



**READERS' RECEPTION OF PRINT MEDIA MESSAGES ON THE 2024 CHOLERA  
OUTBREAK IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*The mass media plays a pivotal role in the dissemination of information during health emergencies. The media does not only bring emergency messages to the people, but also influence public opinions and perceptions. Therefore, this study examined the newspaper readers' reception of the print media messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state. The major aim of the study was to analyse the newspaper readers' reception of the print media cholera messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state. The study is hinged on Reception Analysis and Uses and Gratifications theories. Survey and in-depth interview methods were employed in the study. The survey method was used to gather data from the sample population of 800 respondents who were systematically drawn from seven (7) selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Lagos state. In addition, fourteen (14) opinion leaders were randomly selected and interviewed. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analysed, and the core findings of the study showed that 97.7% of the respondents were well aware of the 2024 cholera outbreak; 89.0% agreed that the message was about health emergency, and 89.4% perceived the message as being very helpful. It was therefore concluded that print media is a reliable means of getting health information across to the masses. Subsequently, the study recommended that the government and health authorities should further explore and utilise the print media as a veritable means of reaching out to the populace during health emergencies.*

**Keywords:** Awareness, Interpretation, Knowledge, Print Media, Reception

## **Introduction**

Readers' reception is an evaluation of how the newspaper readers perceive, receive, interpret and utilize print media messages at a particular period for a particular purpose. It is a communication term that has to do with the analysis of the way and manner in which people interact with the media messages to bring about a noticeable change of attitude or behaviour. Specifically, reception analysis acknowledges the fact that print media readers are not passive consumers of media messages but they actively engage with and interpret contents in unique ways, based on some factors, (Attah, 2016). The concept of reception analysis is primarily and fundamentally applied to texts or written communication. Therefore, it is a framework within communication studies which focuses on how readers interpret and make sense of the media messages. Rather than looking solely at the intents of the sender or the contents of the message itself, reception analysis emphasizes the active role of the readers in constructing meaning based on their personal experiences, cultural background, and social context, (Adeleke, 2015). Without equivocation, readers' perceptions and interpretations of media messages can vary based on some certain factors, such as the credibility of the source, individual experiences, level of education as well as psychological factors, (Makisalo, 2021).

Notably, the history of print media in Nigeria began from Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria in the year 1859, when a European missionary, Reverend Henry Townsend embarked on the publication of what could be described as the first newspaper in the country, called "*Iwe-Iroyin fun Awon Egba ati Yoruba*", which literally means "*A Newspaper for the Egba and the Yoruba People*". It was first published on 3rd of December, 1859. The paper's cardinal aim was to encourage literacy and build elites among the then Egba people of Abeokuta, in the present-day Ogun State of Nigeria. Since then, the print media had been a veritable means of informing the people, even before the advent of other mass media. Accordingly, the print media was used predominantly to disseminate cholera messages when the Lagos State Government announced the outbreak of cholera on June 15, 2024, with 436 suspected cases reported initially. Within six days, the number of suspected cases exceeded 500. The health authorities began to work assiduously to mitigate the menace and reduce the spread by creating awareness and informing the people through all the available media platforms. Having traced the rise in cholera cases in Lagos state to sales of unregistered drinks, adulterated drinking water, open defecation and indiscriminate dumping of refuse, the authorities adopted the print media as one of the platforms to reach the masses with the message of preventive measures and curative practices. Consequently, print media began to have its field day in disseminating cholera messages by publishing timely and detailed information on symptoms, treatment options, prevention measures and government health advisories. Newspapers helped raise public awareness about the importance of hygiene, safe water use, and sanitation practices to reduce the spread of the disease. Throughout the period of the 2024 cholera epidemic, newspapers were used to feature expert opinions, interviews with health officials, and updates on affected areas, which guided the public on how to protect themselves effectively. Ultimately, print media became a veritable platform for promoting public health campaigns and creating emergency contact information for medical assistance during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the significant reliance on print media messages during health crises, there is limited understanding of how readers interpret and respond to such messages. According to Azeez (2017), 68% of the Nigerian literates still access information through the print media, whether online or offline, but the way these readers perceive, receive and interpret the print media messages is yet to be ascertained. Conscientiously, previous studies, such as (Ibraheem, 2018; White, 2017; Azeez, 2017) have mainly focused on readership demographics, newspaper coverage and content analysis, but less attention has been given to the effectiveness of the print

media in disseminating information across to the people, especially during health emergencies. This gap makes it difficult for media practitioners to determine how effective the print media is in getting people informed during epidemic or pandemic. Therefore, this study seeks to examine how newspaper readers perceive, receive and interpret newspaper messages during health emergencies, using the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state as a focus.

