



ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE USE OF FACE MASKS IN PREVENTING COVID-19 AMONG YABA RESIDENTS.

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Abstract

A person's positive evaluation towards the use of face masks may be a critical factor in the prevention and management of Covid-19 and other related virus outbreaks. This study investigated the attitude of Yaba residents towards the use of face masks for the purpose of identifying differences that may be peculiar to residents whose statuses were categorized as employees, students and the self-employed. An online survey of social whatsapp groups within Yaba district was conducted to enable the authors fulfill the inclusion criteria of Yaba residents. A total of 262 responses were fit for analysis. The responses were subjected to a factor analysis to determine the reliability of the instrument. Thus, a coefficient alpha statistics of 0.88 was obtained. A One Way between subject ANOVA statistics suggested statistical significant differences in the attitude of the Yaba residents towards the use of face masks. ($F(259) = 3.9, p = 0.022$). A Scheffe post hoc analysis suggested that participants who were employees expressed a better attitude ($M=80.84, SD=10.33$) towards the use of face mask compared to participants who were self-employed ($M=76.59, SD=13.66$), and participants who were students ($M=77.05, SD=12.72$). Additional results suggested that females had a higher positive attitude ($M=80.29, SD=11.54$) compared to males ($M=77.10, SD=12.11$) $t(260) = -2.150, p=0.032$.) It is recommended that efforts to curb the spread of a virus should focus on different groups in the society due to their peculiarities .

Key words: Attitude, use of face masks, Covid-19, Yaba residents, Lagos.

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Introduction

Attitude refers to the evaluations that people make about a person's behaviour (Ajzen, 1985) or an object. The evaluations may be positive or negative, sometimes favourable or unfavourable (Eagly, & Chaikan, 1993), but the outcome of such evaluations motivates behaviour. Thurstone (1932) argued that attitude is an affective inclination about an object, idea or issue. Attitude could be presumed to be important in motivating the behaviour of people especially when the study of attitude is targeted towards a specific behaviour (Presseau, McCleary, & Lorencatto, et al., 2019) such as the use of face masks. For attitude to be formed, a correlation should exist between affective, behavioural and cognitive evaluation of the target (Banaji & Heiphetz, 2010). In spite of the use of face mask being advocated as an intervention for prevention against viruses such as CoronaVirus (Covid-19), there are sparse studies on the attitude of Nigerians towards the use of face masks. The available studies investigated rational use of face mask (Ogoina, 2020); face mask utilization (Edet, Harry, Wegbom et al., 2020), and

responsiveness to covid-19 face masks (Akande & Adenle, 2020). The few studies that investigated attitude utilized attitudinal measures that lack the cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions of attitude. In this study, the authors contributed to the literature on attitude towards face masks by considering the three components of attitude to confirm that a relationship between cognitive, affective and behavioural components exists in the attitude towards face masks. The consideration of the three components of attitude towards the use of face masks is imperative to enable adequate understanding, instead of generalization that may be erroneous especially in the current state of limited quality healthcare facilities in Nigeria. Empirical results of investigations that are scientifically obtained through established models and theories are germane to combating infections. This study therefore investigated the attitude of Yaba residents in Lagos towards the use of face masks.

ABC model of attitude

The ABC model of attitude represents the three components of attitude namely affective, behavioural and cognitive

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components. Investigations on attitude agree that these three components must be in tandem in the formation of attitude toward an object, idea, place or event (Cherry, 2019). The affective dimension of attitude describes the emotions or feelings that people develop and experience about an object. People express their feelings or emotions in words such as love, happiness, excitement, hate, anxiety, sadness fear. The behavioural component of attitude refers to a person's inclination to take an action towards something in a particular way. It is a visible move that reflects activity. The cognitive component of attitude consists of beliefs and thoughts that a person relates with an object. It is informational and described as beliefs or opinion. The cognitive component of attitude is the mental process of perception.

The three components of attitude are interwoven into a complex entity to reveal the relationship between attitude and behaviour. It is often assumed that the three components must be correlated to aid the formation of a schematic pathway in evaluating an object, idea or event. The ease with which the

components are interrelated also determines the potential for bringing about a desired behaviour. The attitude of a person describes the thoughts, feelings and behaviour expressed towards some other persons, ideas, or events (Cherry 2019). Attitude towards the use of face mask may be a function of past experiences with face masks, cultural overview of face masks or learning history of an individual (Abun, Abun & Foronda et al. 2018).

