

# Exploring Community Resistance to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Preventive Information Protocols in Mando Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study explored community resistance to coronavirus pandemic preventive information protocols in Mando area of Kaduna State, Nigeria.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Qualitative research method was adopted whereas case study research design was used for the study. A total number of 15 participants were interviewed for the research.

**Research limitation(s):** Participants for the study comprised only people living in Mando area who were between the ages of 25-50 years and found to be resistant to the COVID-19 preventive information protocols.

**Key finding(s):** It was discovered that suspicion of the western powers; distrust of political leaders and their agents; impracticability of the COVID-19 preventive information protocols; COVID-19 is lesser evil were among the reasons behind the community resistance to the preventive information protocols in Mando area of Kaduna State.

**Practical implication(s):** These findings had portend some serious concerns for public health campaign in Mando area of Kaduna State. This calls for aggressive and interagency collaboration amongst public health practitioners, community gatekeepers, information professionals, civil societies etc. in order to assist in educating community members on the true nature and characteristics of coronavirus.

**Contribution to knowledge:** This study has to a large extent added to the existing body of literature not only on COVID-19 preventive information resistance but by also advocating for the establishment of Community Information Centre (CIC) to serve as a gateway for information generation, access, dissemination and use in Mando area of Kaduna State.

**Paper type:** Research.

**Keywords:** Community resistance; Coronavirus pandemic; COVID-19 preventive information protocols; Mando; Kaduna State; Nigeria.

## Introduction

Globally, Coronavirus disease widely known as (COVID-19) has now become pandemic threatening peoples' health, lives and means of livelihood. According to World Health Organization (WHO) (2020) COVID-19 is "an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered Coronavirus". This explains why COVID-19 is prefaced with the word "novel" because "it is a new breed in a family of viruses" (Washington Post, 2020). Coronavirus disease was first discovered in Wuhan, the Capital of Hubei Province, China in late December, 2019, (Wang et al, 2020). Although, COVID-19 is new but it cannot be divorced from the earlier two other cases of Coronaviruses namely Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) that had made news in the recent past. Regrettably, the exponential rise in coronavirus cases in the first quarter of 2020 led to the WHO classification of COVID-19 as a pandemic, and the activation of the International Health Regulation (IHR), 2005 guidelines, (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). It is estimated that 79.23 million people are infected with COVID-19 disease from 216 countries of the world, (WHO, 2020), including 1.75 million deaths as at 27<sup>th</sup> December, 2020.

In Nigeria, for instance, COVID-19 case was first reported on the 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2020 as an imported case by an Italian citizen who had arrived in Lagos from the Europe, (Bamidele, 2020). Since then, the situation has continued to increase with more infected cases and few deaths across the federation. This is in spite of the various means and approaches adopted by Federal and State Governments to contain community spread of the virus. As at December, 2020, it was reported by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) that "there were 84,414 confirmed cases with 71,034 recovered and over 1,254 deaths from 36 States and federal Capital Territory, Abuja."

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However, in Kaduna State, government in collaboration with NCDC and other Non-Governmental Organizations had pursued various methodologies and approaches in order to save lives of its citizens and contain the spread of the dreaded virus, (Ayeni, 2020). These methods and approaches include but not limited to the sensitisation lectures, enlightenment campaigns, long lasting lockdowns, partial curfews, closure of schools and markets, enforcement of intra and inter travel bans, stiffer sanctions etc. In spite of all these laudable and proactive efforts, as at 27<sup>th</sup> December, 2020, there were 4,940 confirmed cases with 4,443 recoveries and 50 deaths in Kaduna State, (NCDC, 2020).

In similar perspectives, in order to contain the virus and flatten the curve of its community spread in the world, WHO suggested that countries must ensure their citizens comply with the COVID-19 prevention information protocols. These protocols include among others: regular washing of hands, social distancing/physical distancing, always stay at home until necessary, use of face and nose masks when in crowded places etc. In view of this suggestion, the State Government under the leadership of Governor Nasir Ahmed El-Rufa'i has strictly and aggressively adopted and enforced them across the 23 Local Government Areas in the State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is no doubt that the world's attention has been shifted to combatting or slowing down the spread of coronavirus pandemic across communities in all countries of the world. In order to achieve this objective, the WHO in collaboration with other countries' Centres for Disease Control (CDC) have advocated for the adoption and enforcement of some basic preventive information protocols in order to limit the rate of COVID-19 community infection. These preventive information protocols include: social distancing/physical distancing measures, regular washing of hands with soaps or hand sanitizers, use of face masks, stay at home and avoiding crowded places, (WHO, 2020).

