

Information Sharing Patterns and Its Implications on the Sit-at-home Order in South-East Nigeria: A Politics of Minority Inclusiveness



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Abstract

This study evaluates how fear is promoted through information sharing on the controversial "Sit-at-Home Order" in the South-East political zone of Nigeria. Unfortunately, the ripple effect of this order and how it affects residents and all business activities weekly causing loss of millions in various industries especially, the economic implications towards GDP calls for concern. Certainly, public behaviour and attitude are believed to be a product of the kind of information they are constantly exposed to. This study seeks to provide a basis for substantiating this claim by establishing the level of awareness of information on the Sit-At-Home order among residents in South East Nigeria; their attitude towards such information and factors that promotes fear among residents regarding the Sit-At-Home order in the region. This study uses the Fear Appeal Theory. The study uses 372 respondents, and copies of questionnaires were administered to respondents in the South-East regions of Nigeria. The States in this terrain were five. Findings revealed that 94% of respondents are aware of the Sit-At-Home order whereas 60% of the respondents were practically exposed to the content of the information sharing on the Sit-At-Home order in the region. Further findings revealed the general feeling of perpetual fear among respondents arising from exposure to video contents of victims gruesomely murdered as a result of a perceived violation of the Sit-At-Home order. This was found to be a major factor that promotes fear along with the threat contained in the content of the Sit-At-Home order, especially among non-literate population in the grassroots. The researchers, therefore, conclude among other things that fear is easily promoted by incidents that suggest insecurity of human lives with the constant spread of information about victims murdered as a result of a perceived violation of the Sit-At-Home order. The study recommends among other things that residents should avoid acting by impulse or join in the spread of information that can

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promote fear, especially among non-literate members of the public who mostly fall victim to the heinous crimes perpetuated by “Unknown Gunmen in the region.

Keywords: *Fear, Information, Sit-At-Home, Communication, Violence*

Introduction

The spread of information regarding daily killings of innocent people resulting from the Sit-At-Home -order violation in the South-East geo-political Zone in Nigeria has become a disturbing situation. It is no news that diaspora news has carried versions of this bad news, and sadly, the threat to life is discouraging many Nigerians from returning to their homeland. Many even do not attend the most important family event, especially in this region of Nigeria. Apart from the regular Monday Sit-At-Home Order by one Mr. Simon Ekpa, (a Nigerian) who resides in Finland, other factors constitute to the extra judicial massacre. It is also believed to have been responsible for the prevailing fear among residents in the terrain. Unfortunately, bizarre video clips of victims who are gruesomely murdered keep going on, adding more pain to the minority groups in this region. More heartbreaking is the viral footage and intermittent flooding of the social media of heinous killings which seem to have out-weights government at all strata. However, one may attribute the rampant massacre to the approach and manner the Sit-At-Home Order was being enforced, (Ally & Mark, 2007).

Concerned scholars and stakeholders believe that the effectiveness of the Sit-At-Home order might be as a result of the use of force by Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) or its agents in enforcing the order. Essentially, in areas that are known to be laden with fear and places where people have witnessed the increase of violence (Owoeye, Anyadiegwu & Nzekwu, 2022).

The use of technology to further escalate the “fear incident” by showing video clips of victims who were gruesomely murdered for violating the order seems to have become a new trend of promoting fear. The kind of information spread often with the inscription: “Viewers’ Discretion Advised” is believed to have further heightened the prevailing mood of fear and insecurity in most parts of the South East region of Nigeria.

Studies on media violence have suggested that violent content can lead viewers to perceive life as dangerous and fearful. This is because, the media is believed to often distort crime or violent situations by over-representing more severe, intentional, and gruesome incidents. This makes the public overestimate the consequences of flaunting information sharing of rules that pose danger to the lives of individuals. Again, the frequency and threats to lives are often misperceived as the reality of death is not usually trivialized by many.

The global trend of information overload experienced in some parts of the world affects individuals’ attitudes to situations and social life generally. The way an individual receives information that could help him make informed decision determines how he will respond to such information. It is believed that any information that threatens the security of human life has every tendency to create fear in the minds of people.

