

Salutogenesis: A New Paradigm for Student's Wellbeing

Gurjeet Singh^{1,2}, Raksha¹, Koyalmannam Raman Sethuraman², Shivasakthy Manivasakan²

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ABSTRACT

Israeli-American medical sociologist Aaron Antonovsky invented salutogenesis in the 1970s, highlighting factors supporting human health and well-being over causes of ill health. It suggests that mental and social stressors accumulate, leading to health breakdown. Salutogenesis, a wellness approach, focuses on multidimensional health causes and rejects traditional medical models. Antonovsky's salutogenic model emphasizes the influence of lifestyle on life circumstances, resources, stressors, and health perceptions, emphasizing the importance of coherence and confidence in one's environment. The initiative aims to promote sustainable health on campuses by combining traditional pathogenic and salutogenic approaches, emphasizing the importance of a salutogenic environment for student health and well-being. Antonovsky's coherence concept is crucial for health outcomes, while the salutogenic model addresses imbalances. To improve student wellbeing, colleges can establish care teams, create wellness communities, and prioritize team-based learning. The implementation of salutogenesis in medical colleges in India aims to enhance individuals' sense of coherence by exploring personal strengths, resources, and meaning. Key elements include self-reflection exercises, goal setting, and strategies. The session should be supportive, collaborative, and encourage open dialogue.

Keywords: Building Resilience, Health-Promoting Campus, Rethinking Health.

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INTRODUCTION

Salutogenesis theory focuses on promoting human health and well-being by examining the relationship between stress, health, and wellbeing, positing that social and mental stressors play a significant role. It is suggested that mental and social stressors would have a cumulative effect and finally lead to some breakdown of health status. However, among subjects that were exposed to the same or similar stressors, the individual's health status might still differ from another.¹⁻⁶ Hence, it is postulated that health and illness were not just simple opposites of each other. They were two separate entities driven by different intervening factors. Further, the healthy subject had to distinguish some critical determinants of it, which are assumed to be support and stressors. This can contribute to medicine not only by increasing the odds of health in patients but also by improving the chances of enabling both the doctor and the patient or teacher and student to adhere, not only to dealing with illness but to promoting health and well-being.⁷⁻¹⁰

Salutogenesis is the study of the causes of health, with an emphasis on elements that promote human health and wellbeing as opposed to those that lead to disease (pathogenesis). More precisely, the "salutogenic model" was first based on research on Holocaust survivors and examined the connection between stress, coping, and health. Some people survived the horrific tragedy of the Holocaust and

¹Department of Microbiology, Abhishek I Mishra Memorial Medical College and Research, Bhilai, Durg- 490020.

²Institute of Health Professions Education, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University), Pondicherry- 607402.

Corresponding Author: Gurjeet Singh

Email: gurjeetsingh360@gmail.com

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went on to prosper in later life. Salutogenesis developed as a result of the realisation that there had to be significant variables driving health problems. Professor of medical sociology Aaron Antonovsky (1923–1994) is credited with coining the phrase.¹⁻⁵

Antonovsky's ideas contrast with traditional medical models, which differentiate between health and illness, referring to the relationship as the health-ease versus disease continuum as a continuous variable.¹¹

Salutogenesis has expanded to include multifaceted causes of higher levels of health rather than only the beginnings of health. Salutogenesis models typically encompass holistic perspectives this includes aspects such as environmental, intellectual, social, emotional, spiritual, physical, and occupational aspects.

Antonovsky's qualitative research in Israel found that women who survived concentration camps managed stress and maintained good health. He identified three personality qualities: Meaningfulness, manageability, and comprehension. Meaningfulness is the most important component, reflecting the importance of achieving personal fulfillment and manageability. Antonovsky views health and illness as extremes on a continuum and suggests strengthening SOC could improve health. Other researchers support Antonovsky's perspective.¹¹

History of Salutogenesis

Salutogenesis, invented by Aaron Antonovsky in 1979, explains how coping mechanisms help individuals maintain health even in adverse situations.^{1,2}

In 1972, Aaron Antonovsky developed the salutogenesis theory, which suggests that individual traits can enhance a person's ability to cope with stress. The theory, inspired by a dysphoric experience in post-World War II German displaced persons' camps, suggests that health and illness can coexist.¹⁻⁶

