The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in Combating Fake News and Infodemic During Public Health Emergencies: Reflections on COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

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Abstract

Humanity was accosted by one of its biggest challenges with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The problem was far-reaching and devastating; its spread was readily aided by fake news and infodemic. Indeed, the rapidity of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic and the high mortality rate coupled with the fact that little was known of the new strain of the disease sent people into a panic search for information that could help them understand the disease and preventative or mitigation measures. This was more serious in developing countries like Nigeria faced with low levels of literacy, a dilapidated healthcare system and a proclivity to attach supernatural tags to uncommon matters. This attitude made the problem more difficult to address. Fake news was freely disseminated through social media. Given their skill sets as information professionals, librarians in Nigeria and elsewhere have a role to play in the fight against fake news and infodemic especially during public health emergences. This paper advocates for the use of the following strategies as a panacea for curbing infodemic and the dissemination of fake news and curbing infodemic. The strategies include information literacy, information re-packaging, oral librarianship, current awareness service (CAS), use of social media, building online resources collaborations and partnerships among others. The paper concludes by calling on librarians to play a more proactive role in any public health emergencies.

Keywords: *Fake News, Infodemic, Librarians, Libraries, Coronavirus Disease, COVID-19 Pandemic, Public Health Emergency*

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) initially reported the outbreak of the coronavirus disease on December 31, 2019, and on January 30, 2020, the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency (Gallegos, 2020; Ramzy & McNeil, 2020). The disease spread rapidly, affecting millions of people, and resulting in the WHO declaring the world situation as a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Ramzy & McNeil, 2020). Last (2001) defines a pandemic as "an epidemic occurring over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries, and usually

Ijeoma J. Ibegbulam, Anthonia N. Ejikeme and Fidelia N. Enem

The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in Combating Fake News and Infodemic During Public Health Emergencies: Reflections on COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

affecting a large number of people." In essence, the disease was declared a pandemic and not any other disease such as an epidemic because of its geographical spread rather than the mortality rate.

he rapidity of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic and the high mortality rate coupled with the fact that little was known of the new strain of the disease sent people into panic for information that could help them understand the disease and its preventative or mitigation measures. In response, a lot of information from credible and questionable sources became available. To worsen matters, the need for information on the disease was so high that people were not hesitant about the sources from which information could be obtained. Unarguably, information is an important requirement for decision-making and success in one's daily life including health-related needs. However, with the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the enormous amount of information available in the public domain and the speed of its spread became such an issue that the talk was no longer about information overload but about fake news and infodemic. Fake news is defined by Ethical Journalism Network (n.d.) as "information deliberately fabricated and published to deceive and mislead others into believing falsehood or doubtful messages" while the WHO (2023) defines infodemic as "too much information including false or misleading information in digital and physical environments during a disease outbreak." Olatunji et al., (2020) have observed that because the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) was "the first pandemic to occur in the digital communications era, it

got rife with "infodemic" of misinformation and conspiracy theories." In acknowledgement of the enormity of this challenge, the UN Secretary-General-António Guterres posited that although the coronavirus was a common enemy, the growing surge of misinformation was a present danger thus he advocated the need to urgently promote facts and science, hope and solidarity over despair and division (African Libraries and Information Associations, 2020). Gutteres' advocacy stemmed from the fact that health is important if individuals are to be in a position to take care of themselves, remain productive and continue to contribute to the success of their families, organisations or nations, and access to information plays a vital role in the lives of communities and peoples. This truism has been known from the earliest times as society evolved from the simple life of hunter-gathering to the more sophisticated electronic/digital era as we have it today. As societies continue to evolve, the importance of information in the lives of people and in the development and running of societies will become even more felt. However, information is relevant to the extent that it is accurate, timely, reliable and capable of aiding one to make informed decisions. In essence, while there may be a variety of sources of information to choose from to make informed decisions, there is no doubt that a barrage of fake and by inference unverified information can lead to confusion thus resulting in a decision-making process that is even more complex or flawed.

