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For Play or A Study Way? Investigating Japanese University Students' Perceptions and Uses of The Golden Week Holiday Period

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Abstract

To accommodate the influx of people expected to participate in and attend the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, educational institutions in the Tokyo metropolitan area, when constructing their 2020 academic year calendars, opted to truncate, postpone, or eliminate altogether the week-long spring vacation period known as Golden Week. A research study was planned that would investigate via questionnaires and interviews Japanese university students' and teachers' perceptions and uses of this long-established holiday period and, crucially, how its existence early in the school year impacts students' academic studies. Although the full research study was cancelled due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, the preliminary 2019 fall semester student questionnaire had already been administered, the main purpose of which was to gain background information on students' typical Golden Week activities, their views on the benefits of and drawbacks to the holiday period, and if and how the period influences their academic studies. While much of the information garnered from this questionnaire was to be used as the basis for the construction of later questionnaires, as a stand-alone data-gathering instrument, it revealed that students viewed Golden Week as being fundamental and essential to them both as students and as native Japanese, and that the break was largely – but not solely – for engaging in non-academic pursuits. As questionnaire results revealed that this national holiday period simultaneously provides students with both timely opportunities and academic and motivational disruptions, the paper calls for further research into Golden Week's influence on students' academic endeavors.

Keywords: Japanese university, student, Golden Week, holiday, study