

AUDIENCE KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE ON THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING COVID-19 VACCINATION

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Abstract

The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has been producing, approving, and distributing COVID-19 vaccines since early 2021. Despite this, the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to negatively impact the socioeconomic standard and healthcare systems of African countries and other parts of the world. This review seeks to document audience knowledge and attitude on the controversy surrounding Covid-19 vaccination. The problem was that Covid-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc which has created academic gap for public school and the trauma caused by the pandemic will be a major concern for all students, the disease has no permanent cure yet. Thus, some of the objectives of this study includes; to ascertain the audience knowledge and attitude on the controversy surrounding covid-19 vaccination and to evaluate the audience knowledge and attitude on the controversy surrounding covid-19 vaccination. The population of the study was 36 of Masters of Art, mass communication departmental student 2020/2021 set of UNN. Purposive sampling was utilized to pick participants for this study since it is typically the most favored method for qualitative research because it gives individuals a platform to express themselves virtually unrestrictedly. The survey research design was employed to conduct this investigation. The finding from the study revealed that vaccine uptake is the only way to restore weak human immunity but the audiences were scared because of the after effect of taking the vaccine which is as a result of misinformation, this has led to apathy in vaccination. The study recommends that, the general public be given access to enough knowledge and reliable information regarding COVID-19 vaccines via a variety of media.

Key words: Audience, Knowledge, Attitude, Controversy, Covid-19, Vaccination

Introduction

The history of man over the years has been dotted with several life consuming disease in the recent time. The global community has been threatened by one of the most devastating diseases referred to as corona virus. Covid-19 which has been described as one of the deadliest disease much more than HIV/AIDS, Lassa fever among others, has attracted the attention of global health bodies like UNICEF, WHO and other stakeholders including governments of various nations.

The name corona virus came from the Latin word corona, meaning crown or halo. The

novel corona virus was identified by Chinese authorities in 2019 in Wuhan (Hubei China) and ever since, it was named SARS-CoV-2, it is a new strain that had not been previously identified in humans. Little is known about it, although human-to-human transmission has been confirmed.

A novel strain of the sickness known as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is brought on by coronavirus 2 that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARSCOV-2). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2013) designated it to be a pandemic in March 2020. The pandemic had a significant influence on global economic conditions in addition to human mortality and morbidity. It spreads from person to person fatally, seriously, and in large part through direct touch and respiratory secretions. More than 261 million individuals had been infected by the coronavirus as of November 29, 2021, and more than 5 million of them had perished. Wiersinga WJ *et al* (2019). This was due to people's ignorance of the virus and their attitude toward it at the time of its discovery. People were scared when the news of vaccine was discovered because of its after effect when given a dose, there were speculation of symptoms such as; headache, dizziness, weakness and the likes after taking the vaccine, this made people to avoid taking it. Also, not been sure of the right vaccines was another controversy that made people to run away from being vaccinated.

Dr. Ihekweazu (2021) said, "the initiative aims at increasing the number of Nigerians who practice COVID-19 preventive measures such as; regular hand washing, social distancing, sneezing in the elbow etc". This will last for an initial period of four months while communicating the main messages that "THE POWER TO STOP COVID-19 IS IN OUR H.A.N.D.S," Ihekweazu said.

The main reason there had been no pharmaceutical control measures in place aside from social isolation, routine hand washing, avoiding large gatherings, and mask use is because this threat has accelerated the development of vaccines to prevent further transmission of the infections and induce herd immunity over the long term. There is broad agreement within the global scientific community that, the most effective way to defeat the covid-19 pandemic is through the mass vaccination of population around the world. (Barry Bloom 2021).

The globe is presently concentrating on obtaining and administering a variety of COVID-19 vaccinations, however producing safe and effective vaccines requires significant financial resources because they are essential for the eradication and prevention of diseases throughout the world. According to documents, the COVID-19 pandemic prompted scientific teams and the World Health Organization (WHO) to collaborate on the creation of additional vaccines. Despite the quick creation of a successful SARSCOV-2 vaccine and the extent of delivery, the audience learned that the vaccine had become a hazard to public health because of a number of negative effects. The most commonly side effects reported includes; fever, headache, fatigue

(tiredness) and pain at the injection site.

