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FACULTY OF MEDICAL SCIENCES

# The Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Voluntary Non-remunerated Blood Donations (VNRBD) on the University of the West Indies Blood Donor Foundation (UWIBDF) and a general community group (GCG) in Trinidad and Tobago

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## Introduction

- The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends collection of one unit per 20 persons each year. Given the population of T&T, 70,000 units of blood are required per annum. However, only 20,000 units are collected.
- This study aims to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on VNRBD within the UWIBDF and the GCG in T&T and highlights the motivators and demotivators to VNRBD during that time.

## Objective

- To describe the knowledge, attitudes and practices towards VNRBD, during the COVID-19 pandemic among the UWIBDF members.
- To describe the knowledge, attitudes and practices towards VNRBD during the COVID-19 pandemic in a GCG.
- To determine the motivators and demotivators towards VNRBD during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Methodology

- This was a descriptive study with 244 respondents.
- Responses were obtained from members of the UWIBDF and the GCG via an online questionnaire, distributed using social media platforms.
- Convenience sampling was utilized since the pandemic hindered physical distribution of questionnaires.
- Data from the questionnaire was analyzed using the IBM SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were generated using Microsoft Excel.

## Results

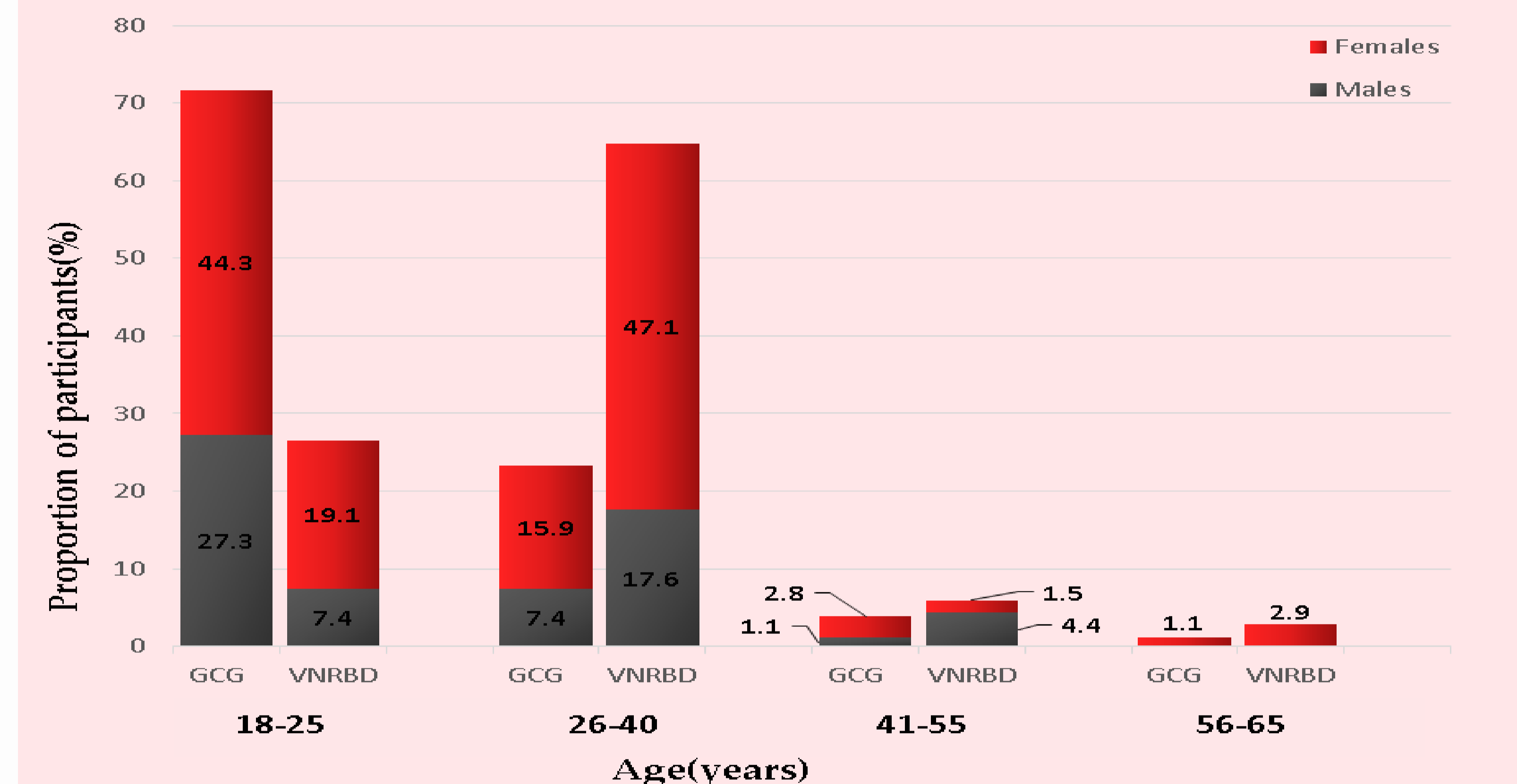


Figure 1: Bar chart showing distribution of study participants by age and sex.

