

## Research on College Students' Sense of Social Responsibility during the COVID-19 Epidemic

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### ABSTRACT

**ABSTRACT:** The Coronavirus Disease 2019(COVID-19) outbreak in 2020 has had seriously affected people's normal study, work and life. In order to understand the impact of COVID-19 on college students and their changes of sense of social responsibility, a survey was conducted among 8,614 college students and a self-designed questionnaire was used as a tool to analyze the structure and characteristics of their sense of social responsibility during this period. The survey results indicate that: (1) College students develop a strong sense of social responsibility and follow the latest news related to epidemic during the COVID-19. (2) The ongoing COVID-19 epidemic has caused severe impacts on most students' study and personal lives. (3) COVID-19 has a greater impact on college students with financial hardship. The "green channel" timely created by the colleges to help the impoverished students and other caring actions during the epidemic have been highly recognized by college students. (4) Most students take a neutral position on the issue of the COVID-19 and show their support for China's stringent epidemic prevention measures. (5) College students express deep respect for those fighting at the front line against the novel coronavirus pneumonia, such as the medical staff and volunteers. And meanwhile they have actively involved in various work to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, which suggests that the college students are imbued with a strong sense of social responsibility.

**KEY WORDS:** College Students; COVID-19; Social Responsibility

### I. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 outbreak constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and poses a major threat to the public health and safety, which seriously affect the economic and social order (Zhao, Liu, Yang, & Liao, et al., 2020). As the COVID-19 wreaks havoc all over the world, global epidemic prevention and control is faced with a serious challenge. College students are on behalf of our national youth group and have a bearing on the future development of our nation. Therefore, the sense of social responsibility of college students under the COVID-19 epidemic is worth exploring and discussing. Sense of social responsibility mainly refers to a social member's attitudes towards the country, collective and other individuals. As a kind of moral emotions, it is not only a unity of knowledge, emotion and behavior, but also an organic combination of inner spiritual value and external behavioral norms (Wu, 2016). Therefore, the cultivation of college students' sense of social responsibility has attracted extensive attention from all walks of life. College students under the epidemic situation have distinct characteristics that are different from other social groups: they are knowledgeable,

capable and good at information technology, but their sense of social responsibility is unstable (Lv & Zhang, 2020). On the one hand, with the extensive use of electronic devices and the internet, college students have more access to lots of information. Both positive and negative information related to the epidemic will affect their sense of social responsibility. On the other hand, the COVID-19 prevention and control requires people for a long-time home quarantine. This has a great impact on the lives of college students, and they are more prone to negative emotions that affect their sense of social responsibility. Most existing studies on COVID-19 epidemic mainly focuses on mental health injury (Chen, 2020), information transmission (Zeng & Zhou, 2020), and the impact of distanceteaching on education (Lv, Wang, Zhang, & Han, et al., 2020). There are few studies paying attention to the sense of social responsibility of college students under the epidemic. Therefore, this study mainly aims to explore the basic situation and characteristics of college students' social responsibility under the COVID-19 epidemic, so as to provide an effective reference for a comprehensive understanding of college students' social responsibility during the epidemic.

## II. RESEARCH OBJECT AND METHODOLOGY

This study takes undergraduate students in Guangdong province as the research object. The offline questionnaire survey was carried out in April 2020. A total of 8,614 valid questionnaires were collected, and the questionnaire efficiency was 100%. The data collected was analyzed by SPSS 24.0, an analysis software of Statistical Product and Service Solutions. Among the students who completed the questionnaire, there are 2,106 male students (24%) and 6,508 female students (76%). The ratio of male to female is about 1:3. The number of students in Grade One, Grade Two, Grade Three and Grade Four account for 46% (N=3,937), 42% (N=3,612), 9% (N=772), and 3% (N=293) respectively. As for the registered permanent residence, 65% (N=5,629) of them are registered urban residents and the remaining 35% (N=2,985) are registered rural residents. Besides, 12% (N=1,027) of the students have applied for financial aid while 88% (N=7,587) have not applied. Overall, the distribution of its demographic characteristics basically conforms to the reality. Thus, this sampling survey is reasonable and credible.