Background to the study

The reaction that followed the recommendation of face masks in Nigeria was lukewarm but became mandatory when the Federal Ministry of Health, with support of the Federal Government of Nigeria announced the imposition of the use of face masks for all Nigerians (FGN, 2020). This move has been reported to achieve better compliance and result (Betsch, Kurn, Sprengholz et al, 2020). The first state to announce compulsory use of face mask in Nigeria on the 24th of April, 2020 was Osun State (The Punch Newspaper, 05 May, 2020). Confirmation of compliance to the use of face

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masks can be sighted in public places after the compulsion on mandatory use of face masks was announced. However, this behaviour appeared to wane in the middle of 2021.

As far back as 2009, MacIntyre, Cauchemez, Dwyer et al. (2009) described face mask as an effective intervention mechanism that reduces the spread and contamination of respiratory diseases such as influenza and SARS. At the initial period of the covid-19 pandemic, conflicting signals were sent by health agencies on the efficacy of face masks in restraining the contamination and spread of viruses. For instance, the World Health Organization mandated face mask use for only health workers and people that clinical tests have confirmed to be infected with covid-19 (Feng, Shen, Xia et al, 2020). However, Chu, Aki & Duda et al (2020) reiterated that a change of opinion in favour of the use of face mask by the general public was issued by WHO (WHO (2020a)

Face mask is a gear in soft material designed to give adequate cover to the mouth and nose against virus infections (Chughtai, Seale, & Macintyre, 2020) The wearing of face masks

became the most popular and preferred behaviour recommended by the WHO to prevent infections with covid-19. Thus, the WHO issued a collective instruction to all countries to make their citizens use the face masks (WHO (2020a). To ensure safety and protection of all her citizens, the Nigerian government set up a regulatory body known as Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC) to enforce wearing face masks and make wearing it mandatory (Amzat, Aminu, Kolo, & Akinyele et al., 2020).

In Nigeria, till date, 255,802 cases have been confirmed, while 3,143 deaths have so far been recorded from all the 36 states (NCDC, 10th May, 2022). Between 7th to 9th May 2022, 6 new cases were reported in Nigeria. According to WHO (2022), the current global status with covid-19 as at 24th April, 2022 appears to be declining with 4.5 million confirmed cases and 15,000 deaths recorded; a decline of 21% and 20% respectively between 18th to 24th April 2022. However, confirmed cases and deaths were still being recorded. Globally, 500 million cases and more than 6 million deaths have been reported (WHO, 27th May, 2022). Covid-19

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may still pose a global economic threat and health crisis to lives across all age groups. The closure of workplaces at the heat of the pandemic meant that workers stayed at home, a situation that reflected an already low global economic growth from a weak 2.9% in 2019 to 2.4% in 2020 (OECD, 2020). What this situation portends is that economic activities must be awakened to increase production. This may be achieved when workers go back to work to a safe environment where face masks protects everyone.

The work from home alternative that became popular in the heat of the pandemic was short lived because as described by Allen, Cho and Meier (2014), only professional and complex jobs that require less interaction can be effectively operated from home. The effective use of face masks thus became germane in that dispensation. Employees require sensitization on the usefulness of face masks to ensure safety in the workplace. The effect of the pandemic on mental health was examined by Hamouche (2020) who reported that the adverse consequence of covid-19 on

mental health of employees was identified to be influenced by perceptions of safety, threats and risks of contagion among other stressors.

Statement of the problem

Coronavirus (Covid-19) is one of the viruses in the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) family (Hu, Guo, Zhou, & Zheng-Li, 2021). The WHO announced that Covid-19 was a global epidemic on March 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020b). After identifying the virus in Wuhan, China (Zhu, Zhang, Wang, et al. 2020), the declaration of covid-19 as a pandemic was inevitable. This is due to the rate at which the virus spread across countries, and the rate at which human deaths linked to the virus were recorded; in 2019, and across most countries thereafter. In Nigeria, the first case of covid-19 was confirmed on the 27th of February, 2020 (Onahire, 2020). Due to non-availability of vaccines for covid-19 at the onset of the virus, non-pharmaceutical preventive behaviours were recommended.

