



### **Communicating stability in Nigeria's post Covid-19 scenario: An exploration of Harold Lasswell's communication model**

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#### **Abstract**

This year 2022 marks the 84th anniversary of the first known reference to Harold D. Lasswell's Model of Communication in 1940. In recognition of his milestone, this paper revisits and applies Lasswell's famous construct, "who, said what, in which channel, to whom and with what effect" to the study of post Covid-19 messages emanating from the Federal Government through the media and explores such roles that communication plays thus far in terms of informing the nation's landscape on the practical steps being taken to reassure citizens of stability which ranges from life structure, credible and viable workable strategies that are of mutual benefits. The essence for the desirability of stability is to cushion the effect on Covid-19 on the nation's landscape which would also serve as a protective assurance against any form of further future crisis situation and helps the government to maintain connection with societal reality, available social resources and citizen's expectations. This is achieved by adopting a Qualitative approach using Key Informant Interview (KII) to generate data from sampled Communication, Sociology, Economics and Political Science scholars, as this was analysed thematically to ascertain who should communicate what, in which channel, to whom and with what effect, in Nigeria' spost Covid-19 scenario. The sampling technique is purposive and Key Informants were selected based on their wide knowledge in the areas of Communication, Sociology, Economics and Political Science discipline.



Lasswell's model plays a significant role in how the Government is conveying stability messages in post Covid-19 era to the masses through the media and the effect this is having on them, as there is need to ascertain the level of assurance the citizens have and the implication of this study is that, the Government would be able to clearly identify what should be communicated to who in what channel and expected effect in forms of feedback in post future pandemics. The study suggests further research on the 'why' dimension in the communication process in post emergency crisis situation such as Covid-19.

**Keywords:** Communication, Harold Lasswell's Model, Behavioural Change, Covid-19, *SDG 16: (Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions)*

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#### **Introduction**

In the face of extreme danger or crisis, there is always a psychological trauma victim of such crisis experience that could sometimes dampen their convictions about the ability of a system to live up to desired expectations in such challenging times. The Covid-19 pandemic came like a whirl wind and shook the globe to its very foundations in all ramifications. The aftermath of the pandemic left adverse effect on the social, political and economic structure on many nations of the world, as many are still struggling to find their feet till today. At the center of these brouhaha and hullabaloo is the government whose responsibilities it is to protect lives, properties and see to the general welfare of its citizenry. The essence for the desirability of stability is to cushion the effect on Covid-19 on the nation's landscape which would also serve as a protective assurance against any form of further future crisis situation and helps the government to maintain connection with societal reality, available social resources and citizen's expectations.



To achieve this, the government must devise a means to communicate strategically to the citizens its plans and programmes that would serve as a staple stability for an already fragile and devastated nationhood in all ramifications, owing to the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic. Harold D. Lasswell's Model of Communication which was propounded in 1940 comes to mind at this instance. In recognition of Model's milestone, this paper revisits and applies Lasswell's famous construct, "who, said what, in which channel, to whom and with what effect" to the study of post Covid-19 messages emanating from the Federal Government through the media and explores such roles that communication plays thus far in terms of informing the nation's landscape on the practical steps being taken to reassure citizens of stability which ranges from life structure, credible and viable workable strategies that are of mutual benefits to both the government and the governed.

### **Harold Lasswell's Communication Model**

Many scholars in the field of communication such as Almaney, 1971; Duncan & Moriarty, 1998; R. G. Smith, 1968; Stern, 1994; Watson & Hill, 1997, often times make reference Harold Lasswell's article titled "The Structure and Function of Mass Communication in Society", with biases on this model being too static. However, despite misconceptions of this scholarly contribution by Lasswell to the mass communication discipline, he can be regarded as one of the founding fathers of behavioural sciences, with range of diverse contributions to fields such as, psychology, law, political science communication, sociology, philosophy, psychiatry, economics and anthropology (Lasswell, 1948).

Despite misgivings and misconceptions about Harold's model, it has been established that communication is a process that emanates from the sender to the receiver with desired feedback and Harold Lasswell's model gives a linear representation of what takes place in the communication process. Though some scholars have criticized Harold Lasswell's model has been too static and linear which does not comprises the full communication process. Other communication models such as Reactional, Interactional and Transactional models came as a way of departure from Harold Lasswell's model which was tagged linear and static. Harold Lasswell's model propounded in 1940 is instructive to this study because political communications over the years have become dynamic but the components of the communication process, as depicted in his model still remains relevant till date. Other models emphasize feedback which makes communication dynamic but Harold's focus is on effect, it represents persuasive communication rather than informative communication (Lasswell, 1936).



