

1. **Committee:** Health Committee

2. **Topic:**

Positive and negative impacts of lockdown on mental and physical health

3. **Problem:**

1.1. Reducing stigma and discrimination associated with COVID-19?

The COVID-19 pandemic has provoked stigmatization and discriminatory behaviors against people who have or might have, COVID-19. People discriminate against those people since the virus is something unknown to them and unknown things lead to fear. As a result, people who experienced discrimination face difficulties in living a normal life such as being isolated, losing social status and experiencing mental disorders. In addition, stigma is important as it can drive people to deny or hide the illness to avoid discrimination, it can prevent or delay timely healthcare seeking, and it can discourage people from adopting healthy behaviors.

1.2. How can we support people who are in quarantine/lockdown showing symptoms of mental problems and what can we do to prevent them?

COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown has brought about a sense of fear and anxiety around the globe. This phenomenon has led to short term as well as long term psychosocial and mental health implications.

1.3. How to improve our physical health during the pandemic?

- Many people lost the chance to exercise because they had to stay at home.
- Some people started to eat unhealthy foods due to a change of daily rhythm.
- With the lack of physical action and less tiredness, people had sleeping disorders.
- The online conferences, classes, and events have increased screen time and have led to eyesight problems.

With the lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people had their change in daily rhythm and have suffered from physical health problems. Many people lost the chance to move and exercise because many things were done online, and they could not get out of their homes. Before the pandemic, when people went to work, shopping or school, they unconsciously walked and moved. People who do not have a routine to exercise daily, losing the chance to move like there was a significant decrease in physical motion. Moreover, people who had a daily exercise routine also got affected because all the gyms were closed and could not play any sports with friends and members.

Some people start to eat unhealthy foods during the pandemic, such as eating junk foods, overeating snacks, and skipping meals. Everyone stayed at home all day, so it allowed people to eat snacks and be couch potatoes in their comfortable home, even having work and classes. The body clock was messed up, leading to eating late at night or skipping morning because of getting up late. Also, the lack of physical activity has led people not to feel hungry and skip meals or unable to enjoy meals at the most. These factors have caused people to have unhealthy food habits while staying at home in the quarantine.

The lack of physical activity has also brought the problem of sleeping disorders. As mentioned above, people were less tired with less physical activity. Even the brain is exhausted from working online; there is a less physical action and less tiredness.

As a result, people could not get sufficient sleep quality.

Lastly, with everything done online, many people had increased screen time, which caused eyesight problems. Since we could not meet physically, school classes, work, conferences, and even live music events exchanged their form in-person to online. Many people sit in front of the computer all day to do all the tasks; the blue light from screens is affecting people's eyesight.

The change of many occasions that people usually did online has affected them in multiple ways from a physical health perspective. The lack of physical activity is a severe problem that we need to cope with when we can not easily go out. This is not an individual problem; it applies to all countries, and all need to cooperate and support to have healthy habits. Citizens are suffering from maintaining health and adjusting to a new normal with covid-19. Therefore, to come up with a solution to ensure physical health would be efficient that would apply to all the country.

4. Solution

4.1. For reducing stigma and discrimination associated with COVID-19

4.1.1. Doctors or professions will arrange mental health care activities, such as group relaxation practice, online mindfulness training sessions, one-on-one counseling

4.1.2. Build COVID-19 stigma-reduction initiatives for the general public on knowledge-shaping and attitude-changing strategies by using media channels, including news media and social media, to speak out against stereotyping groups.

4.1.3. Use artists and art to showcase stories, conditions, and experiences of people who have suffered discrimination in order to cultivate engagement, empathy, acceptance, and social change

4.1.4. Involving communities and key stakeholders by incorporating the voices, stories, recovery, hope narratives, and images of local people who have been affected by COVID-19.

4.2. For supporting people who are in quarantine/lockdown showing symptoms of mental problems and what can we do to prevent them.

Individual level

- Solutions of Mental Health Problems:
 - Consultation:

A mental health consultation is an assessment of a person's mental state to determine whether he has or is at risk of developing any mental disorder. This is more commonly performed on children to identify and address issues that may have a negative impact on their mental development. However, it is also beneficial for people who are experiencing symptoms of mental issues. The procedure is done using a wide range of techniques and resources to evaluate a person's state of mind and identify potential disorders.