### **Aim and Objectives of the study**

This study examined reader's reception of print media messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. assess the readers' awareness of the print media cholera messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state, Nigeria.
2. determine the knowledge of the readers about cholera messages in the print media during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state, Nigeria.
3. evaluate the readers' perceptions of the print media cholera messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

1. To what extent were the readers aware of the print media cholera messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state, Nigeria?
2. What is the readers' knowledge about cholera messages in the print media during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state, Nigeria?
3. What is the readers' perception of the print media cholera messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state, Nigeria?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Print Media**

Ajibade (2017) stated that the first dated printed book known as the "Diamond Sutra" was printed in China in 868 A.D. Although there are insinuations that some books were printed before then, no traceable records of them. Movable clay type was invented in 1041 in China as a means of printing. Therefore, due to the slow spread of literacy to the masses in China, and the relatively high cost of paper there, the earliest printed mass-medium was probably European popular prints from about 1400. Although these were produced in huge numbers, very few early examples survive, and even most known to be printed before 1600 have not survived. The term "mass media" was coined with the creation of print media, which is notable for being the first example of mass media, as we use the term today (Akinfeleye, 2008). This form of media started in Europe in the Middle Ages. However, the prominent forms of print media include newspapers, magazines, books, coupons, billboards, flyers, posters etc. Moreover, stories that appear in the newspaper are called editorial items. Therefore, editorial items can come as news stories, feature articles, opinion articles, editorials, interviews or cartoons, (Attah, 2016). Predominantly, this study examined news stories, editorials and opinion articles that explored the subject of the 2024 cholera outbreak.

#### **Cholera Outbreak**

Cholera is any of several acute infectious diseases of humans and domestic animals. It is caused by a number of types of *Vibrio cholerae*, with some types producing more severe disease than others, (Avans, 2022). It is spread mostly by unsafe water and unsafe food that has been contaminated with human feces containing the bacteria. Undercooked shellfish is a common source. Humans are the only known host for the bacteria. Risk factors for the disease include

poor sanitation, insufficient clean drinking water, and poverty. Cholera can be diagnosed by a stool test, or a rapid dipstick test, although the dipstick test is less accurate, (Oyeleke, 2020). According to NCDC (2020), prevention methods against cholera include improved sanitation and access to clean water. Cholera vaccines that are given by mouth provide reasonable protection for about six months, and confer the added benefit of protecting against another type of diarrhea caused by the same bacteria. In 2017, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a single-dose, live, oral cholera vaccine called Vaxchora for adults aged 18–64 years who are travelling to an area of active cholera transmission. It offers limited protection to young children. People who survive an episode of cholera have long-lasting immunity for at least three years, (Marbot, 2020).

### **Cholera Messages in the Print Media**

Cholera messages in the print media are health messages placed in the newspapers to create awareness about the disease and promote preventive behaviours. These messages typically focus on educating the public about cholera causes, transmission, and prevention methods, emphasizing safe practices to mitigate the risk of infection. According to Azeez (2017), most newspapers in the country make health emergency messages a priority and give them adequate coverage and reporting during the critical period of an outbreak. So, cholera messages came in different forms in the print media during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state. While some appeared as headlines, others came as straight news, opinion articles, feature articles, editorials, cartoons, etc. In all these forms, the themes of these cholera messages are similar or exactly the same, and they can be summarised to include hand washing, use of toilets, thorough cooking of foods, safe storage of water, drinking of safe water only, seeking medical care early, etc.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Reception Analysis Theory**

Reception Analysis Theory is a theory propounded by Hans Robert Jauss in the late 1960s, but later popularized by Stuart Hall in the early 1970s as stated in Akpan (2021). It is also called "Reader Response Theory". It is initially and essentially applied to texts or written communication. Its main principle is that a print media message can have different meanings to different readers. The readers contribute to the print media messages by interpreting it to mean what they think it says. The theory focuses on how the readers understand and interpret written messages. It views the reader as an active participant in the interpretation process, rather than a passive recipient of information.

This theory is relevant to this study because it explains the various ways in which newspaper readers perceive, receive, interpret and utilise media messages. The theory was used to depict the knowledge and interpretations that Lagos residents attached to print media messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos. Likewise, in the context of this study, this theory enabled the researcher to delve into the diverse ways in which print media readers decode and make sense of the print media messages.