Fear at an individual level is “instructive, inherent to our psychological make-up, and serves a deep psychological need.” They add that fear at a societal level is “experienced where the consensus is that a perceived threat to existence (or the values associated with that existence) cannot be contained or managed using traditional defenses”. This explains the scenario behind residents’ attitudes towards the use of

information on the Sit-At-Home in South East Nigeria to promote fear and cause tension in the region, (Aly & Green, 2010).

The historical antecedent of the Sit-At-Home Order in South East Nigeria can be traced to the struggle towards restoring an independent state of Biafra in the old Eastern Region of Nigeria. Historically, Biafra had previously existed as an independent multi-ethnic republic, encompassing majorly the Igbo, the Ijaw, the Efik, and the Ibibio people among a few other ethnic groups. The current Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) is traced to the declaration of Biafra by the late Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu between 1967 and 1970 which led to the Civil War between Biafra and the Federal Republic of Nigeria at that time (Owoeye, et. al., 2022).

However, the limelight of IPOB's Monday Sit-At-Home Order in South East Nigeria became known to the public at the instance of the re-arrest of the independent people of Biafra (IPOB) leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu by the Federal Government of Nigeria on June 29, 2021. The Monday Sit-At-Home Order has been the major strategy of the IPOB group to canvas support for the agitation for the release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu.

It is on this premise that, this study seeks to examine the promotion of fear through information dissemination with a focus on residents' attitudes towards the Sit-At-Home order in South East, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Information sharing in contemporary times has become pivotal and citizen journalism seems to have enabled the flow of content without restrictions. Ironically, the unethical manner of viral bizarre videos appeal harmful in crisis situations in Nigeria. The kind of information we share especially through social media determines to a large extent how people will react. It is believed that the unusual makes news among third-world countries and people tend to be eager to share contents that portray violence and murder to alert the public of a trend to avoid or something to help them make informed decisions. Unfortunately, these contents that were meant to help individuals make informed decisions regarding the Sit-At-Home order in South East Nigeria are believed to have been responsible for the prevalence of fear among residents in the region.

Given the foregoing, the study seeks to establish the connection between the promotion of information loaded with violent content and murder scenes and the general feeling of fear among residents in South East, Nigeria. Can it be established that people are afraid to come out during the days of the Sit-At-Home order for fear of being killed? This study seeks to provide answers to the above concerns as speculated about how the spread of information on the Sit-At-Home order promotes fear among residents in South East Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

Specifically, the objectives of the study include:

1. To find out the level of awareness of information sharing on the Sit-At-Home order among respondents in South East Nigeria.
2. To determine the attitude of respondents in South East Nigeria towards the Sit-At-Home order.
3. To investigate factors promoting fear among respondents in South East Nigeria regarding the Sit-At-Home order

Literature review

Fear is the anxiety and distress that comes from doubts about the consequences of an occurrence, event, situation, or outcome. It is also an unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain, or harm as a result of an information or uncertain situation. Fear promotion is a term most conversant in communication studies, especially in advertising and promotion of products. In political communication also, fear is the most viable tool employed by opponents in instilling uncertainty towards winning elections. More so, fear is a tool that is universally employed across all sectors to have an edge over others without paying attention to its dangers and outcomes. In advertising generally, fear is a veritable tool used in creating traffic and false enticement that appeals to the target audience, (Ally *et al*, 2007).

Technically, fear is “an unpleasant emotional state characterized by anticipation of pain or great distress and accompanied by heightened autonomic activity especially involving the nervous system. The state or habit of feeling agitation or dismay...something that is the object of apprehension or alarm. Fear evolved as a mechanism to protect human beings from life-threatening situations. As such, nothing is more important than survival and the evolutionary primacy of the brain fear circuitry.

The brain’s fear circuitry is more powerful than the brain’s reasoning faculties. “The amygdala sprouts a profusion of connections to higher brain regions – neurons that carry one-way traffic from amygdala to neocortex. Fear can sometimes be evoked easily and absurdly for reasons that live in mankind’s evolutionary past. For example, reacting to a nonexistent threat, such as a snake that is a stick, is not as dangerous as the other way around - failing to respond to the actual threat of a snake. The brain seems to be wired to flinch first and ask questions second. As a consequence, fear can be easily and untruthfully sparked in such a way that is irrational and not subject to reason.