The salutogenic approach focuses on developing resources for health rather than just studying risks and disease. Although Antonovsky's assumptions are generally accepted, they may not solve all health problems. To create synergy, health, medicine, public health, and health promotion actors must collaborate.⁵⁻¹⁰

Salutogenesis in Teaching Practice

The environment in which individuals live and learn is crucial for promoting their health and wellbeing. While clinical services are necessary, the current number of clinicians cannot meet the demand. However, there are still ways to promote health and wellness. Approaching health problems from a pathogenic perspective, which defines health as "the absence of disease," can help address challenges like drug and alcohol abuse and mental health issues.¹²

Incorporating health potentials into campus environments and cultures, offering resources for resistance, and integrating health into campus culture are the main goals of a salutogenic orientation in health-promoting strategies.¹³

Sharing of resources for student health promotion, collaboration with instructors, wide access to resources, and the commitment to spreading health, happiness, and self-care messages.

In 2022, Inside Higher Education, Herbert and DeBurro emphasize the importance of integrating student experiences into a network, fostering collaboration between professors and staff, and promoting intellectual and psychological development.¹³

Educational stress and burnout can be caused by political shifts, intense pressure, and conflict between expectations



Aaron Antonovsky (19 December 1923 to 7 July 1994)

and real experiences. Physical and mental health should be considered, as tension and emotional disarray can impact teaching and create an unsound educational atmosphere. Student suffering is a public health issue, especially in first-year students.¹⁴

Academic burnout syndrome is characterized by increased stress among first-year and new students due to difficulties in adjusting to academic life, leading to avoidance behavior and interest loss.¹⁵

Salutogenesis, a scientific approach, emphasizes the importance of understanding and utilizing available resources to control stress and maintain health, focusing on the continuum of well-being rather than a fixed position.

Antonovsky developed the concept of SOC,^{16,17} which is associated with the life's ability to provide support and significance in difficult situations, coupled with a commitment to maintaining well-being, is linked to the belief in life's ability to overcome challenges.

A strong Self-Compassion (SOC) and Generalised Resistance Resources (GRR) are crucial for overcoming obstacles and identifying opportunities. GRR includes resources like money, coping mechanisms, and social support, while non-material determinants like traits, coping mechanisms, and genetic makeup contribute to a person's ability to manage stress.^{17,18}

Individual differences will result in varying levels of SOC achievement and distinct abilities in identifying and utilizing GRR.

Sir William Osler's "As is our pathology, so is our practice" emphasizes the importance of salutogenic principles in medical practice. Many medical professionals are unaware of the World Health Organisation's principles of health, which encompass total physical, mental, and social well-being.¹⁹

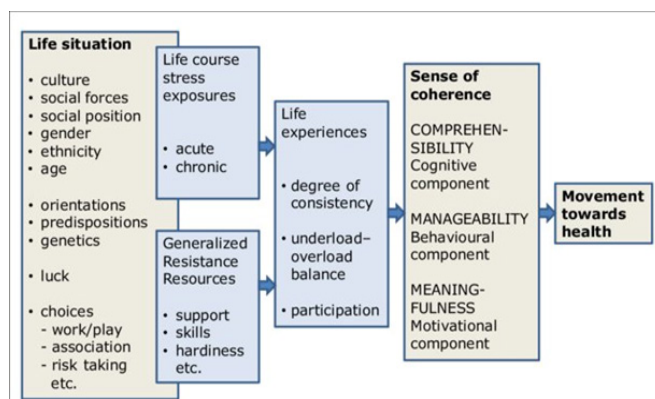


Figure 1. The salutogenic model, based on Antonovsky, 1996.⁹

Teachers Role in Salutogenesis

Salutogenesis is a holistic approach to education considers the physical, emotional, and social aspects of students' lives, leading to more effective teaching and learning experiences. Teachers' well-being is formed through caring relationships with students, which impacts their motivation and work.²⁰

Salutogenesis is a widely applied concept in fields like nursing, medicine, and space exploration, focusing on health promotion and lifelong learning. It emphasizes goals, self concept, and general relativity, encouraging active adaptation and strong social relationships. Communication generates meaning and confidence through empathy, openness, and genuineness. Reflection projects encourage involvement in emotions, social relationships, and existential concerns. Salutogenic talk therapy groups provide mutual support and knowledge, demonstrating the importance of understanding and addressing students with health issues.²¹

WHY SALUTOGENESIS IS SOCIETY DEMAND?

