

### 57. AWARENESS, COVERAGE, AND BARRIERS TO COVID-19 VACCINATION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN NIGERIA

Fortune Benjamin Effiong<sup>1</sup>, Ibrahim Adebayo Hassan<sup>2</sup>, Dimeji Abdulsobur Olawuyi<sup>3</sup>, Chiemela Prosper Ogbonna<sup>4</sup>, Jeremiah Babatunde Araoye<sup>5</sup>, Esther Edet Bassey<sup>6</sup>, Kenneth Emeka Enwerem<sup>7</sup>, Yusuff Adebayo Adebisi<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> BSc. Department of Clinical Chemistry and Immunology, Faculty of Medical Laboratory Science, University of Calabar, Nigeria; Directorate of Research, TORASIF, Nigeria; Global Health Focus (GHF), UK.

<sup>2</sup> BPharm. Faculty of Pharmacy, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria; Directorate of Research, TORASIF, Nigeria.

<sup>3</sup> Fourth-year Medical Student. Department of Medicine and Surgery, Faculty of Clinical Sciences, College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria; Directorate of Research, TORASIF, Nigeria.

<sup>4</sup> BSc. Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria; Directorate of Research, TORASIF, Nigeria.

<sup>5</sup> BPharm. Faculty of Pharmacy, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

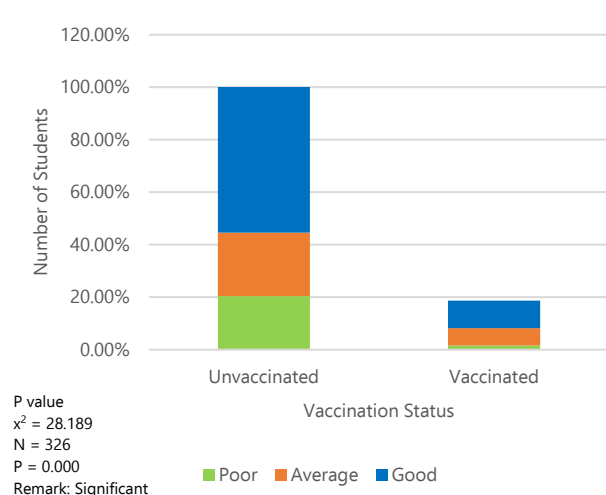
<sup>6</sup> BSc. Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria; Directorate of Research, TORASIF.

<sup>7</sup> MD. Omega Cares Foundation, Jos, Nigeria.

<sup>8</sup> BPharm. Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria; Global Health Focus (GHF), UK.

**BACKGROUND:** With the resumption of physical learning activities across Nigeria's higher education institutions, tertiary-level students, a prioritized group according to the WHO SAGE in the deployment of the COVID-19 vaccines, face circumstances that necessitate widespread vaccination coverage among them. This is critical in view of vaccine hesitancy attitude and low vaccination coverage that has been reported among this subpopulation and the larger Nigerian populace. Surmounting these barriers is necessary to achieving a successful national vaccination program and for future pandemic preparedness and response. To this end, this study aimed to assess Nigerian undergraduate students' knowledge, coverage, and barriers to COVID-19 vaccination. **METHODS:** A cross-sectional survey of Nigerian undergraduates was conducted in October 2021, using an online questionnaire and a non-probability convenient sampling technique. The questionnaire included sections on respondents' demographic characteristics, COVID-19 vaccine awareness, coverage, barriers, and recommendations. A total of 326 respondents electronically completed and returned the informed consent form along with the questionnaire. Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 25 were used to code and analyze the data, respectively. **RESULTS:** The overall awareness of COVID-19 vaccines among the sampled students were high, with 62.3% having good knowledge, 20.9% having average knowledge, and 16.9% having poor knowledge. However, the majority of the respondents (81.3%) had not received the vaccines. The most prominent barrier to vaccination was misinformation about vaccine safety (23.6%). Opening vaccination centers on campuses (18.6%), demonstrating vaccine effectiveness and safety (18.7%), and organizing awareness campaigns (17.2%) were the most frequently recommended actions. **CONCLUSION:** Most respondents were aware of the availability and potential benefits of COVID-19 vaccines; however, coverage remained extremely low. Our findings emphasize the importance of addressing vaccination barriers by public health stakeholders to achieve optimal COVID-19 vaccine coverage.

**Figure.** Association Between Coverage and Awareness (Knowledge Grading) of COVID-19 and COVID-19 Vaccines.



**Legend:** Bar Chart reflecting the associations between vaccine uptake and awareness (knowledge grading) of COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccine. Having a good level of knowledge is associated with a higher chance of getting vaccinated. However, other factors may influence actual vaccination.

**Key words:** COVID-19; Vaccines; Vaccination Coverage; Nigeria; Education; Medical; Undergraduate (Source: MeSH-NLM).