

Mizo Youth and the COVID Lockdown Life: A Gender Comparison

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ABSTRACT

Background: COVID-19 has come not only as a serious pandemic but has turned the whole world upside down. Normalcy seems like a far cry especially for young people whose work, education, movement and choices are affected by Lockdown and Physical distancing.

Aim: This paper looks into gender differences in physical and social activities among youth during the COVID Lockdown.

Methods and Materials: The study was cross sectional and descriptive in nature and data analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings are based on an online survey that was conducted among youth aged between 18-35 years in Mizoram, India.

Results: Mizo society relies heavily on youth volunteerism in community building and it is no surprise that youth were found engaging in volunteer work within and outside their communities during the Lockdown. Though many became lethargic with the new free time and the feeling of being locked-in, most youth spent time on the internet while others found new hobbies and interests such as baking and gardening.

Conclusion: There have been countless initiatives undertaken by Government and Civil Society Organization to promote healthy activities during Lockdown and new trends have evolved among youth. However, young people need direction and guidance to face the new normal effectively.

Keywords: Youth, COVID-19, Lockdown, Social, Physical, activities

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic is not just about disease as it has a multiple ripple effect on every aspect of human life. The situation has become a huge challenge for young people as it affects their education, work, movement and life choices. Youth are in the prime of their life where engagement in physical, social and recreational activities hugely impacts their development. Lockdown as a precautionary measure has saved a million lives but it has also altered the way youth spend their time and energy. Engaging in activities that contribute to physical and mental well-being; and maintaining healthy social relationships cannot be overemphasized especially during a crisis. Social service or helping others has been found to enhance mental health and well-being. ^[1]

Youth require increased choices and facilities within the community and need to be physically active. ^[2] Physical activities help to enhance the immune system, lower risk factors, and overcome the pandemic and other health related problems. ^[3] Exercises that can be carried out in one's own home such as body weight training and dancing will enhance cardiovascular health and help to prevent COVID-19; as well as promote positive physical and mental health. ^[4]

Maintaining physical distance has taken a toll on social life and relationships as well. COVID-19 has taken the focus off social activities to more personal activities.

It can negatively impact those whose daily routine involves travel, jogging and using public transportation. Social contacts are completely reduced and lead to home-centric activities. [5] Social activities are characterized by more trust in social networks of a micro-environment than to social institutions. [6] Many young people are consumed by loneliness and feelings of being locked in during the Lockdown. However youth have actively participated in volunteer work during COVID pandemic. [7]

Mizoram is one of the smaller states in the Indian sub-continent situated in the North-Eastern region. Mizoram, as with the other states in the region differ vastly from the rest of the country and a deep sense of community persists among the Mizos, having often been called a close-knit society by many. The Community is built on volunteerism of youth where a community based organization called the Young Mizo Association (YMA) undertakes all volunteer activities and has often worked alongside the Government in many welfare activities. All mizo youth are part of this association through smaller YMA branches in their respective localities. One of the main goals of the YMA is to ensure that youth spend their leisure or free time effectively by serving the community. It comes as no surprise that many youth in Mizoram

volunteered themselves through the YMA and Local Task Force groups to help the less privileged in their communities during the COVID crisis.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The current study sought to understand the physical and social activities that Mizo youth engaged in during the first and second stages of Lockdown in India. The study adopted cross sectional descriptive design and findings are based on an online survey using google forms questionnaire. The survey was administered through different social networking platforms among youth aged between 18-35 years and permanent residents of Mizoram, India.

Statistical Methods

Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study carried out multiple response analysis, gender comparison and correlation.

RESULTS

The total number of 1429 young people (687 male and 742 female) from all districts of Mizoram participated in the study. Findings generated through multiple response analysis across gender are analyzed below:

Table – 1: Gender comparison of Physical activities among youth

Physical activities	Gender		Over all
	Male	Female	
Cleaning room/house/compound	316 (46.2)	584 (78.7)	900 (24.5)
Exercise	335 (49)	370 (49.9)	705 (19.2)
Working from home	204 (29.8)	182 (24.5)	386 (10.5)
Skin care	74 (10.8)	268 (36.1)	342 (9.3)
Breathing exercises	99 (14.5)	138 (18.6)	237 (6.5)
Gardening	94 (13.7)	126 (17)	220 (6)
YMA/Local task force services	135 (19.7)	49 (6.6)	184 (5)
No physical activity	110 (16.1)	57 (7.7)	167 (4.6)

Source: Computed;

Figures in parentheses are percentages

A Gender comparison of physical activities among youth during lockdown in Mizoram is presented in Table 1. More female youth (78.7%) mentioned cleaning out their room and their homes during the Lockdown as compared to males (46.2%). Half of both male (49%) and female participants (49.9%) undertook exercise and

fitness activities (19.2%) engaged in Exercise and physical fitness. A slightly larger number of young men (29.8%) worked from as compared to their female counterparts (24.5%). Young women (36.1%) were more into facials and skin care activities than males (10.8%). More females (18.6%) than males (14.5%) did

breathing exercises and gardening followed the same pattern (17% females and 13.7%). More males (19.7%) participated in volunteer activities through YMA and Local

Task Force as did females (6.6%). However more male youth reported lack of physical activities (16.7%) than females (7.7%).