According to documented evidence, one of the vaccine that had side effect was the Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) in people who have first received the j&j/Janssen covid-19 vaccines, this causes a rare disorder in the human body immune system and damages the nerve cells, this results to muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis. The GBS has largely been reported in men within the age of 50 years and above (Tomasz Chmiela *et al.*, 2021) Based on a study of data from Vaccine Safety Datalink, it was discovered that the GBS within the first 21 days following the J&J/Janssen Covid-19 vaccination was found to be 21 times higher than that of mRNA Covid-19 vaccines (Jonathan & Temte 2022).

Following the j&j/janssen covid-19 immunization, the rate of GBS was 11 times greater after the first 42 days. CDC and FDA will continue to monitor for and evaluate reports of GBS occurring after covid-19 vaccination and will share more information as it is available to the meaningful audience.

Also, vaccine is seen as a critical issue in most part of Africa. When this report was published, only 1% of Africa's 1.3 billion people had received all of their vaccinations, a figure that is much lower than that of high-income nations, where more than 50% of the populace has received all of their vaccinations because there were worries regarding vaccination safety and important (NHS, 2022).

There were claims and attitudes of audience towards vaccines at first which includes that; the vaccine will be used to kill Africans as part of a long-standing population control strategy; Bill Gates is trying to rule the world by implanting microchips into the Covid-19 vaccine (Ali Swenson 2021); big pharmaceutical companies created the virus in order to make billion-dollar profits from selling the vaccine while others claim Covid-19 is caused by 5G towers; and so on. (BBC NEWS, 2020).

As the Covid-19 vaccinations were being tested over the past six months, vaccine knowledge and associated anxieties dominated social media conversations in South Africa and around the world. Since vaccines are now being distributed, the worries have grown more serious.

It is concerning that some of these conspiracies and false information came from well-known people given that South Africa is currently experiencing a fatal second Covid-19 outbreak and that the first shipment of vaccines is on its way to the nation. Some leaders had advocated for rejecting any vaccination not created in Africa and urging Africans to rely instead on locally available plants. Although native plants on the continent offer numerous medicinal benefits and are used extensively in traditional medicine and health care, advising individuals to forgo the vaccine in favor of only conventional medicine is deadly advice.

The virus won't be killed by either steam infused with eucalyptus or extremely hot

summer temperatures. The most perilous hypothesis is that Covid-19 and the vaccine are pawns in a sinister scheme to depopulate Africa and give Western nations complete control over its natural resources. It's incomprehensible how the West would attempt to control Africa's population and resources by developing a virus and vaccination that wipes out its own citizens. All these created a vacuum in the minds of the people about covid-19 vaccines

Based on the enigma concerning the covid-19 vaccination, this study examined audience knowledge and attitude on controversy surrounding coronavirus vaccination.

Statement of Problem

Covid-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc which has created gap in schools, businesses and the trauma caused by the pandemic was a major concern for all students and business mogul. The disease has no permanent cure yet, it is still ravaging some part of the world even after millions of people had been vaccinated, and there is still speculation, controversy as to the side effect after the use of vaccines on infected patient. This is as a result of misinformation, knowledge and negative attitudes towards administering of vaccine are part of the challenges the general audience in the world is facing.

Public concern about vaccination safety may increase if there is uncertainty regarding the reason why some people react negatively to vaccines, and this fear may persist longer if there is more uncertainty. (Elise Paul *et al* 2021,) It is crucial that the audience be informed, reassured that the matter is thoroughly investigated, and informed of the outcome as soon as feasible while the source of the reaction is being identified.

Objectives of the study

To ascertain the audience knowledge and attitude on the controversy surrounding covid-19 vaccination.

To evaluate the audience knowledge and attitude on the controversy surrounding covid-19 vaccination.

Coronavirus Vaccination Overview

COVID-19 vaccine is a substance made with the intention to provide [immunity](#) against [severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2](#) (SARS-CoV-2), which is the cause of coronavirus disease ([COVID-19](#)).

