

# “No jab, No job”: Employee Perceptions on Mandatory Coronavirus Vaccinations at Workplace in Zimbabwe

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**Abstract:** The inspiration behind this article is the prevalence of Covid-19 policies in organizations in Zimbabwe which are dominated by ‘no jab, no job’ policies during the third wave of the pandemic. The article seeks to parade the perceptions and attitudes of employees across all sectors in Zimbabwe on ‘no jab, no job’ policies, and mandatory vaccinations at the workplace. In probing the problem at hand, the researcher used quantitative methodologies to generate data from a sample size of one thousand and two hundred respondents (n = 1 200). In deriving employee perceptions the study observed that 82.5% of study respondents had at least received a first dose jab. The article displays that enterprises across Zimbabwe have Covid -19 policies, and a number of them enforce the ‘no jab, no job’ pinnacle. The last section of the article transmits that employees in Zimbabwe are opposed to the ‘no jab, no job’ policy, and there is a general belief that it is unethical and illegal. There is a general belief that mandatory vaccinations lead to poor industrial relations and reduced productivity. There is an urgent need for employers to educate employees on the need for vaccination in order to demystify circulating conspiracy theories.

**Key Terms:** Vaccination, Coronavirus, Workplace, mandatory vaccinations

## I. INTRODUCTION

Covid -19 pandemic has undoubtedly transmuted geopolitics, social behaviour and economic activities in the whole world. Anyone who denies the impact of Covid -19 pandemic must be living under a rock. Novel Coronavirus was first discovered in November 2019, in the Wuhan province in China (World Health Organisation, 2020). By March 2020 Covid -19 virus had been confirmed as a pandemic (Balkhair, 2020). As of July 2021, there has been above two hundred million cases and above four million deaths due to the pandemic (Worldometer, 2021). In Africa, around seven million people have been infected by the Novel Coronavirus, and over a hundred and seventy nine thousand people have perished from it (Malomo, 2021). According to Worldometer (2021) about a hundred and eighteen thousand people had been infected with the virus, and above four thousand people had died. Faced with this dilemma most countries enforced a ban on social gatherings and demanded the decongestion of workplaces.

The economic morass followed by the breakthroughs in the discovery of vaccines compelled countries to revise their

stance, and ordered firms to allow particularly the vaccinated employees back at work. Zimbabwe was not immune to these, and by 12 August 2021 the country had administered over three million doses of vaccinations with Sinovac and Sinopharm being the major vaccines taken (Trading Economics, 2021). This was one of the strides of achieving a herd immunity, and employees in most sectors of the economy were prioritised in the distribution of vaccines, and this has been seen as psychological and or invisible golden handcuffs to organisations to institute ‘no jab, no job’ policies.

In the United States, Gur-Arie, Jamrozik, & Kingori (2021) observe that the health care sector is prioritised in terms of vaccination, and with a goal for mandatory vaccinations. They express that mandatory vaccinations in pro-democracy nations are unethical and illegal as they infringe the freedom of choice which is at the heart of the socio-political principles. In addition, Kaiser Permanente a large American health care conglomerate has given an ultimatum to its employees to get vaccinated by end of September 2021 (Heath, 2021). Disney on the other hand ordered its non-unionised workers, and Walmart also required its office workers to get vaccinated (Heath, 2021). The geo-political influence of USA had set the tone for other countries to emulate the ‘no jab, no job’ policies. The Fiji government also announced plans to coerce all employees regardless of job level, to be fully vaccinated (Dyer, 2021). This positions it to be one of the strictest countries in terms of the ‘no jab, no job’ policies.

