



Is the Pandemic So Far Gone? – A Semiotic Analysis of Covid-19 Fading Imageries

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Abstract

The interest of this work is in the examination of diverse pictorial items produced and circulated in public places during the pandemic to educate, warn and sensitise the global citizenry of the dangers inherent in the COVID-19 pandemic as well as how they could protect themselves from it. However, these days, most of the pictures of COVID-19 seem to hang forlornly, appearing like abandoned artefacts. This paper is thus a semiotic study of selected COVID-19 pictorials posted in public places in and outside Nigeria during the pandemic. The data comprise twenty-two (22), images, using the purposive sampling method, in line with the thematic preoccupation of the study. A semiotic analysis of the data was done, using Kress' (2010) multimodal analytical approach to discourse study. Findings reveal that the producers of the COVID-19 images employed semiotic resources such as linguistic and pictorial elements as well as colours to encode the preventive messages of COVID-19 during the pandemic. In addition, the visual state of the images signified that they have become neglected, and people appear to no longer care to observe the safety measures that are encoded in them. The study concludes that, in spite of the grave implication of COVID-19 in relation to human existence, the physically tattered state of most of the images produced to serve as precautionary measures to the spread of the coronavirus in and beyond Nigeria suggests that the global citizens now view the pandemic as a thing of the past. The study recommends that governments of nations should sustain societal sensitisation of COVID-19 because, according to the World Health Organisation, although the virus is no longer a public health emergency, the disease is still a global threat.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Semiotic analysis, Multimodal instrument, Fading imageries, Post-pandemic era

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Introduction

Perhaps due to the devastating effects that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the world generally, the outbreak of the virus has attracted scholarly attention (e.g. Hosen et al, 2022; Eze et al, 2021); and research remains ongoing on the pandemic from different disciplines and scholarly perspectives. This research work was a motivation for a larger research work (see Nwabueze, et al., 2022). However, we decided to do a sectional study to look right into the face of the issue that gave rise to the other research work in an in-depth manner. The interest of this work is in the examination of diverse pictorial attempts produced and circulated within and without Nigeria's public places from the onset of the pandemic to educate, warn and sensitise the global citizenry of the dangers inherent in the COVID-19 pandemic as well as how they could protect themselves from it. Contrariwise, these days, most of the pictures and the warnings on COVID-19 hang forlornly in public places where they appear like abandoned artefacts. They now hang like torn notices on office walls where they were formerly placed as important semiotic materials. The warnings that were the toast of many of these COVID-19 materials, even on those that are not looking faded are now ignored as if they do not exist. The wash-hand basins created for the COVID-19 ablutions now stand, looking wistfully at passers-by who used to worship faithfully at their altars.

The question then is: how far gone is the COVID-19 pandemic that the lives of many Nigerians and others around the globe seem to have returned to normal as we had it in the pre-pandemic era? Have Nigerians and peoples of other climes moved into the post-pandemic era? It appears as if many have actually moved into the post-pandemic era. Answers to these questions guided our investigation into this new state of affairs.

Corona Virus that Began in 2019 and the World in the Grip of a Pandemic
COVID-19 stole on the people stealthily in December of 2019. It was around Christmas 2019 that the global news network, special reference to Cable News Network (CNN), filtered out the news of the type of sickness that caused the shops to close in China instead of preparing for the traditional Chinese festival that was commonly held at such a time when Christians the world over would also be completing the Christmas



celebrations and preparing for the New Year festivities. The sad situation in China appeared pitiable and very far away. However, by January, it had reached Europe. And by February, the first case in Nigeria was recorded, brought in by an Italian man, apparently fleeing from the unimaginable number of deaths that Italy was being ravaged with at the time. The news of the many deaths and the huge number of coffins were being shown on the global news network, Euronews and the others. Then came the data from the United States, India, Brazil and more. The world seemed to be at war with itself. Coffins became the new images flitting across our television sets. The whole world was in the grip of fear. Armageddon seemed to have finally arrived among humans as the preachers had predicted for centuries.

It got so bad that some people tuned off their television sets. Everyone appeared helpless and unable to determine what exactly to do. Then came the season of lockdown. In an attempt to save lives, countries put in place precautionary measures to limit the spread of COVID-19. One of these measures was restrictions on mobility to limit human-to-human transmission of the virus. Thus, the free flow of people was affected through strict migration restriction measures (UN, 2020).

The world was doing trial and error in attempts to end the plague. Different images of past plagues began to flit across social media. But one advice given by scientists was the need to observe a series of protocols if people necessarily had to hold in-person meetings. Therefore, different organisations decided to put up varied types of notices to intimate people about their required behaviour protocol if they must come to their physical space. The way everyone seemed helpless to solve the problem, it appeared that everyone must also come together to see an end to the problem of the outbreak that took on a pandemic proportion and humbled the modern world in a manner never before imagined.

However, recently, the authors observed that there seemed to be a kind of lackadaisical attitude to the pandemic now. The question to ask then is: Is the pandemic over? Among other things, one of the tell-tale manners to determine this appears to be the imagery of the pandemic itself. The relics of its having been among us include the different warning signs in the public

spaces where people needed to meet physically to conduct their businesses – be it religious, economic, social, or even sometimes, medical.

This study thus seeks to find the answer to the question of whether the pandemic is over. It investigates the semiotics of the imageries that denoted the expected protocols that visitors or members of the community were expected to carry out as safety measures at the time the coronavirus held the world in its grip.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. examine the nature and state of the COVID-19 pandemic-related images vis-à-vis the current state of affairs in the world once held captive by the pandemic; and
- ii. investigate how the COVID-19 messages are encoded in the images.

