

# Preferences and Motivations of Nigerian Undergraduates in Sharing COVID-19 Information on Social Media

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the practice and motivators of Nigeria undergraduates' use of satire, music, and comedy for sharing COVID-19 information on social media. Just 294 undergraduates from six federal universities in Southwest, Nigeria participated in the survey. A questionnaire was posted on online platforms to collect data from the participants. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with tables and charts adopted in the presentation of results. Findings revealed that the most used of social media platforms for sharing COVID-19 information was WhatsApp, while satire, music, and comedy were moderately used with comedy used mostly. Gratifications for satire, music, and comedy use have positive effect on the undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information ( $\beta = 0.531, P = 0.000$ ). Academic libraries' provision of access to credible COVID-19 information in form of satire, music, and comedy will possibly promote the sharing of reliable COVID-19 information among the undergraduates and foster meeting their gratifications positively.

## KEYWORDS

Comedy, COVID-19, Gratifications, Information Sharing, Media Content Consumption, Music, Nigeria, Satire, Social Media, Undergraduates, University

## INTRODUCTION

Communication is significant to human existence, survival and sustainability. Various mass communication media are preferably used by people to share different types of media content such as satire, music and comedy as coping strategies (Eden et al, 2020). While satire and comedy are both genres and literary devices, music is a collection of coordinated sound or sounds. The use of satire, music and comedy to disseminate information may be circumstance, season, purpose or event-driven. People's media and media content consumption patterns have changed during this critical period of public health emergencies resulting from the corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic (Eden et al, 2020).

DOI: 10.4018/IJLIS.301607

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In such period, libraries' adoption of a positive paradigm shift in information services provision to curtail the spread of fake news will be highly beneficial to people.

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic is causing changes in the lives of people (Cabedo-Mas, Arriaga-Sanz & Moliner-Miravet, 2021). The outbreak has devastating impacts on the economic, social, political, cultural, educational, and religious aspects of people's lives, necessitating lockdown as a preventive measure (Lateef, Adesanmi & Olomola, 2020; Onuora et al, 2021). According to Umezudike et al (2020), "the rapid surge in the number of cases during the COVID- 19 pandemic has placed enormous strain on health care systems and significantly impacted educational systems globally." Hence, strains were on everyone to share vital information and updates that could help them successfully navigate through the pandemic and the induced infodemic. According to Ayanbode and Adetoro (2021), an infodemic is excess information, some accurate and some inaccurate, making it difficult for people to find credible sources and reliable advice when needed. Library and information professionals have critical roles to play in reducing the strains posed by misinformation. In recent times, COVID-19 has become topical and has caught the attention of all mass communication media globally (Karmegam & Mapillairaju, 2020).

Moreover, the dynamism in information sharing has emerged over time since the advent of the advanced means of mass communication. "During the COVID-19 crisis, the main means or channels of communication were social networks." (Cancelas-Ouviña, 2021:1). Social media and their creative use have been playing significant roles in facilitating the processes of social interaction through which vital life-sustaining information are shared. According to World Health Organisation-WHO (2020), social media platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Flickr, Vimeo, MySpace, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Imo were reported being used to share data, news, clinical best practices, and updates about COVID-19 around the world. Hence, this current study is set to evident if gratifications for social media use have a positive effect on Nigerian undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information. Hamzat and Otulugbu (2020) noted that people's dependence on the various social media platforms for information about COVID-19 during this critical time is very high, probably based on the ease and freedom that is attached to the use of social media. It could also be because health information or messages must be communicated effectively in formats that will make a positive impact (Onuora et al, 2021). Intentionally, people have been using social media to share COVID-19 information in formats such as texts, images, memes, cartoons, music, comedies, satire and so on (Obi-Ani, Anikwenze & Isiani, 2020; Sulaiman et al., 2020). Literary devices and genres (such as satire and comedy) are being used to share COVID-19 information (Karmegam & Mapillairaju, 2020). Satire, music and comedy are powerful means of communication media even during an emergency such as the one caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Gharib & Turner, 2020; Onuora et al., 2021). According to Cancelas-Ouviña (2021), satire refers to the use of humour, cartoons or caricature, irony, exaggeration or sarcasm to express an opinion and criticize people's, organizations', and government's action or vices especially in the context of topical issues.

For instance, the Internet meme is medium that engages humor and satire to communicate information (Kulkarni, 2017). Often, satire is engaged in both comedy and music to communicate or express ideas on topical issues. According to Onuora et al (2021:126), "animated cartoons have been used via YouTube to highlight and educate social media users on COVID-19 and further influence their behaviour." Comic strips were created in Chinese and Spanish to disseminate COVID-19 information to kids (Gharib & Turner, 2020). In Nigeria, teenagers and youths are not left out in the use of different social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and so on to socialise, connect, and share information (Ngonso, 2019). Though this present study focuses on Nigerian undergraduates generally, among the Nigerian youths, evidences have shown that information about COVID-19 was shared by different categories of Nigerian undergraduates and that they possess adequate knowledge of the disease. For example, Umezudike et al (2020) found that 50% of undergraduate dental students