Fear appeals are commonly used in many types of marketing communications to boost sales and attracts more attention. In marketing communications of products, services, social causes, and ideas information packaged in fear goes a long way in drawing the audience's attention to the ideology or cause like in basic messages such as “if you do not do this (buy, vote, believe, support, learn, etc.), some particular direct consequences will occur”. The advertising professionals are founded on this fear appeal. That is, advertisers invoke fear by identifying the negative results of not using the product or the negative results of engaging in unsafe behaviour. Holistically, fear seem to appeal to unique individuals as an effective instrument that constantly increasing the interest of many. More specifically in advertising interest, involvement, recall, and persuasiveness. “Fear appeals are one of the most frequently used motivators to get people to help themselves” (Bagozzi & Moore, 1994,p. 56). Fear appeals have grown in popularity because advertisers have found them to increase ad interest and persuasiveness. People seem to recall information clothed in fear and frequently adhere to the threats it embodies.

Fear can be used in institutions to arrest a situation, especially in tertiary institutions, it can be used to penalize the unruly behaviour of young college students, it can be used at homes to correct children’s bad behaviour, politicians use fear to tame the social unrest, industrialists also captialise on this tool to achieve their sales target by creating artificial scarcity of good and services.

In addition, Cauberghe, De Pelsmacker, Janssens, and Dens (2009,p. 276) state, “Message involvement is a full mediator between evoked fear, perceived threat, and

efficacy perception on the one hand, and attitudes towards the message and behavioral intention to accept the message on the other." Fear appeals can be direct or indirect. A direct fear appeal focuses on the welfare of the message recipient. An indirect fear appeal focuses on motivating people to help others in danger. Whether the fear appeal is direct or indirect, three additional factors contribute to success: (1) design ads that motivate changes in individual behavior, (2) distribute the ads to the appropriate target audience, and (3) use a sustained communication effort to bring about change.

The use of fear appeals

Fear appeals have been used for many products, services, ideas, and causes. Some examples include smoking, dental hygiene, personal safety, pregnancy warnings, child abuse, AIDS prevention, safe driving practices, insurance, financial security, sun exposure, climate change, food additives, social embarrassment, motorcycle helmets, anti-drug abuse, immunization, smoke detectors, cell phones, safe sex, stress, and regular health exams. Specific advertising examples of fear appeals include Michelin tires and the baby, Talon zippers and "gaps," Wisk and ring around the collar, Bayer aspirin, and heart attack prevention, drug use portrayed as eggs frying in the pan, J&J Advanced Care cholesterol test product, fear of gun crime to disarm the American public, Christianity and God's punishment for sin, and World Wildlife Federation's "Don't buy exotic animal souvenirs.

Methodology

This is a cross-sectional study. The quantitative data is on the awareness and attitude of residents of the South East on the ongoing *Sit-At-Home* order by the IPOB. The population of the study is 21,955,414 residents of the South-East (NBS, 2016). The States that make up the South-East are Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. A sample size of 384 was drawn from the population using online sample size calculator (<http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>).

The questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A contains demographic data on the respondents based on sex, age, residence, and education. The *section B* contains information on the subject under study. Section B is designed to ensure that only relevant questions that addressed all the research questions were accommodated. A provision was made for only close-ended questions in the questionnaire, to make categorization and analysis of generated data easier.

Sampling techniques

The multi-stage sampling technique was used to carry out the study. The sampling process was done in four stages as stated below;

Stage One: Each of these states in the South-East zone has three senatorial districts each. These senatorial districts were therefore categorized as clusters. A simple random process was used to select one local government area from each of the senatorial districts. Below are the senatorial zones and the selected LGAs.