In a Post Covid-19 Nigerian scenario, the public are in dire need of persuasion, which would in turn translate to a form of comfort that would in the long run serve as stability, if the government could follow Harold Lasswell's model communication process through. The arrow head of this model that makes instructive to this study was the last question raised in the model, with what effect? 'Effect' in this regard is considered as an evaluation mechanism which would help the government to know how effective the communication process has been effective. According to Lasswell's concept, communication is the act of conveying messages; it emphasizes "effect" rather than "meaning." The term "effect" suggests a measured and observable change in the receiver that is brought on by distinct process components. Changing one of these components will alter the outcome: we can alter the sender, the message, or the channel, and each of these modifications should result in the desired alteration in the outcome.

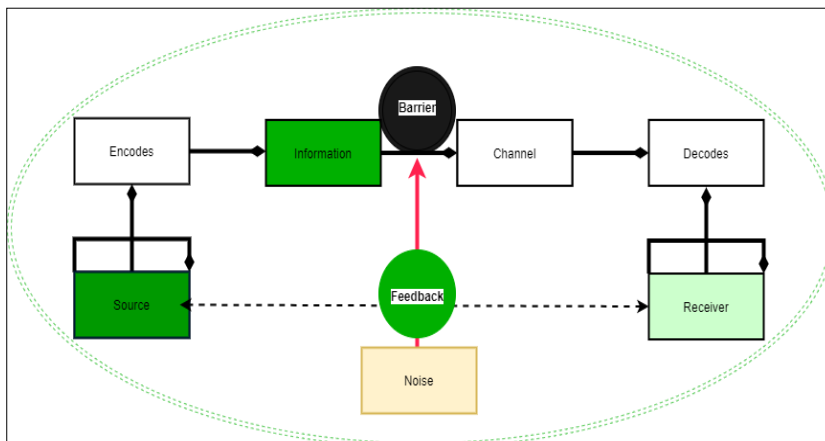
Who Says What to Whom and With What Effect by Harold Lasswell (One can point out flaws in this model given our concept of communication and the General Systems Theory) Lasswell was making an attempt to explain his observations regarding the workflow and impact that newspapers have on readers. The "who" is the newspaper reporter or editor, and the "says what" is the substance of the narrative. The "in what fashion" refers to the newspaper item's format and form. The reader is the "to whom," and the phrase "with what effect" refers to the reader's behaviours as a result of exposure to the newspaper item (Lasswell, 1943). Some may argue that an essential element of our definition, feedback to gauge the level of understanding gained during the process, is missing from this model. According to Harold Lasswell, a sociologist, there are several factors to take into account while analysing communication. Lasswell's model is meant to guide us to the types of study we need to perform to address his problems (such as "control analysis," "effects research," and so on) because he was particularly interested in mass communication and propaganda. In actuality, though, it is a very helpful model, regardless of the type of communication we are researching. It's important to note that the Lasswell Formula has five main parts, albeit this is not required (Lasswell, 1958).

### **Communication as a System during Covid-19 Pandemic**

Communication is as old as man himself and the appreciation of this fact leads to the efficacy of this phenomenon. Communication is dynamic, whether one is looking at it from intrapersonal, interpersonal, group or mass communication. The reason for this is connected to the fact that, 'the human society is a communication society', when we are thinking of something or saying something or doing something,

communication is taking place. That is why the axiom 'man cannot not communicate'. Literarily, communication is an act by which one or more people send and receive messages through a channel with some effect and opportunity for feedback. If there is anything clear in this simple definition, it is that, communication is all about humans, what they do and the society they live in, whether during peace or when at war, that is why, we cannot not communicate but of more concern is, how understanding is or not achieved and how messages influence important, personal, societal and global outcomes (Rubin, et al, 2010).

When communication takes place, it goes through a process known as fidelity which could be described as a concept that shows the degree of congruence between perceptions of two or more people who decide to follow through a message originating from the sender. It is also a level of interaction that exists between the intended meaning that originates from the sender and what a message is perceived to mean by the receiver. To achieve effective message fidelity a sender of the message must go through the full communication cycle as depicted in figure 1 below because without going through the full cycle, communication would end in bareness or infertility. The government, in this case, is the sender and the masses are the receiver but the onus lie on the media who stands as the intermediary to ensure that during the gate-keeping process, the original message intended by the government is not over-diluted or polluted with sentimental biases, considering the severity of the Covid-19 pandemic to Nigeria and the world at large.



