

LIFESTYLE INTERVENTIONS FOR ENHANCING ADULT MENTAL HEALTH POST-COVID-19

Dr. Rashmi Shrivastav¹ and Naina Khatri²

1. Professor and Head, Department of Home Science, Govt. Home Science P.G. College, Narmada Puram

2. Research Scholar, Home Science, Barkatullah University, Bhopal

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted daily life worldwide, contributing to heightened levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges among adults. As societies move into a post-pandemic phase, identifying effective lifestyle interventions that can support long-term mental wellbeing has become critical. This study examines the role of structured lifestyle interventions — including physical activity, sleep hygiene, nutrition, mindfulness, and social engagement — in enhancing mental health outcomes among adults. Data were collected from a sample of 75 adults in Narmada Puram using standardized mental health scales and lifestyle inventories. Results indicate that participants who engaged consistently in recommended lifestyle practices reported significantly lower stress levels and higher measures of psychological wellbeing compared to those with unstructured routines. The findings highlight the importance of comprehensive lifestyle strategies in promoting adult mental health in the post-COVID era.

Keywords: *Mental Health, Post-COVID-19, Lifestyle Interventions, Adults, Wellbeing, Physical Activity*

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic radically altered daily routines, work environments, social interactions, and lifestyle behaviours. Prolonged lockdowns, social isolation, and constant health risks led to elevated stress, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and depressive symptoms in adults globally. Although the acute phase of the pandemic has passed, many individuals continue to experience lingering psychological effects. This underscores the need for effective, sustainable lifestyle interventions that can enhance resilience and mental wellbeing.

Lifestyle factors such as regular physical activity, balanced nutrition, adequate sleep, stress management practices, and social connectedness have been linked to improved psychological outcomes in both experimental and observational research. Post-COVID-19, there is a unique opportunity to integrate these lifestyle strategies into community mental health frameworks to support adult populations in transitioning toward better wellbeing.

2. Literature Review

Previous studies have identified lifestyle practices as foundational components of mental health. Research during the pandemic revealed:

- Physical activity reduces stress hormones and enhances mood via endorphin release.
- Mindfulness and meditation lower anxiety and depressive symptoms.
- Sleep hygiene is crucial for emotional regulation and cognitive functioning.
- Balanced nutrition, especially diets rich in omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, and micronutrients, supports neurochemical balance.

- Social engagement mitigates feelings of loneliness and isolation, which surged during COVID-19 (Brooks et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2021; World Health Organization, 2020).

However, there remains limited research on multi-component lifestyle programs that combine these elements specifically in the post-COVID population.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of structured lifestyle interventions on adult mental health post-COVID-19.
2. To identify which lifestyle practices most strongly correlate with improved psychological wellbeing.
3. To provide actionable recommendations for integrating lifestyle strategies into mental health programs.

4. Research Hypotheses

H1: Adults who engage in regular physical activity will report significantly lower stress and anxiety levels than those who do not.

H2: Participants practicing regular sleep hygiene protocols will show higher psychological wellbeing scores.

H3: Increased social connectedness is positively correlated with improved mental health outcomes.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

A descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted to examine lifestyle intervention effects on mental health post-COVID-19.

5.2 Sample

A total of 75 adults (ages 25–60) from Narmada Puram were selected using stratified random sampling ensuring diversity in gender, occupation, and socioeconomic status.

5.3 Data Collection Tools

- DASS-21 Scale: Measures depression, anxiety, and stress.
- Lifestyle Inventory: A structured questionnaire assessing physical activity, sleep, nutrition, mindfulness practice, and social engagement.
- Wellbeing Scale: A validated psychological wellbeing measure (Ryff, 1989).

5.4 Procedures

Participants completed questionnaires online and through in-person interviews. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis.

6. Results

6.1 Demographic Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Age	25–40	38	50.7
	41–60	37	49.3
Gender	Male	40	53.3
	Female	35	46.7
Occupation	Working	52	69.3
	Non-Working	23	30.7

6.2 Lifestyle Intervention Participation

Intervention	Engaged Regularly	Not Engaged
Physical Activity	45 (60%)	30 (40%)
Sleep Hygiene	50 (66.7%)	25 (33.3%)
Mindfulness	35 (46.7%)	40 (53.3%)
Balanced Nutrition	60 (80%)	15 (20%)
Social Connectedness	48 (64%)	27 (36%)

6.3 Mental Health Outcomes

Group	Mean Stress Score	Mean Anxiety Score	Mean Wellbeing Score
Engaged in ≥ 3 Interventions	2.9	2.7	78
Engaged in ≤ 2 Interventions	4.0	3.8	61

6.4 Hypothesis Testing

H1: Physical Activity & Stress/Anxiety

Group	Mean Stress	Mean Anxiety
Active	2.7	2.5

Inactive	4.2	3.9
-----------------	-----	-----

Correlation:

- Physical activity and reduced stress: $r = -0.51, p < 0.01$
- Physical activity and anxiety: $r = -0.47, p < 0.01$

Interpretation: Support for H1 — regular physical activity is significantly associated with lower stress and anxiety.

H2: Sleep Hygiene & Wellbeing

Sleep Quality	Wellbeing Mean
Good	81
Poor	64

Independent t-test results:

$t = 4.32, p < 0.01$

Interpretation: H2 accepted — better sleep hygiene is strongly related to higher psychological wellbeing.

H3: Social Connectedness & Mental Health

Variable	Correlation with Wellbeing	Significance
Social Engagement	+0.59	$p < 0.01$

Interpretation: H3 accepted — social connectedness has a positive, significant correlation with improved mental wellbeing.

7. Discussion

This study demonstrates that lifestyle interventions — especially physical activity, sleep hygiene, and social engagement — are significantly linked to improved mental health among adults post-COVID-19. Participants engaging in multiple lifestyle practices showed lower stress, lower anxiety, and higher overall wellbeing.

Findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the protective effects of healthy living behaviors on psychological outcomes. The multifactorial nature of lifestyle components suggests that an integrated approach is more beneficial than isolated practices.

8. Conclusion

Lifestyle interventions play a vital role in enhancing adult mental health post-COVID-19. Structured physical activity, regular sleep, good nutrition, mindfulness practices, and social connectivity collectively contribute to stronger psychological resilience and wellbeing.

These findings reinforce the value of promoting comprehensive lifestyle programs in community health initiatives and mental health services.

9. Recommendations

1. Community Awareness Programs on lifestyle and mental health.
2. Workplace Wellness Initiatives promoting activity and sleep health.
3. Policy Integration of lifestyle education in public health programs.
4. Support Groups and Social Activities to enhance connectivity.

10. References

- Brooks, S. K., et al. (2020). *The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it*. The Lancet.
- Xiao, Y., et al. (2021). *Impact of working from home on wellbeing*. Journal of Occupational Health.
- Ryff, C. D. (1989). *Happiness is everything, or is it?* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.
- World Health Organization. (2020). *Mental health and psychosocial considerations*.