- Physical Activities:

According to the study "Exercise for Mental Health", exercise improves mental health by reducing anxiety, depression, and negative mood and by improving self-esteem and cognitive function. Exercise has also been found to alleviate symptoms such as low self-esteem and social withdrawal. Exercise is especially important in patients with schizophrenia since these patients are already vulnerable to obesity and also because of the additional risk of weight gain associated with antipsychotic treatment, especially with the atypical antipsychotics. Patients suffering from schizophrenia who participated in a 3-month physical conditioning program showed improvements in weight control and reported increased fitness levels, exercise tolerance, reduced blood pressure levels, increased perceived energy levels, and increased upper body and hand grip strength levels.

- Prevention for Mental Health Problems:

- Making Connections with Society and Interacting with People

When it comes to wellbeing, other people matter. Evidence shows that connecting with others and forming good relationships – with family, friends and the wider community – are important for mental wellbeing. Building stronger, broader social connections in your life can increase your feelings of happiness and self-worth. Many of us would like to spend more time with people who are important to us. Sometimes, having a busy life can make this difficult. But evidence shows that our relationships affect both our physical health and mental wellbeing. Mental wellbeing means feeling good – about ourselves and the world around us – and functioning well.

Practical Actions Suggestions:

- Writing letters or having a penpal
- Finding new hobbies
- Interacting with online communities
- Finding new connections with friends
- Having hashtags to engage people worldwide

- Value Yourself

Treat yourself with kindness and respect, and avoid self-criticism. Make time for your hobbies and favorite projects, or broaden your horizons. Do a daily crossword puzzle, plant a garden, take dance lessons, learn to play an instrument or become fluent in another language. Like it or not, stress is a part of life. Practice good coping skills: Exercise, take a nature walk, play with your pet or try journal writing as a stress reducer. Also, remember to smile and see the humor in life. Research shows that laughter can boost your immune system, ease pain, relax your body and reduce stress.

- Physical Activities

Taking care of yourself physically can improve your mental health.

- Eat nutritious meals
- Drink plenty of water
- Exercise, which helps decrease depression, anxiety and improve moods
- Get enough sleep
 - Show love and Gratitude Toward Others

Research has also shown that “by consciously practicing gratitude, we can train the brain to attend selectively to positive emotions and thoughts, thus reducing anxiety and feelings of apprehension.” The simple act of reminding yourself of the positive things in your life – even as simple as the roof over your head or food on your plate – can invoke feelings of thankfulness and optimism that make managing stress, depression or anxiety easier.

- Try to appreciate everything.
 - This includes not only the big and obvious, but also the small. Recognize the good in every part of your day.
- Find gratitude in your challenges.
 - It can be hard to feel thankful when faced with a stressful situation. But taking the time to find gratitude and optimism during your difficult times can make managing them easier.
- Keep a gratitude journal.
 - Take a few minutes at the end of each day to think about what you are grateful for and write them down. This can be anywhere from one thing to 10 and will help you develop a habit of recognizing the good from each day.
- Volunteer in your community.
 - Research shows that volunteering is significantly helpful in improving mental and physical health, including increased life satisfaction and happiness, and lower depressive symptoms, stress and anxiety.
- Spend time with loved ones.
 - Spending time with loved ones can help you recognize things to be grateful for and evoke feelings of happiness and love.

Society level

- Correct the content of the media

Today's media is all about serious content such as the number of people infected and killed in Corona. The effects of this are causing people to be unnecessarily anxious. To prevent this negative impact, the media should add positive content to the news, such as the benefits of teleworking and reports of environmental improvements. In addition, food recipes and indoor

exercise methods that make everyday life more enjoyable are also effective for people's mental health. It could also help older people meet new communities by teaching them how to use Zoom on TV.

- Create a new campaign for mental health

It is expected to promote mental health by creating a new campaign. The mental health business does not require much money. However, it is believed to save the lives of those in need and have immeasurable effects with money. Taking the example of a campaign to give a message card to thank those who work hard every day in this situation, the writer of the letter feels gratitude on a daily basis and the person who receives the letter feels that the effort has been acknowledged and can gain further aspirations.

- Creating Online Health Communities

A community includes not only relationships in a place where people can face each other face to face, but also an "online community", which is a group of people on the Internet. Especially in this situation, the possibilities of the online community are expanding. For example, people can exchange useful information by setting up a place online where people with some common problems, such as corona-infected people, health care workers, and people suffering from this situation, can gather. Moreover, there are some advantages of encouraging each other mentally and creating a strong relationship of trust.

