

EFFECTS OF PANDEMIC ON THE PHYSICAL FITNESS AND MENTAL CONDITION OF STUDENT-ATHLETES OF THE ORANI CAMPUS, BATAAN PENINSULA STATE UNIVERSITY, PHILIPPINES

CEDRICK B. CANA*, APRIL M. SANTOS

College of Education, Bataan Peninsula State University, Orani Campus, Bataan, PHILIPPINES.

**Email: cbcano@bpsu.edu.ph*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to know the effects of pandemic in the physical fitness and mental condition of student-athletes. The researcher developed 6 items questionnaire in order to know the Effects of Pandemic in Physical Fitness and Mental Condition of student-athletes. After analyzing the data, it is documented that, lack of exercises or without training create negative effects to the body and when you people do not exercise regularly it can affect the mood, bones, gain weight, muscle, heat, joints and makes the bones weak. The narrative of participants presents the effects of pandemic on their physical fitness that student-athletes are gaining weight and the reason is student-athletes are not much engaging in exercise or lack of training because of pandemic. Plan of student-athletes to maintain their usual performance or getting better. The participants still have their confidence to get back their lost performance because of the pandemic they have plan to maintain their performances through doing their training indoor work out or doing jogging outside. Participants are willing to get back their old performance. The mental condition is very important to student-athletes and it condition the whole performance of student-athletes. Participants feel stressed and having anxiety and negative thoughts because of the pandemic and thinking when they can perform again and they can have their proper training. Participants feel stressed when pandemic it so that they can go back normal training. The findings revealed that participants are having anxiety, negative thought and feeling stressed because of the pandemic and the participants thinks when they can perform again and also how they can perform if there are changes on their performance. The possible changes on the performances of student-athletes. This address that there is an impact to the performance of participants because of the pandemic. Findings revealed that pandemic has impact to the body and training that affect the performance of participants.

Keywords: *Pandemic, physical fitness, mental condition, student-athletes.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on all physical activities and events around the world, including sports in a variety of settings, such as college campuses and universities, as well as housing. Student-athletes were particularly hard hit, as their communities, as well as their way of life, training, and performance were all shutdown. They didn't have much time to devote to their training routine. External factors, such as financial troubles, terrible daily news, and internal sources of distress, such as fear about their performance when they return to competition, were aslo the causes athletes to encounter situations that can damage their mental health. This can bring on unpleasant emotions like worry and depression, as well as harmful activities like drinking and smoking, as well as eating and sleeping problems.

Due to the isolation period, staying at home for a long time negatively affected the mental health status of athletes as well. COVID-19 had physical, nutritional and psychological consequences that may have impacted the safe general health of athletes. The athlete does not have a sharp decline in physical fitness. In this sense, several studies have shown that the periods of without training induce reductions in aerobic fitness, muscle strength, muscle power, sprint performance, flexibility, and physiological adaptations in athletes from different sports (Lervasen, 2020). In this study, student-athletes could do a conditioning routine at home if they had equipment to use or nothing, but home confinement still affected their mental status, physical consequences, and general health.

Since athletic events were canceled during the spring athletic season, it was important to identify the experiences of these participants and how they felt during this uncertain time. In response to how they felt when their season ended abruptly, many participants stated that they felt sad and depressed, as well as heartbroken. Practices and competitions of all Divisions were canceled to ensure the safety of student-athletes, coaches, game management personnel, and spectators. Feeling upset was another common theme among participants. Some stated how difficult it was to see their teammates distraught when receiving the news that the spring season was canceled. Other elements of concern included participants feeling lonely and wondering when they would get the opportunity to play with their teammates again (Bullard, 2020). In this study, it is clear that the pandemic had an impact upon student-athletes and affected their mental condition as a result of missed competitions and training.

