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MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID PANDEMIC

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INTRODUCTION

Global pandemic, coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious sickness caused by a newly discovered virus called coronavirus. It is a respiratory illness without any vaccine or special treatment. Individuals with weak immune system as well as those who are old and have some sort of ailment such as hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular etc have a higher risk of contracting COVID 19. Dry cough, fever, fatigue, heaviness in the chest and fever are the common symptoms. Symptoms such as body pain, nasal blockage, dysgeusia, skin rash, diarrhoea may or maynot be seen in patients. But at the same time the virus with its capability to mutate has also been found in patients who have been asymptomatic. Social distancing, staying at home, maintaining personal hygiene are some norms recommended by WHO to keep the disease at bay(World Health Organization, *Coronavirus*).

The cases are increasing rapidly.

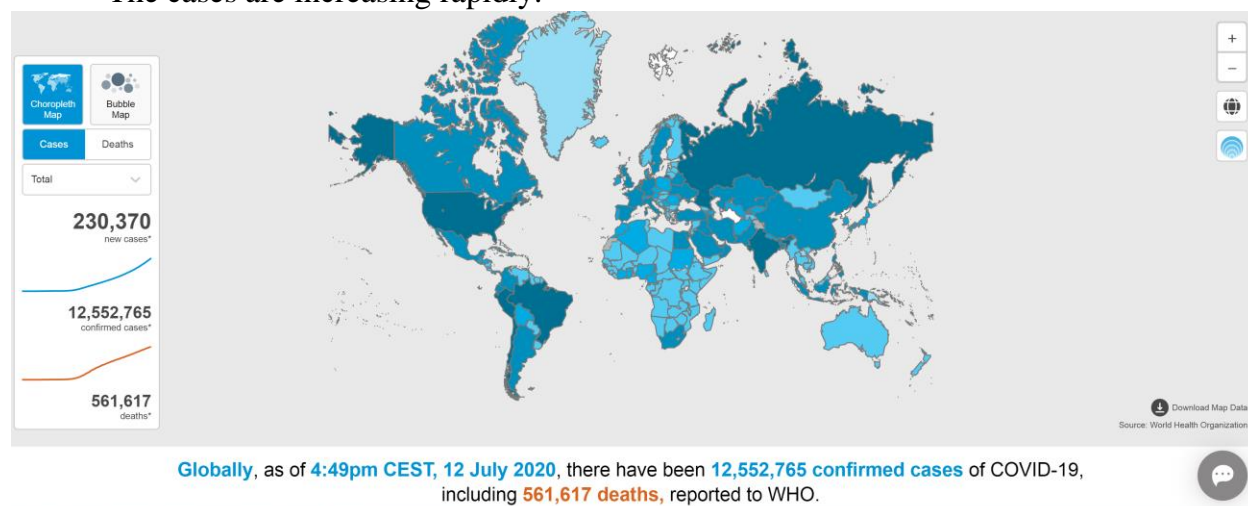


Figure 1: Covid-19 cases at global level (World Health Organization, *WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard*)

The disease sprouted in Wuhan, China during the beginning of December, 2019 and spread rapidly throughout the world. It had reached India in the first week of February, 2020. Constant fear of contracting Covid-19 disease has led to various psychological ailments among people across places. This scare has also led to changing lifestyle. In order to restore health and prevent psychological crisis among people, the National Health Commission has issued instructions to the health care system to promote mental health through interventions. These guidelines are not only to be followed by patients, but also by medical

officials, people under quarantine as well as all residing civilian in times of covid-19 pandemic. (Gao et al.).

Further, Holmes et al. reported that the coronavirus pandemic could have a "profound" effect on people's mental health. Increased social isolation, loneliness, health anxiety, stress and an economic downturn are a perfect storm to harm people's mental health and wellbeing.