Research Questions

Specifically, the study sought to find out:

- i. How do pictorial representations of the COVID-19 pandemic protocols expose the current state of the pandemic in the world?
- ii. How are the COVID-19 messages encoded in the images?

COVID-19 and the Global Hope

According to the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), globally, the number of reported COVID-19 cases and deaths continues to decline. This improvement is attributed to the general vaccination rates globally (WHO, 2022). It is asserted that the COVID-19 pandemic is not completely gone; nobody really knows when the pandemic will be completely gone. Instead, the virus will likely become “endemic,” eventually fading in severity and folding into the backdrop of regular, everyday life. Once endemic, COVID-19 will not dictate your daily life decision-making as much. Endemic illnesses are always circulating throughout parts of the world but tend to cause milder illnesses because more people have immunity from past infections or vaccinations. You might get a cough and sniffles, but if you are up to date on your vaccinations, you will be protected enough to prevent severe illness or hospitalization.



COVID-19 could eventually become like other respiratory viruses; there will be times of the year when COVID-19 infections peak — most likely the colder fall and winter months, but in the tropical climate, it may never be as peaked. The warning is that: It is not time to say the virus is over! As of 12 June 2022, over 533 million confirmed cases and over 6.3 million deaths were reported globally (WHO, 2022). Udenze and Ugoala (2022) aver that the outbreak of COVID-19 places everyone in the society, even the older adults or the elderly a risky position due to their age.

Prevention strategies, like regularly washing your hands and maintaining distancing practices in high-risk settings, could also stick around, especially in crowded environments; but mask-wearing may still be encouraged to continue in areas with flu or when one is close to someone with cough and catarrh. In this case, people need to take personal responsibility and stay at home when they are sick or when they are symptomatic, in which case they could work from home.

It is noteworthy to remark that preventive measures must not be completely put aside in low-income countries because vaccination rates are much lower in these countries (WHO, 2022). Nigeria is one of such low-income countries. The perception that the pandemic is over is understandable, but we must be on guard as no one is sure when another variant of the virus will emerge. This thus gives us reason to investigate the true status of the pandemic as indicated by the pictorial representations of its prevention and our protection from its spread.

Pictorial Semiotics and Multimodality as Analytic Instrument

Discourse as a concept continues to generate discussions in terms of definition and description. While textually oriented linguists' perception of discourse presents it as connected speech or writing, socially oriented views perceive discourse as actual instances of language use in different social and cultural contexts, which contribute to people's views of the world, events and people (Paltridge, 2012). This explanation of the concept suggests that the ordering of discourse is institutionally and culturally based. In addition, it shows the dialectical nature of discourse, which indicates that discourse is socially constitutive and socially conditioned (Weiss & Wodak, 2003).

Gee (1999) differentiates between discourse and discourses by describing the former as referring to language in use while the latter is described as referring to different ways in which humans integrate language with such different ways of thinking, acting, interacting, believing, among others, to enact identities and activities. In this wise, discourse produced in the medical sphere could be classified as a type of discourse. It has however been noted that research in discourse analysis initially focused more on the study of the linguistic elements that characterised language use. However, the advancement in technology in the 21st century has ushered in increased use of multimodal semiotic elements in communication. Messages either spoken or written now combine many modes. These modes are semiotic elements that communicate our understanding of the world around us (Forceville, 2011). Nwabueze (2021) used semiotic analysis of the posters of Ambode and Agbaje during their Lagos governorship campaign in 2015 to show that pictorial semiotics have inherent communicative power that could determine the destiny of a people. The analysis of the pictorial self-representations points to how the candidates were able to convince the Lagos public who the better man for the job was.

From the multimodal perspective, scholars (e.g. Leeuwen, 2005; Hodge, 2023) have argued that all texts are multimodal in nature and thus cannot be adequately analysed without a holistic investigation of all the semiotic modes employed in their meaning-making. Semiotics is an investigation into how signs, either visual or verbal, are created and how meaning is communicated through the signs. This is because each mode has specific potentials and limitations with regard to communication. Nonetheless, the signs used in passing across messages are familiar to the people in a particular geographical location, provided they are able to interpret them instinctively and instantly. According to the New London Group (1996), five broad semiotic or meaning-making systems could be applied when discussing how meaning is created. These are **written-linguistic**, **visual**, **audio**, **gestural**, and **spatial** patterns of meaning. These semiotic elements are not all used in a single communicative scenario.



This study draws insights from Kress' (2010) approach to multimodal analysis for its investigation of imageries produced and posted in public places during the COVID-19 pandemic. The multimodal approach is employed to examine the ways in which language, image and other semiotic modes integrate to convey meaning in different contexts (Hussein et al, 2020). Following this perspective, this paper thus analyses the semiotic structures in diverse pictorial representations of prevention messages circulated at different locations within and outside Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to determine their current statuses in terms of their representations and citizens' apparent view of them.

Multimodality and COVID-19 Discourses

Research has been carried out by scholars who have adopted different approaches to the study of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the studies investigated the incidence of violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. Fawole, et al, 2021), the adverse effect of COVID-19 on tertiary enrolment during the pandemic (Eze et al, 2021; Hosen et al, 2022), coping strategies for COVID-19 pandemic (Ilesanmi & Fagbule, 2020). Nwabueze et al. (2022) is a pilot study of a wider study (hinted at above), which is focused on how the reluctance to get vaccinated by people in Nigeria is proving to be an issue that could make the risk of COVID-19 recurrence real. It however focused essentially on the communication factors that enhance or detract from the readiness of people to get vaccinated against the virus as a preventive measure.