The need for correct information that will aid in the decision-making process cannot, therefore, be overemphasised. However,

Ijeoma J. Ibegbulam, Anthonia N. Ejikeme and Fidelia N. Enem

The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in Combating Fake News and Infodemic During Public Health Emergencies: Reflections on COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

there is no doubt that as more sophisticated information and communication technologies emerge on the scene, and new challenges by way of disease and other public health emergency issues are experienced, the rate of fake news and infodemic will be even higher. To combat this, individuals must equip themselves with the resources that can help them cope by way of being able to sieve the information they receive. In this regard, the role of librarians as information professionals cannot be overemphasized. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, librarians were not fully engaged in the fight against the global COVID-19 pandemic nor the fake news and infodemic that followed its spread. As the world seeks ways to mitigate health and other emergencies and the ever-present danger of fake news and infodemic, Chakraborty, et al., (2020) counsel that all hands must be on deck because it is only through extensive partnerships, collaborations and teamwork that success can be recorded.

Objectives of the Paper

The general objective of this paper is to highlight the role that librarians in Nigeria can play in the fight against fake news and infodemic during public health emergencies with a focus on COVID-19. Specifically, the paper will do the following

1. Undertake an overview of the Coronavirus pandemic in Nigeria
2. Highlight the concept of fake news
3. Highlight the concept of infodemic
4. Consider fake news and infodemic as a challenge in the fight against the Coronavirus pandemic in Nigeria
5. Highlight the role of librarians in fighting against fake news and infodemic
6. Highlight strategies librarians in Nigeria can employ to mitigate fake news and infodemic during public health emergencies.

Methodology

The paper was primarily a review of relevant literature. It examines the current knowledge and substantive findings in addition to theoretical and methodological contributions on the topic of fake news, infodemic and COVID-19. Relevant databases and websites were searched using appropriate keywords such as fake news, infodemic, coronavirus pandemic and COVID-19 among others. These keywords were either combined or searched singly as appropriate. From the literature search, the authors highlighted some strategies that librarians can employ to combat fake news and infodemic during times of public health emergencies.

Literature Review

Coronavirus Pandemic in Nigeria

The first confirmed case of the coronavirus in Nigeria was announced on the 27th day of February 2020, following the positive testing for the virus by an Italian who worked in Nigeria and had returned from Milan, Italy to Lagos on the 25th day of February 2020 (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control [NCDC], 2020). On the 9th of

Ijeoma J. Ibegbulam, Anthonia N. Ejikeme and Fidelia N. Enem

The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in Combating Fake News and Infodemic During Public Health Emergencies: Reflections on COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

March 2020, a second case of the virus, this time a Nigerian citizen who had contact with the Italian, was reported in Ewekoro, Ogun State (P.M. News as cited in Wikipedia, 2023). To combat the spread of the disease, several measures were announced by the Nigerian government including sensitisation campaigns, shut down of schools and government parastatals, hand washing and or use of hand sanitiser, wearing of face masks in public, social distancing, reporting of suspected cases of the disease, lockdown, travel bans and stoppage of intestate travels and ban on religious and social gatherings, among others (Omaka-Amari, et al., 2020).

As of the 17th day of November 2020, the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control confirmed that there were 65,457 COVID-19 cases in Nigeria. Out of this number, 2,957 were active, 61,337 were recovered while deaths stood at 1,167.

However, even with the grim statistics above, most Nigerians chose to believe otherwise. Beyond that, the news was not that coronavirus pandemic cases were found in Nigeria or the casualty rate thereof. Rather, it was the enormous amount of information (mostly fake news) that was available in the public domain and spread through the agency of traditional print media, electronic media and social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter among others. This continued to prove a considerable challenge in the effort to mitigate the further spread of the disease and the sensitisation efforts in the country (Omaka-Amari, et al., 2020).