In Nigeria, for instance, Federal and State Governments through the NCDC in collaboration with the Presidential Task Force (PTF) on COVID-19, the Federal Ministry of Health and the State Government Task Forces on COVID-19 have taken proactive and aggressive initiatives to inform, educate, and enlighten the citizens on how best to avoid contracting the virus as well as slow down its spread amongst communities across the federation. In addition to that, several organizations (public and private) have supported government in creating massive community awareness through the print media, radio and television stations, cable satellite stations and social media respectively with the view to promote community compliance to the preventive information protocols.

Regrettably, it has been noticed that a majority of the citizenry living in Nigeria and Mando area of Kaduna State in particular has exhibited high level of resistance or noncompliance to the observance of the COVID-19 prevention protocols, (Ojoma, 2020). This is happening in spite of strict measures and severe sanctions imposed by the Kaduna State Government. This is indeed a worrisome and ugly development in the fight against coronavirus pandemic in the study area and Kaduna State in general. As a result of this, this research becomes expedient in order to uncover reasons for the ever increasing community resistance or disobedience to the established COVID-19 preventive information protocols using the Chatman's Theory of Normative Behaviour (TNB) in Mando Area of Kaduna State.

### **Research Questions**

1. What factors are responsible for community resistance to COVID-19 preventive information protocols in Mando Area of Kaduna State?
2. To what extent does Chatman's Theory of Normative Behaviour (TNB) explained Community resistance to COVID-19 preventive information protocols in Mando Area of Kaduna State?

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

It is always significant that a good research is connected with model or theory in order to guide the research. There are a number of theories that can be used to explain the resistance to health information in a particular community. This study was grounded in Chatman (2000) theory of normative behaviour (TNB). The theory explains the common or routine events that characterize the everyday reality of people living in a particular community who share a similar cultural space. "TNB attempts to address how social expectations and behaviour affect information behaviour" (Burnett, Besant, & Chatman, 2001). The theory has the following four constructs namely: social norms, worldview, social

types and information behaviour. For this study three constructs were adopted to explain how people in a small world get information, use information, share information and accept or avoid information within their sociocultural settings.

**Social norms:** refers to a sense of rightness and wrongness in social appearances within a small world. Small world can be seen as group of people that share the same idea and understanding.

**Worldview:** is a collective set of beliefs by members who live in a community. The value of having a worldview is that it gives a collective approach to the same value as they enter a person's awareness.

**Social types:** can be seen as the ways in which individuals are perceived and well-defined within the society. The process of social type occurs within the boundaries of people living in the environment or society. This is why the theory postulates that the most trusted members of the society are those living within the society. This position justifies why information coming from the outsiders would not be readily accepted or believed.

### **COVID-19 Preventive Information Protocols**

As the coronavirus became a global pandemic, certain preventive information protocols have been recommended by the WHO to prevent and limit the spread of the highly contagious coronavirus disease across communities in the world. These preventive information protocols include but not limited to the following:

*Maintain at least a 1-metre distance between yourself and others to reduce your risk of infection when they cough, sneeze or speak. Maintain an even greater distance between yourself and others when indoors; make using a mask a normal part of being around other people; avoid the 3Cs: spaces that are closed, crowded or involve close contact; clean regularly your hands with an alcohol-based sanitizers or wash them with soap and water. Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Clean and disinfect surfaces frequently especially those which are regularly touched, such as door handles, faucets and phone screens. (WHO, 2020)*

### **Previous Studies that Adopted Chatman (2000) Theory of Normative Behaviour (TNB)**

Several scholars from different fields of studies have conducted empirical inquiries and adopted Chatman (2000) theory of normative behaviour to study how people interact with the information in their small worlds. For instance, a study conducted by Markwei (2013) investigated the information needs, sources of information, patterns and problems encountered in information seeking of urban homeless. It determines how libraries and other stakeholders can meet the information needs of urban homeless youths. The study used qualitative methodology.

Another study conducted by Muhammad (2016) adopted Chatman (2000) TNB to uncover how female suffering from dysmenorrhea share and access information to manage the illness. The study adopted qualitative methodology and case study research design.

