

EXPLORING SEDENTARY BEHAVIOR AMONG STUDENTS AT THE HEIGHT OF THE PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the sedentary behavior among Senior High School students during the pandemic. Results showed that the lived experiences of the Senior High School students as regarding their sedentary behavior are gaining weights and mental health problem are the changes that happened to them during series of lockdowns. Majority of them did not have any physical activities since they were not allowed to go out because of the feat of the virus. Also, the results in coping strategies of the Senior High Students regarding sedentary behavior are doing household chores eased the burden brought by the pandemic, In the same vein, they coped with the problems on sedentary behavior through doing an exercise, they engaged into gardening by planting of vegetables which enabled them to see the fruition of their labor. Lastly, reaching out their loved ones helped them overcome the effect of sedentary behavior. Through this, they can share their problems and other sentiments. This study employed qualitative-phenomenology that gives the detailed understanding of the topic being investigated, issues and concerns based on the lived experiences of the people.

KEYWORDS: Sedentary Behavior among Students & Height of the Pandemic

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

Lockdowns implemented all over the world made a detrimental effect on the health and wellness of the people. In particular, the youth have been affected in they have embraced a sedentary behavior. Sedentary behavior can be associated with certain activities that required only a very low energy effort. It is different from physical inactivity and a predictor of metabolic risk even a person meets the present physical activity guidelines. Cognitive work was found to be a factor that may increase the glycemic inability which leads to the increase in the desire to eating (Panahi & Tremblay, 2018)

The sedentary behaviors among the students during lockdowns increased and all physical activities decreased. Majority of them resorted to using of mobile phones (Gallè et al., 2021). This dilemma is also true among adults and children (Stockwell et al., 2021; Breidokienė, et al., 2021). Research suggested that there should have physical activities even in the comfort of home which could help them physically and mentally. Interventions must be done that promote physical activities and the reduction of sedentary behavior (Stockwell et al., 2021).

Consequently, the study of Alonso et al (2020) revealed that there was sedentary behavior among preschoolers affected their sleeps in a day. This lowers their internalizing scores as compared with their peers. Hence, the importance of physical activities as recommended by the World Health Organizations was highlighted to reduce psychosocial difficulties during lockdowns. In the Philippines, Morada (2021) that the Grade 3 learners engaged more in online games.

Sedentary behavior could be avoided since if students would have to resort to making themselves busy especially in this time of the pandemic. Having the physical activity could reduce the cardiovascular risks mainly through effects on atherosclerosis (Ahmadi-Abari et al., 2017). The study Cheval et al (2018) of suggested that additional cortical resources are needed in order to combat sedentary behaviors especially among adults. Excessive sitting must be avoided since it could have a serious health hazard, thus it is necessary to have physical activities and of course by following health guidelines (Hamilton et al., 2008).

More importantly, the investigation of sedentary behavior among the Senior High School students in this time of the pandemic called my attention. Majority of them have more time on sitting, lying, and reclining instead of doing their activities and other household chores. Also, cases of obesity can be of sight where many of them have gained weights. Basically, this happened because of the impositions of health quarantines. Conversely, this study could be disseminated through conferences and eventually be published in the international refereed journal. This could to the limited number of literatures in the local setting.

Researches on sedentary behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic were conducted outside the Philippines and involved young adults (Sañudo et al., 2020), university students (Romero-Blanco et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2021) and preschool (López-Bueno, 2020). Though, there are relative studies among youth but are still outside the national and local setting (Margaritis et al., 2020). There are no studies on sedentary behavior among the Filipino youth. Hence, the gap of the study. This study is timely and relevant to give everyone in-depth information on its threat to human health. The premise motivates the researcher to conduct this endeavor.

1.1.1 Research Questions

- What are the lived experiences of the Senior High School students as regarding their sedentary behavior?
- How do they cope with the challenges as regards their sedentary behavior?
- What physical activities can be proposed based on the findings of the study?

1.1.2 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

This study will be limited only on perception of the students as regards sedentary behavior and its effects to their health and overall well-being. The participants of this study will be Senior High School students. Since the pandemic cannot make the face-to-face possible, online interview such as the utilization of Google Meet will be done. This ensures that everyone is safe. Furthermore, some problems may be encountered such as a slow internet connection.