Concept of Fake News

The appreciation of the place of information in the lives of people and communities has today made information not only much sought after but also a marketable product. This need has resulted in the massive production of both verifiable and unverifiable information, stored in different formats and shared through different channels and for all kinds of purposes. However, at no time in history has fake news played up so gravely as we had it at the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Without a doubt, fake news is not a new phenomenon, rather, fake news touches virtually every aspect of life and has continued to be a source of concern because of its far-reaching impact on society (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2019). The concept of fake news does not have a universal definition rather, in an attempt to capture its very essence, scholars have conceptualised it in many ways, but with almost the same meaning (McGonagle, 2019). Duffy et al., (2019) define fake news as "concocted content that copycats legitimate news, presented subtly to lure the public into believing it is legitimate." According to Maharaji (2017), fake news is "a type of yellow journalism or propaganda that consists of deliberate misinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional print and broadcast news media or online social media."

Furthermore, the British Broadcasting Corporation as cited in Sela (2019) defines

Ijeoma J. Ibegbulam, Anthonia N. Ejikeme and Fidelia N. Enem

The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in Combating Fake News and Infodemic During Public Health Emergencies: Reflections on COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

fake news as "completely false information, photos or videos purposefully created and spread to confuse or misinform." UNESCO, Ireton and Posetti (2018) posit that "fake news" and whatever it represents revolve around three typologies: misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. In a bid to differentiate the three terms, the Ethical Journalism Network (n.d.) observes the following: (1) misinformation is false information, but the person who is disseminating it believes that it is true. (2) disinformation is false information, and the person who is disseminating it knows it is false. It is a deliberate, intentional lie, and points to people being actively misinformed by malicious actors, and (3) mal-information is information that is based on reality, but used to inflict harm on a person, organisation or country. Brennen (2017) adds that usually, these stories are created to influence people's views, push a political agenda or cause confusion and can often be a profitable business for online publishers. While considering the broad spectrum of news that can be considered fake, Mckee, van Schalkwyk and Stuckler (2019) identify the following: untrue information, including myths, rumours, conspiracy theories, and hoaxes as well as deceptive or erroneous content intentionally or unintentionally disseminated on social media platforms. The definitions and explanations above highlight the fact that fake news could be untrue information that is presented as authentic news, and which is capable of damaging the reputation of a person or entity, and causing more problems instead of bringing about a solution(s). The pervasive nature of fake news makes it a source of concern to individuals, governments and other bodies. This is because it spreads like wildfire and can be very difficult to contain or correct. Furthermore, it has an enormous capacity to distort the eventual truth, and as such is a threat to the security and continuing existence of any society. As mentioned earlier, fake news can emanate from any number of sources. However, the spread of it today has become almost uncontrollable as a result of electronic media and more far-reaching, accessibility to mobile devices, social media and Internet connection. For instance, Kemp (2022) estimates there were about 32.9 million active social media users in Nigeria in January 2022 and 31.60 million active Internet users in Nigeria in January 2023, equating 14.3 per cent of the total population. Inferentially, if this figure is correct, it stands to reason that "social media packs a punch for good or ill depending on what it is used for" (Ekpu, 2020). Zhou and Zafarani (2018) also note that the popularity of social media stems from the fact that it permits interaction and diffusion of new ideas. This is basically because social media users can advance ideas or spread the news through shares, likes or retweets (Rampersad, 2019). Added to that is the fact that the potency of fake news is enhanced as it could take the form of text, audio, photos or videos thus, appealing to all classes of people irrespective of their educational or social status. The implication is exposure to an uncontrollable type and amount of information, mostly news that emanates from independent authors.

Ijeoma J. Ibegbulam, Anthonia N. Ejikeme and Fidelia N. Enem

The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in Combating Fake News and Infodemic During Public Health Emergencies: Reflections on COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

This is why Wilson and Umar (2019) posit that the new information age has created a virtual surrounding with loads of information, a large part of which is reliable with the more significant chunk unverifiable. Thus, discerning truth from hearsay has become an enormous task. Wilson and Umar assert that the pluralistic nature of the media compounds the problem. More troubling is the fact that there is a divergence between the creation and dissemination of fake content on social media platforms. In essence, fake news sharing may be unintentional, but its creation could be highly intentional (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019). The sheer volume of information available, the high rate of production and the rapidity of the spread of information, whether credible or questionable, have given rise to the concept of infodemic.