In addition to having direct disruptive impacts from COVID-19 on the current competition season, the student-athletes were also exposed to the negative psychological consequences of COVID-19 like frustration, anxiety and depression which was found to be common during this stressful time. A significant proportion of athletes reported feelings of isolation and of being disconnected. This may be associated with the majority of respondents participating in a team sport. Having the social aspect of participating in team sports removed due to social distancing measures led to feelings of isolation and disconnection in the respondents.

The global outbreak of COVID-19 resulted in the closure of gyms, stadiums, pools, dance and fitness studios, physiotherapy centers, parks and playgrounds. Many individuals were therefore not able to actively participate in their regular individual or group sporting or physical activities outside of their homes. Under such conditions, many athletes tended to be less physically active, have longer screen time, experience irregular sleep patterns, and eat worse diets, resulting in weight gain and the loss of physical fitness (May 2020). In this study, it is clear that the closing of environments where student-athletes and elite athletes trained resulted in their not being able to participate in their typical physical activities.

In this research, we seek to understand the experiences of student-athletes in Bataan Peninsula State University during the pandemic and to discover if there were any differences in their performance before the pandemic and during the pandemic, and how this affected their performance and their mental condition.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative research design which aims to develop an in-depth understanding of the participant's narratives of their experiences as student-athletes during the pandemic. The participants recounted their experiences of being student-athletes during the pandemic and their responsibilities to care for their mental and physical condition at home. Since the participants have their failure and success stories as student-athletes, offering them

a meaningful avenue to narrate their experiences allowed the researcher to re-tell the participants' stories through shared experiences of meaning-making.

2.2 Population and Sample of the Study

Since qualitative research tends to be more focused on depth and detail, having only a few participants were appropriate. Ten participants were requested to participate in the study, and they were selected based on certain criteria for being athletes. Every participant should have been a student-athlete for at least 2 years. This is because the researcher believed that more experienced student-athletes have more insights to share as they have been immersed in the field for a longer period of time. After the researcher generating the selection criteria and the list of the potential participants, the researcher set the schedule for interviewing the participants at a time of their convenience.

2.3 Data Gathering Procedure

In order to facilitate the process of data collection, permission was needed from participants, and they were informed regarding the purpose of the study and were given the chance to choose their most available time to entertain an interview. When all clearances were acquired, the researcher conducted the interview as scheduled. In this study, virtual interviews were conducted to ask questions of the participants in order to elicit responses that could be analyzed to answer the research questions. Initial interviews with every participant were approximately 30 minutes. Interviews were conducted with each participant for clarification and verification. There were several questions asked as points of discussion to help guide the interview. The guided interview questions were intentionally developed as open-ended in order to elicit thoughtful storied responses. However, each interview unfolded and follow-up questions that were not determined to asked to further probe in order to generate uninterrupted narratives.

2.4 Construction and Validation of the Instrument

To collect information from the respondents, a well-made questionnaire was used. It consisted of questions generated from our analysis. The researcher formulated the questions used in the survey. The questions were based on the researcher's study. The effects of the pandemic on the physical fitness and mental condition of student-athletes. The researcher asked for the approval of the research experts, for the instrument that the researcher used.

2.5 Data Processing

Data were compiled online and included the participants' actual words, analyzed using a qualitative data technique. Virtual interviews or video calls were used to collect information from the respondents. Researchers gave enough time to the respondents to think and to give appropriate answers. Following the compilations of the records, the researcher reviewed, interpreted, and determined the result based on the participants' answers.

2.6 Ethical Consideration

Efforts were made to ensure that the paper followed the protocols of conducting research. Participants were made aware of the purpose of the study and consent and cooperation were sought voluntarily from them. The interviews were done at a time chosen by the participant. In each interview, they were ensured that all data would be treated with the utmost

confidentiality. Furthermore, authors of works that have been incorporated into the study were properly cited.

