

“Exploring The Influence Of Wellness Apps On College Students’ Well-Being”

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ABSTRACT

In the modern era of technology, especially health and well-being apps play a crucial role in shaping the lifestyle of college students. The study is descriptive and interviews were conducted to gain insights into app preferences, usage patterns and transformative effects on behaviour. Wellness apps are influential in diverse health goals, positively impacting physical health. It all depends upon individual dedication and consistency in app usage contributing to their effectiveness, with valued features including goal-setting, progress tracking and motivational rewards.

KEYWORDS: Health Communication, Mobile Applications, Health/ Fitness well-being apps, College Students, Lifestyle, Preferences, Personal growth.

INTRODUCTION

With the changing dynamics of technological integration and the growing importance of personal well-being, this study examines the notable trend of college students relying on wellness apps. These wellness tools have become an integral part of cultivating a lifestyle within the broader landscape of technological advancements. From this point of view, the researcher aims to examine the diversity of wellness apps, usage patterns and their influence on college students.

As per the survey by Statista “With the number of smartphone users in India projected to reach 1.55 billion by 2040,” (India: Smartphone Users 2040 | Statista, 2023) the increasing dominance of technology in health communication has led the younger generation, particularly college students, to embrace smartphone applications as indispensable tools for tracking their everyday activities.

This descriptive study seeks to understand the patterns of how college students use health and fitness well-being applications to effect behavioural changes. Within this framework, the study investigates app preferences, usage patterns, behavioural changes, perceived relevance, privacy issues, alternatives to wellness applications and transformative effects on human development.

Qualitative interviews provided detailed insights into how students integrate these apps into their daily lives. The findings provide a focused perspective into the several ways in which technology, as manifested in wellness apps, has become a powerful factor in shaping college students' well-being. These applications go beyond their role as basic tools, greatly impacting individual lifestyle choices and health-related behaviours.

Furthermore, the study reveals that college students employ wellness apps for diverse health and fitness goals, reporting positive impacts on physical health and behaviour. However, the effectiveness of these apps usage depends on individual dedication and

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consistency. Participants emphasize the significance of features such as goal-setting, progress tracking and motivational rewards in their experiences with wellness apps.

The research provides a comprehensive exploration, transitioning from the broad landscape of technology-driven wellness trends among college students to the specific dynamics of app usage, behavioural impacts and the underlying factors contributing to transformative effects on personal health and well-being.

AIM

The researcher aims to investigate wellness application usage among college students in the Hyderabad area.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the widespread use of wellness applications among college students.
2. To explore the motivational variables in wellness apps that influence user engagement.
3. Identify the barriers and factors involved in the usage of wellness applications.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research is supported by two models those are the Health Belief Model and the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The Health Belief Model helps understand how individual's health risks and the advantages of health-related actions. Meanwhile, the Theory of Planned Behaviour provides insights into the influence of attitudes and behavioural control on one's intentions and behaviours.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review on the usage of wellness applications and their impact on health outcomes begins by exploring various facets of university students' engagement with fitness-related technologies. This comprehensive review encompasses studies investigating the antecedents of fitness application usage behaviours, the association between physical fitness and activity and the motivations driving college students to adopt fitness-related technology.

Firstly, Yu et al., (2021) study integrates the theory of planned behaviour and the technology acceptance model to identify factors influencing university students' engagement with fitness apps. The findings emphasize the significance of perceived usefulness, ease of use and attitude in shaping students' intentions to use these applications, providing a psychological perspective on their adoption.

Wang (2019) studied the relationship between physical fitness and activity among Chinese college students highlighting the increased risk of obesity among students lacking regular exercise. This study shows the importance of consistent physical activity for maintaining optimal physical fitness.

Kendrick, Duffy and Burke's (2022) study delves into the motivations driving college students to use and discontinue the use of fitness-related technology. Employing qualitative methods, the research uncovers insights into the behavioural aspects and motivations related to the adoption of fitness-related technology among undergraduate students, providing a deeper understanding of user perspectives.

Schaben and Furness's (2018) examination of the impact of fitness trackers on college students contributes nuanced findings, indicating no significant change in step count or body measurements over 12 weeks. Despite this, the study suggests potential activity benefits, prompting further exploration into the role of fitness trackers in promoting physical activity among college students.

In general, the above works of literature offer valuable perspectives on the variables impacting college students' engagement with fitness-related technologies. This literature provides an in-depth understanding of the dynamics surrounding the integration of fitness applications and technologies into college students' lives, from the psychological antecedents identified by Yu et al. to the observed associations between physical fitness, activity and technology usage motivations highlighted by Wang and Kendrick et al.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do college students diversely utilize wellness applications for health and fitness goals?
2. What motivational features within wellness apps contribute to sustained engagement among college students?
3. What challenges and factors influence the utilization of wellness apps among college students?

