

Understanding Self-Care Literacy Among Healthcare Practitioners Working from Home During the COVID-19 Pandemic : A Qualitative Analysis Using AI

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ABSTRACT

Self-care literacy has been defined as knowledge, motivation, and competencies to promote health, prevent disease, and maintain health with or without the support of a healthcare provider. Little is known about how healthcare practitioners who were able to work from home during the COVID-19 pandemic took care of themselves. Forty-four practitioners responded to the Self-Care During COVID-19 Questionnaire from September 2022-January 2023. Data about the meaning, methods, and prevention of self-care were analyzed using AI. Findings aligned with previous manual coding as exercise and sleep/relaxation were the most often mentioned categories of self-care. Implications for self-care literacy will be explored.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to understand self-care literacy among healthcare practitioners working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODS

A mixed-methods study was conducted online via Qualtrics between September 2022 and January 2023. Participants were recruited via LinkedIn and snowball sampling. The responses to the qualitative component from the *Self-Care During COVID-19 Questionnaire* is the focus of this poster Responses to the questions that were most relevant to self-care literacy were included in the analysis and listed below:

1. What does taking care of yourself mean to you? Please explain.
2. How have you taken care of yourself during the COVID-19 pandemic? Please explain.
3. What has prevented you from taking care of yourself during the COVID-19 pandemic? Please explain,
4. What made it easier for you to take care of yourself during the COVID-19 pandemic? Please explain.
5. Please share any other thoughts about taking care of yourself during the COVID-19 pandemic.

DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistical analyses were used to calculate the demographic information in Excel. ATLAS.ti 23 is a qualitative software that was used to first manually code responses to one of the questions. Secondly, the AI feature of AI Coding was used to establish self-care categories. AI coded data was cleaned and reviewed for accuracy. AI coding aligned with self-care categories established by previous manual coding.

RESULTS

Demographic Information

Total participants (582) and Complete Responses (317)
Total Front-Line Employees (176) Front Line Employees Able to Work from Home (141) Front-Line Employees Able to Work From Home that Identified as Healthcare Practitioners (44)

Female Respondents (29) Male Respondents (11) Non Binary Respondents (3) Gender not Specified (1)

Occupations: Athletic Trainer (4); Clinical Lab Tech (2); Dental Hygienist (1); Dentist (1); Dietician (1); EMT (4); Nursing (5); Massage Therapist (1); Medical Assistant (1); Health Information Specialist(2); Medical Transcriptionist (1); Mental Health Provider (8); Nurse Practitioner/Midwife/Nurse Anesthetist (4); Occupational Health (2); Pharmacist (1); Physical Therapist (1); Physician/Surgeon (4); Surgical Tech (1)

Categories

Category	Most frequently mentioned
Definition of Self-care	Physical health, rest/relaxation, and eating healthy.
Took care of themselves	Exercise, mask wearing, and vaccinating against COVID-19.
Prevented taking care of themselves	Having to work, being too tired, and having limited time
Helped participants take care of themselves	Working from home & support from family and friends

PARTICIPANT QUOTES

Definition of Self-Care

“Taking care of myself means that I am actively trying to ensure that my physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health are at places I want them to be through activities like exercising or reading a book. I do all of this for self-improvement and to develop/understand myself.”
(Female, 25, Georgia)

Took Care of Themselves

“Exercising every single day on my peloton bike or in the peloton app on my phone. I will do multiple types of workouts such as cycling, weight lifting, walking, and running. This has literally been my life line to staying healthy physically and mentally during COVID. It has been such a great outlet for me!”
(Female, 36, California)

Prevented taking care of themselves

“Working from home has too much actual work, which blurs the lines between personal and professional time.”
(Female, 54, California)

Helped take care of themselves

“Ability to occasionally work remote gave me more time”
(Male, 40, New York)

DISCUSSION

Healthcare practitioners faced challenging times during the COVID-19 pandemic. A new virus was sweeping the country that they knew little about, and virtual visits were replacing in person care, with the same level of care being expected by patients. This population shared how they defined self-care, self-care activities, and facilitators and barriers to self-care while working from home. Exercise and physical activity has been the most mentioned way to practice self-care across our self-care studies regardless of status as frontline or working from home. Findings provided a baseline understanding about how healthcare practitioners working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic defined and practiced self-care. The categories of how participants took care of themselves during the COVID-19 pandemic can be shared and could be used to promote future self-care strategies among healthcare practitioners working from home, especially during times of stress and emergency. In addition, the preliminary findings may contribute to understanding the concept of self-care literacy. The current definition of self-care literacy is abstract and more of a vision statement. The next steps will be to create a functional definition of self-care literacy that can be used to plan specific activities and behaviors, which could lead to the development of self-care literacy measures to be used in future research.

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