

# Using a massive open online course (MOOC) to empower peer-to-peer conversations to improve vaccine acceptance

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## Background

Distrust in government and healthcare systems has become a major hurdle to COVID-19 vaccine uptake globally. It is crucial to identify trusted messengers who can provide credible information, dispel misinformation and rumors, and promote vaccine confidence. Peer-based communication approaches are an effective method to reduce vaccine hesitancy and may be particularly important for reaching communities where distrust of public health institutions is prevalent<sup>1</sup>. A massive open online course (MOOC) was designed with the goal of providing an accessible training platform for trusted community messengers to act as vaccine ambassadors in school settings<sup>2</sup>.

## Specific Aims & Objectives

Our objective was to develop a scalable MOOC resource using the popular online Coursera platform to empower individuals to act as trusted messengers in increasing COVID-19 vaccine uptake in their communities. The primary aim of this training resource was to equip parents, school staff, and members of the public with evidence-based knowledge and skills to navigate vaccine conversations with their peers, with the primary goal of supporting COVID-19 vaccine uptake for children and a secondary goal of supporting uptake for adults. To date, over 30,000 learners from over 88 countries have enrolled in the course since its launch in January 2022, indicating a positive response and potential for widespread impact.

## Methods

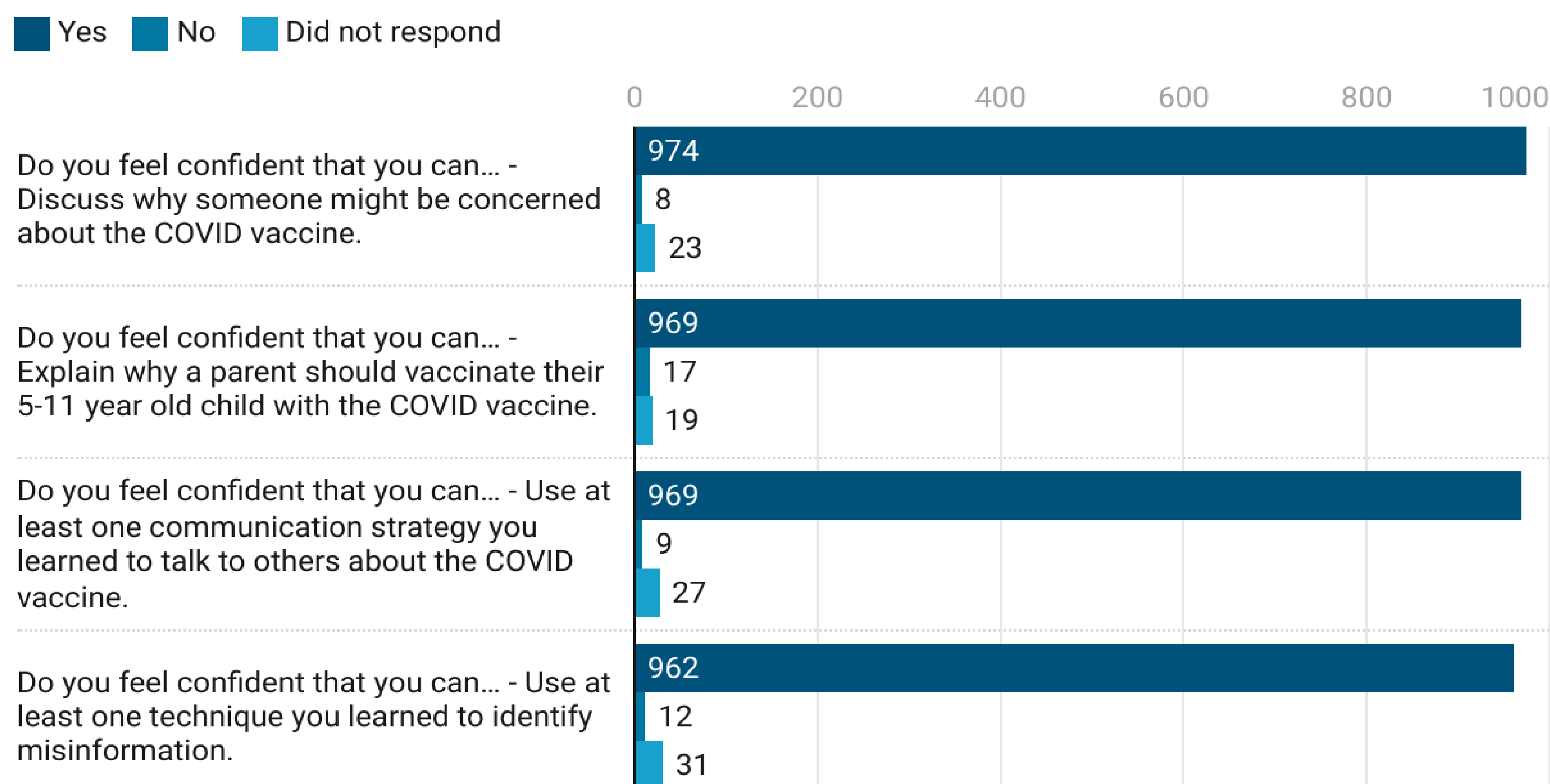
To guide the development of this resource, we convened an advisory board of 6 parents (some of whom were teachers or school administrators). Guided by their recommendations, we developed a 60-minute short online course comprised of four modules:

- 1) understanding vaccine hesitancy;
- 2) understanding the immune system;
- 3) effective communication techniques; and
- 4) identifying and mitigating misinformation.

The advisory board emphasized the importance of concise, engaging content reminiscent of social media including, self-paced clickable slides, frequent quizzes, and short humorous videos.

## Graphs/Figures

### Self-rated confidence measures after completion of training



## Results

To understand the impact and effectiveness of the training, 2,000 learners were randomly invited to complete an evaluation survey after completing the course. Survey respondents (1,005) were geographically diverse with 88 countries represented. The majority of respondents were located in the United States (589, 59%), had an average age of 48.4 years, identified as female (660, 66%), and held at least a bachelor's degree (804, 80%). Overwhelmingly, respondents who completed the survey self-reported a positive overall experience rating their experience as "excellent" (901, 90%). Importantly, respondents self-reported confidence in being able to: identify vaccine misinformation and communicate effectively with peers.

## Conclusions

As vaccine hesitancy is one of the greatest threats to public health, it is critical to equip individuals outside of medical and public health institutions with the skills and knowledge to have empathetic conversations about vaccines. We found that members of the public were eager to play a role in mitigating the pandemic in their own communities by promoting greater vaccine confidence and uptake and dispelling misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines. This supports further research and investment in empowering peer messengers in health promotion.



Training in English



Formación en español

## Acknowledgements

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## References

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- 2) Limaye, R. COVID Vaccine Ambassador Training: How to Talk to Parents. Coursera. Available at: <https://www.coursera.org/learn/covid-vaccine-ambassador>. Published 2022.