## III. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### Places where the students live

According to the statistics of Table 1, during the COVID-19 epidemic, a majority of college students spend their time in China. Among the 8,614 students surveyed, 274 of them are in Hubei, Zhejiang and other areas severely hit by the epidemic.

Table 1: Places where the students live

Option	Total	Proportion
Areas hit seriously by the epidemic, such as Hubei and Zhejiang	274	3.18%
Other areas in China	8,340	96.82%

**The degree of concern about the epidemic among college students :** As the Table 2 shows, the highest number (62.63%) goes to students who regularly follow the epidemic news and have an understanding of epidemic prevention knowledge. The students follow the epidemic news almost every day and have a good command of epidemic prevention knowledge account for 26% while 11% of the students only occasionally follow the epidemic news and just have some acquaintance of epidemic prevention knowledge. Only 8 people say they pay little attention to the COVID-19 news and their knowledge about the epidemic prevention is limited, which is a problem worth reflection.

Table 2: The degree of concern about the epidemic among college students

Options	Total	Proportion
Follow epidemic news almost every day, and have a good command of epidemic prevention knowledge.	2,290	26.58%
Follow epidemic news regularly, and have an understanding of epidemic prevention knowledge.	5,395	62.63%
Follow the epidemic news occasionally, and have some acquaintance with epidemic prevention knowledge.	921	10.69%
Pay little attention to it and don't know about the epidemic prevention.	8	0.09%

**The impact of the epidemic on college students :** As shown in Table 3, the majority of students consider that the COVID-19 epidemic has a great impact on their personal lives to some extent, among which 11.16% of them say that the impact is quite huge. The students who think the impact is modest account for 23.44%, and the remaining 1.02% say it doesn't change anything. Obviously, it can be seen that the COVID-19 epidemic has a great impact on college students.

Table 3: The impact of the epidemic on college students

Options	Total	Proportion
Quite huge. It seriously affects my personal life.	961	11.16%
Relatively huge. It affects my personal life to some extent.	5,546	64.38%
Modest. It hasn't changed my life so much.	2,019	23.44%
No impact.	88	1.02%

As Table 4 shows, it is worth noting that 64.43% of the students who don't apply for financial aid think it has a relatively huge impact, while 1.04% think it has no impact. For those who have applied, a higher percentage of students (12.17%) consider the epidemic outbreak greatly influence their personal life, and only 0.88% of them think there is no impact. This suggests that the COVID-19 has a greater influence on students from economically disadvantaged family. Therefore, it is necessary for schools to provide financial aid to the impoverished students during the COVID-19 epidemic.

Table 4: The impact of application for financial aid on college students

Whether to apply for financial aid	Quite huge. It seriously affects my personal life.	Relatively huge. It affects my personal life to some extent.	Modest. It hasn't changed my life so much.	No impact.
Yes	125 (12.17%)	658 (64.07%)	235 (22.88%)	9 (0.88%)
No	836 (11.02%)	4,888 (64.43%)	1,784 (23.51%)	79 (1.04%)

According to the results of the research (see Table 5), 92.8% of the non-poor students highly admire the "green channel" quickly created by the college to help the impoverished students while 2.2% of the students did not receive relevant information due to the improper information communication or their neglect of notices. Only

0.1% of students don't think it necessary for the schools to do so. According to statistics, among 1027 poor students, 1,001 students strongly agree with the school's approach, accounting for 97.5%. Only 23 students think their schools just do what they are supposed to do.

