



Sedentary Behavior of City Dwellers during Lock-Down Period after Coronavirus Outbreak: A Case Study on EMBA Students of IUB

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Abstract

The report examines the consequences of the sedentary behavior of city dwellers since the nationwide lock-down that began following the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic globally. To focus on specific group behavior, the report takes on the EMBA students of IUB as the target population. Relevant data were primarily gathered from secondary sources. Two case studies were conducted involving purposively selected EMBA students from IUB to cover specific contexts behind the coronavirus outbreak and ensuing lock-down impacts. The study indicates that the city dwellers including IUB graduate students are experiencing an increased level fear and tension because of the lock-down. Changes in daily lives of city dwellers have occurred particularly for IUB students such as staying at home, changing work habits to work from home as much as practicable, spending more time with family members and keep their morale high do more household chores, shopping for groceries and other necessities online. Furthermore, the city dwellers and students are coping and adjusting their life styles during the lock-down with increased use of social media and mobile phones to stay in touch with family members and friends and overcome social isolation. The study recommends several measures for ensuring healthy life, both physical and mental, for the city dwellers including: Undertake regular physical exercise at home to relieve the stress and negative emotions to prevent sedentary behavior, stroll at a neighborhood park or rooftop/home garden to relax while maintaining a safe social distance with others, scan local and international media for updates on the latest corona virus situation, use more social media, and mobile phones to avoid the consequences of social isolation. Finally, a major response is to follow the instructions put forth by the WHO and the national authority to prevent further spread of coronavirus. The sooner the adjustments are made, the better will be the changed life style and the less the danger of COVID-19.

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Introduction

Never in modern human history since the end of the Second World War, has the world community seen disruptions in their way of life and livelihood which is due to the spread of the novel coronavirus. The novel coronavirus outbreak that emerged in China in December 2019 has now spread to 202 countries with 638,146 confirmed cases and 30,105 deaths around the world (World Health Organization (WHO) 2020); and it is spreading rapidly in all countries. The coronavirus pandemic has been confirmed to have spread in Bangladesh in March 2020. The first three known cases were reported on March 7th, 2020. Since then, a total of 48 confirmed cases, 11 recoveries, and 5 deaths have occurred in the country. On March 22nd, the Government of Bangladesh declared a 10-days lock-down effective from March 26th to 4th April. During the lock-down, people have been directed to stay at home, avoid leaving home other than for essential shopping and urgent medical needs and maintain a minimum social distance of 1 meter (3 feet). This lock-down has affected the city dwellers especially, resulting in sedentary behavior amongst the general population resulting in people tending to spend almost all their time indoors; somewhat inactive away from social gatherings and social interactions with those outside home. Students of primary, secondary and tertiary education also have been affected by the lock-down as the government has shut all educational institutions in the country on March 24th till April 9th 2020. Public and private universities have started to conduct classes online amid the fear of the novel coronavirus outbreak. All these measures and the unprecedented critical situation in the country have affected city dwellers from all walks

of life particularly university students. Thus, the lock-down period due to the outbreak of coronavirus is having detrimental effects on university students' psychological and social well-being because they are forced to adopt a sedentary lifestyle in the city.

Research Objectives

The goal of this research is to showcase how the sedentary behavior of the city dwellers during the lock-down period due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus is affecting the psychological, sociological and personal well-being of the Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) students at IUB. More specifically, the research will identify the negative effects that the lock-down may have on the lives of the EMBA students and what measures could be taken to lessen the negative aspects. The specific research objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To explore the sociological, psychological effects of the lock-down on the daily lives of EMBA students of IUB.
2. To inspect how the lives of city dwellers have been affected by the outbreak, resulting in a sedentary lifestyle.
3. To study how EMBA students in IUB are adopting and coping in their sedentary lifestyle during the outbreak.
4. To identify measures that can be taken by city dwellers and EMBA students to lessen the negative impacts of these sedentary behaviors especially the university students.

Research questions

The study is expected to provide answers to the following specific social questions:

1. What are the psychological, emotional and sociological affects of the lock-down on city dwellers particularly EMBA students of IUB?
2. What changes in lifestyle has occurred in the lives of city dwellers including EMBA students during the lock-down?
3. How are the city dwellers including EMBA students coping and adjusting to their sedentary behavior during the outbreak?
4. What measures may be taken to lessen the negative consequences of sedentary behavior during the period?