In contrast to the biomedical paradigm, which stresses equilibrium and homeostasis and proposes heterostatic disequilibrium in the human body, salutogenesis and pathogenesis analyses concentrate on preserving health through positive resources.

Well-being in Teaching Campus

Well-being encompasses emotional regulation, physical well-being, social well-being, workplace well-being, and societal well-being. It involves regulating emotions, maintaining physical health, cultivating communication skills, building support systems, and forming connections. It is essential for overall well-being, including academic success and community involvement.²²

Student engagement in higher education is influenced by various factors, including positive emotions and behaviors of students, positive behaviors of teachers, and the

relationship between teachers and students. Factors that promote learning include positive emotions and behaviors, the ability of students to learn and think critically, the assistance of learning resources, individual and personality traits, and teaching aspects. Impediments include a supportive environment, poor student behavior, and poor teacher behavior.²²

Wellness is crucial for college students as it directly affects their overall quality of life and academic achievement. Emotional intelligence, the ability to recognize and regulate emotions, is essential for enhancing relationships, excelling in school and the workplace, and achieving professional and personal objectives. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are institutionalized in higher education, involving active engagement with diversity in people, the curriculum, and communities. A campus's journey from establishing a campus-wide constituency to integrating equity, diversity, and inclusion into its structure is ongoing. Despite achieving its objectives, campuses continue to evaluate their sustainability and rate of advancement due to the dynamic nature of the environment.²²

Factors affecting student engagement include internal and external factors, with non-intellectual factors being the key factor. Promoting students' well-being involves creating supportive environments at home and college, personal attributes, language proficiency, academic success, social relations, college networking, teacher assistance, and supportive policies. Negative influences on student well-being include socioeconomic status (SES), mental health issues, peer pressure, bullying, unhealthy school environments, inconsistent parenting, and substance abuse. To address these challenges, colleges can establish care teams, create living communities focused on wellness, engage in direct communication with students, create fitness and wellness initiatives, make wellness training mandatory for faculty, provide a range of living options, reduce obstacles for marginalized students, examine commutes, use technology, give team-based learning top priority, and motivate for good scoring and heal average students.²³

To improve campus student wellbeing, colleges can implement initiatives such as establishing welcoming environments, using less demanding evaluation techniques, encouraging candid discussion of health-related subjects in the classroom, and promoting involvement in extracurricular pursuits that foster interpersonal relationships. By incorporating these tactics into college culture, teachers can foster an environment that enhances students' academic achievement and well-being.^{22,23}

However, promoting student welfare is challenging due to the multifaceted nature of student well-being. Colleges often face challenges such as prioritizing well-being over academic standards, restricted control over outside variables, and stressful work environments for teachers.

Table 1: Comparison of pathogenesis and salutogenesis.

Feature	Pathogenesis	Salutogenesis
Focus	Disease processes, causes, and treatment of illness	Health promotion, well-being, and factors that support health
Approach	Identifying and treating the causes of disease	Promoting health and resilience
Perspective	Negative, disease-oriented	Positive, health-oriented
Goal	To understand and combat disease	To understand and enhance health and well-being
View of Health	Health and disease as opposing extremes	Health as a continuum, with various states of well-being
Core Concept	Pathogens and disease mechanisms	Sense of coherence (SOC) and generalized resistance resources (GRR)
Origin	Ancient Greek, meaning "the origin of sickness"	Proposed by Aaron Antonovsky, a professor of medical sociology
Examples	Understanding the mechanisms of infection, developing antibiotics	Promoting healthy lifestyles, stress management, social support

Table 2: Session Plan Outline.

