

Running head: HOW LOCKDOWNS DUE TO COVID-19 CHANGED THE LIFE OF PEOPLE  
IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

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

First Name, Last Name

University Title

## HOW LOCKDOWNS DUE TO COVID-19 CHANGED THE LIFE OF PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), “COVID-19 is a dangerous disease caused by a virus discovered in December 2019 in Wuhan, China” (Centers for Disease Control, 2021). This unprecedented virus has plagued almost every country around the world, thus affecting over 180 countries worldwide. COVID-19 is a public health crisis and has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). The long-lasting effects of lockdowns will continue to be felt in many countries and their economies around the world. The short-term effects of lockdowns were intended to “flatten the curve” and keep people as healthy as possible. However, many countries continue to face struggles as they enter pandemic recovery. Officials in positions of power were left with making tough decisions regarding lockdowns, which were unable to appease everyone. Officials focused on the immediate needs of the people in their communities, which led to varying lockdowns throughout the world. Unlike anything else in modern history, it left citizens in a particularly strange situation where they were being told to stay home as long as possible and limit social interactions for the first time in their lives.

Italy was one of the first countries to impose a nation-wide lockdown that began in March 2020 and lasted till May. Many other countries around the world eventually followed, including France, Spain, New Zealand, and several others. The analysis performed for BMC Public Health, showed that Italy waited too long to impose their national lockdown, which ultimately led to “saturated ICUs throughout the country (Supino et al., 2020). As such, this research served to alert other countries that they must act promptly on lockdowns. That way, the term “flatten the curve” became popular as people tried to limit overflowing the healthcare systems. While the initial goal of these lockdowns was positive, people were unprepared for the mental health outcomes that isolation would bring. Many people across the world were impacted

## HOW LOCKDOWNS DUE TO COVID-19 CHANGED THE LIFE OF PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

by mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression. “During the pandemic, about 4 in 10 adults in the U.S. have reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorders, a share that has been largely consistent, up from one in ten adults who reported these symptoms from January to June 2019” (Panchal et al., 2021). For many people, the worry or anxiety about their health or the health of their loved ones posed a daily struggle. In a time where people did not know as much about the virus, they were living in a state of fear that exacerbated anxiety that people may already have had.

This shocking increase in mental health disorders shows the widespread impacts that COVID-19 lockdowns had on people’s mental health status. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, suicide rates were increasing. The COVID-19 pandemic caused an increase in suicide rates in itself. In a survey conducted in June of 2020, 11% of adults responded that they have had thoughts of suicide within the last 30 days (Panchal et al., 2021). In addition to the things like anxiety or depression, a KFF Health Tracking Poll also showed that people reported other impacts on their mental health, such as difficulties with sleeping, eating, increased alcohol or drug usage, and worsening of chronic health conditions. (Panchal et al., 2021). There are a variety of factors that contributed to those including loss of jobs, increased stress and worry regarding the virus, social isolation from friends and family, and increased stress parents had to face during the time of online learning and work-from-home adjustments. A survey conducted in June of 2020 by KFF among young adults found that 25% of young adults surveyed reported an increase in alcohol or drug use since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This goes hand-in-hand with the increase in suicidal thoughts. According to the observations outlined by the United States Department of Education, “nearly all students have experienced some challenges to their

## HOW LOCKDOWNS DUE TO COVID-19 CHANGED THE LIFE OF PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

mental health and well-being during the pandemic and many have lost access to school-based services and supports” (Office of Civil Rights, 2021). Students, especially those relying on school counseling services, language learning, or reduced or free school-lunches, took an extra hard hit from COVID-19 related lockdowns. In contrast, while others felt socially isolated, others felt even more connected via Zoom and spent more time with their immediate families at their homes. This shows that the effects of the lockdowns varied greatly amongst different people. While some experienced an increase in mental health problems or use of substances, others experienced a deeper sense of connection with their friends and families.

Students and teachers are another group of people impacted greatly by the COVID-19 pandemic. Students around the world had to learn to adapt to online and Zoom classes for over a year — something that would have once sounded unreasonable. Especially for younger students, this posed learning challenges for many students. To begin with, even having access to high-speed internet and the necessary technology equipment to do online learning, there were obstacles related to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. The latter have brought to light these disparities and as such, many efforts to increase internet access in impoverished areas have come about. According to the data collected by UNICEF, “more than 1 billion children are at risk for falling behind due to school closures. Many of the world’s children, particular those in poorer households, do not have internet access, personal computers, TVs or even radio at home”. 83% of countries used online platforms to continue school during the COVID-pandemic, yet this only reached about a quarter of schoolchildren around the world (Unicef, 2021). In a report titled “Education in a Pandemic: The Disparities Impacts of COVID-19 on America’s Students”, conducted by the Office for Civil Rights by the United States Department of Education, eleven

## HOW LOCKDOWNS DUE TO COVID-19 CHANGED THE LIFE OF PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

disparities and observations are highlighted. To begin with, “the pandemic has negatively affected academic growth in core subjects like math and reading”. To support this observation, a study conducted by McKinsey & Company, found that students only learned “67 percent of the math and 87 percent of the reading that grade-level peers would have typically learned” (Office of Civil Rights, 2021). While students made the best with the materials given to them, these consequences in education will affect their ongoing and future learning. Although difficult, the COVID-19 lockdowns also showed the resiliency in children and their ability to quickly adapt to new environments and adversities.

Teachers were equally affected by COVID-19 lockdowns. Not only did they need to quickly adapt their teaching methods to online platforms, dealing with glitches and technology barriers, but they also had to work even harder to help mitigate these known learning difficulties for their students. As noted in the same assessment by the Office of Civil Rights, “even with heroic efforts by teachers, staff, and school leaders-- many of whom quickly developed online lessons, remote-teaching plans, and concrete strategies for meeting students’ basic needs— challenges were profound” (Office of Civil Rights, 2021). This is especially true for rural and high-poverty schools that faced additional impacts from COVID-19 lockdowns, as mentioned previously.

Another noted observation indicates that students of color have faced additional obstacles in the barriers related to access to necessary online technology to participate in online classes, as mentioned previously. Much like teachers and students, parents also faced challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as they may have been providing childcare, assisting with online

## HOW LOCKDOWNS DUE TO COVID-19 CHANGED THE LIFE OF PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

schooling, and trying to maintain their job while working from home. Several impacts on education were seen throughout the world for students, parents, and teachers alike.

In conclusion, the COVID-19 lockdowns were necessary and effective measures that were put in place by elected officials and successfully limited the rapid spread of the virus. However, they posed several negative challenges for people around the world. Challenges include mental health challenges, include depression and anxiety, coming from apprehension about the dangers of the virus and increased social isolation from friends and family. COVID-19 also brought an increase in substance use and suicidal thoughts. In addition to these mental health challenges, COVID-19 affected students, teachers, parents, and all things related to education as online learning posed challenges that many schools were not prepared for.

# HOW LOCKDOWNS DUE TO COVID-19 CHANGED THE LIFE OF PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

## References

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021). *Basics of COVID-19*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/about-covid-19/basics-covid-19.html>.
- Education and COVID-19* (2021). UNICEF DATA. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/covid-19/>.
- Nirmita Panchal, R. K. (2021). *The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use*. KFF. <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>.
- Office of Civil Rights (2021). *Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America's Students*. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf>.
- Supino, M., d'Onofrio, A., and Luongo, F. (2020). The Effects of Containment Measures in the Italian Outbreak of COVID-19. *BMC Public Health*, 20(1806). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-09913-w>