1.2 Research Design

This study will employ qualitative-phenomenology. Qualitative does not use any statistical treatments to analyze the data (Richards, 2020). Generally, it analyzed the words, pictures, and symbols (Wlaker, 2020). Similarly, it varies depending on the method to be used. This involves participant observation, in-depth interviews which can be done face-to-face or through telephone, and focus group discussion (Guest et al., 2020). Using this approach, gives the detailed understanding of the topic being investigated, issues and concerns based on the lived experiences of the people. It is opposed to quantitative where statistical treatments are needed in order to understand the views of the respondents. Basically, this will establish to answer questions such as hows and whys of the phenomenon.

Conversely, this approach is defined as being subjective where coding and common themes will be determined during analysis (Parameswaran, 2020). In some other contexts, it involves the analysis of the discourse as well as the content of lexemes. Hence, the interpretation could vary from one approach to another. Sometimes, interpretations can be taken on the mannerism or behavior of the people (Troshani et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, phenomenology gives light to identify the phenomena of how it is perceived by those who have the first-hand experience in a given situation (Aspers, 2009; Khan, 2020; This entails that information are based on their perception through interview, discussion, and presenting it from the contexts of the participants. Epistemologically, is based on the personal knowledge which caters on the importance of personal perspective and interpretation (Rockmore, 2007). More so, they are powerful in understanding experiences that are subjective in nature whereby gaining insights into the motivations and actions of the people.

Phenomenology is the most appropriate method to be used in this study because it determines the lived experiences of the participants especially the Senior High School students in this time of the pandemic. Also, I could cull out the deeper stories behind sedentary behavior.

1.3 Informants of the Study

There were 12 informants who participated in this study. They were chosen using the following criteria:

- They must be a Senior High School students in President Roxas National High School;
- Currently, in Grade 12
- They will be chosen regardless of their gender, strand, ethnicity, religious affiliations, and race.

1.4 Locale of the Study

This study will be conducted in President Roxas National High School, Poblacion, President Roxas, Cotabato. Below is the map of the locale of the study.

1.5 Data Gathering Procedure

As a researcher, it is my duty to uphold the ethical standards in treating the participants. I have to first seek permission from them through the consent-to-participate form. They have to affix their signature. Also, their identity will be hidden by assigning them a specific code or alias.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

2.1 Lived Experiences of Senior High School Students on Sedentary behavior

The lived experiences of Senior High school students on sedentary behavior are found on table 1.

Gaining of Weights

Gaining weights is one of the changes that happened to them during series of lockdowns. Majority of them did not have any physical activities since they were not allowed to go out because of the feat of the virus. As stated during the interview:

“My problem encountered in this pandemic is the fast gaining of weight.” (S1)

Meanwhile, this is supported by another participant:

“The pandemic really changed me and the vision I have as an athlete. During the pandemic I’ve been experiencing the loss of interest in sports for such reason that the virus dominated and destroyed all the dreams of all life.” (S12)

The absence of physical activities and due to sedentary behavior, many of the students gained weights. This is beyond from the supposed Body Mass Index. With their confinements at home due to lockdowns, they resorted to eating unhealthy foods. They have much more time in lying down, sitting, and inactivity.

Lockdowns brought by the COVID-19 pandemic made the students to resort to inactivity at home. They spent most of their time in sleeping, sitting, and lying because they were not allowed to go out. Those who were sporty gained weights and have the problem in bringing back their figures prior to the pandemic (Dun et al., 2021).

Mental Health Problem

Majority of the students that the pandemic affected their mental health. Since they do not have any physical activities, they are confined in the four corners of their homes. It was mentioned during the interview that:

“The problem that I experience in pandemic was depression. It hits me most of the time especially when I’m alone, if someone told me I can’t do nothing in the near future, if someone told I’m only a piece of shit, any negative things.” (S8)

This was seconded by another participant:

“The problem that I experience during this pandemic is on my mental health problem because I always think that what if this pandemic will end more longer that affects my studies and my communication with my friends and relatives who are far from us.” (S11)

There are those who were greatly affected by the lockdowns. Issues relative to mental health were raised. Normally, students are sporty and are involved into different activities. Some of them are hopeless that the pandemic would end the soonest and that they could go out and have the normal life again. But, then the now normal situation implies that health protocols need to be observed.

