

# COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy and Acceptance Study in Madagascar: A qualitative analysis using the WHO Behavioral and Social Drivers of Vaccination (BeSD) framework

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## KEY TAKEAWAY

- 11.17% individuals nationwide had been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in Madagascar as of July 2023.
- Despite this huge investment by government, the rate of hesitancy to COVID-19 vaccine remains high.
- Most respondents know that COVID-19 is dangerous and kills and believes COVID-19 can prevent people from coming down with severe form of the disease.
- Awareness creation by leaders in government motivates people to get the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Positive testimonials from vaccinated individuals is strong motivation.
- Most people prefer the one-dose schedule COVID-19 vaccine to the multiple-dose schedule.
- COVID-19 vaccination messaging must be re-designed to carry the benefits of vaccination and the implications of not getting vaccinated.

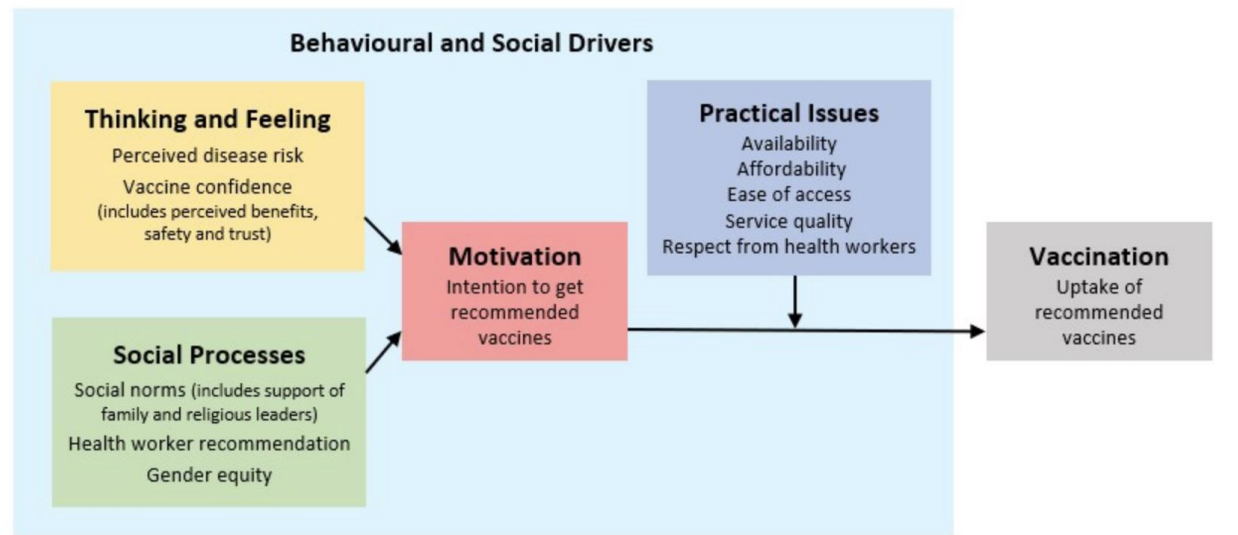
## METHODS

- A qualitative study and BeSD Framework used to design questionnaire .
- 63 Key informant interview s and 9 focused group discussions conducted.
- Five communities across three districts of two regions were selected.
  - Representing remote rural communities, urban poor communities, conflict and disaster-affected communities, and gender related inequity.
- Respondents-
  - EPI managers at national, regional, and district levels, immunization partners; health facility COVID-19 vaccinators, community agents, community leaders, district administrative district chiefs (Mayors), district-level civil society organizations (CSOs), religious leaders, and traditional leaders.
  - Clients: Older people, young people, pregnant and breastfeeding women, people with comorbidities, and people with disabilities.
- Framework-based coding was used.
- Data was analyzed using qualitative analytical software Dedoose.

## INTRODUCTION

- As of July 30, 2023, only 3,092,063 (11.17%) individuals nationwide had been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in Madagascar (WHO, 2023).
- The aim of the study was to use the behavioral and social determinants of vaccination (BeSD) framework to understand the drivers of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and the strategies to improve COVID-19 vaccine uptake among high-priority populations; older adults, pregnant women, breastfeeding and pregnant mothers, youths, people with comorbidities and people with disabilities in Madagascar.