Ahmad et al. conducted a cross sectional study to assess anxiety and demographic parameters among Indians during the period of Covid lockdown. The sample size of 398 Indian citizens was taken via google form. Only those forms were accepted wherein the respondents were of 15 years and above. The level of anxiety was evaluated by using a standardized questionnaire- GAD-7. It was seen that based on gender, type of work, religion, size of family, health and lack of sleep, 24.5% citizens were anxious. Further, those who were confined at home during lockdown showed prevalence of anxiety.

Chen et al. conducted a research wherein they said that exercise at home using various safe, simple, and easily implementable exercises is well suited to avoid the airborne coronavirus and maintain fitness levels. Prolonged home stays can increase behaviors that lead to inactivity and contribute to anxiety and depression, which in turn can lead to a sedentary lifestyle known to result in a range of chronic health conditions. Maintaining regular physical activity levels as per WHO guidelines in a safe home environment is an important strategy for healthy living during the coronavirus crisis.

Taking it further, a study by Hammami et al. indicated that physical activity has been affected world over due to Covid-19. Due to the outbreak, individuals are to required to primarily stay indoors and self quarantine them for specified duration depending from country to country.

Keeping the given significance in mind, the study entitled 'Mental health during Covid pandemic' was carried out with the following objectives:

- To assess the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on physical activities among respondents residing in tricity (Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali).
- To assess the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on mental health among respondents residing in tricity (Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali).
- To assess the correlation between physical activity and mental health among respondents residing in tricity (Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali).

METHODOLOGY

STUDY DESIGN

The study was carried out on respondents residing in the Tricity- Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula during lockdown due to COVID-19. Chandigarh is the capital of Punjab and Haryana. Mohali and Panchkula are districts on Punjab and Haryana respectively. They are also known as the satellite cities of Chandigarh.

Sample size. 145 respondents- 118 females and 27 males were assessed.

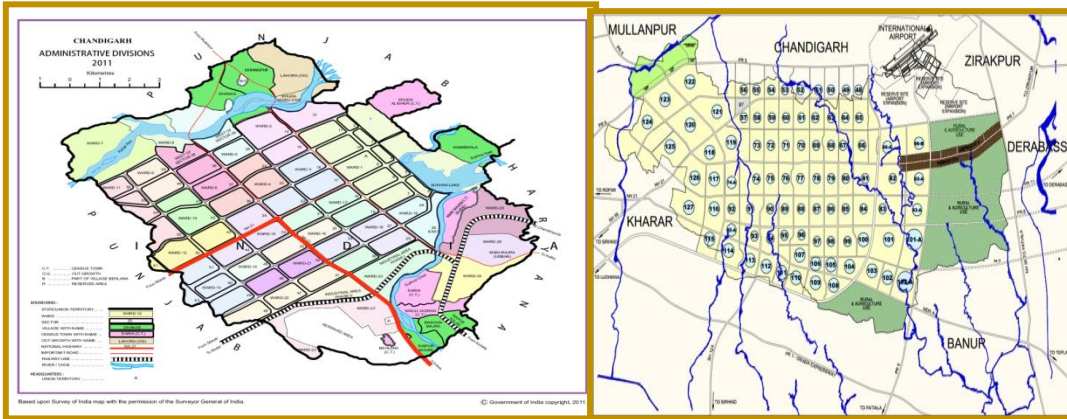


Figure 2:Map of Chandigarh (*Direct Census Handbook Chandigarh*)Figure 3:Map of Mohali (GMADA)

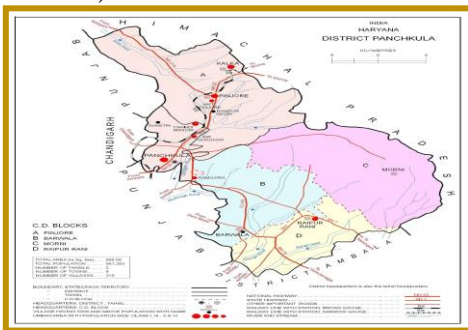


Figure 4: Map ofPanchkula(*Direct Census Handbook Panchkula*)

Sampling technique. Online survey through snowball sampling technique was done.

