Vaccine Hesitancy, the COVID 19 Pandemic, and Christian Fundamentalism

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Vaccine Hesitancy, the COVID 19 Pandemic, & Christian Fundamentalism
Nicole Drew
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Introduction to Research
- This study explores the relationship between Biblical literalism, a form of Christian fundamentalism, and vaccine hesitancy, in particular how it relates to the COVID 19 vaccine.
- Over the past few decades religion has increasingly come to forefront of American politics, particularly in the Republican party, which is almost synonymous with American Christianity today.
- Vaccine hesitancy is at all time high. With the COVID 19 pandemic completely disrupting the daily lives of every person on Earth, it has become even more pertinent to address the drivers of vaccine hesitancy so that the government and scientific community may find the best way to convince more people to take the COVID 19 vaccine.
- This study uses cross tabulations of the Chapman Survey of American fears to determine what, if any, relationship exists between a person’s adherence to Biblical literalism and vaccine hesitancy in general, as well as in relation to the COVID 19 vaccine.

What Is Known About Vaccine Hesitancy

Vulnerable Groups:
- Black people, this is typically due to a mistrust in the scientific community because of past abuses of Black Americans at the hands of scientists and doctors.
- Republicans, the issue of the COVID 19 vaccine in particular has become hyper-politicized and it has created a disparity in how Republicans view vaccines compared to Democrats.
- Christian Nationalists, this is the second largest indicator of anti-vaccine attitudes behind race.

Other Drivers:
- Age, older people are more likely than younger people to trust scientists when it comes to COVID 19.
- Concerns about the risks and benefits trade off of vaccines.
- The success of vaccines itself is a factor driving vaccine hesitancy because people do not fear the diseases that vaccines are meant to prevent because they have no lived experience with them.
- Misinformation from the media and anti-vaccine lobbyists has also been a major driving factor.

Hypotheses:

H 1: People who adhere to Biblical literalism are more likely to believe COVID 19 is a pretext to put a chip in people.

H 2: People who adhere to Biblical literalism are less likely to believe the benefits of vaccines outweigh the risks.

H 3: People who adhere to Biblical literalism are less likely to say they will take the COVID 19 vaccine.

Data

H 1: COVID 19 is a pretext to put a chip in people.
Cross Tabulation Results:
- The Bible should be taken literally.
  - Strongly agree: 8.86%
  - Agree: 20.89%
- The Bible is perfectly true but should not be taken literally.
  - Strongly agree: 2.50%
  - Agree: 14.7%
- The Bible contains human error.
  - Strongly agree: 0.68%
  - Agree: 8.9%
- The Bible is a book of myths.
  - Strongly agree: 2.6%
  - Agree: 4.38%

*An regression equation was made for each cross tabulation: Sign = -0.008 Beta = -220 (COVID 19 is a pretext to put a chip in people.)

H 2: The benefits of vaccines outweigh the risks.

Table 1

H 3: I will receive the COVID 19 vaccine.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Bible should be taken literally.</td>
<td>14.40%</td>
<td>22.64%</td>
<td>27.04%</td>
<td>30.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible is true but should not be taken literally.</td>
<td>34.36%</td>
<td>25.03%</td>
<td>24.14%</td>
<td>14.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible contains human error.</td>
<td>38.34%</td>
<td>23.51%</td>
<td>33.75%</td>
<td>10.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible is a book of myths.</td>
<td>54.54%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>13.45%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chapman University, Survey of American Fears, 2020

Table 3

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View of the Christian Bible</th>
<th>Beta Value</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Statistical Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>-1.14</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0.234</td>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chapman University, Survey of American Fears, 2020

Table Interpretation

With the highest Beta, the dependent variable in H1 is most impacted by a person’s beliefs on the Christian Bible out of the three that were tested. The amount of people who say they believe COVID 19 is a pretext for putting a chip in people steadily decreases as the results move from Biblical literalism to beliefs that the Bible is a book of myths, with the exception of the ‘Strongly Agree’ category under “The Bible is a book of myths.” The reason for this result would be an interesting topic for future research. The variables H2 and H3 (shown in tables 1 & 2) share the same Beta value and therefore have are equally influenced by a person’s views on the Bible. In table 4, out of the three independent variables, a person’s party affiliation has the greatest effect on whether or not they will take the COVID 19 vaccine (Beta = -291). Their view of the Christian Bible is second (-174) and education level has the smallest effect (-0.027).

Findings

H 1: This hypothesis was confirmed by the data, the amount of people who adhere to Biblical literalism who responded that they strongly agree or agree with the statement: “COVID 19 is a pretext to put a chip in people,” was higher than those who responded with little less literal views of the Bible and those who view the Bible as a book of myths. These results are statistically significant.

H 2: This hypothesis was confirmed by the data, adherents of Biblical literalism answered ‘strongly disagree’ at the highest rate out of the other groups who answered. 14.46% strongly disagreed, which is a significantly higher number than the other respondents. However, the other categories, ‘strongly agree,’ ‘agree,’ and ‘disagree’ were not as consistent. This inconsistency would be a good topic for future research. These results are statistically significant.

H 3: This hypothesis was confirmed data, the number of people who believe in Biblical literalism who strongly disagreed with the statement, “I will receive the COVID 19 vaccine when it becomes available,” was significantly higher than the other respondents, at 35.84%. Similarly, the amount of people in this group who strongly agreed with the statement was significantly lower than the other respondents at 14.46%. The ‘agree’ and ‘disagree’ categories however are not as consistent, the question as to why this case was an interesting focus of future research. These results are statistically significant.

Conclusions

A person’s view of the Christian Bible does have an impact on their views of vaccinations, particularly the COVID 19 vaccine. People who believe the Bible should be interpreted literally displayed over all higher rates of anti-vaccine attitudes in regards to the variables used in this data. One’s view of the Bible is not the strongest indicator of their views of vaccines, for example party affiliation is a more significant indicator. However, given the results seen in this research, this is definitely an interesting and pertinent subject for further research as the government and medical community try to convince more of the population to get vaccinated to reach herd immunity and bring about the end of the pandemic.

References