A few challenges (Cherry & Murphy, 2021) were associated with the face masks. Firstly,

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according to WHO, there was the tendency that the face masks could present a sense of false security and poor adherence to other preventive behaviours by the user (WHO, 2020c). Secondly, face masks were associated with littering of the environment (Tesfaldet, Ndeh, Budnard et al. 2022). Thirdly, some people objected to wearing face masks (Taylor, & Asmundson, 2021). Fourthly, the use of face masks could likely be a function of the attitude that people have towards its use so, Martinelli, Kopilas, Vidmar et al. (2021) advocated for intervention studies based on attitude.

In spite of the aforementioned challenges, face masks have been reported to provide effective measures against covid-19 (Geldsetzer, 2020). Can we comfortably affirm that the attitude of the general population towards face masks will be similar? So, would different segments of the population express different attitude towards the use of face mask? Thus, this study investigated three categories of the general population namely employers of labour, the employees and students. These categories of the population are in constant contact with a

crowd; a situation that may expose them to infected people. Barasheed, Alfelali, Mushta et al. (2016) suggests that face mask protects against respiratory infections in a mass gathering. This was especially consequential during the period when vaccines were unavailable (the Punch Newspaper, 2020), and insufficient in countries that lack their manufacturing capacities. This rendered the use of face masks as an effective measure for the prevention of covid-19. Additionally, in the event of future virus outbreaks, adherence to the use of face masks will facilitate effective prevention.

Literature Review

Using a face mask during covid-19 pandemic became a subject of political choice. For instance, in a survey conducted by Lauter (2020), it was revealed in a poll conducted on wearing of face mask by Americans that 75 per cent of democrats responded in the affirmative about wearing face masks, compared to 53 per cent of Republicans who responded similar behaviour. Lauter (2020) further suggested that in the U.S., Democrats and Republicans considered face masks as a symbol. Thus, for the democrats, they trust

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science and medicine, while the Republicans reject same.

Attitude towards wearing face masks was predicted by affective emotions such as discomfort (Esmailzadeh, 2022). Similar results were obtained by Scarano Inchingola and Lorusso (2020) in which the N95 respirators were reported to cause discomfort and hence lower adherence rate to the use of face masks compared to the medical surgical masks. This suggests that the type of face masks may determine a positive or negative attitude towards wearing it.

Behavioural reactions to the face mask were found to be consequential on prior behaviours. For instance, reports are rife on the huge success of wearing face masks in Asian countries during the covid-19 pandemic (Hanstein & Echegaray, 2018). This may be due to habitual behaviours associated with face masks use by people in countries such as China and Japan for instance who wear face masks as protective gears against seasonal flu-like symptoms prior to covid-19 pandemic. According to Hanstein & Echegaray (2018), face masks

has been worn to prevent different forms of pollution in the environment such as yellow dust in China.

Important outcomes on the studies investigating attitude of males and females towards the use of face masks have been documented. The outcome of the study of Croson and Gneezy (2009) suggests that women are averse to risk taking. This further suggests that they are likely to comply with instructions relating to preventive measures such as using their face masks or any behaviour that protects them from the virus. This was confirmed in Inglehart and Norris (2000).

Men appear to be willing to wear face masks compared to women while women were reported to maintain significant social distancing (Capraro & Barcelo, 2020). Gender differences on preventive behaviours such as face masks could be influenced by political ideology of conservatism and liberalism (Rothgerber, Wilson, Whaley et al. 2020).

Ethical consideration was planned for this present study from inception. Respondents

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were given the opportunity to accept or reject their participation. Firstly, the purpose of the research was clearly stated to respondents in an online Google form survey. Additionally, participants were given the opportunity to withdraw their participation at any point during the study.

Study hypotheses

1. Participants who are employees will express a better attitude towards the use of face masks compared to those who are self-employed and those who are students.
2. Female participants will report a positive attitude towards the use of face mask compared to male participants.

METHOD

This study was conducted among Yaba residents in Lagos metropolis, Nigeria. An inclusive criterion indicating place of residence was necessary for this study. Thus, only those living in the Yaba Mainland of Lagos state were included for analysis. Yaba is a district that is located in the mainland part of Lagos, and it is the first landlocked area after Lagos Island. A few federal government institutions are located in Yaba. These

include the University of Lagos, Yaba College of Technology, Federal Technical College, Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research, Queens College, the Infectious Disease Treatment Centre and Covid-19 Isolation Centre, and a popular market known as Tejuosho market.