In Europe, specifically in the United Kingdom, US owned businesses such as Google and Facebook announced intentions to allow only fully vaccinated employees (Chakrabarti, 2021). She further notes that the British government is working on vaccine passports that will be used by employees to go to work. Chakrabarti (2021) also expresses that Pimlico Plumbing Company has already introduced a policy that only allows fully vaccinated employees to work, under the disguise of safeguarding lives. She also observed that there had been opposition to the issue of compulsory vaccinations, with high-level members of parliament showing interest to vote against vaccination passports. Dyer (2021) posits that by July 2021 France was preparing a law for compulsory vaccination for employees in the health sector. He further states that the Greece government

was still categorising jobs that require the incumbents to be vaccinated. Dyer (2021) notes that Latvia was a bit extreme, as it was coming with pieces of legislation that made vaccination mandatory for public service workers, social workers, teachers and health workers. Furthermore, the laws will give employers the liberty to dismiss workers who have not been vaccinated by 15 September 2021. European Union Commission since June has been coming up with laws that would help in the implementation of vaccine passports for its member states (Schengen Visa, 2021). It is forecasted that these laws will be the foundation for 'no job, no job' policies across the European Union.

In Asia, Australia in particular employers were encouraged to incorporate mandatory vaccination in their health and safety policies (Asia Employment Law, 2021). However, organisations are not allowed to coerce their employees to be vaccinated, unless it is part of the employee's job requirements to do so, as in the case of *Marin Carazon Glover v Ozcare* [2021]. According to Packham & Jose (2021) in a desperate attempt to revive its industries New South Wales permitted employees in the construction sector around Sydney suburbs to go to work provided that they were fully vaccinated. In Turkmenistan the government expected everyone above the age of 18 to be vaccinated save for those with medical contradictions (Dyer, 2021). Saudi Arabia on the other hand, has the strictest laws on Covid -19 vaccinations in the whole of Asia (Dyer, 2021). It started in March 2021 to apply 'no job, no job' policies in both the private and public sectors. Kazakhstan on the other hand, required employees in the transport, banking, retail and communication sector to be vaccinated since July 2021 (Dyer, 2021). In addition, the Kazkhstan government issued a directive for entertainment, hospitality, healthcare and education sectors to vaccinate 60% of their staff. 60% is statistically significant for one to make inference that in these sectors there is a 'no job, no job' policy.

In Africa, governments have been hesitant to introduce mandatory Covid -19 vaccinations. This may be because the continent relies much on imported Coronavirus vaccinations from other continents. This has thwarted measures to do with mandatory vaccinations for employees. Morocco is ahead in terms of vaccination in the entire African continent, and opened up its tourism sector since June 2021 (Redaction Africanews, 2021). Its robust vaccination of 9 million doses, enabled it to open up its tourism to vaccinated travelers. According to Dhaysane (2021) the Djibouti President made a decree in June 2021 to vaccinate its adult population including foreign nationals domiciled in the country. This meant that workplaces had to enforce the President's decree. In a nutshell, in as much African leaders want mandatory vaccination, they face challenges in acquiring and distributing the vaccines among their populace.

In Southern Africa, South Africa in particular there had been mixed feelings in terms of mandatory vaccination at the workplace. There were speculations and suspicions amongst

bigger trade unions such as the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) that the South African government will enforce 'no job, no job' policies in the public sector. Mufambi (2021) asserts that the South African health department is still weighing options, and one such option was mandatory vaccination for employees. He cited that the obstacle to this were religious beliefs, safety concerns and conspiracy theories. It is thus unclear whether or not the largest economy in Southern Africa will pursue mandatory vaccination at workplaces, or perpetuate the current trajectory in dose distribution. Whatever path they choose, Trade Unions, and political parties such as Economic Freedom Front have promised heavy resistance to mandatory vaccination of employees.

In Zimbabwe, vaccination distribution has been deemed successful, as compared to its neighbours. Mufambi (2021) admits that Zimbabwe is leading the whole of Southern Africa in terms of vaccinating its populace. Both the public service and private service sectors in Zimbabwe are pushing for mandatory vaccination. Tshili (2021) puts forward that the government of Zimbabwe has instructed that public service employees who are unvaccinated will not be given Covid -19 insurance. In addition, they will not be allowed to use subsidized transport to and from work. Tshilli (2021) adds that the Confederation of Zimbabwe Retailers has added its weight behind the government, and it views mandatory vaccinations as the only solution towards saving the economy. Samaita (2021) notes that the government of Zimbabwe by June 2021 had started to threaten businesses to instigate compulsory vaccinations to their workers. Job seekers in the public service have to present a vaccine certificate. The message is clear from the perspective of the government that in order to work one has to be fully vaccinated.

