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PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS HEALTH AND FITNESS - A STUDY ON HOW THE COVID OUTBREAK THROTTLED THE INDIAN FITNESS INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic is a massive global health crisis and rapidly spreading pandemic of recent times. As compared to the earlier pandemics the world has witnessed, the COVID-19 pandemic is now on the top of the list in terms of worldwide coverage. This is the first time the whole world is affected simultaneously and struck strongly in a very short span of time.

Initially the only way to curb the spread of the virus was to impose a nationwide lockdown which resulted in complete shutdown of all fitness and wellness centers in the country. This gravely impacted all the fitness enthusiasts both physically and mentally. In this paper, the authors aimed at understanding the unique experiences of fitness enthusiasts during the period of lockdown due to COVID-19. The study reveals that initially the participants lacked motivation to work out and also had impaired situational perception. They also faced mental challenges due to change in routine. It also resulted in overdependence on social media during the lockdown. The participants showed gradual positive increase in motivation and improved self-perception. Their daily social media times reduced and they also felt better psychologically. Daily structured workouts greatly helped them to stay fit both physically and mentally.

Keywords- COVID-19 pandemic, health crisis, fitness and wellness centers, fitness enthusiasts, mental challenges, structured workouts, staying fit.

Introduction

With the coronavirus pandemic confining people within the bounds of their homes on and off since March 2020, the fitness industry also saw a major slump. While this was enough for fitness lovers to take up exercising from home, others started becoming conscious about their health when the lockdown kept on extending for months last year and they had no option but to take up fitness at home.

The imposed lockdown, has hampered routine fitness activities of fitness freaks, In the present paper, we aimed at understanding the unique experiences of fitness freaks during the period of lockdown due to COVID-19. The paper also intended to explore the ways in which alternate exercises and fitness activities at home helped them deal with psychological issues and physical health consequences.

According to a report by mobile data and analytics provider App Annie, 2020 saw about 71,000 new fitness and health apps being launched and there was a 46% increase in downloads of health apps across the world between Q1 and Q2 of 2020, with India witnessing the highest increase in the downloads – of a whopping 156%. This, the report said, meant that there were 58 million new active users in the country. It is important to note that physical activities (PA) and exercise not only maintain physical and psychological health but also

help our body to respond to the negative consequences of several diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and respiratory diseases.

Objectives of the study:

- To analyze the Indian Fitness Industry.
- To Evaluate people's perspective towards fitness after covid-19 pandemic

Review of Literature

Introduction

In today's competitive and fast-paced world, one should look after his/her physical and mental health. Fitness is something that is broadly considered to be of great importance in contemporary times. Indians now focus more on fitness as compared to old times and hence international brands and gymnasium chains look up to exploring Indian fitness market.

The market size of the global fitness industry surpassed 96 billion USD as recently as 2019, with over 170 million people choosing to stay fit each day. Despite the pandemic-induced disruption, the industry witnessed a rapid increase in the number of gym subscribers and fitness enthusiasts in the last two years. What worked in the industry's favor was its resilience and adaptability. For instance, in response to the shift to remote working amid the initial lockdowns, the fitness market offered remote workout solutions to allow fitness enthusiasts to follow their fitness regimes virtually.

The concept is to provide the right kind of guidance to the people of India about Healthy living where sustainability can be incorporated—breaking myths about fitness and a fit lifestyle by molding the social perception through educating and training people as it's considered to be on a diet when one is eating healthy, but it's considered absolutely alright when one is continuing an unhealthy and unsustainable lifestyle which ends up in diseases and other problems in leading life.

So, all in all, the vision is to provide people with an ecosystem where they can have all their answers about a fitness lifestyle with the right guidance and carefully undertaking stakeholder management; we wish to help people improve their overall health, lower the risk of lifestyle diseases, and live a long, disease-free life through our products and services.

Reasons for Study

In India, fitness trends emerged and thrived at a rapid pace. People began to combine their home exercises with their weekly training sessions at gym studios as the vaccination drive accelerated across the country. Hybrid fitness routines arose as a result of this. Fitness aficionados may now follow more flexible programs without sacrificing personal coaching or community connection.

Despite the covid onslaught, market research firms predict that the overall fitness industry will grow at a 27 per cent annual rate and reach US\$32 billion by 2022, with fitness services contributing around US\$6.6 billion. User-friendly AI-based apps assisted fitness lovers in creating and following individualized fitness regimens, which included nutrition plans, HIIT workout modules, sleep cycles, and meditation schedules, among other things.

