

Chapter 8

COVID–19 Vaccine Hesitancy: Analyzing Risk Factors Impacting Minority Populations' Acceptance/ Adoption and ICT–Based Solutions

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ABSTRACT

Information and communication technology (ICT) tools and services are revolutionizing the healthcare fields in many ways. One of such ways has been the sharing of information about vaccines to encourage their acceptance and adoption. The COVID-19 Vaccines Hesitancy Project (hereafter called the Project) was completed at one of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the United States of America (USA). The researchers investigated through literature and secondary data the issues that continue to cause inequities and fuel vaccine hesitancies among different populations, particularly minority populations as well as the use of various ICT tools and services to better educate society for acceptance and adoption.

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 global pandemic was officially known as *SARS-CoV-2* as confirmed by collaborative research work of many scientists and healthcare professionals (Delorey, 2021). It was the first time that we heard about the disease in early March 2020, but it spread very rapidly in the USA and other parts of the world and by mid-2020 it had become a pandemic. Many businesses were shut down, schools were closed and some that had technological capabilities turned to such technologies to conduct virtual learning. Throughout 2020, there were no ready-made vaccines or medication to combat the disease (Charumilind et al, 2021). By October 2021, there were more than 5 million deaths globally and 500,000 in the USA (USAFacts.org, 2021, October 30). A few COVID-19 vaccines were made available in the USA by big pharmaceutical firms like Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson in early 2021, however, the long existing problem of medical mistrust and vaccine hesitancies hindered people from taking the vaccines.

Blendon et al (2014) inform that the USA ranks high among many industrialized countries in customer satisfaction but low in public trust of their physicians. The medical mistrust and vaccine hesitancy were amplified in 2020 with COVID-19. They became more pronounced even with the availability of the COVID-19 vaccines in the later part of 2021 so that people became flustered and full of various hesitancies that prevented them from taking the vaccines (Chou & Budenz, 2020; Cowan et al, 2021; Croxford, 2021; and Kates, et al, 2021). This research, therefore, investigated COVID-19 vaccines hesitancy. The following questions guided the investigation using literature review and data from various health portals including the Vaccine Makers Project (VMP), US Center for Disease Control (CDC), and USA Facts organization.

Research Questions

- Historically, how has the healthcare industry created mistrust with certain groups of people such as minority populations?
- What are factors influencing the behavioral decision to accept/adopt, delay or reject COVID-19 vaccines?
- Are people hesitant about getting COVID-19 vaccines concerned about complications and long-term health impact?
- What influence does social media have on COVID-19 vaccines hesitancy?
- Has politics contributed to COVID vaccines hesitancy?
- What ICT tools and health information portals are available and can be used to educate the public and minority populations on COVID-19 vaccines acceptance and adoption?

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