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## The impact of COVID-19 lockdown on sports and physical activity

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### Abstract

COVID-19 is a droplet transmitted potentially fatal corona virus pandemic which affecting the world in 2020. The World Health Organization recommended that social distancing and human to human contact was discouraged to control the transmission of viruses. The Covid-19 had an unprecedented impact on not only sports field but also society, leading to a rapid closure of businesses, places of works, social engagement, universities and school. Due to Covid-19 most of major sporting outdoor and indoor sporting events at international, regional and national levels have been cancelled or postponed. The International Olympic Committee, along with the Japanese government, announced that the 2020 Tokyo Olympics will be rescheduled. COVID-19 affects not only humans but also all systems of institutions. In the face of COVID-19 lockdown, many millions of jobs are therefore at risk in overall world, not only for sports professionals but also for those in related retail and sporting services industries which connected with leagues and events. The disease collapsed healthy systems all over the world.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, lockdown, sports, physical activity

### Introduction

The COVID-19 was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan (China) and spread throughout the world with rapid infection and deaths (Graham Carlos *et al.*; 2020) <sup>[1]</sup>, caused clusters of respiratory illnesses (Huang C, Wang Y, Li X, *et al.*; 2020) <sup>[2]</sup>. The highly transmittable viral infection is caused by the virus known as the SARS-CoV2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2), which analysis of genomic revealed that it is genetically related to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak (Lu R, Zhao X, Li J, *et al.*; 2020) <sup>[3]</sup>. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 which led to a lot of deaths in 2002-2003 (Ksiazek TG *et al.*; 2003) <sup>[8]</sup>. The virus that harms primarily the respiratory system and leads to the symptoms such as fever, dyspnea and myalgia or fatigue etc. Although the younger people have been those most infected by COVID-19 at the very beginning (Li Q *et al.*; 2020) <sup>[9]</sup>.

The World Health Organization has declared the COVID-19 as a pandemic after the span of three month on March 11, 2020 (Virtual Press Conference; 2020) <sup>[5]</sup>. By the start of March 2020, over 1 million cases of the disease had been reported across the 90 countries worldwide, at which time the World Health Organization labeled Covid-19 a 'Global Pandemic' (Kanties *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[6]</sup>. As the year of 2020 progressed, Covid-19 continues to spread, over 160 million cases and 3.3 million deaths globally since the start to the pandemic on 13 May 2021 (WHO; 2021) <sup>[4]</sup>.

Due to continuing spread of COVID-19, the Indian government announced lockdown to prevent individuals from exposure to infection of COVID-19. Due to lockdown, limited regular physical activities, exercises and outdoor activities will affect the daily activities of most of the individuals (Pulla P.; 2020) <sup>[10]</sup>. Staying home at the prolonged time lead to secondary behaviors, like spending more time on sitting activity such as playing games, watching television, decreasing regular outdoor activities and exercises lead to an increased risk of chronic health conditions (Owen N. *et al.*; 2010) <sup>[11]</sup>. In the absence of protective vaccination social distancing or lockdown strategy was used by the government, implementing travels bans, closing crowded public places like temples, malls and market etc. and schools and colleges also (Singh R. *et al.*; 2020) <sup>[12]</sup>.

The applicability of lockdown due to COVID-19 not only affects mental health of people but also affecting their physical health due to reduce physical activity in their daily routine life.

### **The Impact of Covid-19 on Sports**

Since its onset, the COVID-19 pandemic has spread to almost all over the world, then social and physical measures, lockdown of businesses, schools or colleges and overall social life which have become commonplace to curtail the spread of the diseases; have also disrupted daily regular aspects of life, including sports and physical activity. This COVID-19 lockdown policy brief highlights the challenges to sporting world.

The rapid transmission of the coronavirus, which has led thus far to the loss of over a million human lives throughout the world, has meant that most of major sporting indoor and outdoor sports events at regional, national and international levels have been postponed or cancelled or altered place without spectators of competitions (Malcolm and Velija; 2020, Parnell *et al.* 2020) <sup>[13, 14]</sup>. The pandemic caused by the COVID-19 has a crushing impact on sporting events, with global events like Olympics being postponed by almost a year. The International Olympic Committee, along with the Japanese government, announced on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020 that the 2020 Tokyo Olympics will be rescheduled to the July 2021, whilst keeping the name of 2020 Tokyo Olympic (IOC; 2020).

The Olympic Games have never been cancelled due to any medical issue, in the history of these great games (Dhillon MS; 2020) <sup>[15]</sup>. It is a major setback not only to the host country Japan, in terms of massive financial losses, but also to the 11,000 Olympic athletes and 4400 Paralympians take part in this mega sports event. The rare golden opportunity provide by Olympics for athletes to demonstrate their own talent in competition and worth in front of the world. Every athlete does very hard preparation and training for it.