in Nigeria had adequate general knowledge of COVID-19. Most of this knowledge was shared via collaborative technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and so on. Notwithstanding, social media has greatly contributed to the spreading of anxiety about the COVID-19 (Ahmad & Murad, 2020; Karmegam & Mapillairaju, 2020), fake news and misinformation among others. Wherefore, academic libraries in Nigeria must play significant role in preventing misinformation among undergraduates. Rendering information literacy services to undergraduates will equip them with the needed proficiencies to efficiently evaluate and share reliable COVID-19 information on social media. In this regard, deploying the undergraduates' preference of the use of satire, music and comedy to share information will be highly rewarding.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Social media has taken the lead in the dissemination of vital information about the COVID-19 pandemic (Obi-Ani, Anikwenze & Isiani, 2020). In time past, Nigeria undergraduates and youths have been involved in the use of various social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and so on to share information, socialise or connect with friends and family (Anyanwu, Ossai-Onah, & Iroeze, 2013). Nwagwu (2017) confirmed that youth (undergraduates) with associated behaviour are active users of social media purposefully for accessing, using and sharing diverse kinds of information. Recently, it has been observed that undergraduates have passed through a lot of physical and social changes during the pandemic (Adewale et al, 2021). These changes may have resulted from the lockdown or exposure to, and exploration of various kinds of information about COVID-19. According to Adewale et al (2021), changes were also noticeable in the area of undergraduates' use of social media during the pandemic. Their engagements in other creative and innovative activities have equally increased, probably resulting from their information need, need for personal fulfilment or as means of escape from anxiety associated with the news about COVID-19. Moreover, Ahmad and Murad's (2020) findings showed that in Iraqi Kurdistan, the majority of youths aged 18-35 years are facing psychological anxiety. Did the Nigerian undergraduates deploy any strategy to overcome anxiety by sharing COVID-19 information in emotionally supportive formats? Among college students in the United States, evidence has shown an increase in the consumption of both media and specific types of media content, probably for coping strategies to deal with stress and anxiety associated with COVID-19 (Eden et al, 2020). Although Onuora et al (2021) found that animated cartoons were used to inform and educate the general public about COVID-19 on social media and that such visual messages influence the health behaviour of social media users in Nigeria. Since satire, music and comedy are emotionally friendly formats of sharing credible information, investigating Nigerian undergraduates' use of these in sharing COVID-19 information will be a worthwhile effort. The findings from such study may inform academic libraries on understanding how to leverage the undergraduates' habits in order to effectively render information services to them, especially during a pandemic. There is a scarcity of empirical studies on Nigerian undergraduates' practice of and motivators for using satire, music and comedy for sharing Covid-19 information on social media. The need to fill this gap in the existing literature necessitated this present study which adopted the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory by McQuail (1983).

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to investigate the practice and motivators of Nigerian undergraduates' use of satire, music, and comedy for sharing COVID-19 information on social media. In line with this objective, the following research questions and hypotheses guided the study.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Through what medium do Nigerian undergraduates receive most information on COVID-19?
2. What are the social media platforms used mostly by Nigerian undergraduates for sharing COVID-19 information?
3. What motivates Nigerian undergraduates' choice of using a specific social media platform for sharing COVID-19 information?
4. To what extent do Nigerian undergraduates share COVID-19 information on social media?
5. To what extent do Nigerian undergraduates use satire, music, and comedy for sharing COVID-19 information?
6. Among satire, music, and comedy, which is the most used by Nigerian undergraduates for the sharing of COVID-19 information and what motivates them?
7. Do Gratifications for social media and media content use have a positive effect on the undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information?

## HYPOTHESES

Social media use is the utilisation of collaborative technologies to facilitate the creation, acquisition and sharing of information, opinions, ideas, insights, interests, and so on via networks.

**H1:** Gratifications for social media use have a positive effect on the undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information.

Media content use is the utilisation of different formats (text, images, cartoons, meme, music clip, video clip) of created, acquired and shared information, opinions, ideas, insights, and so on to meet specific needs. Such different formats of content are delivered via print or electronic media.

**H2:** Gratifications for media content use have a positive effect on the undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information.

The rest of this paper is organised as follows: the next sections present the literature review and theoretical underpinning, followed by the methodology adopted in executing the study. The next section after methodology details the results, followed by a discussion of the findings. The conclusion, recommendation and suggestion for future studies conclude the paper.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

A review of related works and the theoretical framework on which the study is anchored is presented in this section.

### Media Through Which People Receive Most COVID-19 Information

Media is significant to COVID-19 information sharing and response (Hall & Li, 2020). COVID-19 information is disseminated through print and electronic media. Mass media became the main source of COVID-19 information, yet with associated infodemics (Anwar, Malik, Raees & Anwar, 2020). An infodemic is excess information, some accurate and some inaccurate. Newspapers, news magazines, television, radio, social media and personal connections are sources of COVID-19 information (Ali, Foreman, Tozan, Capasso, Jones & DiClemente, 2020). For instance, the research carried out by Ali et al (2020) revealed that traditional media sources: TV, radio, or newspapers were the media through which US adults received most of the COVID-19 information (91.2%). Though some of the pieces of

information on COVID-19 were also received through oral communication, evidence has shown that technologies or web sources have been the major media of the sharing of COVID-19 information in general (Ali et al., 2020; González-Padilla & Tortolero-Blanco, 2020).

Media is greatly contributing to the dissemination of vital life-saving information in this era of COVID-19 pandemic. According to Anwar et al (2020),

Mass media has an imperative role in today's world and it can provide a unified platform for all public health communications, comprehensive healthcare education guidelines, and robust social distancing strategies while still maintaining social connections.

From Nigeria's perspective, young and old also received information on COVID-19 via mass media such as newspaper, television, radio, house to house sensitization and social media (Lateef, Adesanmi & Olomola, 2020). Though this current study investigated Nigerian undergraduates generally, some studies have shown that different categories of Nigerian undergraduates received information on COVID-19 through various media. While Hamzat and Otulugbu (2020) confirmed that Television was the source through which library and information professionals in Nigeria received most COVID-19 information; followed by telephone, in the study done by Umeizudike et al (2020), they found that among Nigerian undergraduate dental students, social media was mostly their source of COVID-19 information, followed by television. This is also similar to the findings of Adebowale et al (2021) that the most preferred source of COVID-19 information among undergraduate veterinary medical students in Nigeria was social media but the less employed sources of information were newspapers.

### **Social Media Platforms Used Mostly for Sharing COVID-19 Information, and Why**

Globally, social media has greatly contributed to the availability of excess COVID-19 information (Anwar et al, 2020; Sulaiman, Adeyemi & Ayegun, 2020). Social media has served as a viable information dissemination platform to Nigerians during this pandemic. According to Onuora et al (2021), "social media platforms now play an essential role in healthcare information communication." Twitter, Facebook, and government websites were social media platforms through which the announcement of the first case of COVID-19 in Nigeria was made (Obi-Ani, Anikwenze & Isiani, 2020). González-Padilla and Tortolero-Blanco (2020) affirmed that

the responsible use of these tools can help during a pandemic to quickly spread new important information, sharing diagnostic, treatment and follow-up protocols, comparing different approaches from other parts of the World to adapt them to our setting and available resources.