3. RESULTS

The findings narrate the research questions that guided the study. The data were gathered through virtual interview. Ten (10) participants who were recruited voluntarily were interviewed and had expressed their experiences on the effects of pandemic in their physical fitness and mental condition. After transcribing and data analyzing the narratives, themes were revealed. To give a clear and comprehensive presentation of findings, researcher subdivided this section into four parts viz-a-viz (i) Effects of Pandemic to Physical Fitness, (ii) Effects of Pandemic to Mental Health, (iii) Maintain or Getting Better, and (iv) Changes on the Performances.

Part I: Effects on Physical Fitness

This study explored the experiences of student-athletes in the Bataan Peninsula State University. From the narratives of the 10 participants of the study to be discussed, the following emerging themes were revealed:

PARTICIPANT A: I gained weight because I did not get much training.
PARTICIPANT B: I gained weight because it's not like before that have training and not allowed to go outside and always eating.
PARTICIPANT E: Before we do our training three times a week but now we do it 1 time a week and then my body is not active like before.
PARTICIPANT F: When the Pandemic start, I gained weight and my resistance get weakened because it's not like before that I do my training hard.
PARTICIPANT G: It really affects my body because we don't have activities to do and I can't run and I do gain weight now.
PARTICIPANT H: I don't have training that is I have less movement. When it comes to the physical, I'm not gaining weight and not underweight but my body get weakened.
PARTICIPANT J: I can't do exercise like it makes me short breathing and then light movements make me tired in everything I did and I gained weight because I can't maintain my old shapes.

According to Dhivya (2020) lack of exercise or any physical activity is responsible for mortality of men by 30% and 60% of death rate on women. Some of the daily activities which lead to the sedentary life style are reading, playing online games, sitting or watching television. Workouts provide a number of benefits to the body and lack of exercise create negative effects to the body and when you people do not exercise regularly it can affect the mood, bones, gain weight, muscle, heat, joints and makes the bones weak. However, which can be seen to the narratives of participants, the effects of pandemic to their physical fitness is they gained weight by lack of exercises and not having a training.

Part II: Effects on Mental Condition

PARTICIPANT A: It had a huge impact because I was stressed that I might lose my previous skill.
PARTICIPANT B: I'm stressed because I cannot balance my body even I am working out in the house it's really hard.
PARTICIPANT C: Yes, it really affects because my excitement to play is gone and almost replace by fear because of growing cases of Covid-19.
PARTICIPANT F: Yes, I'm having anxiety and always thinking that hoping this pandemic ends and continue the career.
PARTICIPANT G: It really affects and I'm stressed because I can't do what I want to do before.
PARTICIPANT H: It affects at first because I'm stressed.

PARTICIPANT I: I lose hope because I don't know when we will go back to normal. While training, I have negative thoughts if I will go to continue or stop playing.

According to Firestone (2012) When the athletes start to feel separated from the world they love, they may start to listen and increase believe the commentary of this cruel inner critic. This process may exacerbate their feelings of seclusion, depression, or grief. When a person experiences these symptoms and fails to seek the help they need, tragedy can result. However, it is the biggest challenge of student-athlete thinking when they can perform again. The pandemic affects the mental condition of student-athlete where the participants feels stressed, anxiety, and having a negative thought.

Part III: Maintain or Getting Better

PARTICIPANT A: My plan is I want to be better than my old self, I want to beat my own records...
PARTICIPANT B: I want to continue playing that is I am continuing working-out even in the house.
PARTICIPANT C: My first plan is work-out but it needs to do jogging outside.
PARTICIPANT D: My plan is to maintain but it is not allowed to go outside so, I do work-out in the house.
PARTICIPANT E: Advance training and more determination to become better.
PARTICIPANT H: For now, my plan is cycling to get back my strength.
PARTICIPANT I: I still do training but don't have aggressiveness, I can still maintain my performance but not getting better.
PARTICIPANT J: For now, I do jogging and I do write my schedule for training.