#### **Uses and Gratifications Theory**

The Uses and Gratifications theory was primarily propounded by Elihu Katz and Jay Blumler in the 1970s. Although the concept had been initially explored in the 1940s by some unknown authors, Katz and Blumler's work in 1974 as recounted in Popoola (2023) significantly shaped and popularised the theory. Michael Gurevitch also contributed to the development of the theory. According to Dennis McQuail (1994) as stated in Ibraheem (2018), Uses and Gratifications theory has to do with the way an individual chooses to utilise a particular media message or content, and the gratification they obtain thereof. Essentially, Uses

and Gratification theory focuses on the active roles of an individual in selecting and using different media messages to fulfil their needs and aspirations. Cantrell (1942) as recounted in Azeez (2017) noted that during the early days of communication research, an approach was developed to study gratifications that attract, as well as hold audiences to the kind of media and content that satisfy their social and psychological needs. Also, Klapper (1960) as stated in Akpan (2021) noted that early researches used the experimental or quasi-experimental approach, through which communication conditions were explored in search of general information on how to communicate better, or about the unplanned outcome of messages. Several studies have been conducted about media effects to derive motive and selection patterns of media users. The theory facilitates the understanding of the fact that different individuals have different motives why they choose to engage with specific media contents and the gratifications they expect to obtain through their engagement. It talks about the motivations and satisfactions that people derive from media messages based on their individuals' needs. In particular, uses and gratifications theory concentrates mainly on what people do with the mass media messages. It demonstrates an analysis of how the print media readers actively or inactively use the print media messages to advance their own individual needs. Hunt & Ruben (1993) noted that uses and gratifications theory suggests that individuals are motivated to engage particular mass media messages at a particular time as a means to finding personal gratification to some human needs, especially at a critical or emergency time, which is the focus of this study.

### **Empirical Review**

This section presents a critical examination of previous studies and scholarly works that are related to this study. It highlights synopsis of various works that have explored audience reception of media messages. This includes:

Nimat, (2017) in her Ph.D. thesis titled “Media Performances in Information Dissemination during Health Emergencies” submitted to the school post graduate studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria affirmed that print media can inform and educate the people concerning the current situations at a particular time, and provide a guide to its readers. The aim of the study was to ascertain how well the media informed the audience during health emergencies. The study argued that the phenomenon called “newspaper” must truly provide exciting appeal and aesthetics, which can draw the people to its messages. The study adopted qualitative research method through the instrumentality of in-depth interview, and gate keeping theory to justify its claims. However, the major gap in the study is that very few people were interviewed and some of them were not known personalities in the media industry. The study concluded that the role of the print media in information dissemination in critical situations is essentially crucial, because it is capable of giving the people timely information which can be obtained at their pace and at their own convenient time. It was therefore recommended that decision makers should make the print media a preferred means of disseminating information during emergency situation.

Omoera (2018) examined audience reception of the print media political messages. The aim of the study was to assess how effective the print media is in disseminating political messages to the people. The study was conducted in Benin City and seven local government areas of the states were used. For the theoretical framework of the study, Reception analysis and Uses and Gratifications theories were adopted. Furthermore, the study made use of survey research method and administered questionnaire to 426 respondents drawn from the selected local government areas of the state. The findings of the study indicate that the print media political messages captivate the print media audiences, because they find a vivid description of their candidates or political parties in readable forms. The study concluded that print media messages have a high impact on the elite members of the society and influence their actions and reactions

in no small measures. The gap in the study is that neither the study population nor the sampling technique was systematically defined and that made the outcome of the study less scientific and therefore doubtful.

Uchenna (2021) examined the reception of the message of the Nigerian print media in a transnational context of a semi-domestic setup. The study linked print media message reception to social condition of the audience, claiming that freedom of choice or convenience, getting advice for own life and learning new culture are gratifications derived from the message of the print media. The aim of the study was to assess the reception pattern of the print media audiences. Survey research method was used and 384 respondents were sampled. The findings of the study through survey research method agreed with the findings of Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961) and Weiss (1971) who claimed that reception of messages by print media audiences is premised on audiences' perceptions and interpretations which in turn constitute their gratifications. This invariably confirmed McQuail, Blumler, and Brown's (1972) findings of diversion, personal relationships, personal identity, and surveillance (Little John, 1992 in Steinberg, 1994; Severin and Tankard, 1992). The major drawbacks in the study are the fact that the outcomes were not well stated and the research procedures were not clearly explained.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

Mixed research methods were employed for the study. This involved a collection of both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time, whereby qualitative data were used to corroborate and confirm findings from quantitative data. This approach, according to Wimmer and Dominick (2014) is one in which the researcher collects, analyses and integrates both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study for the purpose of coming to a definitive conclusion. Specifically, the methods adopted in this study are descriptive survey and in-depth interview.