**Figure 1: Full Circle Showing the Communication Process – Source: Author, 2022**



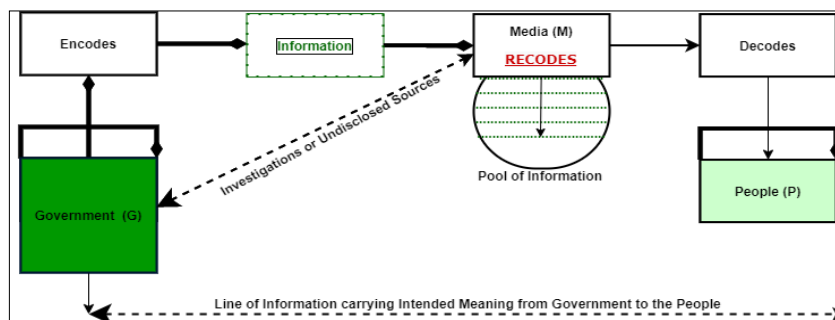
A critical look at the definition of communication shows that it serves some useful purposes, its inherent weaknesses notwithstanding. Many at times the purpose of communication is to persuade but this may not be right in all situation because, if the information from a sender has lost its original content before it gets to the receiver due to interference, then the receiver might not be persuaded. From figure 2, it shows that noise could cut through the communication process, thereby creating a barrier in the process and with this barrier of noise; feedback needed by the sender is mostly delayed, no matter the channel of communication adopted. For instance, when the government makes public service announcement on Covid-19 through the mass media, sometimes their aim may not be to persuade the people into trusting or accepting such information, but might be just to inform them on the danger such a virus poses to health and livelihood. However, communication can serve different purposes depending on what the sender intends to pass across to his/her listeners, these ranges from information, instruction, education, news, entertainment, selling, persuasion etc. Figure 1 above shows the full circle communication goes through for it to be complete because communication is a process that is dynamic, recursive, on-going, continuous and cyclical.

Models, as presented in this study, are symbolic illustration that describes how elements of a communication structure or system are connected for basic analysis and discussion purposes, as these models are aimed at explaining the full communication cycle. However, there is no identifiable beginning and end, or a rigid sequence of interaction, the source is only motivated by the need to communicate and he/she receives stimulus that triggers him/her to communicate. Oftentimes the source of a message is regarded as the chief communicator. He/she has the primary responsibility of controlling the communication process because he/she is largely influenced by skills, knowledge level, socio-cultural context and attitude. Largely, a message is also influenced by the medium employed to convey meaning because the same information/message and quality that is transmitted via CNN and Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) do have varied meanings and influence on the listener (receiver). Nevertheless, what determines a choice of medium is the availability of such to the communicator/sender of a message, cost, audiences and how credible it could be in terms of adaptability to message being disseminated through the sender?

Analytically, as depicted in the diagram above (Figure 1), all elements in the communication process are; the source, message, channel, receiver, feedback and noise. However, the source and sender alternate their positions once information is communicated but the

extent to which feedback gets to the source without any barrier would determine to a large extent how the message is received, even if the channel remains the same. Conceivably, both or one of the communicators could have written the information or could have spoken it but the onus lies on the sender to communicate relevant and understandable message useful to the receiver and Covid-19 is an example of such. If the sender does not have the adequate knowledge of the message, his/her encoding apparatus cannot instruct it to transmit a message. Another challenge might arise from the way the sender is perceived based on individuality and inherent problem in the communication process, there might be possibilities that the encoder could be deficient in in one way or the other and this might distort the message transmission processes. Communication as described above is a continuous process that the sender should fully take responsibility for.

The sender initiates the communication process and has the primary responsibility to ensure that the process is not hindered. The sender (encodes) as depicted in the above (figure 2) is the government with the primary responsibility of ensuring the right information on Covid-19 gets to the people through directives that covers their safety and total wellbeing. Despite this enormous responsibility on the government, they cannot reach the people directly; they have to depend solely on the media to reach the mass audience (people) through available channels of communication at their disposal. The mass media takes information from government and recodes such due to the gatekeeping feature that makes the media different, as such recoded information loss their intended meaning in the process. The people decode already mixed information passed from the media and also interpret it in their way, as the feedback the government expects also goes through the media to get to the government.



**Figure 2: Model showing the process information from the government goes through before it finally reaches the people – Codes: Codes: S-sender (Government), M-medium (Media) and Receiver (people). Source: Author.**



As shown in the diagram above, the media becomes the pool for message/information storage at every point in time. Although, the media sometimes through investigative journalism can have access to some topnotch information through unconfirmed, reliable, anonymous undisclosed and top sources but the bottom line is, both the government and the people depend on the media for information and feedback respectively. Any meaningful and legitimate government that desires to have a well robust and informed citizenry always want to reach out to the them with information continuously, despite this burden of desire on the part of the government, they have to go through the mass media and in the process, the original/intended meaning of such information is compromised when the media processes such through the gatekeeping mechanism.

