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Contribution of community science NSS volunteers in mitigation of Covid-19 pandemic

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Abstract

Student youth network of volunteers are organized at all colleges under the umbrella of National Service Scheme aimed at developing student's personality through community service. In this digital era, plethora of information on any issue leaves the public in confusion. The right information should flow in a right path with right people to clear the public quandary. The NSS volunteers of College of Community Science have utilized their classroom knowledge, practical skills, time and talents for a good cause of awareness creation during COVID-19 pandemic. They have developed and shared media material to create awareness on Corona virus. The study was conducted to know the sense of social responsibility and contribution of the Community Science NSS volunteers. Exploratory research design was applied and data was collected through a structured schedule from 211 volunteers. Results revealed that 96.21% students have smart phones and 90% of volunteers believed that social networking platforms influence the individual behavior and used the same for sharing COVID health guidelines. WhatsApp (79.6%) Instagram (12.3%) were the preferred apps and students used to visit applications 5-10 times (50.71%) followed by 2-5 times (26.54%) in a day. Fifty percent of the volunteers shared videos followed by posters (33.03%) and text (14.7%) on COVID-19. Volunteers educated their family members and relatives very frequently (39.81%) to frequently (33.65%). Nearly 70% of the students assisted the local volunteers and 95.23% of them installed the Arogya setu app and 81.04% have registered on the Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) portal for COVID related training. The volunteers distributed stitched face masks (56.87%) and supported underprivileged group (65.40%). About 86.3% students contributed through various means like media material development like animation (1.90%) video (5.21%) posters (59.72%) audio (19.4%) on health, nutrition and COVID-SoPs which were circulated widely for connecting their community with science to mitigate the pandemic.

Keywords: NSS volunteers, COVID-19, contribution, awareness

Introduction

It was the idea of our father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi to involve students in the national service with which he tried to stimulate the student's talent and time and to remind their social role. The students should prepare themselves for final commitment to the service of the nation with national goals through essential services to society, but not to treat their period of study as the opportunities for their intellectual magnificence only. Advising students to develop rapport with the society and do something for enhancement of the quality of the life of community with their education and moral values.

The UGC recommended introducing social service for students as an educational reform to enhance the quality of educated human resource on a voluntary basis in the academic institutions. The aim was to develop healthy atmosphere among the students and teachers through productive linkage between the campus and the community. The first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1958), Dr. C.D. Deshmukh (1959), Dr. D.S. Kothari (1964-66), Vice-Chancellors' Conference (1969) and a conference convened by the Ministry of Education and the UGC (1969) welcomed this recommendation as an connected part of education aimed at developing student's personality through community service with a campus-community linkage.

On September 24 1969 the NSS programme launched in 37 universities as a concrete attempt in making campus responding to the community needs. Since inception of the NSS in the year 1969, the number of students strength increased from 40, 000 to over 3.8 million in various universities, colleges and Institutions enrolled to take part in various community service programmes.

Personal hygiene and community sanitation has direct impact on health and economic status of individual as well as nation which is proved in with outbreak of corona virus disease 2019

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(COVID-19) has created a global health crisis with its rate of contagion and patterns of transmission. e-Science communication is one of the rapid and effective ICT intervention strategies to reach huge audience with science based information in a shorter period since it uses social media networking platforms and other digital means.

Nation's development is in the hands of the most resourceful segment youth who are 34% of its total population. It is widely accepted fact that youth are usually the early adopters of electronic gadgets and they are the powerful force for spreading information and social awareness into society using social media (ISR, 2015). Youth networks are dynamic platforms for mobilizing and engaging community towards a common goal. National Service Scheme is one platform where services of the volunteered youth can be utilized for meeting the national needs and to resolve the most emerging national problems including the pandemic COVID-19.

Community Science is an applied and integrated science which aims at improving the quality of life of the individual, the family and the community. It is a unique field of knowledge with its comprehensive and inter-disciplinary approach from different domains. The relevance of Community Science in the present scenario becomes more apparent when the subject is linked to address the core issues of well-being of community and millennium goals of development through its major areas of specialization.

The NSS volunteers of Community Science programme tackled various technical issues using their class room knowledge as information consumers and disseminators to educate and empower their own family members, relatives and known society to mitigate the incidences of COVID-19. College of Community Science, Guntur, ANGRAU involved the NSS volunteers to address the COVID-19 information challenges through e-Science Communication strategies by harnessing their innovative and creative ideas in development and designing of media material for technical empowerment of the people.