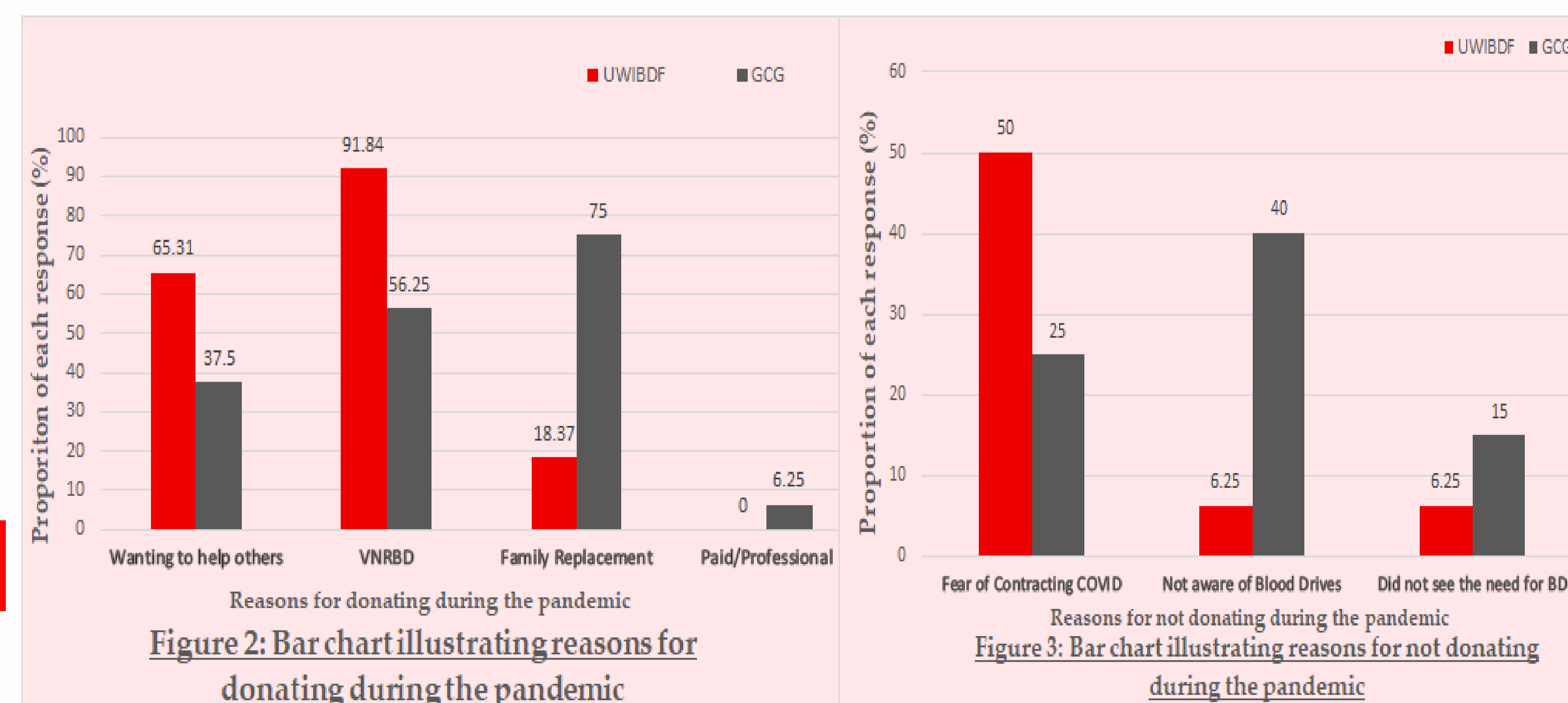


Figure 2: Bar chart illustrating reasons for donating during the pandemic

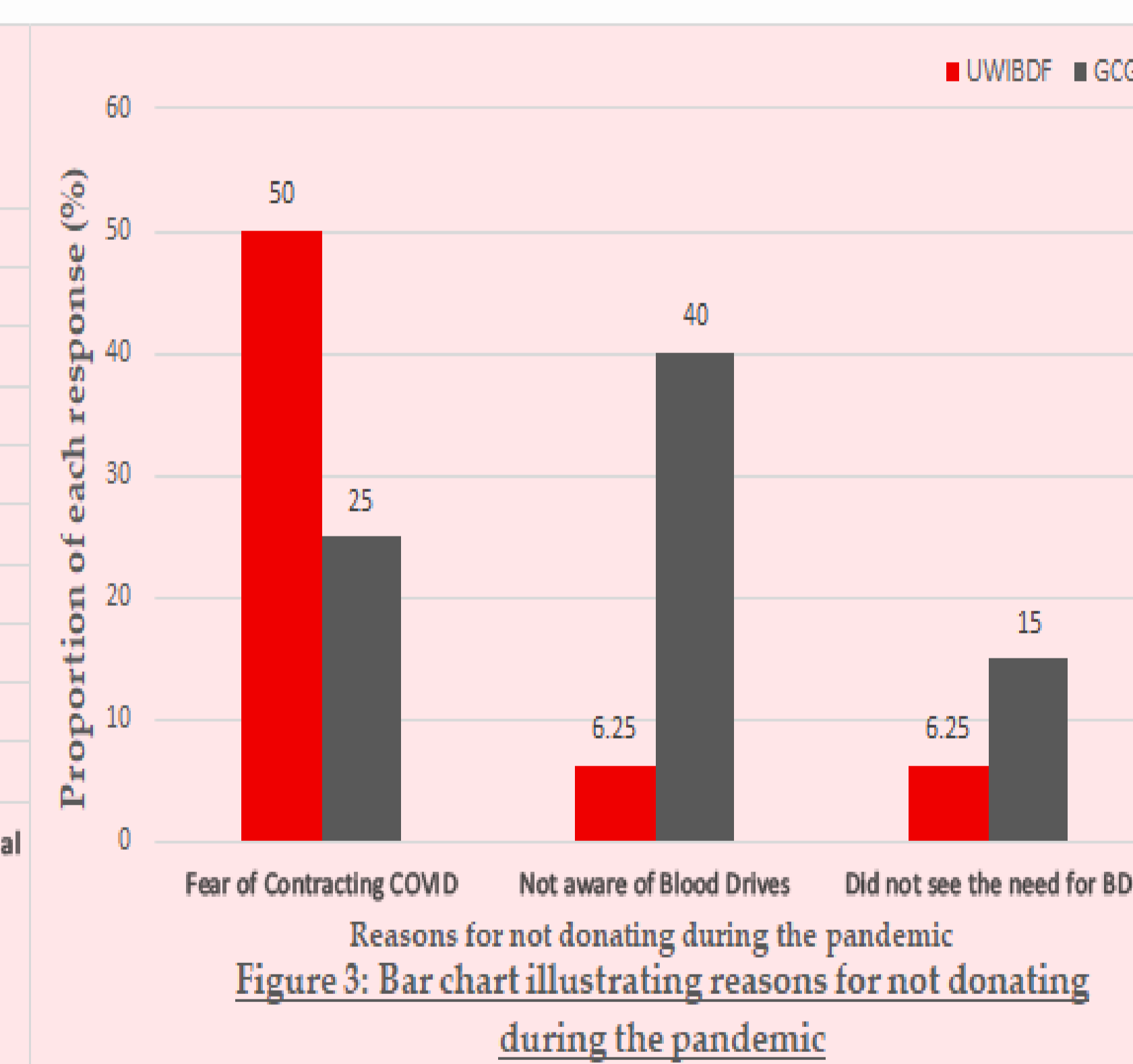


Figure 3: Bar chart illustrating reasons for not donating during the pandemic

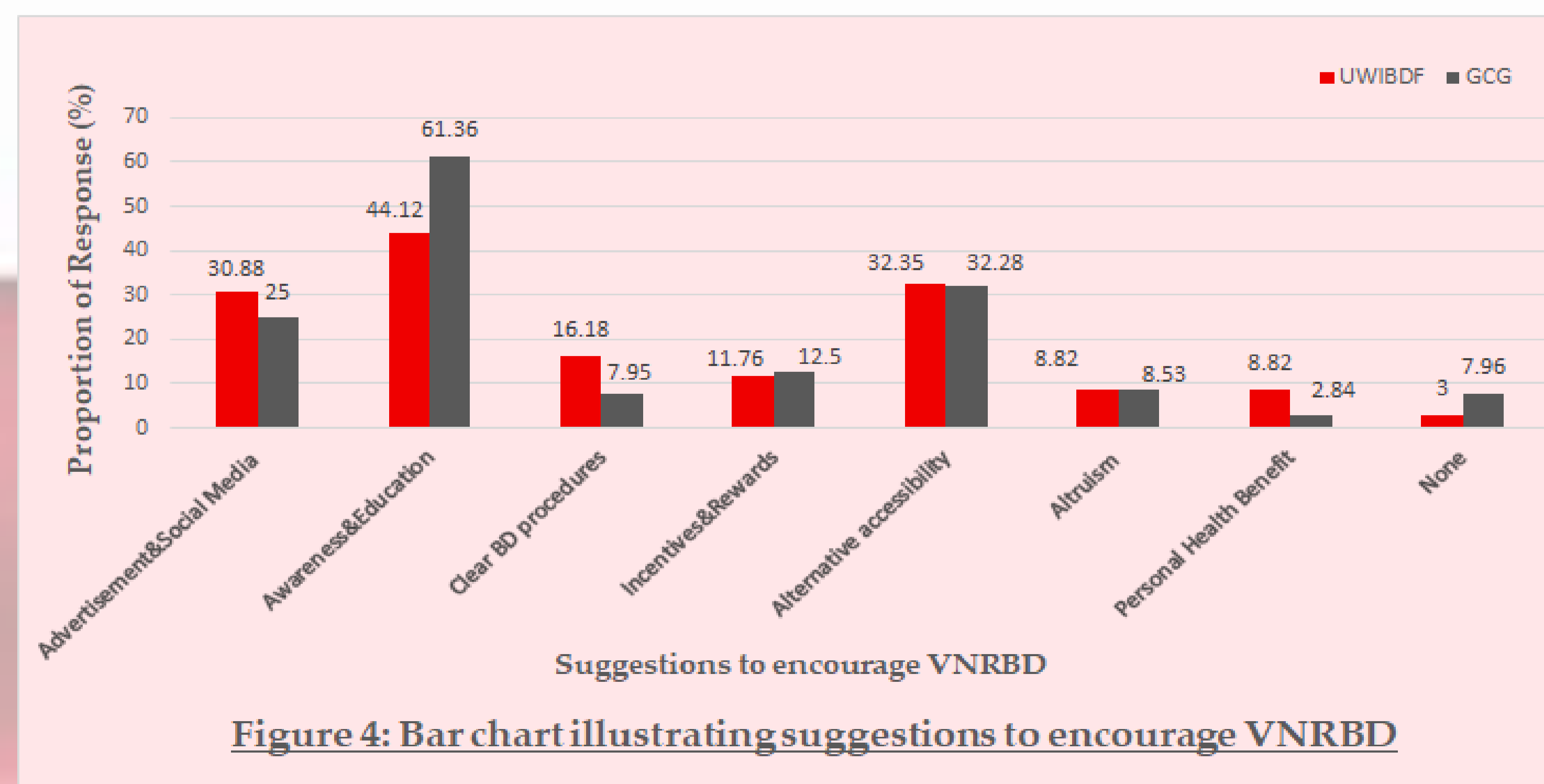


Figure 4: Bar chart illustrating suggestions to encourage VNRBD

## Discussion

- Persons from UWIBDF were more aware of the importance of VNRBD and its shortage in T&T. They were also aware that there was no deferral period for donation after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Additionally, persons from UWIBDF had a positive attitude towards VNRBD while persons from the GCG generally supported family replacement blood donations as supported by Charles et al.(1).
