

PUBLIC CONCEPTION, PRECAUTIONS AND THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

It's really disconcerting for a virus as small as 120 nm to turn the whole world upside down. Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) has closed almost all schools and industries, markets and shops and economic activities especially in 2020. The aim of this study is to assess the public conception, prevention measures and spread of COVID-19 in northern part of Nigeria. An anonymous online survey was conducted on 140 respondents from 16 northern states of Nigeria by filling out a questionnaire. For this study, simple percentage scores were used for the analysis of respondents' opinions, tables and graphs were used for interpretation of the results. The result of this study is that 63.0% believe COVID-19 is real, while 36.2% still doubt it. 64.3% believed in the reality of COVID-19 since the first incident, While 15.7% did not accept the problem from the start. As for preventive measures, 77.9% took precautionary measures, 12.1% were inconsistent in preventive measures while 10.0% did not take preventive measures at all. 55.7% said the incidence was increasing in their country while 35.0% said it was not increasing. Of the 140 respondents, 25.7% already knew the victim of COVID-19 while 72.1% did not know the victim.

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A. Introduction

As of the year 2020, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has turned the whole world upside down. Economic activities were short down, schools, industries, ministries, markets and shops were closed. One will not be said to have exaggerated if one said “the world is in lockdown”. Coronavirus pandemic is growing exponentially in the whole world. Religious gatherings, wedding ceremonies and any kind of congestion were banned. Researchers, technologists, doctors and other healthcare workers are working day and night on the development of vaccines and medicines to

control and treat this virus.¹ That is why in January 2020, the W.H.O. The Director-General declared the COVID-19 pandemic as the global public health emergency of international concern.²

Initially many people thought that the pandemic could cripple Africa, due to the poor health facilities and health systems and indeed South Africa has the most recorded cases of COVID -19 in Africa. On the other hand it had the fifth highest number of total infections globally as of 11 November 2020.³ Malawi was among the last African countries to confirm the virus case even though the number of affected cases rose shortly.⁴ Nigeria recorded her first case of Covid-19 on 27th February 2020.⁵ As of 6th of June 2020, the number of confirmed cases, number of cases on admission, number of discharged and the number of deaths was 4346, 2043, 217 and 186 respectively.⁶

In another development, Nigeria is known as the giant of Africa due to its population, strength and economy. So all eyes were on the country because it is a yardstick to measure the gravity of the virus on the continent. In contrast within Nigeria, the Northern part of the country is the most densely populated region and first recorded of infected cases in Kano; the populated state of the country and perhaps the north, was on 11th April 2020.

As for the economic impact of the pandemic, Nigeria had surfer the viral blow due the imposed lockdown and shutdown of business activities within the country and the globe at large. This could be the reason the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to disclosed that "it is developing a framework to provide financial support to aid the fight against Coronavirus in the country".⁷

There is no angle the pandemic has not touched. Recent reports indicate racial disparities in the rates of infection and mortality from the 2019 novel coronavirus.⁸ To preserve the safety of their communities and adhere to public health guidance, universities and colleges around the world have rapidly transformed to fully online teaching and learning models and implemented remote work for the majority of employees and shut down countless public spaces and programs.⁹ COVID-19 has become an international emergency in a short period and will have long-lasting effects¹. Therefore any research related to the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is highly welcome.

The goal of this study was to assess the public conception, precaution and spread of COVID-19 in some Northern states of Nigeria. The researchers used an anonymous online survey using a google form to collect data from respondents in Northern Nigeria.

¹ Abid Haleem et al., "Areas of Academic Research with the Impact of COVID-19," *The American Journal of Emergency Medicine* 38, no. 7 (July 2020): 1524–26, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajem.2020.04.022>.

² World Health Organization, "Consent," Diagnostics, Therapeutics, Vaccine Readiness, and Other Health Products for COVID-19 (World Health Organization, 2020), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep27984.5>.