Selection of Sample

Inclusion criteria

1. Residents of Tricity.

Exclusion criteria

1. Residents outside Tricity.
2. Residents staying on rent in Tricity.

TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Self designed and modified validated questionnaires to assess demographic, daily activities and mental health were used to assess parameters during Covid pandemic. The questionnaire was kept simple, easy to answer, less time consuming and without ant cultural and religious bias.

Demographic information: Demographic information with respect to name, age, gender, education and occupation were asked from respondents.

Daily activities: The respondents were asked questions on as to how were utilizing time at home. Various options such as cooking, reading, sleeping, watching movies etc were put forth to them to know about their daily routine.

Physical activities: Questions related to whether respondents indulge in physical activity, types of workouts and time spent per day on working out were asked to respondents.

Mental health: They were asked if they meditated. Further, respondents were asked if they felt depressed and if they felt low for two consecutive weeks.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The data was recorded in Google form on a predesigned questionnaire. Statistical analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Keeping in mind the objectives of the current study, statistical tests such as frequency, percentage, chi square test and persons correlation were used for assessment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution on the basis of age groups

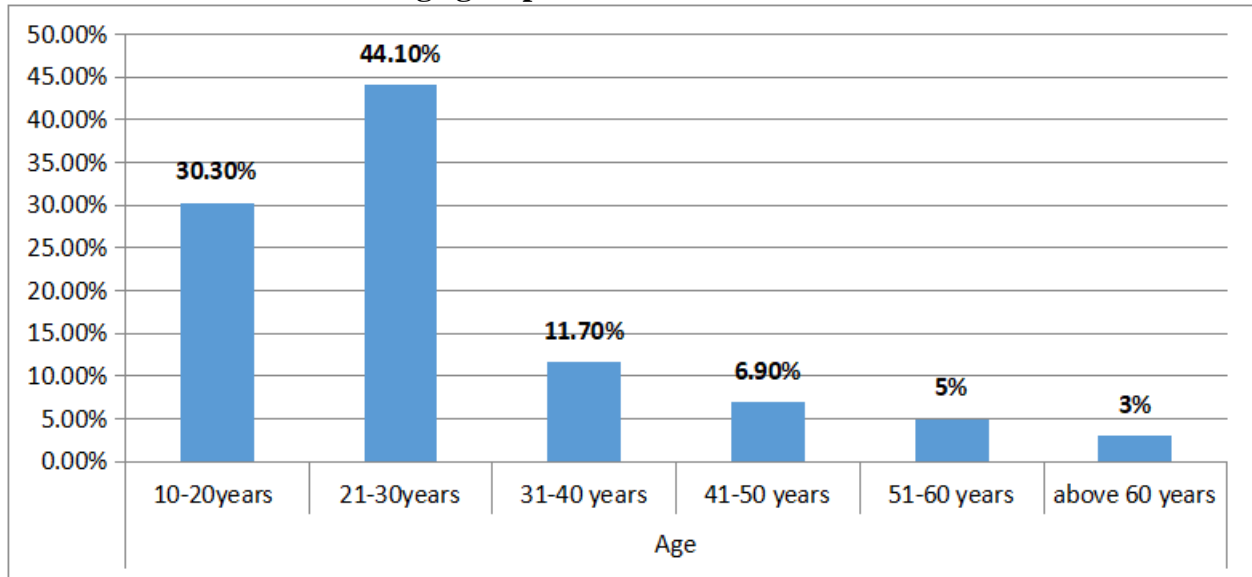


Fig 5: Distribution on the basis of age groups

The demographic information of the respondents revealed that 44.10% respondents were in 21-30 years age group, followed by 30.30% respondents of age group 10-20 years and 11.07% of age group 31-40 years. 6.90% respondents were of age group 41-50 years. Only 5% respondents were of age group 51-60 years and 3% were found above 60 years of age.

