Examining College Students’ Knowledge and Beliefs about Self-Care through the Lens of the Covid-19 Pandemic

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

Riley Engle
College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University

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 (Aggar & 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 (MS-S, Cook-Cottone & Guoyer, 2018): 6 dimensions (Mindful Relaxation; Physical Care; Self-Compassion and Purpose; Supportive Relationships; Supportive Structure; Mindful Awareness), α = .60, α = .71, α = .83, α = .81, α = .76, α = .79.
• 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.”).

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.

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<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
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<th>p value</th>
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</thead>
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<td>.20</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Care</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Compassion and Purpose</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Correlations Between College Students’ Engagement in Self-Care and the Covid-19 Pandemic.

<table>
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</tbody>
</table>

• 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.

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 964.8% 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.

References