

# International students and mental health and wellness

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## Background

Purpose of undertaking this study with international students is to to advocate for better resolution on their availability to use public health services or services from their colleges or universities that will benefit their lives to overcome barriers they may encounter in the present and moving forward in terms of being able to receive healthcare. This is important because knowing more about access to resources and local health services may help to provide better services for international students.

International students were greatly impacted by the pandemic. COVID-19 has continuously contributed by mainly affecting international students' accessibility to resources that could support them and guide through difficult times in relation to their mental health concerns. "Since the early 2000s, reports of increased rates of mental ill health among young people worldwide have received much attention.

Several studies indicate a greater incidence of mental health problems among tertiary students, compared with the general population, and higher levels of anxiety, in particular, among international students compared with domestic students" (Mewett, Sawyer & Maree, 2016). This is deeply concerning and should be considered to spread awareness among international students.

## Methods

- My research was conducted by a survey. The sampling method that was used is convenience sampling (non-probability technique).
- International students were eligible to engage in this research and any person(s) who are not international are ineligible to engage in this activity.
- I created my survey through MS forms and prepared the information about my survey and some insight on what my survey was about in relation to international students.
- Data analysis was conducted from October 28, 2023, to November 17, 2023.
- I did not encounter any ethical issues regarding my survey.
- The survey was anonymous, and participants were presented with an information and consent form prior to filling in the survey.

## Key Findings

### **COVID-19 affecting healthcare (including mental health and wellness resources).**

There was a major indication that COVID-19 did not affect their access.

Of the 15 respondents, three (20%) indicated that healthcare had been impacted due to COVID-19 while 80% responded that it had not been impacted.

### **Describing how the access was impacted during COVID-19.**

*"I was unable to go to healthcare services because of the pandemic restrictions"*

### **Since COVID-19 healthcare services (including mental health and wellness) are more accessible than before since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

From the 15 people 3 people answered yes that represents the 20% while 12 people had answered no which represents the 80%.

### **While the 12 respondents that had answered no gave their reasons as to why healthcare services (including mental health and wellness) are not more accessible**

More cases of COVID-19 which represents the 6.66%

Coping strategies: Better meditation development which represents 6.66%

More awareness on social media outlets and sources which represents the last 6.66

### **Whether college or university provides supportive resources to students during their education**

From the 15 people 11 people answered yes which represents 73% while the other 4 answered no that represents 27%.

### **Why or why not?**

In this question only 2 responses did not answer my research question. While the rest of the respondents responded with:

Barrier in communication & language 2= 14%

Mental health and wellness 4= 28%

Accessibility to Resources 7 = 57%

### **Recommendations to healthcare providers to provide more accessible healthcare resources (including mental health and wellness) resources for college and university students**

Communication (n=1, 8.4%), Health & wellness resources (n=11, 91.6%)

### **Other factors respondents found important to the issue of accessible healthcare resources for international students**

Financial issues (n=1, 16.6%)

Healthcare services & resources (n=5, 83.3%)

## Discussion

Participants in my study did not encounter any issues in accessing health care resources as their schools implemented. This is contrary to past studies (Chutiyami et al., 2022) that show that COVID impacted access to healthcare.

However, in relation to my research question and the findings in my survey fully demonstrated that before and during the impact of COVID-19 did not affect the accessibility to healthcare services and resources.

## Implications for policy and/or practice

The implications for practitioner and policy would be understanding the sensitivity about this topic and how it can impact international students and their accessibility to healthcare resources or services and the policies around healthcare in general.

- There is a need to evaluate health services to ensure they are accessible.

## References

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- Mewett, F., & Sawyer, A. M. (2016). International Students and Mental Health. *Journal of International Students*, 6(3). 661-677. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/international-students-mental-health/docview/1792214289/se-2?accountid=3455>