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An Observational Survey Study on the changes in Life style before and during COVID-19 lockdown

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19, a global pandemic impacted daily life on a vast scale and is significantly affecting the global economy. The spread of this disease is exponential and our country is slowly rising up to being one of the worst affected countries. Since, any suitable form of immunization is not attained yet on a large scale; countries are enforcing a strict lockdown to curb the spread of this virus. People are advised to stay at homes and go out only if it is absolutely essential. India had imposed one of the biggest and strictest lockdown during the months of March, April and May 2020 which had a significant impact on the lives of its citizens. Our study is a theoretical analysis to investigate the immediate impact of lockdown on eating and lifestyle of the population aged ≥ 18 years. The survey was conducted using a well-structured questionnaire which examined the demographic, dietary, lifestyle habits before and during the lockdown period so as to assess if there was a positive or negative influence on the health of a person. The study was conducted during the month of June 2020 and was active for a period of 30 days. The paper also encompasses some of the relevant principles in Ayurveda which can be incorporated as a part of daily routine to promote a cleaner healthier regime.

Key words: COVID-19, Lockdown, lifestyle, Ayurveda.

INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), a pandemic of the 20th century has caused an utmost toll on medical and health professionals' worldwide. The ever-growing patient population and variants of the disease has diverted most of the resources towards it. At its peak, strict rules enforced suddenly by the government to curb the spread of the disease, inadvertently impacted the dietary, social, physiological and economic sectors of public life. The impact was so

huge that social distancing, work from home, digitization for most of the daily needs; face-masks etc. are the new norms. Although now vaccine immunization has started for the corona warriors, health care professionals have still advised caution and normalcy which we knew before is still a far way to go.

The communicable diseases as mentioned under *Janapadoddhvams*^[1] (communicable diseases affecting an entire country or the whole world) due to impairment of *Vayu* (air), *Jala* (water), *Desha* (land) and *Kala* (season) are more lethal in their consecutively increasing order. *Adharma* (unrighteousness) is the root cause for vitiation of all factors and is led by *Pragyapradha* (intellectual error). Transmission of disease from one person to another is termed as *Sansargaja* (diseases transmitted directly through close contact or droplet infection) and *Upasargaja* (diseases transmitted indirectly through contaminated surfaces), in Ayurveda.

Among all the different *Nidanas* (etiological factors) for the occurrence of disease, importance is always

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given more for *Manasika* (psychological) factors as any system involved in causation of ailment *Manas* is invariably involved.

Most of the studies are focused on symptom detection, relief and treatment aspects. However, if more studies are aligned in this direction, it can provide a great value of importance to the unaffected population. India, being a diverse population country with a workforce ranging in different economic, educational and time zones is one of the best sources of such a study. Our preliminary study examines the immediate impact on the daily routine. Based on the inclination towards healthier living observed, we propose some of the ancient norms as listed in the field of Ayurveda, promoting cleanliness and immunity against diseases.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A questionnaire-based survey,^[2-6] created using Google Forms, was circulated by the investigators via various social media apps like - WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram with the invitation message for the purpose of this study. Invitation message provided a brief description of the study and also ensured the anonymity of the participants. Ethical clearance was included as a part of the questionnaire. Participants were also requested to circulate the link amongst the contacts to increase the contributors. Participants were requested to be honest in their responses. The questions mainly focused on dietary, activity and sleep patterns. All the questions were made mandatory and the incomplete responses (those left midway before clicking the submit button) were not recorded.

Inclusion criteria

Indian subjects from different regions with age groups of 18 years and beyond.

Exclusion criteria

Participants were limited to Indian subcontinent that was too concentrated over some regions. People from extremely rural areas, with limited literacy skills were not the part of this study. The control group was not divided on the basis of occupation and background.

