

Full Length Research Paper

Are the effects of pandemics on our life always bad? Positive effects of Covid-19 on our life

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Received 9 August, 2021; Accepted 24 September, 2021

This study is conducted to investigate whether restrictions applied during Covid-19 process caused positive gains in individuals' lives or not. In this study, data collection method used was questionnaire to reach more number of participants in a short time. Questionnaire form prepared in accordance with purpose of study was designed through "Google Forms". During the data collection process, due to the restrictions applied globally, the link sharing with the research questions and the text containing the information about the research were sent to the e-mail addresses of the potential participants. Prior to questionnaire questions, information transmission was made in relation to purposes of study. Data collection period covers dates of 1st of June, 2020 to 31st of March 2021. Questionnaires sent after these dates were not evaluated. Mail was sent to 871 participants in order for them to take part in the research and among them, 682 participants (78.3%) have returned back. Frequency and percentage distributions of data obtained from participants were calculated. When the results obtained from the research are evaluated in general, it is seen that the pandemic process has an important effect on the realization of interests that have been postponed due to lack of time, in the process of self-discovery of individuals and in having new experiences, and in breaking the prejudice against the use of technology.

Key words: Covid-19, online education, technology use, positive impacts, new experiences, self-discovery.

INTRODUCTION

How can it be that a virus that comes out in a distant point of the world spreads all around the world in such a short time and it gains a dimension that is threatening humanity? How can it cause all our beliefs, habits and even our psycho-social well-being to be interrupted? In fact this can be explained with "chaos theory", or "butterfly effect". A small deviation that occurs in a system somewhere in the world can give rise to very big and unforeseen outcomes in the future. Covid-19 which started to flap its wings in Asia began to show its impact throughout the world in an instant and caused for a pandemic to occur.

From a consideration of pandemics occurrence in various periods throughout human history, it is apparent that Covid-19 will neither be the first nor the last. In each of the three big pandemics experienced in the 20th century, namely "Spanish Flu" that came out in 1918, the "Asian Flu" that came out in 1957, and the "Hong Kong Flu" that came out in 1968, it is observed that one to four million people died (<https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/communicable-diseases/influenza/pandemic-influenza/past-pandemics>).

World Health Organization (WHO) reported on its official website that as of June 2, 2021, 170,747,372

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confirmed cases of COVID-19 had been reported globally, including 3,555,726 deaths (<https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/communicable-diseases/influenza/pandemic-influenza/past-pandemics>).

When the high number of deaths due to the Covid-19 pandemic so far is compared with the table above, it is seen that it can easily enter the 7th place among the pandemics that cause the highest death in the history of the world.

The rapid transmission of the Covid-19 virus from person to person through droplets and contact has led to the adoption of various measures globally in order to prevent close contact of people with each other. With the isolation of infected people, the transition to flexible working hours, the beginning of the distance education period, the introduction of curfews, the closure of cafeterias, restaurants, gyms and entertainment venues, the necessity of using masks in public areas, and the implementation of many measures both in the world and in our country, we started spending most of our time at our homes and as a result of this, while having a sedentary life style, loneliness, insecurity and family problems occurred. In a study conducted by Sibley (2020) in New Zeland, it was revealed that persons participating in questionnaire experienced higher mental problems in pandemic period when compared with previous times (zacher and Rudolph, 2020).

In a study conducted in Italy with 1006 participants, it is stated that social isolation during Covid-19 increases depression, devaluation, alienation and helplessness (Pancani et al., 2020). In another study conducted by Ammar et al. (2020), it is stated that individuals experience psycho-social tension during curfew periods, and a decrease in life satisfaction occurs due to decreased socialization (Ammar et al., 2020).

As a result of their research on 188 young people, Fernandes et al. (2020) found that those who scored high in game addiction, compulsive internet use and social media use during the Covid-19 process reported high depression, loneliness, escape, low sleep quality and anxiety due to the pandemic and that regardless of country, the COVID-19 pandemic has a significant impact on adolescents' internet use and psychosocial well-being (Fernandes et al., 2020).

