



Vaccine Hesitancy In Youngsters & Seniors In Delhi - NCR

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Abstract: The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has been around for almost a year and a half now, and still, it keeps getting deadlier with each passing day. Having taken millions of lives already, there had to be only one permanent and prominent saviour against this virus; Vaccine.

It's been almost 6 months since the first doses of vaccines were introduced and the subsequent commencement of the vaccination drive. While the governments and medical institutes around the world have been urging their respective countrymen to get vaccinated, there is a certain section of the society which is not quite willing to take the jab. The question is, why? The answer lies in the term 'Vaccine Hesitancy'.

This Hesitancy mostly runs on the track of misinformation and doubt. The factual knowledge can really go for a toss at times. But the other times, these are some genuine concerns of people to which they haven't got answers, leading to mistrust.

Introduction

It has been close to a year and a half since the Covid-19(SARS-CoV-2) pandemic has been taking a brutal toll on the entire world's population. Millions have already lost their lives and thousands are still losing theirs every single day. The deadly virus has brought a abundance of aspects into perspective. The term 'Vaccination' is one of them.

It's been almost 6 months since the release of first ever vaccines against Covid-19. The vaccination drive has begun worldwide but strangely enough, the low vaccine shot turnout has been the talk of the town. People are just not ready to take the jab. But, why is it the case when the vaccine is supposed to be a shield against this deadly pandemic? This can be attributed to 'Vaccine hesitancy'.

Vaccine hesitancy is when a person delays in acceptance of vaccines despite availability of reliable vaccination in the country. Vaccine hesitancy, also called **anti-vaccination** or **anti-vax** is a very complex and complicated as the hesitancy specific is varying across time, place and vaccines. There are 3 main factors in vaccine hesitancy - complacency, confidence and convenience. People who agree with this view are called "**anti-vaxxers**". The World Health Organization believes that vaccine hesitancy is one of the biggest global health threat currently present in the world.

Every vaccination program aims to protect individuals, mostly children's and old age population because these two groups are most vulnerable. Vaccination preventable infectious diseases such as **COVID-19** can be controlled without 100% vaccination coverage, but the rates are generally high sometimes up to 80-90% range. WHO data shows that one in every seven children around the globe are unvaccinated, and that three lives are lost to vaccine – preventable diseases but this number is much higher in recent times as COVID-19 took over the whole world.

Immunization programs faces many challenges such as logistical, economic and cultural challenges and all of these contributes to sub optimal and uneven coverage of vaccination. Sometimes it's even difficult to engage doctors and other healthcare works into vaccination drives due to lack of data regarding vaccine and it's really difficult to vaccinate the left-out population if the healthcare system shows lack of confidence in vaccines.

Vaccine attitudes are often seen on a continuum, starting from total acceptance to complete refusal. Vaccine-hesitant individuals are a heterogeneous group within the middle of this sequence. Vaccine hesitant individuals may refuse some vaccines but comply with others.

With the introduction of social media in people's life, vaccination drives face a new challenge of misinformation. Still, studies of these social networking websites show that opposition to vaccines is small but is far reaching and growing. As number of new users joining these social networking websites is increasing every month which leads to more people looking at misinformation spreading around the social media. Controlling the spread of rumours and fake news is the new biggest challenge which needs to be addressed quickly for the smooth rollout of vaccines.

Refusing of the vaccines started way back in early 1800s, when the smallpox vaccine was started being used in large population. Earlier when the vaccine was given to a small group of population for trail bases, the hesitancy towards the vaccination was less but as the scale of vaccination increased, the news of side effects related to vaccine also increased within the people. Most of the "Anti-Vaxxers" were parents who refused to vaccinate their children because there were misinformation going around that vaccination in young children develop autism in them. This news spread from household to household making a group of people who started refusing vaccination for the disease believing it might develop other diseases while curing the original one.