### **Study Location**

The choice of study location significantly impacts the relevance and context of this study. The study explores how newspaper readers in Lagos perceive, receive, interpret and utilise print media messages during health emergencies. So, the study location is Lagos state. Lagos has been specifically chosen for this study because:

1. It accommodates different ethnic groups from different states of the federation.
2. It is the epicentre of the 2024 cholera outbreak in Nigeria i.e. a state with highest rate of cholera infections (NCDC, 2024)
3. It has highest number of newspaper readers and media elites, (Attah, 2016).

Therefore, respondents were selected from seven (7) Local Government Areas of the state, two (2) LGAs from each of the three (3) senatorial districts of the state with an addition of Lagos Island LGA which was purposefully added to the study area because it was the LGA with the highest number of cholera cases during the 2024 cholera outbreak, (NCDC, 2024). The Local Government Areas in each senatorial district were arranged alphabetically and then the first and the last LGAs were chosen in each case.

### **Population of Study**

The population of this study comprised all print media readers in Lagos state, Nigeria. According to the 2016 estimated population from the National Population Commission (NPC) and Lagos Local Government Statistics (2016), Lagos state has a population of seventeen million, five hundred and fifty-two thousand, nine hundred and forty-two people 17,552,942. This number served as the population of this study. Henry (2018) explains that the population of a particular study comprises all the conceivable elements, subjects, or observations relating

to that particular phenomenon of interest. Henry (2018) defines population as the universe from which a sample is drawn. Due to this fact, the study adopted the population forecasts jointly published by the National Population Commission and Lagos Local Government Statistics (2016).

### Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study was 800 respondents who were systematically selected. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to select the respondents. The population was first broken down into senatorial districts which were regarded as Primary Sampling Units (PSUs). Then the PSUs were further broken down into Local Government Areas (LGAs). The LGAs were further broken down into wards and wards were broken down into streets. Five (5) wards were selected in each LGA and two (2) streets were selected in each ward. Varying number of copies of questionnaire were administered in each street, depending on availability, accessibility and readiness of the respondents. The process was carried out in such a way that every member of the population had an equal chance of being selected.

### Method of Data presentation and Analysis

The data collected from the survey method were analysed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25.0) software and thereafter presented in frequency tables, charts and graphs, and then carefully analysed to provide relevant answers to the research questions. For the in-depth interview (qualitative), the researcher listened to tapes and reviewed field notes generated from the interviewees. NVivo software was used to aid the thematic analysis of the qualitative data. Primary data were then sorted into emerging themes, and patterned according to the issues raised by the discussants. Thereafter, findings were described with the use of appropriate quotes for clear illustrations.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

#### Research question 1: To what extent are the newspaper readers aware of the print media cholera messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos?

**Table 1**

**Extent of Awareness of Print Media Cholera Messages (PMCMs)**

Statement	Strongly Disagree % (n=F)	Disagree % (n=F)	Undecided % (n=F)	Agree % (n=F)	Strongly Agree % (n=F)	Total % (N=F)	Mean (X)	Standard Deviation (SD)
All newspapers in Nigeria carried 2024 cholera messages.	2.2% (n=16)	2.9% (n=21)	6.0% (n=44)	47.3% (n=348)	41.7% (n=307)	100% (N=736)	4.23	0.877
Most people became aware of cholera outbreak through the newspaper messages	2.6% (n=19)	3.3% (n=24)	5.2% (n=38)	48.1% (n=354)	40.9% (n=301)	100% (N=736)	4.21	0.902
Newspapers massively informed the readers about cholera outbreak	4.1% (n=30)	1.9% (n=14)	3.0% (n=22)	49.9% (n=367)	39.1% (n=288)	100% (N=721)	4.23	0.848
Newspaper readers were well aware of print media cholera messages.	1.9% (n=14)	1.4% (n=10)	7.1% (n=52)	38.5% (n=283)	50.5% (n=372)	100% (N=731)	4.36	0.807
Newspaper messages were very effective in creating awareness on cholera outbreak.	1.8% (n=13)	1.6% (n=12)	1.2% (n=9)	41.3% (n=304)	54.1% (n=398)	100% (N=736)	4.44	0.757
All newspaper readers were aware of the 2024 cholera outbreak	1.4% (n=10)	0.8% (n=6)	1.1% (n=8)	41.8% (n=308)	55.9% (n=412)	100% (N=736)	4.51	0.691

**Decision Rule:** Mean of 1–1.79 = Strongly Disagree; 1.80–2.59 = Disagree; 2.60–3.39 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 3.40–4.19 = Agree; 4.20–5.00 = Strongly Agree.