Coronavirus: A Background

On March 7th, 2020 the first three cases of COVID-19 patients were detected in Bangladesh. As a preventive measure, the Ministry of Education announced that all educational institutions would remain closed until March 31st; but later on, the closure was extended till April 9th, 2020. The government also declared the closure of all government and private offices from March 26th, until April 4th to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Emergency services like law enforcement and healthcare services were exempted from this closure. The armed forces were deployed on March 24th to facilitate prevention of spread of coronavirus and enforce the lock-down throughout the country (Wikipedia 2020).

Measures taken at IUB

The IUB also took preventative measures to ensure the safety of its students, staff and faculty members. A Coronavirus Alert (COVID-19) was posted on its website on March 11th, 2020 outlining the preventative measures to be taken on campus [2]. The measures included: avoiding close contact with anyone with cold or flu-

like symptoms including fever; covering nose and mouth when coughing/sneezing with tissue or flexed elbow; cleaning hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub. Biometric access was temporarily disabled and the use of RFID cards instead allowed to gain access to the campus. Additionally, all IUB entrances started taking temperatures of all students, faculty members, employees and staff. If temperatures were found higher than normal, then entry to IUB was highly discouraged and their particulars were recorded for monitoring purposes. The names of students that were recorded for having higher temperatures and missed classes as a result, faculty members of that course(s) were notified (Independent University, Bangladesh 2020).

On March 24, the closure of the institution was extended until April 4; several instructors at IUB assigned grades to students based on available semester assessments (i.e. mid-term exams, quizzes, assignments, presentations etc.). Students wishing to improve their grades were assigned additional assignments. Other faculty members started taking online classes including online evaluation for the rest of course [3].

Literature Review

Coronaviruses are a group of associated viruses that can cause diseases in mammals and birds. In humans, coronaviruses cause respiratory tract infections that can range from mild, such as some cases of the common cold to lethal, such as SARS, MERS, and COVID-19. In December 2019, a pneumonia outbreak was first reported in Wuhan, China. On December 31st, 2019, the outbreak was traced to be a novel strain of coronavirus, which was given the name SARS-CoV-2 by the World Health Organization (Wikipedia 2020).

Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus usually experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. But people in their old age and those with underlying medical conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to suffer serious illness.

The best way to prevent and slow down transmission of COVID-19 is to remain well informed about the symptoms of the disease and how it spreads. The WHO urges everyone to protect themselves and others from infection by washing their hands or using an alcohol-based rub frequently and not touching their face.

The coronavirus spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. To prevent its spread, it's important that everyone maintain respiratory etiquette (for instance, by coughing into a tissue or a flexed elbow) or use a protective mask.

At present, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. Nevertheless, there are many on-going clinical trials evaluating potential treatments and vaccines (World Health Organization (WHO) 2020).

Methodology

To achieve the specific objectives of the study, data were collected primarily from secondary sources. Secondary sources included WHO reports, different publicly available brochures, press release, blogs and websites. Two case studies involving two EMBA students at IUB were conducted to assess their underlying beliefs, emotions, attitudes during the lock-down period in the city.

Data Collection

Primary sources of information included in-depth online interviews with two EMBA students of IUB. This interaction with the two graduate students was a crucial source of collecting information to uncover the underlying contexts of the sedentary behavior of city dwellers.

Analysis and Findings

The sedentary behaviors of city dwellers from the two case studies of two IUB EMBA students are summarized as follows:

Case study A

Fahim Ahmed (not his real name) is an EMBA student at IUB, currently in his fourth semester and lives in Uttara, Dhaka. He has not stepped out of his home during the last week. He is spending time working from home through the web, studying for his courses at IUB through online lectures, drawing, playing online games watching Netflix and reading books.

“The last time I went out was on March 28th. I went to get groceries from Agora. The streets were almost deserted with only a few rickshaws and cars on the street. It was really scary. From then on, I decided to order my groceries online through Chaldal.com. But because of high demands, their service is now delayed. It takes almost seven days for them to make delivery of groceries after ordering.” But in the narrow allies in front of my balcony, I see some people loitering around for no reason. They should realize that it’s time they start staying at home,” he says.