On the other hand, companies such as Grain Marketing Board (GMB) have already sent directives to their employees, to either be vaccinated or seize coming to work (Tshili, 2021). He further stated that employees in leading retail companies were already asking their employees to get fully vaccinated or risk losing their jobs. As for TelOne, it requested its employees to present a coronavirus certificate, and those who were not been vaccinated did not receive monthly Covid -19 allowances. Organisations such as Delta, SeedCo and Windmill, also issued directives to their employees that implied that these companies are in favour of compulsory vaccination at work (Mufambi, 2021). The writing on the wall is crystal clear, employers are throwing their weight on mandatory vaccination.

In a nutshell, the intentions and wishes of the government, public sector and private sector in Zimbabwe have been documented. From what has been presented in the company circulars, print and online media, a majority of employers are in favour of the 'no job, no job' policies. However, there has been inertia in capturing employee perceptions in terms of mandatory vaccination at workplace. It is this lack of documentation that inspired the article, and the article will

document employee perceptions on mandatory vaccinations at workplace, across all sectors in Zimbabwe.

### 1.1 Research Objectives

The following are the objectives that guide the study;

- i. To establish the perceptions and attitudes of employees in Zimbabwe on the 'no jab, no job' policies.
- ii. To explore the consequences of mandatory vaccinations at workplaces in Zimbabwe.

### 1.2 Research Questions

- i. What are the perceptions and attitudes of employees in Zimbabwe on the 'no jab, no job' policies?
- ii. Which consequences do mandatory vaccinations have at workplaces in Zimbabwe?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Covid -19 Pandemic

Covid -19 pandemic has redefined interactions between people, in the social spheres and undoubtedly in the business circles. World Health Organization (2020) defines Covid -19 as a highly infectious disease caused by the recently discovered coronavirus and can be spread through coming into contact, with a cough or sneeze of a person infected. This definition implies that the disease is extreme and spread quickly from one person to another, and implicitly views organizational physical locations as breeding grounds. Moreover, Jha & Kumar (2021) postulate that Covid -19 pandemic is a mild to severe illness that is caused by the coronavirus from one person to another. This definition if taken can cause employers to be reluctant in putting up measures to halt the spread of Covid -19, as it includes the aspect of 'mildness' which can make people to take the infection for granted or be in denial. Therefore, Covid -19 is described as an extremely contagious disease caused by the novel coronavirus, and it is spread by coming into contact with a person or his or her sneeze or cough. The first Covid -19 case was reported on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2019 in Wuhan China. In Zimbabwe, the first case of the disease was reported on 20 March 2020. Since the virus is contagious there was a need to institute social decongestion in eliminating the spread of the novel coronavirus. Vaccination has been one way for preventing more deaths that have been caused by Covid -19 pandemic.

### 2.2 Mandatory Vaccinations

The term mandatory vaccination has been understood in different terms and has been used interchangeably as compulsory vaccination. According to Savulescu, Giublin & Danchin (2021) mandatory vaccination refers to the coercion of the populace to get vaccinated. Compulsory vaccination involves getting people without following their preferences, in order to protect the rest of the populace. In other words, it is forcing people to get vaccinated against their wishes. Mandatory vaccinations are characterised by threats from

authorities. These threats involve loss of social goods and services, benefits, and privileges. In fear of losing these benefits people then get vaccinated. Threats in Zimbabwe involve not being allowed to church, work and denied access to subsidised public transport (ZUPCO). Exceptions do not mean that a vaccination policy is not mandatory. Some people may still be allowed to stay unvaccinated because of medical grounds. However, religious grounds and conspiracy theories are not seen as excuses in getting vaccinated.