FIFA announced on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2020, that football clubs did not have to release players for national teams during the month of March and April 2020, while players also had the option to reject a call-up without any reaction. FIFA also recommended that all international matches during these windows be postponed, though the final decision was left to the competition organizers or member associations for friendly matches (FIFA; 2020) <sup>[16]</sup>.

In July 2020, the International Cricket Council announced that both the 2020 and 2021 editions of the ICC Men's T-20 World Cup had each been postponed by one year due to the pandemic. Therefore, the tournament was moved to November 2021 and October 2022 sequentially as above (ICC; 2020) <sup>[17]</sup>. The right of host the tournament retained to the India in 2021 and Australia in 2020, which announcing on 8 August by ICC (ICC; 2020) <sup>[19]</sup>. Also on 8 August, the ICC confirmed that the 2021 Women's Cricket World Cup 2021 and the tournament's qualifier had each been postponed by one year due to the pandemic (BBC Sport; 2020) <sup>[23]</sup>.

Other sporting events contemplating a curtailed format, or possible events cancellation, such as the Wimbledon championship, athletics championship to basketball, marathons to football tournament, handball to ice hockey, cricket, rugby, skiing, weightlifting to wrestling and more completions.

The postponement of the Games like Olympic, National and International competitions would surely jeopardize the professional career of several top athletes. When discussing

the impact of COVID-19 related break in competition, it is worth considering what factors affect a player's performance. It can be stated that performance of player's highly dependent on many factors between the matches like as match importance, location, opposition, score, number of recovery days, tactical system also (Paul, Bradley & Nassis; 2015) <sup>[24]</sup>.

In the face of COVID-19 lockdown, many millions of jobs are therefore at risk in overall world, not only for sports professionals but also for those in related retail and all types of services and industries related sports which connected with leagues and sports events, which include goods transportation, infrastructure facility, travel, tourism, catering, and media broadcasting among sports field. Due to competition reschedule and their training professional athletes and players are also under pressure, while stay at home and trying to stay fit and they losing professional sponsors risk who may not support them agreed to initially.

Due to COVID-19 lockdown educational institutions had closed as globally and it has also impacted the sector of sports education, which is comprised of a board range of stakeholders, including local authorities and national ministries, public and private educational institution, sports organizations, NGOs and the business community, teacher, scholar, coaches, athletes, parents and mostly young learners.

### **The Impact of Covid-19 on Physical Activity**

COVID-19 caused the suspension of sporting events, closers of gyms, stadium, pools, dance and fitness centers, physiotherapy centers, parks and restriction on all outdoor activities. These causal factors led athletes to modify their programme of exercise and train at home, most of which are not supervised by specific medical staff or professional coaches. During lockdown several athletes have mini gym or fitness equipment at home to train individually. The aim of home activity period, they should be maintained or at least not lost their current physical fitness level (Toresdahl BG & Asif IM; 2020) <sup>[25]</sup>. But many individuals are therefore not being able to actively participate in their regular individual or group sporting or physical activities outside of their homes.

Daily exercise affects the immune systems and its anti-viral defenses (Walsh NP, Gleeson M, Shephard RJ; 2011 & Martin SA, Pence BD, Woods JA; 2009) <sup>[27, 28]</sup>. But the public health recommendations like stay-at-home orders, closers of parks, gymnasium, stadium and fitness centers to prevent SARS-CoV-2 spread have the potential to reduce daily physical activity. These recommendations are unfortunate because daily exercise may be help combat the disease by busting our immune systems and counteracting some of the co-morbidities like obesity, diabetes, hypertension and serious heart conditions that make us more susceptible to serve COVID-19 illness (Siordia JA; 2020) <sup>[26]</sup>.

COVID-19 lockdown impacts not only physical activity but also player's mental health. Cancelling and postponing the sporting events adds uncertainly to athletes or players lives. During this situation most of professional athletes or players feel anxious since they have to face and handle all the insecurities that stand ahead. This duration of uncertainty over the uncertain future might enhance the fillings of worry, stress and anxiety (Grupe DW, Nitschke JB; 2013) <sup>[29]</sup>.

### **Conclusions**

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to have very considerable effects on the sporting world as well as physical activity of sports person around the world. The Covid-19 had an unprecedented impact on not only sports field but also

society, leading to a rapid closure of businesses, places of works, social engagement, universities and school. Due to Covid-19 most of major sporting outdoor and indoor sporting events at international, regional and national levels have been cancelled or postponed. In the face of COVID-19 lockdown, many millions of jobs are therefore at risk in overall world, not only for sports professionals but also for those in related retail and sporting services industries which connected with leagues and events. The disease collapsed healthy systems all over the world.

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