Wikipedia (n.d.) states that, there was a body of information regarding the structure and operation of coronaviruses prior to the COVID 19 pandemic; this knowledge sped up the creation of multiple vaccine platforms in the early 2020s. Through emergency authorizations and conditional permissions, the first COVID 19 vaccinations were created and made accessible to the general public in 2020. The single-dose Janssen COVID-19 vaccine was the only one of the early COVID 19 vaccinations that wasn't a two-dose vaccine. However, it has been discovered that

vaccine immunity wanes with time, necessitating booster doses of the vaccine to maintain immunity. Many people gave the vaccines credit because it was established that they lessened the severity and fatality brought on by COVID 19.

A research published in June 2022 found that COVID 19 vaccines have reduced global mortality during 2020–2021 by an extra 14.4–19.8 million cases. Many nations established prevention strategies and gave top priority to those who were most vulnerable to complications, such as the elderly, and to transmission, such as healthcare personnel. After receiving the COVID 19 vaccination, it is common to have side effects such as soreness, redness, rash, inflammation at the injection site, fatigue, headaches, myalgia (muscle pain), and arthralgia (joint pain), all of which go away on their own in a matter of days.

According to official reports from national public health agencies, 13.16 billion vaccines had been distributed globally as of December 27, 2022. By December 2020, more than 10 billion vaccine doses had been preordered by countries, with roughly half of those doses coming from high-income countries, which account for 14% of the world's population. Although efficient mRNA and viral vector vaccines have developed quite quickly, global vaccine equality has not been reached. It has also not been advised to create and use whole inactivated virus (WIV) and protein-based vaccines, especially for usage in developing nations. Bivalent vaccinations that offer protection against both the original COVID-19 strain and its Omicron version have now been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Literature Review

There were no much literature related to this topic but the few that were seen helped in discussing the topic below therefore, the following related work aid the understanding of the research work as of when it was written. According to (Mastewal, *et al* 2021.) in knowledge and attitudes towards COVID-19 Vaccination and Associated Factors among College Students in Northwest Ethiopia found out that, 46.8% (95% CI:45.9,53.7) had a positive attitude towards Covid-19 vaccination, having comorbidity disease as a male were significantly associated with good knowledge. In addition, being married, being a health science student, being expose to mass media, having good knowledge of Covid-19 vaccination and having paternal primary education were vital as regards to a positive attitude towards covid-19 vaccination.

In another study by Meliha, *et al* (2022) in his work titled; Knowledge, Attitude and Perception towards COVID-19 Vaccination among the Adult Population: A Cross Sectional Study in Turkey, posit that, 633 participants (representing 62.7% of the total study population) believed that covid-19 vaccination would produce an immune response against covid-19. In addition, 80.8 percent of the respondents thought that everyone should get vaccinated to end the covid-19 pandemic and 83.8% of them were worried about family members becoming ill with covid-19. Some patients

(17.7%) had the false perception that people who had recovered from covid-19 do not need to get vaccinated. About a quarter of participants also had another misconception that the vaccines protection is achieved immediately after getting the covid-19 vaccine. More importantly, 31.2% of participant thought there was no need to take precaution such as social distancing, hand hygiene, and masking following covid-19 vaccination

In another study carried out by Bankole, Richard and Ikponmwosa (2014: p1) the study's objective was to gauge how well-informed people of three rural areas in Nigeria's Edo state were about lassa fever. Participants in the study ranged in age from 15 to 69 and there were 380 people registered overall. A standardized questionnaire was given to all volunteers in order to gather pertinent information; a total of 28 (7.4%) participants reported having heard of lassa fever, and awareness of the disease was more common among men in all communities. A total of 57.1% of people were aware of lassa fever but were unaware of the disease's route of transmission or effective means of prevention. As such, the audience was knowledgeable about covid-19 vaccination but the controversy that surrounds the vaccines after being vaccinated is the problem.