Behind these specific ideas often lies mistrust. People who are hesitant tend to be suspicious of authority. But while it's wise to make judgment based on evidence rather than blithely accepting what we're told, in many cases we've found that the vaccine hesitant are susceptible to misinformation.

Research Methodology

The methodology involves collecting data from primary and secondary sources.

Step 1

Review of Secondary Literature: - In this step, I searched for various information present on internet/ news websites/ eBooks & research papers about Vaccine Hesitancy. Looking at various angles of Vaccine Hesitancy, I even read almost 50 references to get clarity about vaccine hesitancy and its impact on current scenario.

Step 2

Research Questions: - These were the following questions that were raised after literature review.

1. Why vaccine hesitancy exists in Delhi - NCR?
2. What are the primary reasons for vaccine hesitancy?
3. Are Gen-Z more hesitant towards vaccination?
4. What are the effects of social media in vaccine hesitancy?
5. How can we minimize vaccine hesitancy In India?

Step 3

Survey: - Survey form gives quantitative data and in the most convenient method of gathering data. In this, I prepared a questionnaire related to vaccine hesitancy. And send it to 100 people and then divided the collected data in 2 groups of the age groups 18- 45 yrs. and 45 & above. The main questions were related to the whether they are willing to take the vaccine or are hesitant towards it and what are the reasons for it. The survey form provided me with the data in percentage which gave me a clear idea as what the majority thinks regarding vaccination drive happening in India.

Survey Question

1. What are the different sources from which you gather information about vaccines?
 - Internet
 - News Channels
 - Social Media
 - News Papers
 - Others
2. Did you had any experience in past that would discourage you getting vaccine?
 - Yes
 - No
3. Do you know anyone who is hesitant about taking vaccine due to religious or cultural reasons?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not Sure
4. Do you trust the data provided by the government or health ministry about the vaccines?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not Sure

5. Do you think vaccines should be made compulsory?
 - Yes
 - No
6. What is the maximum time you are willing to spend to get a vaccination done?
 - 1 Hour
 - 2 Hour
 - 3 Hours or more
7. Do you feel social pressure to get vaccinated?
 - Yes
 - No
8. Do you think vaccines strengthen our immune system?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not Sure
9. Will you take the vaccine against COVID-19?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not Sure
10. What is your age?
 - 18 - 50
 - Above 50

Review of Literature

Majority of the criticism related for not getting vaccinated is related to sanitary, political and religious objections. Some even believed that vaccine went against their religion. Anti-vaccine narratives are numerous from advocating alternative medicines to linking immunizations to conspiracy theories. Recently after 1st wave of Covid-19 came to a steady decline, many started to believe that the virus is disappearing due to already poor hygiene conditions in India and people in our country people eat spicy food which made the virus die itself inside us. People believed due to all these factors; they already have enough immunity to fight against the deadly virus. All these myths were busted when the 2nd wave came even more aggressively infecting double the amount of people.

Vaccine hesitancy does not come up suddenly in the mind of people as it follows a certain pattern in which it rises and falls. When a vaccine is introduced, it makes people hopeful that the fight against the disease will end soon which makes them to accept the vaccine but as soon as any side effect shows up in already vaccinated population from there the news starts spreading which later is followed by other misinformation and rumours. These myths take very less time to convert into fake news spreading across social media. But with time the vaccine hesitancy slows down as people start realising the true value of vaccinating the population which we saw in the 2nd wave of COVID-19 in India.

Later when majority of populations gets vaccinated and the disease starts to enter early stages of eradication, again the vaccine hesitancy starts showing up in the un-vaccinated population. There is a common belief among people that since the disease have been eliminated, there's no need for any further vaccinations. But the truth of the matter is that the diseases will only stay eradicated if vaccine are still being used to prevent them.

Impact of polio vaccine hesitancy in South Asia

Vaccine hesitant groups, mainly those who go on to outright boycott immunization, were relatively rare. Medium to high confidence in vaccines programs were much more common, this was even common in areas with security challenges and history of legacies of mistrust. For example – in Pakistan, an average of only 2 percent of the population refuses vaccines for religious and other personal reasons.