State level

- Online medical consultation

In quarantine/lockdown situations, people cannot go out easily to get medical care. Thus, the government should create a support system to connect people and doctors or specialists. By

creating those systems, people will be able to get medical care without going outside and their mental pressure to take those care will decrease.

- Creating advertisement

In quarantine/lockdown situations, a lot of people feel anxiety and stress but almost none of them don't have the knowledge to control them. Government should pay attention to citizens' mental health and introduce and teach them how to protect their mental health. For example, the [red cross advertisement](#) in Japan.

System Level

- Make an international organization

North Asia countries should establish organizations to cooperate with each other. It can be useful for helping the people who live in foreign countries and cannot go back to their home. In addition, through this organization, the corrected information can be spread and given out officially. Giving the correct information is effective for making them feel a sense of safety.

4.3. For improving our physical health during the pandemic.

4.3.1. Offering exercise programs and campaigns

To encourage people to exercise, governments or organizations can provide the public with free exercise programs and campaigns in which people can participate easily. For instance, by utilizing platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, people can watch instruction videos shared for free. In terms of securing continuity, it would be significant to design these programs or campaigns as enjoyable ones as possible. Utilizing video games and smartphone apps will be convenient and motivate residents to take part.

4.3.2. Hashtag Movements

Providing free (or inexpensive) nutritious meal

There are two perspectives: the first one is to encourage people to maintain healthy food habits, and the second one is to distribute nutritious meals. As for the first viewpoint, hashtag movements would promote having a healthy diet. Taking WHO as an example, the organization has been promoting international public health by creating the #HealthyAtHome hashtag under the COVID-19 situation in which people have to eat at home. For those who have difficulty maintaining healthy food habits due to economic conditions, providing nutritious food for free would be helpful. In actuality, several non-profit organizations in Tokyo are providing free meals for homeless people or children.

4.3.3. More Exercise, Less Screen Time

To solve sleeping disorders, people should have more physical activities to feel tired positively. By applying the first solution, people can increase the amount of time for exercising.

In particular, before people go to bed, they should avoid looking at the screen. Instead, they can exercise and relax their bodies to enhance the quality of sleep. Utilizing glasses that cut blue light is another way of preventing negative impacts caused by the increased online working or studying, which also protects eyesight.

5. Further concerns:

5.1. For reducing stigma and discrimination associated with COVID-19

- For some people, that solution might not be effective because they might not listen to the information and try to change their behavior.

5.2. For supporting people who are in quarantine/lockdown showing symptoms of mental problems and what can we do to prevent them?

- Media Giving Too Much Positive Information

If the media gives too much positive information, people will think that there is no danger of infection, and the number of infections will be accelerated. Thus, the media have to take this problem seriously.

- Children without digital devices can't reach for help easily

Children who need help because of stress or abuse have the danger of not being able to reach for help, because those children have no relation with others without families in quarantine/lockdown situations. Therefore, people and the government have to pay attention to the situation of children during lockdown.

- Elderly people who don't have digital devices or who have difficulty to use those devices

Some elderly people have problems with using devices and having them. In some countries, there are a lot of cases that elderly people living alone, or not living with people who know how to use those devices. Those people have the danger of feeling loneliness, depression and anxiety.

5.3. For improving our physical health during the pandemic?

- Some people do not like to exercise

It is hard to force people to exercise if he/she isn't in the habit of exercising, particularly for students. Students could have physical education classes before the lockdown. However, for students who hate to exercise, it is easy for them to give up exercising during the lockdown.

- Elderly living alone problem

There are many elderly living alone in some countries such as Japan and Taiwan. It is hard to force them into learning electronics. For those elderly, they may lose the chance to exercise online since they don't know how to get online exercising lessons.

- Maintaining a healthy habit

Even if we promote healthy habits under the covid-19 situation, we can not forget the main purpose is to raise the quality of people's health. Therefore, healthy habits that are created during this situation should be lasting long, not temporary. It is not easy to make a new routine practice, and we need to constantly engage people to foster healthiness. When we are all safe going out and restarting in-person activities, the daily rhythm will change again. It is important that people adjust to these environments and stay healthy with sufficient meals, exercise, sleep, etc.