Concept of Infodemic

Infodemic as a term was coined in 2003 from two words: information and epidemic by a journalist and political scientist named David Rothlopf. It was first used in the wake of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) that broke out in China in 2003 but became even more in use in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Merriam-Webster, 2020). International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (2021), notes that the word 'infodemic' is a combination of "information" and "epidemic" and refers to "the idea of a sweeping information disorder affecting users' capacity to find answers to their information needs." Infodemic is defined by the World Health Organization (2020) as "an excessive amount of information about a problem that

that is typically unreliable, spread rapidly, and makes a solution more difficult to achieve" because it is often difficult to sieve the fake from the real. Print, electronic and social media proved a big challenge in the bid to manage and control the flow of information on the coronavirus pandemic, whether fake or real (Olatunji et al., 2020). In essence, the objective of the flood of information is not always to educate, enlighten, or clarify; the objective of the flood of information is mostly to blow out of proportion or exaggerate a phenomenon, a disease or an event and to create a state of fear in the recipient(s), and technology plays a huge part in the experience. The most far-reaching negative effect of the infodemic is that it propels people to take actions, mostly irrational in their bid to stave off or address their fears. In many instances, the actions can result in far-reaching consequences including death. Rothlopf (2003) also notes that the infodemic has affected national and international politics and even security in ways that are utterly disproportionate to the root realities." Infodemic was a serious challenge to combating the coronavirus pandemic. The Pan African Health Organization (PAHO, 2020) outlines some reasons why infodemc made the pandemic worse:

- Makes it hard for people, decision-makers, and health workers to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it. Sources may be apps, scientific organizations, websites, blogs, "influencers," and more
- People may feel anxiety, depression, overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet important demands

Ijeoma J. Ibegbulam, Anthonia N. Ejikeme and Fidelia N. Enem

The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in Combating Fake News and Infodemic During Public Health Emergencies: Reflections on COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

- It can affect decision-making processes when immediate answers are expected and not enough time is allotted to deeply analyze the evidence
- No quality control on what's published, and sometimes, on what's used to take action and make decisions
- Anybody can write or publish anything on the web (podcasts, articles, etc.), in particular on social media channels (individual and institutional accounts).

In their study, Olapegba et al., as cited in Apuke and Omar (2020) posited that the danger of fake news in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic was that it discouraged medical advice as it offered false medications, stirred panic and was used for political point scoring. For instance, as a result of it, there was a rising demand for chloroquine, a drug that had for many years been discontinued for use in the treatment of malaria in Nigeria; there were reports of hospitalisation arising from chloroquine poisoning, of at least two persons. (Goethe-Institut Nigeria, 2020). This "cure" was widely circulated on Whatsapp and in Lagos State, Nigeria. The use of chloroquine for treating coronavirus followed a public endorsement by then-US president, Donald Trump (Healthcare Information For All [HIFA], 2020).

Fake News and Infodemic as a Challenge in the Fight Against the Coronavirus Pandemic in Nigeria

The Goethe-Institut Nigeria (2020) observes that the prevalence of fake news during the coronavirus pandemic made the fight against the spread of the virus more complicated in Nigeria. In their study on the preventive and control challenges within the first two months of the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVD-19) pandemic in Nigeria, Omaka-Amari, et al., (2020) identified misconceptions and myths that constituted fake news including:

- The virus cannot thrive in Africa because of its hot climate
- The disease is meant for the rich and politicians
- The virus was a consequence of 5G technology, the new world order, punishment from God and the coming of the antichrist.
- The virus was manufactured in a Chinese laboratory.

There were also some misconceptions about the prevention of the virus.