³ Steven Gruz, Isabel Bosman, and Nhlakanipho Macmillan Zikalala, "Regions Apart: How South Africa and Nigeria Responded to COVID-19," n.d., 42.

⁴ Pádraig Carmody et al., eds., *COVID-19 in the Global South: Impacts and Responses*, 1st ed. (Bristol University Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv18gfz7c>.

⁵ Oluwakemi Ololade Odukoya and UcheAnne Omeje, "COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria: A Case Study of Kano State – Challenges and Lessons Learned," *Journal of Clinical Sciences* 17, no. 4 (2020): 91, https://doi.org/10.4103/jcls.jcls_73_20.

⁶ "GloEpid," n.d., <https://gloepid.org>.

⁷ Abiola Odutola, "Covid-19: CBN Wants to Fund Research for Nigerian Made Vaccines | Nairametrics," n.d., <https://nairametrics.com/2020/05/12/covid-19-cbn-wants-to-fund-research-for-nigerian-made-vaccines/>.

⁸ Wilson M Alobuia et al., "Racial Disparities in Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Related to COVID-19 in the USA," *Journal of Public Health* 42, no. 3 (August 18, 2020): 470–78, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdaa069>.

⁹ N. S. Wigginton et al., "Moving Academic Research Forward during COVID-19," *Science* 368, no. 6496 (June 12, 2020): 1190–92, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abc5599>.

Research Questions

1. Is COVID-19 real?
2. If Yes, when last did you believe?
3. The Origin of COVID-19
4. Causes of COVID-19
5. Do you take precautions (facemask, no handshake, social distancing)?
6. Is the incident increasing in your place?
7. Do you know any of the COVID-19 victims?

B. Methode

The anonymous online survey was just for a few days; from 2nd to 4th June 2020. A google form was used to collect data from respondents in some Northern states of Nigeria. A total of 140 respondents filled the questionnaire and all were from the 16 Northern states of Nigeria. For this research, a simple percentage score has been used for the analysis of the respondent's opinions.¹⁰ This was calculated as the obtained score divided by the total. The possible score is then divided by a hundred. Tables and charts were used for the interpretation of results.¹¹

C. Result and Discussion

The below diagram is a typical representation of the respondent's responses by gender. It shows that majority of the respondents were male (84.3%) while 15.0% were female and 0.7% prefer not to disclose their status (fig 1).