In situations such as the life-threatening Covid-19 pandemic, it is an important element to investigate social experiences in order for individuals to enjoy life and to gain skills to cope with the stress and depression caused by the presence of danger. As it can be understood from above stated research results, studies conducted have generally revealed negative impacts of Covid-19 process. However, when social media which is widely used today is examined, especially on the days when the curfew is implemented, it is noticed that experiences such as activities and hobbies developed at home are frequently shared in these channels. This is an example of how

people can turn the pandemic process into an opportunity to use their creativity. Due to lockdown, people spent quality time with their family, fulfilled their hobbies, learned many new skills. This pandemic is a lesson for us to learn many new things (Kamdi et al., 2020).

For this reason this study is conducted to investigate whether restrictons applied during Covid-19 process caused positive gains in individuals' lives or not.

METHODS

In the study, data collection method used was questionnaire to reach more number of participants in a short time. During the data collection process, due to the restrictions applied globally, the link sharing with the research questions and the text containing the information about the research were sent to the e-mail addresses of the potential participants. Prior to use of questionnaire, information transmission was made in relation to purpose of study.

Participants

The research consists of participants who voluntarily participated in previous researches conducted by the researcher and who approved the recording of their e-mail addresses by stating that they may want to participate voluntarily in future research because of data collected online as it was not possible to collect face-to-face data due to the pandemic. Data were collected online as it was not possible to collect face-to-face data due to the pandemic.

Mail was sent to 871 participants in order for them to take part in the research and among them, 682 participants (78.3%) have returned back. A second e-mail was sent to the individuals who stated that they wanted to participate in the research and the google forms link was shared.

Procedure

Questionnaire form prepared in accordance with purpose of study was designed through "Google Forms". Number of questions was limited in order to have more feedback from questionnaires. Four questions were asked in order to determine demographic features of participants and ten questions were asked in order to have their opinions relating with Covid- 19 pandemic.

Before presentation of questionnaires, the researcher have transmitted the following information to participants: "This study was conducted to determine how restrictions applied during Covid-19 pandemic period affect your lives. Research questionnaire comprised of ten easy questions and it takes nearly 5-10 min to answer them. Questionnaire does not test any information or skills and it only focuses on emotions and experiences. It bears importance for you to answer the questions in a conscious and honest way with respect to reliability of research."

Duration

In this research, data collection period covers dates of 1st of June, 2020 to 31st of March 2021.

RESULTS

In Table 1, the distributions of participants as per gender,

Table 1. Distribution of participants as per their demographic features.

Parameter	Group	N	%
Gender	Female	473	69.3
	Male	209	30.7
Age	18-25	107	15.7
	26-33	196	28.7
	34-41	218	32
	42-49	79	11.6
	50-57	43	6.3
	58- 65	39	5.7
Education level	Associate	108	15.8
	Undergraduate	367	53.8
	Postgraduate	193	28.3
	Doctorate	14	2.1
Profession	Lawyer	32	4.7
	Teacher	69	10.1
	Academician	14	2.1
	Doctor	28	4.1
	Officer	153	22.4
	Businessman/business woman	103	15.1
	Self-employment	37	5.4
	Architect	27	4
	Student	63	9.2
	Engineer	41	6
	Other	115	16.9

Table 2. Answers given by participants to the question of “Could you allocate time for sports before pandemic?”.

Could you allocate time for sports before pandemic?	N	%	If your answer is yes, how long could you do sports in a week	N	%
Yes	216	31.7	Less than 60 min	52	24.1
			1 -2 h	49	22.7
			2- 4 h	67	31
			4-6 h	36	16.6
			More than 6 h	12	5.6
No	466	68.3	Total	216	100

age, education level and professional groups are shown. When table is examined, it is seen that; 69.3% of the participants are women and 30.7% are men, 34-41 age group constitutes the largest part of the participants with a share of 32%. This is followed by the age range of 26-22 with 28.7%. The lowest participation rate is 5.7% in the 58-65 age group. When the education levels of the participants are analyzed, it is seen that the largest share is undergraduate who graduates with 58.3%, followed by graduates with 28.3%. Considering these results, it can be said that the education level of the participants is

generally high. When the occupational groups of the participants are examined, it is seen that the highest participation is civil servants (22.4%), followed by other occupations (16.9%), businessman / business woman (15.4%), teacher (10.1%), student (9.2%), engineer (6), self-employed (5.4%), lawyer (4.7%), doctor (4.1%) and architect (4%). The lowest occupational group is academicians with 2.1%.

