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## SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROLIFERATION OF FAKE NEWS, DODGY HEALTH ADVICE AND FAKE CURES OF COVID 19

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Fighting against the common enemy called COVID-19 has proven to be harder than what was envisaged for the Western world and world leaders of different governments.

The Corona virus disease(COVID-19), a highly transmittable and pathogenic viral infection caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2( SARS-CoV-2), originating from China has brought the biggest horror of modern times.

The total confirmed cases of Corona Virus in the world is on its way of hitting a disheartening whooping two million worldwide. It is also unfortunate to note that COVID-19 is a pandemic, the first of its kind, being highly contagious and more fatal than other Viruses that have caused a health frenzy in the world.

The SARS and MERS Viruses were diseases that were also highly infectious in nature, however, these viruses were merely epidemics that cut across and largely affected Asia (SARS) and the Middle East (MERS) respectively.

COVID-19 has indeed been the most difficult Pandemic to deal with due to the apace spread of

the virus across every nooks and crannies of almost every country in the world. It has definitely brought global society to a screeching halt. Researchers are now racing to develop drugs and vaccines for the disease that has already sickened almost two million people (with the United States of America being the current epicenter of fatalities). Other Countries highly affected include Italy, Spain, The United Kingdom, France, Germany, South Korea, China, Morocco, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Israel, India, Turkey, Ghana, amongst many others.

The World Health Organisation has stated that regular topmost personal hygiene, some of which include, Frequent washing of hands with clean water and soap, social and physical distancing, self isolation, wearing of face mask, and frequent use of Sanitizer. Presidents of Nations have also championed these preventive measures and have also resorted to civil punishment for individuals who flout these measures, especially when it comes to self isolation.

Social media, which refers to websites and applications that are designed to allow people to share content quickly, to enable social networking has always had the uppermost role to play (on a digital landscape) , and on a positive side, is currently a pivotal force during this Pandemic in the area of sensitising the general world about preventive measures and regular factual updates via the use of popular platforms .

Social media has spread information pretty fast due to the fact that a significant number of people all over the world have at least one of the popular social media accounts, which include Facebook (having over a billion users), and What's App which are the most popular.

It is important to note that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and the likes are facilitating important conversations and enlightenment concerning the virus. Social media has seen a number of professional athletes, celebrities and influencers speak up urging the common individual to keep safe and take everything they see seriously.

However, on a negative note, it is disheartening to note social media has aided the proliferation of fake news, dodgy health advice and fake cures for COVID-19.

We are in the age where anyone can on any social media platform and plant whatever he or she deems fit for the masses as social media has provide a very wide and free landscape for anyone and everyone. It is a known fact that social media promotes content that garners the most engagement, and this without a doubt is partially responsible for the spread of misinformation and sensationalism online.

In my opinion, gullible individuals are also partially responsible for the spread of misinformation, which they themselves continue to spread and it then becomes a chain of the spread of misinformation. This is where the government and public health authorities need to promote digital literacy.

Various platforms that aide the dissemination of fake news are also responsible for the misleading stories during these trying times. The Western digital social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and What's App act as facilitators and multipliers of COVID-19 related misinformation.

Misinformation during disease outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics are very common due to the large number of individuals that have their emotional intelligence weakened due to panic and fear. Then the daily onload of news updates on the virus which is almost unavoidable as news on COVID-19 is on every platform and device also contributes to the panic and fear in individuals.

Dodgy health advice come off in the form of rumours which is also part of the misinformation being spread via social media. Some rumours, most of which have been debunked by senior public health officials include a popular fake theory that of holding your breath for about ten seconds without coughing., In the case which if one can't help but cough, he or she has Corona virus.

Another dodgy theory was that of using antibiotics to cure the virus which is dumb in every sense as antibiotics are only used to cure or subdue bacteria and not viruses. Hot Temperature as a cure went round on social media as a cure to Corona virus, but the World Health Organisation discredited that idea.

We surely can't know more than the most respected and highly revered health organisation. Youthful immunity came out as a theory stating only old people could die, however fatalities have proven people of all ages had tested positive with some even dying. The most popular fake rumour were conspiracies of a digital contagion based mainly on a supposed 5G network rolled out in China is the reason for the evolution of Corona virus due to radio-frequency energy .

Electronic scientists have proven that radiofrequency energy from 5G cannot cause health problems. Some of these misinformation harboured xenophobic tendencies especially when Corona Virus was tagged the Chinese virus. Individuals all over the world started seeing Chinese people as primitive in nature when researchers found out COVID-19 developed in Wet markets.

In my opinion, gullible individuals are also partially responsible for the spread of misinformation, which they themselves continue to spread and it then becomes a chain of the spread of misinformation. This is where the government and public health authorities need to promote digital literacy. In order to curb this proliferation of fake news, individuals need to take a break from frequently being on the know via social media so as not to fall prey to fake news

. This will enable individuals to decipher between genuine news and fake news. Factual Structures should also be put in place to stand as a haven where individuals can get facts on all sorts of information.

It is good to know that the NCDC(Nigerian Centre for Disease Control)is an example of such structure.Will the profilation of fake news be totally eradicated? Definitely not. This is because the mass media is dynamic and the sky is still very big for anyone to put up any sort inappropriate news, but with these few measures I have mentioned, they will definitely be a decrease.

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