

Promoting Fear Through Information: An Analysis of Residents' Attitude Towards the Sit-At-Home Order in South East Nigeria

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Abstract

This study evaluates how fear is promoted through the spread of information on the Sit-At-Home order in South East Nigeria. Public behavior and attitude is believed to be a product of the kind of information they are constantly exposed to. Hence, 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 promote fear among residents regarding the Sit-At-Home order in the region. This study is guided by the Fear Appeal Theory within the domain of information that has become common knowledge. Survey research design was adopted for this study with the questionnaire as the instrument for data collection among 372 respondents (as sample) who represent residents in the five South East States of Nigeria. Findings reveal among other things majority of the respondents (94%) are aware of the Sit-At-Home order while 60% of the residents were found to have been exposed to the content of the information on the Sit-At-Home order in the region. Further findings reveal that there is a general feeling of fear among residents in South East Nigeria arising from exposure to video contents of victims gruesomely murdered as a result of perceived violation of the Sit-At-Home order. This was found to be a major factor that promoted fear along with the threat contained in the content of the Sit-At-Home order, especially among non-literate public in rural areas. The researchers therefore conclude among other things that fear is easily promoted by incidents that suggests insecurity of human life along with constant spread of information about victims murdered as a result of 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 promote fear especially among non-literate members of the public who mostly fall victim of the heinous crimes perpetuated by “Unknown Gunmen in the region.

Key words: *Fear, Information, Sit-At-Home, Communication, Violence*

Introduction

The global trend of information overload experienced in some part of the world affects individuals' attitude 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.

According to Aly and Green (2010, p.269): 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” (Aly and Green, 2010). This explains the scenario behind residents' attitude towards the use of information on the Sit-At-Home in South East Nigeria to promote fear and cause tension in the region.

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 Efitk and the Ibibio people among few other ethnic groups. The current Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) is traced to the declaration of Biafra by the late Lt. Col. Odumegu Ojukwu between 1967 to 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 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.

The spread of information on other days of Sit-At-Home apart from the regular Monday Sit-At-Home Order by one Mr. Simon Ekpa (a Nigerian) who resides in Finland was believed to have been responsible for the prevailing fear among residents in the area as video clips of victims who were gruesomely murdered went viral in the region. This is as a result of the way and manner the Sit-At-Home Order was being enforced which lead to the untimely death of unsuspecting victims in the region.

Scholars believe that the effectiveness of the Sit-At-Home order might be as a result of the use of force by IPOB or its agents in enforcing it, particularly in areas that are known to be laden with fear and places where people have witnessed an increase in violence (Owoeye, et. al., 2022; Anyadiegwu and Nzekwu, 2022).

The use of Social Media to further hype 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 contents can lead viewers to perceive life as dangerous and fearful (Gerbner and Gross, 1976; Signoreli, et. al., 1995; Signoreli and Gerbner, 1988). This is because, media is believed to often distort crime or violent situations by over-representing more severe, intentional and gruesome incidents. This makes the public to over-estimate its frequency and often misperceive its reality.

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

Statement of the Problem

The need to share information with people is a common practice especially when such information will help individuals make informed decisions or take actions that will protect them from becoming victims of the incessant gruesome murder of residents that is believed to have violated the Sit-At-Home order. The kinds of information we share especially through the 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 with the intention 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 is believed to have been responsible for the prevalence of fear among residents in the region.

In view of the foregoing, the study seeks to establish the connection between the promotion of information loaded with violent contents 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? Does the spread of information on violent killings of individuals promote fear among residents in South East, Nigeria? How does social media contents on the gruesome murder of victims instill fear in the minds of residents in South East Nigeria? 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

The objective of this study is to find out how fear is promoted through the spread of information on the Sit-At-Home order with a focus on residents' attitude towards the order. Specifically, the objectives of the study include:

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

Literature Review

Fear is the anxiety and distress that comes from doubts of consequences of an occurrence, events, situation or an 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 outcome. In advertising generally, fear is a veritable tool used in creating traffic and false sale that appeals to target audience.

. 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” (Merriam-Webster, 2002). 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.