Recently in Islam while COVID-19 vaccines were announced, there were many concerns regarding vaccines and most concerning factors for them to know was that whether the vaccines are Halal (permissible or lawful), Whether the vaccines contain any kind of alcohol based substance.

Addressing these concerns was important for them to accept the vaccine and The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) had confirmed that there are no components of animal origin in the COVID-19 vaccines that are currently licensed in the UK.

Let's learn from the Polio Lesson.

- **Overcoming Vaccine Hesitancy Strategies:**

1. **Sharing fact-based information from experts** – As the healthcare and frontline workers become educated about COVID-19 vaccines, they can give accurate information regarding the immunization, from potential side effects to necessary precautions.
2. **Effective use of Social Media & engaging community leaders** – Celebrities & established community influencers can all help to promote vaccine acceptance. Notably, this tactic was used during India's battle with polio.
3. **Making vaccines more accessible** – By setting up vaccination camps sites in remote areas and by providing vaccines for free or at subsidized rates, we can then help the public to feel more confident about the vaccination programmes.

- **India:**

1. Vaccine programme was done by working with volunteers from local communities in the microplanning of Immunization Activities which supplemented with the whole drive to identify and address vaccine related concerns in less visible groups of unimmunized children.
2. India, continued to hold Sub-National Immunizations Days for polio every year to maintain population immunity against poliovirus and continued to do so until it was able to sustain its polio free status.

- **Pakistan & Afghanistan:**

1. In rural areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan, access remained the biggest challenge for reaching communities with low to very-low vaccination uptake rates. This include – geographical difficulties with physical access and difficulty in finding and tracking down migrating communities.
2. While religious leaders often refused to take vaccine, some Islamic leaders even went so far as to issue fatwas (Muslim legal notice) against childhood vaccination efforts.
3. Some even believed that the polio vaccine campaign was an extension of forced population control measures of the 1970s, when the government forced people with two or more children to be sterilized.

COVID-19 vaccine rollout vs Others in the past

- **Swine Flu, 1976**

- The government provided vaccines to the state health departments and to private medical centres directly.
- The program managed to jab 40 million American's during the course of a year, and During elections, vaccines were put on fast-tracking.

- **H1N1, 2009**

- Unlike the Pfizer & Moderna vaccines for SARs-COVID-19, which require two dose and more importantly cold storage chain, vaccination for H1N1 didn't required any special logistics.
- It was a regular vaccine rollout just like flu vaccine and trust rate was high due to availability of vaccine easily.
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Worldwide vaccine hesitancy during Covid -19:

- **Hesitancy in black communities in US**

- A survey was conducted in late 2020 in which sample of 207 black Americans was taken and high levels of vaccine hesitancy and mistrust of COVID-19 vaccines was found in the overall sample.
- Those who showed high levels of mistrust said about potential harm & side effects as the main reason.
- Black Americans also show their medical mistrust, In general and specific to COVID-19 vaccines, In systemic racism, including discrimination and mistreatment in health care as well as by the government itself.

- **Hesitancy in UK compared to US.**

- In a survey, 26 % of Americans said that they won't take the vaccine.
- Meanwhile, In the UK vaccine hesitancy is much lower, government polls show around 6 % only.
- Vaccine hesitancy in the US had stayed the same till now, while hesitancy in the UK fallen to the lowest in the whole world.
- UK has administered 75 dose per 100 people & 95% of their population above 50 have already got their first dose of vaccine.
- One tactic that made UK different from US, was its approach to regulation and public communication regarding to bad news about vaccines.