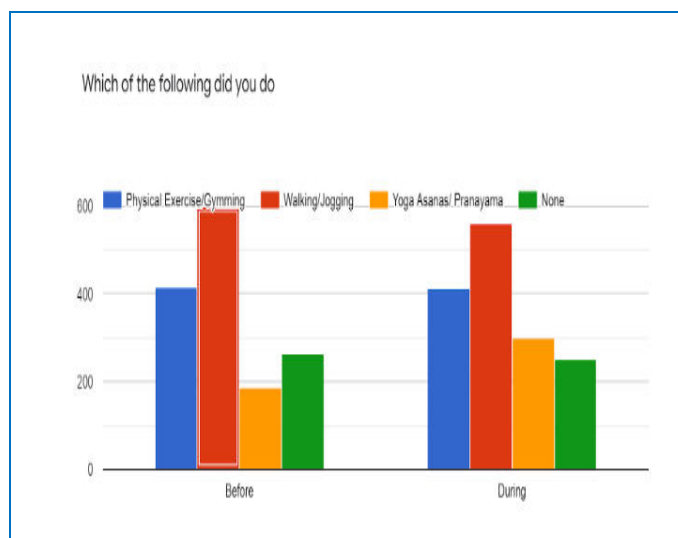
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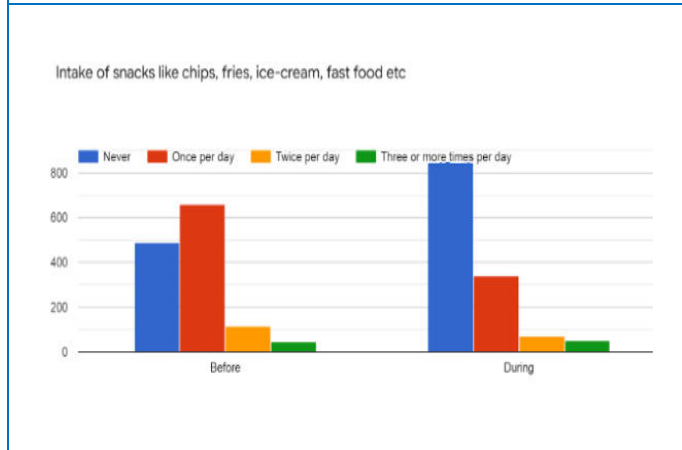
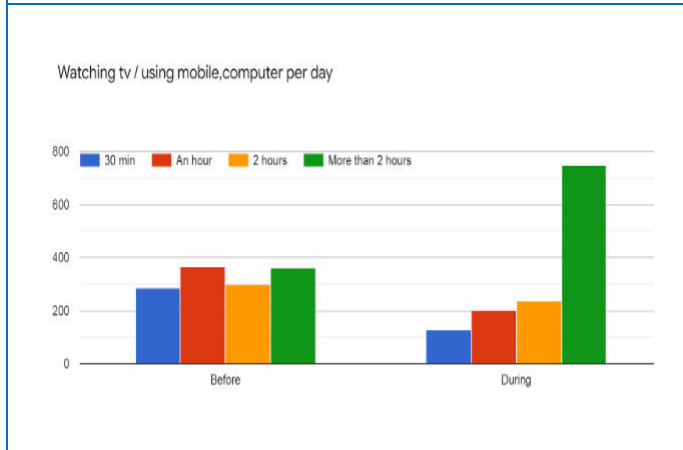
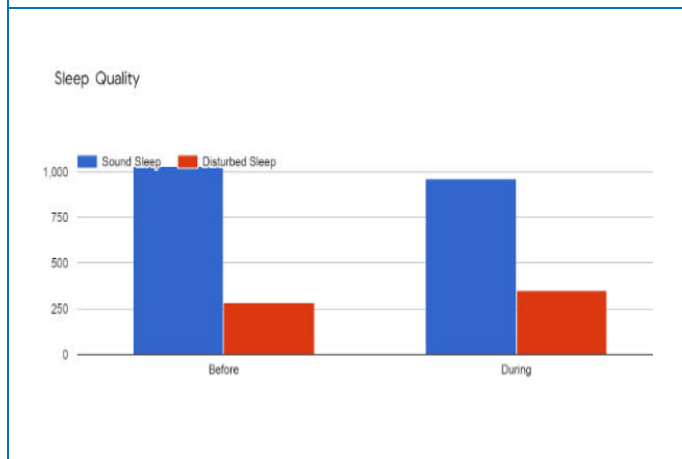
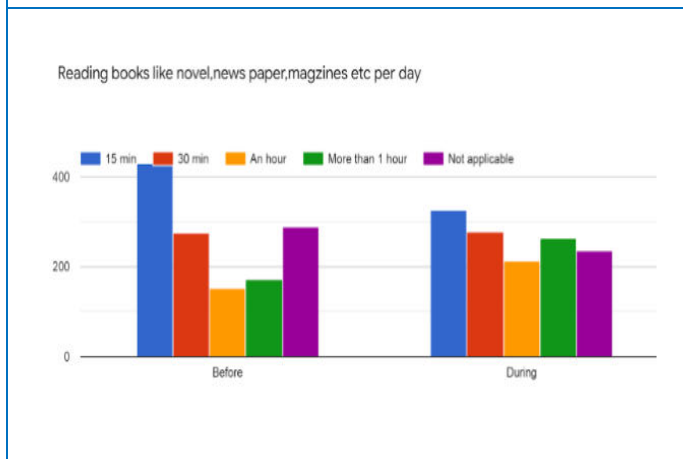
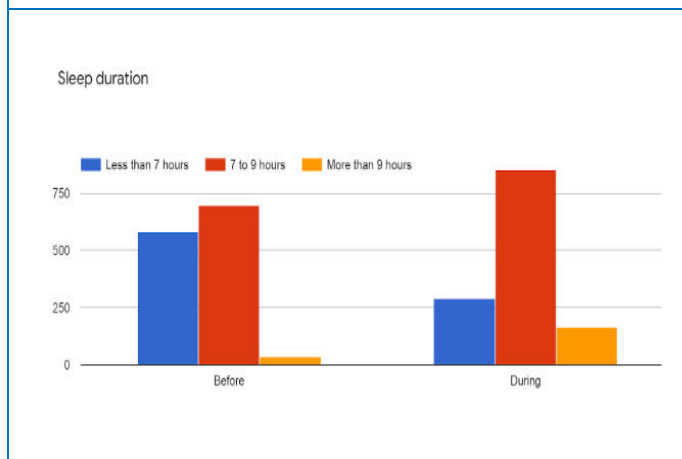