Table 3.1: Senatorial districts in the South-East and the selected LGAs

Abia State			
s/n	Senatorial Districts	Name of LGAs in Each senatorial District	Selected LGA
1	Abia North	Umunneochi, Isukwuato, Ohofia, Arochukwu,	Bende

		Bende	
2	Abia Central	Umuahia North, Umuahia South, Ikwuano, Isiala Ngwa North, Isiala Ngwa South	Umuahia North
3	Abia South	Aba North, Aba South, Ugwunagbo, Obingwa, Ukwa East, Ukwa West, Osisioma	Osisioma
Anambra State			
1	Anambra North	Ogbaru, Oyi, Onitsha North, Onitsha South, Ayamelum, Anambra West, Anambra East	Onitsha South
2	Anambra Central	Awka South, Awka North, Aniocha, Dunkofia, Njikoka, Idemili South	Dunkofia
3	Anambra South	Nnewi South, Nnewi North, Ekwusigo, Ihiala, Orumba North, Orumba South, Aguata	Aguata
Ebonyi State			
1	Ebonyi North	Abakaliki, Ebonyi, Izzi, Ohaukwu	Abakaliki
2	Ebonyi Central	Ezza North, Ezza South, Ikwo, Ishielu.	Ezza South
3	Ebonyi South	Afikpo North, Afikpo South, Ivo, Ohaozara, Onicha	Afikpo North
Enugu State			
1	Enugu West.	Ezeagu, Udi, Aninri, Awgu, Oji River	Udi
2	Enugu East.	Enugu North, Enugu East, Isiuzo, Enugu South, Nkanu East,, Nkanu West	Nkanu West
3	Enugu North	Igbo Etiti, Igboeze North, Igboeze South, Uzo Uwani, Udenu, Nsukka	Nsukka
Imo State			
1	Imo West	Ideato North, Ideato South, Isu, Njaba, Nkwere, Nwangele, Oguta, Ohaji/Egbema, Orlu, Orsu, Oru West, Oru East,	Nkwere
2	Imo East	Abo mbaise, Ahiazu mbaise, Ezinihite, Ikeduru, Mbaitoli, Ngo Okpala, Owerri North, Owerri West	Owerri North
3	Imo North	Ehime Mbano, Ihite/Uboma, Isiala Mbano, Obowo, Okigwe	Okigwe
	TOTAL = 15		15 LGAs

Stage Two: The projected population of each of the Local Government Areas [LGA] was obtained using the 2006 population census figures [NBS, 2017]. The researchers adopted a quota sampling procedure to decide the number of respondents for the quantitative instrument. The essence is to ensure a proportional representation of all the LGAs in the distribution in line with their population sizes.

Stage Three: In the local government areas are communities. These communities were subjected to a simple random process through which three communities were selected for the study. The process was done in a way that gave all the communities an equal chance of being selected. This process is repeated in all the selected LGAs in each State of the South-East zone. In all 45 communities were studied across the five [5] states of the South-East region.

Stage Four: Three communities were purposively selected from each community. Systematic random sampling was then used to determine the clusters and households to

distribute the questionnaire. This is done at an interval order which was determined at the selected communities depending on the size of each community.

Results and discussions

The data gathered are analysed and presented in this section and the implication of each of the results are examined in the light of the objectives of the study. The results are presented in tables showing frequencies and percentages as well as means and standard deviations.

Table 1: Distribution of responses showing the demographic details of respondents

S/N	Variables	Responses	Frequency	Percentages (%)
1.	Sex	Male	98	26
		Female	274	74
2.	Age range	18 - 22 years	36	10
		23 - 27 years	38	10
		28 - 32 years	37	10
		33 - 37 years	40	11
		38 years and above	221	59
3.	Educational Qualification	Primary Education	22	6
		Secondary Education	108	29
		First Degree	207	55
		Masters	29	8
		Ph.D	6	2
4.	Occupation	Student	73	20
		Civil Servants	96	26
		Self-employed	116	31
		Public Servants	45	12
		Unemployed	24	6
		Artisans	14	4
		Retired	4	1
5.	Marital Status	Single	122	33
		Married	219	59
		Widowed	24	6
		Separated	7	2
		Divorced	-	0
6.	Religion	Christianity	372	100
		Islam	-	0
		ATR	-	0
		Total	372	100

The result in Table 1 above shows a preponderance of female respondents from 38 years and above, who had First Degree as their highest educational qualification, most of whom are Civil Servants and are also married Christians.

What this means is that their responses will shape the tone of this study and form the basis for making generalization within the context of this study.