Table – 2: Gender comparison of social activities among youth

Social activities	Gender		Overall (%)
	Male (%)	Female (%)	
Group/video chats	359 (52.3)	418 (56.3)	777 (20.3)
Throwback old photos of you	237 (34.5)	309 (41.6)	546 (14.3)
Playing with children or pets	223 (32.5)	308 (41.5)	531 (13.9)
Cooking your favourite dish or baking and sharing it any of your neighbours	127 (18.5)	307 (41.4)	434 (11.3)
Leaving a positive note/status to encourage others	157 (22.9)	193 (26)	350 (9.2)
Helped someone with a personal or family problem	176 (25.6)	170 (22.9)	346 (9)
Talking to a long lost friend	153 (22.3)	133 (17.9)	286 (7.5)
Sharing your arts, crafts etc through social media	125 (18.2)	109 (14.7)	234 (6.1)
Engage in YMA or local task force	133 (19.4)	59 (8)	192 (5)
Not at all	81 (11.8)	47 (6.3)	128 (3.3)

Source: Computed;

Figures in parentheses are percentages

Table 2 shows the Social activities among youth during Lockdown in Mizoram. It can be seen that physical distancing is taken over by Group/video chats, sharing of old photos on social media, Playing with children or pets, Cooking or baking and sharing it with neighbours or posting on social media, Leaving a positive note/status to encourage others, helped someone with a personal or family problem, catching up with long lost friends, Sharing of arts, crafts etc through social media and engaging in YMA or local task force volunteer activities. While most social related activities were almost equally undertaken by all youth, females were more into video chats (56.3%), sharing old photos on social media (41.6%), Playing with children or pets (41.5%), cooking, baking and sharing recipes (41.4%), and encouraging others (22.9%). Male youth accounted for more of helping someone with a personal or family problem (25.6%), catching up with long lost friends (22.3%), Sharing of arts, crafts etc through social media (18.2%), engaging in volunteer work through YMA or local task force (19.4%). However, more males reported not being social at all during the Lockdown (11.8%) as compared to females (6.3%).

A co-relation between Gender and physical and social activities among youth during lockdown in Mizoram can be seen in Table 3. Activities such as Facial or skin

care (.297), Cleaning room/house/compound (.338), Sharing of old photos (.073), Cooking and sharing recipes (.249), Playing with children or pets (0.94) were highly significant to gender while Deep breathing exercises (.056) also had significant relationship with gender.

Table – 3: Relationship between gender and coping activities among youth

Lockdown Activities	Gender
Deep breathing exercises	.056*
Facial or skin care	.297**
Cleaning room/house/compound	.338**
Throwback old photos of you	.073**
Cooking your favourite dish or baking and sharing it any of your neighbours	.249**
Playing with children or pets	.094**

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

DISCUSSION

The current study was concentrated on physical and social activities of youth in Mizoram. Physical activities of youth in during COVID lockdown show gender variations where young women are more concerned with taking care of themselves and their activities revolve more around the house while young men were either doing nothing at home or engaging in community volunteer work which requires physical effort such as border area duty and distribution of groceries and food items to less privileged households. Youth volunteerism during pandemic can also be seen in other studies. [7] A similar study found that men devote more in voluntary service than women. [8] Male volunteers

work in political, economic and scientific sectors whereas female do volunteer work in social and health sectors. [9] Men are mostly focused on paid work [10] and female are mostly involved in household activities [11] and females show more interest in skin care than males. [12]

Social Media remains the major platform that has helped young men and women to maintain social ties even with strict physical distancing during COVID Lockdown. Majority of people are maintaining social connections through social media and helps to maintain social distancing. [13] For many youth, Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook have helped them in coping with the otherwise anxiety-inducing crisis. Sharing of talent and ideas is enabled and many new trends have emerged during the Lockdown. Gender variations can be seen in social activities as more young women are taking up new interests and hobbies while more young men are engaged in volunteer work in the community. It may also be said that more males isolated themselves during the Lockdown as compared to females. The analysis of relationship between gender and coping activities among youth indicates that female youth were more physically and socially active during the lockdown in Mizoram corroborating with other studies. [14,15]

CONCLUSION

A certain level of inactivity exists among youth during COVID Lockdown. However, the majority of youth were involved in multiple activities and pursuing new hobbies and were active on Social Media. Many were concerned with the upkeep of health beauty and fitness. It is heart-warming that youth are open to encourage others and help each other with personal and family problems. Several Mizo youth served their communities through volunteer work. Overall, youth in Mizoram were active even during the lockdown and found myriad ways of spending the Lockdown.

The deep sense of community has enabled Mizo youth to cope with and offer their youthful energy and time for community service. There have been countless initiatives undertaken by Government and Civil Society Organization to promote healthy activities during Lockdown such as the State Committee on Psychological and Social Guidance who educate the masses through print and social media on self-care and coping. However, young people still need constant direction, guidance and opportunities to face the new normal effectively.

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