Other studies have focused on the analysis of the discourse of the COVID-19 pandemic from different theoretical standpoints. Ternenge et al (2022) is a discourse study of the surviving strategies adopted by the mass media in Nigeria in the post-COVID-19 era. Using the social media theory and the political economy of the media theory, the study revealed that the mass media in Nigeria was sustained during the pandemic through support in the form of bailouts, loan facilities from the Central Bank of Nigeria and donor agencies. While the study highlighted the challenge of sustainability as an outcome of the pandemic, it did not delve into the analysis of the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the discourse of the mass media. Oamen (2021) is a critical discourse analysis of discrimination as expressed in host-

migrant COVID-19 discourse. The findings of the study revealed that host communities' use of linguistic elements and discursive strategies in media discourse demonstrated their discrimination against migrants during the pandemic. While the study provided insight into the expression of power in Sino-African host-migrant COVID-19 discourse, it focused mainly on the linguistic aspect of the discourse.

However, other studies (e.g. Aragbuwa & Adejumo, 2021; Shodipe & Opeibi, 2023; Adebomi, 2023) have analysed COVID-19 discourse from a multimodal perspective. Aragbuwa and Adejumo (2021) is a multimodal study of the compositional, interactive and representational resources deployed in the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) COVID-19 online advertising campaign. The findings of the study revealed that narrative, frontal, action, transactive and offer resources are effectively deployed in the online visuals to communicate the need for citizens of Nigeria to take responsibility with regards to the prevention and spread of the coronavirus. Adebomi (2021) adopted van Leeuwen's approach to the study of multimodal resources deployed in pictorials circulated on the World Health Organisation Centre for Disease Control's website to promote awareness of COVID-19 vaccination. The findings of the study showed that the semiotic resources employed in the pictorials were used, not only for informative purposes but to achieve attitudinal change towards the spread of the virus. Shodipe and Opeibi (2023) is a multimodal study of web-based public health discursive practices produced during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The findings indicated that multimodal resources of online communication on coronavirus complemented its lexico-semantic properties. These studies all indicate that the multimodal investigation of media communication of COVID-19 provided insights into the interplay of the different modes of discourse employed by text producers to disseminate information on the virus during the pandemic. Nevertheless, while the studies focused on the analysis of the multimodal resources produced to sensitise the public during the pandemic, there is a dearth of research on the current state of the COVID-19 pictorials posted in public places in Nigeria and beyond, and their semiotic signification of citizens' attitude to the pandemic after the lockdown. This study intends to fill this gap.



Methods

The data from the study were COVID-19 posters in the form of instructions posted at various strategic locations during the coronavirus pandemic in Abuja and Lagos in Nigeria and Paris in France. The data comprised different semiotic elements in the form of words and visuals of instructions to people to wear their masks before entering a building or an office or in some places where interactions are expected. The researchers took many snapshots of these posters for the study. The posters and diverse images snapped were purposively selected to fit the theme of the study. In the analysis section, the data were described and categorised according to their similarity and contiguity. These were then semiotically analysed, using the multimodal instrument to determine their message/meaning contents and the import of these for the true status of the pandemic in Nigeria and globally currently. These should help to expose the views of the Nigerian and other global citizens in relation to the situation described above during the time the pandemic was raging as well as how it appeared to be affecting them right now, both in Nigeria and in other shores.

Data Analysis and Discussion

During the peak of COVID-19, some safety measures people were advised to take were:

- i. wear a mask
- ii. maintain social distance
- iii. wash hands regularly

So, we commence the analysis by looking at this question: How do pictorial representations of the COVID-19 pandemic protocols expose the current state of the pandemic in the world now?



Figure 1. National Open University of Nigeria

Figure 1 is a warning about COVID-19 based on background knowledge of the prevalence of the virus. The linguistic elements are made up of a declarative statement. As can be seen, part of the image is torn, showing a total neglect of the warning in the image, and a total disregard for the pandemic. This suggests the fact that the people that initially placed the sign so prominently do not see it as a threat anymore.

