

THE ADAPTIVE BEHAVIORAL IMMUNE SYSTEM DURING THE EMERGENCE OF COVID-19 VARIANTS: THE CONCERN AND PREVENTATIVE HEALTH BEHAVIORS AMONG ADULTS IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

The adaptive behavioral immune system is a complex network of behavioral mechanisms that involves the cognitive and affective system of the body to prevent contact and transmission of infectious pathogens. This descriptive correlational quantitative study aimed to investigate the relationship between the adaptive behavioral immune system and COVID-19 variants in terms of concerns and preventative health behaviors of National Capital Region residents aged 18-65 years old. Data on socio-demographics, COVID-19 exposure, behavioral immune system, COVID-19 variants concerns, and COVID-19 preventative health behaviors were collected from 517 respondents through an online survey. Descriptive statistics, Spearman ranking correlation, and p-value determination were used as statistical tools. Results show that respondents demonstrate a high germ aversion and a low perceived infectability and majority exhibit concern and engage in preventative health behaviors. The correlation and p-value determination of germ aversion, perceived infectability, COVID-19 variants concern, and preventative health behaviors all share a positive weak but significant relationship, in contrast to previous studies. The positive weak correlation between germ aversion and perceived infectability with COVID-19 variants concern and preventative behaviors may be due to the increased vaccine coverage, increasing complacency of Filipinos, implementation of less-restrictive protocols, and previous studies being mostly conducted during the peak of the pandemic. Furthermore, the results of the study may be used to allow professionals to consider the behavioral immune system as another factor in implementing the appropriate response measures in managing community movement, establishing information materials, and developing implementing guidelines for the general public regarding COVID-19 variants.

Keywords: *Behavioral Immune System, Germ Aversion, Perceived Infectability, COVID-19 Variants, COVID-19 Variants Concern, Preventative Health Behaviors*