is the seeming situation of covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria, where citizens' acknowledgement of the spread of the pandemic is yet to result in the appetency to get vaccinated.

Research Question 2: What is the level of acceptance of covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria?

With assurances of the safety and efficacy of covid-19 vaccines by local and international health authorities and public vaccination of the highest echelon of Nigeria's political leadership, particularly President Mohammadu Buhari and Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo, accelerated covid-19 vaccination was anticipated. Thus, research question 2 investigated eligible Nigerian citizens' acceptance of covid-19 vaccination. Data presentation in Table 2 showed that many eligible citizens were hesitant to covid-19 vaccination. This report is based on 93% respondents who expressed hesitancy to covid-19 vaccination.

Eligible Nigerian citizens' hesitancy to covid-19 vaccination in the face of continuous spread of the rampaging pandemic, especially the *Delta variant* and probable fourth wave, is indicative of the need for stakeholders' collaboration and the articulation of interpretative messages by relevant stakeholders. Interpretative messages are required to overcome the cloud of apprehensions surrounding covid-19 vaccination. Lin, Bragley and Koops (2003) state that messages that are targeted at affecting people's opinion about a social phenomenon should provide compelling contentions that pass on a sense of criticalness for activity. The scholars aver that a message is made irresistible when the target population is sufficiently introduced into the consequences of indifference to an idea. This is practicable since the introspection of one's views in relation to the consequences of indifference to a phenomenon eliminates sentiments and builds citizens' trust in a social action.

Achieving Nigerian citizens' confidence to participate in covid-19 vaccination lays the foundation for stakeholder relations perspectives in driving the exercise. This is because trust serves as the springboard of citizen participation in a social action. It is the absence of trust that resonates in citizen apathy to social processes, such as, covid-19 vaccination. Thus, Henrique de Gouveia O Melo, Head of *Portugal's Covid-19 Vaccination Task Force* identifies groups collaboration, the elimination of political distrust and persuasive management of anti-vaccination sentiments as critical steps to encourage mass vaccination in countries hit by covid-19 pandemic (Harlen and Alberti, 2021; Nunes, 2021). It goes to say that introducing processes that should engender eligible Nigerian citizens' trust in covid-19 vaccination through stakeholder collaboration and the elimination of leadership distrust is better than introducing compulsory vaccination, which may be ridden with resistances as witnessed around the globe.

Research Question 3: What are factors that underlie Nigerian citizens' hesitancy to covid-19 vaccination?

Determining the factors that underlie covid-19 vaccination hesitancy in Nigeria is foundational to articulating practical measures that should engender mass vaccination. The presentation in Table 3 showed that the reported side effects of covid-19 vaccines was the leading cause of hesitancy in Nigeria. This is based on 61% respondents who were hesitant to covid-19 vaccination due to the reported side effects of the vaccines. Data presented in the same table also indicated that citizens' lack of trust in Nigeria's political leadership and health system and NAFDAC's warning of fake covid-19 vaccines in circulation in Nigeria were other factors that underlie eligible Nigerian citizens' hesitancy to covid-19 vaccination. This is based on 21% and 11% respondents, respectively who expressed distrust in the Nigerian political leadership and health system and worries over NAFDAC's warning of fake covid-19 vaccines being circulated in Nigeria.

It is no doubt that people's hesitancy to an innovation is heightened by the establishment of risks or dangers associated with the innovation. Thus, DeFleur (2010) identifies relative advantage as a critical element that underlies citizens' adoption or otherwise of an innovation. He argues that no matter how compelling a development message may assume, the association of risks with the product or idea being marketed remains a potent cog to adoption. In the case of covid-19 vaccination, not only is the acknowledgement of vaccine side effects by the *World Health Organisation* (WHO) and local health authorities entropic to mass vaccination but also NAFDAC's acknowledgement of fake vaccines being circulated in Nigeria and the seeming callous attitude of the Nigerian health authority to vaccine side effects are sufficient grounds for hesitancy. It seemingly appears that covid-19 hesitancy may continue to expose Nigerian citizens to the rampaging pandemic until the factors that underlie hesitancy are accorded due attention and addressed.

CONCLUSION

Despite Nigerian citizens' acknowledgement of the spread of covid-19 pandemic, there is substantial hesitancy to vaccination. The reported side effects of covid-19 vaccines is the leading cause of eligible Nigerian citizens' hesitancy to vaccination. Other factors that contributed to Nigerian citizens' hesitancy to covid-19 vaccination were NAFDAC's warning of fake vaccines being circulated in Nigeria and distrust of Nigerian political leadership and healthcare system. To contain the continuous spread of the pandemic in Nigeria, it is expedient to develop measures to deal with the factors that underlie hesitancy to covid-19 vaccination. As it is practical in some countries with high rate of vaccination, such as Portugal, there is need for identification and collaboration with critical stakeholders to lead advocacy for mass vaccination in Nigeria instead of crisis-prone compulsory vaccination.

Recommendations

For amicable resolution of Nigerian citizens' hesitancy to covid-19 vaccination, the following suggestions may be useful:

1. There is the urgent need to deal with confusions about the side effects of covid-19 vaccines. It is not enough to acknowledge probable side effects of covid-19 vaccines. National and international health authorities should rise to assure eligible Nigerian citizens that vaccine side effects are normal and recoverable.
2. In view of the acknowledgement of covid-19 vaccine side effects, the Nigerian health authorities should provide accessible designated centres where vaccinated persons who

develop side effects can access immediate medical attention. Such referral centres should be very close to the public and medical attention should be seen to be seamless. Covid-19 side effects should not be treated in the manner that seems as though it is the burden of affected individuals.

3. Just as the testimonies of survivors of the pandemic, the telecast of successful management of covid-19 side effects will raise citizens' confidence that vaccine side effects can be successfully treated. People who recovered from vaccine side effects should be motivated to testify to encourage the public that probable covid-19 vaccine side effects are normal and recoverable.
4. There is need to identify and collaborate with critical stakeholders to diffuse covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria. Stakeholders, such as, the mass media, religious organisations, civil society groups and opinion leaders will help to diffuse covid-19 vaccination in Nigeria.
5. The *National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control* (NAFDAC) should rise to its mandate of certifying the efficacy and safety of covid-19 vaccines and other products. The agency should not assign the certification of covid-19 vaccines to Nigerian citizens. The confusion arising from the agency's acknowledgement of circulation of fake covid-19 vaccines in Nigeria should be squarely addressed to raise citizens' confidence in the safety and efficacy of the vaccines.
6. It is imperative to bridge Nigerian citizens' distrust in the country's political leadership. Leadership communication on people-oriented social actions may continue to suffer setbacks due to citizens' distrust of leadership.

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