In the study done by Ali et al (2020), they found that government websites were the largest individual information source among US adults (87.6%). Ngonso (2019) adopted the uses and gratification (U&G) theory by McQuail (1983) to examine the effects of social media on Nigerian teenagers and youths in secondary schools in rural areas. Facebook was found to be the most preferred among them, and information need was indicated as the motivator. Individuals' exposure to social media and its contents usually results in the exhibition of certain information behaviours (Nwagwu, 2017). Shehata (2020) used a sample of 161 students to investigate the Egyptian Library and Information Science (LIS) undergraduates' health information behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic. He found that official health websites and social media ranked high among the primary sources of COVID-19 information for the undergraduates studied. Results also showed that motivations for the use of social media to share COVID-19 information included keeping updates on news and developments, communication with family and friends, for educational purposes, opinion, and self-expression.

Ahmad and Murad (2020) found that in Iraqi Kurdistan, Facebook was the most used to share information about COVID-19 and that TikTok, Skype, WeChat, and Myspace were among the least used. Furthermore, the study done by Sulaiman, Adeyemi & Ayegun (2020), revealed that most Nigerian youths used Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram for sharing COVID-19 information and that the most used for sharing COVID-19 information was WhatsApp (98.2%). Building

relationships, enjoyment, and establishment of political connection were among the reasons they used social media to share COVID-19 information. Specifically, the findings of Mbodila, Marongwe & Kwahene's (2020) study revealed that WhatsApp is still the most used social media platform among university students based on its support for instant messaging service, quick processing of information, and its cost-effectiveness. The findings from the study carried out by Hamzat and Otulugbu (2020) also showed that WhatsApp was the most used social media for sharing COVID-19 information among Library and Information Scientists in Nigeria, followed by Facebook.

### **Sharing of COVID-19 Information on Social Media**

Sharing of information is crucial in times of crisis and emergencies. According to Sulaiman, Adeyemi & Ayegun (2020), since the first case of COVID-19 in Nigeria was confirmed on February 28, 2020, there has been increased use of various social media to share information about the pandemic. They further stated that information sharing on social media pertains to sharing opinions, knowledge and facts about a specific event. Collaborative technologies have fostered the quick spread of information among the populace (González-Padilla & Tortolero-Blanco, 2020; Sulaiman et al., 2020). Different formats of verifiable and unverifiable information on COVID-19 are being shared on social media (Obi-Ani, Anikwenze & Isiani, 2020; Karmegam & Mapillairaju, 2020; Sulaiman et al., 2020). According to Anwar et al (2020), COVID-19 updates, public health information, preventive guidelines, and other strategies to curtail the spread of the disease were shared on social media. González-Padilla and Tortolero-Blanco (2020) also confirmed that educational content, preventive measures and other medical information were quickly disseminated on social media. The government, public health organisations, and non-health organisations in Nigeria created awareness about the outbreak and controlled panic using social media (Lateef et al., 2020).

The sharing of (credible or fake) information is based on people's information-sharing behaviour. The study done by Shehata (2020) confirmed that a majority of the undergraduates in Egypt assessed the credibility of information and its source before sharing it, shared information based on their personal beliefs, while few others just share COVID-19 information without censorship and evaluation of its source. The study undertaken by Sulaiman et al (2020) confirmed that Nigerian youths (between 18-40 years old) shared COVID-19 information on social media and that they subjectively evaluated the information before further sharing it. Similarly, Umezudike et al (2020) confirmed from their study that among Nigerian undergraduate dental students, COVID-19 information including academic training courses on COVID-19 was shared on social media such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. Likewise, COVID-19 information was shared by Nigerian undergraduate veterinary medical students on social media as indicated in the findings of Adebowale et al, (2021). Hamzat and Otulugbu's (2020) and Ayanbode and Adetoro's (2021) findings also confirmed that information about COVID-19 was accessed, censored, evaluated, and shared by Nigerian Library and Information professionals on social media.

This section reviewed literatures on the sharing of COVID-19 information on social media. Evidences from the studies reviewed show that COVID-19 information was accessed and shared by people on various social media platforms. Nigerian undergraduates (of different categories) were not exempted.

### **Use of Satire, Music and Comedy for Sharing COVID-19 Information and What Motivates**

Social media support the sharing of various formats of information (Mbodila et al., 2020). COVID-19 information such as preventive measures/health behaviour, cases, updates, treatments, and cures are shared in form of text, video, and music clips among people for specific purposes (Karmegam & Mapillairaju, 2020; Onuora et al, 2021). Various literary devices and genres (such as satire and comedy) are being deployed to share COVID-19 information on different media. Satire, music and comedy are powerful means of communication media even during emergencies such as the one caused

by the COVID-19 pandemic (Gharib & Turner, 2020; Onuora et al., 2021). Satire refers to the use of humour, cartoons or caricature, irony, exaggeration or sarcasm to express an opinion and criticize people's, organisations', and government's action or vices especially in the context of topical issues (Cancelas-Ouviña, 2021). Findings from the study conducted by Onuora et al (2021) confirmed the use of satire such as cartoons to share health-related COVID-19 information on social media among Nigerians. Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health (2020) also used comics to enlighten the public about the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Jagers (2020), comics were used to share reliable educational, historic, vaccine updates, patient care, publication, and research information about COVID-19 on social media. An exploratory analysis done by Karmegam and Mapillairaju (2020) revealed that apart from health information, updates, and opinions, sarcasm or humour (satire) about COVID-19 was shared on Twitter and sarcastic tweets were liked most. Glăveanu and de Saint Laurent (2021) confirmed that Internet memes (satirical, sarcastic, humorous, ironic and comical) were used to share COVID-19 information on Reddit. In Spain, a similar thing was practised on WhatsApp (Cancelas-Ouviña, 2021).

Moreover, music is both a therapeutic tool and a medium of communication used during the period of lockdown. This echoes its multifarious role in societies (Ogembo, Anudo & Kodak, 2021). While researchers reported that people engaged in music-making, listening and dancing to music, and playing instruments (Cabedo-Mas, Arriaga-Sanz & Moliner-Miravet, 2021), some others used music to share covid-19 information (Thompson, Nutor & Johnson, 2021). According to Thompson et al (2021), music has great potential to foster effective and quick sharing of information about public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The study done by Ogembo et al (2021) confirms that music was effectively used to disseminate public health information on COVID-19. The dynamic use of the various formats of information may have resulted from the people's innovativeness, creativity or need for gratifications. In Ghana, findings from the study conducted by Thompson et al (2021) revealed that music was used to share COVID-19 information on YouTube and that most lyrics were in English, Ghanaian Pidgin English, Akan, Ga, or Dagbani. The need for creating awareness or educational need motivated the use of music. Similarly in Kenya, Ogembo et al (2021) reported that music was used to share COVID-19 information on YouTube, purposefully to educate (communicate public health messages) and entertain the citizens.

