

How COVID-19 Pandemic and Lockdown Changed Activities of Pensioners: A Study of Division Bahawalpur

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Abstract. Objective: To explore the impacts of COVID-19 and lockdown on the daily routine and activities of pensioners in division Bahawalpur.

Method: A comparative study was conducted in division Bahawalpur. Information about the people, who retired during February 2019 – January 2020, was taken from District Accounts Offices of all the three districts. 24-hour time diary was designed to collect data about time spent on activities by pensioners in a day. Face to face interviews were conducted. The study was piloted in two phases, before the pandemic and during the pandemic lockdown.

Findings: Average time spent on resting/sleeping, physical exercise, watching TV, using the internet, talking on the phone, religious activities, social work, leisure activities, and reading books was slightly increased during the lockdown, whereas time spent with family and eating was increased significantly. Average time for personal care remained unchanged, before and during the lockdown. Outdoor activities like travelling, shopping was completely over.

Conclusion: The deadly virus, COVID-19 has left significant impacts on daily routine activities. Besides the drastic effects of global pandemic Covid-19, it became a blessing in disguise, because it gave pensioners a unique opportunity to spend time with their families, especially youngsters. Pollution was reduced, as people were restricted to their homes.

Keywords: Covid-19, Novel Corona Virus, Pandemic, Lockdown. Lifestyle, Time use

1. INTRODUCTION

Covid-19, the Novel Corona Virus erupted at the end of November 2019 in the city of Wuhan, China. It spread rapidly across the world without sparing any country, either developed or developing. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a public health emergency [1]. As of September 9, 2020, 902,315 deaths have been attributed to COVID-19. However, 19,845,555 people have recovered from the virus [2]. With the exception of the tragic human consequences, it also has left massive economic, political and social implications. The world GDP never faced such a huge setback. The world's transportation system went under crisis. Tourism industry collapsed due to the travel restrictions. Countries closed their borders with neighboring countries and shut downed their air space.

Like other countries, also in Pakistan drastic measures were taken to curb the outbreak after the first case of coronavirus was reported in the country on March 15, 2020. Strict actions were taken by the Federal and the Provincial governments for the implementation of SOPs regarding COVID-19 among the citizens. Moreover, the lockdown was imposed in Pakistan to restrict the movement of the public. Lockdown is the only successful policy to restrict mobility and it also has helped in lessening the graph of COVID-19 patients [3-4]. Observing social distancing, educational institutes, shopping malls, restaurants, parks, cinemas, sports complex, gyms, marriage halls, salons and all other public places were closed. In addition to that, all public and private offices were remained closed, as staff worked from home. Government offices were opened with skeleton staff only. There was a complete ban on religious and social gatherings. Patients with critical health conditions were allowed to have access to hospitals. Unnecessary visits to hospitals were banned, as doctors were available on video conference.

The measures taken by the government to control the globally spread Novel Corona Virus drastically changed the lifestyle of people, as they were urged to stay at home [5]. Therefore, this research was conducted to explore the impacts of COVID-19 and lockdown on the daily routine and activities of pensioners in division Bahawalpur.

2. STUDY DESIGN AND SAMPLE SELECTION

A comparative study was done to determine the time spent by retired people of division Bahawalpur, on daily life activities before lockdown and during the lockdown. Division Bahawalpur is the biggest division of Punjab. There are three districts in Division Bahawalpur; District Bahawalpur, District Bahawalnagar, and District Rahimyar Khan. Information about the people, who retired during February 2019 – January 2020, was taken from District Accounts Offices of all the three districts. 24-hour time diary was designed to collect the data about time spent on activities by pensioners in a day, as time diary is most commonly used methodology for collecting time use data when the sample size is large and it provides most reliable estimates [6]. Face to face interviews with retirees were conducted to fill time-use diaries. The 10% of the target population was taken as sample i.e. 1,041. The study was conducted in two phases, before the pandemic and during pandemic (when the strict lockdown was being observed in the region).