As a matter-of-fact, the brain's fear circuitry is more powerful than the brain's reasoning faculties. According to Begley, Underwood, Wolffe, Smalley, and Inter landi , (2007, 37), “The amygdala sprouts a profusion of connections to higher brain regions – neurons that carry one-way traffic from amygdala to neo-cortex. Fear connections run from the cortex to the amygdala, however, this allows the amygdala to override the products of the logical, thoughtful cortex, but not vice versa. Although it is sometimes possible to think yourself out of fear (‘I know that dark shape in the alley is just a trash can’), it takes great effort and persistence. Instead, fear tends to override reason, as the amygdala hobbles our logic and reasoning circuits. That makes fear ‘far, far more important than reason.’ Due to this circuitry, fear is more powerful than reason. 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 really 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. (Begley, et al., 2007; Maren, 2008, 2010; Lennon and Rentfro, 2010)

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 audience attention to the ideology or cause like in basic message as “if you do not do this (buy, vote, believe, support, learn, etc.), some particular direct consequences will occur” (Glascoff, 2000, 35). Literally, the advertising professional 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 constantly increasing the interest of many. More specifically in advertising interest, involvement, recall, and persuasiveness (LaTour, Snipes, and Bliss, 1996). “Fear appeals are one of the most frequently used motivators to get people to help themselves” (Bagozzi and Moore, 1994, 56). In fact, fear appeals have grown in popularity because advertisers have found them to increase ad interest and persuasiveness (LaTour, Snipes, and Bliss, 1996). Evidently, people seem to recall information clothed in fear and frequently adhere to the threats it embodies. (Snipes, LaTour, and Bliss, 1999, 273).

Apparently, fear can be used in institutions to arrest a situation especially in the tertiary institutions, it can be used to penalized unruly behaviours of young college students, it can be used at homes for correcting children’s bad behaviours, 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, 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 which 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 (Abernethy and Wicks, 1998).

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 “gaposis,” 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.

Summary of Literature Review

Overall, the following generalizations are offered with regard to the current status of fear appeal theory and literature.

1. When people feel fearful, they are motivated to reduce the fear, threat, or danger.
2. Fear appeals are built upon fear. That is, they identify the negative results of not using a product or the negative results of engaging in unsafe behaviour.
3. The use of fear appeals generally is effective in increasing interest, involvement, recall, and persuasiveness by potentially causing distress to the target audience.
4. In general, the more frightened a person is by a fear appeal, the more likely he or she is to take positive preventive action.
5. Overall, there is a curvilinear relationship between fear intensity and change in the target audience. If the fear is too low, it may not be recognized. If it reaches a threshold that is too high, the individual may engage in denial and avoidance.
6. When tension becomes too high, fear appeals seem to become less effective. That is, high tension leads to energy depletion and negative mood. In addition, ads that focus on mortality-related risks may inadvertently make mortality salient and turn off the audience members who, in turn, are desperately trying to save their core worldviews. (Fear Appeal Theory, p. 15)
7. An individual's response to a threat is based on two cognitive processes: threat appraisal and coping appraisal.
8. A fear appeal should contain threat and coping efficacy information sufficient to both evoke a manageable level of fear and inform about adaptive behavioral responses.
9. Fear appeals will not be successful if the individual feels powerless to change the behaviour.
10. Fear appeals are most effective when they provide (1) moderate to high levels of meaningful threat and (2) high levels of self-efficacy or the belief that an individual's behavior change will reduce the threat, and can be attainable by him or her.
11. Fear appeal effectiveness also depends on the individual's characteristics, language, cultural orientation, stage of change, attitudes, and goals.
12. For example, individuals highly involved and ego-involved in a topic can be motivated by a relatively small amount of fear. A more intense level of fear is required to motivate uninvolved individuals and those that are not ego-involved.