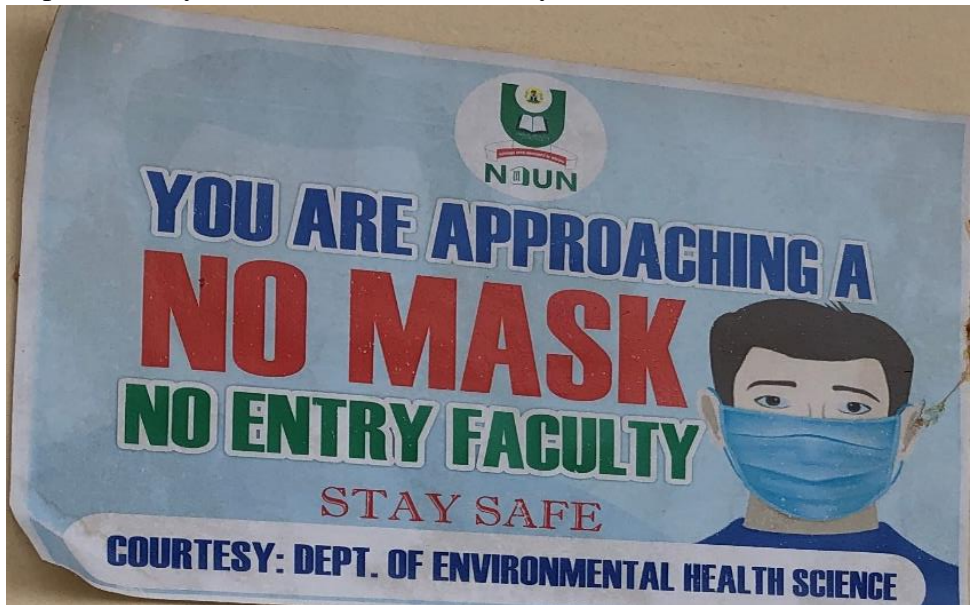


Figure 2. National Open University of Nigeria

Figure 2 is also one of the notices during the height of the pandemic. It uses so many semiotic resources in its message. There is a human face wearing a mask to complement the verbal message in different colours. The “NO MASK” in red font is symbolic as it stands out from the rest of the message. Again, like Figure 1, this notice is sort off coming off if you look at the edges on the left and right-hand sides. It shows a seeming neglect of the message contained in it. This is another sign that those who placed the message no longer consider it of any more urgency that require maintenance to keep it as a focus of attention.



Figure 3. National Open University of Nigeria

As stated in the third safety measure during the peak of the pandemic that people should wash hands regularly, Figure 3 is an icon of the need to wash hands regularly during the height of the pandemic. As can be seen, the wash-hand basin is dirty and lacks attention. The way it is seems to show total neglect as well as being currently not in use. In other words, people have stopped using the basin to wash their hands! Again, this gives the impression that people who are entering the building where it is placed do not see it as a necessity neither do those in that building demand it being used as would have been the case in the height of the pandemic. Obviously, this suggests that all concerned do not regard the virus as a threat anymore and do not need to fight it to a standstill as was the case at the height of the pandemic.



Figure 4. National Open University of Nigeria

Similar to Figure 3 is Figure 4, a wash hand basin that has been neglected and not in use. Is the pandemic totally gone to warrant a total neglect of the wash hand basin? In this case, there is an empty soap dispenser, which is missing in Figure 3. Obviously, both wash-hand basins tell similar tales of abandoned brides who were once darlings but are now forsaken by their grooms.

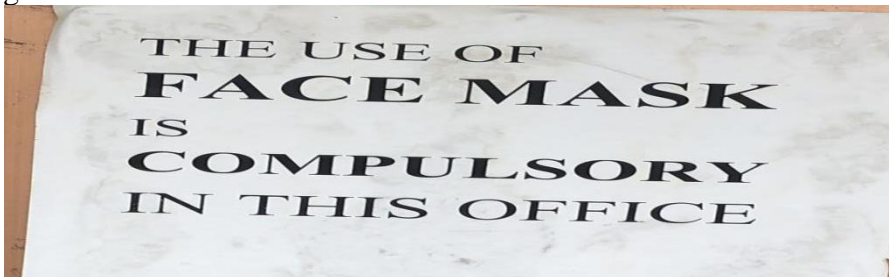


Figure 5. National Open University of Nigeria



Figure 5 is also a stern warning about the use of face masks. The important words are put in bold letters, **FACE MASK**, and the adjective **COMPULSORY**. This shows then the desire to implement the need for face masks to be worn at all times during the peak of the pandemic in that particular office; but now, the notice seems not to be in force anymore with the tattered nature of the notice as can be seen from the torn edges of the notice.

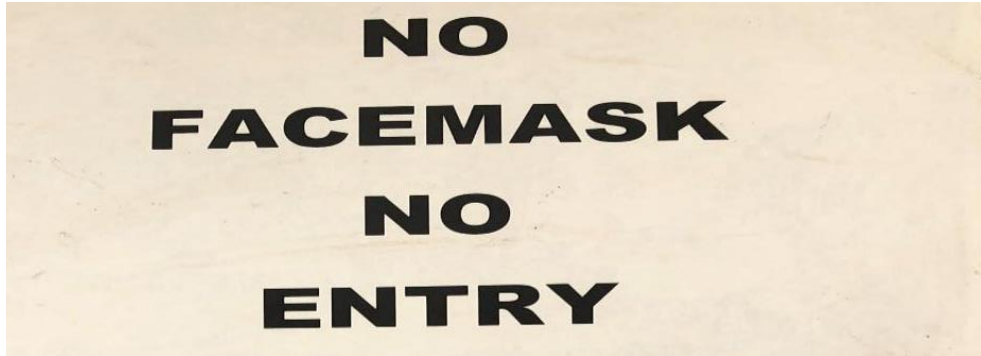


Figure 6. National Open University of Nigeria

Figure 6 is similar to the notice in Figure 1. The declarative statement is set in upper case to sort of reinforce the message in the notice.

