



# Perceived Wellness of College Students in a Basic Studies Course

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## Abstract

Wellness is a positive component of health in need of assessment among college populations. The purpose of this research was to investigate the perceived wellness of college students enrolled in a basic studies wellness course (PED 101). The significance of the research was to utilize knowledge of how students perceive their wellness to improve the course curriculum and student health outcomes. The Perceived Wellness Survey (PWS), a 36-item six-point Likert scale assessment of six dimensions of wellness (physical, social, emotional, intellectual, psychological, and spiritual), and demographic data were administered online. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the wellness score, total perceived wellness, and the six wellness dimensions. Bivariate analyses were conducted to explore relationships between the variables. The sample was comprised of 66% female aged 17-20 (80%), and 89 % White, full-time students (98%), and working a part time job (95%). The sample self-reported the highest mean scores for spiritual wellness (M = 4.50), followed by social wellness (M = 4.18), with emotional wellness rated the lowest (M = 3.83). The overall composite wellness score was relatively high (M = 4.54). Race was significantly correlated with spiritual wellness ( $r = .098, p < .05$ ), and employment was significantly related to emotional wellness ( $r = -.803, p < .05$ ), indicating demographic background may affect perceived wellness. Recognizing the highest perceived wellness levels were found in the spiritual and social dimensions, and that total wellness may depend on race and employment are significant findings to consider when making curricular decisions for PED-101.

## Introduction

With a rising trend in both physical and emotional problems, and established national health goals to increase not only quantity, but quality of life,<sup>1</sup> university level basic health and fitness-based courses are expanding to include a more comprehensive, preventive, and multidimensional approach to its curriculum. Wellness, "a multidimensional state of being describing the existence of positive health in an individual as exemplified by quality of life and a sense of well-being,"<sup>2</sup> represents the shift in focus from the treatment of illness and disease to the proactive process of maximizing potential by balancing positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors associated with quality of life. The concept of wellness is predicated upon the overlapping, integrative nature of its multiple dimensions that uniquely influence each other throughout life. These dimensions represent the whole person (i.e., mind, body, spirit) and, depending upon the model, include physical, social, intellectual, emotional, psychological, spiritual, occupational, and environmental.<sup>3,4</sup>

## Purpose

The purpose of this research was to investigate the perceived wellness of college students enrolled in a basic studies wellness course (PED-101).

## Methods

Following demographic questions, the participants were directed online to complete the Perceived Wellness Survey (PWS), a 36-item, self-administered, multidimensional questionnaire scored on a six-point Likert scale from 1, "Very strongly disagree" to 6, "Very strongly agree." This scale measures overall well-being on six dimensions, physical, social, emotional, intellectual, psychological, and spiritual, with six questions devoted to each dimension. Higher scores indicated greater total wellness overall and in each of the subscales. The instrument has shown construct validity and reliability in previous research, and has been used to assess college populations.<sup>5</sup>

Sample items from each dimension include, "I am always optimistic about my future" (psychological), "I sometimes think I am a worthless individual" (emotional), "I will always seek out activities that challenge me to think and reason" (intellectual), "My friends will be there for me when I need help" (social), "My physical health is excellent" (physical), and "I believe that there is a real purpose for my life" (spiritual).

## Data Analyses

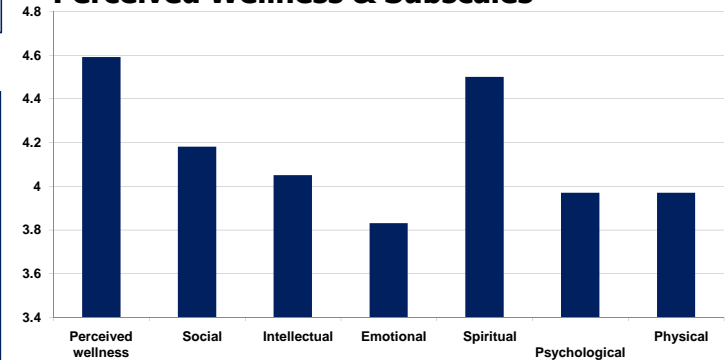
Descriptive statistics were calculated for the wellness score, total perceived wellness, and the six wellness dimensions. Bivariate analyses were conducted to explore relationships between the variables using Pearson's r in the SPSS statistical package (version 15.0).

## Results

The sample of 611 enrolled PED-101 students (59% response rate) was comprised of 66% female aged 17-20 (80%), and 89 % White, full-time students (98%), and working a part time job (95%).

Descriptively, the sample reported high perceptions of wellness overall (M = 4.45). While the means clustered close together on wellness scores, the sample self-reported the highest mean scores for spiritual wellness (M = 4.50), followed by social wellness (M = 4.18), with emotional wellness rated the lowest (M = 3.83). The overall composite wellness score was relatively high (M = 4.54) (see Table 1). Bivariate correlations indicated that race was significantly associated with spiritual wellness ( $r = .098, p < .05$ ), and employment was significantly related to emotional wellness ( $r = -.803, p < .05$ ), indicating demographic background may affect perceived wellness.

**Table 1. Means for Perceived Wellness & Subscales**



## Conclusions

Recognizing the multi-dimensional, positive aspect of health, that college students report their highest levels of perceived wellness in the spiritual and social dimensions, and that total wellness may depend on race and employment are significant findings to consider when making curricular decisions for basic studies fitness and wellness courses. Future research further exploring these dimensions among college populations using other valid wellness measures are recommended.

## Selected References

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