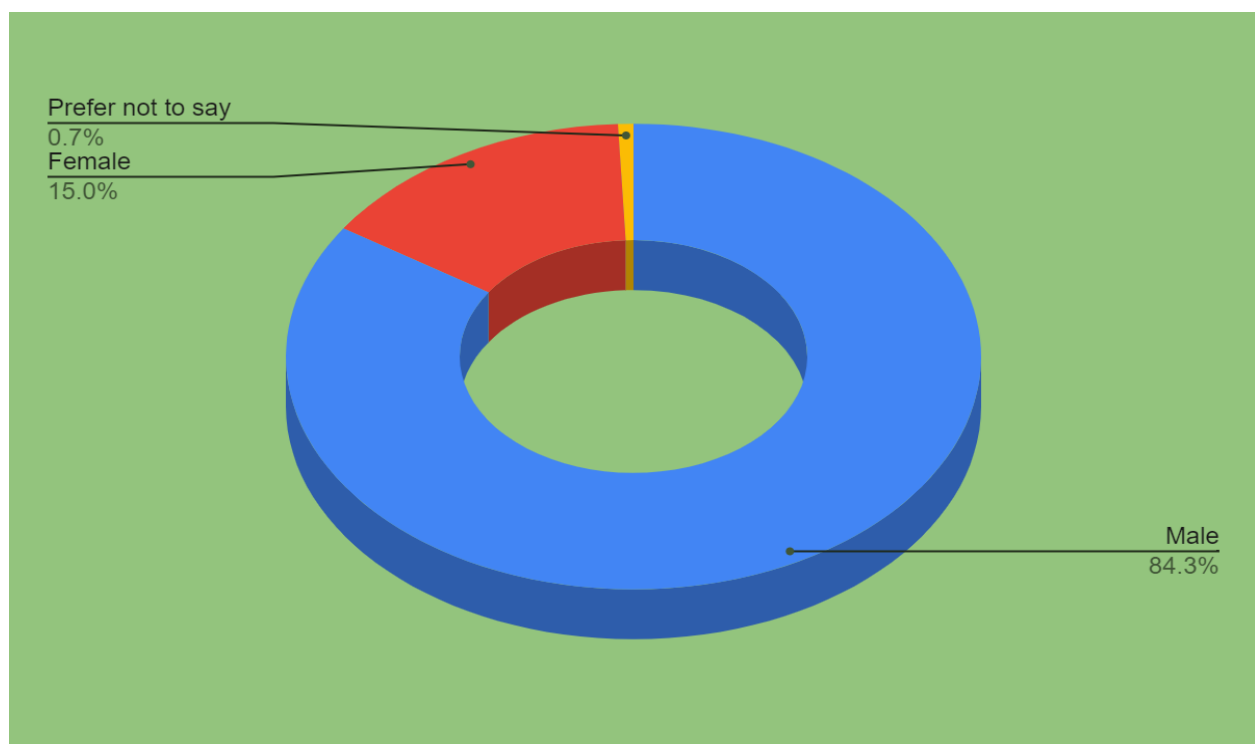


Fig.1 Doughnut chart on Respondents by Gender

¹⁰ John W. Best and James V. Kahn, *Research in Education*, 8th ed (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998).

¹¹ Abubakar Aji and Bala Sani Abdullahi, "Causes And Consequences Of Female Students Dropout Of Secondary School In Nasarawa L.G.A. Of Nasarawa State," *Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 3, no. 15 (2019): 63–82.

From the analysis of the data, it was found that 63.0% of the respondents said COVID-19 is real, while 36.2% are still doubting about it but 0.7% did not even believe in the existence of the disease (fig. 2 and Table 1).