No message/information remains the same once it is processed, so at every point in time, the final message that gets to the people are not as packaged originally by the government, it is already mediated. What forms the aggregate of opinion in circulation at every point in time? When analyzed carefully, it is sum total of the information in the media but to get the intended message of government, one has to look at the information that left the sender (S=G) through Media (M=M) and what finally gets to the receiver (R=P). Codes: S-sender (Government), M-medium (Media) and Receiver (people). The COVID-19 pandemic has created a new environment for information which is continuously evolving, with unpredictable and blurred messages on health risks and suitable safety behaviours from the media, health officials, and government at all levels, as well as family and friends. The WHO describes the Coronavirus information arena as "over-abundance of information," ultimately declaring the existence of a "massive infodemic" (World Health Organization, 2020b). Unfortunately, woven into this rapidly-expanding tapestry of messages is a plethora of misinformation but relevant state agencies must not relent in communicating appropriate, useful and required information per time to cushion the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic (Frenkel, Alba & Zhong 2020).

### **Nigeria's Covid-19 Experience and Citizen's Expectations**

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus and has spread the world over. These viruses are a family of viruses which cause problems for human's respiratory system (WHO, 2020). Infections before coronaviruses were known as SARS-CoV-1 (in 2002) and MERS-COV (Middle East respiratory syndrome) (in 2012) recorded more than 10,000 persons infected. The index case of COVID-19 was recorded sometimes in November 2019, in Wuhan, China, as much was unknown on its precise source. As the world battles the pandemic, no one has identified its cure or vaccine. A





person infected by this virus may show or not show symptoms, but if the symptoms show, it ranges from minor to severe. (Alberca et al, 2020). The usual symptoms range from dry cough, headache, tiredness, fever, sore throat and in extreme cases shortness of breath. It is on record that the symptoms show between 2–14 days infection. However, based on estimation, an individual infected could infect the other two, as the number of people infected could double nearly weekly of the outbreak (Huang et al, 2020).

The index case of COVID-19 was declared in Nigeria on 28 February 2020 and this led to setting up of the National Coronavirus Emergency Operation Centre in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Historically, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) had a rapid deployment of manpower and resources to battle the Ebola disease in the year 2014 and this received accolades of the global community and World Health Organization (WHO). Ebola occurrence caused 15,000 established cases and more than 9,000 assumed cases in West Africa, was put under control 92 days, this WHO described as a “piece of world-class epidemiological detective work”. Based on media record that is widely circulated, on 27 February 2020, an Italian citizen who was 44 years of age was diagnosed with COVID-19 in Lagos State. He came into the country via Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos on 24 February at 10 pm on aboard Turkish airline from Milan, Italy. He later journeyed to Ogun state where his company's site is on 25 February but presented himself the next day at the company's clinic in Ogun where the Doctor that attended to him suspected possible COVID-19. Due to lack of facility to ascertain this suspicion he was referred on 27 February to Virology Laboratory of Lagos State Teaching Hospital which is part of the Laboratory Network of NCDC and sample taken returned positive (NCDC, 2020).

After this, a Multi-sectorial National Emergency Operation Centre (MNEOC) was immediately set up by (NCDC), as states followed this step to activate their Response Centers. The aftermath of the index case led to the inauguration of a Presidential Task Force to manage 10 key areas of operation on the nation's response to COVID-19 pandemic. The areas include but not limited to epidemiology and surveillance; laboratory; case management; infection, prevention and control; risk communication and community engagement; security, logistics and mass care; research; coordination and resource mobilization; finance monitoring and compliance and point of entry with daily briefings being held at the functional areas and coordination level.

Aside managing these key areas, Nigerians expected some form of rapid deployment of personnel and material resources as a way to cushion the devastating effect of the pandemic but these