Table 1 presents the extent of respondents' awareness of print media cholera messages (PMCM) across various statements, measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The table evaluates awareness of the coverage, effectiveness, and reach of newspapers in informing the public about the 2024 cholera outbreak.

For the statement that all newspapers in Nigeria carried 2024 cholera messages, 47.3% (n=348) of respondents agreed, while 41.7% (n=307) strongly agreed. Only 6.0% (n=44) were undecided, and 5.1% (n=37) expressed disagreement (2.2%, n=16 strongly disagreed; 2.9%, n=21 disagreed). The mean of 4.23 and standard deviation of 0.877 indicate strong agreement, suggesting that respondents believe that the print media provided widespread coverage of cholera messages.

Concerning newspaper readers' awareness of PMCM, 38.5% (n=283) agreed, and 50.5% (n=372) strongly agreed, while 7.1% (n=52) were undecided and 3.3% (n=24) disagreed. The mean of 4.36 and SD of 0.807 indicate strong agreement, suggesting that newspaper readers were well-informed.

On the effectiveness of newspaper messages in creating awareness, 41.3% (n=304) agreed, and 54.1% (n=398) strongly agreed, with very few undecided (1.2%, n=9) or disagreeing (3.4%, n=25). The mean of 4.44 (SD = 0.757) demonstrates strong agreement, highlighting the perceived impact of print media in raising awareness.

Also, regarding the statement that all newspaper readers being aware of the 2024 cholera outbreak, 41.8% (n=308) agreed, and 55.9% (n=412) strongly agreed. Only a small fraction was undecided (1.1%, n=8) or disagreed (2.2%, n=16). The mean of 4.51 and Standard Deviation of 0.691 indicate very strong agreement, reflecting a general consensus that newspaper readership effectively contributed to public awareness.

Analysis in table 7 shows that respondents strongly agree that newspapers extensively covered the cholera outbreak, effectively informed readers, and created high levels of awareness. The consistently high means (ranging from 4.21 to 4.51) and low standard deviations (ranging from 0.691 to 0.902) suggest that newspaper readers were well aware of the print media cholera messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state.

This outcome was reinforced by the responses of the participants in in-depth interview who also claimed that their subjects were well aware of cholera messages in the newspapers in all their communities. According to a traditional ruler in Somolu who bought a copy of newspaper every day and read it to pass the information to his three wives and nine children, both the literate and illiterate members of the community got the information about cholera through the medium of newspaper and acted according to the directives of health authority.

## Research Question 2: What is the Knowledge of the newspaper readers about the print media cholera messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos?

**Table 2**

**Respondents' Knowledge about Print Media Cholera Messages**

Statement	Strongly Disagree % (n=F)	Disagree % (n=F)	Undecided % (n=F)	Agree % (n=F)	Strongly Agree % (n=F)	Total % (N=F)	Mean (X)	Standard Deviation (SD)
PMCMs are about health emergency	2.2% (n=19)	2.9% (n=21)	6.0% (n=41)	45.9% (n=338)	43.1% (n=317)	100% (N=736)	4.24	0.889
PMCMs serve the information need of the society.	2.6% (n=19)	3.3% (n=25)	5.2% (n=37)	48.1% (n=356)	40.9% (n=299)	100% (N=736)	4.20	0.908
PMCMs stimulate people's awareness of cholera	4.1% (n=30)	1.9% (n=14)	3.0% (n=22)	49.9% (n=360)	39.1% (n=295)	100% (N=721)	4.24	0.851
PMCMs give adequate information	1.9% (n=14)	1.4% (n=10)	7.1% (n=52)	38.5% (n=281)	50.5% (n=374)	100% (N=731)	4.36	0.808
PMCMs reach out to many people	1.8% (n=13)	1.6% (n=12)	1.2% (n=9)	41.3% (n=308)	54.1% (n=394)	100% (N=736)	4.44	0.757

