

COVID-19 Pandemic Effects on Individuals Physical Activity Levels and Emotional Health: A Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT

Texas is among one of the leading states of COVID-19 cases and fatalities which has impacted both healthy individuals and those living with preexisting chronic illnesses. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle and remaining physically active during a pandemic has challenged most, if not all, local residents. **PURPOSE:** to describe physical activity and mental health status in Texas residents with preexisting comorbidities and those without preexisting illnesses. **METHODS:** On July 2020, four months after the declaration of the global pandemic, an online survey was developed and distributed to various regions in Texas. A total of 156 respondents answered questions regarding their demographics, current health status, physical activity level, and mental health status prior to and after the COVID-19 pandemic declaration. A frequency distribution and descriptive statistical analyses was completed. A paired sample t-test was used to calculate means of responses pre- and post- the pandemic with significance level set at $p < 0.05$. **RESULTS:** Majority of respondents were white (84%), non Hispanic or Latino (54%), female (87%), under the age of 45 (57%) and reported having 1 or more diagnosed medical condition (61%). Physical activity levels were not significantly impacted in either subgroup. Although not significant, participants with 1 or more preexisting conditions decreased their activity level by 10% after declaration of the pandemic. Those without preexisting conditions increased their overall physical activity level by 9%. While physical activity level did not report significant changes after the COVID-19 pandemic, the psychological health of individuals, however, was significantly impacted. A significant increase in emotional distress such as feelings of nervousness and anxiousness were highly evident after the declared pandemic ($p < 0.001$). **CONCLUSION:** The present analysis confirms significant levels of stress after the declared current pandemic. Prolonged stress can lead to harm and disease and make a person more susceptible to infection which is why promoting physical activity and improving psychological health strategies for all Texas residents with emphasis to those with preexisting conditions should be a public health priority.