The participants' knowledge and attitudes toward COVID19 and associated health behaviors were evaluated in this study. There were equal proportion of participants who planned on receiving covid-19 vaccine (37%) and those who did not (36.3%) others of (26%) were indecisive. Our results indicated that attitude on whether to receive the vaccine, how serious consequences might be if getting the infection as well as suspicion towards the vaccine efficacy and the fear of the vaccine potentials side effects may also depend on participant age (below 40 or above 40 year). The barriers that make participants unsure about receiving the vaccine includes; controversy behind the vaccine, distrust, efficacy and safety. This may vary in different socio-demographic groups and depending on which point in time in the course of the pandemic developed as well as the vaccine availability and experience in using certain vaccine formulas. (Silva Guljas et al 2021.)

One hundred and fifty-two (65.52%) of the participants who were interviewed had a negative attitude concerning COVID19 vaccines based on the audience's knowledge and attitude toward the vaccine. The existence of a COVID19 vaccination in Tanzania were accepted by 166 individuals (84.48%). In spite of this knowledge, only 16 (6.9%) of the participants received a COVID19 vaccination, and only 84 (36.21%) of the participants were willing to be immunized. There had been false information about the pandemic on social media platforms, such as 5G mobile network are linked with the virus, that vaccine experiment killed participants after taking covid-19 vaccine and that the pandemic is a conspiracy or a bioweapon, such information can instigate fear and doubt thereby threatening the public on the intake of covid-19 vaccine (Sahil, L. et al 2021).

Theoretical Support

The study is anchored on Knowledge Attitude and Practice (KAP) Model, it was propounded in 1960s by Mayo, a professor in Harvard University. It is commonly used to explain how individual knowledge and attitudes affect health behavior changes which is also known as a behavioral intervention theory. The importance of the theory to this study is that, it improves personal knowledge, attitudes, how to practice ways to help increase health-related behavior as well as disease prevention and control. Therefore, understanding people's knowledge, attitudes and behavior towards covid-19 can provide a reference for the development of health through sensitizing the audience on the dos and don'ts.

Methodology

The survey research design was used in carrying out this work with the questionnaire as the instrument of data collection. The population for the study is the entire M.A student of mass communication department of 2020/2021 set which is 36 in number of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Using the Australian sample size calculator developed by the National statistical service of Australia, a sample size of 27 was gotten, this calculation was done at <http://www.nss.gov.au/nss/home.nsf/pages/-sample+size+calculator>. Studying this set of people will aid easy response to questions of the study. The purposive sampling was employed by the researcher to choose study participants since it is typically the most favored method for qualitative research because it gives individuals a nearly limitless space to express themselves (Babbie 2013). Since the researcher was also affiliated with the University of Nigeria Nsukka department, choosing the subjects on purpose was not difficult. As a result, each potential participant was approached and asked to fill out the questionnaire.

Findings/Discussion

Data collected in the research provided a clear insight to the subject matter, accordingly, the audience were knowledgeable about covid-19 pandemic but were misinformed on how the vaccines worked. In other to establish this fact from table 1, in line with question 1, (33%) of respondents said that, there were no misinformation pertaining covid-19 vaccination while (67%) said that, there were misinformation pertaining the vaccine such as headache, weakness, dizziness etc after taking the vaccine. This simply shows that, a large number of people had misinformation about covid-19 vaccination at the earlier time it started which prevented them from wanting to be vaccinated.

Furthermore, table 2 showed that, greater number (59%) said that it was positive in line with question 2 because of experience seen, either from friends or that of a family member such as; sore in the mouth, weakness, when a bulb is placed in the hand it lights up, fatigue etc while (41%) said it wasn't effective and that it was only speculation of

rumor about the vaccine. This goes to say that, there is need for effective and efficient dissemination of information from the beginning of any action taken thereby making the audience to have confidence and work with relevant information.

The Qualitative tool of analysis was used to describe data to understand processes, develop insights into form of sensitizing concepts and present the view of the world from the point of view of the participants (e.g., the teachers, students and other related to the classroom). Qualitative data are descriptive in such manner; field notes, interviews, video, audio, open-ended survey question all provide qualitative data for analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Question 1: Ascertain the audience knowledge and attitudes on the controversy surrounding covid-19 vaccination

Table 1: Do you know of any misinformation pertaining covid-19 vaccination?