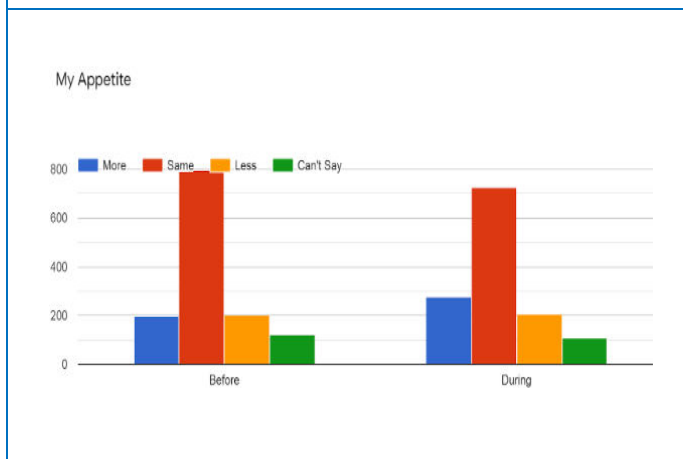
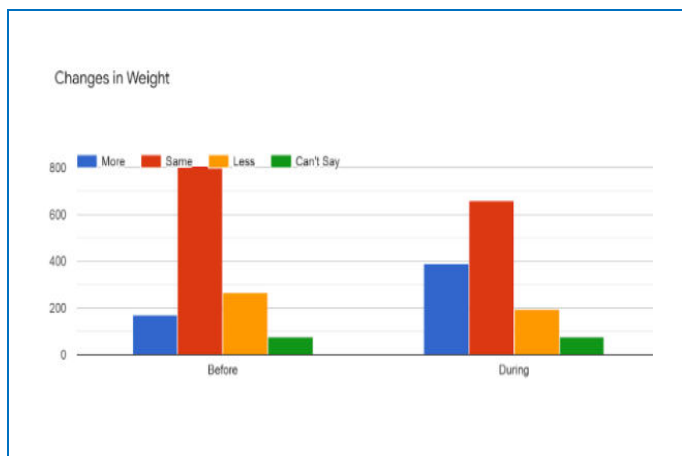
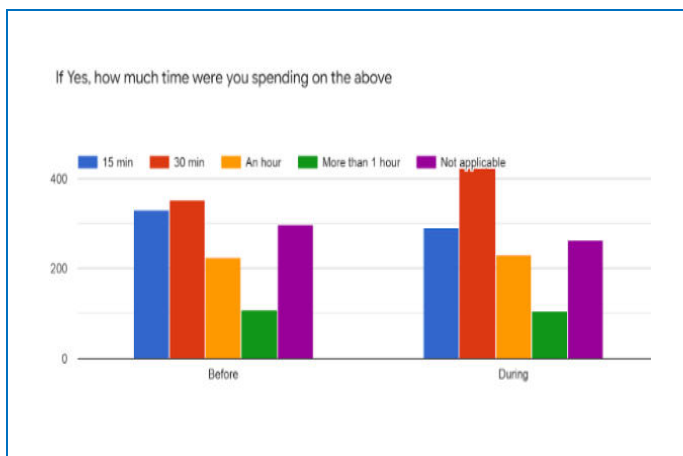
The questionnaire did a preliminary assessment of the following factors before and during lockdown period. Along with these basic demographic data was also collected like location, age and sex.