Table 5: The attitude of non-poor students towards school'poor students subsidies

Options	Total	Proportion
I couldn't agree more. The school responded quickly.	7,037	92.8%
Schools just do what they are supposed to do.	369	4.9%
I don't think it's necessary for schools to do that.	11	0.1%
I didn't get the information.	170	2.2%

**College students' attitudes towards COVID-19 and national epidemic prevention measures :** It can be seen from Table that 36.3% of the students hold a positive attitude towards the epidemic situation, believing that the lockdown measures of Wuhan has been lifted and our whole country has resumed work and production. This indicates epidemic situation has been effectively controlled, and our lives will soon return to normal. Over half of the students (60.2%) choose a neutral position, saying that it will take some time for the epidemic to be fully brought under control. From their perspective, although the epidemic situation in China has improved, we can't relax our vigilance as long as there are new confirmed cases. Only a small percentage of students (3.5%) are negative about the global situation and the future situation, thinking it will take a long time to fully control the epidemic.

Table 6: College students' attitudes towards the epidemic situation

Options	Total	Proportion
Positive attitudes: the lockdown measures of Wuhan has been lifted and our whole country has resumed work and production. The epidemic situation has been effectively controlled, and our lives will soon return to normal.	3,129	36.3%
Neutral attitudes: Although the epidemic situation in China has improved, we can't relax our vigilance as long as there are new confirmed cases. It will take some time for the epidemic to be fully brought under control.	5,184	60.2%
Negative attitudes: Despite the improvement of the epidemic situation in China, the current global situation is grim and the future situation is not clear. It will take a long time to bring the epidemic under complete control.	301	3.5%

As shown in Table 7, college students hold a supportive attitude towards the strict epidemic prevention measures adopted in China. There are 99% of the students agreeing that stringent anti-epidemic measures have played an important role in China's fight against the epidemic and is worthy of popularizing. More than 90% of them are proud that all the people are making joint effort in epidemic prevention and control campaign. They express a high level of confidence towards socialist system, saying that it not only enables us to have the advantage of being able to concentrate our forces on a major task, but also conforms to the development principle of putting

people's interests above everything else. However, it should be noted that a small number of students(1%) complaining that the measures affect their normal life ,and0.1% of the students think the strict anti-epidemic measures unnecessary.

Table 7: College students' views on theepidemic prevention and control in China

Options	Total	Proportion
Stringent epidemic prevention measures have played an important role in China's fight against the epidemic.It needs to be promoted to the whole world.	8,527	99.0%
Stringent epidemic prevention measures have affected my normal life, and I don't like it.	82	1.0%
COVID-19 is just a common infectious disease, so the stringent prevention measures are not necessary.	5	0.1%

**College students' views on the uplifting stories of medical staff and volunteers and their participation in epidemic prevention work :** During the fight against the epidemic, there are uplifting stories and acts of kindness from medical workers, volunteers, as well as ordinary people who sticks to theirposts. As presented in Table 8 and Table 9, more than 90% of the students praisethose people as heroes in peaceful times, and they are the practitioners of the Chinese people's spirit of uniting as one, defending the country and patriotic devotion. They deserve our respect, appreciation and gratitude. For non-medical college students, most of them also actively participated in various epidemic prevention work during the epidemic. There are 88.8% of the students persuading their families and friends to adopt self-protection measures and set a good example,and 93.5% believe that self-quarantine at home would be the greatest contribution. In addition, some students worked as volunteers (5.7%), some participated in fund-raising activities (30.7%) ,and others created cultural works related to the promotion ofepidemic prevention and control (14.6%). It can be concluded that college students have a highly strong sense of social responsibility and have a good cognition ability.

Table 8: Views on the touching stories of medical staff, volunteers and so on

Options	Total	Proportion
They arethe practitioners of the Chinese people's spirit of uniting as one, defending our country and patriotic devotion. They deserve our respect and admiration.	8,386	95.9%
Their actions are moving, and they make a great contribution in ensuring our safety.	8,004	92.9%
They just do what they are supposed to do. There is nothing worth bragging about.	127	1.5%

Table 9: College students' participation in epidemic prevention work

Options	Total	Proportion
Worked as an anti-epidemic volunteer	488	5.7%
Participated in anti-epidemic fund-raising activities	2,641	30.7%
Created cultural works for promoting epidemic prevention	1,256	14.6%
Persuaded family and friends to carry out self-protection measures and set a good example	7,653	88.8%
Self-quarantine at home is the greatest contribution	8,059	93.5%
Other	51	0.01%

#### IV. DISCUSSIONS

Based on the survey of college students, this study found that, in general, college students' sense of social responsibility during the COVID-19 was at a high level, and was affected by news attention, family poverty and other factors. It enriched this research of college students' social responsibility during the epidemic.

