

Sedentary Behavior and Social Loneliness in Before, During and After the Lockdown Periods in COVID-19 Pandemic among Physiotherapy Undergraduate Students in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic had become a major global threat in whole over the world. To control the rapid infection, the country was lockdown. The aim of this study was to assess the level of sedentary behavior and social loneliness in before, during and after the COVID-19 lockdown among physiotherapy undergraduate students in Sri Lanka. The descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out with 300 physiotherapy students of Kotelawala Defence University, University of Peradeniya and University of Colombo between January 2020 and February 2023. The data was collected using validated structured self-administrated questionnaires. The responses were captured electronically and the data was analyzed using SPSS software, version 20. The lowest number of population showed high sedentary behavior (127-168 hrs/week) in all three phases while the highest showed in during lockdown (7.3%). Most students showed high level of social loneliness during lockdown (13.3%) than the other two phases. A significant difference was found between gender and sedentary behavior only before lockdown ($p=0.04$) while no difference for the social loneliness. Further, a significant negative correlation was found between physical activity and sedentary behavior in before lockdown ($p=0.04, r=-0.12$). Most of the Sri Lankan physiotherapy undergraduates spent less sedentary hours regardless of COVID 19 pandemic. However, compared to other two phases there was an increase of sedentary hours in during lockdown while they showed more social loneliness in during lockdown period rather than the other two phases.

Keywords: *COVID-19 lockdown, Undergraduates, Sedentary behavior, Social loneliness*