PMCMs are true and authentic	1.4% (n=10)	0.8% (n=6)	1.1% (n=8)	41.8% (n=309)	55.9% (n=411)	100% (N=736)	4.51	0.691
PMCMs are timely	2.2% (n=16)	3.3% (n=24)	4.5% (n=33)	56.5% (n=416)	33.6% (n=247)	100% (N=736)	4.14	0.813
PMCMs are more reliable	1.8% (n=13)	2.3% (n=17)	3.8% (n=28)	46.6% (n=343)	45.5% (n=335)	100% (N=736)	4.31	0.815
PMCMs are mostly accurate	3.9% (n=29)	2.2% (n=16)	6.3% (n=46)	47.1% (n=347)	40.5% (n=298)	100% (N=736)	4.20	0.861

**Decision Rule:** Mean of 1–1.79 = Strongly Disagree; 1.80–2.59 = Disagree; 2.60–3.39 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 3.40–4.19 = Agree; 4.20–5.00 = Strongly Agree.

Table 2 presents respondents’ knowledge about Print Media Cholera Messages (PMCMs) across a range of statements, measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The table assesses the respondents’ knowledge regarding the purpose, coverage, authenticity, timeliness, and reliability of PMCMs in informing the public about the 2024 cholera outbreak.

On the statement that PMCMs are about health emergencies, 45.9% (n=338) agreed, while 43.1% (n=317) strongly agreed. A total of 6.0% (n=41) were undecided, and 5.1% (n=40) expressed disagreement (2.2%, n=19 strongly disagreed; 2.9%, n=21 disagreed). The mean of 4.24 and standard deviation of 0.889 indicate strong agreement, suggesting that the respondents have the knowledge that PMCMs is about health emergencies.

Concerning whether PMCMs give adequate information, 38.5% (n=281) agreed and 50.5% (n=374) strongly agreed, while 7.1% (n=52) were undecided and 3.3% (n=24) disagreed. The mean of 4.36 and SD of 0.808 indicate strong agreement, suggesting that the respondents know that PMCMs give adequate information.

Regarding PMCMs’ reach, 41.3% (n=308) agreed and 54.1% (n=394) strongly agreed, with only 3.0% (n=22) undecided or disagreeing. The mean of 4.44 and SD of 0.757 suggest strong consensus that PMCMs reach out to many people.

For the authenticity of PMCMs, 41.8% (n=309) agreed and 55.9% (n=411) strongly agreed. Only 2.2% (n=16) were undecided or disagreed. The mean of 4.51 and SD of 0.691 indicate very strong agreement, reflecting the fact that the respondents know that PMCMs are true and authentic.

On timeliness, 56.5% (n=416) agreed and 33.6% (n=247) strongly agreed, while 4.5% (n=33) were undecided and 5.5% (n=40) disagreed. The mean of 4.14 and SD of 0.813 show strong agreement, suggesting that the respondents know that PMCMs are generally disseminated promptly.

Regarding reliability, 46.6% (n=343) agreed and 45.5% (n=335) strongly agreed, with 3.8% (n=28) undecided and 4.1% (n=30) disagreeing. The mean of 4.31 and SD of 0.815 demonstrates strong agreement, indicating that respondents know that PMCMs are more reliable than other information sources.

Finally, on accuracy, 47.1% (n=347) agreed and 40.5% (n=298) strongly agreed, while 6.3% (n=46) were undecided and 6.1% (n=45) disagreed. The mean of 4.20 and SD of 0.861 reflects strong agreement, confirming that the respondents know that PMCMs are mostly accurate.

Table 9 reveals that respondents have appreciable knowledge of PMCMs, across all statements, indicating high percentages of agreement and strong agreement, coupled with mean scores ranging from 4.14 to 4.51 and relatively low standard deviations of 0.691 to 0.908. This implies that respondents have the knowledge that PMCMs are health-focused, informative, authentic, timely, reliable, and accurate, reinforcing the critical role of print media in cholera awareness campaigns.

At the same time, respondents in in-depth interview asserted that their subjects have good knowledge of the print media cholera messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos. One respondent recalled that the young people who are members of ‘association of free readers’ brought cholera information to their illiterate parents who began to disseminate the information to other members of the community. A respondent also observed that before they received the

newspaper information about cholera, they defecated freely in the open and drink anyhow water, but as soon as they were informed of the newspaper guidelines to avoid cholera, they stopped the practice.