Worrall (2015) used the concept of social norms, social type and information behaviour derived from the theory of normative behaviour to examine the roles digital libraries play, from a social perspective, as boundary objects within and across social worlds, information worlds, and communities. The study used mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative methods. Another study conducted by Musa (2013) investigated the reasons for resistance to polio immunization in Kano, Nigeria. The study used qualitative methodology.

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopted qualitative research method. According to Creswell (2013) qualitative research methodology refers to "the method of inquiry employed to gather an in-depth understanding of phenomenon and human behaviour especially feelings, perceptions or opinions, and the reason that governs behaviour".

Research design adopted for this study was case study. Participants for this study were selected through purposive sampling technique particularly, criterion sampling. Using this technique, respondents for this study must meet the following criteria: he/she must be living in Mando area, aged 25-50 years, who are resistant to COVID-19 preventive information. This will give the researcher

opportunity to understand why they resist to observe the COVID-19 preventive information in spite of several efforts by government to inform and persuade them to adhere to it.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected for this research using in-depth interview. The data was collected from a sample of willing 15 participants who met all the criteria earlier established by the researchers. In qualitative research, there is no exact number of sample size, (Yin, 2009). Sample size is based on data saturation level that is, the researcher will end data collection when there are no new ideas or themes coming from the interviewees. Bowen (2008) explained that data saturation “is reached when the researcher gathers data to the point of diminishing returns, when nothing new is being added.” Also, data collected from this study were analysed using inductive approach as postulated by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) as “transcribing the whole interview immediately after completion; reading the text to gather an overall understanding of its content; determining meaning units and initial codes and classifying initial codes into more comprehensive categories.”

### **Analysis of Findings**

The analysis of findings was presented under the following themes and according to the research questions raised in the study:

#### ***Suspicion of the Western Powers***

This theme category provided responses explaining the objective of western countries in spreading the disease that kill people. The participants viewed coronavirus as a ploy by western nations to reduce the world or African population, as explained by the following respondents: “*COVID-19 and its preventive information and protocols is a hoax and also a deliberate effort to spread a disease that kill people. COVID-19 was a creation of the super power countries especially the China.*” Another respondents stated that: “*as you could see this lockdowns and restrictions will usher in a dangerous wave of unemployment and increased poverty in Nigeria.*” Also, these respondents detailed that: “*we believed that western nations would want to use COVID-19 pandemic as a cover to introduce vaccines that will reduce the population of the Muslim communities*”. One of the respondents has this to say “*the western nations who are predominantly Christians were for decades been promoting birth control and therefore will do anything to reduce the Muslim populations across the world.*” In the same vein, these respondents expressed that: “*we were of the view that COVID-19 does not exist in Mando Area. It is just mere imagination and fraud of the super powers and their cohorts like WHO and NCDC*”

#### ***Distrust of Political Leaders and their Agents***

It was discovered from the narratives of the respondents that they do not trust their political leaders who largely championed the fight against COVID-19 in their locality. The respondents further labelled their political leaders as business people who using the pandemic as an instrument for making billions from the Federal Government, other donor agencies and individual philanthropists, as revealed by these respondents: “*it is all over the media that our governors and their agencies have been creating fictitious figures of infected patients of which nobody has seen them*”. In the same vein, these respondents explained “*it is a ploy to ask President Buharito give them financial support.*” Sadly, another respondent described their political leaders as wicked more than COVID-19, “*Our leaders in politics are wicked more than COVID-19 itself, they want us to suffer.*”

#### ***Impracticability of the COVID-19 Preventive Information/Protocols***

This category of narrative indicated that community members in Mando agreed that COVID-19 preventive information and protocols as propounded by WHO and promoted by NCDC were by their nature not practicable by them. They described the WHO and NCDC preventive protocols especially that of ‘stay at home’, and ‘social distancing or physical distancing’ as death sentence on the generality of the community members. As expressed by the following respondents: “*how could government expect us to stay at home and avoid crowded places when our means of survival and livelihood solely depend on daily hustling amidst crowded places*” Another respondent said: “*if our leaders want us to stay home then many of us will surely die of hunger*”

Similarly these respondents explained that: *“the COVID-19 preventive measures were the major obstacle to the fight against Coronavirus in their locality and the country at large.”*

