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## Positive Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic: Perception of Undergraduate Students of Allied Health Sciences at the University of Ruhuna

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**Background:** COVID-19 pandemic affected almost all aspects of life of people in the world. While the world was facing the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, undergraduates were badly affected at their core. For them, the period was undoubtedly very stressful and tight situation. However, undergraduates can focus on good things and try to come up from bad situation.

**Objectives:** To study the positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Allied Health Sciences (AHS) undergraduates of at the University of Ruhuna (UoR).

**Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among AHS undergraduates of the UoR (n=240), using an online self-administered questionnaire. Students who volunteered to participate in the study were included to represent equal numbers from Nursing, Pharmacy and Medical Laboratory Science departments. Students were randomly selected from each department (n=80) by using students name lists to represent 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> academic years.

**Results:** Of the sample, 66.7% were female and the majority (90.0%) agreed that they have experienced both negative and positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of the participants got the opportunity to spend time mostly inside their homes (n=231, 96.3%), for studies (54.2%), with family members (n=232, 96.7%), for religious works (n=147, 61.3%) and for exercises (n=162, 67.5%) during the pandemic than earlier. Many have started new activities such as reading books (n=159, 66%), writing poems (n=61, 25%), gardening (n=139, 58%), cooking (n=178, 74%), meditation (n=74, 31%), exercises (n=127, 53%) and learning a new language (n=127, 49%) and some new spiritual activities [helping neighbours (n=141, 59%), helping poor (n=86, 36%), donating to COVID-19 funds (n=61, 25%)]. The majority (n=215, 89.6%) were satisfied with online lectures and had followed different online teaching methods. Government, universities, and banks have extended some important support for undergraduates during the pandemic. Undergraduates had improved their hygienic behaviours and routine habits. Of the participants, 59.2% mentioned that due to these hygienic practices, the frequency of getting infectious diseases was reduced during the pandemic.

**Conclusions:** COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in positive impacts on the undergraduates of the UoR with respect to their lifestyle, education, economy, health and well-being. It is important to put a positive spin on all experiences, even those are profoundly tragic.

**Keywords:** COVID-19 pandemic, Perception, Positive effects, Undergraduates