Furthermore, comedy is a play or a movie, a dramatic expression characterized by its humorous or satirical tone and its intention to amuse. An example is the new COVID-19 Comedy Song by DUCK VENUS (fictitious character) aka Dark Venus on YouTube (Ampersand Records USA, 2020). In Nigeria, observations carried out on YouTube show that comedy was used to share COVID-19 information. An example is COVID 19 - Episode 39 (Mark Angel TV). Most of these were in form of comics. According to Sangillo (2017), vital news, information, updates, and so on are usually disseminated through comedy. Dawson and Mack (2020) opined that comedy can be used as a coping strategy for the anxiety and fear associated with the pandemic.

### **The Uses and Gratification (U&G) Theory**

This study is anchored on the uses and gratification (U&G) theory by McQuail (1983) which posits that people consciously and deliberately resort to media to meet their information needs. The theory classifies what motivates people to use media into four categories: information, personal needs, integration and social interaction, and entertainment. What can be inferred in U&G theory is the concept of identity; that people are capable of choosing what they want to derive from media and using the specific media to meet their specific needs. The U&G theory is concerned with why and how people use media for their needs and gratification and not necessarily the effects of the media on the users. This current study adopted the U&G theory to ascertain what motivates the Nigerian undergraduates' choice of most used social media as well as music, satire or comedy for sharing COVID-19 information. U&G theory will enable the comprehension of how and the reasons people purposefully use specific media to meet their specific needs in the COVID-19 pandemic period.

According to Whiting and Williams (2013:363), ‘‘uses and gratifications theory is relevant to social media because of its origins in the communications literature.’’ In their study, they found ten uses and gratifications, which include: social interaction, information seeking, fun, entertainment, relaxation, communication, and expression of opinions, comfortability, information sharing, and surveillance and watching of others.

## CONCEPTUAL MODEL

In Figure 1, undergraduates’ sharing of COVID-19 information is the dependent or endogenous variable, while U&G for social media use and U&G for media content use are the independent or exogenous variables. U&G for social media use is expected to drive the undergraduates’ sharing of COVID-19 information. Similarly, U&G for media content use is expected to drive the undergraduates’ sharing of COVID-19 information.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design, Population, and Sampling

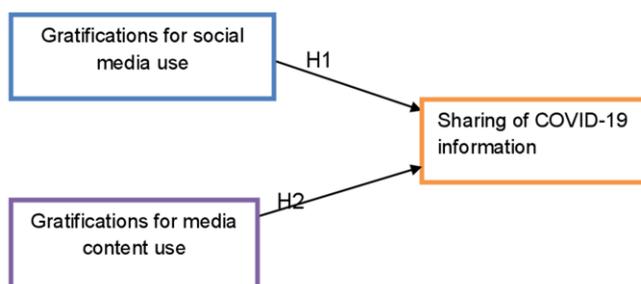
This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Six federal universities in the southwest geo-political zone of Nigeria were purposively selected. The total population of the study was estimated to be 169,101 undergraduates from the six federal universities. All the undergraduates were invited through Facebook and WhatsApp groups of university students but just 294 undergraduates participated in the study. Because the study was carried out during the period of lockdown to curtail the spread of COVID-19, the convenience sampling technique was adopted for this study to ease and foster quick data collection.

### Instrumentation, Data Collection, and Analysis

The study used an online questionnaire created on Google Forms for data collection. The questionnaire comprised seven sections as follows:

- Section A focussed on demographic characteristics of the respondents: institution, gender, age range, and current year of study.
- Section B elicited data on which medium most information on COVID-19 was accessed.
- Section C collected data on social media platforms used mostly for sharing COVID-19 information.
- Section D collected data about the motivation for choosing a specific social media platform for COVID-19 information sharing.

Figure 1. Hypothesized model of uses and gratifications for social media use, media content and undergraduates sharing of COVID-19 information



- Section E centred on information sharing on COVID-19 through social media.
- In section F, the use of satire, music, and comedy for sharing COVID-19 information was investigated.
- Section G, asked a question about the most used among satire, music, and comedy.
- Section H elicited data on the motivation for the use of satire, music or comedy for sharing COVID-19 information.

Except for Sections A, B, C and G the rest sections D, E, F and H were measured on a 5-point Likert scale: strongly agree =5, agree =4, undecided=3, disagree =2 and strongly disagree =1.

The overall Cronbach alpha value for the whole scale was 0.85, which was above the 0.70 recommended by Nunnally (1978). Thus, indicating that the scales were good and acceptable for use in the main study. Data were collected between April 20, 2020, and January 30, 2021. The questionnaire was administered online. The undergraduates were invited to complete the online survey through Facebook and WhatsApp platforms of university students. The online questionnaire was also posted on several online platforms at each university accessible by undergraduate students at all levels. These platforms were official communication channels between the universities and the students. In addition, student representatives from each university were involved in distributing the questionnaire link directly to fellow students.

In the conduct of this study, the researchers ensured that ethical issues were strictly adhered to. The study was devoid of plagiarism as sources of materials were duly acknowledged and cited appropriately. Informed consent was sought by making sure that the consent form contained a comprehensive description of the research. Confidentiality was guaranteed as responses were anonymized and solely used for the research. Ethics relating to respect for persons and beneficence was ensured. In respect for persons, respondents were empowered to decide on whether or not to participate in the study and to withdraw their participation at any stage. With respect to beneficence, this study did not harm and posed no potential risk to the respondents.