Fahim is also attending his lessons through video call at IUB. “I don’t mind staying at home, but I am determined to see the back of this coronavirus,” he says in a determined voice.

Case study B

Priyanka Choudhury (not her real name) who works for a multinational company is an EMBA student of IUB and lives in Banani, Dhaka. She has sent her domestic helping hand on leave and now has to spend a lot of time doing household chores.

“Earlier I used to do a little housework but now I have to do everything as my house help has gone back to her village home. It’s a major change in my everyday routine,” she says.

“I used to cook occasionally as a hobby or on special occasions but now I have to cook full meals every day. I have to cook the food for my parents before getting down working from home in the morning. Plus, I also have to study and attend lectures online for my EMBA course. I stay in touch with my sister abroad, uncle and aunts through messenger and chat with them several times a day. Of course, it’s a huge change in my normal life earlier,” she observes.

Major changes in city dwellers' lifestyle

Several drastic changes have occurred in the lives of city dwellers across the major cities in Bangladesh including the capital city, Dhaka:

a) People are staying at home and are only going outside for necessary shopping, medical needs and other emergencies.

b) Work from Home (WFH) has become a popular term amongst people in cities who have a work arrangement in which employees do not have to commute or travel to offices, rather they telecommute.

c) Increased use of social media and mobile phones to stay in touch with loved ones.

d) People spending more time with their families during the lock-down

e) Psychological effects of a sedentary life amongst city dwellers: Increased agony and tension.

f) Many households who preferred to grant leave to their helping hands due to fear of spread of coronavirus, are now doing their household works themselves.

g) Poor segments of city dwellers undergoing financial hardship due to the lessening of their livelihoods have to go out to earn a living without protective measures.

BDNews24.com states in one of its stories: “People living in Dhaka are also going through changes in their daily life since the city almost went under a lockdown. Some are tense while others are relieved considering that they will not be infected or spread the virus if they stay at home. Many of the people, who are working from home, are not happy with the option. Some are opting to shop grocery online. (bdnews24.com 2020)”

Summary of Findings

The investigation of the sedentary behavior of city dwellers during the coronavirus pandemic identifies the following major findings:

1) City dwellers including IUB graduate students are experiencing an increased level of anguish, anxiety, fear and tension due to the fear of spread of the coronavirus. A fear of an uncertain future is propelling these anxieties.

2) Lifestyle changes have occurred in the lives of city dwelling IUB students such as staying at home all day, working from home, spending more time with family, doing more household chores as domestic helps have left, as well as shopping for groceries and other necessities online have increased.

3) City dwellers and students are coping and adjusting in this adverse situation with increased use of social media and mobile phones to stay in touch with their loved ones to overcome social isolation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the sedentary behavior of city dwellers during the coronavirus pandemic is having tremendous negative consequences in the lives of people as showcased by the case studies of EMBA students at IUB. In summary, the psychological effect of the lock-down is: Increased fear, anxiety and tension resulting in a fear of uncertain future. City-dwelling students’ lives have become sedentary because of staying at home all day, working from home, some shopping for groceries online and spending more time doing household chores. Furthermore, the increased use of social media and mobile phones is having a positive impact on lessening social isolation during the lock-down period. Thus, the coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing lock-down may have consequences that change in the way we socialize, rationalize, and the way we lead our daily lives.

Recommendations

The study suggests the following recommendations to lessen the negative consequences during the lock-down due to the coronavirus pandemic:

1) City dwellers including students should do physical exercise at home to relieve the stress and negative emotions due to social

isolation and offset their sedentary behavior, yoga and meditation could be effective in this regard.

2) City dwellers and students may go to a neighborhood park or garden on rooftops or in front of their homes to relax while maintaining a safe social distance of 1 meter (3 feet) with others.

3) People in the city should be vigilant and maintain caution scanning local and international media to find out more about the latest corona virus situation in the country and take corrective measures accordingly.

4) City dwellers also should use social media, video chat and mobile phones to avoid the consequences of social isolation speaking to their loved ones.

5) Most importantly, they should follow the instructions put forth by the WHO to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

6) Finally, the sooner the adjustments to the changed life style can be made, the lesser will be the dangers and better will be life under present emergencies.

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