Sr. No.	Session Component	Content	Time
1	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Icebreaker: A brief group activity to establish rapport and comfort level. Overview of Salutogenesis: Explain the concept of salutogenesis, the central idea of "sense of coherence" (SOC), and its three dimensions: comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness. 	10 mins
2	Exploring Personal Strengths and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guided reflection: Ask participants to reflect on personal strengths, positive experiences, supportive relationships, and skills that contribute to their resilience. Pair and Share: the created small group. The each person in group must share their identified the strengths and weaknesses and listen actively to each other. 	20 mins
3	Identifying Life Challenges and Stressors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion: Current life challenges and stressors that participants are facing must be discussed, also mentioning both internal and external factors. Coping mechanism: Always reflect on current coping strategies which use to manage stress, difficult emotions, and navigate challenging situations. Also identify the areas for improvement. 	30 mins
4	Enhancing Sense of Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensibility: Discuss strategies to make life situations more understandable, such as seeking information, clarifying uncertainties, and reframing perspectives. Manageability: Explore ways to increase personal control and manage stressors, including setting realistic goals, developing coping skills, and seeking support networks. Meaningfulness: Reflect on personal values, purpose, and finding meaning in life challenges, including connecting to a larger cause or community. 	30 mins
5	Action Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goal setting: Develop individual action plans based on salutogenic principles, focusing on specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals. Implementation strategies: Brainstorm concrete steps to incorporate salutogenic practices into daily life, including self-care routines, positive social interactions, and meaningful activities. 	20 mins
6	Closure and Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of key takeaways: Recap the main points discussed and emphasize the importance of ongoing reflection and self-awareness. Feedback and questions: Allow time for participants to share feedback and ask questions about the session. 	10 mins

To effectively address these issues, a whole-college strategy including educators, parents, local government representatives, and community organizations is needed. By addressing physical, emotional, and social aspects of wellness, colleges can promote students' overall well-being and achievement, leading to better academic achievement, higher satisfaction levels, and a stronger sense of community.^{22,23}

Implementation of Salutogenesis in Medical Colleges In India

A session plan for implementing salutogenesis would focus on actively identifying and strengthening individuals' "sense of coherence" through exploring their personal strengths, resources, and meaning in life, while also addressing challenges and stressors in a way that promotes personal agency and resilience; key elements include: introduction to salutogenesis concept, self-reflection exercises, discussion of personal resources, goal setting based on salutogenic principles, and strategies to enhance comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness in daily life; the session should be facilitated in a supportive and collaborative environment, encouraging open dialogue and individual participation.

POEM ON SALUTOGENESIS

1. In whispers of wisdom, a mentor's voice
Echoes through the chambers of the soul
A gentle breeze that rustles the heart's leaves
As salutogenesis takes its gentle role
From stress to strength, from pain to peace
The mentor's guidance weaves a healing release
By empowering the mentee's inner force
A resilience blooms, like a rare, precious course

In mentorship's sacred dance, we find
A space where growth and healing entwine
Like tender shoots that stretch towards the sun
The mentee's potential is forever begun

As fears and doubts are gently laid to rest
The mentor's words ignite the mentee's quest
For purpose and passion, for courage and might
Salutogenesis shines, a beacon in flight

In this sacred bond, a symphony plays
Of trust and respect, of empathy and praise
The mentor's touch ignites the spark within
As salutogenesis weaves its healing twine

Through trials and tribulations, the mentee grows
Stronger, wiser, and more radiant as they know
Their inner strength, their unique voice and pace
As the mentor's guidance fills the space

In this tapestry of wisdom and care
Salutogenesis weaves its healing share
A legacy of love, a gift that's rare
A mentor's presence, forever beyond compare.

2. In halls of healing, where minds are shaped
A subtle shift takes place, a paradigm's escape
From mere disease and cure, to wellness's core
Salutogenesis whispers secrets to explore

In medical education's sacred space
A focus on health, a new narrative's pace
From mere symptoms to the whole being's tale
Students learn to see, the person, not just the frail

Theories of stress and coping unfold
As students learn to weave a healing gold
From mere treatment to prevention's might
Salutogenesis shines, a beacon in the night

Through role-models, mentors, and guides
Young minds are shaped, with compassion's tides
They learn to listen, to empathize and care
To see the patient's story, beyond the chart and fare

In simulations, real-world scenarios play
Students practice, as they navigate the way
To diagnose and treat, with a holistic view
Salutogenesis' wisdom, they begin anew
Through case studies, they learn to see
The intricate web of social determinants' plea
From socioeconomic status to environmental stress
The roots of health and illness, they must confess

In medical education's crucible of fire
Salutogenesis forges a new desire
To heal the whole person, body, mind and soul
A new paradigm emerges, making the heart whole

With every step, with every passing year
Students learn to see the patient's story clear
From mere disease to wellness' core
Salutogenesis weaves its healing lore.

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Orcid ID:

Surjeet Singh - <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9475-4521>

Raksha - <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0237-2794>

K.R. Sethuraman - <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1547-0289>

Shivasakthy Manivasakan - <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2925-0682>