During the pandemic, there were cases of students who committed suicide. This can be attributed by the fact that they cannot handle the problems brought by the lockdowns. Students were not allowed to roam around because they are considered as vulnerable by the Department of Health (Malolos et al., 2021).

Table 1: Themes and Core Ideas on the Lived Experiences of Senior High School Students on Sedentary behavior

Themes	Frequency of Response	Core Ideas
Gaining of weights	General	Majority of them gained weights since they did not have any physical activities. They were not allowed to go out to play and do their usual activities because of the threat of COVID-19. Since they were not allowed to go out, it affected them psychologically.
Mental Health Problem	Typical	

Legend

General 50%

Typical 25-40%

Variant 20%

3.2 Coping Strategies of the Senior High Students Regarding Sedentary behavior

Table 2 states the themes and core ideas on the coping strategies of the Senior High School students regarding sedentary behavior.

Doing Household Chores

Doing household chores eased the burden brought by the pandemic. They cleaned their house and wash the dishes. Through this, they can have the movement and could not feel being sleepy and lazy. During the interview, it was stated that:

“I work small bits of exercise into my daily routine. I also clean my room as well as the entire house.” (S4)

To make themselves busy and to avoid sedentary behavior, the Senior High School students resorted to doing the household chores. It made their lives busy instead of lying and sitting and just watching the television and or playing online games. They have the routine which would make active.

A study of Fernandes et al. (2021) confirmed that household chores enabled them to forget the wrath brought by the pandemic. Also, it is important for them to make themselves busy at home because aside from being a big help to their parents they are also considering their mental health at the highest level. Sedentary behavior is indeed a culprit that young individuals must have to fight with. They have to discipline themselves so that they would not get sick.

Doing Exercise

In the same vein, they coped with the problems on sedentary behavior through doing an exercise. They did the morning walk so that they could stretch their muscles.

“I just do small walks every morning.” (S1)

Sweating is good for the health. Without physical exercise the toxins inside the body will be trapped. This is also the very reason why many young individuals already have the dreaded diseases. Exercise such as running, skipping rope, and muscle flexing will make the blood circulation.

Exercises are the best remedy in order to make the body healthy. Even with a 30 minute of flexing the muscles in a day would strengthen the cardiovascular system. As a matter of fact, those who died because of the COVID-19 did not have the exercise. Many of them were obese and or thin (Bawingan et al., 2020).

Engaging in Gardening

On the other hand, they engaged into gardening by planting of vegetables which enabled them to see the fruition of their labor. In the interview, it was clearly reiterated that:

“I overcome sedentary behavior during pandemic through finding some enjoyment such as planting vegetables, because we are not allowed to go outside to buy some food, so it’s good to spend some time in planting.” (S6)

Planting of flowers can innovate happiness and total joy. As they can see them every day blooming with flowers it strengthened their mental health capacity. It was said that gardening reduces depression, anxiety and obesity as well as heart diseases and can improve life satisfaction as a whole. There is also an improvement in the quality of life and the sense of belongingness in the community.

It corroborates that gardens have an essential support recovery especially those who are physically ill. In the same manner, it improves the overall well-being because it reduces stress, blood pressure, and muscle tension. Similarly, the lockdowns provided them the opportunity to make a garden that they wanted wherein they can show great pride and total pleasure not only for themselves but also for the members of the family (Sunga & Advincola, 2021).

Reaching out to Friends and Loved Ones

Lastly, reaching out their loved ones helped them overcome the effect of sedentary behavior. Through this, they can share their problems and other sentiments. One of the participants said that:

“With the help of the technology (smartphones and wifi) that is present on our home. I can communicate and socialize with other people and make new friends through social media sites so my stress and worries lessen and also gave a great help in my studies.” (S11)

During the pandemic, one of the best strategies employed by the students is that they reached out their friend and loved ones. Since there were many reported cases of suicide among the young individuals because of the lockdowns, talking with the people with dear to them will strengthen their mental health. They have the confidence that they will never be left alone.

