

Trust versus Knowledge: Factors Influencing Adherence to COVID-19 Guidelines among Academics

The COVID-19 pandemic offers a unique opportunity to investigate the real-world implications of scientific literacy and trust-in-science of individuals, namely in their response to COVID-19 public health guidelines. Given the considerable body of research establishing a lack of scientific literacy and trust-in-science among the general public, the present study investigates whether this issue also pervades academia by investigating compliance with COVID-19 guidelines. Members of the academic community at a British Columbian university (N = 104) participated in an online survey which evaluated attitudes and behaviours regarding COVID-19 public health guidelines, nature of science understanding, and trust-in-science. Results indicated a significant correlation between trust-in-science and attitudes towards vaccination (both generally and in the case of COVID-19), but interesting, no relationship was found between understanding of the nature of science and attitudes towards COVID-19 public health guidelines, or between nature of science understanding and trust-in-science. Results indicate that it is trust-in-science, rather than an understanding of science, that influences compliance with COVID-19 guidelines among the academic community. The need to extend the present study to validate these results as well as the possible implications for science education are discussed.