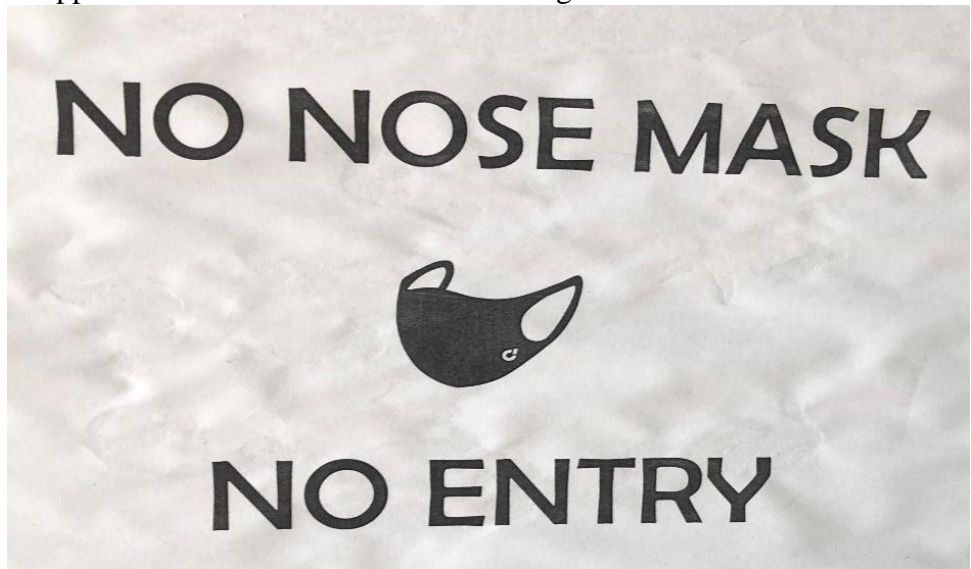


Figure 7. National Open University of Nigeria

Figure 7 uses a pictorial representation of the mask and some linguistic elements in passing across its message that mask-wearing is required in accessing the office where it is placed. It is a stern warning to people that the use of masks is important to help in curtailing the spread of the deadly coronavirus. Though the virus is not mentioned in the notice, the background knowledge people have about the virus helps to make the message clear. Again, the notice is not significant anymore, as people no longer adhere to it.

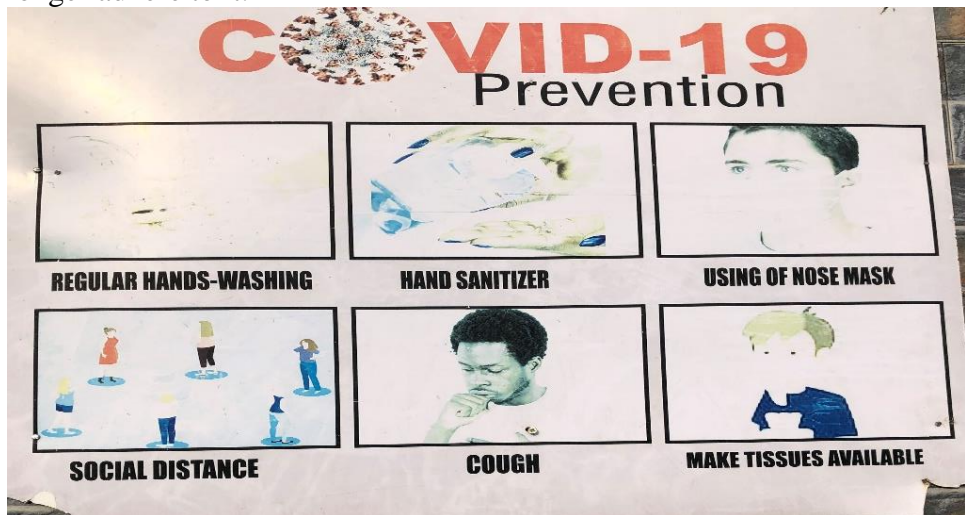


Figure 8. Living Faith Church, Lokogoma, Abuja

Figure 8 is a conglomeration of many semiotic elements of the dos and don'ts during the peak of COVID-19. Each semiotic element is vital to the non-spreading of the virus. Like other images analysed above, it is torn at the edges showing a total neglect of the possible impact of the coronavirus. More interesting is that it was once a colourful pictorial representation of these messages but now faded. Indeed, this particular sign motivated the study in the first place, thereby giving it its title. While previous images analysed were sourced from an academic institution, specifically, the National Open University of Nigeria headquarters, Figure 8 is sourced from a church, which is also located in Abuja. This shows that the growing neglect of the pandemic cut across different sectors in the life of the citizens.



Figure 9. National Open University of Nigeria

Figure 9 is similar to Figure 8 in the use of many semiotic elements in the passing of information about the virus, and how its spread can be curtailed. However, this takes us back to the signs in the National Open University of Nigeria. This is a major sign at the entrance of the building hosting four Faculties. It is no surprise that it is made to handle so many things at the same time. This same sign was also seen placed at other strategic points in the University. However, as it is said, it appears that this very one is the last ‘man’ standing. This is another way to show that many seem to think we are already in the post-pandemic era.



Figure 10. National Open University of Nigeria

Figure 10 is also a declarative statement about how the spread of the virus can be curtailed. As we have in other notices, its physiognomy is tattered, also showing a disregard for the possible existence of the pandemic.



Figure 11. Chrisland Schools, Idimu, Lagos State

Figure 11 also shows, through the use of multiple semiotic elements, what is to be done in order to prevent the spread of the virus. It is torn at the edges like other images analysed above.