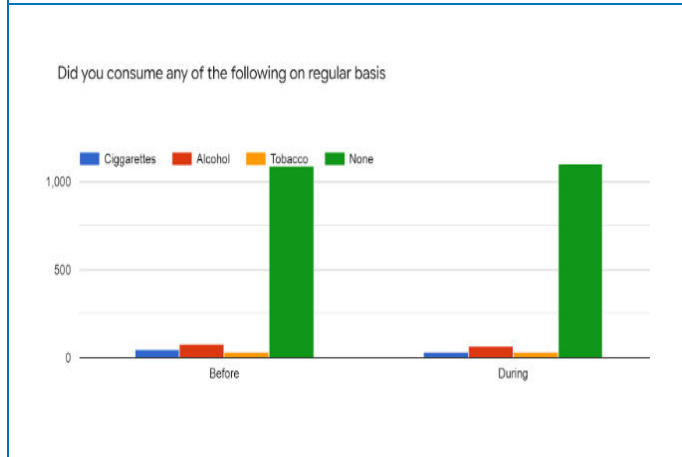
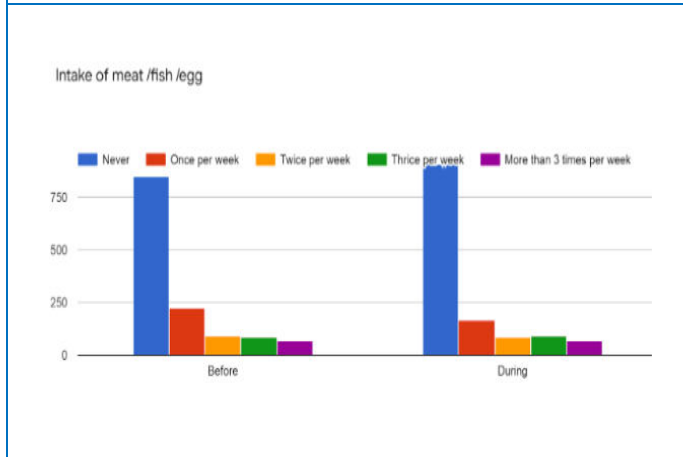
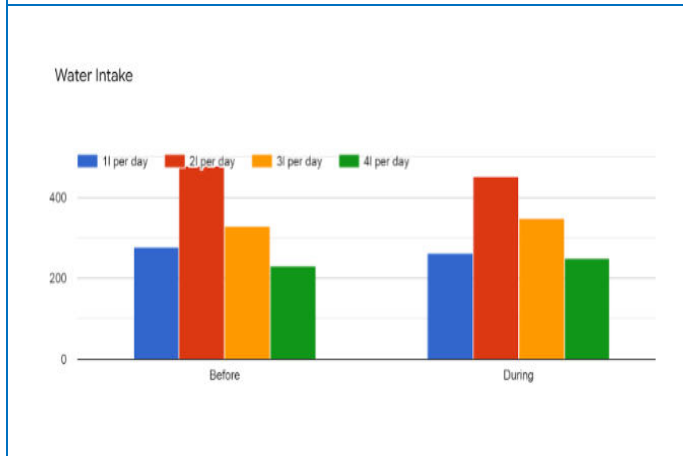
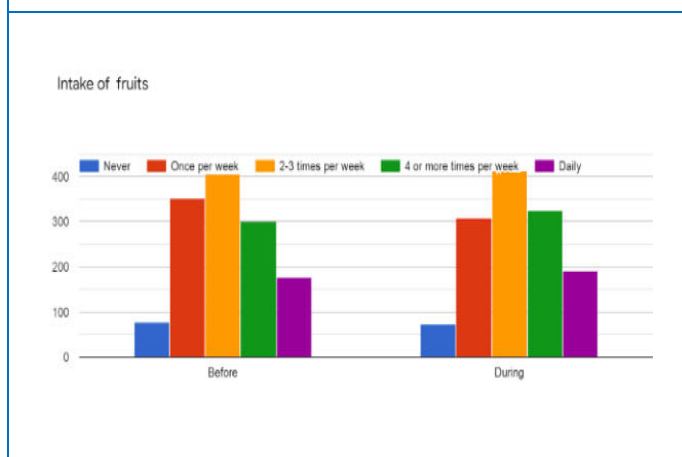
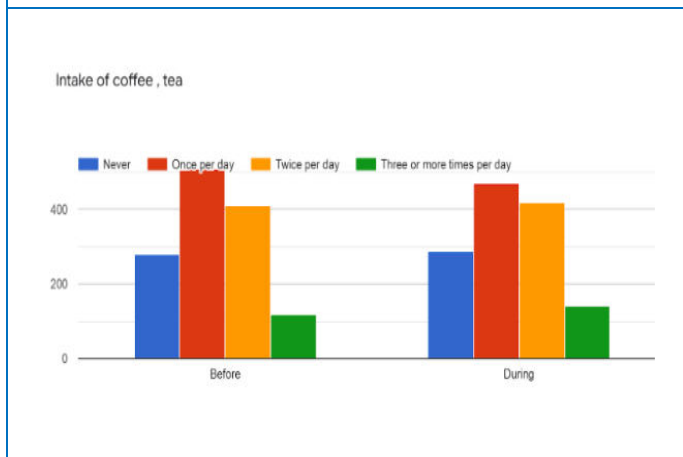
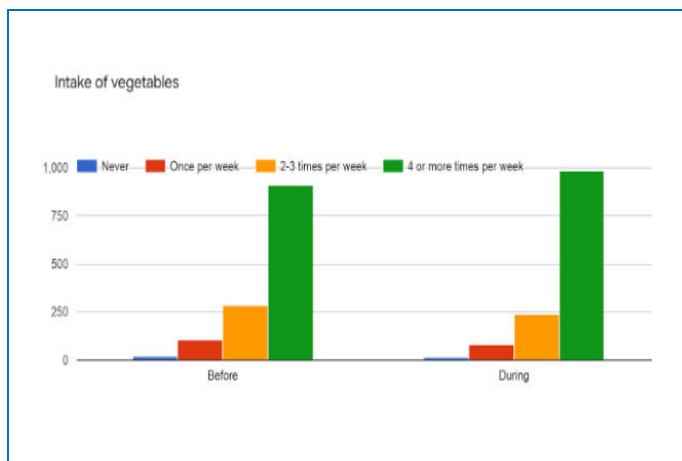
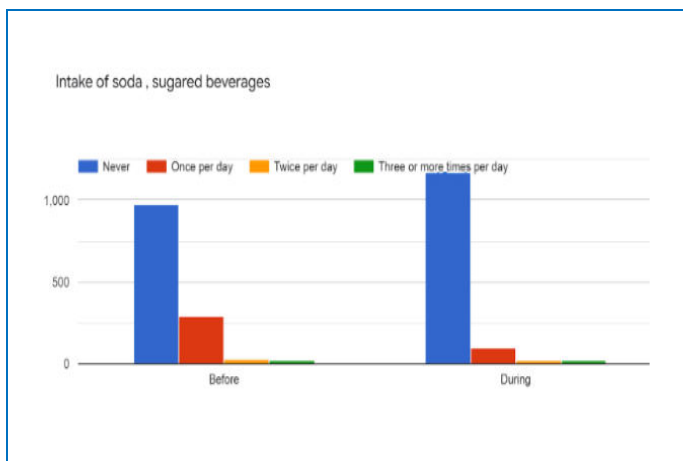
- Exercise Regime with time duration.
- Appetite
- Reading habits
- Screen Time
- Sleep duration and quality.
- Changes in weight.
- Consumption of alcohol, cigarettes etc. along with frequency.
- Fast food, tea / coffee, poultry / fish, fruits /vegetables and sugared beverages intake frequency.
- Frequency of eating out.
- Mood swings rate.
- Effect of lockdown on diabetes/hypertension patients if any.

