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## Background

First case of covid 19 was reported in Sri Lanka on 27th Jan 2020



### Vaccination campaign

- Covid 19 vaccinations were started in January, 2021
- Near 70% of eligible population vaccinated by 2022 with 2 doses



### Booster

- Only 40% have obtained it 4 months after initiation, indicating vaccination hesitancy for booster



### Social Media

- Communication on social media has been identified as a contributor for development of vaccination hesitancy.



## Objective



To discover the anti-vaccination narratives that propagated on the Facebook page dedicated for health promotion, under the purview of the Ministry of Health, in Sri Lanka.



## Method

1. Booster related posts were extracted from Health Promotion Bureau Facebook page



2. Comments were categorised as

- Vaccine Related
- Not-Relevant
- Sarcastic



3. Vaccine related comments were further categorised into

- Pro-vaccine
- Anti-vaccine
- Seek information



4. Anti-vaccine comments categorised according to the codebook, and Keywords added for commonly occurring codes



Scan QR for Codebook

## Graphs / Figures



Fig 1: Categorisation of all comments

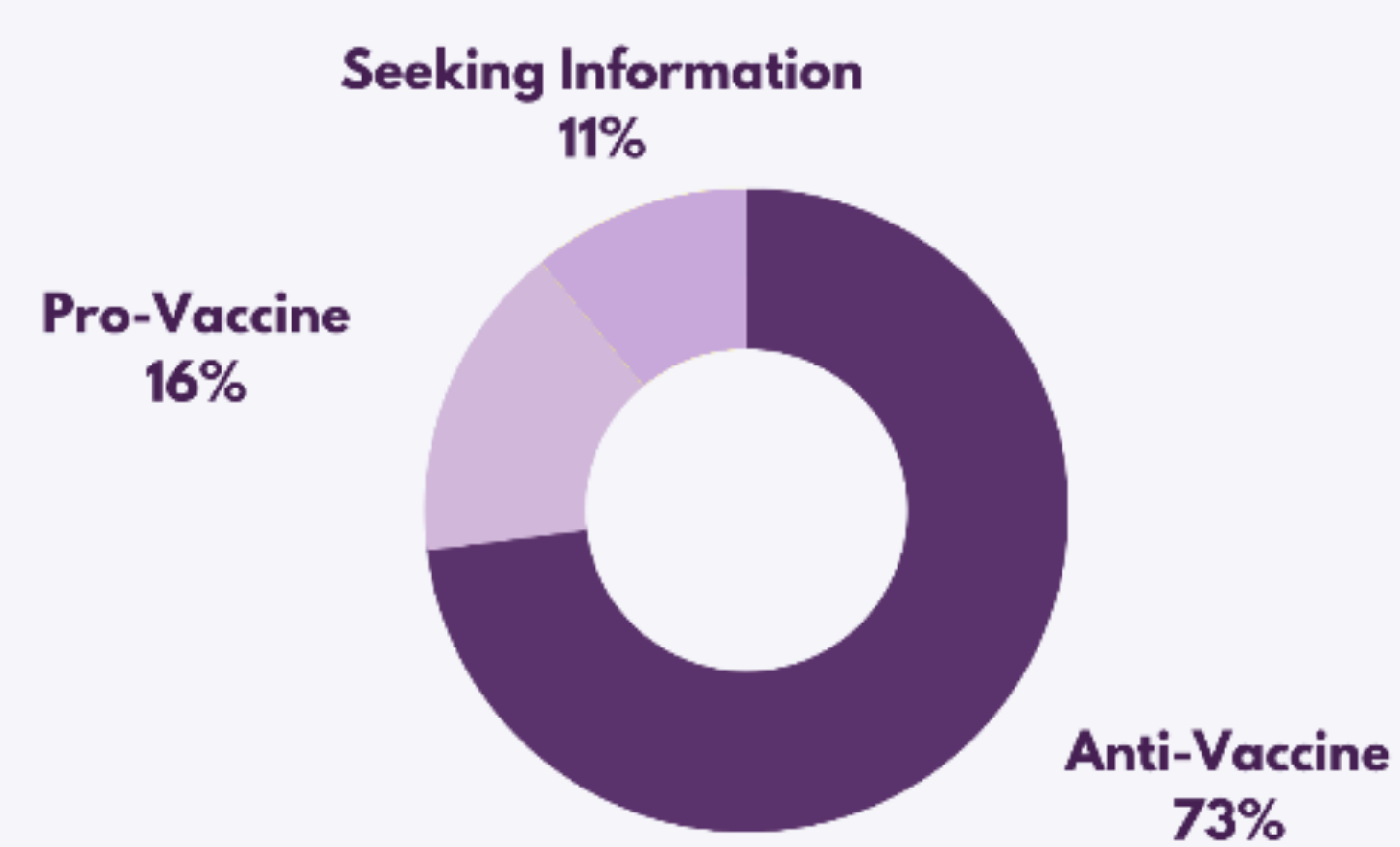


Fig 2: Categorisation of vaccine related comments



Fig 4 Commonly occurring key words under anti-vaccine codes



Fig 3: Categorisation of anti-vaccine comments

Fig 3: Categorisation of anti-vaccine comments



Fig 5: Key words commonly occurring under seek information

## Results

Eight booster related posts were identified following the search,

- Total of 6514 comments were extracted (Fig.1)
- With 4001 (61%) vaccine related comments, which was further categorised as anti-vaccine, pro-vaccine and seeking information (Fig.2)

Most commonly occurring anti-vaccine codes were (Fig3)

- Health hazards (29.51%)
- Lack of trust in administrative structures (11.87%)
- Motive is profit (8.92%)
- Not effective (8.59%)
- Protest (7.38%)

The least occurring anti-vaccine codes;

- Religious tenets (0.08%)
- Effective only for trivial diseases (0.08%)

Under the anti-vaccine themes the top three keywords were (Fig.4)

- Death
- Native remedies
- Consent

Under the seeking information theme the most commonly occurring keywords were related to (Fig.5)

- Vaccination Program
- Information about the vaccination
- Eligibility forgetting vaccinated

## Conclusion

- Even though Facebook has implemented a set of regulations intended to combat vaccine misinformation, the comment section seems to be frequently overlooked
- As a result, it may provide an ideal environment for the propagation of anti-vaccination propaganda.
- As evident from the research a high volume of anti-vaccine comments are being propagated via the Facebook page dedicated for health promotion, under the purview of the Ministry of Health.
- Therefore, a greater number of people have the potential to be exposed to them, which may lead to vaccination hesitancy and eventually give rise to a public health risk.
- Therefore, both offline and online social listening should be done timely and vigorously to identify the health misinformation that gets circulated on social media,
- Also immediate action needs to be taken to answer the public's concerns with scientifically based evidence and debunk the myths.

## References

1. Epidemiology Unit. (2022). <https://www.epid.gov.lk/web/>
2. COVID-19 policy updates and protections | Facebook Help Centre. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/help/230764881494641/>