- **Hesitancy in Singapore**

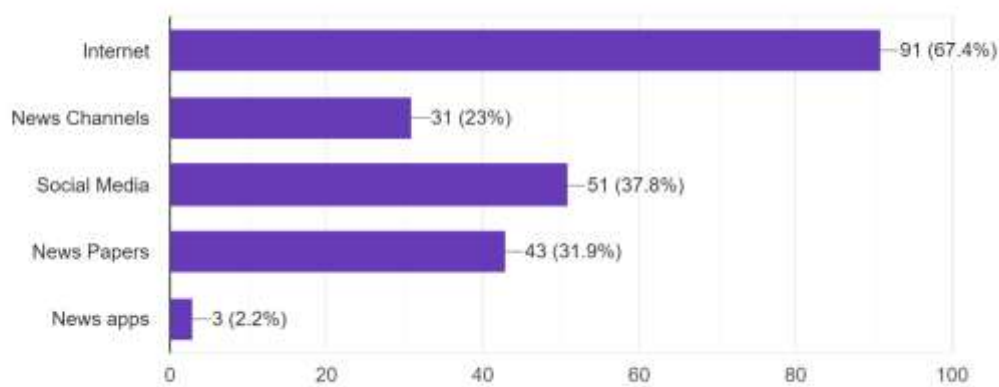
- Singapore was fighting against the virus by implementing strict restrictions. It was also fighting vaccine hesitancy on social media.
- Singapore Health Ministry had debunked lots of rumours and also ordered corrections to the posts that endorsed false claims and misinformation regarding the vaccine side effects.
- The government also released a music video by Singaporean comedian & actor, Gurmit Singh, that address common concerns and misconceptions regarding the vaccine.
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Result

1) What are the different sources from which you gather information about vaccines?

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135 responses

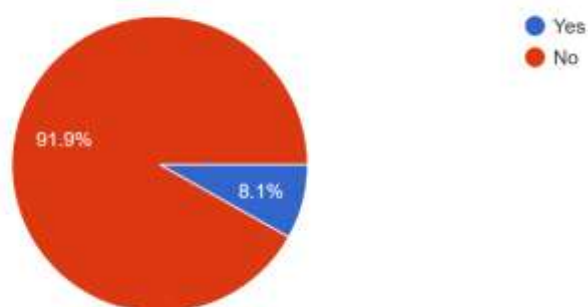


By observing the above data, we can see that majority of the people who took the survey gather the information about vaccines from the internet followed by social media and newspapers.

2) Did you had any experience in past that would discourage you getting vaccine?

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135 responses

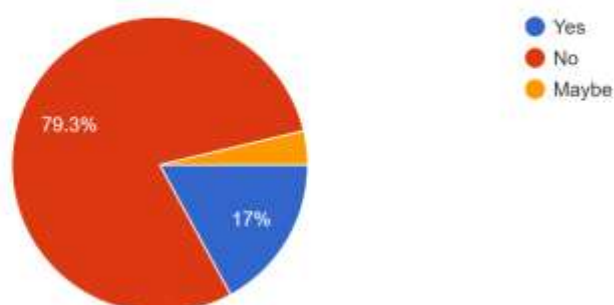


Most of the people did not had any past experience in their life which made them not getting vaccine. This could be due to people has seen the India's vaccination drive against the Polio which made them more confident for Covid-19 vaccination drive too.

3) Do you know anyone who is hesitant about taking vaccines due to religious or cultural reasons?