**Research Question 3: What is the readers’ perception of the print media cholera messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos?**

**Table 3**

**Respondents’ Perception of the Print Media Cholera Messages**

Statement	Strongly Disagree % (n=F)	Disagree % (n=F)	Undecided % (n=F)	Agree % (n=F)	Strongly Agree % (n=F)	Total % (N=F)	Mean (X)	Standard Deviation (SD)
PMCMs are completely unnecessary.	41.7% (n=307)	47.3% (n=348)	4.6% (n=34)	2.9% (n=21)	3.5% (n=26)	100% (N=736)	1.79	0.923
PMCMs are very important.	2.6% (n=19)	3.3% (n=25)	5.2% (n=37)	48.1% (n=350)	40.9% (n=305)	100% (N=736)	4.22	0.886
PMCMs are very helpful.	4.1% (n=28)	1.9% (n=14)	3.0% (n=24)	49.9% (n=365)	39.1% (n=290)	100% (N=736)	4.21	0.904
PMCMs are somehow biased.	3.5% (n=26)	3.1% (n=23)	4.3% (n=32)	38.0% (n=280)	50.9% (n=375)	100% (N=736)	4.30	0.953
PMCMs are highly relevant.	1.8% (n=13)	1.6% (n=12)	1.2% (n=9)	41.3% (n=305)	54.1% (n=397)	100% (N=736)	4.44	0.762
PMCMs are highly educative.	1.4% (n=10)	0.8% (n=6)	1.1% (n=8)	41.8% (n=311)	55.9% (n=409)	100% (N=736)	4.48	0.693
PMCMs are clear and understandable.	3.9% (n=29)	4.9% (n=33)	3.1% (n=23)	49.3% (n=363)	39.1% (n=288)	100% (N=736)	4.15	0.966
PMCMs meet the expectations of all readers.	2.9% (n=22)	4.8% (n=35)	2.2% (n=16)	46.1% (n=339)	44.0% (n=324)	100% (N=736)	4.23	0.931

**Decision Rule:** Mean of 1–1.79 = Strongly Disagree; 1.80–2.59 = Disagree; 2.60–3.39 = Neither Agree nor Disagree; 3.40–4.19 = Agree; 4.20–5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 3 presents respondents’ perception of Print Media Cholera Messages (PMCMs) across a range of statements, measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The table assesses the respondents’ perception regarding the necessity, importance, objectivity, relevance, purpose of print media during health emergencies.

On the statement that PMCMs are completely unnecessary, 2.9% (n=21) agreed, while 3.5% (n=26) strongly agreed. A total of 4.6% (n=34) were undecided, and 47.3% (n=348) expressed disagreement and 41.7%, n=307 strongly disagreed. The mean of 1.79 and standard deviation of 0.923 indicate strong disagreement, suggesting that the respondents perceived PMCMs as completely necessary.

Regarding the statement that PMCMs are very important, 48.1% (n=356) agreed and 40.9% (n=299) strongly agreed. Only 5.2% (n=37) were undecided, while 3.3% (n=25) disagreed. With a mean of 4.22 and SD of 0.886, respondents strongly agreed, reflecting the perception that PMCMs are very important.

Concerning the statement that PMCMs are helpful, 49.9% (n=365) agreed and 39.1% (n=290) strongly agreed. Disagreement was minimal at 1.9% (n=14), and 3.0% (n=24) were undecided. The mean score of 4.21 and Standard Deviation of 0.904) demonstrates strong agreement, confirming respondents’ perception of PMCMs to be very helpful. Likewise, the mean score 4.44 and standard deviation of 0.762 indicate strong agreement that the respondents perceived PMCMs to be highly relevant.

With reference to the statement that PMCMs are highly educative, 41.8% (n=311) agreed and 55.9% (n=409) strongly agreed, with only 1.1% (n=8) undecided. The mean of 4.48 and Standard Deviation of 0.693 suggest strong agreement that respondents perceived PMCMs to be highly educative. A similar mean of 4.15 and standard deviation of 0.966 indicate a strong agreement that the respondents perceived PMCMs to be clear and understandable.

Table 3 reveals that the newspaper readers have the perception that PMCMs are helpful, relevant, educative, and understandable. The consistently high means, ranging from 4.21 to 4.48 and low Standard Deviations, ranging from 0.693 to 0.966 indicate newspaper readers' positive perception of PMCMs.

