

Review of: "Interrogating the Role of Opinion Leaders in Media's COVID-19 Awareness Campaign to Mass Audience"

Aimée Bernice Munezero

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article: "Interrogating the Role of Opinion Leaders in Media's COVID-19 Awareness Campaign to Mass Audience." by Olanrewaju et al. is a descriptive, quantitative study whose aim is to determine the role played by mass media during COVID-19 pandemic in raising awareness, and how opinion leaders may have interfered or contributed to doing so in Nigeria.

The authors start by giving a background context on how the COVID-19 pandemic was grave, the signs and symptoms, the preventive measures as well as the need for the governments all over the world to communicate to the population about the measures taken to limit the spread of the virus and how this communication had to take place through mass media. They also explain the process of communication, and the Health Belief Model as an approach to effective health communication with thorough literature review.

The study was done using a quantitative descriptive design combined with meta-analysis and systematic literature review. It successfully represents the situation in Nigeria thanks to the sampling done in all six geographical regions of Nigeria.

The article successfully demonstrates that most of the population got information through mass media and that the information gotten influences their compliance to government measures. Furthermore, it proves that the population in Nigeria relied greatly on Opinion leaders in regard to information about the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through extensive and thorough literature review, Olanrewaju et al. demonstrate how challenging it was to achieve effective health communication with positive behavioral change given the inescapable passage of the message from the government through the media to the population. The discussion section successfully connects the findings to the existing data in the literature.

The strength of this article lies in the systematic literature review that guarantees a scientific work which takes into account the global situation while answering the question on national level.

However, the survey used cannot prove that opinion leaders were dissenters or interfering with the communication between the government and the population at large. If anything, it only proves that more than half of the population felt that Opinion leaders were distorting the information. Further research can be considered comparing the original message from the government and the delivered message to the population after going through the gatekeeping process of the media and after going through the influence of opinion leaders.

To sum up, “Interrogating the Role of Opinion Leaders in Media's COVID-19 Awareness Campaign to Mass Audience.” is an article with great potential, a good contribution to the scientific world as lessons must be learned about the communication around the COVID-19 pandemic for better preparedness for eventual future outbreaks.

Recommendations:

Polish the article by being brief, too much length may prevent the readers from getting the essential information but rather distract them with accessory information. E.g.: The geographical description of Nigeria could be removed, and that section replaced by the paragraph on the sample population for the survey.

Maximize smooth transition between ideas in order to keep reader's attention. E.g. The paragraph on communication and the one on Health Belief Model should follow each other as a logical succession of ideas.

Be more concise about the conclusion of the study: Highlight the results of the study in relation to its objectives (to the research question).