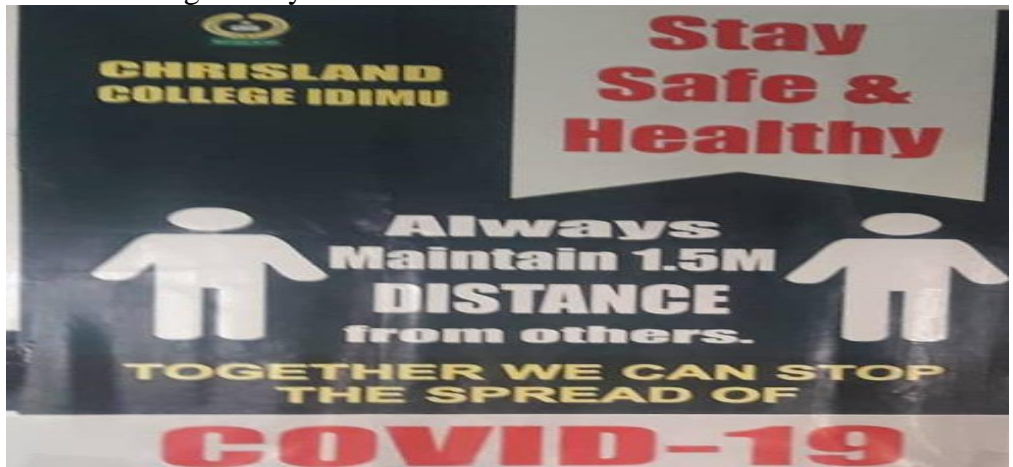


Figure 12. Chrisland College, Idimu, Lagos State



Figure 12 deploys pictorial elements, linguistics elements, and colours in the passing across of its message. Unlike the images analysed above, Figure 12 does not really include the use of masks, but focuses on the distance people should maintain so as to stop the spread of COVID-19. Like others, it appears also torn at the edges.

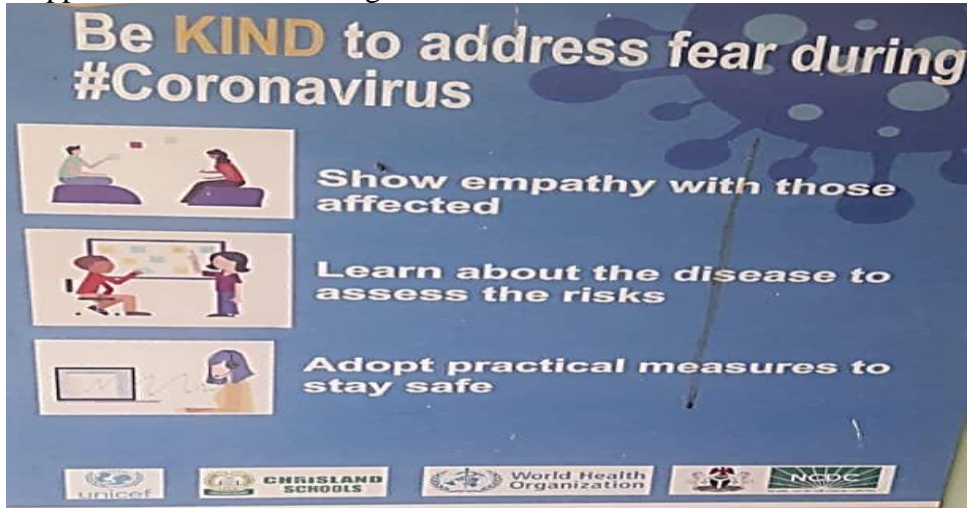


Figure 13. Chrisland Schools, Idimu, Lagos State

Figure 13 encodes so many messages about how to relate with those affected by the virus, a directive for people to learn more about the virus, and the measures people should adopt in order to stay safe, and so on. Each semiotic element passes across a unique message. Like other images, it is torn too, showing a neglect of the still possible prevalence of the virus.



Figure 14. Chrisland Schools, Idimu, Lagos State

This image is similar to others analysed above in its tattered edges. It focuses on the use of hand sanitizer as one of the safety measures to prevent the spread of the virus. The image of a human hand and a can of sanitizer complement the linguistic elements.

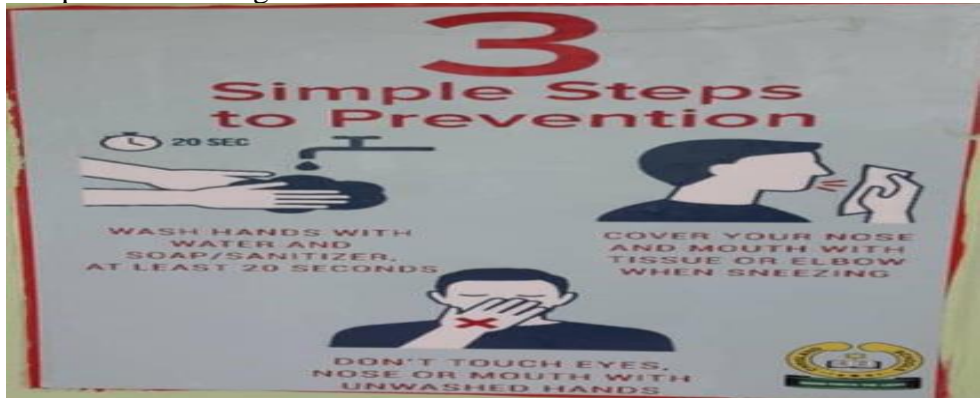


Figure 15. Chrisland Schools, Idimu, Lagos State

The edges of Figure 15 are torn like others above. It deploys so many semiotic elements to pass across the message of how to stop the spread of COVID-19. Though COVID-19 is not obviously mentioned in the image, it is easily understandable that COVID-19 is what is being talked about here.

All these images show that Chrisland Schools actually took seriously its duty to warn the members of its community. However, again, we can deduce that for the managers of the school, the pandemic appears over as the warning signs have now taken on a forlorn look by their presentation within the public space in terms of their faded and torn nature. They are not alone in these as we have seen above; and we will still see below.



Figure 16. University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State



The appearance of Figure 16 shows a total neglect of the possible existence of the virus. The image is rumpled. Not even passers-by nor those who placed it there consider the need to smoothen the rumpled poster and keep it in focus. This shows total neglect by the originator of the image, as well as the passers-by. The implication of this is a suggestion that there is no longer much regard for the virus that motivated the placement of the poster in the first place.