Table 2: Distribution of responses showing respondents' level of awareness and exposure to contents of the Sit-At-Home order in South East Nigeria

S/N	Variable	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Are you aware of the Sit-At-Home order declared in the entire South East Nigeria?	Yes	349	94
		No	8	2
		Can't Say	15	4
2.	Have you been exposed to any of the contents of the Sit-At-Home order?	Yes	272	60
		No	83	22
		Can't Say	67	18
Total			372	100

The result as shown in Table 2 reveals that majority of the respondents in South East Nigeria (94%) are aware of the Sit-At-Home order in South East Nigeria. Conversely, the number of respondents that are exposed to the contents of the Sit-At-Home order is affirmed by 272 (60%) respondents. Even though 22% of the respondents say they have not been exposed to the content of the Sit-At-Home order 18% said they can't say if they have been exposed to the content or not.

This result implies that awareness does not necessarily mean exposure since one can easily become aware of something that has become public knowledge without necessarily seeing the content of the information. Hence, there is a need for deliberate and conscious effort for one to become exposed to the content of what has become public knowledge as a result of public discourse on the matter. The level at which one becomes exposed to the content of what has become public knowledge is determined by the level of exposure to the medium of disseminating the said content.

Table 3: Distribution of responses showing the frequency of exposure to contents of the Sit-At-Home order in South East Nigeria among respondents

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Always	106	28.5
2	Often	134	36.0
3	Occasionally	109	29.3
4	Rarely	15	4.0
5	Never	8	2.2
Total		372	100

The result as shown in Table 3 reveals how often respondents are exposed to the content of the Sit-At-Home order in South East Nigeria. Findings reveal that most of the respondents (134 representing 36%) do get information on the Sit-At-Home order "Often" as against 109 (29.3%) respondents who said they get information on the Sit-At-Home order "Occasionally" leaving those who get such information "Always" with a record of 106 (representing 28.5%) as shown in the result.

This result implies that the rate at which people get information on the Sit-At-Home order is determined by their frequency of exposure to the medium through which such contents are easily disseminated.

Table 4: Distribution of responses showing respondents' attitude toward information about the Sit-At-Home order in South East Nigeria

S/N	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	U	Mean	St.D	Dn
1.	I feel it is one of those political rhetoric used by politicians or their agents	102	110	46	36	78	3.33	1.492	D
2	I feel it is not coming from IPOB	64	100	74	43	91	3.01	1.434	D
3	I feel some of the Sit-At-Home orders apart from the regular Monday Sit-At-Home are masterminded by enemies of the Igbo tribe	168	99	38	19	48	3.86	1.380	A
4	I feel it is necessary to show solidarity for Mazi Nnamdi Kanu	109	133	45	41	44	3.60	1.327	A
5	I feel it will make the Nigerian government to release Mazi Nnamdi Kanu	88	60	78	87	59	3.08	1.405	D
6	I feel it increases the rate of insecurity in the South East	229	81	16	23	23	4.26	1.182	A
7	I feel some politicians take advantage of it in the guise of unknown gunmen	182	114	17	22	37	4.03	1.292	A
8	I feel it creates fear for residents in the South East based on the killings	264	79	10	3	16	4.54	0.932	SA

Key: SA (Strongly Agree); A (Agree); D (Disagree); SD (Strongly Disagree); U (Undecided); Dn (Decision)

The analysis of the results as shown in Table 4 above used the Limit of Real Numbers as a determinant for the decision rule based on the mean scores of each responses. It is given below:

- Strongly Agree (SA) = 5.00 - 4.45 = 5 Points
- Agree (A) = 4.44 - 3.45 = 4 Points
- Disagree (D) = 3.44 - 2.45 = 3 Points
- Strongly Disagree (SD) = 2.44 - 1.45 = 2 Points
- Undecided (U) = 1.44 - 0.45 = 1 Point

From the results, out of eight (8) responses, one had a mean score that fell within the Limit of Real Numbers for the Strongly Agree (SA) decision rule (i.e. 5.00 - 4.45). The response is an expression of feeling from the respondents that the "Sit-At-Home" order creates fear in the minds of residents in South East Nigeria as a result of the killings of innocent victims. The result implies that when human beings are killed, the information tends to create an atmosphere of fear among the living around the area where such incidents happened.