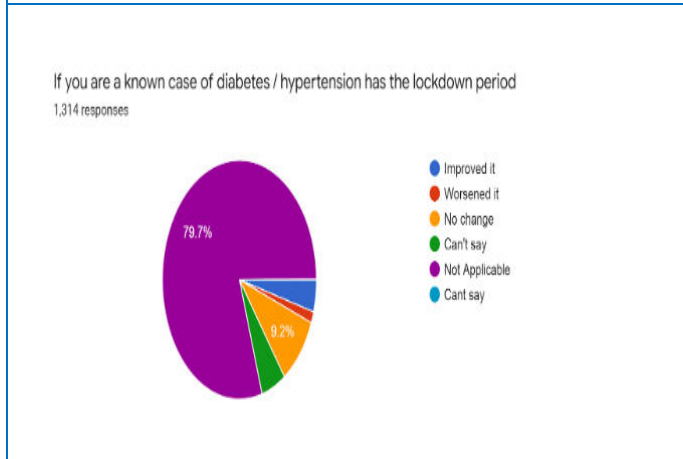
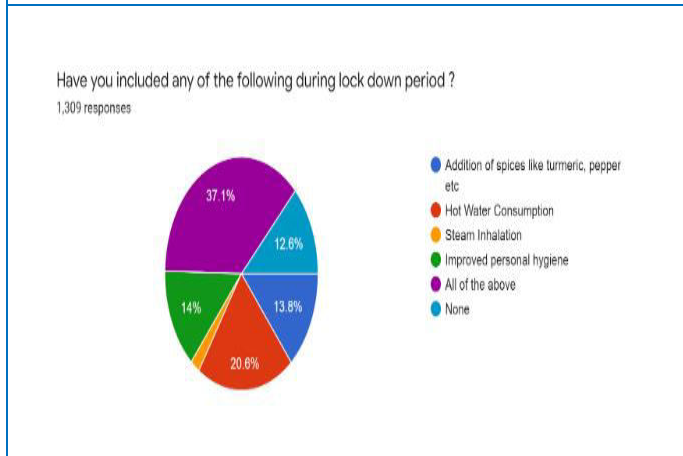
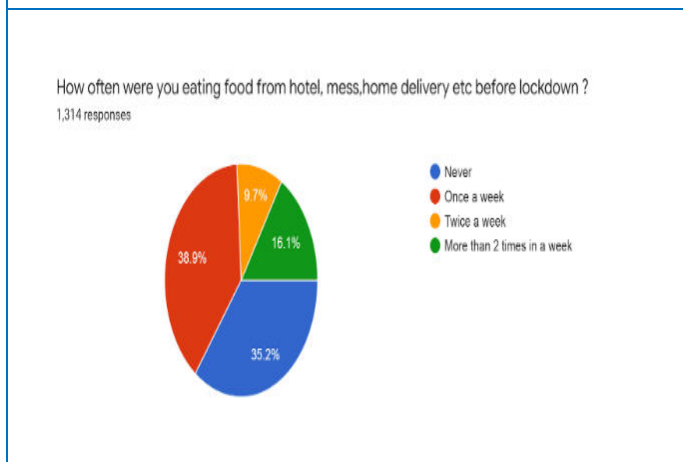
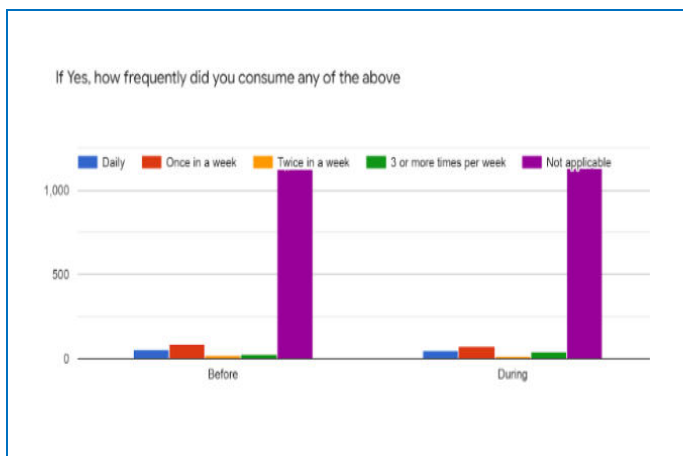
RESULTS

