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# Examining College Students' Knowledge, Beliefs, and Attitudes Towards Self-Care Through The Lens of Covid-19

Riley Engle

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## Method Continued

### Introduction

- According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2022), self-care is taking the time to do things that help you live well.
- Self-care decreases stress and risk of illnesses (NIMH, 2022).. Since self-care looks different for everyone, it is important that people do what works for them.
- Research suggests that when college students experience stress, simply sharing information about self-care strategies is not enough. Additionally, students report that self-care is more of an indulgence than a necessity.
- Research also states that the increased isolation from the spread of Covid-19 led to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and mental health issues (Apgar & Cadmus, 2011).
- The goal of this study is to explore the self-care practices college students engage in. Specifically, examining whether their beliefs and attitudes towards self-care play a role in the extent to which they are engaging in these practices.
- This study also investigates whether Covid-19 impacted the extent to which college students engaged in self-care practices.

### Method

#### Participants

- 128 undergraduate students aged between 18 and 22 at two liberal arts colleges in the Midwest.
- 49.25% First Years, 35.2% Sophomores, 10.9% Juniors, and 4.7% Seniors.
- 83% White, 64.8% Women.

#### Materials

Measures used included:

- **Self-Care Practices.** Mindful Self-Care Scale (MSCS, Cook-Cottone & Guyker, 2018): 6 dimensions (Mindful Relaxation; Physical Care; Self-Compassion and Purpose; Supportive Relationships; Supportive Structure; Mindful Awareness),  $\alpha = .60$ ,  $\alpha = .71$ ,  $\alpha = .83$ ,  $\alpha = .81$ ,  $\alpha = .76$ ,  $\alpha = .89$ .
- **College Students Knowledge.** One item ("How strongly familiar are you with self-care practices?").
- **College Students Beliefs about Self-Care.** ("Do you believe that self-care practices positively impact you as a student? If yes explain.").

#### Procedure

- Participants were recruited through the Psychology Research In Action for an introductory psychology course in Fall 2022.
- Self-report surveys were completed online anonymously.
- Participants received one credit for completing the study.

#### Analytic Strategies

- A Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between college students' knowledge and engagement in self-care.
- A Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between college students' engagement in self-care and the Covid-19 pandemic.
- A thematic analysis was conducted to explore college students' beliefs regarding self-care.

## Results

Table 1.

*Correlations Between College Students' Knowledge and Engagement in Self-Care.*

Variables	Degrees of Freedom	r value	p value
Mindful Relaxation	126	.20	.03
Physical Care	126	.20	.02
Self-Compassion and Purpose	126	.20	.02

Table 2.

*Correlations Between College Students' Engagement in Self-Care and the Covid-19 Pandemic.*

Variables	Degrees of Freedom	r value	p value
Mindful Relaxation	126	.20	.01
Self-Compassion and Purpose	126	.20	.02

- A significant positive correlation was found between college students' knowledge and self-care practices (relaxation, physical care, self-compassion and purpose). See Table 1.
- A significant positive correlation was found between college students' engagement in self-care and the Covid-19 pandemic (mindful relaxation and self-compassion and purpose). See Table 2.
- The thematic analysis showed that 63% of college students who engaged in self-care practices believed that it helped to balance their stress, promoted success, and allowed them to prioritize their own wellbeing. On the other hand, 4% of participants did not think that engaging in self-care was beneficial.