Online survey of purposive groups was conducted whereby the survey instrument was posted to groups that fit the study description for the participants. These are employees, the self-employed and students. The instrument of data collection was an attitude scale that was developed for the purpose of this study. The items were generated by the authors based on the content domain of the three components of attitude such as affective, cognitive and behavioural dimensions of attitude. The generated items were reviewed for content analysis by 5 faculty members of a faculty of social sciences. Data collected was run through the SPSS for factor analysis utilizing varimax rotation

For example, one item that represented the affective component stated that ‘being

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infected with COVID-19 is the worst experience that could happen to me.’ An example of the cognitive component stated that ‘I think the best practice is to wear a face mask when in contact with people.’ One example of the behavioural statements read ‘I always wear face mask at crowded places.’

There are 15 attitude statements in all (see appendix)

Method of Data analysis

An independent sample t-test and One Way ANOVA statistics were employed to test the hypotheses.

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Table1: Frequencies and cumulative percentages of participants’ demographic variables

Variables	N	%
Gender		
Male	105	40.1
Female	157	59.9
Age		
<25	67	25.6
26-35	68	26.0
36-45	90	34.4
46-50	30	11.5
>50	07	2.7
Sample Categories		
Self-employed	63	24.0
Employees	143	54.6
Students	56	21.4

Gender of participants was represented by 105 (40.1%) males and 157 (59.9%) females. Age of participants was grouped as ≥ 25 years (N=67, 25.6%), 26-35 years (N=68, 26.0%), 36-45 years (N=90, 34.4%), 46-50 years (N=30, 11.5%), and >50 (N=7, 2.7). For the sample categories, 63(24.0%) were self-

employed, 143 (54.6%) were employees, and 56(21.4%) were students.

Hypothesis 1 was tested with a One Way ANOVA statistic. A summary of the descriptive statistics was run, and the result

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revealed the mean differences on the sample categories. These are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Descriptive Statistics Showing Mean Differences of Sample Categories

Variables	N	Mean	SD
Sample Categories			
Self-employed	63	76.59	13.66
Employees	143	80.84	10.33
Students	56	77.05	12.72

Table 3: Summary of One-Way ANOVA showing the attitude of Sample Categories Towards the Use of Face Masks.

Source (Attitude)	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1062.575	2	531.287	3.864	0.022
Within Groups	35615.410	259	137.511		
Total	36677.985	261			

P<0.05

The result in Table 3 suggests a statistical significant difference in the attitude of the sample categories towards the use of face masks ($F(2,259) = 3.9, p = 0.022$).

Hypothesis 1 was therefore accepted. However, the difference effect can only be determined by a post hoc analysis as revealed in Table 4.

Table 4.: Multiple Comparison Analysis Showing a Scheffe Post-Hoc Analysis for Sample Categories.

	1	2	3
Student	-	.46627	-3.78559*
Self -Employed		-	-4.25186*
Employee			-

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

A Scheffe post hoc analysis suggested that employees expressed a better attitude

($M=80.84, SD=10.33$) towards the use of face mask compared to those who were

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self-employed ($M=76.59$, $SD=13.66$), and participants who were students ($M=77.05$, $SD=12.72$)

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 stated that female participants will report a more positive attitude towards

the use of face mask compared to male participants. An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare attitude of males and female participants on the use of face masks. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary *T-test results comparing participants attitude based on Gender.*

DV	Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
	Gender						
Attitude towards the use of face masks	Male	105	77.10	12.11	-2.150	260	0.032
	Female	157	80.29	11.54			

The results in Table 5 suggest that females have a higher average score on their attitude towards the use of face masks ($M=80.29$, $SD=11.54$) compared to males ($M=77.10$, $SD=12.11$) $t(260) = -2.150$, $p=0.032$. This means that females will report a higher

positive attitude towards face masks compared to males.