### **COVID-19 is a Lesser Evil**

This category contained narratives which indicated that Mando Community members considered COVID-19 as a smaller and minor health issue compared to other major killer diseases bedevilling the community such as malaria, measles, cholera and typhoid. Many of the respondents believed that COVID-19 is not their major health challenge. One of the respondents argued that *“Yallabai, there are more dangerous diseases which kill many of our wives, children and the aged than COVID-19. These diseases include: cholera, malaria, measles etc.”*

Other respondents opined that *“if government at all levels have been sincere and patriotic, they should help in improving the environmental hygiene of Mando Community to create a healthy environment”*. Also, another respondent’s voice out that: *“while our community (Mando) lacks very essential social services such as drinking water, good drainage system, good schools, good roads and standard healthcare facilities, government and its agencies were busy wasting monies on enforcement of COVID-19 preventive information protocols”*.

### **Cultural/Religious Beliefs**

Responses from participants revealed that having ills or not, it is from God and according to them only God can provide health for them not wearing face mask, washing hand nor social distancing. As explained by this respondents: *“only God (Allah) can provide health for us, wearing face mask, washing hand or social distancing cannot save us or give us health except Allah”*. Also, the respondents believed that wearing face mask is also a health issue, as he stated: *“wearing face mask can stop us from breathing, you cannot breathe well, it will lead you to a very serious health issue”*

### **Discussion of Findings**

This section discusses the findings of the study according to the major categories emerged in the data analysis.

**Reasons for community resistance to COVID-19 preventive information protocols in Mando Area of Kaduna State:** It was discovered that suspicions of the western people contributed to the resistance to COVID-19 preventive information in Mando area of Kaduna State. They believed that COVID-19 was a creation of the super power countries especially China to reduce the population of Africa, they also believed that western nations would want to use COVID-19 pandemic as a cover to introduce vaccines that will reduce the population of the Muslim communities. Findings also revealed that the western nations who are predominantly Christians were for decades been promoting birth control and therefore will do anything to reduce the Muslim populations across the world. They also believed that COVID-19 does not exist in Mando Area. It is just mere imagination and fraud of the super powers and their cohorts like WHO and NCDC. This finding was corroborated by Omaka-Amari, et al (2020). They argued that *“high level misconceptions concerning COVID-19 may have led to the poor understanding of the seriousness of the disease and the importance of its preventive practices.*

It was also revealed that people of Mando area of Kaduna State, do not trust their political leaders who largely championed the fight against COVID-19 in their locality. The findings further labelled their political leaders as business people who were using the pandemic as an instrument for making billions from the Federal Government, other donor agencies and individual philanthropists. In this perspective, Ejimabo (2013) observed that *“due to years of bad governance and nonchalant attitude towards the welfare of the people, the political leaders in Nigeria have always been faced with the challenge of winning the trust of the citizens”*. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2019), *“lack of trust compromises the willingness of citizens and business to respond to public policies and contribute to a sustainable economic recovery”*. The eroded trust between citizens and their leaders has adversely impeded the level of compliance and observance to covid-19 preventive information protocols in Mando area of Kaduna State and virtually all communities in Nigeria

Findings from this study also indicated that community members in Mando agreed that COVID-19 preventive information and protocols as propounded by WHO and promoted by NCDC were by their nature and purposes not practicable by them. They described the WHO and NCDC preventive protocols especially that of ‘stay at home’, and ‘social distancing or physical distancing’ as death sentence on the generality of the community members. This is obvious because according to George (2020) “during the first and second two weeks of lockdown, many Nigerians were unable to cope financially because 85% of Nigerians are self-employed and most of which are traders, labourers and craftsmen. He added that asking such persons to stay at home without savings as a buffer was suicidal. The implication here is that people prefer to come out and get food even if they will contract COVID-19. It is our conviction that this particular reason was the major breaker to imposed lockdowns and curfews by the Kaduna State government.

It was also discovered from the study that Mando Community members considered COVID-19 as a smaller and minor health issue compared to other major killer diseases such as malaria, measles, cholera and typhoid bedevilling the community. Finding from this study also revealed that having illness or not, it is from God itself and only God can provide health for them not by wearing face mask, washing hand or social distancing/physical distancing as the case maybe.

**How does Chatman’s Theory of Normative Behaviour (TNB) explained Community resistance to COVID 19 preventive information protocols in Mando Area of Kaduna State?:** The Theory of Normative Behaviour influences an individual’s approach to understanding, making sense and use of information, (Chatman, 2000). The three constructs of this theory can effectively explain community resistance to COVID-19 preventive information/protocols in Mando Area of Kaduna State.