**Improving college students' attention to epidemic news :** Media literacy is an essential ability for college students under the current informational survive environment, which directly affects their cognitive rationality and behavioral norms (Huang, Guo, Hao, & Li, 2020). News about COVID-19 spread quickly through the internet, making college students pay more attention to COVID-19. However, accurate epidemic information and a good network environment will affect college students' sense of social responsibility. The spread of misleading epidemic information will cause panic and anxiety, thus reducing their sense of social responsibility. The spread of scientific knowledge of the epidemic will enable college students to take the initiative to understand the scientific knowledge of the epidemic situation and know the harm of virus transmission and other information, so as to carry out self-protection measures, and enhance their sense of social responsibility (Li, 2013).

**Enhancing college students' emotional identification with the COVID-19 and national epidemic prevention measures :** According to the survey results, college students agree with China's policies and systems during the COVID-19. They are optimistic about the future situation of the epidemic in China, and have a good sense of social responsibility. However, there are still a few students who are indifferent to the epidemic situation and hold a negative attitude towards the future of the epidemic. Therefore, schools should give full play to their educational role to enhance the political awareness of college students. Besides, schools should pay attention to using internet to carry out epidemic prevention education in various forms and integrate epidemic prevention information into various activities, thus gradually influencing students' active integration into social life and form a strong sense of social responsibility (Hao, 2020). As the survey results show, the school's timely establishment of a green channel for subsidy and other caring actions during the epidemic period are highly recognized by college students. The effect of the financial support and education is significant, which effectively enhances their sense of social responsibility.

**Strengthening the practice of college students' social responsibility behavior during the epidemic :** The sense of social responsibility is an important orientation for the cultivation of civic morality and also an important factor affecting the effectiveness of social governance (Lu & Li, 2020). The survey found that college

students have a respectful attitude towards the epidemic prevention workers from all walks of life. In this emotional identity of responsibility, college students take the initiative to cooperate with the epidemic prevention work and assume their social responsibility. This shows that college students have a strong awareness of social participation and construction in the face of major health emergencies. In the future, colleges still need to strengthen the cultivation of college students' sense of social responsibility.

## V. CONCLUSION

Selecting the sense of social responsibility of college students during the COVID-19 epidemic as a starting point, this study explores the five influential factors on college students' social responsibility, which is their attention to epidemic news, the impact of the epidemic on college students themselves, their attitudes towards COVID-19, their views on the anti-epidemic workers and their participation in epidemic prevention work. The results show that:(1) during the COVID-19 epidemic, college students have a very high level of sense of social responsibility and pay much attention to the epidemic news. (2) COVID-19 has greatly affected the life and study of most students, and to some extent affected their personal lives. (3) COVID-19 has a great impact on college students whose families have financial difficulties. Schools' timely establishment of a "green channel" to provide subsidy and other caring actions during the epidemic has been highly recognized by college students. (4) Most students hold a neutral attitude towards COVID-19 and a supportive attitude towards China's stringent epidemic prevention measures. (5) College students show great respect for the medical staff and volunteers, and actively participate in all kinds of anti-epidemic work. This indicates that college students have a strong sense of social responsibility. Inevitably, there are still some limitations in the study. For example, the samples are only from college students in Guangdong province, China, and there is no comparison with international data. Besides, the study only examined the basic situation of college students' social responsibility, but it did not examine correlation, difference and so on, which needs further improvement in the future.

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