Discussion

In our study, differences were expressed on the attitude towards the use of face mask by Yaba residents who were categorized as self-employed, employees and students. A value of $X=79.01$ was obtained as the mean for the attitude scale by which participants can be

described as having a positive or negative attitude towards the use of face masks. By this value, only participants that were employees ($\bar{x} = 80.84$) expressed a positive attitude towards the use of face masks. Positive attitude indicates a favourable attitude to the use of face masks. . The other

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groups who were self-employed (76.59) and those who were students (77.05) appeared to score close to the average value of the attitude measure. What this suggests is that the respondents differ in their attitude towards the use of face masks based on the average score (80.84) of the attitude scale. The mean difference was negligible in terms of actual observation, but comparing the mean of the groups with average scale, employees show more positive attitude towards the use of face masks in comparison to participants who were self-employed and students. It can be reasonably deduced that the high positive attitude expressed by employees towards the use of face masks may be due to enforcement by their employers to wear face masks. In this regard, the fear of losing their jobs (Balmer, 2021) may be a factor, though this study did not investigate that possibility. In essence then, general public policies may be effectively enforced when refusal to obey is related to job security.

Students were the next sample that expressed a more favourable attitude (77.0) towards the use of face masks compared to employers (76.59). This is very surprising because

Hansstein, & Echegaray (2018) reported that 23.8 per cent of 1329 participants affirmed that because students are not in the vulnerable groups that are more susceptible to covid-19 due to their age, it is a wonder that they expressed a high positive attitude towards the use of face masks. The result of this study will be useful for future purposes when health-related crises break out. It was revealed that mandatory use of facemasks may have urged employees and students to utilize their facemasks more than self-employed participants. This is because self-employed participants are not answerable to any immediate authority, therefore they could take the enforcement of face mask wearing for granted. In the study of Azlan, Hamzah, Sem et al., and Larebo & Abama, a minimal positive attitude was expressed by students towards the use of face masks. However, Taylor, Rahael, Barr et al. (2009); who examined 18-24 year old participants and Tang Wong (2004), who investigated 19-29 year old participants reported that young people expressed low preventive behaviours in face mask usage. The close range in the mean values obtained from our results on the

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sample categories suggests that intervention can be applied to change the attitude of participants who were self-employed and those who were students because their average attitude measures are close to the scale average of 80.04. This suggests they can be easily amenable to expressing a higher positive attitude towards the use of face masks.

Gender differences on the use of face masks in our study suggested that our finding is supported by some recent studies. For instance, Zhang, Looi, Li et al. (2021) reported a higher face mask usage for females compared to male users in Malaysia. In another report on face mask and gender, Howard (2020) reported that men perceived face mask as an item that infringed on their movement more than women, but more women perceived face masks as uncomfortable compared to men. In Galasso, Pons, Profeta et al. (2020), findings suggested that gender differences were significantly reported in beliefs and behaviours, stating that women are more likely to take covid-19 seriously, and were

more compliant than men. Perhaps, this may explain the reason more men than women died from covid-19 (Wenham, Smith & Morgan, 2020).

Recommendation

Blended crowd consists of various population groups from which samples can be drawn for comparative and insightful studies. In our study, it was revealed that employees, students and employers expressed comparatively high positive attitude towards the use of face masks; however, only employees obtained a score above the average score on the attitude scale. Our result is in agreement with most studies that reported that females significantly use face masks more than males. This result calls for concerted effort in focusing attention on segments of the society to bring about behavioural changes. So, policy makers and stakeholders in the health sector should plan to identify peculiar needs of the groups in a society. In that wise, similar intervention may not be adequate for everyone.

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APPENDIX 1:

S/N	Attitude toward wearing face mask	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I feel uncomfortable wearing a face mask	C				
2.	I will be glad to know the correct way of wearing face mask	A				
3.	It is good to carefully put-on and take off my face masks	A				
4.	Wearing face mask is the best way to avoid touching my face	B				
5.	I think wearing a face masks is effective at preventing infectious droplets from spreading	C				
6.	The best thing is to wear a new face mask every morning I go out	C				
7.	I think the best practice is to wear a face mask when in contact with people	C				
8.	Wearing face mask reduces my fear of getting COVID-19	A				
9.	It is the best thing to wear a face mask because beinginfected with COVID-19 is the worst experience that could happen to me	A				
10.	I am confident that I will wear my face mask when am with people	A				
11.	Wearing of face mask to prevent me from being infected with covid-19 is under my control	C				
12.	I always wear face mask at crowded places	B				
13.	I always encourage others to wear face mask at crowded places	B				
14.	I always wear face mask when am speaking with people	B				
15.	I always change my face masks every morning	B				