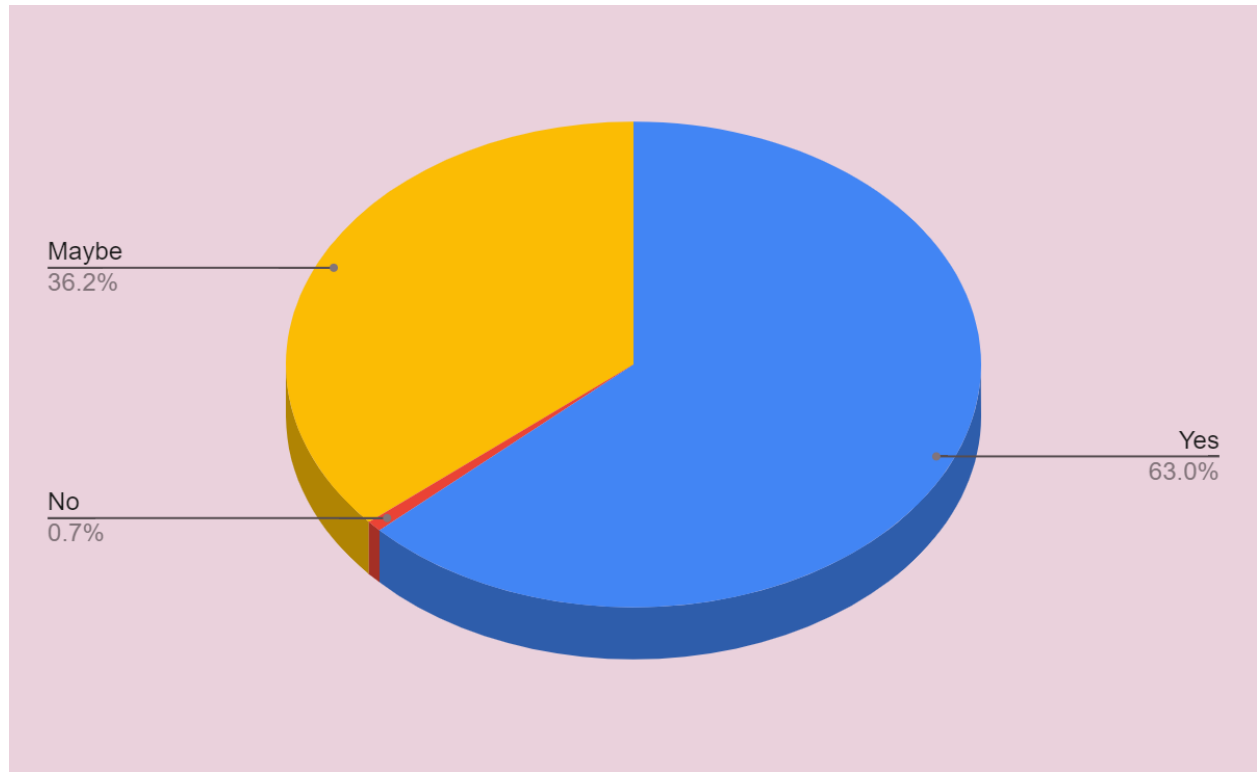


Fig 2. Pie chart displaying responses to the question “is COVID - 19 real?”

Table 1: results in % of question 1

Is COVID - 19 Real?	%
Yes	63
No	0.7
Maybe	36.2

From fig 3, 64.3% of the respondents believe in the reality of the COVID-19 from the first incident, 20.0% could not remember when last they admitted the matter while 15.7% did not accept the issue in the first place.