- Steaming self with hot water,
- Drinking of gins
- Gargling throat with hot water
- Consumption of hot drinks made of ginger, pepper, lemon, garlic and other kinds of herbs.

Describing the torrent of information available during the pandemic as a "tsunami of information and disinformation Hassan (2020) notes that it provoked fear and exploited vulnerabilities. Whatsapp has been described as a common conduit for spreading fake news in Nigeria because it allows for the circulation of different types of media such as audio, video, text and links. The audio can be put in the local language thus removing the barrier of literacy (Hassan, 2020).

Ijeoma J. Ibegbulam, Anthonia N. Ejikeme and Fidelia N. Enem

The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in Combating Fake News and Infodemic During Public Health Emergencies: Reflections on COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

Ajikobi as cited in Gikand (2020) posits that while fake news is a global problem, it is even more so in Nigeria because false information on social media can quickly end up on legitimate news websites. As often happens "you have cases where something is trending on Twitter or Facebook, and then the next morning, traditional newspapers put it on their front page." This makes it difficult to differentiate between true and fake.

Hassan (2020) further posits that Nigerians' vulnerability to fake news is not particularly due to their unique gullibility rather; it has more to do with the "weak communications between the government and the governed, high reverence for miracle healing and a dilapidated health care system." Another factor that enables fake news in Nigeria is the high level of illiteracy. The African Libraries and Information Associations (AfLIA, 2020) observes that Africa lags in the world's averages on literacy levels, and "misinformation thrives more where there is illiteracy, especially the inability to understand and evaluate information itself as well as the source(s)." Given this scenario, if Nigerians are not correctly informed, the fight against any public health emergency may not yield the desired results as the fight against COVID-19 showed.

Roles for Librarians in Combating Fake News and Infodemic

It is without a contest that librarians should be involved in the fight against fake news and infodemic especially during public health emergencies. Ali and Gatiti (2020)

articulate the role of librarians in any pandemic to consist of three dimensions:

1. To promote public health awareness by creating and disseminating information relating to preventive measures;
2. To support the research team, researchers and faculty by providing information regarding the latest developments, research and literature;
3. To meet the core needs of regular library users.

Although questions about the ability of libraries and by implication librarians to fight fake news because of its cognitive and emotional dimensions have been asked, Sheonberger (2020) posits that libraries are "well-placed to combat misinformation in an increasingly politically polarized environment where even medical facts can be seen through a partisan lens." Continuing, Sheongerger reported that libraries across the U.S. helped their communities stay informed about the pandemic. Efforts in this direction in the U.S. by public and academic libraries alike during the COVID-19 pandemic included educating their users, holding seminars, and doing questions and answers (Q&As) to help people learn about the disease as well as dispel misconceptions. Other libraries developed central websites to be one-stop shops for their communities. Ostman (2020) while urging libraries to use their digital reach to thwart misinformation noted that during the pandemic, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA, 2020) prepared a downloadable infographic on "How to Spot Fake News." This resource was translated into several languages.

Ijeoma J. Ibegbulam, Anthonia N. Ejikeme and Fidelia N. Enem

The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in Combating Fake News and Infodemic During Public Health Emergencies: Reflections on COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

Strategies for Mitigating Fake News and Infodemic in Nigeria by Librarians

A study conducted by Aiyebelehin and Mesagan (2021) revealed that the major roles played by librarians in Nigeria in mitigating fake news and infodemic during the Covid-19 pandemic included correction of misconceptions online, posting of official information online, and provision of authentic sources for COVID-19 guidelines. Also, another study among medical librarians revealed that the following services were provided during the Covid-19 pandemic to combat fake news: provision of remote access to e-resources, circulation of information on preventive measures for COVID-19, and provision of health information literacy services. However, Pelemo et al., (2021) reported that "the involvement of librarians in combating COVI-19 in Nigeria was to a large extent, a marketing strategy that has the potential to create public awareness of library resources and services, and ultimately increase its patronage, as well as national and global visibility." However, these efforts were largely done by individual librarians. To that extent, libraries/librarians must get involved in the effort to contain fake news and infodemic in Nigeria even before any public health emergency.