University level Knowledge Outreach Webinar on "Mitigation of COVID-19 pandemic through Health, Nutrition and Family care" was conducted for the NSS volunteers to impart scientific facts and enhance their

knowledge on the deadly disease. Three experts from the nutrition, health and family care were invited to deliver science based facts and mitigation strategies of their respective fields pertaining to COVID-19. Later the NSS volunteers from the College of Community Science are instructed and inspired to develop media material under the guidance of the teachers in different media formats like, posters, videos and animations to create social awareness on different topics like sanitation, nutrition, health care and family care. Many of the NSS students of College of Community Science have utilised their skills, time and talents for a noble cause during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The selected media materials were shared to their friends, family members, relatives and other known circles through social networking platforms for awareness creation.

College of Community Science is located in Guntur, which is the only college under the faculty of Community Science under Acharya N.G.Ranga Agricultural University, Andhra Pradesh. College has conducted three outreach webinars on for the NSS volunteers, extension functionaries and Villages under Village adoption programme to provide science based information on COVID-19 for further dissemination to their local communities. With the above background, a study was conducted to assess the Sense of Social Responsibility of NSS Volunteers in Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19 Pandemic to explore the Community Science NSS volunteers role and contribution.

Methodology

Exploratory research design was adopted for the present study. A pretested questionnaire was administered to the students to collect data regarding their contribution in mitigation of COVID-19 pandemic. Out of 304 enrolled volunteers in two NSS of College of Community Science, 211 volunteers have responded to the questionnaire. To report the findings of the research questions in the study the descriptive statistics of frequency and simple percentages were used for data analysis and interpretation.

Results and Discussion

Volunteers profile

Table 1: Profile characteristics of community science NSS volunteers

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Degree - Year of study		
First year	41	19.4
Second year	45	21.3
Third year	63	29.9
Fourth year	62	29.4
Total	211	100
Family type		
Nuclear	182	86.3
Joint	27	12.8
Extended	2	0.9
Total	211	100
Place of living		
Rural	119	56.4
Urban	92	43.6
Total	211	100.0

The Table 1 revealed that most of the study population is from the third year (29.9%) and fourth year (29.4%) followed by an equal (21.3%) participation from second year and first year volunteers in the survey. The majority (86.3%) of the student volunteers belong to nuclear families followed by the

joint families (12.8%) and very meager sections (0.9%) of the volunteers are from the extended family type. A significant percentage (56.4%) of the students hailed from rural areas followed by urban areas (43.6%).

Media networking behavior

Table 2: Media networking behavior of community science NSS volunteers

S. No.	Behavior	Frequency	Percentage
1	Mode of internet access		
	Laptop	4	1.90
	PC	4	1.90
	Smart phone	203	96.21
	Total	211	100
2	Preferred social media network		
	Facebook	7	3.3
	Instagram	26	12.3
	Tik-Tok	3	1.4
	WhatsApp	168	79.6
	YouTube	5	2.4
	Others	2	0.9
Total	211	100	
3	Frequency of postings on social media in a day		
	10 + times	21	9.95
	5-10 times	107	50.71
	2-5 times	56	26.54
	Once a day	19	9.00
	Not every day	8	3.79
Total	211	100	
4	Type of media format used		
	Chats	31	14.7
	Picture sharing	70	33.2
	Video sharing	110	52.1
	Total	211	100.0

Table 2 reveals that a huge majority (96.21%) of the volunteers access internet through smart phones while an equal (1.90%) percentage of volunteers have access internet through personal computers and laptop. A vast majority (79.6%) percentage of the students have preferred WhatsApp followed by Instagram (12.3%) and Facebook (3, 3%) to share COVID related information to friends and public. The plausible reason for preferring WhatsApp may be due to its popularity and simple in use and user friendly features like sharing all kinds of messages in all formats and phone calls without spending a single penny. The fact that the man is social animal is once again proved that the respondents may have preferred WhatsApp to keep them in touch with their family and friends.

The frequency of postings on social media by the students, half of the students have shared and posted on social media networks 5-10 times followed by 2-5 times (26.54%) more

than ten times (9.95%) and once (9%) in a day. Very few students (3.79%) have used it for sharing and posting of COVID-19 related messages once in a while but not daily. The reason for this may be due curiosity and eagerness to people are more to share the information on burning issues during crisis using multiple alternatives features like chatting, sharing, and video calls which are available in one platform, which certainly is more advantageous than only a single feature in one app. Concerning the type of media format used by the volunteers to disseminate the COVID-19 information revealed that 52.1 percent of the volunteers have used video sharing followed by chats (14.7%). Statistics show that 1, 3 billion people use YouTube regularly and 400 hours of videos are uploaded by users every minute ^[1].