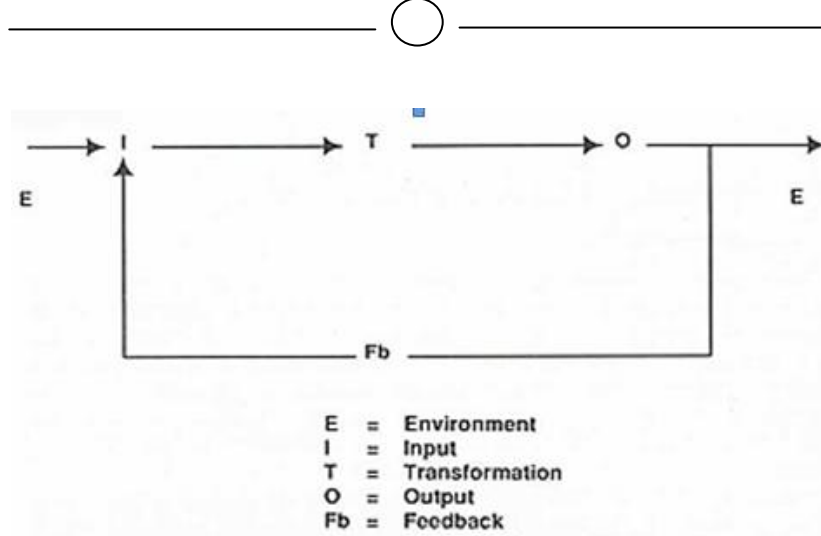


expectations were cut short as the government claimed the management of the pandemic was limited by financial constraints, as individuals and corporate organisations had donated their resources to support the government.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Harold Lasswell's Communication Model is systemic, so also is the nature of communication which is a process. The theory that aligns with this study is Systems Theory which was propounded by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (a Biologist) in 1928. Prior to this time, the scientific method had suggested that a typical system could be broken down into its component parts, and each piece could be analysed on its own in a vacuum. These parts could then be placed in order to create the system which one was studying. Bertalanffy claimed this approach was wrong as his theory was of the opinion that these components take on their meaning due to their place in the system, definition by context, he further opined that they were defined by their meaning in relation to the rest of the system and could not accurately be studied alone.

Bertalanffy suggested that studying entities as systems that are related to one another and affect one another could help better understand the function of a specific system (Drack, 2008). Nigeria is a system and communication is system too. Systems theory is the trans-disciplinary study of the abstract organization of phenomena, independent of their substance, type, or spatial or temporal scale of existence. It investigates both the principles common to all complex entities, and the (usually mathematical) models which can be used to describe them. A system can be said to consist of four things. The first is objects – the parts, elements, or variables within the system. These may be physical or abstract or both, depending on the nature of the system. Second, a system consists of attributes – the qualities or properties of the system and its objects. Third, a system had internal relationships among its objects. Fourth, systems exist in an environment. A system, then, is a set of things that affect one another within an environment and form a larger pattern that is different from any of the parts.



**Figure 3: Simple System Model**

**Source: Littlejohn (2001)**

The fundamental systems-interactive paradigm of organizational analysis features the continual stages of input, throughput (processing), and output, which demonstrate the concept of openness/closeness. A closed system does not interact with its environment. It does not take in information and therefore is likely to atrophy, that is to vanish. An open system receives information, which it uses to interact dynamically with its environment. Openness increases its likelihood to survive and prosper. Several system characteristics are: wholeness and interdependence (the whole is more than the sum of all parts), correlations, perceiving causes, chain of influence, hierarchy, suprasystems and subsystems, self-regulation and control, goal-oriented, interchange with the environment, inputs/outputs, the need for balance/homeostasis, change and adaptability (morphogenesis) and equifinality: there are various ways to achieve goals. Different types of networks are: line, commune, hierarchy and dictator networks. Communication in this perspective can be seen as an integrated process – not as an isolated event.

With this core assumption and propositions of the Systems Theory, communicating stability in Post Covid-19 Nigeria cannot be treated in fragments but as a whole (system). The government has the responsibility to communicate to the public through available media policy frameworks and other social welfare programmes that would birth hope which in the long run would restore public confidence. In other words, whoever is communicating what through available channel to whom must receive such information must also expect feedback?, as that goes to show that the message has generated an



effect in the minds on those that received such. This is systemic, as any part of government trying to communicate stability after a traumatised Covid-19 pandemic experience, must to in synergy of Harold Lasswell's Communication Model in partnership with the media and other relevant stakeholders. Any form of isolation in any of these communication processes would yield little or no targeted expectations.

### **Methodology**

Covid-19 pandemic came with a lot of mixed feelings among Nigerians, as many expectations differ but the realities are not in tandem with these leveled expectations, therefore the need for the Government to communicate stability in the psychic of its citizens. However, the essence for the desirability of stability is to cushion the effect of the pandemic on the nation's landscape which would also serve as a protective assurance against any form of further future crisis situation, as this would help the government to maintain connection with societal realities, in alignment with available social resources and citizen's expectations.

This is achieved by adopting a Qualitative approach using Key Informant Interview (KII) to generate data from sampled Communication, Sociology, Economics and Political Science scholars, as this was analysed thematically to ascertain who should communicate what, in which channel, to whom and with what effect, in Nigeria's post Covid-19 scenario. The sampling technique is purposive and Eight (8) Key Informants in total were selected based on their wide knowledge in the areas of Communication, Sociology, Economics and Political Science discipline. Two of these Eight (8) scholars were selected per discipline highlighted above in Landmark University, Kwara State, Nigeria based on the author's ability to have ease of access to the respondents. These respondents were asked semi-structure questions based on the adoption of Harold Lasswell's Model, who should communicate what, to whom, through what channel, and with what effect?