Collected data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with tables and charts used in the presentation of the results. The demographic profile of the respondents (Table 1) showed that out of the 294 undergraduates from the six federal universities, the majority 132(44.9%) were from the University of Lagos (UNILAG), while just 10(3.4%) were from the Federal University Oye Ekiti (FUOYE). More than half of the respondents, 154(52.4%) were males, while 140(47.6%) were females. The majority, 131(44.6%) of the respondents were in the age group of 20-22 years, while just, 26(8.8%) of them were in the age group of 26 years and above. The mean age of the respondents is 24.06 years (Std Deviation = 0.905). Eighty-seven (29.6%) of the respondents were in the second year of study, and just 41(13.9%) were in the fifth year of study.

## RESULTS

In this section, the results are presented in line with the research questions starting with research question one.

### **Research Question One: Through Which Medium Do Nigerian Undergraduates Receive Most Information on COVID-19?**

Table 2 presents the mediums through which respondents get the most information on COVID-19.

Results in Table 2 show that most information on COVID-19 was from social media (78.2), followed by Television (12.6%). Just, 1.0% of the respondents indicated that the NCDC telegram Channel group was a medium through which they get the most information on COVID-19.

Table 1. Demographic data of the respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percent
<b>Institutions</b>	University of Ibadan, Ibadan (UI)	34	11.6
	Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB)	69	23.5
	University of Lagos (UNILAG)	132	44.9
	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife (OAU)	26	8.8
	Federal University of Technology Akure (FUTA)	23	7.8
	Federal University Oye Ekiti (FUOYE)	10	3.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	154	52.4
	Female	140	47.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>	Below 16	-	-
	16-19	85	28.9
	20- 22	131	44.6
	23-25	52	17.7
	26 and above	26	8.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Current year of study</b>	First	53	18.0
	Second	87	29.6
	Third	61	20.7
	Fourth	51	17.3
	Fifth	41	13.9
	Sixth	-	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2. Medium through which respondents get the most information on COVID-19

Media	Frequency	Percent
Newspapers and News magazines	6	2.0
Television	37	12.6
Radio	12	4.1
Social Media	230	78.2
Family members	3	1.0
Friends	4	1.4
Worship Centers	1	0.3
NCDC telegram Channel group	1	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>100</b>

### Research Question Two: What are the Social Media Platforms Used Mostly by Nigerian Undergraduates for Sharing COVID-19 Information?

Respondents were asked to indicate which social media they used mostly for sharing COVID-19 information.

Results in Figure 2 indicate social media used by Nigerian undergraduates for sharing COVID-19 information; 16 different social media platforms were found used by the respondents. The Majority, 243(82.7%) of them used WhatsApp. This may suggest the ease of access, ease of use, and affordability of WhatsApp. Also, less than half of the respondents, 127(43.2%) used Twitter, followed by Facebook 89(30.3%), and then Instagram 74(25.2%). This may indicate the unpopularity of these social media platforms as acceptable media of communication among the undergraduates in general. The least used were MySpace, Tumblr, Periscope, Digg, Reddit, Flipboard, and Imo 1(0.3%) each.

### Research Question Three: What Motivates Nigerian Undergraduates' Choice of Using a Specific Social Media Platform for Sharing COVID-19 Information?

Table 3 presents what motivates Nigerian undergraduates to use a specific social media platform for sharing COVID-19 information.

Results in table 3 show that there are seven motivators for Nigeria undergraduates' use of a specific social media platform for sharing COVID-19 information; the weighted mean was 4.07 on a five-point scale with a threshold of  $\bar{x}=3.00$ . This confirms that their use of a specific social media platform for sharing COVID-19 information was based on certain motivating factors. Similarly, the result showed that most of the respondents indicated to a very high extent, that comfortability

Figure 2. Social media used mostly by Nigerian undergraduates for sharing COVID-19 information (N= 294 in each case)

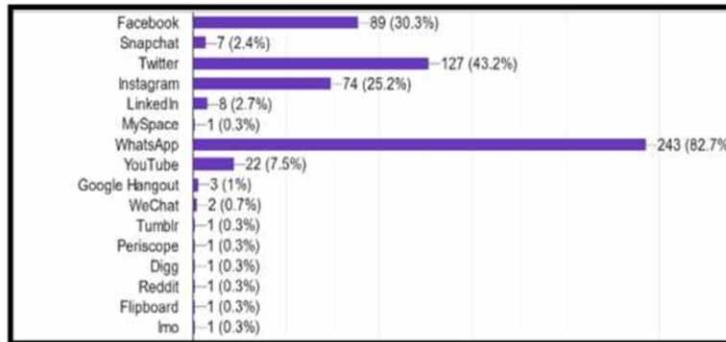


Table 3. Motivation for Nigerian undergraduates' use of a specific social media platform for sharing COVID-19 information

Motivation for Nigerian undergraduates' use of a specific social media platform for sharing COVID-19 information	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%	Mean $\bar{x}$	Std Dev
I have the competence to effectively use it	38.1	46.3	13.9	0.7	1.0	4.20	0.776
I can access it anytime and anywhere	44.6	46.3	7.8	1.4	-	4.34	0.681
It enhances my status	16.7	33.7	40.5	8.5	0.7	3.59	0.890
Efficient and prompt access to needed information on COVID-19	31.6	51.7	12.2	3.4	1.0	4.10	0.812
I easily connect and interact with friends and family through it	41.8	45.6	9.5	2.7	0.3	4.26	0.767
I can share different formats of information on COVID-19 through it	36.7	52.4	9.9	1.0	-	4.25	0.688
I always want to be prudent	15.3	46.3	34.4	4.1	-	3.73	0.767
<b>Weighted Mean = 4.07</b>							

( $\bar{x}$ =4.34), integration and social interaction ( $\bar{x}$ =4.26), information needs ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.25 and  $\bar{x}$ =4.10) were among what motivated them to use a specific social media for the sharing COVID-19 information. The findings suggest the undergraduates used media for their needs and gratifications and were not necessarily concerned with the effects of the media on them. This confirms the applicability of the uses and gratification (U&G) theory by McQuail (1983) in the use of a specific social media platform for sharing COVID-19 information.

### Research Question Four: To What Extent Do Nigerian Undergraduates Share COVID-19 Information on Social Media?

Table 4 presents the extent to which Nigerian undergraduates share COVID-19 information on social media.

Results in Table 4 show the extent to which Nigerian undergraduates shared COVID-19 information on social media; the weighted mean was 3.24 on a five-point scale with a threshold of  $\bar{x}$ =3.00. This suggests that the extent of the Nigerian undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information on social media was at a moderate level. The findings suggest that Nigerian undergraduates willingly shared COVID-19 information in different formats on their preferred social media.

