

AB042. Perceptions and experiences of young adults regarding the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in Uganda: a focus group study

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Background: Uganda is amid its third resurgence of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The government instituted its second lockdown on June 7, 2021, closing schools and other public facilities. This study explored the perceptions and experiences of young adults related to social isolation and other measures regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda.

Methods: Twenty-seven Ugandan residents (18–22 years old) from the district of Lira were divided into five groups by parish (Bar Pii, Acut Kumu, Otara, Te-Adwong, and Agweng) for focus group interviews. Interviews were conducted in English by health facilitators trained by Ray United FC to evaluate personal and community perceptions and experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic. Responses were compiled, transcribed, and analyzed using NVivo software to code responses for thematic insights.

Results: Qualitative analysis revealed recurring themes of social, financial, reproductive, and educational impacts from school and business closures. Though they understood the purpose of lockdown in mitigating the pandemic's effects, participants cited concerns about rising instances of crime, domestic violence, early marriage, and social isolation.

Barriers to vaccination included doubled transportation costs, lack of public interest, and fear. Sources of fear included religious condemnation, distrust in vaccine providers, and community myths.

Conclusions: This study found that the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened pre-existing community-specific challenges in Uganda. Cultural, political, and religious beliefs have negatively impacted perceptions and behaviors regarding public health initiatives to combat the pandemic. This study emphasizes the need for future public health policies and interventions that address these social issues and misconceptions.

Keywords: Coronavirus disease (COVID-19); public health; qualitative research; focus group

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Footnote

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