DISTRIBUTION ON THE BASIS OF OCCUPATION

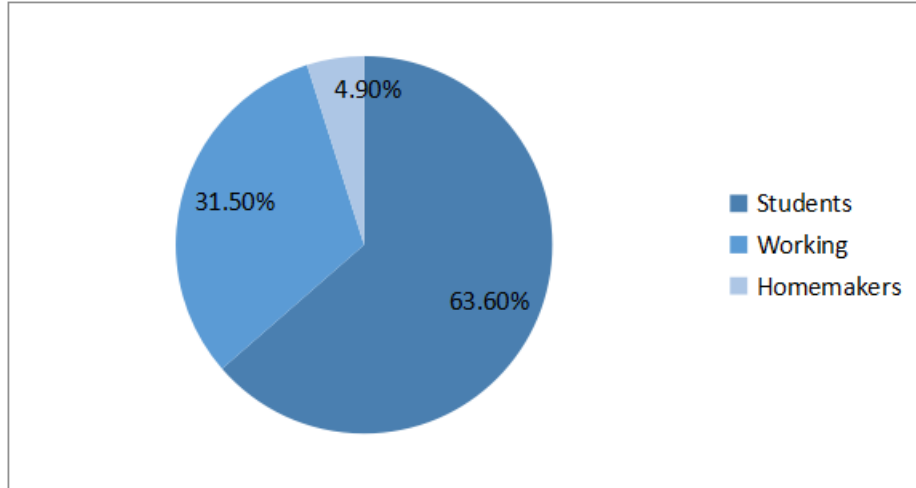


Fig 6: Distribution on the basis of occupation

The above figure shows that maximum respondents in the current study, i.e. 63.6% were students and 31.5% were working. 4.90% respondents were homemakers.

DISTRIBUTION ON THE BASIS OF SPENDING TIME DURING LOCKDOWN

Respondents utilized their time by doing household work, stitching, reading books, cooking, talking to relatives and friends over phone, cooking, exercise, walk, sleep, movies exercise, reading, teaching T.V and phone online course, watching news, drawing etc.

Distribution on the basis of meditation

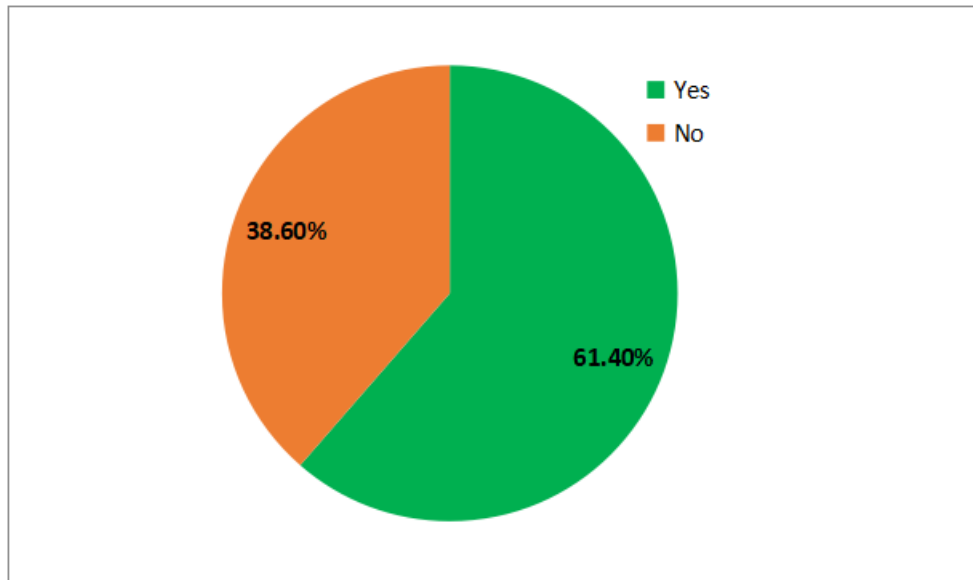


Fig 7: Distribution on the basis of meditation

It was seen that 61.40% respondents did meditation and 38.60% did not do so. The respondents did utilize the lockdown period to meditate to feel calm, relaxed and lift up their spirits.