Any strategy or strategies designed to mitigate fake news and infodemic in Nigeria must take into consideration the peculiar nature of the environment. For instance, the factors that enable fake news to thrive in Nigeria as articulated by HIFA (2020) and AfLIA (2020) are: "weak communications between the government and the governed, high reverence for miracle healing, dilapidated health care system and high level of illiteracy. What is not in doubt however is that as information professionals, librarians are well positioned to contribute their quota in the fight against fake news and infodemic. Librarians in Nigeria can play the expected roles in the following ways:

1. **Information Literacy Programmes and Instruction**: Simply put, information literacy "describes a set of abilities that enables an individual to acquire, evaluate, and use information. It has five components: identify, find, evaluate, apply and acknowledge sources of information" (Seminole State College Library, 2020). Information literacy is a powerful tool in combating fake news because an information-literate person can locate and assess needed information, and evaluate and put it to good use. The individual can sieve the information that he/she receives thus lowering the rate of misinformation, disinformation and mal-information. Possession of information literacy skills encourages individuals to take personal responsibility for their health and other needs. That is why UNESCO (2023) asserts that information literacy empowers people in all walks of life to seek, use, and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion in all nations. By developing and implementing information literacy

Ijeoma J. Ibegbulam, Anthonia N. Ejikeme and Fidelia N. Enem

The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in Combating Fake News and Infodemic During Public Health Emergencies: Reflections on COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

programmes aimed at educating users on how to critically think about information, how to fact-check information and evaluate information sources, individuals will be equipped with the ability to discern reliable information from misinformation.

Academic librarians are best suited to teach information literacy using the platform of the classroom. Seminars, conferences, and Question & Answer (Q&A) sessions can be useful avenues for dispelling fake news.

2. **Information Re-Packaging:** Information repackaging is one of the traditional skills of librarians that can be utilised to combat fake news and infodemic. Dongardive (2013) defines information re-packaging as "the process to repackage the analysis of consolidated information in that form that is more suitable and usable for library users." Digital technology has given room for a heightened information explosion in varying information formats. Sieving the contents of these formats can be an onerous task. Moreover, making sense of the enormous information out there can be rather daunting. Librarians can undertake to re-package information on health-related matters and translate them into the languages that are understood by their users or locality. The right information can then be pushed out into both the online and print spaces calculatedly.

3. **Current Awareness Service (CAS)**: Technically speaking, CAS is a service where libraries provide all the information affecting the progress of a researcher's work by bringing to their notice new acquisitions of the library (Chatterjee, 2023). However, the essential elements of CAS which include, providing information by creating indexes and abstracts, aggregated news alerts, fact-checking services, specialised newsletters, subject-specific alerts and database updates can be combined with educational programmes, social media monitoring, collaboration with fact-checking organisations, monitoring legislation and policies and user training sessions to ensure that information is identified, retrieved, evaluated and selectively disseminated to the patrons. By staying informed about the latest developments in a field or topic of concern, librarians can identify misinformation, and provide accurate information to their patrons. Health Sciences librarians can retrieve current and correct information on any health emergency and forward it to health workers and other users to enable them to keep abreast of the latest information and management options.

4. **Oral Librarianship:** In a predominantly semi-literate or illiterate society such as Nigeria, "oral librarianship" can go a long way in

Ijeoma J. Ibegbulam, Anthonia N. Ejikeme and Fidelia N. Enem

The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in Combating Fake News and Infodemic During Public Health Emergencies: Reflections on COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

communicating information. Oral librarianship as advanced here consists of disseminating information by word of mouth through personal contact. To achieve this, librarians must ensure that they are abreast of the latest and correct information on any subject, and personally educate as many people as they can reach. Oral librarianship takes its relevance from Africa's established culture of oral tradition. Physical awareness campaigns also provide a veritable avenue for communicating correct information. Librarians can also offer to fact-check health-related information for their friends and families.