Mandatory vaccination is viewed as the only tool that can make countries achieve herd immunity. The sole justification of mandatory vaccination is to protect the greater part of the population (Heath, 2021). This is because Covid -19 pandemic is spread by people, getting vaccinated protects friends, families and strangers. Furthermore, mandatory vaccination makes people who are reluctant because of conspiracy theories and religious beliefs to get vaccinated. This results in a country returning to its usual business. In the case of the Covid -19 pandemic, once herd immunity is reached countries will allow social activities such as churches, bars, schools and industries to open. In other words, mandatory vaccinations are for the greater good of the whole nation, and to bring back normalcy, they should be pursued.

### 2.3 'No Jab, No Job' policy

The term 'no jab, no job' has a lot of meaning to different authorities and organizations. The term can be understood through different lenses, and these include job seeker's angle and employee perspectives. The more obvious and plain explanation of the 'no jab, no job' policy is that organisations seem not to be recruiting people who are not fully vaccinated against Covid -19 (Chakrabarti, 2021). The public service is already asking for potential employees to avail their vaccination status during the recruitment process. Organisations that include Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) are already asking applicants to provide proof of vaccination upon applying for a job. This is crystal clear in black and white that if you are not vaccinated you will not get a job. Given the high unemployment rate in Zimbabwe, people end up vaccinating in order to be eligible to apply for vacant posts. This is an aspect of mandatory vaccination as there is undue influence and duress on the part of job applicants. It is also their vulnerability and desperation that also play out, and make them comply.

The 'no jab, no job' policy also applies to the current employees the organization has. The policy means that employees who are not fully vaccinated are not allowed to come to the workplace (Mufambi, 2021). Several organizations' remuneration policies are time-based, and this means that employees that do not come to work either receive a lower remuneration or nothing at all. Given the economic quagmire, employees are unwilling to receive insignificant salaries, and thus they compromise. Other companies give forced vacation leave to unvaccinated employees. Again there is an act of coercion that translates to mandatory vaccination.

It is also clear that employers who pursue this are poised at making everyone vaccinated at their workplaces. There is also a harsh reality that can be faced by an employee who does not comply with the 'no job, no job' policy. Some employers may even dismiss workers who are not vaccinated. Other employers give a timeline that clearly states the deadline by which they expect their workers to be vaccinated. Employees who miss the deadline may be dismissed from work. In other words, this is a form of threat and is geared at making everyone at work vaccinated from managers, middle managers to the shop floor workers. In other words, it's either you get vaccinated or you go home. In a nutshell, the 'no job, no job' policy means that if one is not vaccinated, is denied a job, and for those already employed, one should not come to work, and in worse circumstances, he or she gets fired. Thus, there is some form of coercion, duress, and undue influence that makes the 'no job, no job' policies the heartland of mandatory vaccinations.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Sampling

The investigation utilised an anonymous online survey of workers across all sectors in Zimbabwe between 18 July 2021 and 18 August 2021, via survey monkey. The survey monkey link was sent to various WhatsApp group platforms with employees from a plethora of sectors. A total of 1 200 people completed the survey, and all the respondents completed each and every question.

#### 3.2 Questionnaire

A standardised questionnaire that had 10 questions was developed and pre-tested on 10 people for its appropriateness, as well as the average time it would take for its completion. The questionnaire was structured and had two sections. The first sections dealt with biographic data and vaccination status of the respondents. The second and final section inquired on perceptions of the employees on mandatory vaccination.

#### 3.3 Ethical Considerations

To render the investigation ethical, the rights to anonymity, self-determination, confidentiality, informed consent, scientific honesty, which are in line with the Research Council of Zimbabwe (RCZ) were observed. Only those who were interested could complete the online survey and withdraw at any time they wanted. Anonymity was maintained as the names of respondents were not required in the research. Participants were treated as autonomous agents by informing them about the investigation and allowing them to voluntarily choose either to participate or not. Each and every data of this investigation was collected, analyzed and disclosed anonymously.

#### 3.4 Statistics

Data were descriptively analyzed, and for demographic data, frequencies were used. However, for measuring perceptions, means, variances, and standard deviations, were used to

compare the constructs. SPSS version 27 was employed in the analysis, presentation, and evaluation of data.