Distribution on the basis of physical activity

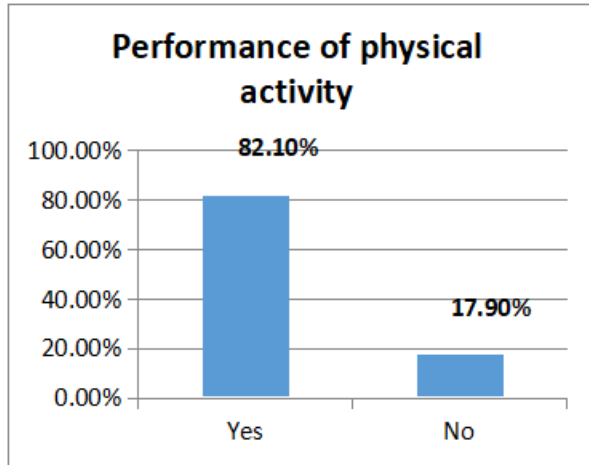


Fig 8: Distribution on the basis of physical activity

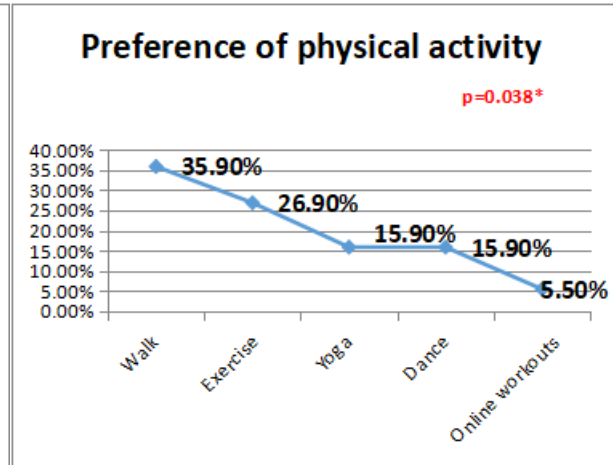


Fig 9: Distribution on the basis of preference of physical activity

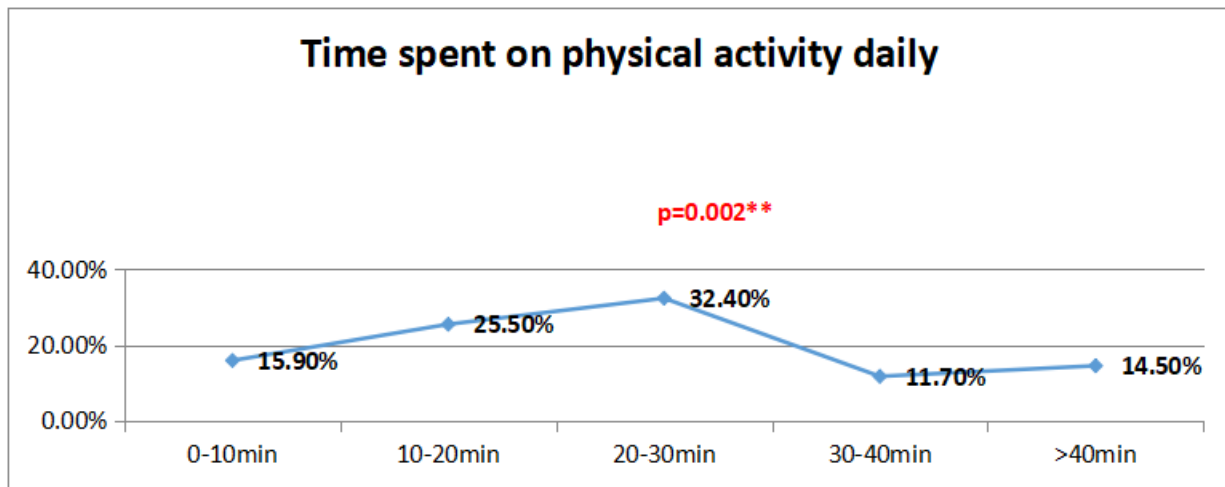


Fig 10: Distribution on the basis of time spent on physical activity daily

*= Significant

**= Highly significant

It was seen that physical activity was performed by 82.1% . Out of the respondents who indulged in physical activity, 35.9% preferred walking, followed by 29.6% who exercised, 15.9% who did yoga and online workouts. Statistical significance was observed in the preference of physical activity ($p=0.038^*$). Only 11.7% respondents did physical activity for >40 minutes. The results were seen to be highly significant ($p=0.002^{**}$)

Distribution on the basis of mental health

Distribution on the basis of respondents being stressed or depressed.

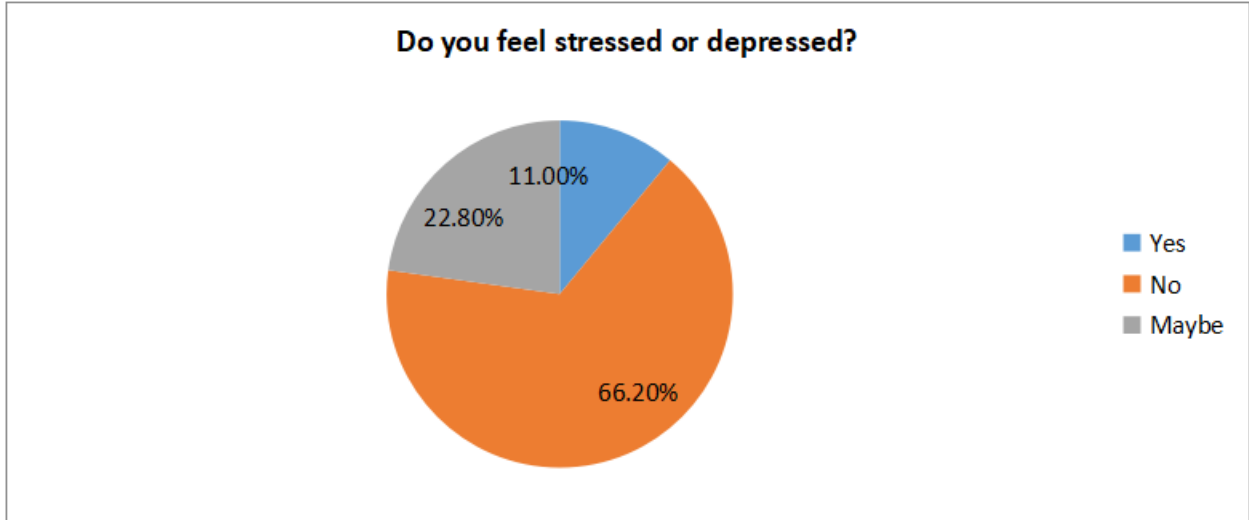


Fig 11: Distribution on the basis of respondents being stressed or depressed.

It was seen that 11% respondents felt depressed during the period of Covid- 19 pandemic. Maximum respondents, i.e. 66.2% did not feel depressed or stressed. As many as 22.80% respondents were in a dilemma if they were depressed or not.

Distribution on the basis of respondents feeling low for more than two weeks in a row