METHODOLOGY

The study is qualitative where the data is gathered through interviews to explore the experiences and perceptions of a sample of 15 College students aged 18-22 from diverse backgrounds and demographics. Convenience sampling has been done to select the sample. Secondary data involves the literature review and book revolving around the research topic. Thematic analysis is applied to analyse qualitative data gathered.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis of the provided data reveals several key themes related to the use of wellness apps among college students. These themes include:

1. Frequency of Smartphone Usage:

Smartphone usage ranged from approximately 20 to 6000 minutes per day varying from the participants. Different operating systems, such as iOS and Android, were mentioned. Gaurav aged 19 uses his smartphone almost 6 hours a day. Victoria aged 20 uses her smartphone for 20 to 30 minutes and checks it frequently.

2. Wellness App Usage:

The participants used several wellness programmes, including My Fitness, Nike Run, the Lose Weight in 30 Days Challenge and Step Set Go. These apps were used for weight loss, tracking physical activity and meeting general health and fitness goals.

3. Duration of App Usage:

Participants reported varying levels of app usage, ranging from a few months to intermittent use. Mili aged 20, began using the health programme quite some time ago, but she hasn't used it as much recently. Puran aged 20, employs a woman's fitness for regular workouts that we can accomplish at home.

4. Progress Tracking and Goals:

Users tracked progress through features like calorie counting, workout duration and step count. Goal-setting was a common feature, including standing goals, running goals and specific workout plans. Satish aged 19 tracks the Burning of his calories and checks how many hours he works out or how many meals he works out?"

5. Effectiveness of Wellness Apps:

Participants perceived wellness apps as effective in motivating them to achieve fitness goals. Features such as showing calories burned, setting goals and tracking heart rate were highlighted as contributing to the apps' effectiveness.

6. Positive Impact on Physical Health:

Users reported positive impacts on physical health, including increased motivation, behavioural changes and better body transformation. Apps were credited with instigating physical activity, especially during the COVID-19 lockdown.

7. Behavioural Changes:

Behavioural changes included increased physical activity, reduced laziness and a shift in daily routines to accommodate health and fitness goals.

8. Satisfaction with App Effectiveness:

Participants reported various levels of satisfaction with the usefulness of the wellness applications, ranging from 3.5 to 70%. Consistency in app usage and personal dedication were found as variables impacting customer happiness.

9. Challenges and Limitations:

Some participants mentioned challenges such as inconsistency in app usage, eventual laziness and the need for personal dedication beyond app functionalities. Puran aged 20 says BMS helped her. Behavioural change which happened after starting it.

10. Alternative Health Practices:

A few users indicated alternative health methods, such as home cures, herbal teas and gym workouts, in addition to app usage.

11. Motivation through Rewards:

Participants who used apps like Step Set Go emphasised the motivational benefits of receiving prizes through physical activity. Victoria, a 20-year-old, states, So with this coin we can redeem and award our coupon so that we can avail it from other applications.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. Participants utilised a variety of wellness apps for different health and fitness goals, including My Fitness, Nike Run, Lose Weight in 30 Days Challenge and Step Set Go.
2. Wellness apps were perceived as effective in motivating users through features like goal-setting, progress tracking and rewards, fostering positive behavioural changes.
3. Participants reported positive impacts on physical health, including increased motivation, improved body transformation and enhanced overall well-being.
4. Satisfaction levels varied among participants, influenced by consistency in app usage and personal dedication. Challenges such as laziness and inconsistency were identified.
5. A few participants integrated alternative health practices, such as home remedies and gym workouts, alongside wellness app usage.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the diverse utilization of wellness applications among college students for health and fitness goals reveals a spectrum of smartphone usage patterns, ranging from extensive daily usage to more infrequent interactions. The popularity of specific wellness apps, such as My Fitness, Nike Run, Lose Weight in 30 Days Challenge and Step Set Go,

underscores the varied purposes these applications serve, including weight loss, physical activity tracking and overall health and fitness goals.

The motivational aspects of these wellness applications are critical to maintaining college student engagement. The use of progress tracking, goal-setting and personalised training promotes a sense of accomplishment and dedication. Participants emphasise the efficacy of elements such as calorie counting, goal-setting and heart rate tracking, demonstrating the positive impact on their dedication to reaching fitness goals.

Despite the perceived success of wellness apps, obstacles and influencing variables emerge. Participants' degrees of satisfaction vary, with factors such as consistency in app usage and personal dedication influencing the entire experience. Challenges such as inconsistent app usage and occasional laziness are addressed, emphasising the importance of a comprehensive approach that goes beyond app functionality. Notably, alternative health methods such as home remedies, herbal teas and gym routines are noted, indicating that college students take a varied approach to their health and well-being.

The motivational aspect, particularly through rewards as observed in apps like Step Set Go, emerges as a significant factor contributing to sustained engagement. As college students navigate the complexities of integrating wellness apps into their lives, the findings emphasize the importance of considering individual preferences, motivations and challenges to enhance the overall effectiveness and impact of these applications on their health and fitness journeys.

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