### **Analysis and Discussion of Findings**

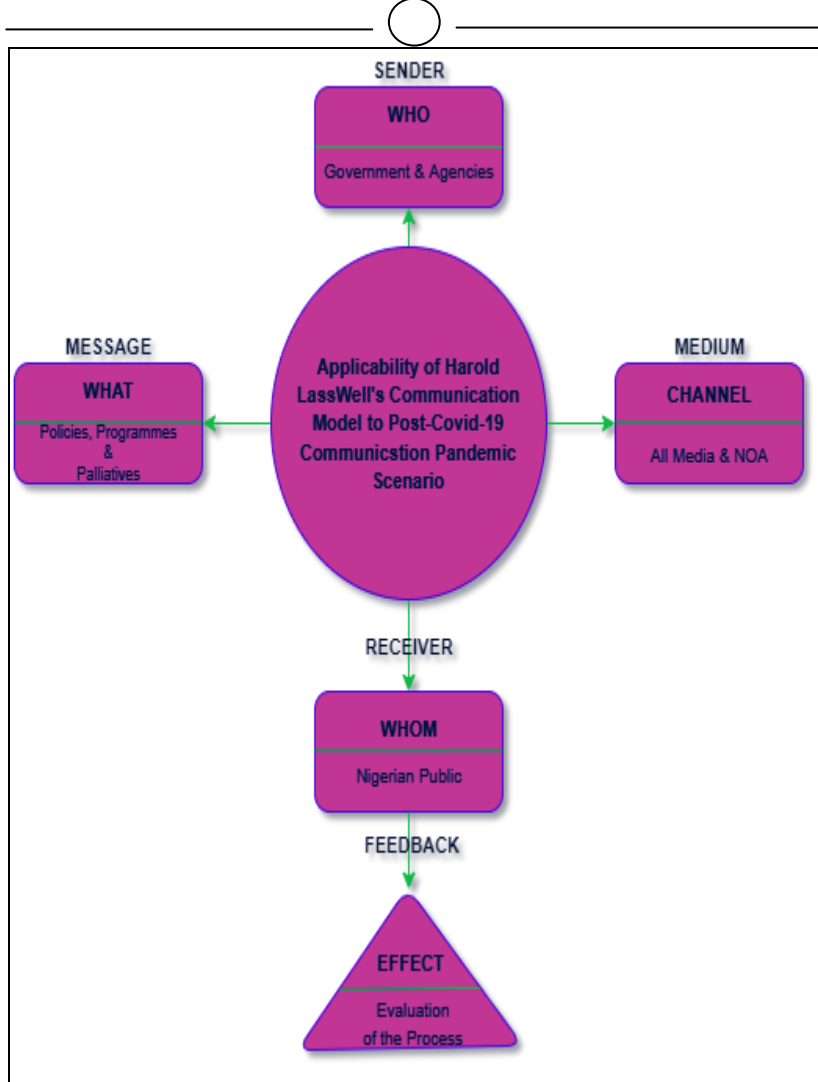
This section presents data obtained from the interview conducted with the respondents selected for this study. The scholars were asked questions based on Harold Lasswell's Model, to find out who should communicate what, to whom, through what channel, and with what effect? The first question who should communicate was directed to the Communication scholars and their response was that the Government and its agencies should be one to communicate in a post pandemic situation. The second question of what should be



communicated was directed to the Political Science and Economics scholars and their responses were that, Government needs to communicate new policies and programmes that would reassure the citizens' of government's total resolve to bring about stability after facing a pandemic such as the Covid-19.

The question regarding to whom government should communicate to was directed to Sociology scholars, their response was that, the government should direct message of motivation and stability to Nigerian public consisting of those in urban and rural setting, as well as those in different social strata of the nation's landscape. The question that deals with the channel that should be adopted by the government was direct to the Communication scholars, their response was that, in times of crisis the government should explore all forms of medium of communication, ranging from one-on-one (interpersonal) form of communication, use of traditional media, group communication, mass communication (traditional/mainstream media) as well as online medium of communication they opined that, the government must adopt media of communication that will appeal to all age group weather in the rural or urban centers.

