

ABSTRACT

Background: On October 2021, the FDA approved the Pfizer COVID vaccine for children aged 5-11 [1]. Despite their widespread success, the COVID vaccines are viewed by some to be unsafe for the pediatric population, resulting in parental vaccine hesitancy [2],[3],[4].

Methods: Partnering with the community organization, Family Life Education (FLE), 15 mothers were recruited to participate in the study through distribution of a flyer to the FLE mailing list. Two focus groups were conducted for a cohort of Spanish and English speaking parents.

Results: Parents' main concerns centered around the expedited FDA approval process, vaccine side effects, and associated hospital costs in case of an adverse reaction. Additionally, many parents who were initially hesitant agreed that if schools required vaccinations they would be willing to follow that requirement.

Conclusions: School vaccination requirements may be a successful policy based on our focus group discussions and responses.

Keywords: vaccine hesitancy, COVID-19, young children, public health, vaccination

BACKGROUND

- On October 2021, the FDA approved the Pfizer COVID vaccine for children aged 5-11 [1].
- Despite their widespread success, the COVID vaccines are viewed by some to be unsafe for the pediatric population, resulting in parental vaccine hesitancy [2],[3],[4].
- Understanding the potential concerns and causes of parental vaccine hesitancy and moving forward to address these concerns are essential for meaningful promotion of childhood vaccination.

OBJECTIVES

- Assess parental vaccine hesitancy to identify factors contributing to this phenomenon
- Help address concerns of population regarding the COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5-11
- Promote widespread COVID-19 vaccination in the pediatric population

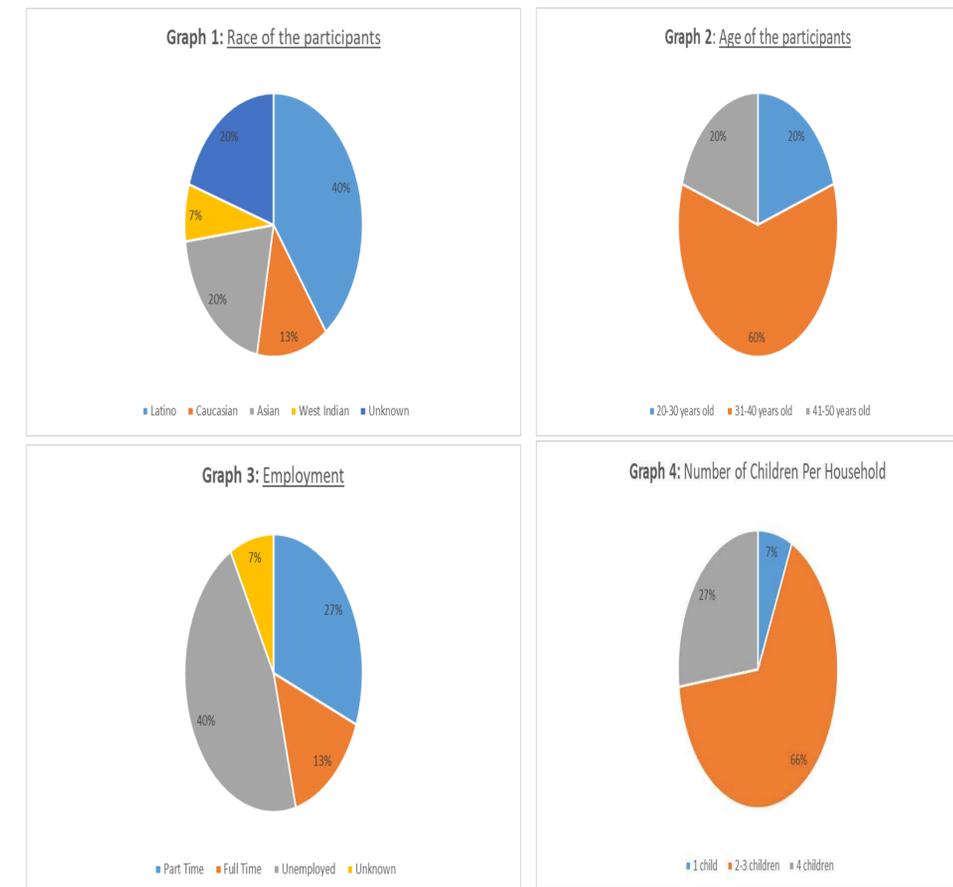
METHODS

- 15 mothers were recruited and divided into two groups based on their preferred spoken language (Spanish or English)
- Two focus group sessions were conducted for each group
- In the initial focus group, discussion was facilitated to bring out concerns related to the COVID-19 vaccine and factors driving parent's hesitancy to vaccinate their children
- Each individual group's concerns were categorized and addressed in the second focus group
- The group was polled on their willingness to get the vaccine for their child if it was required by the school administration during both focus group sessions.
- Epidemiological data of the participants was also obtained during the focus groups

RESULTS

- Parents' main concerns centered around:
 - Expedited FDA approval process of the vaccine
 - Vaccine's side effects
 - Associated hospital costs in case of an adverse reaction to the vaccine
- Parents were actively seeking out more reputable resources to provide them with more verifiable information on the vaccine
- These resources included:
 - Local news outlets
 - Family Life Education informational pamphlets
 - CDC Website's information regarding the different vaccines available
- All participants agreed that if schools required the COVID-19 vaccine in order for the child to attend in person, they would be willing to follow that requirement.

RESULTS (EPIDEMIOLOGIC DATA)



CONCLUSIONS

- Parents had many concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine's expedited approval process and associated side effects
- Parents were reluctant for their child to be the "first ones" to receive the vaccine in the newly approved age group and preferred to "wait and see" unless vaccination was required by the school administration
- School vaccination requirements may be a successful policy to increase vaccination rates among the 5-11 year age group
- Sample is based in Hartford, CT but if parents across the state or country share similar sentiments, statewide or national vaccine requirements for children could also be a success