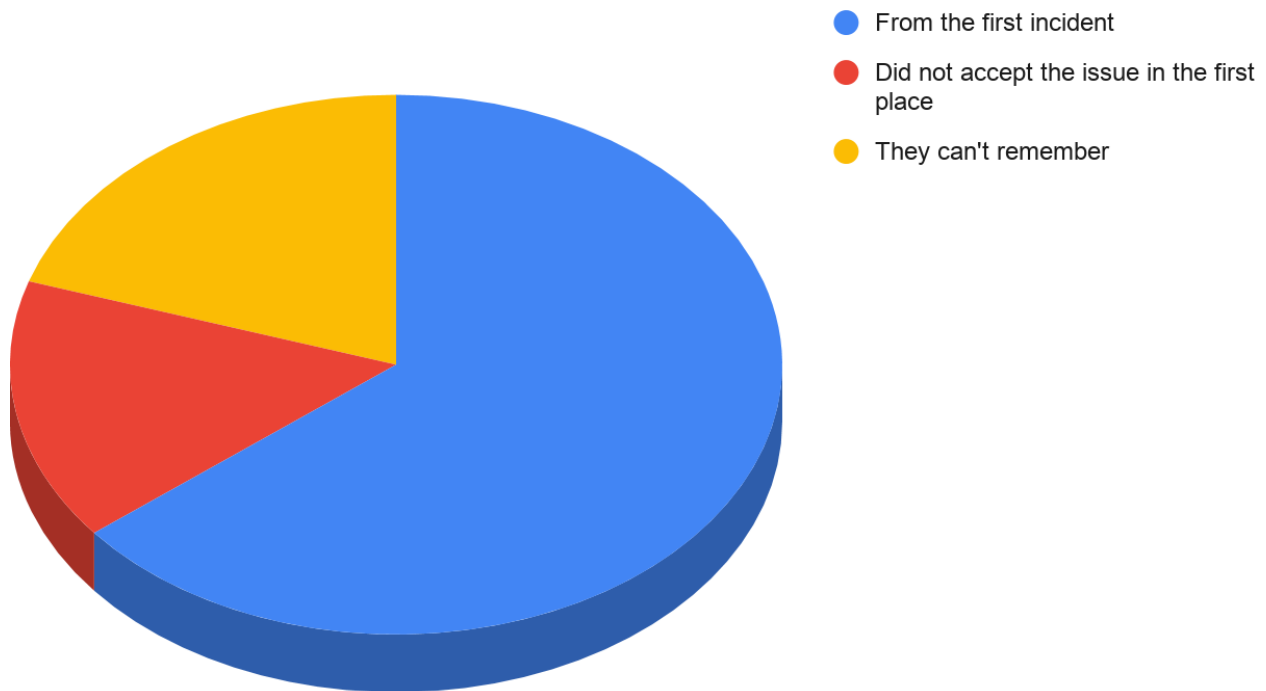


Fig 3: A pie chart displaying responses to the question “If Yes, when last did you believe?”

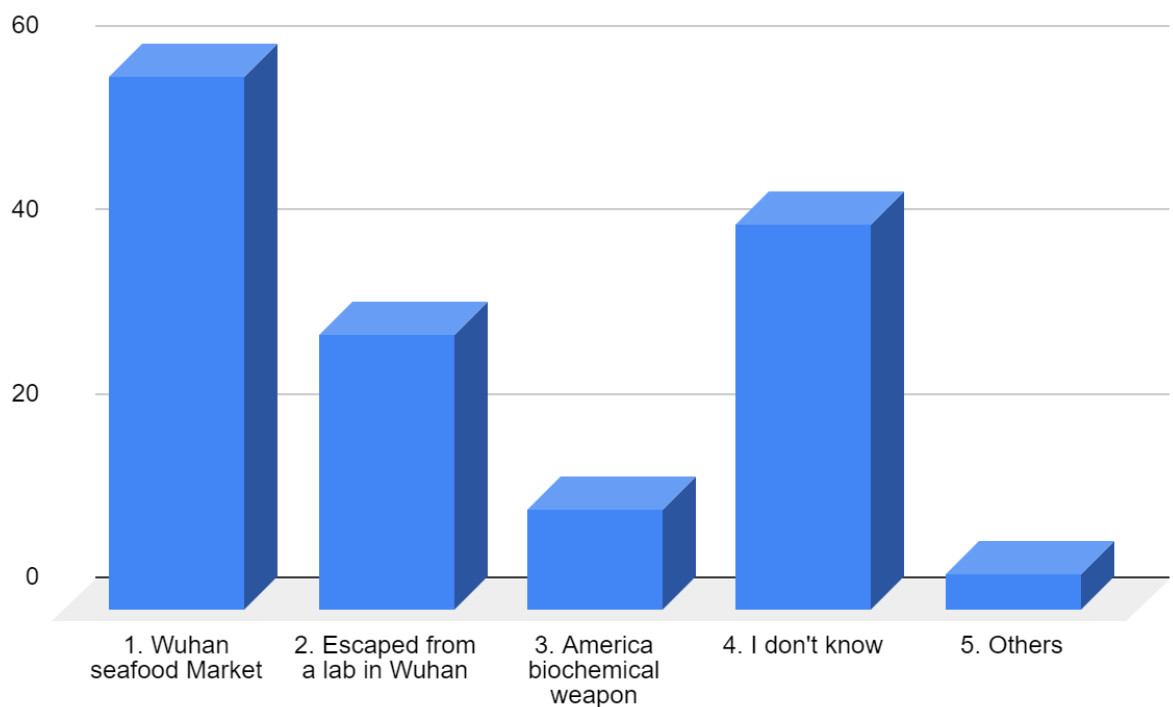


Fig 4: The bar chart displaying the response to “the Origin of COVID-19”

As for the precaution, 77.9% were taking precautions such as using the facemask, no handshake, and social distancing. 12.1% were not consistent in the precaution while 10.0% were not taking the preventive measures at all (fig. 5).