### Research Question Five: To What Extent Do Nigerian Undergraduates Use Satire, Music and Comedy for Sharing COVID-19 Information?

Table 5 presents the extent of use of satire, music and comedy for sharing COVID-19 information by Nigerian undergraduates.

Results in Table 5 show the extent of the Nigerian undergraduates' use of satire for sharing COVID-19 information on social media; the weighted mean was  $\bar{x}$ 2.52 on a five-point scale with a

Table 4. Nigerian undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information on social media

Nigerian undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information on social media	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%	Mean $\bar{x}$	Std Dev
I share information on COVID-19 pandemic	11.2	41.5	34.0	11.2	2.0	3.49	0.908
I share information on COVID-19infection and death rate around the world	6.1	27.6	43.2	18.0	5.1	3.12	0.946
I receive updates/ news on the COVID-19outbreak in Nigeria	28.6	61.9	7.5	2.0	-	4.17	0.644
I willingly share all information on COVID-19 infection with my friends	14.6	40.1	32.0	11.6	1.7	3.54	0.936
I share different formats of information on COVID-19 infection with my online groups	10.2	31.6	38.1	16.7	3.4	3.29	0.974
I receive different formats of information on COVID-19infection from my online groups	22.4	53.4	18.4	5.4	0.3	3.92	0.808
I receive information on preventive measures against COVID-19infection from my friends	28.2	56.8	13.3	1.4	0.3	4.11	0.699
I share successful treatment updates on the COVID-19 outbreak with my family and friends, as received	13.6	38.1	34.4	11.9	2.0	3.49	0.941
I exchange data on COVID-19infection in Nigeria with my friends	10.9	38.8	31.3	17.0	2.0	3.39	0.960
My colleagues send to me data on COVID-19 infection in affected countries	9.9	44.2	26.2	17.0	2.7	3.41	0.973
<b>Weighted Mean = 3.24</b>							

Table 5. Nigerian undergraduates' use of satire, music and comedy for sharing COVID-19 information

<b>Nigerian undergraduates' Use of Satire for sharing COVID-19 information</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>Mean <math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>Std Dev</b>
Some pieces of information on the COVID-19 pandemic I received are in form of a cartoon	6.5	33.0	27.2	25.9	7.1	3.06	1.066
I create cartoon on COVID-19 infection	1.7	7.5	13.9	53.4	22.8	2.11	0.903
I share cartoon on COVID-19 infection as received,	5.8	18.0	21.4	39.1	15.3	2.60	1.123
I receive some humourous stories on COVID-19 infection from my colleagues.	10.9	44.6	24.8	14.3	4.8	3.43	1.021
Much exaggerated information on the COVID-19 outbreak are posted on the online groups that I belong to	16.0	38.4	25.2	17.7	2.4	3.48	1.036
I share some sarcastic statements about the government's action on COVID-19 infection.	8.2	26.9	31.6	24.1	8.8	3.01	1.095
<b>Weighted Mean = 2.52</b>							
<b>Nigerian undergraduates' Use of Music for sharing COVID-19 information</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>Mean <math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>Std Dev</b>
Some pieces of the information on the COVID-19 pandemic I received from colleagues are in form of music clips	7.1	25.9	27.9	29.3	8.8	2.93	1.096
I compose songs on COVID-19 infection, which I shared with my friends	2.4	6.1	19.4	43.9	27.2	2.12	0.961
I share music on COVID-19infection as received	7.5	14.3	20.7	36.1	20.4	2.52	1.187
I receive lyrics on COVID-19 infection.	3.7	14.6	24.8	36.7	18.7	2.47	1.075
<b>Weighted Mean = 2.51</b>							
<b>Nigerian undergraduates' Use of Comedy for sharing COVID-19 information</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>Mean <math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>Std Dev</b>
A lot of comedies on COVID-19pandemic are shared on online groups that I belong to	11.2	41.2	25.9	16.7	5.1	3.37	1.049
I send comedies on COVID-19infection as received to friends and family	7.8	21.1	26.9	34.0	10.2	2.82	1.116
I receive comedies on COVID-19 infection from my friends and family members.	9.9	36.4	26.5	22.4	4.8	3.24	1.058
<b>Weighted Mean = 3.14</b>							

threshold of  $\bar{x}=3.00$ . This suggests that the extent of the Nigerian undergraduates' use of satire for sharing COVID-19 information on social media was at a low level. Notwithstanding, a good number of the respondents indicated that much exaggerated information on the COVID-19 outbreak was posted on the online groups that they belong to ( $\bar{x}= 3.48$ ), they received some humourous stories on COVID-19 infection from their colleagues ( $\bar{x}=3.43$ ), some pieces of information on the COVID-19 pandemic they received were in form of a cartoon ( $\bar{x}=3.06$ ) among others. The findings suggest that probably, most of the undergraduates were not highly and favourably disposed to the use of satire for sharing COVID-19 information on social media.

Moreover, results in table 5 show the extent of the Nigerian undergraduates' use of music for sharing COVID-19 information on social media; the weighted mean was  $\bar{x}2.51$  on a five-point scale with a threshold mean of  $\bar{x}=3.00$ . This potentially suggests that the extent of the Nigerian

undergraduates' use of music for sharing COVID-19 information on social media was at a low level. Moreover, just 33% of them indicated that some of the pieces of information on COVID-19 pandemic they received from colleagues were in form of music clips, and 21.8% shared music on COVID-19 infection, as received. This suggests that just a few of the undergraduates used music for sharing COVID-19 information on social media.

Furthermore, results in table 5 further show the extent of the undergraduates' use of comedy for sharing COVID-19 information on social media; the weighted mean was  $\bar{x}$ 3.14 on a five-point scale with a threshold mean of  $\bar{x}$ =3.00. This indicates that the Nigerian undergraduates' use of comedy for sharing COVID-19 information on social media was at a moderate level. Just above half, 52.4% of them indicated that a lot of comedies on COVID-19 pandemic were shared on online groups that they belonged ( $\bar{x}$ =3.37), and 46.3% of them received comedies on COVID-19 infection from their friends and family members ( $\bar{x}$ =3.24). This suggests that a number of the undergraduates used comedy for sharing COVID-19 information on social media. Wherefore, results from Table 5 show that extent of the Nigerian undergraduates' use of satire, music and comedy for sharing COVID-19 information was at a moderate level.

