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How Lockdowns Due to COVID-19 Changed the Life of People in Different Countries

First Name, Last Name

University Title

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The COVID-19 pandemic is unlike any other public-health crisis that has occurred in modern times. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the “COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented, but the global response draws on the lessons learned from other disease outbreaks over the past several decades (World Health Organization, 2021). In March of 2020, WHO declared a pandemic and since then, almost every country in the world has been impacted on several societal, financial, and health-related levels. The COVID-19 lockdowns and government restrictions changed the life order of people in different countries in many ways, which is what makes this pandemic impact different places through the world in several differing ways. This paper seeks to highlight the positive, unintended consequences of COVID-19 lockdowns and how they changed life order for people around the world via a change in work-from-home status and an increased awareness of the importance of health. While many people recognize the negative unintended consequences of the pandemic, such as missed social interactions, loss of lives, loss of jobs, economy downfall, etc; these seem to be highlighted so much that the positive aspects are ignored. COVID-19 has changed the way people live across the world with a change in the work-from-home culture, and an increased awareness in public health and self-care practices.

Many countries lockdown lengths and restrictions varied. Some countries, like the United States, did not put country-wide lockdowns in place, rather allowing individual State Governors or City Mayors to make specific local restrictions. Within the United States, this meant that people living on the east coast in one state vs. people living on the west coast could be living

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completely differently. For example, Florida state Governor, Ron DeSantis, began lifting stay-at-home orders in late April of 2020 with a three-phased opening plan. (Florida COVID-19 Response, 2021). By September of 2020, the state had entered the final, Phase 3 stage, which is essentially an unrestricted, return to normal phase. In comparison, California Governor did not reach this point in their reopening schedule until June 2021. This is almost a 10-month period where people in the United States were living very differently.

Unlike the United States, other countries have imposed country-wide lockdowns, with raging levels of restrictions. For example, Italy was one of the first countries to impose this type of lockdown. On March 9, 2020, Italy announced they were going to expand their lockdowns to the entire country, which is almost 60 million people (CIDRAP News, 2020). This was the first time ever in Italy's history that the country had been locked down. The impact of lockdowns on people's lives really depends on the severity and length of the lockdown. Nevertheless, there are many long-term effects that were seen because of these lockdowns, no matter where they occurred.

The "work-from-home" movement has become increasingly popular since last March, 2020. What began as a necessary measure to keep people socially distanced and limit their exposure to the COVID-19 virus, has now become a mainstream and accepted form of work for many employees and businesses. Also known as telecommuting, this concept skyrocketed as employees and businesses alike began to see the all-around benefits. According to Forbes Magazine, by 2025, an estimated 70% of the workforce will be working from home at least five days out of every given month. According to a new survey conducted by the Enterprise Technology Research (ETR), "work from home" jobs increase productivity. Another recent

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survey indicated that “over two-thirds of the [workforce] plans to permanently shift to remote work” after the COVID-19 pandemic ends.

Another study, conducted at the Pew Research center, indicated similar findings, showing that more than half of surveyed individuals reported that they would like to remain working from home. (Parker et al., 2021). When the COVID-19 pandemic began last spring, these are not potential outcomes that could have been anticipated. Nevertheless, the shift in working from home culture has benefits for both employers and employees alike. These shocking statistics prove how the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed the United States workforce.

Another positive unintended consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic that changed the life order of people in different countries is an increased awareness of public health and self-care awareness. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only made people more aware of their individual health status, but it has also held them more accountable for their lifestyle choices. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), adults with several health conditions are at an increased risk to get severely ill or die from the coronavirus. These chronic health conditions include “cancer, chronic kidney disease, chronic lung diseases, dementia, heart conditions, weakened immune systems” and many others that are not listed. (CDC, 2021). People with these conditions are now encouraged to take-charge of their personal health and practice extensive measures to prevent themselves from catching the virus, such as social distancing, masks, and increased hygiene protocols. Knowing that these conditions make a person at higher risk for COVID-19, many people have recently shifted their focus to better lifestyle choices, including healthy eating and better workout schedules. No matter where you turn, there is a sign reminding you to take extra care with things like hand-washing and getting enough sleep. According to Glofox,

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“consumer habits have changed since the COVID-19 pandemic, including a greater emphasis on health and wellbeing” (Connor et al., 2021). This is a positive change induced by COVID-19 lockdowns that is hopefully here to stay. Especially amongst the younger generations, at-home workouts and outdoor walks were appreciated greatly during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

To go together with an increased awareness of personal and public health measures, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way people view self-care practices. Prior to the pandemic, self-care was not nearly implemented enough. In a survey conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of Samueli Integrative Health Programs, they discovered that 80% of people surveyed said they will be more mindful about practicing self-care once the COVID-19 pandemic is over” (Aislinn Antrim, 2021). Many people reported positive “changes in their behaviors due to the pandemic, including 25% who said they are spending more time outdoors or eating healthier foods. Additionally, 35% said they are practicing more creative activities”. Others reported increased daily time spent praying and more meaningful conversations with friends and family. These are all positive benefits are all unintended consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In summary, COVID-19 lockdowns posed both negative and positive impacts across the world. To begin with, the shift in the work-from-home culture has provided flexibility to workers that may not have previously existed, and for companies, has allowed them to shift to cut-costs in operating costs related to office space. Working from home has become widely accepted as an acceptable work form due to COVID-19 lockdowns. Another positive impact, as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns, include an increased awareness in public and personal health, especially in those who once did pay much attention to their health. Increased awareness of the correlation between disease and the overall health of your body has emerged, which is a positive thing all

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around. In addition, the shift in self-care and wellness activities and awareness is a positive benefit for people around the world.

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