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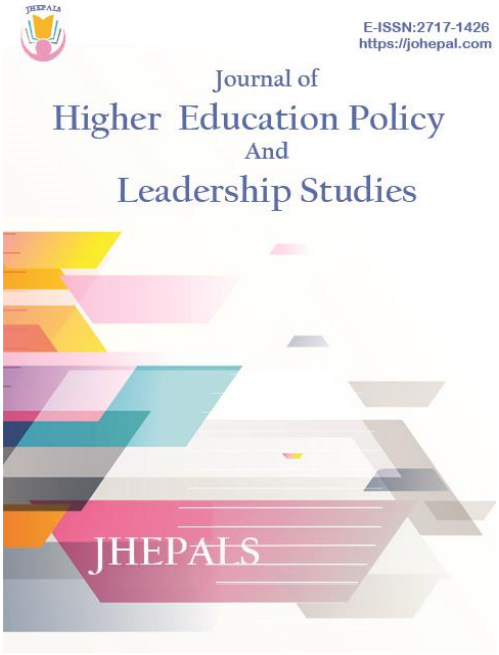

Self-Reflective Holistic Health for University Students during Covid-19: Using a Novel Tool

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Self-Reflective Holistic Health for University Students during Covid-19: Using a Novel Tool

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Highlights

- During the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, students were engaged in self-reflection to overcome the anxiety and related disorders. Universities entail the responsibility of a focused engagement approach for their students, this was reinforced using survey-based self-reflection.
- A survey of fifteen questions covering three domains of holistic health namely - attitude, self-reflection and conscience was undertaken, every question has an ordinal response of Likert scale - one to five. Maximum score is seventy-five and minimum is fifteen. There are five qualitative ordinal levels which can be derived from this score.
- Perception of illness in the recent past (six months) gave positive finding in 1/3 of the participants, despite good attitude among most of the participants, 85% of the participants showed good holistic health. Participants were largely neutral for donation and charity.
- Students shall have self-conscience for constant engagement and involvement to face the new-normal with a better outlook for holistic health. We used survey questionnaire as a holistic health tool for this purpose.

Keywords: Conscience; Attitude; Self-Reflection; Student Needs; Holistic Health

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Self-Reflective Holistic Health

Self-reflection may come from responding and engaging in online surveys and discussions on health-related aspects; it is accepted by students readily. During the COVID-19 there is high prevalence of anxiety among University students, their attitude may vary from *self-caring and conscious-controlled* to *unorganized and non-responsive* depending on living conditions (Husky et al., 2020). Such affective reports are reported for the Indian students as well (Rehman et al., 2021). This may reflect in poor *holistic health*, decreased *engagement*, and frequent *illness*. Developing better response during COVID-19 among students and inculcating self-reflection was desirable during the *new-normal*, and to check the holistic health by engaging them in a motivating interaction for their attitude using a *self-reflective* approach. It was necessary to investigate how we can manage better in the *new-normal* and further motivate to achieve *holistic health*.

Student Engagement

Students from undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) programmes were invited through online interactions and emails. A total of ninety (90) students were involved in the study. Complete responses were received from seventy-three (73) participants.

All participants were involved in online classes during the pandemic of COVID-19. Criteria based sampling was done and inclusion criteria were:

- Age group – 18- 25 years,
- Level – UG and PG;
- Exclusion criteria: Not able to participate in online classes, and COVID-19 affliction.

It also needs to be mentioned that informed consent was taken from all. Ethical approval was given by the institutional board. A Google form was developed as per the holistic health tool; and it was based on the review of literature (Ludeman et al., 2009; Haghani et al., 2020; Beil et al., 2014; Gieck et al., 2007; Gradidge & De Jager, 2011; Pettit et al., 2009).

It included three domains – a)- Attitude, b)- Self-reflection and c)- Conscience– (covering the Spiritual dimension). Expert advice was sought from two (02) experienced academicians and peer group five (05) faculty members.

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Questionnaire

		No	Maybe	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
A	**Attitude –**					
A1	I eat a balanced diet	1	2	3	4	5
A1	I eat a vegetarian diet	1	2	3	4	5
A3	I feel enthusiastic during the academic/ official activities	1	2	3	4	5
A4	I exercise at least 5 times per week	1	2	3	4	5
A5	I feel belongingness for my family and friends	1	2	3	4	5
B	**Self-reflection–**					
B1	I have a good perception of the present	1	2	3	4	5
B2	I have a better perception for future	1	2	3	4	5
B3	I can justify my actions comfortably	1	2	3	4	5
B4	I relate to activities around me	1	2	3	4	5
B5	I have not fallen sick in the last six months	1	2	3	4	5
C	**Conscience–**					
C1	I take part in social work	1	2	3	4	5
C2	I attend religious ceremonies	1	2	3	4	5
C3	I have donated to charity	1	2	3	4	5
C4	I meditate and pray	1	2	3	4	5
C5	I have a purpose in life	1	2	3	4	5

Total max score - 3x 5x 5= 75
Minimum score - 3 x1 x 5=15

15-30- Needs urgent support
30-45- Needs improvement
45-50- Average but can do better
50-65- Good holistic health
>65 - Exception holistic health

A)- Attitude change- Diet & Lifestyle
B)- Self-reflection- Perception of Self
C)- Conscience- Spirituality, Charity & Social Work

Findings

There were both male and female (M:F = 18:55) participants, both undergraduate and graduate (UG:PG = 29:44). Age group was 18- 30 years of age.