### Research Question Six: Among Satire, Music and Comedy, Which is the Most Used by Nigerian Undergraduates for the Sharing of COVID-19 Information and What Motivates Them?

The respondents were asked to indicate which of satire, music and comedy they used most for the sharing COVID-19 Information.

Results in Figure 3 show that comedy was the most used for the sharing of COVID-19 information (48.4%).

Results in table 6 show motivation for the undergraduates' use of satire, music or comedy for sharing COVID-19 information on social media; weighted mean was  $\bar{x}$ 3.64 on a five-point scale with a threshold mean of  $\bar{x}$ =3.00. This potentially suggests that the Nigerian undergraduates' most use of comedy for sharing COVID-19 information on social media was based on certain motivating factors. Similarly, the result showed that most of the respondents indicated that promotion of creativity ( $\bar{x}$ =3.79), escape from fear associated with news of the COVID-19 pandemic ( $\bar{x}$ =3.75), promotion of relaxation ( $\bar{x}$ =3.75), enjoyment or entertainment ( $\bar{x}$ =3.69), and social interaction ( $\bar{x}$ =3.69) among others were motivating factors for use of comedy for sharing COVID-19 information. This suggests that a number of the undergraduates used comedy for sharing COVID-19 information purposefully for their needs and gratifications which can be classified into information, personal needs, integration and social interaction, and entertainment as noted by McQuail (1983).

Figure 3. The most used among satire, music and comedy for the sharing of COVID-19 information

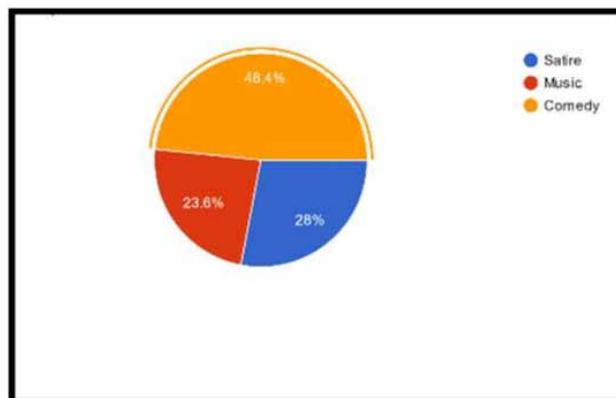


Table 6. Motivation for the Nigerian undergraduates' most used of satire, music or comedy for sharing COVID-19 information

Motivation for the Nigerian undergraduates' most used of satire, music or comedy for sharing COVID-19 information	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%	Mean $\bar{x}$	Std Dev
Friends and family members appreciate me for using them	7.8	34.0	47.3	6.5	4.4	3.34	0.883
I feel comfortable using them	11.6	43.9	36.7	6.1	1.7	3.57	0.838
It promotes creativity	18.0	49.7	26.5	5.1	0.7	3.79	0.819
It is full of fun and I always enjoy it	18.0	42.5	32.0	5.4	2.0	3.69	0.899
I always like to promote entertainment	15.6	44.2	33.3	5.1	1.7	3.67	0.861
I feel fulfilled providing information through emotionally friendly means	13.6	49.7	28.9	6.5	1.4	3.68	0.839
It provides escape from fear associated with news of the COVID-19 pandemic	15.3	52.4	25.9	5.1	1.4	3.75	0.824
I can promote relaxation through their use	13.6	52.7	27.9	4.1	1.7	3.72	0.811
I love engaging people's participation on topical issues	15.3	46.3	32.3	4.4	1.7	3.69	0.844
I safely and technically criticize vices without running into trouble	9.9	40.8	37.8	7.5	4.1	3.45	0.918
<b>Weighted Mean = 3.64</b>							

## INFERENCE ANALYSIS

### Hypothesis One: Gratifications for Social Media Use Have a Positive Effect on the Undergraduates' Sharing of COVID-19 Information

The result of regression analysis in Table 7 shows that gratifications for social media use have a positive effect on the undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information ( $\beta = 0.493, P = 0.000$ ). Since the  $P < 0.05$ , the hypothesis is accepted. Wherefore, gratifications for social media use impacted significantly on undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information and was found to have explained for 24.1% total variance in the undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information ( $R^2 = 0.241$ ).

### Hypothesis Two: Gratifications for Media Content Use Have a Positive Effect on the Undergraduates' Sharing of COVID-19 Information

The result of regression analysis in Table 8 shows that gratifications for media content (satire, music and comedy) use have a positive effect on the undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information

Table 7. Gratifications for social media use have a positive effect on the undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information

Model 1	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	9.771E-17	0.051		0.000	1.000
UGsocialmedia	0.493	0.051	0.493	9.692	0.000

a Dependent Variable: COVID19InfoShar  
Model 1  
Adjusted R= 0.243  
Adjusted R Square = 0.241

**Table 8. Gratifications for media content use have a positive effect on the undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information**

Model 2	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	7.496E-17	0.049		0.000	1.000
UGmediaContent	0.531	0.050	0.531	10.712	0.000

a Dependent Variable: COVID19InfoShar  
 Model 2  
 Adjusted R= 0.282  
 Adjusted R Square = 0.280

( $\beta = 0.531$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ). Since the  $P < 0.05$ , the hypothesis is accepted. Wherefore, gratifications for media content use impacted significantly on undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information and was found to have explained for 28.0% total variance in the undergraduates' sharing of COVID-19 information ( $R^2 = 0.280$ ).

## DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings from the study are discussed with their implications. Findings revealed that the undergraduates received most information on COVID-19 on social media. This is contrary to the findings of Ali et al (2020) and Hamzat and Otulugbu (2020), but it agrees with the findings of Umeizudike et al (2020) and Adebowale et al (2021) whose studies, carried out among Nigeria undergraduates revealed that most information on COVID-19 was received on social media. This is probably due to the rapid and broad spread of information on social media (Caitlinalder, 2020). Wherefore, people should carefully harness the potential of social media as veritable means of sharing information and ensure that they share and consume credible information on social media. (González-Padilla and Tortolero-Blanco, 2020).