13. Behavior depends on the value an individual has placed on a particular goal and the individual's assessment of the likelihood that a given action will achieve the goal.
14. As such, fear is both a drive and a cue in that fear may be acting as a cue below the threshold and as a drive above the threshold.
15. Demographics also influence fear appeal effectiveness, e.g., age, sex, race, and education.
16. Individuals with high self-esteem react more favorably to high levels of fear than do people with lower self-esteem. Lower self-esteem individuals are more persuaded by low levels of fear.
17. Emotionally intense, high-impact ads may require fewer exposures to evoke strong emotions and stimulate empathy. But, subjective knowledge impacts the degree of emotional response to fear appeals, e.g., knowledgeable people may be more receptive to messages that are designed to be less emotionally arousing.
18. Cognitive and emotional processes are mutually engaged and mutually supportive rather than antagonistic. Individuals seem to use emotions as tools for efficient information processing and this enhances their abilities to engage in meaningful deliberation.
19. The more vulnerable an individual feels, the less effective a fear appeal.
20. Defensive avoidance appears to be directly related to one's characteristic level of anxiety.
21. Fear-appeal messages will be most effective if they are interesting, attention-capturing, novel, relatively unknown topics, culturally sensitive, and cause the recipients to initially feel good about themselves, later sensitize them to their own risk, and then have their unhealthy point-of-view dispelled with empowerment.
22. While these are the general findings regarding fear appeals, many moderating variables have been studied with varying results, e.g., values and beliefs, prior knowledge and experience, aware vs. latent publics, presence of addictive behavior, what is "hot information" for the individual, whether it is a direct or indirect fear appeal, and the information processing capability of the individual.
23. In spite of these general conclusions, there remains a considerable question as to whether or not the use of fear appeals is ethical and how to make a fear appeal more ethical. Fear Appeal Theory.

Methodology

This study adopts survey as the research design, while questionnaire serves as the measuring instrument. This is because the study focuses on getting quantitative data on awareness and attitude of residents of the South-East on the ongoing *Sit-At-Home* order by the *IPOB*. The population of the study consists of the 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. The *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. The *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, so as 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. Thus we have:

Stage One: Each of these states in 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, Osioma	Osioma
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 gotten using the 2006 population census figures [NBS, 2017]. The researchers adopted 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 to. This is done at an interval order which was determined at the selected communities depending on the size of each community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of data analysed in this study are 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
		Married	219
		Widowed	24
		Separated	7
		Divorced	-
6.	Religion	Christianity	372
		Islam	-
		ATR	-
		Total	372

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 reveal 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 reduced as 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 while 18% said they can't really say if they have been exposed to the content or not.

The implication of this result is 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 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 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.

The implication of this result is 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. Furthermore, since this is a kind of security information, social media have been shown to be the widely used medium for disseminating such kind of information.

Table 4: Distribution of responses showing respondents’ attitude towards 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 mean score that fall within the Limit of Real Numbers for 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 implication of the result is that when human beings are killed, the information tends to create an atmosphere of fear among the living around the area where such incident happened.

Furthermore, four (4) of the responses had mean scores that fall within the Limit of Real Numbers for “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.

The implication of this result is that people easily lose confidence in government once they sense compromise especially in the area of security which further fuels the feeling of fear and a sense of not being secured 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 had the capacity to 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 “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 the 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” was found to be a major factor that instilled fear in the mind of residents in the region. This is followed by this response that: “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 implication of the above results is 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 has

the capacity to 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 through social media 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 has death as the penalty. This was also found to have increased the level of compliance to 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 in this study are discussed as they provide answers or meet the objectives of the study in this research. On the level of awareness of the residents to the Sit-At-Home order in South East Nigeria, the study found that 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%) respondents and also “occasionally” (29.3%) and “Always” (28.5%)

The implication of this finding is that people easily become aware of information or messages that carry “death” threats and the tendency to want to be exposed to its contents so as 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 was 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 that share similar experience necessitated the idea of 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 has 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 was 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.

The implication of these findings is that the feeling of fear is easily heightened when information on threat 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 mind 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 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.

The implication of this finding is 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 mind 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

Based on the findings that emanated from the results in this study, the researchers draw the following conclusions:

- 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 becomes the topic of public 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 breach 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 is 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 suggests 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

The findings that emanated from the result in this study gave rise to the conclusions drawn therefrom, which is the basis for which the following recommendations are made:

- 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 accurate account of the right kind of information so as to enable them make informed decisions that will not put them at risk of becoming victims of “Unknown Gunmen”.
- Opinion leaders should give proper perspectives to 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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