Furthermore, four (4) of the responses had mean scores that fall within the Limit of Real Numbers for the "Agree" decision rule (i.e. 4.44 - 3.45). These responses include:

- "I feel it increases the rate of insecurity in the South East" (Mean = 4.26)
- "I feel some politicians take advantage of it in the guise of Unknown Gunmen" (Mean = 4.03)
- "I feel some of the 'Sit-At-Home' orders apart from the regular Monday Sit-At-Home are masterminded by enemies of the Igbo tribe" (Mean = 3.86)
- "I feel it is necessary to show solidarity for Mazi Nnamdi Kanu" (Mean = 3.60)

Findings reveal that the above responses show an attitude of despair arising from a feeling of compromise among politicians but with the believe that compliance to the Sit-At-Home order was worth it for the sake of solidarity for Mazi Nnamdi Kanu.

This result implies that people easily lose confidence in the government once they sense compromise, especially in the area of security which further fuels the feeling of fear and a sense of not being secure in one’s homeland or residence. All these can easily be traced to the nature of information spread about the “Sit-At-Home” order, which could make residents comply out of compulsion.

Lastly, there seem to be a general believe among residents in South East Nigeria that the “Sit-At-Home” order is not a political rhetoric, neither is it coming from Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) nor will it make the Nigerian government release Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. All these were found in the remaining three (3) responses which had mean scores that fall within the Limit of Real Numbers for the “Disagree” decision rule (i.e. 3.44 – 2.45). The implication of the result is that residents see the “Sit-At-Home” order as a possible hijack of authority from the government of the South East States as well as being a political tool which is aimed at marginalizing the people of South East Nigeria. Findings show that the general believe is that it is not masterminded by IPOB.

Table 5: Distribution of responses showing factors that promote fear among residents in South East Nigeria regarding the Sit-At-Home order

S/N	Variables	SA	A	D	SD	U	Mean	St.D	Dn
1.	The rate at which victims are gruesomely murdered and videos go viral	234	79	22	7	30	4.29	1.187	A
2	The way the information on the Sit-At-Home order is being communicated	128	201	13	3	27	4.08	1.030	A
3	The means through which the Sit-At-Home order is being disseminated	90	208	47	6	21	3.91	0.967	A
4	The frequency of spread of the videos of victims that have been killed	181	134	13	7	37	4.12	1.218	A
5	The threat accompanying the information on the Sit-At-Home order	183	133	27	8	21	4.21	1.058	A
6	The sudden declaration of the Sit-At-Home order without notice	116	122	73	25	36	3.69	1.248	A
7	The rate at which people discuss the consequences of its violation	126	163	33	14	36	3.88	1.200	A
8	The level of compliance to the Sit-At-Home order among residents	121	153	64	10	24	3.91	1.086	A

Key: SA (Strongly Agree); A (Agree); D (Disagree); SD (Strongly Disagree); U (Undecided); Dn (Decision)

The analysis of the result in Table 5 above also used the Limit of Real Numbers as stated earlier in the study. Findings from the result revealed that all eight (8) responses on factors that promote fear among residents regarding the “Sit-At-Home” order in South East Nigeria had mean scores that fall within the Limit of Real Numbers for “Agree” decision rule (i.e. 4.44 – 3.45).

Top among these responses is: “The rate at which victims are gruesomely murdered and videos go viral” which was found to be a major factor that instilled fear in the minds of residents in the region. This is followed by this response: “The threat accompanying

the information on the Sit-At-Home order" was also found to be another major factor that promoted fear among residents in South East Nigeria. These two (2) responses had mean scores of (4.29) and (4.21) respectively.

Another factor found to have been responsible for promoting fear is the "frequency of the spread of the videos of victims that have been killed" (mean = 4.12) and "The way the information on the Sit-At-Home order is being communicated" (mean = 4.08). Other responses include:

- "The means through which the Sit-At-Home order is being communicated" (Mean = 3.91)
- "The level of compliance to the Sit-At-Home order among residents" (Mean = 3.91)
- "The rate at which people discuss the consequences of its violation" (Mean = 3.88)
- "The sudden declaration of the Sit-At-Home order without notification" (Mean = 3.69)

The above results imply that the tendency to lose one's life increases fear in him/her and the knowledge and frequency of spread of information on killings of unsuspecting victims can make those alive to constantly live in fear. Information indeed changes behavior and some kind of information spread through some kind of medium to some kind of audience produces some kind of effect. This agrees with the words of Berelson on the "cause and effects" notion, i.e. the effects of the media and the process leading to those effects, on the audience's mind. According to Berelson (1949): "Some kinds of communication, on some kinds of issues, brought to the attention of some kinds of people, under some kinds of conditions, have some kinds of effects."