Virtual communication makes a difference during the pandemic. This removes the feelings of loneliness and isolation. In the same manner, they will be able to reconnect with them. This strengthens their love and compassion wherein they could make their mental health the priority (Cordero Jr., 2021).

Themes	Frequency of Response	Core Ideas
Doing household Chores	Typical	They did the cleaning of the house and washing of the dishes where they can have the movement and could not feel being sleepy and lazy.
Doing exercise	Typical	They did the morning walk so that they could stretch their muscles.
Engaging in gardening	Variant	They made themselves busying by engaging into planting of vegetables which enabled them to see the fruition of their labor They were able to talk with their family and other close members of the family where they can share their problems and difficulties.
Reaching out to friends and loved ones	Variant	

Legend

General 50%

Typical 25-40%

Variant 20%

3.3 Implications for Practice

Physical activities are very important for our overall well-being. It made us healthy and strong and away from different diseases and illnesses. Opposite to this, with the advent of COVID-19 pandemic different outdoor activities were curtailed. This is due to the mere fact that the virus is still loaming the horizon.

During the implementation of series of lockdowns, the students were greatly affected. Aside from that, during that time the availability of the vaccine was still impossible for everyone. Only those who are in the medical sectors were prioritized and those with the comorbidities. Series of studies were undertaken before a go signal was given for the vaccination of those who are below 18 years old.

This study is also crucial for the mental health of the students since they are all effected by the pandemic. However, this cannot be avoided because the government must have to adhere to the standards on health protocols set by the international organization. In the same vein, the students should have to exercise even in the comfort of their homes. There are many ways to make themselves healthy. Though the present condition of the Philippines is no longer that strict as compared before, thus, the students can now have time to bring their shapes back.

More importantly, having the hobbies is a big game changer in making themselves healthy both physical and mental aspects. Because of this, they could express themselves on things that could make them happy and satisfy. Above all, students should be aware that most of the illnesses and diseases can be attributed to lifestyle. Health consciousness is a must.

3.4 Implications for Future Research

This study gave a perfect picture of the current status of the students especially in their health and well-being. Though this study involved the qualitative phenomenology yet it does not limit the findings. Different narratives were undertaken which revealed the importance of physical exercise in improving health.

Though sedentary behavior focuses on the health status of the students in this time of the pandemic, future researchers could also involve those in the lower grades and in the tertiary level. It cannot be denied that hypertension and diabetes are not true even among the elementary pupils. This can be associated by the lack of physical activities and the poor eating habits.

There are those who do not believe on the findings of the medical results. However, this study could support and efficient enough that indeed, they should not take for granted the negative effects of sedentary behavior. Likewise, another study will be considered especially for teachers. They are confined in making all the reports which made them sickly.

Notwithstanding, teachers may be able to learn from the lessons being revealed in this study. Future researchers can actually conduct the same study and articulate the lived experiences of teachers regarding sedentary behavior and their health status in particular. It is also being looked forward to test the proposed physical activities in making the students and teachers achieve their perfect Body Mass Index.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

As a researcher, I have plenty of realizations because of this study. Being a Physical Education teacher, it is an eye opener for me that indeed physical activities are important in making ourselves healthy. Indeed, health is wealth that we all need given the highest level of prioritization. If we want to live longer, we have to engage in different forms of activities that have a positive impact in our overall well-being.

For the students who were incarcerated in their homes because of threat of the virus, they can adapt the proposed physical activity plan. Even within the comforts of their homes they can make themselves healthy. They can still make themselves productive.

By making themselves productive, they can have the daily routines which involved physical activities. Aside from that they to consume food that is healthy and natural. They have to resist eating non-nutritious food which is considered deadly by health practitioners. Eating with discipline must be taught in school not only by the Physical Education teachers but also by science teachers.

The proposed intervention may be employed in schools and should be introduced to students. Seminars together with the health professionals should be undertaken to be able to instill in them the value of physical activities and do away from sedentary behavior.

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