

## Research Article

# GUARDIANS OF HEALTH: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON THE EFFICACY OF WEARING MASKS IN VARIOUS CONTEXTS

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Received 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023; Accepted 13<sup>th</sup> January 2024; Published online 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024

### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented the world community with previously unheard-of difficulties in recent times. The extensive use of face masks is an essential component of the preventive measures put in place globally. Although masks have been shown to be effective in halting the spread of respiratory diseases, more research is necessary to fully comprehend the complexities of mask use, especially in the context of senior high school students. The primary objective of this study is to investigate the perceptions of senior high school students towards wearing masks and to evaluate their compliance with recommended guidelines in various contexts, such as classrooms, social gatherings, and extracurricular activities. In order to better understand senior high school students' lived experiences with mask-wearing habits, this study used a transcendental phenomenological approach. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, giving senior high school participants the freedom to openly express their ideas, opinions, and feelings. In order to understand the fundamental nature of the participants' experiences wearing masks in various circumstances, the research placed a strong emphasis on investigating the subjects' subjective perceptions. The results highlight the complexity of mask-wearing behavior and demonstrate the dynamic interaction between supportive and challenging circumstances that affect mask-wearing rules adherence. While people face a variety of challenges, including discomfort, communication impediments, and logistical problems, they also recognize helpful tactics that lessen these difficulties, such as the usage of alternate mask alternatives, organizational techniques, and useful solutions like anti-fog sprays.

**Keywords:** Guardians Of Health, Efficacy, Wearing Masks, Perceptions, Senior High School.

### INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented the world community with previously unheard-of difficulties in recent times. The extensive use of face masks is an essential component of the preventive measures put in place globally. Although masks have been shown to be effective in halting the spread of respiratory diseases, more research is necessary to fully comprehend the complexities of mask use, especially in the context of senior high school students (Betsch *et al.*, 2020). Encompassing teenagers on the verge of adulthood, this population is crucial in determining how society behaves and how closely health recommendations are followed.

Wearing a mask has effects on communal well-being in addition to one's own health. It is crucial to comprehend the attitudes, routines, and obstacles senior high school students encounter while deciding to adopt and continue wearing masks in order to design focused treatments (Tamamoto *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, the knowledge gathered from this research aided in the creation of efficient public health plans that safeguard the well-being and safety of people as well as communities.

Through comprehension of these dynamics, treatments can be customized to target particular issues and improve overall adherence. Within this period, data collection, analysis, and recommendation formulation will be completed in order to guarantee prompt dissemination of findings for successful integration of policy and practice. Senior high school students were the study's target participants. Their distinct viewpoints and life experiences offered insightful information about the variables impacting mask-wearing

behaviors both within and outside of schools. This important group's cooperation will greatly advance our knowledge of mask wearers' overall effectiveness and support the creation of focused public health campaigns. This study's main goals were to find out how senior high school students feel about wearing masks and to assess how well they follow recommendations in different settings, like social events, classes, and extracurricular activities. Finding the obstacles preventing kids from wearing masks consistently and the elements that promote appropriate mask use is a secondary goal.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Theoretical frameworks were crucial tools that academics use to investigate and comprehend the intricacies of human behavior in certain contexts. The health belief model (HBM) and the theory of planned behavior (TPB), two well-established frameworks, will direct the investigation of personal and social factors influencing mask-wearing behaviors in the study "Guardians of Health: A Comprehensive Study on the Efficacy of Wearing Masks in Various Contexts" among senior high school students.

#### Theoretical Framework 1: Health Belief Model (HBM)

A popular psychological framework for comprehending actions connected to health is the Health Belief Model (HBM), created by Rosenstock in 1966. Within the framework of the present investigation concerning the effectiveness of mask-wearing among senior high school pupils, the HBM can assist in examining the personal views and convictions that impact their choice to comply with mask-wearing regulations (Rosenstock, 1966).