The last question which asks with what effect? was directed at all the respondents, they opined that, all the processed adopted earlier for the other questions must be evaluated to ascertain their effectiveness, as the findings would serve as a feedback mechanism to help embark on an effective communication strategies that would help in future pandemics if such ever occurs. The diagram below puts all these in the right perspectives and subsequently analysed thematically:



**Figure 4: Applicability of Harold Lasswell's Communication Model to Post-Covid-19 Communication Pandemic Scenario - Authors' Model, 2022**

**Theme One: (Who Says What in Nigeria's Post COVID-19 Scenario?)**

Communication is fundamental to all humans and it is one of the characteristics of any living. This fundamental part of man is more required in times of crisis situation compared to any other. Scholars in Economics were of the view that, the Federal Government rolled out different Post Covid-19 policies and programmes to the public to help



cushion the effect of the pandemic. Respondent (II) in Economics noted that:

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) after the pandemic established a 50 Billion naira, i.e. EUR 121 Million, which was targeted micro, small and medium enterprises, as well as households. There were also economic stimulus measures such as loans, 1 year moratorium on debt repayments. Reduction of interest rate on intervention loans from 9 to 5%. 100 Billion was also provided as intervention fund to the health sector to strengthen their human resources and capacities. We cannot say Government did not know what to communicate, they had what to communicate but if such Post Covid economic programmes were communicated to the public and they (the public) had access, is also a different ball game all together.

The bone of contention according to this scholar above is that, the government had good intervention programmes to cushion the effect of the Coronavirus on the citizens but, if such was well articulated and communicated to the public is indeed a different ball game. A Political Science scholar who was respondent (IV) also stated that:

After the Covid-19, government came out with policies and programmes to cushion the effect of the pandemic. During that time, we had trade rmoni, market rmoni and farme rmoni loans. Aside funds released to Bank of Industry, Nigeria Export-Import Bank and Bank of Agriculture, with adequate funding of critical sectors of the economy. No serious government would not come up with, series of intervention programmes and policies after such emergency health crisis that shook the world. The question to ask is that, does government have the political will to see those policies and programmes to a logical conclusion. I don't think what a challenge here is but was it communicated to the people appropriately.

**Theme Two: (To Whom was What Communicated and through Which Channel in Nigeria's Post COVID-19 Scenario?)**

Fundamentally, in the communication process, there is always a sender of information and a receiver. The Federal Government of Nigeria as asserted above rolled out policies and programmes to



cushion the effect of Covid-19 pandemic of the populace but the question remains, if such programmes that could give succor were communicated through the right channel(s). If such were communicated through the right channel(s), to whom were they communicated? A Mass Communication scholar (Respondent III) while responding to the question bothering on 'to Whom and Which channel?' opined thus:

The Federal Government of Nigeria through the Ministry of Information and Culture should not be perplexed on whom policies and programmes of the Government should be communicated. If there are policies and programmes and it is not well communicated through appropriate channel, to the right audience, then the purpose of such communication process is defeated. Off course, Nigerians are the Whom in this regard, no sensible government should miss that, but you know we are in system where the government can choose to communicate whatever they so desire, without recur to who gets it. Aside, making use of every available media to communicate stability to the citizenry, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) should be empowered to move from house-to-house to intimate people with the plans government have to give them relieve after such traumatic experience.

Effective communication is crucial for the accomplishment of any desired organisational/corporate goals, according to Bhagwan and Bhushan (2006: 284). Communication is correctly referred to as the "bloodstream of administration in anorganisation" by Millet (2001:912). Gaining a competitive advantage requires effective communication in any profitable venture, which is necessary for achieving target goals or objectives. Therefore, in order for Nigerian leaders to function effectively, they need to have a solid understanding of the communication process, most especially during times of crisis where stability needs to be communicated to the citizens (Jones and George, 2009:424). An organisation is considerably more likely to expand and acquire a stable competitive position when all of its members can successfully interact with one another and with those outside its domain. Respondent V who is a Sociologist took a different stance on the issue of 'To Whom were What Communicated and through Which Channel?', thus:

It is not enough for the Government to know what to communicate, to whom and through which channel. They must be able to identify the direct need s of the



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citizens based on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. They must be able to prioritise their programmes and policies. If the people need food and you are communicating programmes on clothes, yes they need clothes but food is their priority at that point in time. If the people must take the government seriously, then, the government must communicate based on priority. Aside that, they must communicate to the right people based on their cultural and language inclination because that is the only way the people can feel relieved after a traumatic experience such as Covid-19 pandemic. Language of communication must be domesticated in tune communal reality the people are used to. Culture is central if the people must receive any meaningful message from the government, and traditional leaders could be employed to engage the people directly and this would go a long way to stabilize a fragile citizenry after such a traumatic experience such as the coronavirus pandemic.