According to Taylor (2011) Confidence is the single most important mental factors in sports. He defined the confidence on how athletes strongly believe in their ability to achieve their goals. Prime confidence also encourages the athletes to seek out pressure situations and to view difficult conditions and tough opponents as challenges to pursue. Prime confidence enables athletes to perform at your highest level consistently. However, which can be seen in the narrative of participants they have plan to maintain their performance even it can be indoor workouts or jogging outside. Participants confident to maintain their abilities and to get back their strength.

Part IV: Changes on the Performances

PARTICIPANT A: I think I'm weakened because I don't have training.
PARTICIPANT B: Yes, specially myself and my sports is Sepak Takraw. It's hard for us without training your bone will be hardening specially I am spiker, we really need a training.
PARTICIPANT C: In the athletics endurance is important to us and because of pandemic we lost our endurance in running.
PARTICIPANT D: It is huge impact of pandemic because it's not like before that I do training and playing specially in volleyball it affects the jumping.
PARTICIPANT F: Yes, I think being jumper cannot back as a really jumper because I stop training for a long time and the training is back to zero because I gained weight.
PARTICIPANT G: It has huge changes; I'm weakened without doing running and my work-out before.
PARTICIPANT H: In the time that are not much strict and we play and it happens that my power in my arms is gone when I do spiking but the speed of my feet is not because I do cycling.
PARTICIPANT I: It really has a changes on my performance because of the lock down after 9 months without training and I thought my training is back to zero.
PARTICIPANT J: I think it has huge changes because when I tried jogging last time I recognized that it makes me tired easily.

According to Delk (2021) If athletes don't practice, they can regress overtime. Without consistent training, athletes may have to relearn that skill that they once had. Some athletes find ways to motivate and keep themselves accountable. However, which can be seen in the narrative of participants, there is huge changes on their performances and impact to their skills

and body. Participants need to train from the start to get back their usual performance and it will take a long time to relearn the skill they have. Pandemic gives the participants a big challenge to stop them to their training and to maintain their performance and it shows how the pandemic move them away from their old performance.

4. DISCUSSION

The study generally aimed to present the effects of pandemic in the physical fitness and mental condition of student-athletes in Bataan Peninsula State University. Lack of exercises or without training create negative effects to the body and when you people do not exercise regularly it can affect the mood, bones, gain weight, muscle, heat, joints and makes the bones weak. The narrative of participants presents the effects of pandemic on their physical fitness that student-athletes are gaining weight and the reason is student-athletes are not much engaged in exercise or lack of training because of pandemic.

Plan of student-athletes to maintain their usual performance or getting better. The participants still have their confidence to get back their lost performance because of the pandemic they have plan to maintain their performances through doing their training indoor work out or doing jogging outside. Participants are willing to get back their old performance. The mental condition is very important to student-athletes and it condition the whole performance of student-athletes. Participants feel stressed and having anxiety and negative thoughts because of the pandemic and thinking when they can perform again and they can have their proper training. Participants feel stressed when pandemic it so that they can go back normal training.

There are huge changes on participant's performance as can be seen in the table, the participants are facing challenges on the changes in their performance because of the pandemic, many places where student-athletes can do their proper training is being closed and the reason why participants stop their training and it has an impact to their body movement and performance and as Delk (2021) said if the athletes did not practice, they may take to relearn the skill once they had.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the indicated findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- The effects of pandemic to the physical fitness to student-athletes. The respondents are gaining weights by staying at home without doing exercise or training during this pandemic.
- A plan do they have to maintain their usual performance or getting better. The findings revealed that the student-athletes are planning to maintain their usual performance and getting better to get back their old performance so that after this pandemic they can perform well. The participants plan to do their work out indoor and jogging outside to maintain their performance.
- Effects in the mental condition. The findings revealed that participants are having anxiety, negative thought and feeling stressed because of the pandemic and the participants thinks when they can perform again and also how they can perform if there is changes on their performance.
- The possible changes on the performances of student-athletes. This address that there is an impact to the performance of participants because of the pandemic. Findings revealed that pandemic has impact to the body and training that affect the performance of participants.

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