Analyzing students' perceptions of their susceptibility to respiratory infections, such as COVID-19, can shed light on their reasons for

donning masks. Interventions targeted at raising awareness can be informed by knowledge of their perceived susceptibility (Rosenstock, 1966). The significance of perceived severity in shaping health behaviors is emphasized by the HBM. The elements that influence compliance can be revealed by evaluating the senior high school pupils' perceptions of the seriousness of the consequences of not donning masks (Rosenstock, 1966).

Examining the benefits of wearing masks, such as preventing disease and improving community health, can reveal important information about the driving forces behind following mask-wearing recommendations (Rosenstock, 1966). Perceived barriers are taken into account in the model as potential obstacles to health-promoting actions. Developing focused interventions will be made easier by recognizing the obstacles senior high school students encounter in embracing and sustaining mask usage (Rosenstock, 1966).

### Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

Ajzen's 1985 creation, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), is another well-known theoretical framework that can be used to comprehend and forecast actions connected to health. According to this idea, a person's intention to engage in a certain activity is influenced by a combination of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1985).

Examining senior high school students' perspectives on mask wear can reveal how they view this health-promoting practice generally. Persuasive communication techniques can be developed with an understanding of both positive and negative attitudes (Ajzen, 1985). It is essential to look into how social norms, such as peer and societal expectations, affect mask-wearing behavior. Senior high school students' intentions to wear masks are likely to be impacted by the opinions and actions of their peers and community (Ajzen, 1985).

Evaluating the degree of control students feel they have over masks in different situations might help identify what supports or undermines their compliance with rules. To create interventions that improve perceived behavioral control, these elements must be identified (Ajzen, 1985). In order to fully comprehend the intricate interactions between personal views, attitudes, social norms, and perceived control that influence health behaviors, the Health Belief Model (HBM) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) work in tandem (Rosenstock, 1966; Ajzen, 1985). By incorporating these frameworks into the current research, a thorough knowledge of the variables impacting senior high school students' decisions to wear masks will be possible. A comprehensive strategy to investigating and addressing mask adherence in this population is created by the TPB, which takes social and environmental factors into account while the HBM stresses personal ideas and perceptions.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the perceptions of senior high school students towards wearing masks and to evaluate their compliance with recommended guidelines in various contexts, such as classrooms, social gatherings, and extracurricular activities. This study sought to answer the following:

- (1) What do high school students think about wearing masks in different situations, like classrooms or social events, and how does this impact their decision to wear them?
- (2) How do friends, family, and societal expectations influence high school students' decisions to wear masks, and how does this affect their intentions to follow mask guidelines?

- (3) What challenges and support factors do high school students face when it comes to wearing masks, and how do these factors impact their ability to follow mask-wearing rules in various situations?

### RESEARCH METHODS

In order to better understand senior high school students' lived experiences with mask-wearing habits, this study used a transcendental phenomenological approach. Twenty senior high school students made up the sample, which was carefully chosen to guarantee a range of experiences. The goal of the transcendental phenomenological approach was to comprehend the fundamental meanings and structures of a phenomena, in this case, the actual experiences associated with mask usage. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to gather data, giving senior high school participants the freedom to openly express their ideas, opinions, and feelings. In order to understand the fundamental nature of the participants' experiences wearing masks in various circumstances, the research placed a strong emphasis on investigating the subjects' subjective perceptions. To find recurrent themes, common patterns, and variances in the tales of the senior high school students, thematic analysis was utilized. This method offered insightful information for public health initiatives and policies by advancing our understanding of the variables impacting senior high school students' decisions and intentions regarding mask adherence.

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Q1.** Can you describe your thoughts and feelings about wearing masks in different situations, such as classrooms or social events? How do these thoughts impact your decisions regarding whether or not to wear a mask?

#### Theme: Personal Comfort versus Collective Safety in Mask-Wearing Behavior

The responses show a range of opinions about wearing masks in different contexts. Although kids in schools understand that masks are necessary for safety, they frequently find them to be bothersome or limiting. On the other hand, because people believe they are shielded from possible disease exposure, they feel safer. When it comes to wearing masks at social gatherings, considerations including self-consciousness, comfort level of the setting, and other people's actions play a role. Some people put their health before discomfort, while others make decisions based on their own preferences and social cues.