### IV. RESULTS

60% of women constituted the majority of the respondents, and 55% of the participants were between the age of 18 and 25. Employees from the education sector constituted 42.5%, the manufacturing sector contributed 5% of the respondents, the mining sector and the retail sector had 2.5% representation each, and 47.5% of the respondents belonged to other sectors. 82.5% of the respondents had at least received the first dose of the vaccine against coronavirus (**Table 4.1**) below.

Table 4.1: Description of the study population

Attribute	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	720	60
Female	480	40
<b>Age</b>		
18-25 years	660	55
26-33 years	270	22.5
34-41 years	150	12.5
42 years and above	120	7.5
<b>Sector</b>		
Mining & Quarry	30	2.5
Education	510	42.5
Manufacturing	60	5
Retail	30	2.5
Other	570	47.5
<b>Vaccination Status</b>		
Vaccinated	990	82.5
Unvaccinated	210	17.5

Source: Primary data (2021)

#### 4.1 Covid -19 Policy

Most respondents confirmed that their organisations have Covid -19 policies, and these constituted 77%. Only 23% of the study population indicated that their organisations do not have Covid -19 policies in place. Of the 73% whose organisations have Covid -19 policies, 50% highlighted that they were consulted in the formulation of these policies, while 50% indicated that they were not involved in the process. A majority of 55% showed that their employers do not allow unvaccinated workers to come to work, while 45% demonstrated that their employers permit everyone to come to work regardless of vaccination status.

4.2 Employee Perceptions on Mandatory Vaccination at Workplace

The participants had differing perceptions (Table 2). The majority of the respondents viewed mandatory vaccination at the workplace as unethical and this had a mean of 3.1625, a standard deviation of 0.93279, and a variance of 0.87 signaling a low dispersion amongst responses availed by participants. Using mean comparisons the second-largest perception held by respondents was that the act was illegal, and this had a mean of 2.7175, a standard deviation of 1.17782, and a variance of 1.3787, symbolizing a low dispersion amongst respondents. However, an insignificant number of respondents indicated that mandatory vaccinations against Covid -19 pandemic are ethical and legal as these had a mean of 2.325 and 1.2 respectively, and their measures of dispersion were too low.

Table 4.2: Employee Perceptions on Mandatory Vaccination at Workplace

Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Ethical	1200	2.3250	.93279	.870
Unethical	1200	3.1625	1.17782	1.387
Illegal	1200	2.7175	.94257	.888
Legal	1200	1.2000	.40017	.160
Valid N (listwise)	1200			

Source: Primary data (2021)

4.3 Consequences of ‘no jab, no job’ policies

The majority of participants viewed ‘no jab, no job’ policies as having negative consequences. The largest number of participants with a mean of 3.2675 indicated that ‘no jab, no job’ policies lead to poor industrial relations, and the dispersion of this response was low amongst participants. Other respondents showed that ‘no jab, no job’ policies resulted in reduced productivity, and this had a mean of 2.800 and low variability of 0.872. Some respondents viewed ‘no jab, no job’ policies as positive, and highlighted that they save lives and this had a mean of 2.368. The least construct was that ‘no jab, no job’ policies avoid disruptions caused by Covid -19 pandemic, and this had a mean of 1.215 and low dispersions amongst responses of respondents.

Table 4.3: Consequences of ‘no jab, no job’ policies

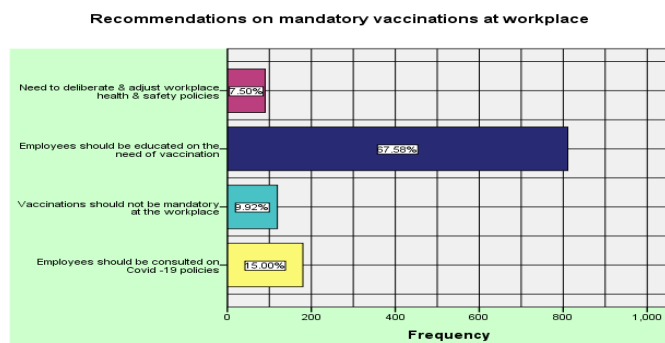
Descriptive Statistics				
	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Saves life at the workplace	1200	2.368	.89256	.797
Poor industrial relations	1200	3.267	1.11219	1.237
Reduced Productivity	1200	2.800	.87281	.762
Avoids disruptions caused by Covid -19 pandemic at workplace	1200	1.215	.41157	.169
Valid N (listwise)	1200			

