

LOCKDOWN INFLUENCE ON DIET AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OF SENIORS

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: Many studies draw attention to the negative consequences of the pandemic or lockdown on the well-being and lifestyle of different population groups. This study analyzes whether some changes occurred in physical activity during three periods – before the pandemic, during the lockdown, and at present in Slovak older adults. We also investigated whether individual weight changed after the pandemic.

Methods: The study has a cross-sectional design. We collected 436 questionnaires from older adults (60+) living in Slovakia. 277 come from the first phase of online data collection (04/2022-06/2022) in university students of the third age, and 159 from the second phase of offline collection (07/2022-11/2022) in social service facilities. We monitored if there were any changes within the observed periods in the variables of physical activity and BMI. The database was processed in IBM SPSS Statistics.

Results: During the lockdown, the time respondents devoted to physical activity during the week decreased ($p < 0.001$). The BMI of older men and women did not change after the pandemic ($p = 0.519$), and it did not differ between men and women either before the pandemic ($p = 0.281$) or after it ($p = 0.449$). Also, there is no difference between Universities of the Third Age students and social facility living seniors before the pandemic (0.933) and now (0.317). The results showed that even though physical activity significantly decreased during the lockdown, the older adults in our study did not eat more during the lockdown, nor did they gain weight.

Conclusion: It is essential to simultaneously create compensatory measures while implementing future anti-epidemic (or other) measures. They would help maintain the desired amount of physical activity or other healthy habits at an optimal level.

Keywords: BMI, COVID-19, nutrition, physical activity, older adults

INTRODUCTION

The proportion of individuals aged 60 and above is steadily increasing worldwide. In 2019, this demographic surpassed one billion and is projected to double by 2050. These demographic shifts necessitate changes across multiple sectors, such as healthcare, social