5. **Social Media:** Agreed, social media is presently the most potent tool in the dissemination of information and is the most used and fastest tool to disseminate misinformation and disinformation. That does not make social media an ogre of a tool. Librarians can put social media to better use by creating and sharing/ tweeting the correct information. Zorocostas (2020) counselled that since the spread of fake news and infodemic is heightened by the Internet and social media, the same channels should be employed to fight the menace by ensuring that correct information is disseminated through those sources. Where misinformation or disinformation is encountered, librarians should make an effort to search out the correct version and disseminate same. Librarians using their information literacy skills should

be able to evaluate information before they share it. For instance, during the pandemic, the COVID-19 alert service on WhatsApp by the WHO (https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/who-health-alert-brings-covid-19-facts-to-billions-via-whatsapp) was one of the most reliable sources of information on the current crisis. The WHO also had a chatbot on Facebook Messenger to provide accurate information on the virus. These and other useful sites could be harvested and shared. Videos and songs educating people on any health emergency can also be created and shared on social media. Wilson (2017) also recommends sharing credible library resources on social media because "sharing articles with library's social media fans promotes the vetted, trustworthy, but often underused resources and helps to validate the librarian's role in the information space." Building credibility is important in the fight against any health emergency. The Nigerian Library Association should borrow a leaf from the effort of the World Health Organization.

6. **Online Resources:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, there were available online, COVID-19 fact-check resources that went a long way in enabling individuals to identify misinformation and disinformation. This was very useful for sieving facts from myths. Credible online resources also offer tips on how to read health-related news articles, social media posts and so on critically.

Ijeoma J. Ibegbulam, Anthonia N. Ejikeme and Fidelia N. Enem

The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in Combating Fake News and Infodemic During Public Health Emergencies: Reflections on COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

7. **Collaborative Partnerships and Teamwork:** According to Keyton (2017), this is "a type of interaction in which individuals or teams or organizational members, work together to reach a common shared goal, activity or production." During the pandemic, IFLA formed the Cochrane Call to Action which came about as "the result of discussion involving different stakeholders involved in efforts to make sense of the pandemic while it was happening, including knowledge managers." The goal of the Cochrane Call to Action is to support evidence-based responses to global health emergencies. There exist some international and regional organisations committed to combating fake news and infodemic. Librarians can collaborate with some of them. They can partner with the regional programmes of WHO and/or partner with Non-Governmental Organisations dedicated to fighting the spread of any disease.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic created a health crisis that transcended geographical barriers. Countries all over the world were grappling with not just economic losses but also huge losses in terms of high mortality rates. But beyond the huge losses, the incident of infodemic and fake news heightened the situation. The deluge of information available in print, electronic and social media made it more complex to contain the pandemic. Fake news makes informed decisions making difficult and

can result in loss of life. Infodemic and fake news pose more challenges in a developing country such as Nigeria. As information professionals, librarians in Nigeria have a strategic role to play in combating fake news and infodemic. The time calls for all hands to be on deck to fight fake news and infodemic. For librarians to succeed in disseminating proper and adequate information, certain strategic steps must be taken and librarians must have the skill sets tailored towards providing adequate information on how to tackle any public health emergency. They should use the platforms of the classroom, seminars, and conferences to instruct people on information literacy focused on creating more awareness of public health emergencies in their various institutions. Librarians should engage more rigorously in information repackaging and delivery and also selective dissemination of information for the dissemination of the correct information.

Oral librarianship, social media, building online resources, collaboration and partnerships are other veritable avenues that can be explored for the dissemination of correct information on any public health emergency.

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Ijeoma J. Ibegbulam, Anthonia N. Ejikeme and Fidelia N. Enem

The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in Combating Fake News and Infodemic During Public Health Emergencies: Reflections on COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria

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Ijeoma J. Ibegbulam, Anthonia N. Ejikeme and Fidelia N. Enem

The Role of Library and Information Science Professionals in Combating Fake News and Infodemic During
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