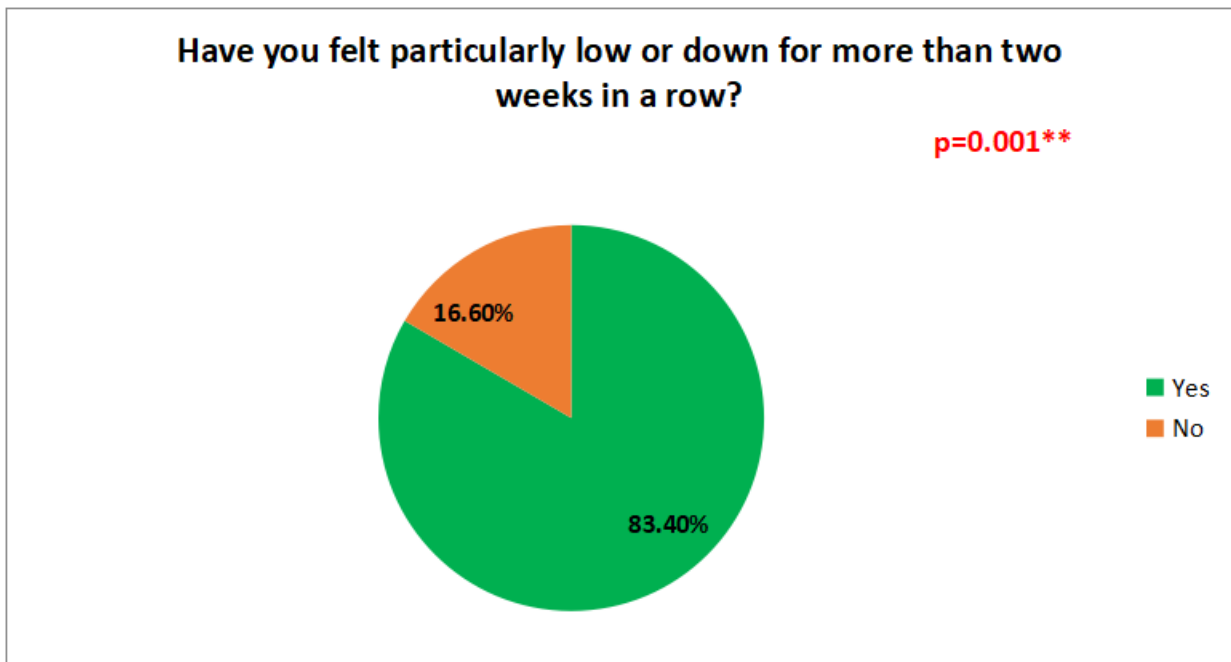


Fig 12: Distribution on the basis of respondents feeling low for more than two weeks in a row
**= Highly significant

Further, 83.4% respondents felt low or were not in a happy state of mind for more than two consecutive weeks. Association between feeling low for two weeks in a row and duration of physical activity was statistically highly significant ($p=0.001^{**}$).

CONCLUSION

Covid-19 pandemic has escalated to a level wherein it is pertinent to stay at home and keep social interactions to the minimum. However, in doing so, there is a decrease in socializing as well as physical activity and exercise. The study by Chen et al. has indicated that sedentary lifestyle in lockdown may lead to anxiety as well as lifestyle diseases. The lockdowns have also led various situations such as work from home, being laid off from job, less or no meetings with family members, friends as well as fellow colleagues. Such circumstances have led to changes in lifestyle, mental and physical health. In the current study, it can be concluded that despite utilizing time in various activities, respondents felt low. The findings are similar to those conducted by Holmes et al. and Ahmad et al. wherein deterioration of mental health has been seen that due to Covid- 19 pandemic. It is important for the respondents to cultivate compassion, feel spirited and make optimum utilization of time. Further, helping those in need and offering support in ones own way may also aid in feeling good. Setting small goals, doing yoga and exercise for 45 minutes daily as per WHO standards may help in being contented. Positive mental attitude, eating balanced nutritious diet along with motivation can aid in feeling good. We are all aware of the importance of our mental health which is extremely important for fighting sickness. Staying at home can lead to a lot of stress, anxiety and mental distress. It is important to keep oneself informed about what is the scenario but only from authentic channels. Excess of misleading information would build up anxiety and fear which would affect mental health. Social contact maybe maintained virtually as well as through telephones to keep boredom and tension at bay. It is advised to take regular intervals from watching screen all the time. Home-based activities such as yoga, indoor walk, exercise, online workouts and dance etc. provide an opportunity for people to stay mentally and physically fit. Practicing simple yet effective techniques while staying at home can thus bring about happiness and improvement in quality of life.

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