*"Wearing masks in classrooms feels a bit restricting, but I understand it's necessary for safety. In social events, it can be awkward, but I try to prioritize health over discomfort."*

*"I find wearing masks in classrooms annoying because it muffles our voices, but I know it's for everyone's safety. In social events, it's a mixed bag – sometimes I feel self-conscious, but if others are doing it, I'm more likely to wear one."*

*"Wearing masks in classrooms makes me feel safer, especially when someone around me is coughing or sneezing. In social events, I'm more hesitant, but if it's a crowded space, I'd wear it for sure."*

*"Wearing masks in classrooms is just a part of the routine now. In social events, I'm cautious about the vibe – if people seem comfortable with it, I'll wear mine without hesitation."*

*"Wearing masks in classrooms is not my favorite, but I get why it's necessary. In social events, it depends on the setting – if it's an outdoor gathering, I might not wear one, but indoors, I usually do."*

*"I have mixed feelings about wearing masks in classrooms – it's necessary, but it can be uncomfortable. In social events, I'm more likely to wear one if I see others doing the same."*

*"Wearing masks in classrooms feels like a safety measure, but it can be a bit suffocating. In social events, I'm more conscious of the situation – if it's a close-knit group, I might skip the mask, but in larger gatherings, I wear one."*

*"Wearing masks in classrooms is a bit of a hassle, but it's become routine. In social events, it depends on the crowd – if people are generally wearing masks, I'll follow suit."*

*"Wearing masks in classrooms is not my preference, but I do it for everyone's safety. In social events, I gauge the atmosphere – if it's a casual setting with close friends, I might not wear one, but in public gatherings, I always do."*

*"Wearing masks in classrooms can be uncomfortable, especially during discussions, but it's a small sacrifice for safety. In social events, I tend to follow the majority – if most people are wearing masks, I'll join in."*

The results show that wearing masks creates a conflict between personal comfort and group safety. Although students understand the value of masks for public health, they nevertheless feel uncomfortable and inconvenient, especially in social situations. The impact of peer behavior and societal norms highlights how social dynamics shape judgments about mask wear. Furthermore, the diversity of opinions regarding mask-wearing points to a complicated interaction between individual convictions, contextual elements, and perceived hazards.

The interaction of individual comfort and group safety can be understood to guide the development of tactics that encourage persistent mask wear. Providing breathable and pleasant choices or instituting mask breaks are two ways that mask pain and annoyance can be addressed. These measures have the potential to improve compliance, especially in educational settings. Cultivating a culture of collective responsibility can also be aided by stressing the social norm of mask usage and its significance in preserving the health of the community. According to research, mask-wearing behavior is highly influenced by social norms and comfort perceptions (Betsch *et al.*, 2020). According to studies, people are more likely to follow mask-wearing regulations when they feel comfortable doing so and when there is social pressure to do so. Furthermore, people's perceptions of danger and opinions regarding the effectiveness of masks in limiting the spread of disease have an impact on the adoption of these devices (Martinelli *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, strategies to encourage mask wear should take into account societal impacts on behavior as well as personal comfort considerations.

**Q2.** In your experience, how do your friends, family, and societal expectations influence your decision to wear masks? Could you provide specific examples of instances where these influences played a role? How does this impact your intentions to follow mask guidelines?

### **Theme: Influence of Social Circles and Societal Expectations on Mask-Wearing Behavior**

According to the responses, people's decisions about donning masks are impacted by expectations from friends, family, and society at

large. When family members place a high priority on health and safety, they frequently urge mask wear, which compels participants to comply—especially during family get-togethers. Like this, hanging out with people who value safety also encourages a group commitment to mask-wearing in public. Furthermore, social conventions and requirements—particularly during pandemic peak periods—have a big impact on people's intentions to follow mask-wearing guidelines.