**Theme Three: (With What Effect did 'What' was Communicated have on the Public in Nigeria's Post COVID-19 Scenario?)**

Communication emphasises "the collecting, processing, and dissemination of information necessary to address a crisis or post-crisis situation" (Coombs & Holladay, 2010, p. 20). Additionally, it is helpful to think of crisis or post-crisis communication as a collection of verbal behaviours and procedures designed to promote stability and safety during times of crisis. Leadership in most respect must think swiftly of organizational communication, public relations, strategic communication, problems management, organisational rhetoric, crisis management, and management science disciplines are all parts of the broader interdisciplinary topic of disaster response and emergency management, therefore the need for input in a multilayer approach to give stability to troubled citizenry. Whichever way the communication goes, there is need to evaluate the process and that is what necessitated why Harold asked the question, 'with what effect?' Respondent (I), a communication scholar opined thus when analyzing the effect aspect of Lasswell' model:

Yes, Harold's model is Linear without feedback but that does not mean, it is not effective in managing the communication process. The question of 'with what effect' calls for evaluation of the entire communication process from the sender to the receiver. The government must show commitment to

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evaluate if the right policies and programmes were communicated, through appropriate channel and to the right public, bearing in mind that the public are heterogeneous and diverse in nature. Any process one engages in and cannot be systematically evaluated should just be discarded.

The examination of best practises in the intricate of leadership in managing a crisis and this embodies or ecologies crises which must bring together a variety of disciplines to factor in possible solutions. It is widely acknowledged that it is not always possible and easy to quickly or swiftly restore stability to a traumatised populace. As a result, achieving operational stability or a new normal is a more realistic outcome for effective crisis communication which leadership must approach from bottom-top. One explanation for why crises occur and how they affect a nation's regular system is explicated in Chaos Theory (Seeger, 2002). Thus, the basis of chaos theory is that unexpected and nonlinear interactions lead to the necessity of self-organization (i.e., personal order).

### **Conclusions**

Findings have shown that communication is one of the major factors that government can use to communicate stability in a post crisis situation, such as Covid-19 pandemic. Scholars are of the views that, the internal operation of any setting, whether they are public or private, as well as interactions with the outside world, depend on effective communication. Leaders at different levels in any setting ought to be equipped with the knowledge required to perform adequately, as well as communicate appropriately. In any given system, information can move not just up or down, but also horizontally or diagonally, but effectiveness must be the goal. Above all, such communication process must be evaluated to ascertain the level of its effectiveness. Although written communication is a possibility which cannot be rules out if the government is trying to communicate stability but what is the percentage of those that can read effectively? Oral communication tends to convey more information and meaning, as empathy is shown in such process. In addition, gestures and facial expressions are used by humans to communicate, as well. No stone should be left unturned when it comes to communicating stability to an already traumatised populace. As was previously noted, communication is the act of passing information from one person to other using similar symbols. Facts, objective information, or feelings could all be included in the information but all these must be done with the right intent, to the right people, continuously throughout the lifecycle of any major crisis.



This study, would serve as insight to future crisis managers and team leaders, whether in public or private sector because of the significance of managing crisis through effective communication. There is no doubt that various obstacles and breakdowns can hinder the communication process, therefore, the need for evaluation. Understanding and addressing these limitations can be made easier by being aware of them in the first place. Therefore, it is important to use communication carefully as one of the tools for excellent crisis management. Leadership at the top is believed to be the source of any crisis management and they can only achieve this through effective communication without bureaucratic bottlenecks, as expert advice should be sort in future crisis management.

### **Recommendations**

The study based on findings recommend as follows:

1. Communication is the livewire in managing any crisis situation. For a communication to be tagged effective, it must follow through all the processes it entails. In a typical crisis situation, volume should not be the question but meaning and the process comes first. Harold Lasswell's model has once brought to fore the relevance of all elements in the communication process, even though some scholars believed that, his model is linear but much can still be applied to communicating stability to a traumatised populace in a post-crisis situation.
2. Allowing experts champion this cause would go a long way for the realization of its applicability. Government at all levels must engage communication experts and social scientists to guide them in what to communicate, whom to communicate, the right channel to explore and the effect that the processes has generated which will lead to evaluation.

Recommendation for further studies:

1. The Harold Lasswell's communication model is considered by some scholars to be too linear and static in nature. This was what gave rise to other models such as reactional, interactional and transactional models of communication. Further studies could be carried out on other communication models regarding communication in a post emergency situation. Handlers of government's public communication could benefit from such work in the future, as this would be an eye opener on the right model to adopt in a post crisis scenario.

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2. Another look at the 'Why' dimension of Harold Lasswell's model would be an addition to knowledge if further studies are carried out on this historic communication model. The 'why' dimension would provide further insight to government and its agencies on the need to always communicate their policies and programmes effectively.

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