Attitude: It is seen that >60% ate balanced diet, and >50% were vegetarian. >60% students were enthusiastic about their work and ~50% exercised 5 times per week, >85% were having the feeling of belongingness to family and friends.

Self-Reflection: >76% had a good perception of present, and >80% had a good perception of future >70% were able to justify their actions and relate to the activities around them >30 % reported falling sick in last 6 months, and further 18 % were neutral for past illness, it makes >48% with illness perception in last 6 months as per their self - reflection. The self-

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reflection of not falling sick is at >51%. Thus, during Covid-19 there was a significant about 50% self-perceived illness.

Conscience: 63% of the participants participated in social work. C2 - 53% attended religious ceremonies. 53% were not sure of donating to the charity. 62% meditated/ prayed. >94% of the participants have reported feeling a conscience for purpose in life.

Qualitative distribution of Holistic health (proportions): 85% of the participants were reported to have good holistic health and 6 % exceptional. 5% had average, 3% + 1%(urgent support needed) required help and improvement.

Mode value for various qualifiers: *Donated to charity* qualifier is having a neural mode. Balanced diet, belongingness and purpose in life show a mode of strongly agree. Self-reflection has not shown any qualifier as strongly agree.

Discussion

COVID-19 as a pandemic had produced a *new normal*. Student population was also affected by this – as a vulnerable group; mainly during lockdowns. Student' engagement through surveys has always been a requirement, for *reflective thinking*, and has shown improvement in their meta-cognition - as told by Ramlal and Augustin (2020). The requirements for student' concerns and care, and student' anxiety during the pandemic is influenced by living conditions and arrangements. It is not possible to change the economic or living arrangements, however the assessment of attitude and behaviour of the students, for their holistic health - using reflective approaches can be very useful.

In the present study it has been found that most of the participants maintained good holistic health (85%), but their *specific perception* about illness in recent past was not at the same proportion, where only ½ of the participants reported not falling sick. It may have origination in the anxiety associated with COVID-19 illness (coranophobia).

Attitude of the students was seen as *reported belongingness*, to their family and friends at large, but the balanced diet and exercise habits were not consistently reported. The population comprised of the students from health science courses, and are expected to be at the better part of the society in this regard; better understanding and *attitude* towards diet and exercise has health promotive and preventive potentials (Deschasaux-Tanguy et al., 2020). Student population resided within the hostel, and were forced to stay under lockdown, it produced situational isolation and anxious atmosphere for different reasons.

To influence the attitude, and behaviour - self-reflection is an excellent method. Learning is significantly influenced by it; it also gives substitution for personal face to face interaction. The participants response about the sickness in last 6 months, was at 50%, thus it clearly points out the relevance of *self-reflection.*

The qualitative analysis of holistic health showed 1 participant needing urgent help. On careful one to one discussion - family illness, economic crisis and fear for self were noticed. Institutional support was provided immediately. Interventions like breathing

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exercises have the potential to eliminate anxiety and distress in general for such situations (Shukla et al., 2020).

Student's engagement was done using online approach by us. The online questionnaire helped in self-reflection and served as a diagnostic tool for university student's population. Belongingness and purpose in life v.i.z. qualifiers A5 and C5 have got a mode of 5, it reflects a sense of direction for the studied population. The tool was able to identify all three domains.

Holistic health tool has a role in screening large populations and covering various aspects of *holistic health.* Students responded in good proportion, and the questionnaire is easy to administer. The tool is generalized, and it is not specific to a disease or illness. Only English-speaking students can respond and engage using it, also it is specific to Indian settings. Surveys can be of exploratory, and diagnostic nature and may indicate the requirement for face-to-face session, and interventions. The holistic health tool identified participant in urgent need of help, and served this purpose.

The students maintained good holistic health during Covid-19, generally. Illness self - reflection was not at par with it. It reflects a state of increased perception for illness or concerned approach due to COVID-19 in the student' population. University Students' engagement for attitude, conscience, and self-reflection of holistic health, during the *new - normal of COVID-19* using an online survey by holistic health tool was found effective.

Author's Note:

* This work is adapted from Covid-19 response of the University using online engagement of students; the University' Proctor' (Lead Author') strategy was to explore the Holistic health of the participants. International conference on Student' Engagement, Wellbeing, Holistic Development & the 'New Normal.2021 was the platform where discussions were held about *Holistic health and Student' engagement.*

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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Human Participants

Ethical approval, informed consent, and all aspects of declaration of Helsinki are followed.

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