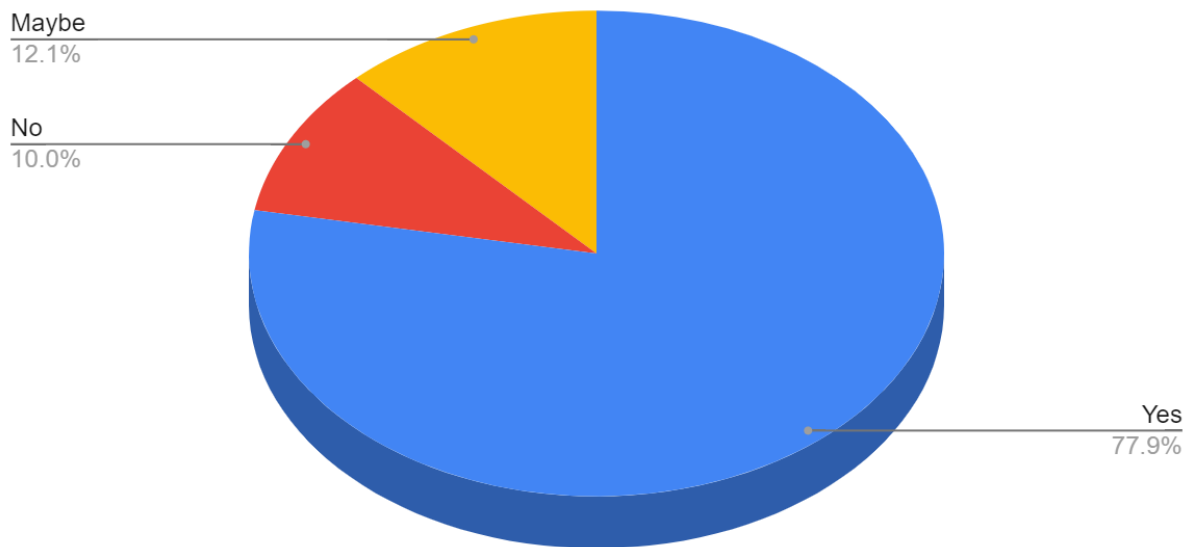


Fig 5. The bar chart on the question “Do you take precautions (Facemask, no handshake, social distancing)?”

55.7% said the incident is increasing in their state, 9.3% were neutral while 35.0% said it is not increasing (Fig 6). Out of the 140 respondents, 25.7% have known the victim of COVID-19 while 72.1% have not known any victim yet but 2.1% were neutral (Fig 6)

