

EFFECT OF COVID-19 LOCKDOWN ON DIETARY HABITS AND LIFESTYLE OF STUDENTS FROM NORTH MACEDONIA

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ABSTRACT

This investigation aimed to study the changes in dietary behaviours, physical activity, and psychological habits during the COVID -19 lockdown among students from North Macedonia. An online questionnaire was distributed using an institutional mailing list and social media, based on 89 items, including sociodemographic information, anthropometric and physical behaviours, eating habits, and psychological data. We examined a cross-sectional survey with a sample size of 603 students from the University of Tetova. An online questionnaire was administered for pre-pandemic and during the pandemic to examine students' dietary intake, physical activity, sedentary and psychological behaviour. Categorical data were reported as numbers and percentages. Multivariate logistic regression models were used to assess the association between various factors and physical activity and weight gain. All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 21.0 (SPSS Inc, Chicago, Illinois, USA). There were significant differences between males and females regarding **working before social isolation**. The female (75.9%) participants reported significant **changes of eating behaviour during social isolation (P<0.001)**. The weight gained during the lockdown was positively associated with an (OR, 1.32, $p < 0.01$), bread during pandemic and consumption of rice, pasta, tortilla (OR, 1.72, $p < 0.001$; OR, 1.49, $p < 0.05$, respectively), and no physical activity in school (OR, 0.64, $p < 0.01$) during the COVID-19 lockdown. The odds ratio for decreased physical activity during isolation were significantly correlated with changes in the frequency of ordering and lower physical activity in school before isolation. The dietary habits during COVID-19 lockdown could be helpful in the strategy of improving and highlighting the need for better promotion of the students' well-being.

Keywords: COVID-19, body weight, lockdown, ordering frequency, physical activity