Amidst the several challenges faced during the outbreak, people took out time to find newer ways to lead healthier lifestyles and take better care of themselves. A recent report observed that 75% of Indians were consuming home-cooked food, 54% were exercising regularly, 47% were going for consistent health check-ups, and 30% were upgrading their fitness regimes using advanced apps and devices. The fitness apps, for instance, saw a 156% increase in their total downloads. Fitness technology was already established as a buzzword even before the pandemic. However, after March 2020, industry reports show that the Indian wearable market grew 170.3% year-on-year in Q1 2021 as more people started taking note of their heart rates, calorie intakes, sleep cycles, and daily water consumption. Astride of the tech wave, the coming years will see the fitness industry embracing more tech-based solutions to deliver enhanced, personalized, and more holistic experiences to fitness lovers. The rise of online fitness classes has been just one chapter in a long story of innovation in the fitness industry, people worldwide will be able to enjoy superior experiences enabled by tech-led training sessions. The advance towards such a future has already begun.

Reasons for Growth

This growth is being fueled by three factors:

- Expenses of Health Insurance: The rising costs are driving people to live a healthy lifestyle in order to avoid diseases and the need for costly insurance.
- Healthier Diets: Natural, healthier, and organic foods are becoming increasingly popular among Indian consumers.
- Fitness-monitoring Wearables: Technology is infiltrating every industry, and new technology-driven fitness-measuring wearable gadgets are causing a stir in the market and propelling the fitness trend forward

Research Methodology

Intent

Research addressing the problems of health freaks, who used to spend a widespread quantity of time for normal exercise to be able to hold their physical health, fitness, and look, seem to have found no place so far in the literature when it comes to the current pandemic state of affairs. Supposedly, the unique experiences of such humans, their fitness problems, and the approaches in which they have handled those problems at some point during the COVID-19 pandemic have remained underexplored.

Scope

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought major upheaval in the life of every individual across the globe. It has hampered the day-to-day activities of almost all individuals including those who depend on gyms for their physical fitness routine. The present study was conducted with individuals for whom going to the gym was a routine activity so as to explore their experiences in terms of their perceptions of the pandemic situation and their ways of coping with COVID-19-induced uncertainties and health issues.

Method

A good way to gain a wealthy and giant knowledge of experiences into humans' lives during this pandemic and their efforts to keep a healthy lifestyle, a qualitative method was followed to examine. We used Interpretive Phenomenological analysis (IPA) to delve into the members' perceptions and to provide a close picture of the members' precise stories throughout the lockdown duration.

Sampling

A homogeneous pattern of twenty-two participants become decided on for this take a look at. The criterion-based totally purposive sampling technique was used to pick out and pick the individuals. We first contacted the health club owners/running shoes and sought their consent to help us within the conduction of this examine. Upon consent, we asked them to provide us with the information in their normal gym individuals who continuously go to the gym and do fitness physical games for as a minimum 6 months prior to the imposed lockdown. Once the listing was generated, the potential individuals had been then related via smartphone, had been defined, and have been asked for his or her consent to participate. Folks who consented for his or her inclusion had been then asked some questions primarily based on the pre- decided inclusion and exclusion criteria for the Survey. On the basis of this information, the individuals who met the inclusion criteria (i.e., folks who had been persevering with fitness workout in their domestic or hostels and have been following strict home confinement measures at some stage in the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown) had been in addition contacted and asked to offer an appointment for a cellphone interview.

Table 1 presents the demographic and exercise traits of the contributors blanketed on this

Variables	Variable levels	Characteristics
Gender	Male	20
	Female	2
Age (in years)	Minimum	19
	Maximum	34
	Mean age	26.5
Occupation	Student	6
	Homemakers	1
	Working professionals	11
	Entrepreneur	2
Marital status	Unemployed	4
	Single	19
	Married	2
Living status	Separated	1
	Living alone	7
	Living with family	15
Socioeconomic status	Middle class	18
	Higher class	4

Table 1

Findings

A recent report observed that 75% of Indians were consuming home-cooked food, 54% were exercising regularly, 47% were going for consistent health check-ups, and 30% were upgrading their fitness regimes using advanced apps and devices. The fitness apps, for instance, saw a 156% increase in their total downloads, the highest in any country during the pandemic. Through a variety of fitness and wellness apps, fitness enthusiasts were not only meeting their daily walk and body workout targets but were also practicing mindfulness and meditation on the go.