## Results Continued

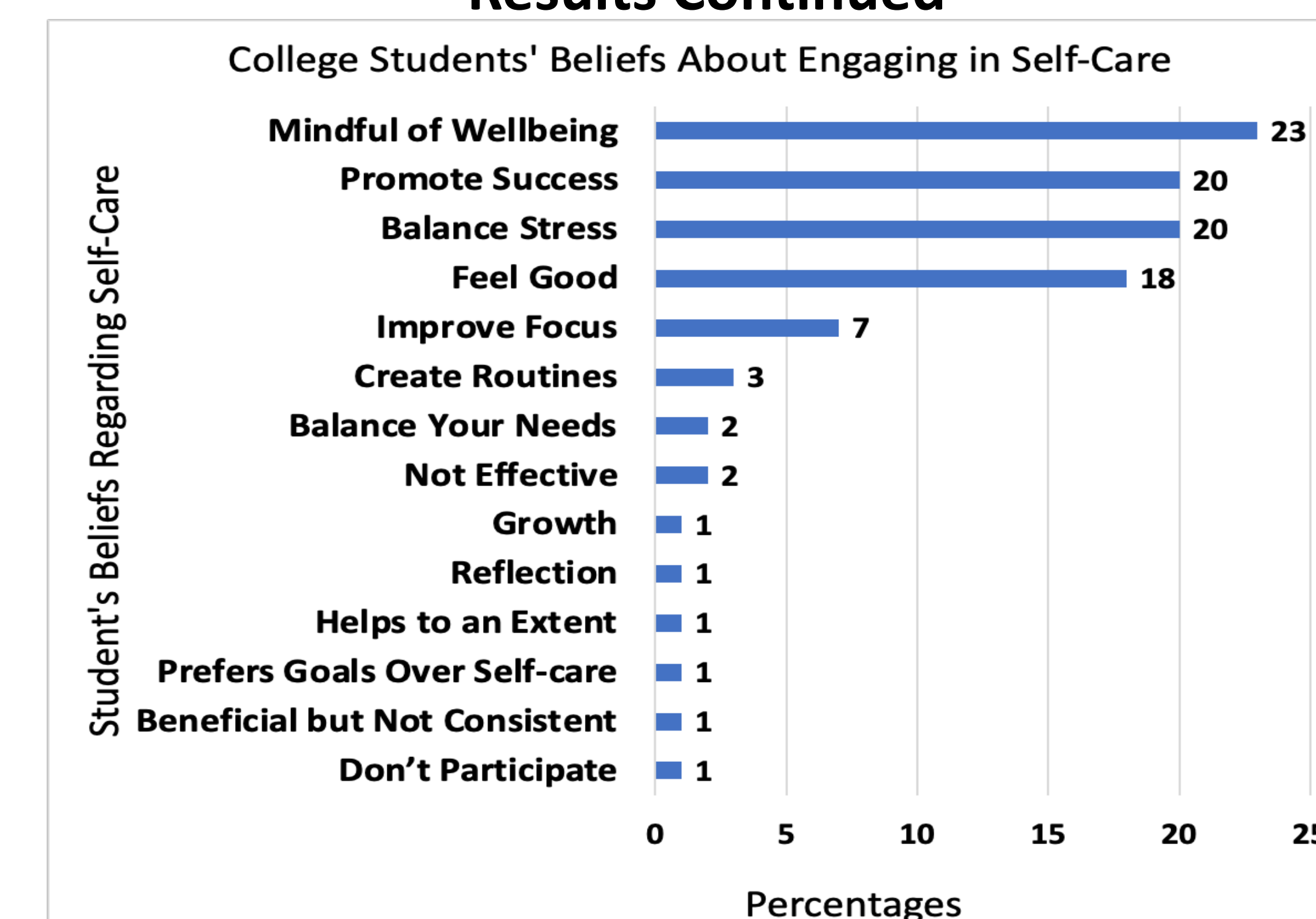


Figure 1. College Students' Beliefs about Engaging in Self-Care.

## Discussion

- Our findings reinforce the importance of self-care among college students.
- Physical activity can be used as a way for college students to manage their emotions (Yon et al., 2022).
- The free time that quarantine provided allowed students to embrace their physical feelings and do exercises that felt best for them, and their mental health was prioritized as the Covid-19 pandemic progressed (Yon et al., 2022).
- Self-care allows students to reflect on their wellbeing and identify their needs as students and deal with them on an individual level.
- Limitations of our study include, our study was cross-sectional, and our participants were mostly women (96.4%) and White (64.8%).
- Future research could benefit from more diverse participants and may use longitudinal data.
- With limited research on self-care among college students, our study enhances the current understanding of self-care among college students.

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