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135 responses

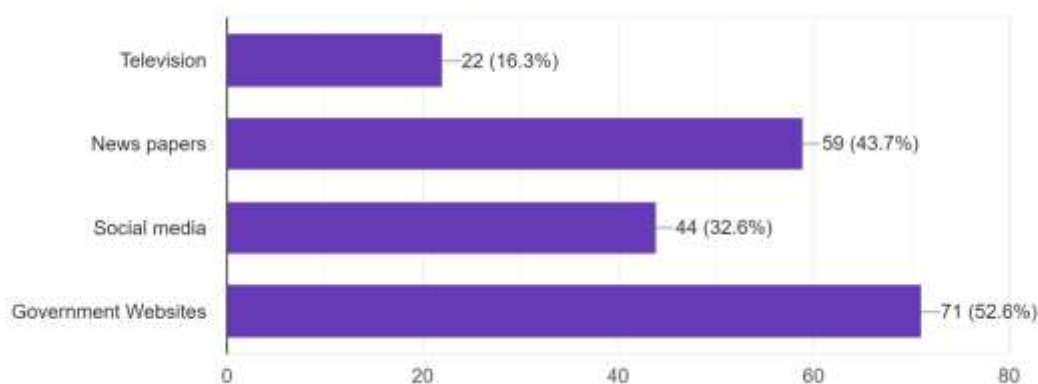


79.3 % of the people in the sample had not come across or know anyone who is hesitant about taking vaccine due to any kind of religious or cultural reasons. 17 % said they know someone and only a fraction of people being not sure about the same.

4) Which of the following source give true COVID-19 data according to you?

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135 responses

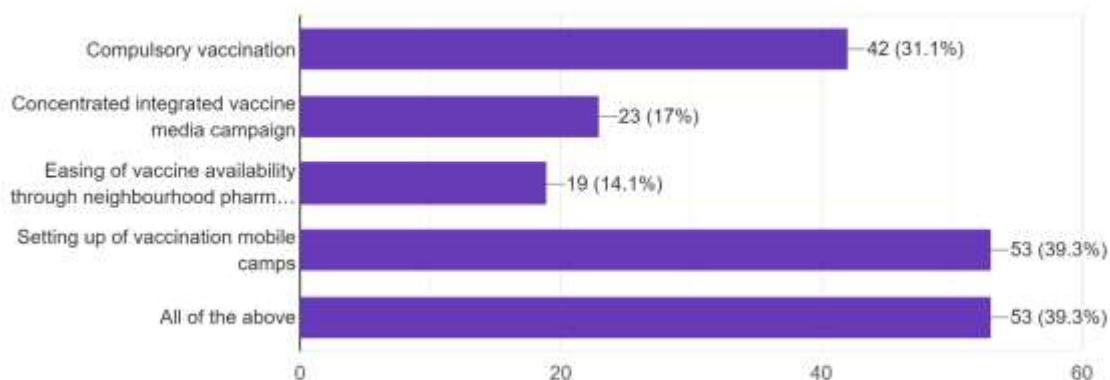


By the above chart, people believe in data provided by the government websites the most for gathering information on Covid-19 followed by newspapers and social media. People have least faith in the data provided by the television due to already hampered image of the news channels in India.

5) What is your suggestion for eliminating Vaccine Hesitancy?

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135 responses



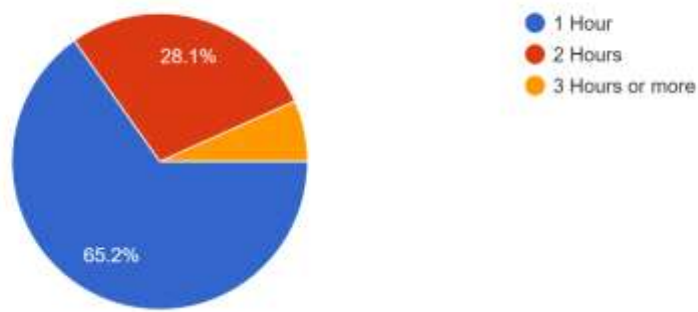
53% people agree with all the steps which are mentioned in the survey question and equally they are in favour of setting up of mobile camps of vaccination. Compulsory vaccination is the next closest suggestion which is believed to help in elimination of vaccine hesitancy.

This question had the option to select multiple answers at the same time.

6) What is the maximum time you are willing to spend to get a vaccination done?