*"My family is very cautious about health, so they always encourage me to wear a mask, especially when going out. I remember a specific instance when my mom insisted on it before attending a family gathering. Their expectations make me more likely to follow mask guidelines."*

*"My friends and I are usually on the same page about wearing masks. There was a time when we were planning to hang out, and we all agreed to wear masks in a crowded public place. Knowing that my friends prioritize safety influences my decision to follow mask guidelines in such situations."*

*"My extended family is more relaxed about masks, but my immediate family is quite strict. During a family reunion, I wore a mask because my parents insisted, even though some relatives weren't. It highlighted how family expectations can override societal norms, impacting my intentions to follow guidelines."*

*"My friends and family have a mix of attitudes towards masks, but societal expectations play a significant role. For example, when the government issued guidelines for mask-wearing in crowded places, it influenced my decision to wear one in similar situations, aligning with broader societal expectations."*

*"My friends are laid-back about masks, but my grandparents are more concerned. When visiting them, I always wear a mask as a sign of respect. The varying expectations from different circles impact my intentions, making me more mindful of specific situations."*

*"My friends have diverse opinions on masks, and my family is somewhere in between. However, societal expectations during the peak of the pandemic heavily influenced my decision to wear masks consistently, even if it meant adapting to different views within my social circles."*

*"My family is quite strict about masks, especially in indoor public spaces. When attending a wedding with friends, I wore a mask because my family expected it. The interplay of family and societal expectations strongly influences my intentions to adhere to mask guidelines in various settings."*

*"My friends are generally relaxed about masks, but my parents are more cautious. I remember a time when my parents insisted I wear a mask at a friend's birthday party. The contrast in expectations between friends and family impacts my decisions and intentions to follow mask guidelines."*

*"Societal expectations, especially during the early stages of the pandemic, influenced my decision to wear masks consistently. Even when my friends were less concerned, the broader societal norms guided my intentions to adhere to mask guidelines and prioritize public health."*

*"My family and friends have similar attitudes toward masks, and we often discuss guidelines together. There was a specific instance when we all agreed to wear masks during a community event. The shared expectations within my close circles significantly impact my intentions to follow mask guidelines."*

The results highlight how social networks and larger cultural norms influence mask-wearing behavior. People often follow the rules and expectations of the people in their immediate social circle, whether they be family or friends, and this affects the decisions they make about wearing masks. Furthermore, general cultural standards and conventions act as a determining factor in how people perceive and intend to behave when wearing masks. The intricate network of variables influencing people's adherence to mask norms is highlighted by the interaction of peer, familial, and social pressures.

The development of measures to encourage persistent mask-wearing behavior can benefit from an understanding of the influence of social circles and cultural expectations. Attempts to strengthen good social norms around the wearing of masks, like promoting candid conversations in families and group pledges among friends, may improve compliance. Additionally, public health messaging can be strengthened by conforming to social norms and guidelines to emphasize how crucial mask use is to protecting the population's health. According to research, peer pressure and social norms have a big influence on health-related behaviors, like wearing masks (Liu *et al.*, 2020). According to studies, people are more likely to take up health-related practices that their friends and family support. Furthermore, especially during public health emergencies, cultural norms and standards can be strong inducers of behavior change (Leung *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, programs designed to encourage mask wear should take into account how social networks and cultural norms shape people's behavior.

**Q3.** What challenges have you encountered when it comes to wearing masks? Conversely, can you identify any supportive factors that have made it easier for you to wear masks? How have these challenges and support factors influenced your ability to consistently follow mask-wearing rules in different situations?

### **Theme: Addressing Challenges and Leveraging Supportive Factors in Mask-Wearing Adherence**

When wearing a mask, participants face a variety of issues, such as trouble communicating, skin irritation, foggy glasses, and reduced airflow when engaging in physical activity. Nevertheless, they also list helpful elements that lessen these difficulties, like the use of clear masks, hypoallergenic fabrics, anti-fog sprays, and breathable mask alternatives. Furthermore, organizational techniques, such as having masks in several places, make it easier for people to follow the mask-wearing regulations consistently in a variety of contexts.