Total of 1315 participants with almost equal male to female ratio and age groups stretching from 18 to 70 years participated in this study. Following charts give the results of our analysis.









DISCUSSION

Strictest lockdown enforced to contain COVID -19 spread in India, impacted the routine lifestyle almost on a grand scale. Some of the key findings disclose a shift in eating and behavior trends during the lockdown period. The findings indicate more consumption of fruits and vegetables and lesser consumption of junk food, alcohol etc. In terms of lifestyle a healthier approach is observed with an increase in exercise duration, sleep duration and lesser amount of alcohol/cigarette consumption. However, owing to financial strain and tension around, the sleep quality was seen to be more disturbed during lockdown. Variations in employment patterns and income were the source of worry. For the initial period of lockdown, COVID was treated as a stigma which added to the tension. Exaggeration from the media houses about the disease proved more worrisome for most of the people. Screen time was increased due to prevalence of work from home practices. More usage of social media apps was seen. People got to eat healthier at home and pursue their hobbies. Although initially people enjoyed being around family, as the lockdown period extended they missed their social life in confinement. People have commented on using home remedies like intake of herbs to build up immunity. Importance to hygiene has increased post COVID era. In some of the participants an increase in weight was observed due to absence of routine.

Tested interventions to reduce the chances of Respiratory illness contraction

The Ministry of AYUSH recommended few self-care guidelines for preventive health measures and boosting immunity with special reference to respiratory health. These are supported by Ayurveda literature and scientific publications.^[7-11] It was found in the comment section that people had already started using procedures like steam inhalation, consuming more spices in food etc. as a preventive measure against the infection. Few other such relevant measures are listed as follows:

Protection of Entry Portals

Any respiratory ailment is caused due to the entry of bacteria or virus via eyes, nose and mouth. Following measures are mentioned in our ancient texts to reduce the chances of pathogen entry.

- Drinking hot water and consumption of hot food.
- Consumption of medicated spices like dry ginger, turmeric, cumin, coriander, pepper etc. Decoction made from these spices is a common solution for many fever related ailments in Indian households.
- Gargles made from neem, turmeric and catechu barks are considered effective to improve oral hygiene.
- Steam inhalation along with nasal oils (like sesame) is proven effective against headaches, congestion and sinusitis.

Inculcation of healthier lifestyle

- Balanced diet: *Ahara*, good sleep and regular sexual life is considered as the mainstays for healthy –happy life in *Ayurveda*. Keen measures on maintaining appropriate nutrients in diet while taking care about preparation and dosage is suggested. Proper balance of nutrients in food with regular intake of water keeps the body healthy.
- Immuno-modulators: Researchers have observed good therapeutic effects in the following ingredients: *Withania somnifera* (*Ashwagandha*), *Tinospora cordifolia* (*Guduchi*), *Asparagus racemosus* (*Shatavari*), *Phyllanthus embelica* (*Amalaki*), and *Glyceriza glabra* (*Yashtimadhu*) are potential immunomodulators
- Maintaining personal and environmental hygiene.

Yoga

COVID-19 has a huge impact on our daily life and people are still trying to adapt to the post COVID-19 environment. Its impact on daily routine, financial losses, fear of disease contraction and uncertainty around has led to a huge psychological strain amongst the people. Yoga has proven beneficial in reducing

stress, depression and anxiety associated with various diseases like asthma, hypertension etc. There studies which support the advantages of Yoga in assuaging stress induced immune deregulations. Pranayama is known to regulate and improve respiratory capacity. Evidences are also observed wherein meditation was proven effective in synergizing respiratory and heart ailments.

CONCLUSION

This is a pilot study on the effect of lockdown on routine life. As the duration was limited no much significant changes were observed. To summarize people started eating healthier, immunity hygiene etc. were taken more seriously and stress levels increased owing to the difficult times. However, in future, the study can be enriched with more detailed questionnaire covering the above aspects. Behavioral changes observed in children due to lockdown, effect of lockdown on less privileged population, its effects on family dynamics can be some of studies which can be some good studies in future. Now that, countries are reopening, challenges faced by individuals and its psychological effect can be analyzed.

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