The above assertion corroborated the findings in this study as it explains the effect of the nature of information spread on the Sit-At-Home order. To a large extent, human beings tend to respond with fear to information or messages on death and some consequences that have death as the penalty. This was also found to have increased the level of compliance with the Sit-At-Home order in South East Nigeria.

Table 6: Distribution of responses from open-ended questions on other factors that promote fear among residents regarding the Sit-At-Home order in South East Nigeria

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Agitation for the release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu	6	10.5
2	Army men moving around with guns	3	5
3	Fear of further loss of lives	11	19
4	Fear of the Sit-At-Home order	2	4
5	Fear of the downfall of business	2	4
6	Government not tackling insecurity in the country	12	21
7	Hoodlums using Sit-At-Home order to do evil	6	10.5
8	Personal experience of the attacks	3	5
9	Increased in starvation due to the Sit-At-Home order	4	7
10	Inability of Igbo leaders to come together and condemn it	4	7
11	The marginalization of the Igbo	4	7
	Total	57	100

The result in Table 6 above are responses from open-ended questions on other factors respondents think are responsible for promoting fear among residents in South East Nigeria regarding the Sit-At-Home order.

Top among these factors is: "Government not tackling insecurity in the country". This was affirmed by 12 (21%) respondents. Another is "fear of further loss of lives which recorded 11 (representing 19%)". "Agitations for the release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu" and "Hoodlums using the Sit-At-Home order to do evil" both had equal response of 6 (representing 10.5%). Other factors found to have been responsible for increased fear among residents in the study area include:

- "Increased starvation due to Sit-At-Home order"
- "Inability of Igbo leaders to come together and condemn it"
- "The marginalization of the Igbo"

All the above responses recorded 4 (7%) of the total respondents in the study. Also, "One's personal experience of the attacks" and "Army men moving around with guns" were found to be among other factors that promoted fear as affirmed by 3 (5%) respondents. At the bottom of the table are "fear of the Sit-At-Home order" and "fear of the downfall of businesses" both of which recorded 2 (4%) of the total respondents in the study.

Discussion of findings

The findings that emanated from the results of this study are discussed as they provide answers to the research questions raised in this study. On the level of awareness of the residents of the Sit-At-Home order in South East Nigeria, the study found that the majority (94%) of residents in South East Nigeria are aware of the Sit-At-Home order. Further findings reveal that their level of exposure to the contents of the Sit-At-Home order stood at 60% while the frequency of exposure found among residents was "often" as affirmed by (36%) of respondents and also "occasionally" (29.3%) and "Always" (28.5%)

This finding implies that people easily become aware of information or messages that carry "death" threats and the tendency to want to be exposed to its contents to act accordingly is high. Awareness of information on security issues can easily lead to the need to be exposed to its content as but such exposure is determined by the availability of the contents of such information to everyone in the region. Those who were not exposed to the content of the Sit-At-Home order must have been limited by internet connection, especially for residents in rural areas but invariably opinion leaders in the region were found to have played a key role in communicating the content to them as espoused in the two-step flow theory of communication. The information need of a group of people who share similar experiences necessitated the idea of a two-step flow of information of public interest where information becomes common knowledge both to those who have access to the content of such information and those who were not privileged to have access to the content of the information. Hence, the level of awareness is increased as a result of the role played by opinion leaders, especially in the rural areas which have become the target of killings as a way of punishment for violating the Sit-At-Home order.

On the attitude of residents in South East Nigeria towards the Sit-At-Home order, the study found that there is a general feeling among residents arising from the way

unsuspecting victims were gruesomely murdered as a punishment for violating the Sit-At-Home order.

Further findings revealed that the rate of insecurity in South East Nigeria increased as a result of the Sit-At-Home order because hoodlums took advantage of the order to unleash mayhem on residents in the area as it was also found that politicians were involved in the spate of several killings carried out by "Unknown Gunmen".