*"Communicating with masks on can be challenging, as it muffles our voices. However, supportive factors like using clear masks or being in environments with good acoustics have made it easier to understand and be understood, influencing my adherence to mask-wearing rules during social interactions."*

*"Wearing masks for an extended period sometimes causes skin irritation, which can be uncomfortable. Discovering masks made from hypoallergenic materials and practicing good skincare routines has been supportive, making it easier for me to adhere to mask guidelines without experiencing significant discomfort."*

*"One challenge is remembering to bring a mask everywhere, but having multiple masks in various places – in my bag, car, and at home – has made it convenient. This organizational approach has influenced my consistency in following mask-wearing rules across different situations."*

*"Glasses fogging up has been a persistent issue, particularly in colder weather. Using anti-fog sprays has been a helpful solution, allowing me to wear masks comfortably. Overcoming*

*this challenge positively influenced my commitment to following mask-wearing rules in various climates."*

*"Wearing masks during physical activities, like running or exercising, can be challenging due to restricted airflow. However, finding breathable and moisture-wicking mask options has made it easier for me to maintain consistent mask usage during these activities, aligning with guidelines."*

The results emphasize the complexity of the problems related to mask wear and the role that supportive variables play in easing these problems. Adherence to mask-wearing rules might be hampered by practical challenges, discomfort, and communication barriers. However, people can overcome these obstacles and continue to consistently comply to mask-wearing regulations by identifying and utilizing supportive measures. The necessity for customized tactics to encourage good mask-wearing behavior is highlighted by the recognition of both obstacles and motivating factors.

Interventions intended to promote consistent compliance with mask-wearing requirements can be informed by an understanding of the difficulties people have when wearing masks and the supportive elements that aid in adherence. By offering several mask alternatives and useful solutions like anti-fog sprays, efforts can be made to solve common issues like discomfort and communication hurdles, which can improve comfort and promote compliance. Public health can also be promoted by supporting organizational tactics like making masks easily accessible, which can help with adherence consistency in a variety of settings.

Studies have indicated that encouraging adherence to health behaviors, such as wearing masks, requires removing obstacles and utilizing supportive elements (Greenhalgh *et al.*, 2020). Research has revealed a number of obstacles to mask wearing, including discomfort, communication problems, and practical difficulties that may hinder adherence (Viola *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that supportive measures—like alternate mask options and organizational strategies—improve adherence to standards regarding the use of masks (Howard *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, overcoming obstacles and utilizing favorable circumstances are essential elements of successful mask-wearing advocacy campaigns.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results highlight the complexity of mask-wearing behavior and demonstrate the dynamic interaction between supportive and challenging circumstances that affect mask-wearing rules adherence. While people face a variety of challenges, including discomfort, communication impediments, and logistical problems, they also recognize helpful tactics that lessen these difficulties, such as the usage of alternate mask alternatives, organizational techniques, and useful solutions like anti-fog sprays. People can adhere to mask-wearing regulations consistently in a variety of circumstances by resolving these issues and utilizing supportive factors. These findings emphasize the significance of customized approaches that take into account each person's needs and preferences in order to encourage mask-wearing behavior that is effective and support larger public health initiatives aimed at reducing the transmission of infectious diseases.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Provide Access to Diverse Mask Options: Given that people could experience difficulties with some kinds of masks, it's critical to provide a range of choices, such as transparent masks, materials that are hypoallergenic, and designs that are breathable. This

makes it possible for people to select masks that most closely match their requirements and tastes, improving comfort and lowering obstacles to adherence.

2. Implement Education and Training Programs: Create teaching programs that emphasize the value of wearing masks and offer helpful advice on resolving typical problems. Instructional materials might cover how to use masks correctly, how to deal with discomfort, and how to keep masks in different settings. Through the provision of information and abilities, these initiatives can enable people to wear masks more skillfully and improve compliance with regulations.
3. Foster Supportive Social Norms: Establish conditions that encourage the wearing of masks in a positive way by emphasizing group accountability and community safety. Supportive attitudes and behaviors can be strengthened by promoting candid conversations about the value of mask-wearing among families, peer groups, and larger communities. Furthermore, encouraging public figures or community leaders to wear masks as role models and advocates might help to further cultivate a culture of adherence to norms.

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