**Social norms:** Social norms are “the standards with which members of a social world comply in order to exhibit desirable expressions of public behaviour” (Burnett, Besant and Chatman, 2001). It also establishes “acceptable standards and codes of behaviour” (Chatman, 2000). The findings in this study indicated that Mando people lived within a highly pro-natal community and attached many positive values and beliefs, which were deeply rooted in their social norms. Over the years, Mando people have created their own social norms and standards that a person must adhere to, in order to live. For examples they believed that having or not having any disease is from God alone. For any person to live in that community he/she must adhere to their standards, because wearing face mask or social distancing or washing of hand cannot prevent you from contracting the virus. To them, only God can prevent you from the disease.

**Worldview:** Finding from this study revealed that Mando people have a collective understanding and belief that COVID-19 pandemic is a mission of western nations in spreading the disease that kill people. They viewed it as a ploy by western nations as a means of reducing the world or Muslims population. The understanding of the Mando people about COVID-19 disease, defined their worldview and they considered COVID-19 preventive information/protocols such as wearing face mask, hand washing, social distancing/physical distancing, and stay at home as irrelevant to their needs in everyday life information seeking behaviour. Mando people do not trust the West and therefore they have high suspicion on COVID-19 preventive information.

**Social Types:** The process of social types according to Burnett and Jaeger (2008), occurs both within the boundaries of the small world and the society at large. They also suggested that the most trusted members of the small world are the insiders. Based on these explanations the two main groups of social types identified in the study are insiders and outsiders. The insiders are the Mando people (friends and relatives). The outsiders on the other hand include WHO, NCDC, Government (agencies). The TNB suggests that members in a community would be willing to accept, use and disseminate information from a people whose behaviours and connections or interactions within the small world are desirable (that is they conform to the worldview and norms within their world).

Findings from this study indicated that Mando people were willing and ready to accept and use information (such as information about not to wear mask because it will lead to health issue, information about to spread a disease that kill people and reduced the African populations, etc.) from their group

members, friends and relatives based on their collective worldview, credibility and trust. But they do not accept information from WHO, NCDC and political leaders. They perceived them as people or agencies living outside their community with 'undesirable behaviours' contrary to their own norms and values.

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, it can be argued that community resistance to coronavirus pandemic preventive information protocols would have been unnecessary if adequate and proactive measures have been put in place by government with active involvement of the relevant stakeholders which include among others the traditional rulers, information professionals and other community leaders. The desired outcome of the campaign would have been hugely successful if cultural and socio-economic issues of the stakeholders are considered with a robust community engagement. It is therefore hoped that government will adopt persuasive approach in future to convince its citizens to comply with any public health preventive information.

### **Recommendations**

Arising from the above discussions, it is recommended as follows:

1. That government should engage community gatekeepers such as traditional rulers (Sarki, Hakimi, & Mai Unguwa) as well as religious leaders, civil societies, information professionals and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to assist in educating community members on the true nature and characteristics of coronavirus. This strategy will help reduce or eliminate suspicion and negative perception that characterized the fight against COVID-19 pandemic amongst populace in Mando area of Kaduna State.
2. That government and its agencies should as a matter of priority become very responsive, truthful and trustworthy in all matters of governance. This will go a long way in building and sustaining trust and trustworthiness between government and the citizens, thereby creating a cooperative understanding and partnership in dealing with the dreaded coronavirus pandemic in Mando area and Kaduna State in general.
3. That evidence based enlightenment campaigns with relevant stakeholders should be aggressively embarked upon in order to present evidential facts and figures before the community members on the serious dangers of non-compliance to COVID-19 preventive information protocols. This style will go a long way in convincing various members of the Mando community to understand and appreciate the need to remain compliant to the COVID -19 preventive protocols.
4. Government should pursue very aggressively the provision of necessary social utility services such as healthcare delivery services, quality education services, good drainage systems, water supply services, and security services as key developmental issues in order to improve the lives of residents of Mando area of Kaduna State. This gesture will build more confidence in the minds of the people that government generally cares for their wellbeing not only on matters of coronavirus pandemic.
5. Community Information Centre (CIC) should be established to serve as a gateway for information generation, access, dissemination and use by the members of the Mando Area. The CIC should be fully funded by government with support from community members and NGOs. The Centre will help in building trust between government and the community through the provision of right type of information, in the right place, at the right time and in the right manner.

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