Source: Primary data (2021)

4.4 Recommendations on mandatory Covid -19 at the Workplace

Most participants (67.58%) recommended that companies should educate employees on vaccinations as displayed in Table 4. This was followed by the need for consultation of employees, and this recommendation was raised by 15% of the participants. Other respondents who constituted 9.92% indicated that vaccinations should not be mandatory at the workplace. The least recommendation which was indicated by 7.5% of the sample, was that there is a need for deliberation and adjusting health and safety policies, to incorporate Covid -19 pandemic

Table 4.4: Recommendations



V. DISCUSSIONS

The data gathered show mixed feelings in terms of perceptions on mandatory vaccinations at the workplace. Most of the respondents had received at least a first dose, and this showed that the Zimbabwean government was making strides in reaching herd immunity. Participants highlighted that their organizations had Covid-19 policies, which denied entry to unvaccinated employees. This is in line with what had been documented that most employers were for mandatory vaccination, and were implementing ‘no jab, no job’ policies (Mufambi, 2021). 50% of the participants showed that they were at least consulted and forewarned by their employers before the implementation of mandatory vaccination policies. This is significant as it motivated employees and abates future resistance to such policies by shop floor workers (Dyer, 2021). However, the other half of respondents demonstrated that they were not consulted. This may be because of the urgency of the matter, as Covid-19 pandemic requires reflexivity in policy-making, and they may be limited time to do consultations (Jha & Kumar, 2021). Given that a significant number of employees were consulted, fewer people recommended that employers should consult their employees in coming up with such policies, and thus this establishes some form of convergence validity of this study.

The widely held perception was that mandatory vaccination against Covid -19 pandemic was unethical and illegal. In other words, employees did not see morality in these acts and viewed these policies as infringing their rights as enshrined in

the Zimbabwean Constitution and Labour Act Chapter 28:02. There was some form of discrimination, and unfair labour practices based on the vaccination status of an employee (Dhaysane, 2021). However, an insignificant number of participants demonstrated that it is legal and ethical to coerce employees to be vaccinated. These participants can be argued to believe in consequentialist ethics theory, that whatever benefits the majority is ethical and legal. These may be the same people who posted that mandatory vaccination has positive consequences as it saves lives and avoids disruptions at the workplace. However, the bulk of respondents asserted that mandatory vaccination led to poor industrial relations at the workplace. This is logical, as this strains relations between the unvaccinated, the management and the employer at large. Another significant group showed that the 'no jab, no job' policies resulted in reduced productivity. This was because of reduced levels of manpower, and some key talented employees were unvaccinated and denied entry at work. The majority of participants advocated for employers to educate employees on vaccination against Covid -19 pandemic. This is progressive as most of the people who were unvaccinated believed in conspiracy theories, and denying them entry at work cements their beliefs. In a nutshell, although the majority of the respondents were vaccinated they still believed that mandatory vaccination against Covid -19 pandemic was illegal.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

This investigation was undertaken during the peak of the third wave in Zimbabwe. The encouraging sign is that most of the respondents had been vaccinated, showing that it is not long till Zimbabwe reaches herd immunity. Organizations in Zimbabwe came up with Covid -19 policies that largely denied entry to workers who were not vaccinated. It was also encouraging that half of these policies had been a product of consultation with their employees. Regardless of consultations employees still believed that these 'no jab, no job' policies were unethical and illegal because they discriminated against unvaccinated employees. Hence, it is immoral and or unAfrican to coerce employees to get vaccinated. In other words, employees wanted vaccinations to be voluntary. Employees lamented the need for employers to educate them on the need for vaccinations against Covid -19 pandemic. There is a need for future studies to look into the effects of mandatory vaccinations in specific sectors using qualitative methodologies.

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