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## PERCEPTION AND PATTERN OF PHYSICAL FITNESS AND YOGA DURING THE 2<sup>ND</sup> WAVE OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A MIXED ENQUIRY

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### ABSTRACT

States and Union Territories started imposing restrictions from mid-April, 2021 for varying periods as the deadly second wave of corona virus hit the India and most of them extended the curbs till the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> week of June, 2021. The imposed lockdown, resulting in the closure of business activities, public places, fitness and activity centers, and overall social life, has hampered many aspects of the lives of people including routine fitness activities of fitness freaks, which has resulted in various psychological issues and serious fitness and health concerns. In the present paper author aimed at understanding the people's mental health and well being experience during 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of pandemic during lockdown and how during confinement, physical exercises and yoga benefitted for their well being and mental health. A sample of 75 participants was part of this study. The online Google form was created in the form of questionnaire to fulfill the objectives of the study and consent was obtained for their participation. The semi-structured questionnaire was prepared with both closed and open ended questions. It is also evident from the findings of the study that the participants experienced more psychological health issues in the second wave than the 1<sup>st</sup> wave. Additionally the results of the study also indicated that the participants perceived that yoga and physical exercise has the potential to mitigate the ill physical as well as psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**KEYWORDS:** Covid-19, Yoga, Mental Health, Lockdown

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The current pandemic was caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The quarantine period during corona virus disease 19 (COVID-19) outbreak might affect the quality of life leading thousands of individuals to diminish the daily caloric expenditure and mobility, leading to a sedentary behavior and increase the number of health disorders (De Sousa Ricardo et al, 2021). In this COVID-19 environment, we must constantly navigate hiccups that come from adjusting to learning online and working remotely. With social-distancing practices at play, maintaining a social life is equally difficult, leading to more video games and midday movies. Inevitably, we find ourselves spending more time than ever alone inside our homes, staring at screens (Ben Timm, G. N. 2020).

Research shows that physical inactivity is a high-risk factor for major disease morbidity (Hallal, et al., 2012). A large-scale, prospective study demonstrated that 30 min per day of light-intensity PA, which replaces sitting for the same duration, is able to reduce the mortality risk from cardiovascular disease by 24% (Dohrn, et al., 2018). According to the WHO, regular PA has multiple health benefits as evidenced by reducing high blood pressure, weight management, reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes, stroke, heart disease, and various cancers, which are all variables that can increase susceptibility to the Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) pandemic (<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/physical-activity>). Importantly, a recent systematic review reported that exercise reduced the severity of ARI symptoms among 373 participants and the number of symptom days during the follow-up period measured on the Wisconsin Upper Respiratory Symptom Survey (Grande, et al., 2020). Physical activity generates multiple benefits to physical and mental health and is a good strategy to contribute to emotional well-being, while its decline could cause deterioration in health and lead to the development of psychological disorders (Translated by ContentEngine, L. L. C. (2021). Exercising is used as a non-pharmacological treatment in many chronic diseases. The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns have caused unease and a negative impact on people's sleep and routine physical activities. Moreover, feelings of stress and poor sleep quality are both associated with reductions in physical quality. There are also a growing number of researches that suggests that home-based exercise program during pandemic prevent psycho-physiological changes during confinement and improve self-esteem, mental

wellbeing, and general health behavior of people. (Altena et al. 2020, Chevance et al. 2020 Luzi & Radaelli 2020 Narici et al. 2020 Pecanha et al. 2020 ). However, all these studies were conducted in the 1st phase of the pandemic. There is a lack of studies investigating the way in which the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of pandemic affected their mental health and well being and to what extent they were able to follow and benefitted from the home based exercises.

Therefore, the present research aims at understanding people's mental health and well being experience during 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of pandemic during lockdown and how during confinement, physical exercises and yoga benefitted for their well being and mental health.