- As a result, during the pandemic, 72% of VNRD donors continued to donate as VNRBD while family replacement was the most common reason among the GCG.
- Fear of contracting COVID-19 as stated by Sayedahmed et al (2) was the most common reason for not donating among UWIBDF while unawareness of blood drives held was the most common reason among the GCG.
- The most popular suggestions between both groups to increase VNRBD were awareness and education, alternative accessibility and the use of advertisement and social media.

## Conclusion

- The UWIBDF was more aware and maintained a positive attitude towards the practice of VNRBD.
- The GCG practiced and maintained a positive attitude towards family replacement.
- The findings of the study showed that overall improvement in knowledge, advertisements and accessibility to blood donation sites in T&T are the key to moving towards VNRBD and ultimately achieving a sustainable blood supply.

## References

- Charles KS, Poon King A, Ramai A, Rajnath K, Ramkissoon D, Ramkissoon S, et al. Blood donors' attitudes towards voluntary non-remunerated donation in Trinidad and Tobago. *Transfusion medicine* (Oxford, England). 2017;27(4):249-55.
- Sayedahmed AM, Ali KA, Ali SB, Ahmed HS, Shrf SF, Ali NA. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and decrease in blood donation: A cross-sectional study from Sudan. *ISBT Science Series*. 2020 Jun 26;15(4):381-385

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