Table 2, answers given by participants to the question about how much time they could allocate for sports before pandemic are seen. When the table is examined,

Table 3. Answers given by participants to the question “Could you allocate time for sports during pandemic?”.

Could you allocate time for sports during pandemic period?	N	%	If your answer is yes, how much time could you allocate in a week?	N	%
Yes	402	58.9	Less than 60 min	43	10.7
			1 -2 h	138	34.3
			2- 4 h	123	30.6
			4-6 h	57	14.2
			More than 6 h	41	10.2
No	280	41.1	Total	402	100

Table 4. Answers given by participants allocating time for sports during pandemic period to the question “Did you participate in online sports training during pandemic period?”.

Did you participate in online sports training during pandemic period?	N	%
Yes	319	79.4
No	83	20.6
Total	402	100

Table 5. Answers given by participants to the question “Did you participate in online cultural/artistic courses or activities in order to attain new hobbies during pandemic period?”.

Did you participate in online cultural/artistic events to gain new hobbies during pandemic period?	N	%	If your answer is “yes” what were the activities you preferred?	N	%
Yes	326	47.8	Painting Courses	28	8.6
			Language training courses	36	11
			Jewelry / accessory making	53	16.2
			Cooking / pastry courses	61	18.7
			Garden/ flower care	23	7.1
			Music/ instrument courses	42	12.9
			Museum/art gallery visits	21	6.4
			Other courses	62	19.1
No	356	52.2	Total	326	100
Total	682	100			

it is seen that 68.3% of participants could not allocate time for sports before pandemic, 31% of those who could allocate time for sports could allocate maximum 2-4 h in a week for sports, and that group that could allocate most time for sports constituted 5.6% of participants who could allocate more than 6 h in a week for sports.

When the answers given by the participants to the question about how much time they could allocate for sports during the pandemic process in Table 3 are examined, it is seen that 58.9% of them could allocate time for sports. Compared to Table 2, it is not overlooked that there is a significant increase in the number of participants who spend time doing sports. While 31.7% of

the participants were able to allocate time to do sports before the pandemic, it is seen that this ratio increased to 58.9% during the pandemic process.

When the answers given by the participants about their participation in online sports training during the pandemic process are examined in Table 4, it is seen that 79.4% of the participants participated in online sports trainings.

When the answers given by the participants about their participation in online cultural/artistic courses or activities in order to acquire new hobbies during the pandemic process are examined in Table 5, it is seen that 47.8% of the participants participated in various courses or activities. Food and pastry courses (18.7%), jewelry and

Table 6. Answers given by participants to the question “How would you define the effect of restrictions during pandemic period on your life?”.

How would you define the effect of restrictions during pandemic period on your life?	N	%
Caused me to have family problems	43	6.3
Made my life so hard	109	16
It didn't have any positive effect on my life.	51	7.5
Although I was very bored in the first days, it helped me to renew in the following periods.	119	17.5
I had the opportunity to spend more time with my family/ strengthened my family ties	96	14.1
It was an opportunity for me to discover myself.	103	15.1
It gave me the opportunity to do many things that I wanted to do and could not do before.	161	23.5
Total	682	100

Table 7. Answers given by participants to the question “How would you define the impact of experiences you had during pandemic period on your life?”.

How would you define the impact of experiences you had during pandemic period on your life?	N	%
It didn't affect my life	48	7
It helped me go through the process more comfortably	109	16
It changed my perspective on the use of technology in a positive way	126	18.5
It contributed to time management	103	15.1
It gave me the opportunity to evaluate the process well and learn new things	216	31.7
We had the opportunity to share and experience more as a family	80	11.7
Total	682	100

Table 8. Answers given by participants to the question “Do you think that hobbies you attained during pandemic period will also make positive contributions to your life following the pandemic?”.

