

# Why People Share News About Vaccinations on Facebook: A Uses and Gratifications Approach

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## Abstract

Facebook, the world's largest social network, is now a significant source of news and information for U.S. adults. The primary way users access news on Facebook is via links to stories shared by others in their network, including friends, family and even media organizations. Users share links about stories on myriad topics, but one topic that is of particular interest to public health researchers is the focus of this study – childhood vaccinations.

This research employs a uses and gratifications theoretical framework to understand why people share links to news stories about vaccinations on Facebook, and how such needs are related to an individual's vaccine hesitancy. A survey of 202 Facebook users who have shared such links found that respondents gratified needs for agency-seeking, status-seeking, socialization/entertainment and information storage. Users who reported low vaccine hesitancy were more likely to experience agency-seeking gratifications; essentially, Facebook users who were strongly supportive of childhood vaccines were found to share news stories to feel empowered to have their say.