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135 responses

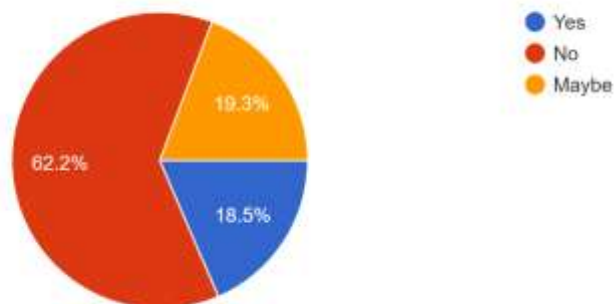


In the current times where people want everything quickly done, this also applied in getting the vaccine jab with 65.2% people willing to wait for only 1 hour at the vaccine centre and 28.1% ready to wait for at least 2 hours. A very small chunk of people are ready to wait for 3 hours and beyond for getting a vaccination done.

7) Do you feel social pressure to get vaccinated?

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135 responses

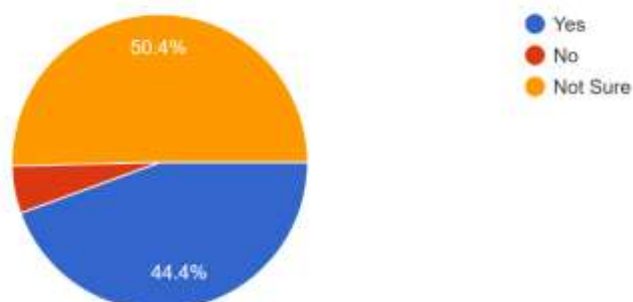


Majority of people do not feel the social pressure to get vaccinated but some feel the social pressure, this can be due to the FOMO (Fear of missing out) which is building up around the vaccination. People who have said “Yes” might be seeing their friends and family or even celebrities posting pictures of getting vaccine on the social media which triggers this FOMO in them.

8) Do you think vaccines strengthen our immune system?

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135 responses

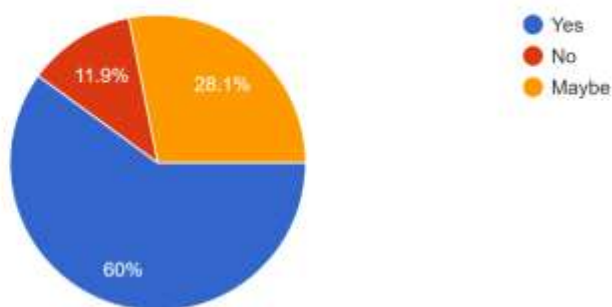


Confidence in the vaccine plays a huge role in vaccine hesitancy. Surprisingly, almost 50% of the people who took the survey were not sure about whether the vaccines strengthen our immune system against the deadly coronavirus or not while 44.4% believe that available vaccines do trigger the immune response.

9) Will you take the vaccine against COVID-19?

Will you take the vaccine against COVID-19?

135 responses

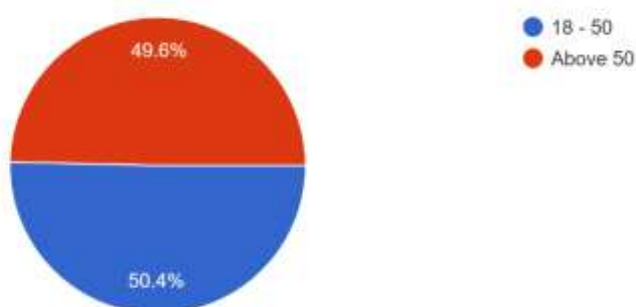


Even though majority of people who participated in this survey said that they are “Not Sure” about the vaccine efficacy and protection against the coronavirus but still 60% of them agreed on taking the vaccine followed by 28.1 % people still in the state of confusion about taking the jab and only 11.9% straight away refusing to take the vaccine against the Covid-19.

10) What is your age?

What is your age?

135 responses



As mentioned before the Chapter 3 (**Research Methodology**), The sample size for this survey was approximately 100. In the end of data collection, around 134 entries were registered. The last questions shows that the survey ratio of 50 younger generation samples and 50 older generation samples was maintained. By “Above 50” sample showing .4% difference due to duplicated entries those were removed in the data verification stage.

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