3. Outreach extension activities of NSS volunteers to mitigate COVID-19 pandemic

Table 3: Outreach extension activities of NSS volunteers

S. No.	Outreach extension activities	Yes	No
1.	Digital mode of instruction used for sharing COVID information in social networking sites will influence the individual's behavior	190 (90.0)	21 (10.0)
2.	Self-trained on COVID-19 using facilitator guide given by Government of India	186 (88.2)	25 (11.8)
3.	Shared authentic COVID information in Social networking sites for social awareness	190 (90.0)	21 (10.0)
4.	Registered on the Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) portal	171 (81.04)	40 (18.96)
5.	Downloaded and registered Aarogya setu application	201 (95.26)	10 (4.74)
6.	Assistance to local volunteers	145 (68.72)	66 (31.28)
7.	Supported homeless and underprivileged people	138 (65.40)	73 (34.60)
8.	Prepared and distributed face masks	120 (56.87)	91 (43.13)
9.	Preparation of audio visual aids on COVID-19 for further dissemination	182 (86.3)	29 (13.7)
10.	Learnt the process of preparation of sanitizers using social media	148 (70.14)	63 (29.86)
11.	Prepared and distributed sanitizers	64 (30.33)	147 (69.67)
12.	Encouraged public to download and use Aarogya setu app	201 (95.26)	10 (4.74)

(Figures in parentheses is indicates percentage).

A great majority (95.26%) of the volunteers have downloaded and registered Aarogya setu application and also encouraged the public to download and use Aarogya setu app to update their health status and to identify the COVID cases in their vicinity. Campaign by NSS volunteers to persuade their family members and friends to download and complete Self-Assessment on Aarogya Setu App was initiated. Under this campaign, each volunteer has to mobilize a minimum of 10 contacts on which the app was downloaded by him/her. A screenshot of each download was provided with the mobile number.

About ninety percent of the volunteers have also believed that the mode of instruction used for sharing COVID information in social networking sites will influence the individual's behavior and shared authentic COVID information in their social networking sites for social awareness, A huge majority of the volunteers have registered (88.2%) on the Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) portal and self-trained on COVID-19 using facilitator guide given by Government of India for sharing of science based facts with public on a regular basis. Majority of volunteers have learnt the process of preparation of sanitizers using social media (70.14%), Assistance to local volunteers (68.72%), Supported homeless and underprivileged people (65.40%), prepared and distributed face masks (56.87%).

As part of their responsibility 86.3 percent of the volunteers have contributed through Preparation of audio visual aids on COVID-19 for further dissemination and shared the same with through social networking platforms and some volunteers have prepared and distributed sanitizers (30.33%).

Contribution of NSS volunteers to mitigate COVID-19 pandemic

Table 4: Contribution of NSS volunteers

S. No.	Contribution	Frequency	Percentage
1	Posters/chart making	126	59.72
2	Video making	11	5.21
3	Created animations	4	1.90
5	Audio clips	41	19.4
6	E-webinars attended	211	100.00
7	Through word of mouth	211	100.00
8	Social media sharing	169	80.09

All the volunteers felt the social responsibility and attended the knowledge outreach E-webinar conducted by the university to impart science based facts on Nutrition, Health and family care to mitigate COVID-19 and involved in spreading the science based information through various means including word of mouth to the society to minimize the spread. The probable reason might be due the strict adherence to the instructions and orientation from the faculty and University Officers. The other reason might be that most of the responded volunteers of this study sample are from 3rd and 4th year of their degree and their level of intimacy with teachers mobilize them to take part in the assigned activities and made them to involve in community outreach activities assigned by the college.

Nearly sixty percent of the volunteers developed charts and posters followed by audio clips About 86.3% students contributed through various means like media material development like animation (1.90%) video (5.21%) posters (59.72%) audio (19.4%) on health, nutrition and COVID-SOPs and were shared by 80.9 percent NSS volunteers for

wide circulation through social media networks for connecting their community with science to mitigate the pandemic.

Conclusion

Involving the most resourceful man-power youth in development activities and crisis management activities especially during pandemic is an important and praiseworthy act. The developed media material with their young innovative and creative ideas by the NSS volunteers and their contribution and service to enlighten the community from different magnitudes will certainly yield desirable behavior in increased awareness and reduced transmission of COVID-19 with the active participation of youth volunteers. NSS volunteers with improved sense of social responsibility and involvement in social marketing for the nations good cause in modifying the sanitation and health behavior of society at individual, family and community level is always praise worthy.

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