3. RESULTS

Resting/Sleeping		Personal Care		Eating	
Before Lockdown	During Lockdown	Before Lockdown	During Lockdown	Before Lockdown	During Lockdown
451.9	457.6	40.00	40.69	111.5	127.1
Travelling		Time Spent with Friends		Time Spent with Family	
Before Lockdown	During Lockdown	Before Lockdown	During Lockdown	Before Lockdown	During Lockdown
20.00	0	43.20	26	155.5	194.66
Physical exercise		Using Internet		Talking on Phone	
Before Lockdown	During Lockdown	Before Lockdown	During Lockdown	Before Lockdown	During Lockdown
22.85	25.0	42.39	52	36.39	43.7
Watching TV		Reading book/newspaper etc		Housework	
Before Lockdown	During Lockdown	Before Lockdown	During Lockdown	Before Lockdown	During Lockdown
108.6	119.19	44.81	52	56.85	44
Shopping		Leisure Activities		Outing	
Before Lockdown	During Lockdown	Before Lockdown	During Lockdown	Before Lockdown	During Lockdown
37.81	0	20.37	35.4	19.77	0
Religious activities		Social Work		Post Retirement Occupation	
Before Lockdown	During Lockdown	Before Lockdown	During Lockdown	Before Lockdown	During Lockdown
167.0	175.85	14.80	20.55	46.19	25.9

Table. 1 Average time spent on activities (minutes)

