



Carta al Director

LEVEL OF ACTIVE LIFESTYLE AND EXERCISE APPROACH AMONG STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NOVI PAZAR DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Dear Editor-in-Chief,

According to the current COVID-19 pandemic situation, we are faced with many restrictions established by the Government of the country and the Institute for Public Health. Although these restrictions help reduce infection rates, they also result in adverse effects in that they limit participation in normal daily activities, which include physical activity (1). As physical activity is reduced by the above-mentioned restrictions, it may also be said that they also reduce the ability to deal with infection and with immune and cardiorespiratory complications, with more severe outcomes. The emergence of this virus causes a sedentary lifestyle that can lead to various diseases associated with the heart and coronary tree, as well as a certain degree of obesity (2). Also, most people were forced to adapt their diet, which could have been affected by the number of family members, the number of children, the number of members with specific diets, and also a reduction of financial income during the pandemic (3). Anxiety, fear, and stress are also associated with the living conditions the whole world is currently facing (4). Therefore, the aim of this letter was to determine which changes in healthy lifestyle habits and in the way of conducting physical activity caused the COVID-19 pandemic among students, to prevent harmful consequences, primarily on their health and then on their physical status. The survey questionnaire is based on the perceived lifestyle of students during the introduction of temporary restrictions due to the pandemic, and includes a scale for self-assessment of level of physical activity, a scale constructed for self-assessment of nutrition habits, and a scale for assessing the impact of physical activity on mental health. The survey questionnaire was filled out using "Google Forms", which were placed on the internet pages of all organizational units of the University of

Novi Pazar, from 5th May to 24th May 2020. The results obtained by the survey questionnaires automatically were entered in Google's calculation template. Answers were analyzed using Office Excel and SPSS 20.0 against the relevant percentage values of the responses received. Based on our results it is evident that 45.6 % of students at the University of Novi Pazar regularly engage (at least three times a week) in some form of sports and recreational activities, while 54.4 % do not practice regular physical activity. The perceived changes in the quality and quantity of nutrition among students at the University of Novi Pazar is reflected by the fact that students consume healthier food such as cooked meals (74.5 %), fruits and vegetables (85.9 %), and to a lesser extent integral grains (31.2 %). In addition to healthier products, students also consume products with much lower nutritional quality such as: dough products (73.3 %), sweets (67.7 %), and snacks (56.9 %). Regarding the impact of physical activity on student health, it was concluded that students had significantly better mood (73.8 %) and concentration (60 %) after physical activity as compared to before exercise. Also, the presence of anxiety was significantly lower (76.7 %), and there was an increase in energy in more students (53.3 %). Regarding the above, it may be concluded that the most important thing is not to adapt to the current situation, which implies an increase in sedentary lifestyle. Sports and recreational activities are an effective and appropriate tool for improving health, reducing stress and anxiety, fulfilling the biological need for movement, and making a more meaningful, healthier use of leisure time (5-7). Raising awareness on the importance of physical activity and healthy nutrition habits can have a positive effect on all the aforementioned problems (4). Of course, this approach applies not only to the situation currently involving students but also the living conditions before the pandemic.

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