

An Experimental Study of Public Support for COVID-19 Vaccine Donations

Abstract

The rapid development of vaccines brought hope to end the COVID-19 pandemic, but the lack of access to vaccines in low-income countries causes the emergence of new variants of concern (VOC), which pose a risk to high- and low-income countries alike. Due to the global nature of the pandemic, vaccine-rich countries have to choose between stocking vaccines for their own citizens' use or contributing to the global eradication effort through vaccine donation. Lampert et al. (2022) developed a game-theoretic model that evaluates the potential for vaccine donation under a range of pandemic parameters and from a self-interested point of view. The current research tests the model by examining public support for vaccine donation, through an internet-based representative survey experiment among 2,569 German citizens.

The results present a strong public support for vaccine donation, with a mean support of 42.36%. Women (1.99%, $p < .025$) and unvaccinated respondents (5.09%, $p < .001$) show higher willingness to donate vaccines. The findings however, weakly support the game-theoretic model, suggesting that citizens of vaccine-rich countries consider donating COVID-19 vaccines mainly for other reasons. Policy implications propose to either enhance citizens' understanding of the vaccine donation dilemma or alternatively frame the vaccine donation question from a moral point of view. Further research is needed to evaluate vaccine donation preferences among experts in related fields.