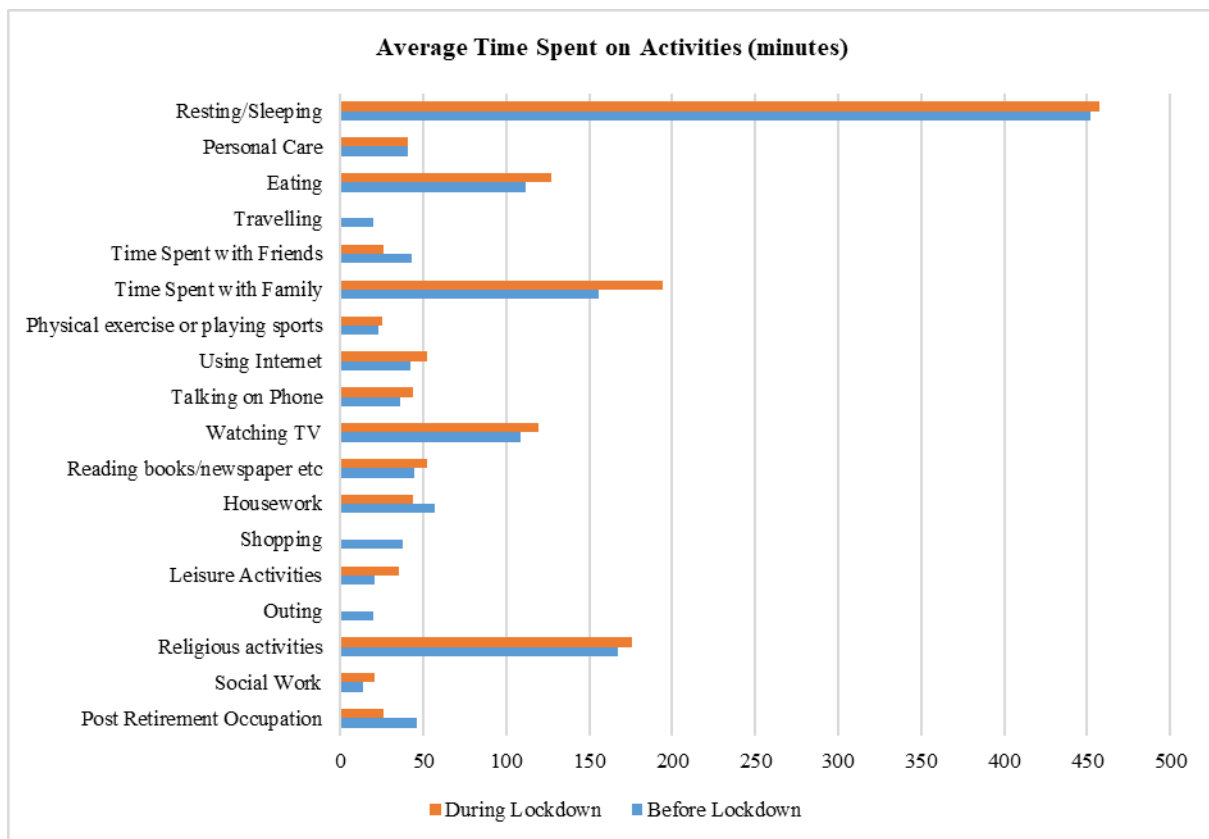


Fig. 1 Average Time Spent on Activities (in minutes)

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study show that pandemic forced people to quit going outside. It can be seen from table 1, during COVID-19 pandemic elderly population remained at their homes because of precautionary measures. Before COVID-19, average minutes spent on travelling shopping and outing in a day were 20, 37.81 and 19.77 respectively, while during lockdown for pandemic time spent on these activities was zero. Corona virus has affected mobility in the cities [7]. Air quality in the cities, where lockdown was being observed, was also improved because of the decline in mobility [8]. Figure 1 indicates that there was no difference in the average time spent on personal care before and during the lockdown. On average, 451.9 minutes were spent by the elderly population on sleeping and resting before lockdown, whereas 457.6 minutes were spent on sleeping and resting during the quarantine. A slight increase was seen in average sleeping/resting time of retired people in division Bahawalpur. Pandemic has increased sleep duration [9]. Eating time of pensioners significantly increased during the lockdown. Staying at home, during the pandemic, people cooked more unpacked and fresh food for healthy eating. Globally, the consumption of meat, milk and fruits during this time period tended to increase [10-11]. A substantial increase was seen in pensioners' time spent with family during the lockdown. The deadly pandemic bought a positive change in our daily life by giving families the opportunity to spend time together. Youngsters preoccupied with their personal stuff and jobs, got more time to spend with their elders at home [12-13]. Table 1 points out an increase in the average time spent by retired people on physical exercise. According to a study conducted during lockdown for COVID-19 in Belgium, adults were found to spend more time on physical exercise [14]. Pensioner's average time spent on using the internet and watching TV and leisure activities was also increased during the quarantine. As people were bounded to their homes, they spent their time watching TV and involved themselves in leisure activities with their family members. Most of the people increased their internet usage, for using social media to be in touch with their friends. Social media and TV both are the sources for proving the latest information. Internet usage exponentially increased during the pandemic. Internet consumption

increased by 47%. A significant increase was seen in watching TV and streaming services during corona virus pandemic. People used technology to ease anxiety and stress caused by the COVID-19 [15-16]. Average time for talking on the phone also increased during the quarantine. While staying at homes, people used more mobile phones than usual, to keep in touch with their friends and family [17]. Time spent on book reading also increased during COVID-19 lockdown. Retirees reported that they got more time to read books, due to pandemic. During the pandemic, a survey in the UK revealed that the time spent on book reading had almost doubled [18]. Apparently, figure 1 shows that in lockdown, time spent on religious activities and social work increased slightly. Although religious centres and mosques were closed during the lockdown, people practiced religion more than usual. They were found actively involved in social work by financially helping those who were unable to earn.

It is evident from figure 1, time spent with friends either outside or inside home and time spent on post-retirement occupation, decreased to less than half an hour during the pandemic. The sole reason for this shrinkage of time spent with friends was fear of being affected by COVID-19 virus. Majority of people distant themselves from other people who were not from their household. Social distancing was observed religiously. Average time spent by retired people on household work also decreased during the pandemic lockdown. The cause of this decrease may be justified as, all of the family members were urged to stay at homes, during the pandemic lockdown, so the work burden was divided among them.

5. CONCLUSION

The deadly virus, COVID-19 has left significant impacts on daily routine activities. It has changed the ways of living. Social gatherings were completely banned during the lockdown. People were urged to stay at homes especially aged people. Time spent with family increased significantly since lockdown has begun. An increase in healthy lifestyle was seen, as dining out was prohibited.

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