Points scored

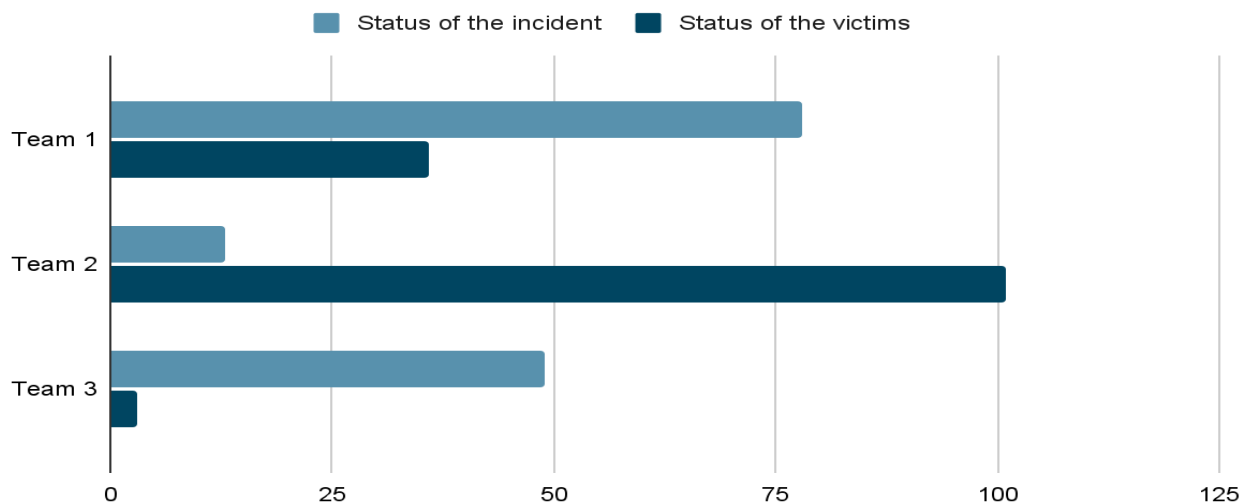


Fig 6: Barchart representing the opinions of the respondents on the status of the disease

The below bar chart (fig 7) is a chart that displayed the number of responses against their opinion about the causes of the COVID-19. Out of the 140 respondents, 122 (84.72%) said the disease is caused by the Virus, 5 (3.57%) said it is caused by Bacteria and 13 (9.29%) don't know its root cause.

No of Responses vs Causes of COVID-19

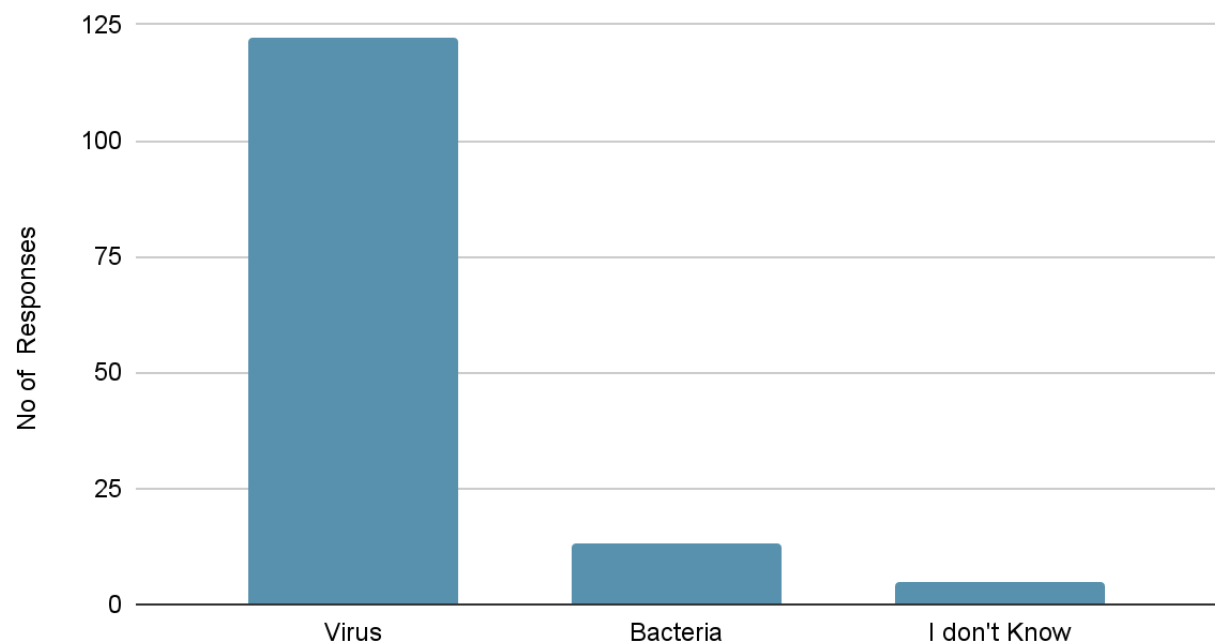


Fig 7: Barchart displaying the number of responses vs the causes of COVID-19

From the analysis of the data, it was found that, even though many believed in the reality of the coronavirus, yet several people are still doubting about it and some did not believe in the existence of the disease. Hence these reasons could be responsible for the spread of the disease in Northern Nigeria. This is in line in comparison with the study conducted by Dry Hurst et.al (2020) on the “Risk perceptions of COVID-19 around the world”. The risk perception of the COVID-19 is directly linked with believing in the existence of the COVID – 19.¹² Indeed misconception will lead to the spread of the disease.