Do you think that hobbies you attained during pandemic period will also make positive contributions to your life following the pandemic?	N	%
Yes	497	72.9
No	185	27.1
Total	682	100

accessory making courses (16.2%), and music and instrument courses (12.9%) ranked first in the course/event preferences of the participants, and 19.1% preferred to attend other courses/events.

Table 6 gives the answers regarding the impact of the restrictions during the pandemic period on the lives of the participants. When the table is examined, it is seen that 23.5% of the participants stated that they found the opportunity to do things they wanted to do before and 17.5% of them stated that although they were bored in the first days of the restriction process, it allowed them to renew themselves in the future, while 16% stated that it made their life difficult and another group of 6.3% stated that it caused problems within the family. In other words, it is seen that 22.3% of all participants were adversely affected by the pandemic process, and pandemic period did not have any positive effects on the lives of a group of

7.5% of them.

Table 7 shows the answers of the participants to the question about how the experiences they gained during the pandemic process had an impact on their lives. When the answers are examined, it is seen that 31.7% of the participants evaluated the process well and consider it as an opportunity to learn new things, 18.5% stated that their perspective on technology use has changed positively, 16% of them stated that the experiences they have gained help them to pass the process more comfortably, 15.1% stated that it contributed with respect to time management and 11.7% of them stated that they had the opportunity to share and experience more as a family. The remaining 7% stated that their experiences had no effect on their lives.

When Table 8 is reviewed, it is seen that 72.9% of the participants think that the hobbies they acquired during

the pandemic will contribute positively to their lives after the pandemic.

DISCUSSION

The data obtained from the research were examined, it was seen that 31.7% of the participants could not spare time for sports before the pandemic (Table 2), while the number of those who could spare time for sports increased to 58.9% as of the pandemic (Table 3). In addition, it is seen that 79.4% of the participants who can spare time to do sports during the pandemic period participate in online sports training (Table 4).

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs report, today 55% of the world's population lives in urban areas and this ratio is expected to increase to 68% by 2050 (<https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/communicable-diseases/influenza/pandemic-influenza/past-pandemics>).

Looking at the data of the Turkish Statistical Institute for the year 2020, it is seen that 93% of the country's population lives in provincial and district centers. The excessive migration from rural areas towards the cities and as a result of this, rapid construction has turned the normal urban development order upside down (Atalay, 2011), and as a result, many problems such as inability to adapt to city life, loneliness, depression, etc. have emerged. Especially the time spent in traffic, the stress experienced and the bad air quality cause the enjoyment of life to decrease day by day. In this intense pace of daily life, it becomes impossible for people to allocate time for themselves in order to lead a healthier life. However, due to the pandemic, individuals living in big cities, especially, have started to work remotely due to curfews which eliminated loss of time individuals were spending at traffic while going to and coming back from work. It is possible to say that this time, which is obtained as a result of not going out to traffic, is used for doing sports because while the ratio of those who could spare time for sports before the pandemic was 31.7% (Table 2), it was seen that this ratio increased to 58.9% (Table 3) during the pandemic process. In addition to these, the participation of 79.4% of the participants (Table 4) in online trainings to do sports also enabled sports activities to be held with accompaniment of experts during periods when gyms were not available.

It is seen that 47.8% of the participants took part in online activities to acquire new hobbies during the pandemic period (Table 5). In addition, 18.5% of the participants stated that their perspectives on technology changed positively by means of these online activities they attended. As a result of their research, Shoaee and Dastani (2020) revealed that social media is used to share participants' perspectives, health services and distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. For

this reason, they stated that the use of social media can be a valuable tool for governments and experts in preventing the spread of this epidemic and even future similar crises (Pancani et al., 2020). Social participation, which has an important place in the socialization of individuals, is strongly associated with life satisfaction. In periods when people's mobility is greatly restricted, such as the pandemic, it is seen that individuals engage in virtual socialization, even if they are not face-to-face, with the use of the internet. When evaluated in terms of social well-being of individuals, it is seen that life satisfaction has an important place. Indeed, life satisfaction has been reported to be associated with important psychological aspects such as psychiatric disorders (eg, depressive disorders) and suicidal ideation (Kamdi et al., 2020). With the use of social platforms during the pandemic period, individuals tended to both acquire hobbies and share these hobbies on social media. In this way, it is thought that these hobbies have an important place for individuals to enjoy life and have a positive mood during the difficult period they are in.