Figure 17. University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State

Figure 17 also reinforces what is observable in other images analysed above. It shows total neglect by the people/person who hung the poster. The haphazard nature of the image shows abandonment and neglect.

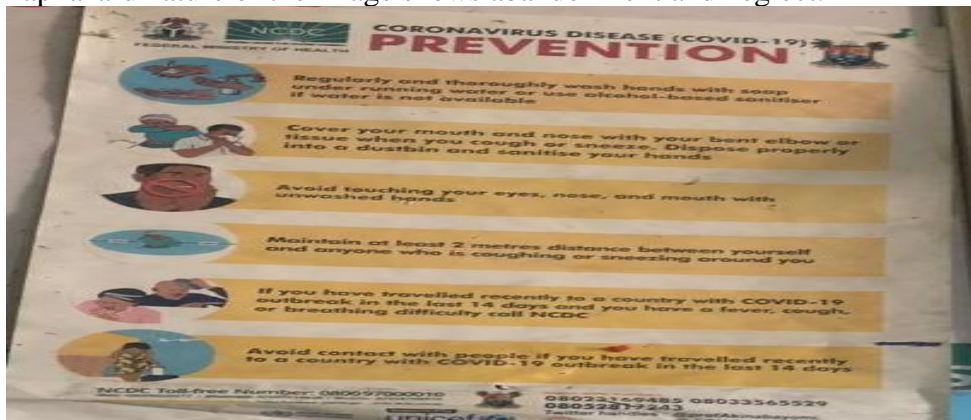


Figure 18. Federal Medical Centre, Ebute Metta, Lagos

Figure 18, like some of the images analysed above, used so many semiotic elements in passing across messages about the virus, and how to stop its spread. The torn edges show total neglect of the possible existence of COVID-19. Interesting though is that this particular poster is located in a tertiary medical institution, where you would think there would be more sensitivity about the state of the public health this poster should be announcing. Once again, it could be observed that this poster is in a state of disrepair and disregard. This poster screams louder than all the others that we seem to have arrived at the post-pandemic state in Nigeria.

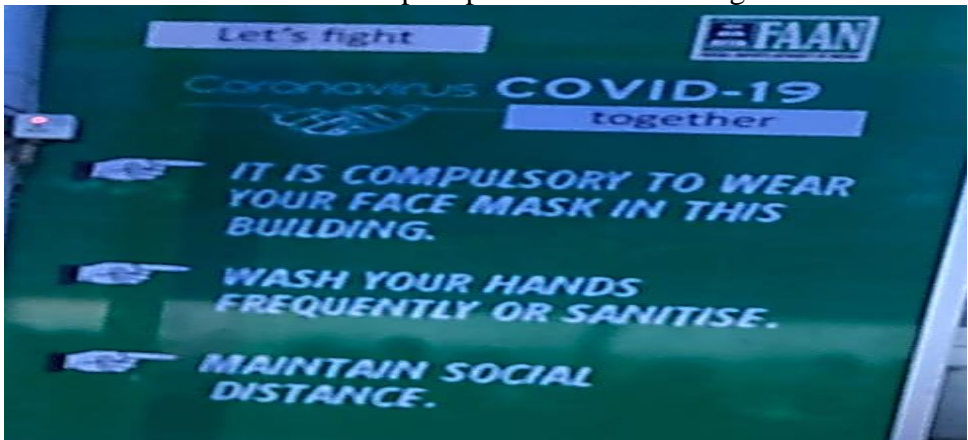


Figure 19. Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN)



Figure 20: Murtala Muhammed International Airport



Figure 19 is located at Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos. This photograph was taken when one of the members of the team was travelling for a conference in France. She noticed that these big messages were everywhere but seemed not to be having any effect on the behaviour of the people compared to what she saw previously at the same location during the height of the pandemic as shown in Figure 20. This image is also a strong warning for people to adhere to the safety measures of COVID-19 while in the airport area. While unlike many others seen above, it is apparently not torn at the edges, the behaviour around it appeared totally at variance with these warnings. Not many people were wearing masks, and no one was definitely maintaining the social distance it was advocating. Comparing this to Figure 20, which was taken in June 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (everyone dutifully wore the masks at the airport area), it is obvious that a lot has changed since then.

This same could be seen to be the case at the Charles de Gaulle Airport in France when the traveller landed there the following morning. Again, despite all the beautiful signs all over the airport (cf. Figure 21 and Figure 22 below), shining through and beautiful to behold, no one seemed to be paying any attention to them, except, of course, the curious researcher who is a member of this team that was looking out for the images and how they are being regarded by the people around her!



