Progress towards standardized measurement of the behavioural and social drivers of vaccination

Background
Immunization Agenda 2030 prioritizes vaccination demand as a key strategy, based on people-centered, country-owned, partnership-based, and data-guided principles. The WHO/UNICEF Behavioral and social drivers (BeSD) tools support an understanding of barriers to COVID-19 and early childhood immunization. Tools include validated surveys, interview guides and a guidance in their application. In 2021, the WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on immunization made recommendations on routine collection and use of BeSD data to guide programme planning and evaluation.

Objectives
Our study had three objectives. Firstly, to assess the progress of using behavioral surveys for childhood and COVID-19 vaccination by reviewing available data from December 2020 to February 2023. Secondly, to demonstrate the challenges and benefits of gathering and using comparable measures and indicators to understand the BeSD of vaccination at national, regional, and global levels through cross-country analysis. Lastly, to specifically promote the use of the globally validated BeSD tools as a common approach to guide strategic and targeted planning at all levels.

Methods
We reviewed studies assessing demand-related reasons for vaccination and collected behavioral data from various sources, including the WHO/UNICEF Joint Reporting Form (JRF) in 2021 and 2022 submissions, published sources and databases, and regional technical working group data banks. Our analysis included data from national BeSD surveys and other tools with comparable measures. To demonstrate the value of comparable measures and indicators, we conducted a global analysis of the relationship between COVID-19 vaccination coverage and the most measured construct, intention to get vaccinated, using the abundance of data on drivers of COVID-19 vaccination in the period December 2020 to February 2023.

Figures

Conclusions
The BeSD tools were developed to measure a broad range of drivers of vaccination from the caregiver/adult vaccine recipient’s perspective. The surveys had already been used in at least 59 countries by 2023 with an increase in use expected as countries are encouraged to use behavioural data. The ongoing JRF updates will facilitate the collection of raw BeSD data from 2022 onwards for global monitoring. A preliminary analysis of available data on COVID-19 vaccination intentions highlights the limitation of relying solely on a single indicator without accounting other dimensions such as thinking and feeling, social norms, or practical issues. A comprehensive and standardized approach to understanding the BeSD of vaccination is crucial for implementing and evaluating effective strategies in programmes. Countries should prioritize collecting data on BeSD to enable this. This study focused on COVID-19 vaccination. As pandemic recovery continues in the context of “The Big Catch-up”, it is important to understand the drivers of childhood vaccination.

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References

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