

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH INTO COVID-19 VACCINE HESITANCY IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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INTRODUCTION

As of 16th October 2021, under 60% of the population was fully vaccinated. There was a high number of vaccine doses available but unused due to a large population of vaccine-hesitant individuals. This low vaccination rate can be linked to the presence of various factors contributing to vaccine hesitancy.

OBJECTIVE

To explore the beliefs and motivations surrounding vaccine-hesitancy in T&T to answer the research questions: 1) “What are the main reasons for vaccine-hesitancy in T&T and 2) What are the motivations for future vaccine uptake?”

METHODOLOGY

This research project was a **qualitative study** that collected information from **25** unvaccinated citizens that were vaccine-hesitant in T&T which were recruited via mobile, social media, and email.

Data collection began in **January 2022** and interviews were performed virtually in keeping with the restrictions of the pandemic.

Participants were assigned numbers to protect their anonymity. Thereafter, the team analyzed the data and sorted it into themes based on the research questions.

RESULTS

Reasons for not getting COVID-19 vaccine

Figure 1 below shows the themes and sub-themes surrounding why participants were vaccine hesitant.

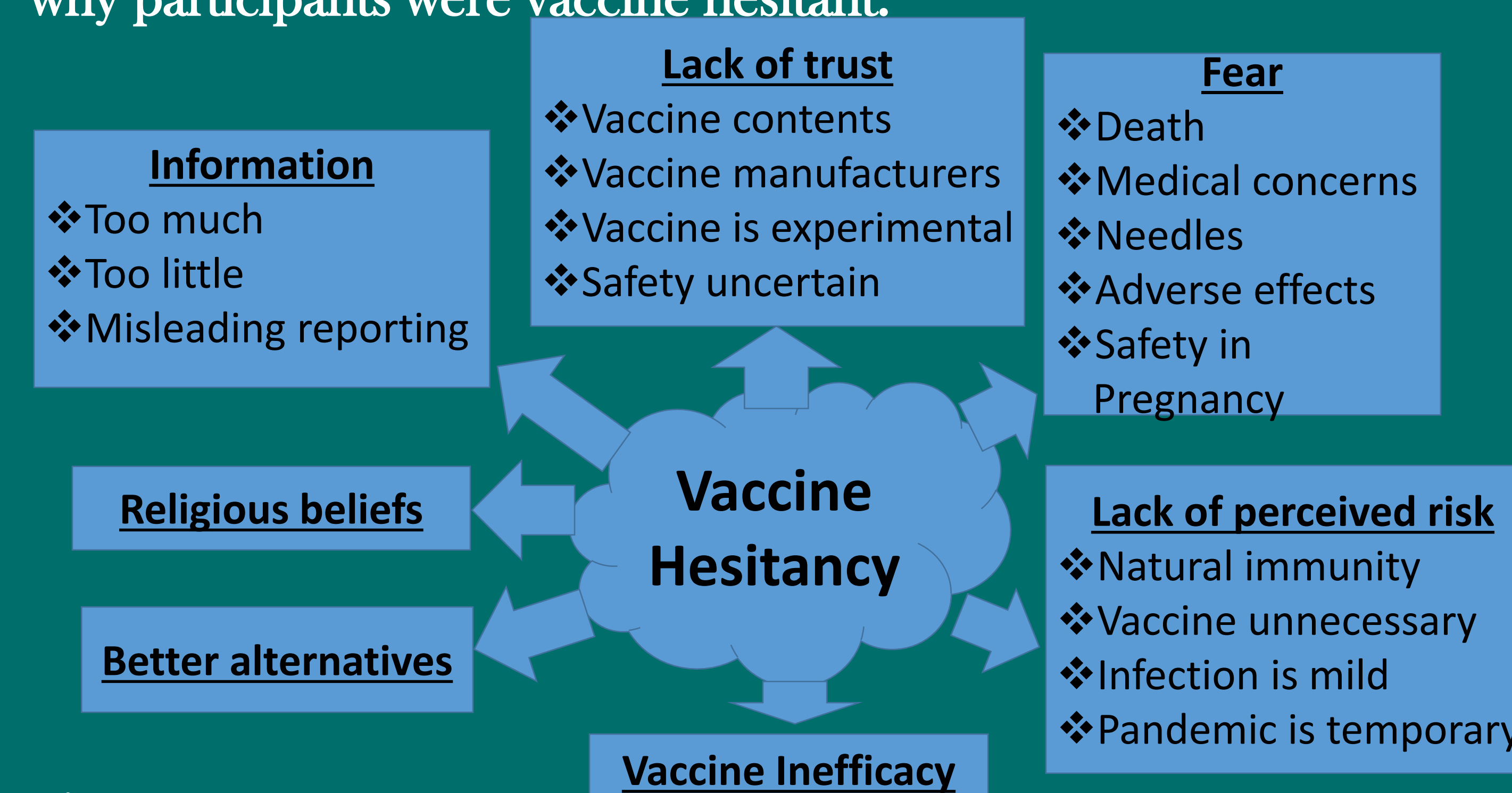


Figure 1

Below are selected quotes from some of the study's participants:

“From personal experience, a relative of mine took the vaccine. God help his family. He dropped down dead right after the shots.”

“It is not safe 100%...like the tetanus, polio, the bacteria, those vaccination those definitely safe...because years and years of research went into those vaccines. They use animals for many many years. And then they started using humans. With this COVID-19 vaccine...Instead of using animals they started using humans as guinea pigs to do the experiment.”

“Pandemics in the past come and go... So, I know it's only a matter of time.”

“I don't think it's a vaccine. I will call it an experimental trial...”

Motivations for future COVID-19 vaccine uptake:

Some of the themes for future vaccine uptake were: **Necessity, Lack of Perceived Risk, Improved Lifestyle and Assurance.**

DISCUSSION

The findings show that the overarching themes of their reasons for vaccine-hesitancy were mostly rooted in the **misconceptions**. Similar findings have been documented in qualitative studies done in other settings around the world in various populations.

Though participants of this study were vaccine-hesitant, they were not opposed to the idea of getting vaccinated in the future.

These findings have implications for how we educate the public and give reliable accurate information to enable informed decision making. Appropriate communication of risk and building trust between those in science and the general public is needed.

CONCLUSION

Our study found that fear, inefficacy, information available, misinformation, lack of perceived risk, lack of trust and the belief in better alternatives were the key factors for vaccine-hesitancy throughout T&T.

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