23.5% of the individuals participating in the study found the opportunity to do many things they wanted to do during the pandemic period for which they could not find opportunities before. 15.1% of participants stated that the pandemic was an opportunity to discover themselves, 14.1 % had the opportunity to spend more time with their family/ strengthened their family ties (table 6), 31.7% stated that they had the opportunity to learn new things by making good use of the process and 11.7 % had the opportunity to share and experience more as a family and (Table 7). In the intensity of daily life, individuals can sometimes come to a state that they do not know what they want. Instead of finding an occupation that will make him happy and help him enjoy life, the individual spends his time doing what others do or doing what others want him to do. This causes the individual to feel existential emptiness (Frankle, 2019). However, the individual, who has to stay away from the people with whom he has to spend time in his social life during the pandemic period, has had the opportunity to discover what his own wishes and desires are by turning to himself. It is thought that the experience and pleasure gained by the individual during this process causes him to pass the pandemic period more easily and to see it as an opportunity to realize his long-delayed wishes. In addition to these, it is seen that the pandemic process contributes to the fact that the participants spend more time with their families and thus to the strengthening of family ties. Changes in social and economic conditions are reflected in parallel with families in the society. Quality time spent in the family will contribute to the strengthening of the individual's relationship with his family, and it will also cause the individual who is happy and valued in the family to feel valuable in the society.

In addition, 18.5% of the participants stated that their perspectives on the use of technology during the

pandemic period changed positively (Table 7), 79.4% of them stated that they participated in online sports training (Table 4) and 47.8% stated that they participated in online cultural / artistic activities to acquire new hobbies. In addition, 72.9% of the participants stated that they thought that the hobbies they acquired during the pandemic would contribute positively to their lives after the pandemic (Table 8). From this point of view, it can be said that the use of technology makes our lives easier, destroys our prejudices, and reduces the negative effects of the pandemic in the process of gaining knowledge and experience.

When the results obtained from the research are evaluated in general, it is seen that the pandemic process has an important effect on the realization of interests that have been postponed due to lack of time, in the process of self-discovery of individuals and in having new experiences, and in breaking the prejudice against the use of technology.

The last 3 steps of the hierarchy of needs (Love and Belonging, Dignity and Self-Realization) are seen as the stages that are directly related to recreation. With recreational activities that can be carried out outside of working hours, the individual can become a person respected by the group he is in, and in this way, his self-respect can increase and he can become a person respected by others through appreciation. While recreational activities instill a sense of self-confidence by nature, they have the effect of instilling self-esteem by saving the individual from monotony through activities. In this way, the individual can meet the need for dignity and move forward on the path of being the only human being (self-realization).

Conclusion

The results obtained from this research also show that; Individuals who have to spend time in their homes due to the pandemic can pass this difficult process with positive gains and easier thanks to indoor recreation activities and online education. In fact, it can be said that they can turn this difficult process into an opportunity in order to make positive changes in their lives.

Recommendations

Considering the results obtained from the research, the following recommendations can be made:

1) Reduction of intensive working time can contribute to the self-discovery of individuals by finding the opportunity to focus on their special interests. Hence, an increase can be seen in the productivity relating with the work.

2) With the help of gradual or remote working options, it is possible to reduce the time spent especially in traffic, allowing individuals to use more time for themselves.

3) Recreational activities can be designed in workplaces for employees to take a break from work stress.

4) Number of online courses and events can be increased. Hence, while accessibility will increase, the cost will decrease, which will provide an opportunity for individuals to acquire new interests.

5) The use of online education in formal or informal training will save time and space, and thus, provide ease of access to information at any time. For this reason, it is an important issue for administrations and educational institutions to give importance to accessibility and diversity in the training programs they will offer. In this way, individuals will have the opportunity to develop themselves in line with their interests.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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