

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

EXPLORING VACCINE REFUSAL AMONG PARENTS IN SELANGOR

WHY PARENTS REFUSE VACCINATION FOR THEIR CHILDREN? POINTS TO PONDER

ISSUE

Throughout the years, the success of vaccination program had resulted in decrease rate of premature morbidity and mortality of vaccine preventable diseases. However, in recent years, there have been a growing number of refusal and hesitancy, especially among young, educated and high-income parents. This phenomenon in Malaysia were contributed to various reasons such as misconception on vaccines, viral fake news in social media, conspiracy theories, religious objection, pressures from significant others and many more. Such irresponsible behaviour may break the herd immunity chain, and thus put people who are unable to be vaccinated at higher risk of infection. This may also introduce re-emerging diseases which had been eradicated through prior vaccination campaign.

KEY FINDINGS

- Majority of parents have **limited understanding** in regards to function of vaccine and immunization schedule.
- Parents were not worried about their children's health status and **felt there is no necessity to vaccinate their children** as the level of contracting the disease is low.
- Some parents perceived that vaccination give **adverse effect to the child's intelligence and manner**.
- Parents seems to **value internal and external barriers** much higher compared to the benefits of vaccination. Internal barriers include self-principle, believe in alternative practices and distrust of health staff. External barriers include waiting time in the clinics, side effects and content of vaccine, as well as influence of media.
- Parents **prefer a diversity of alternative substitutes to vaccination** such as sunnah, TCM and fresh food. They also avoid preservatives and artificial products as well as crowded places.
- The **sources of information on alternatives** are family members, peers, internet, religion preachers and alternative medicine practitioners.
- Recommendation on compulsory vaccination is regarded by them as **unfair and against human rights** as they do not have the power to make any decision about their children's life.
- Some of them **expressed their determination in taking alternative actions** such as alternative or non-schooling if government still plans to make vaccination compulsory for schooling.
- Parents **perceived the verdict 'harus' in the fatwa** means vaccination is not compulsory and it's only applicable when severity is bigger.



Institut Penyelidikan Tingkahlaku Kesihatan

This research highlight is based on Perception of Vaccine Refusal Parents in Selangor.

Who is this publication for?

Stakeholders involved in policy-making and strategic planning in the Ministry of Health.

Purpose of this summary

To inform the policy makers and stakeholders on the research finding and to recommend appropriate strategies in increasing the level of vaccine acceptance among the community.



Institute for Health Behaviour Research
National Institutes of Health (NIH)
1, Jalan Setia Murni U13/52
Seksyen U13, Setia Alam
40170 Shah Alam, Selangor

The Institute for Health Behavioural Research provides evidence to policy makers and health managers at every level, to enable them to make evidence based decision making on health matters.

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METHOD

Research Design

Qualitative Exploratory Study.

Study Population

Parents who refused vaccination for their children at public health care clinics (Selangor).

Study Location

Public health clinics in Petaling, Kuala Langat, Hulu Langat & Gombak.

Sample Size

27 informants.

Study Instruments

Semi-structured interview protocol with diary & voice recorders.

Study Period

21 April 2017 – 20 April 2018.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis.

Data Collection Method

In-depth interviews (IDI).

For further information and to provide feedback on this document please contact:

Zaikiah Mohd. Zin
zaikiah@moh.gov.my

This summary should be cited as:

Zaikiah Mohd Zin, Sheikh Shafizal Sheikh Iلمان, Norrafizah Jaafar, Mohamad Zaidan Zulkepli, Muhammad Ridzwan Zakaria (2020). Research Highlight: Why Parents Refuse Vaccination for Their Children? Points to Ponder. Institute for Health Behavioural Research (IHBR).

Reviewer

Komathi Perialathan

This research highlight is designed by:

Nurfarhana Norddin, Wan Izzati Syakirah Wan Syaiful Akmal

Disclaimer

The views, interpretation, implications, conclusions and recommendations are those of the author alone and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the investigators participating in the project nor the views or policy of the Ministry of Health, Malaysia.

Project reference number:

NMRR-17-516-34985

Funded by:



MINISTRY OF HEALTH MALAYSIA

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

- Increase knowledge of parents on immunization schedule, the concept of herd immunity, contents of the vaccines as well as its risk and benefits.
- Change parents' misconception such as unvaccinated children are healthier, more well-mannered and brighter.
- Prepare trusted and current medium for disseminating information to the public such as Facebook, twitter and websites.
- Train health care practitioners in communication and persuasive skills as it will facilitate vaccine acceptance.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank the Director General of Health Malaysia for permission to publish this research highlight.