The study also found that there is a general feeling among residents that apart from the regular Monday Sit-At-Home orders, there were other Sit-At-Home orders declared which lasted between 3 - 5 days which is believed was masterminded by enemies of the Igbo tribe, to further promote fear within the region. Also, residents believe that the "Monday" Sit-At-Home order was necessary to show solidarity for Mazi Nnamdi Kanu who has been in DSS detention from the inception of the tenure of General Muhammed Buhari.

These findings imply that the feeling of fear is easily heightened when information on threats to one's life becomes widespread. Also, when it becomes clear that nothing is being done by those in authority to ameliorate the situation, there is the tendency that increased insecurity gives room for spate of uncontrolled misrepresented attacks by unidentified persons. This is the situation with the general attitude of residents in South East Nigeria regarding the Sit-At-Home order as found in this study.

On the factors that promote fear among residents in South East Nigeria regarding the Sit-At-Home order in the region, the study found that the gruesome murder of unsuspecting victims and the threat contained in the content of the Sit-At-Home order were found to be the major factors that promoted fear in the mind of residents in the region.

Further findings revealed that the frequency of the spread of videos of victims killed and the way the information on the Sit-At-Home order is being communicated also heightened fear and created a general atmosphere of uncertainty as to the safety of one's life in the region.

Other factors found to have promoted fear in the minds of residents regarding the Sit-At-Home order include: "the level of compliance to the Sit-At-Home order" and "the means through which the information on the Sit-At-Home order is being spread". Residents were also found to be afraid of experiencing a downfall in their businesses and the rate at which the Sit-At-Home order had dominated public discourse in the region further heightened fear among both the literate and non-literate public in the region.

This finding implies that the emotional proximity associated with the killing of unsuspecting victims for violating the Sit-At-Home order does not just create fear in the minds of residents, it also makes them live continually in fear. As an emotional response, fear has the capacity of influencing proper reasoning which leads to inconclusive and unverified assertions about happenings. Hence, the levels of compliance to the Sit-At-Home order found among residents in the region were not out of proper understanding of the information but they were mostly borne out of fear of being the next victim.

Conclusion

The study concludes that awareness of information on insecurity increases the rate of exposure to the content of such information whether directly or indirectly through opinion leaders as shown in this study.

Opinion leaders play key roles in disseminating information on insecurity thereby making such information common knowledge both to the literate and non-literate members of the public.

The gap between the literate and non-literate audience is reduced when issues of insecurity are topical discourse. It makes the content of such information to become common knowledge to guide against violation of the Sit-At-Home order out of ignorance or lack of knowledge.

Fear is easily promoted by information on breaches of security or lack of security. This is further heightened when those in authority is believed not to be doing anything to put an end to it.

Emotional proximity explains why people tend to fear when they are exposed to information on the gruesome murder of unsuspecting victims who are believed to have violated the Sit-At-Home order.

Fear affects the way people think and can easily lead to misrepresented information about what actually happened especially when it is not coming from an eye-witness account of the incident.

Fear is easily promoted by incidents that suggest that one is not safe in a particular area especially when there is constant spread of information about victims who were killed in that area.

Recommendations

- People should be careful of the kind of information they spread especially on social media. Some of these- information tend to make perpetrators of these heinous crime popular in the social media space.
- Information containing gory sites (i.e. videos of dead victims) must have its source verified before sharing and must not be shared on just any kind of platform so as not to promote fear among residents in the area.
- Stakeholders in the various communities that make up the South East region of Nigeria should organize local vigilante groups to guide residents on proactive steps to take not to fall victim of perceived violations of the Sit-At-Home order.
- The mainstream media should wade into the spate of misrepresentation of information on the Sit-At-Home order and provide members of the public with an accurate account of the right kind of information to enable them to make informed decisions that will not put them at risk of becoming victims of "Unknown Gunmen".
- Opinion leaders should give proper perspectives on the kind of information given to residents on the Sit-At-Home order, especially for those in rural areas.
- Residents should learn not to act by impulse or further spread any information that can promote fear especially among non-literate public who mostly fall victim of the heinous crimes perpetuated by "Unknown Gunmen" in South East Nigeria.

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