The findings from this study also revealed that the social media platform used the most by Nigerian undergraduates for sharing COVID-19 information was WhatsApp. This is in line with the findings of Sulaiman et al (2020); Mbodila et al (2020); and Hamzat and Otulugbu (2020) that WhatsApp was the most used for sharing COVID-19 information. This may equally indicate the affordability, accessibility and ease of use of WhatsApp. In this present study, further findings showed seven uses and gratifications for Nigeria undergraduates' use of social media. These included: comfortability, integration and social interaction, information needs, information sharing, prudence, enhancement of status, and competence. This is similar to the findings of Sulaiman et al (2020). Gratifications for Nigeria undergraduates' use of social media was found to impact significantly on their sharing of COVID-19 information. This means that an increase in motivations for social media use resulted in an increase in the sharing of COVID-19 information. Lee and Ma (2012) found that gratifications of information seeking, socializing, status-seeking and prior experience with social media were related to sharing news on social media.

The Nigeria undergraduates were found to share COVID-19 information on social media. Findings revealed that they shared the news, updates, information on preventive measures, successful treatment updates, and information on COVID-19 infection and death rate around the world, among others. This corroborates the assertion of Anwar et al (2020) that COVID-19 updates, public health information, preventive guidelines and other strategies to curtail the spread of the disease were shared on social media. In this present study, a striking finding was the undergraduates' keenness to receive updates/ news on COVID-19 outbreaks in their country. This suggests that they were not only

concerned about the need to obtain life-saving information during the pandemic; they equally took responsibility in sharing the vital information on social media. Likewise, Adebowale et al (2021); Sulaiman et al (2020); Umeizudike et al (2020); Hamzat and Otulugbu (2020) also confirmed that COVID-19 information was accessed and shared on social media. Since the context of the study is academic environment, it is important that academic and public libraries' presence on social media, dedicated to the dissemination of credible COVID-19 information to the undergraduates will be of positive impact on the undergraduates' information literacy and the containing of misinformation related to COVID-19 in Nigeria.

In addition, findings revealed that the undergraduates used satire, music and comedy to share COVID-19 information on social media with comedy being the most used. Some of the undergraduates actually added satirical comments, music, or comedy (e.g. satirical statements, comic gif, cartoons, music clips or songs) to share COVID-19 information. Others indicated that the information they received or shared was already in the form of satire, music or comedy. For example, they received some humorous stories on COVID-19 infection from their colleagues, some of the information on COVID-19 pandemic they received were in form of a cartoon, shared music on COVID-19 infection, as received, and received comedies on COVID-19 infection from their friends and family members, among others. Sangillo (2017) has opined that important news, information, and updates are usually shared through comedy. Similarly, the studies done by Cabedo-Mas et al (2021); Glăveanu and de Saint Laurent (2021); Karmegam and Mapillairaju (2020); Ogembo et al (2021); Onuora et al (2021); and Thompson et al (2021) also confirmed that people used satire, music and comedy to share COVID-19 information on social media. In this present study, further findings revealed that ten uses and gratifications for the Nigeria undergraduates' use of satire, music and comedy were indicated as promotion of creativity, comfortability, promotion of relaxation, enjoyment, promotion of entertainment, and social interaction, information sharing, escape from fear associated with news of the COVID-19 pandemic, safely and technically criticize vices without running into trouble.

It is evident that apart from the promotion of creativity, coping with fear and anxiety associated with news of the COVID-19 pandemic was a major motivator for the undergraduates' use of satire, music and comedy for sharing COVID-19 information on social media. This is similar to the findings of Cabedo-Mas et al (2021) and Ogembo et al (2021). Gratifications for Nigeria undergraduates' use of media content (satire, music & comedy) was found to impact significantly on their sharing of COVID-19 information. This suggests that the more the undergraduates used satire, music and comedy as coping strategy the more they either consciously or unconsciously shared COVID-19 information. However, it is possible that not all pieces of information shared were valid but the media contents were emotionally friendly. The satisfaction and fulfilment derived from the uses of funny, entertaining and emotionally friendly content have an impact on the spread of news. Wherefore, emotionally friendly media content must be deployed during a pandemic to disseminate credible health information to the populace. Dawson and Mack (2020) submitted that such emotionally friendly media content can be used as a coping strategy for the anxiety and fear associated with the pandemic.

## **CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES**

This present study identifies the following seven uses and gratifications for the use of social media to share COVID-19 information: competence, status enhancement, comfortability/ convenience utility, social interaction, personal need, information sharing, and the quest for prudence. Moreover, among the uses and gratifications for using satire, music and comedy to share COVID-19 information were: promotion of creativity, escape from fear associated with news of the COVID-19 pandemic, promotion of relaxation, enjoyment or entertainment, and social interaction. This paper contributes to the body of knowledge in several ways. First, it contributes to academics and practitioners to understand that the uses and gratifications theory applies not only to the use of social media and other mass communication media but also to the use of media contents such as satire, music and comedy

which are equally media of communication. Secondly, it has contributed to the existing literature by demonstrating that satire, music and comedy can be used to share vital health information even in times of emergencies. On this premise, public health stakeholders' innovativeness in creating, organising and sharing credible COVID-19 information in such media content will effectively meet the information-seeking behaviour of people in this time of health emergencies. It is in this connection that it is recommended that all public health stakeholders in Nigeria should incorporate the use of these media contents which are emotionally friendly to share credible health information in times of public health emergencies, now and in the future.

This present study has limitations in terms of the use of only quantitative method and a limited sample size of 294 participants from only six federal universities in southwest Nigeria which makes generalisability challenging. The small size of the sample may be due to the fact that the study was conducted during the peak period of the fierce attack of the COVID-19 pandemic when many Nigerians were ambivalent and apathetic about goings-on around them. This might have prevented many respondents from filling out the questionnaire leading to a low response rate. A larger sample and a mixed-method approach are therefore suggested to enable a deeper probing of the topic and provide a basis for generalisation of the findings. Further studies could also look into the effects of demographic characteristics on the use of satire, music and comedy for sharing COVID-19 information with respect to the stronger findings.

## **FUNDING AGENCY**

Publisher has waived the Open Access publishing fee.

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