In the latter part of the year, fitness trends in India grew and thrived exponentially. Thanks to the increased pace of the vaccination drive across the country, people began to combine their home workouts with their weekly training sessions at gym studios. This led to the rise of hybrid fitness regimes.

The country's first and largest randomized pan-India cluster sample parallel study (Podder, Nagarathna, & Anand, 2021) on physical activity patterns in India revealed that a considerable share of the Indian population was physically inactive (20%) or somewhat active (37%), according to the study's examination of data from 2,33,805 participants. When comparing the urban and rural populations, the study discovered that the urban population was more inactive (22%) or somewhat active (39%) than the rural population. As a result, just 40% of the urban population had reached the necessary level of physical activity.

Around half of the men in the research (Podder, Nagarathna, & Anand, 2021) had engaged in moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity. Males have also been found to have a higher degree of physical activity than females in previous studies.

Interpretation

All of the recorded interviews had been transcribed. these transcripts were then analyzed using the Interpretative Phenomenological evaluation (IPA) framework to discover the members' stories of lockdown, their opportunity preference to maintain their fitness ordinary, and its effect on their fitness. A stepwise progression technique became used to investigate the records. at the start, the researchers read the transcripts oftentimes to get a deeper understanding of the experiences as defined by way of the members. on the way to gain as near an information of the records as viable, the researchers listened to the audio recordings of the individuals at the same time as studying the transcribed statistics.

Within the following step, the tries had been made to convert the transcripts right into a conceptual framework that turned into deeply related to the player's authentic verbatim agood way to perceive emergent themes

Major Themes

Psychological health issues

- Having frustration, stress, anxiety, and fear
- A trend of laziness and mental fatigue
- Change in sleeping pattern

Lack of motivation for fitness

- The role of gym mates
- The role of gym environment

Change of perception

- Negative situational perception
- Positive self-perception

Shifting focus on substitutes of gym workout and equipment

- Shift on yoga and meditation
- Shift on high-intensity workouts
- Shift on alternatives of heavy weights

Social media dependence

- As a medium to get updated
- To overcome the monotonous daily schedule
- Increases the amount of sitting
- Lack of emotional attachment
- Platform to know virtual fitness techniques and influencers

Favorable attitude toward music as a tool

- Used to focus on exercises
- An aid that provides distraction from home setting
- Creates one's own world.

Where there is no COVID-19 The present study shows that despite the initial experience of anxiety and fear and the lack of motivation to engage in physical exercise at home, fitness freaks were able to shift to home exercises and were greatly supported by social media uses and listening to music. One could argue that this study only included fitness freaks who find it difficult to detach themselves from physical activities for a long time, and this was probably the reason for their shift to home-based exercises. However, there is no doubt that the findings of this study have demonstrated that if performed regularly, physical exercise has the potential to mitigate the ill physical as well as psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The findings of this study, therefore, could be extended to the common public to also persuade them to engage in physical fitness exercises, which would result not only in a better physical health but also in an enhanced psychological health and well-being. The findings of this study strengthen the recommendations made by researchers and organizations to engage in home-based exercises (including, but not limited to, aerobic activities, balance and flexibility exercises, and muscular strength and endurance training) for about 150–180 min per week; to use social media, music, and/or similar techniques to increase adherence to physical exercises; and to practice dancing and yoga to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, and even improve the quality of sleep.

Suggestions

The rapid success of virtual fitness seems to have given rise to more radical concepts that include enhanced gamification, augmented reality, and more immersive experiences. The latter could very well be the future of fitness with even gaming companies providing hardware solutions that could be customized to cater to your fitness needs.

If and when we do return to some semblance of our lives which we lived pre-lockdown, a hybrid approach to our fitness routines might be on the cards – combining virtual training with in-person training, in either an outdoor or indoor setting, solo or in a controlled group.

The main focus of apps and software would be that they can be used for tracking and goal-setting. It's one thing to follow a celebrity trainer's work-out or go for a 30-minute walk every day, but what users thrive on is the ability to see their progress in real-time. Ensuring that users achieve their targets and have their virtual fitness companion gratify every accomplishment, establishes an invested interest in their fitness journey.

Conclusion

In conclusion, physical activity has a profoundly positive impact on psychological health, by enhancing self-esteem and resilience to stress and reducing depression and anxiety. Given the spread of COVID-19, stay at home is a fundamental step to halt the pandemic. However, the clinical relevance of the present study denotes that maintaining regular physical activity is an important preventive strategy for physical and mental health during a forced rest period like the current coronavirus emergency. Then "stay active to feel better".

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