Figure 21: Charles de Gaulle Airport, in line

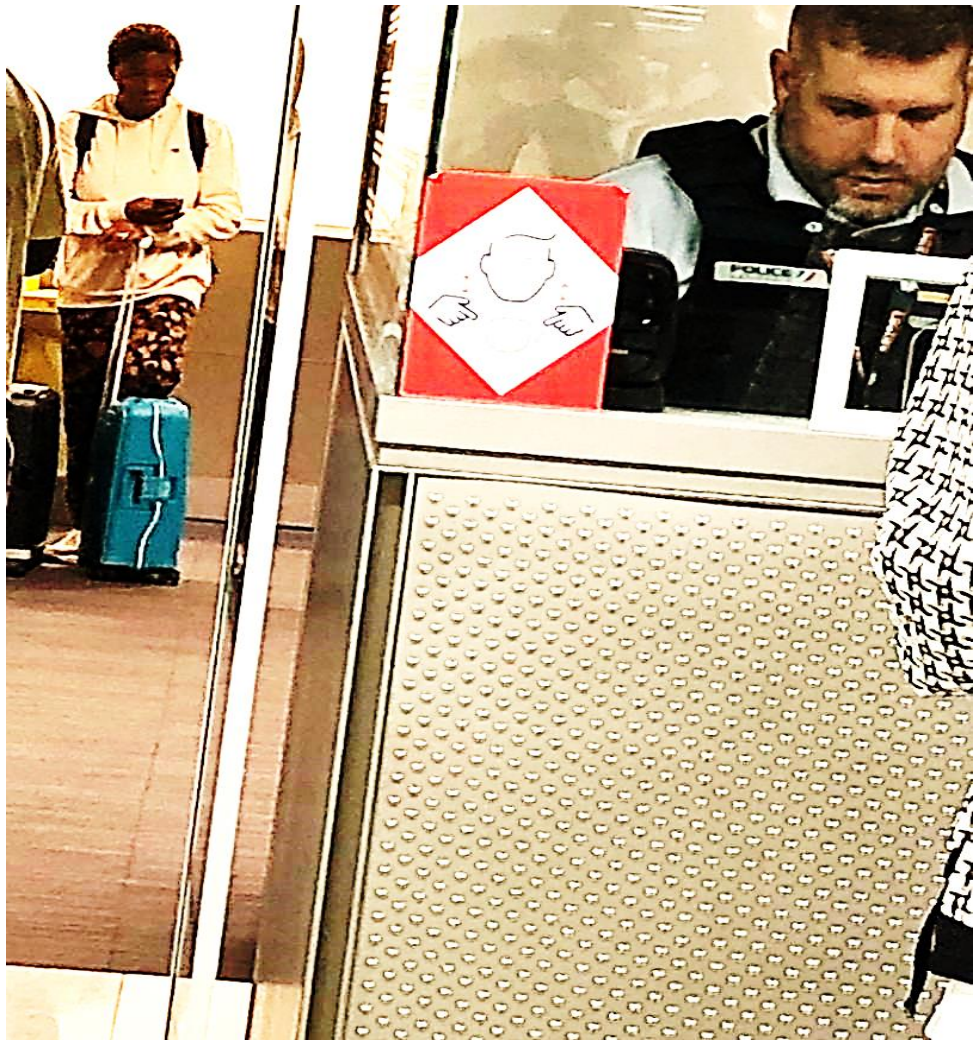


Figure 22: Charles de Gaulle Airport – in front of the Border Control Officer

Findings and Implications

As regards the first objective of this study, the images analysed here show a total neglect of the possible existence of the virus. The images show that people no longer care to observe the safety measures that are encoded in the



images. The safety measure, which required that people wear masks to stop the spread, is no longer adhered to. The wash-hand basins put in strategic locations for people to use in washing their hands to help curb the spread of the virus are all neglected. People no longer maintain reasonable social distance in public places as seen above, especially, the airports that used to be the most sensitive points for its enforcement. The neglected and fading images appear to point to the fact that, many people have grown comfortable and seem to think of the pandemic as no longer existing among us.

The COVID-19 messages are encoded in the images through the use of single and multiple semiotic elements. The single semiotic element comprises the use of linguistic elements, which are declarative warnings to people to observe the safety measures of COVID-19. In some images, COVID-19, the virus and the pandemic are not even mentioned, but the messages are passed based on the common ground knowledge of the existence of the coronavirus. This exemplifies Ugoala's (2020: 57) observation that "words of a structure, though not distinct, still make meaning to the reader." The multiple semiotic elements complement one another in passing across the message to the audience. This agrees with scholars' view (Shodipe & Opeibi, 2023; Aragbuwa & Adejumo, 2021) that multimodal resources produced to create awareness of coronavirus actually served complementary purposes with the lexico-semantic properties of the discourse.

Those pictorial elements are full of contents that effectively put across both intended and unintended messages and cannot be overemphasised. Daniel (2008; 2011) demonstrates the power of images in communicating. Pictorial semiotics continue to show us that message contents are latent in posturing and showing the internal state of affairs as well as external projections of intentions and intendments. Nwabueze (2021) clearly shows how this could be a political power-broking force. This is what we are witnessing here too, a post-pandemic reality seems to be descending upon us, unawares.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the state of the notices of the prevalence of COVID-19 shows total neglect of the still possible presence of the pandemic. There is no official statement from any quarters of the total eradication of the virus, except we want to take WHO (2022) as above as such. However, the way the notices are shown in the data above to indicate a total disregard for the still possible threat of the coronavirus suggests a post-pandemic state of affairs now. The tattered and faded images as discussed above clearly indicate a post-pandemic reality. The way no one appears to care about the signs put up to control behaviours to break the transmission of the virus apparently indicates that the pandemic is over. Indeed, the question is: Are we now out of the pandemic? The images studied in this work seem to suggest that people believe that this is the case. In line with this, this work has shown that there is no direct correlation between the visuals of COVID-19 warnings and the state of the virus across the globe. There has not been any categorical and scientific statement that the virus has been eradicated from the earth to warrant the neglect of the warning signs of the virus. Therefore, we recommend that while people no longer live in the palpable fear that gripped the world during the COVID-19 pandemic, becoming careless in not remaining on guard against it or any such possible outbreak is to have learned nothing from the pandemic. Indeed, the imageries giving out warnings to the public have faded as our findings revealed above, suggesting the end of the pandemic, but caution is the sensible self-preservative and protective gear to wear against any future resurgence of the coronavirus. This lurking fear may explain why no one is ready to officially declare the pandemic over.



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