Figure1: WHO behavioural and social drivers of vaccination framework



## RESULTS

Table 1: Common responses across all respondents

BeSD theme	Common responses
Thinking and feeling	<div>1. COVID-19 is dangerous because it kills people and can affect anyone.</div> <div>2. Some fear conspiracy theories that the COVID-19 vaccine is used to indirectly reduce the population of the world.</div> <div>3. Some managers and providers feel COVID-19 doesn't exist anymore.</div> <div>4. Community leaders and clients state that drinking herbal teas help with recovery, so there is no need to take COVID-19 vaccine.</div>
Social Processes	<div>1. The Government of Madagascar made vaccine available to the populace.</div> <div>2. Widespread negative rumors on COVID-19 vaccines and poor sensitization of clients to vaccination sites.</div> <div>3. Provision of a conditional gift after the vaccination increases the uptake.</div> <div>4. Restrictive measures linked to the possession of a valid vaccination card incite people to get vaccinated to secure their living.</div> <div>5. Trusted source of information: Political leaders, health workers and fokontany chiefs.</div>
Motivation	<div>1. Awareness by leaders in government motivates people to get vaccine.</div> <div>2. Positive testimonials from vaccinated individuals are strong motivation.</div> <div>3. Demotivation by statements that vaccination is not compulsory.</div>
Practical Issues	<div>1. Inaccessibility of vaccination services due to distance.</div> <div>2. Stockout of vaccines and vaccination cards.</div> <div>3. Mass campaigns do not cover all villages, lack of public awareness, negative influence by religious leaders, vials not opened when clients are few.</div>
Vaccination	<div>Most people prefer the one-dose schedule COVID-19 vaccine.</div>

## RESULTS/CONCLUSION

Table 2: Effective messaging, trusted channels of communication, opportunities to increase coverage, barriers to implementing strategies

Theme	Responses
Effective messages, messengers, and messaging platforms/channels of communications.	<div>1. Young people, people with comorbidity and people with disability want messages that clearly states that the vaccine will protect from COVID-19 and the consequences of not getting vaccinated.</div> <div>2. Pregnant and breastfeeding women want messages on COVID-19 vaccine to stress that vaccine protects mother &amp; baby.</div>
Trusted sources and channels of information across each priority population	<div>1. One-on-one communication as the main channel of communication.</div> <div>2. Radio to be a trustworthy and strong channel of communication.</div> <div>3. Respondents across all groups placed value in hearing messages from people who have been vaccinated against COVID-19.</div> <div>4. Health providers, community agents, and fokontany chiefs are highly trusted sources of information.</div>
Resources, opportunities, and community events to improve advocacy, communication, and social mobilization.	<div>1. Managers and providers stressed the importance of increased funds and financial resources to carry out sensitization activities.</div> <div>2. Community agents and community leaders are trusted channels of communication.</div> <div>3. Providing incentives; soaps and disinfectants/hand sanitizer improved COVID-19 uptake.</div> <div>4. Community-level events for sensitization and demand generation, vaccination at special events and integrating COVID-19 vaccine services with other health and non-health services are avenues for delivery of COVID-19 vaccine.</div>
Barriers and challenges to delivery strategies.	<div>A key challenge for COVID-19 vaccination was distance to facilities.</div>

### Quotes on COVID-19 messaging:

“If your explanations are related to the reality they are going through, it could attract them because it will speak of reality. They will accept it. So it will depend on your explanation, if it's an unclear explanation, it won't attract them, but if it coincides with their situation, you can convince them” (Young person in Mananjary district, translated).

“We should emphasize the messages that speak about the advantages of being vaccinated, firstly it ensures health, secondly it ensures the economy of a country because it frees us from confinement, all the world could resume its activities and its work. Thirdly, we young people like to do sports, I mean competitions. To be able to do what we like, we must protect ourselves and maintain our health by taking the COVID-19 vaccine” (Young person in Toliara II district, translated).

“disability is not an obstacle” (Person with disability in Vohipeno district, translated)

### CONCLUSION

- Despite this huge investment by government, the rate of hesitancy to COVID-19 vaccine remains high.
- Immunization program managers and partners in Madagascar should review and revise the contents of existing COVID-19 vaccines and use the best channels for communication with the COVID-19 vaccination eligible target populations as recommended by the respondents in this study.
- More studies should be conducted in the future to determine the magnitude of the hesitancy to COVID-19 vaccines, following government interventions.