In another development, the results from the responses also showed that the majority of the respondent said COVID-19 is caused by the virus which originated from the Wuhan seafood market (fig.2). This finding is inline with Chen Wag et al., (2020) as mentioned by Shereen et al., (2020) who said “the outbreak of the novel coronavirus was originated from the Hunan seafood market in Wuhan city of China and rapidly infected more than 50 people.”¹³

As for the precaution, the research found that some people are not consistent or yet not taking the preventive precaution of any kind. On the other hand, 55.7% said the incident is increasing in their state. This is in contrast with the lack of following the WHO guidelines such as handwashing with soap or sanitization, and social distancing to reduce the people's chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19.¹⁴

Furthermore, despite the existence and the spread of the disease among the people, about 72.1% of the respondents said they have not yet known any victim of COVID 19. Meaning, the

¹² Sarah Dryhurst et al., “Risk Perceptions of COVID-19 around the World,” *Journal of Risk Research* 23, no. 7–8 (August 2, 2020): 994–1006, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13669877.2020.1758193>.

¹³ Chen Wang et al., “A Novel Coronavirus Outbreak of Global Health Concern,” *The Lancet* 395, no. 10223 (February 2020): 470–73, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30185-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30185-9).

¹⁴ “Advice for the Public on COVID-19 – World Health Organization,” n.d., <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>.

COVID-19's hidden attitude could have been another reason for the spread of the virus in Northern Nigeria. This has also been in line with the research conducted by Zandonella (2020) who said "COVID-19's rapidly spreading throughout the world has been fueled in virtue of the virus' ability to be transmitted by people who are not showing symptoms of infection".¹⁵

As for the recommendation, the need for further awareness to clear the doubt about the existence of COVID-19 that is still circulating in the mind of the people will be beneficial. It is also necessary for the public to take preventive measures such as hand washing, social distancing and the use of facemasks among others. Furthermore, societal-level measures to reduce contact between individuals, and measures to ensure the protection of health workers were among some of the measure recommendations made by WHO.¹⁶ Moreover, the expansion of the COVID-19 test will also help in tackling the symptomless spreading of the virus.

D. Conclusion

The Novel CoronaVirus (COVID-19) has indeed affected humanity and the globe at large. The goal of this study was to assess the public conceptions, precautions and the spread of COVID-19 in the Northern part of Nigeria using anonymous online survey instruments to collect data. 140 respondents from 16 Northern states of Nigeria filled the questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentage, tables and charts. If not first, this research is among the earlier ones to unveil and correlate the public conceptions, precautions and the spread of COVID-19 in the country.

The analysis of the results showed that disbelieve in the existence of the COVID-19 by the public in the first place, lack of taking preventive measures and the hidden behaviour of the disease were some of the reasons for the spread of the virus in the Northern part of Nigeria. Hence the need for further awareness, the expansion of the COVID-19 test, the implementation of the preventive measures and the use of the tested, trusted and approved vaccine were some of the recommendations made.

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¹⁵ Catherine Zandonella, "COVID-19's Silent Spread: Princeton Researchers Explore How Symptomless Transmission Helps Pathogens Thrive," Corporate Engagement and Foundation Relations, n.d., <https://cefr.princeton.edu/news/covid-19s-silent-spread-princeton-researchers-explore-how-symptomless-transmission-helps>.

¹⁶ "COVID-19 Strategy Update," n.d., <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-strategy-update>.

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