Likewise, all the participants in the in-depth interview confirmed that the cholera messages in the newspapers were very helpful because they provided information that made their people stay invulnerable to the epidemic, indicating a positive perception of PMCMs.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This study explored the newspaper readers' reception of the print media messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state, aiming to ascertain the awareness, knowledge, perception and interpretations of the print media messages by the newspaper readers. Using survey and in-depth interview methods, the following facts were found out.

1. The manifest data from the quantitative survey with consistently high means (ranging from 4.21 to 4.51) and low standard deviations (ranging from 0.691 to 0.902) suggest that newspaper readers were well aware of the print media cholera messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state. The implication of this finding is that newspaper readers in Lagos state were well aware of print media cholera messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos. This outcome corroborates the insinuations of Oyeleke (2020) who opined that during the health emergency period, people tend to seek newspaper messages because they give detailed information which could be digested at one's own pace. He further explained that print media information is easy to access and gives vivid explanations and descriptions.

2. Data from the quantitative survey shows that respondents have appreciable knowledge of PMCMs, across all statements, indicating high percentages of agreement and strong agreement, coupled with mean scores ranging from 4.14 to 4.51 and relatively low standard deviations of 0.691 to 0.908. This implies that newspaper readers have the knowledge that PMCMs are health-focused, informative, authentic, timely, reliable, and accurate, reinforcing the critical role of print media in cholera awareness campaigns. This finding is consistent with the explanations of Umechukwu (2018) who claimed that the Nigerian society, especially the educated ones, pass the information they obtain from the print media down to the uneducated relatives, friends and family, who mostly get much of their knowledge of current happenings from the media and specifically, the print media, whether online or offline.

3. Data from the analysis revealed that the newspaper readers have the perception that PMCMs are helpful, relevant, educative, and understandable. The consistently high means, ranging from 4.21 to 4.48 and low Standard Deviations, ranging from 0.693 to 0.966 indicate newspaper readers' positive perception of PMCMs. Meanwhile, qualitative data revealed that all the participants in the in-depth interview confirmed that their subjects perceived the print media cholera messages to be helpful, especially during health emergency situations. Incidentally, White (2017) insinuated that most newspaper readers have a common perception of the print media messages and this is the fact that they usually consider the message as true, reliable, helpful, necessary and relevant to the current situation. This fact may not be far-fetched from the fact that newspapers remain a medium of records that can be laid hold to, even several years after an event had occurred.

### **Summary of Findings**

Through descriptive statistical analysis aided with Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26.0 and thematic analysis of interviews, the study found that:

1. Most newspaper readers in Lagos state (with mean value of 4.33) were well aware of the print media cholera messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos, Nigeria.

2. Newspaper readers in Lagos state have the knowledge that PMCMs are health-focused, informative, authentic, timely, reliable, and accurate, reinforcing the critical role of print media in cholera awareness campaigns.

3. Most newspaper readers in Lagos state (with mean value of 3.97) perceived the Print Media Cholera Messages as being very relevant and helpful during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state, Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

Having deliberately studied newspaper readers' reception of the print media messages during health emergencies, using the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos as a focus, it is concluded that print media is a veritable means of getting health information across to the masses, especially during health emergencies. This is because most elites and opinion leaders, such as traditional rulers, youth leaders, religious leaders and heads of families are newspaper readers (whether online or offline) who got information from the newspapers at their own pace and passed it to their subjects with a measure of authority, which the subjects were obliged to obey. The consistently high Mean Values across all the research questions of the study (ranging from 4.21 to 4.51) and low Standard Deviations (ranging from 0.691 to 0.902) suggest that newspaper readers were well aware of the PMCMs during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state, and have adequate knowledge of it with positive perceptions and accurate interpretations of the message. So, in creating knowledge, awareness, perceptions and influence, print media should be given a top priority, especially during the outbreak of epidemic or pandemic when people need to be thoroughly and adequately informed.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The study established that newspaper readers were well aware of the print media cholera messages during the 2024 cholera outbreak in Lagos state. Therefore, it is recommended that government and health authorities should further explore and utilize the print media as a veritable means of reaching out to the masses during health emergencies.
2. In creating adequate knowledge of health emergency messages during epidemic or pandemic, print media should be given a top priority over other media. This is because readers can take their time to thoroughly go through the message and digest it at their own pace for better understanding before passing it to others through interpersonal communication.
3. Sponsors of print media messages should ensure that messages which are meant to create awareness and sensitize the populace are devoid of biases, sectionalism and ambiguity as this may lead to wrong perceptions of the messages.

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