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
No	9	33
Yes	18	67
Total	27	100%

Source: field work, 2023.

The result in table :1 shows that, (33%) of respondents said that, there were no misinformation pertaining covid-19 vaccination while (67%) said that, there were misinformation pertaining the vaccine such as headache, weakness, dizziness etc. after taking the vaccine. This simply shows that, a large number of people had misinformation about covid-19 vaccination at the earlier time it started which prevented them from wanting to be vaccinated.

Question 2: What is the audience knowledge and attitude on the controversy surrounding covid-19 vaccination?

Table 2: how effective was this misinformation on covid-19 vaccination on the audience?

Response	Frequency	Percentage%
Positive	16	59
Negative	11	41
Total	27	100%

Source Field work, 2023.

From table 2: findings showed that, greater number (59%) said that it was positive because of experience seen, either from friends or that of a family member such as; sore in the mouth, weakness, when a bulb is placed in the hand it lights up, fatigue etc. while (41%) said it wasn't effective and that it was only speculation of rumor about the vaccine. This goes to say that, there is need for effective and efficient dissemination of information from the beginning of any action taken thereby making the audience to have confidence and work with relevant information.

Results of this study demonstrate that timely information is an efficient technique for disseminating accurate health information regarding COVID-19, which is consistent with other studies carried out in Tanzania (Khamis & Geng, 2021). We also discovered that reasonable number of respondents said that, they heard of COVID-19 through radio. During a pandemic as such, it is of importance that reliable and timely information be disseminated across the nation because information is key to helping the public (Manganello et al. 2020). Additionally, there is a need for reliable and trustworthy health communication channels that the public may use to learn about health related cases, vaccines and take appropriate action. According to Osuagwu et al. (2021), false information about the COVID19 immunization poses a threat to world health because it could unintentionally make problems worse by encouraging greater disease transmission (Amgain et al. 2020). Despite the knowledge acquired on vaccination, considerable proportion of the audience continues to believe that the virus was created by humans, with Tanzania Journal of Health Research Volume 23, Number 1, May 2022 <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/thrb.v23i1.3>. it was also recorded that, a good number of male participants were reluctant on been vaccinated while few students were seen to be concerned about the adverse effects of immunization.

During the period of January to March, the findings also showed that, most of the respondents were informed about COVID-19, this means that, the audience were knowledgeable about the pandemic in Nigeria but since the beginning of covid-19 pandemic, there had been lots of information with every media channel covering the most recent development. Information channels which includes both traditional and social media were sharing vaccine information. misinformation may be very influential in swaying public opinion as to whether or not members of the public want to be vaccinated. Past research has found that online forums, blogs and social media have contributed to the spread of vaccine information. (Rachael, P.L. et al 2021).

Conclusion

In addition to improving overall health and lowering the burden of infectious disease, vaccines are effective at building immunity in individuals. The annual number of

deaths that were averted by immunizations is about six million, this influence helped save lives directly (medical health care costs), indirectly (workforce productivity), positive finance, and economic growth effects. Vaccine safety is scrutinized by the public more than vaccine efficacy, despite the fact that vaccines are thought to have saved many lives around the world and cost tens of billions of US dollars, there is need to disseminate the right information to its audience to avert fear because most of the vaccines prevent disease rather than treat it. As agents of immunization programs (i.e., they should receive the appropriate immunizations), healthcare professionals should also be informed about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines.

All of these measures in 2023 are a part of a larger effort to make sure that health systems at all levels—local, national, regional, and international—can address the fallout from vaccines in the previous three years, whether during a crisis or during routine care delivery. We have the opportunity to put COVID-19's devastating losses and hard-learned lessons into practice right now, not just for our own benefit but also for the safety and welfare of future generations.

Recommendations

- *Relevant information on covid-19 vaccination should be disseminated void of threat to the audience*
- *There is need for reliable vaccines that can cure not preventing without any side effect*
- *Regular sensitization about covid-19 should be done to keep the audience safe.*

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