## **METHOD AND PROCEDURE**

In order to gain extensive understandings of the experiences of the people during the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of pandemic during lockdown and their efforts to maintain a healthy lifestyle, a qualitative approach was adopted for the study. The study was conducted during the period of 3<sup>rd</sup> May to 15<sup>th</sup> May. In view of the alarming rise of COVID-19 cases in Punjab and Chandigarh, the state and UT government had imposed stricter curbs, banning the entry of all visitors to the state without a COVID negative report. In addition, all non-essential shops was closed till May 15. All bars, cinema halls, gyms, spas, swimming pools, coaching centers and sports complexes were remain closed. All restaurants, cafes, coffee shops, dhabas and fast-food outlets was closed for dine-in and can only function for home delivery till 9 pm (<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2021/may/02/>).

A sample of 75 participants was part of this study. The online Google form was created in the form of questionnaire to fulfill the objectives of the study and consent was obtained for their participation. The semi-structured questionnaire was prepared with both closed and open ended questions.

**TABLE 1: PRESENTS THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY**

<b>VARIABLE</b>	<b>VARIABLE LEVELS</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>
<b>GENDER</b>	Male	12 (16%)
	Female	63 (84%)
<b>AGE IN YEARS</b>	20 years	2(2.7%)
	21-30	54 (73%)
	31-40	9 (12.2%)
	41-50	6 (8.1%)
	Above 50	3 (4.1%)
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>	Single	50 (66.7%)
	Married	22(29.3%)
	Separated	3 (4%)
<b>OCCUPATION</b>	Student	57 (76%)
	Working professional	18 (34%)
<b>FAMILY SIZE</b>	Nuclear	55 (73%)
	joint	20 (27%)

## **RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

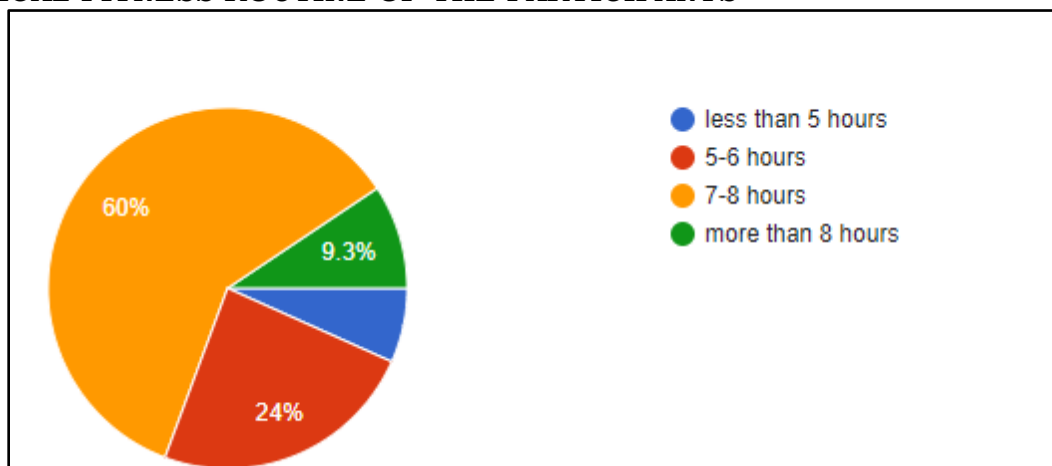
1. To understand the physical fitness routine of the participants during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wave of pandemic lockdown, percentages of various levels were computed. Table 2 shows the percentage of the physical fitness pattern followed by the participants during the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of pandemic lockdown. From the table, it is clear that majority of the participants (60%) sleeping duration was 7-8 hours with 37.3% spent 4-6 hours a day on virtual screen. 47.4% of the participants did yoga or any physical exercise in daily with a majority of the participants (61.8%) spent 30 minutes exercise in a day.

89.5% of the participants did exercises at home with 49.3% preferred yoga during the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave. Majority of the participants rated themselves at good level of awareness with yoga and breathing exercises.

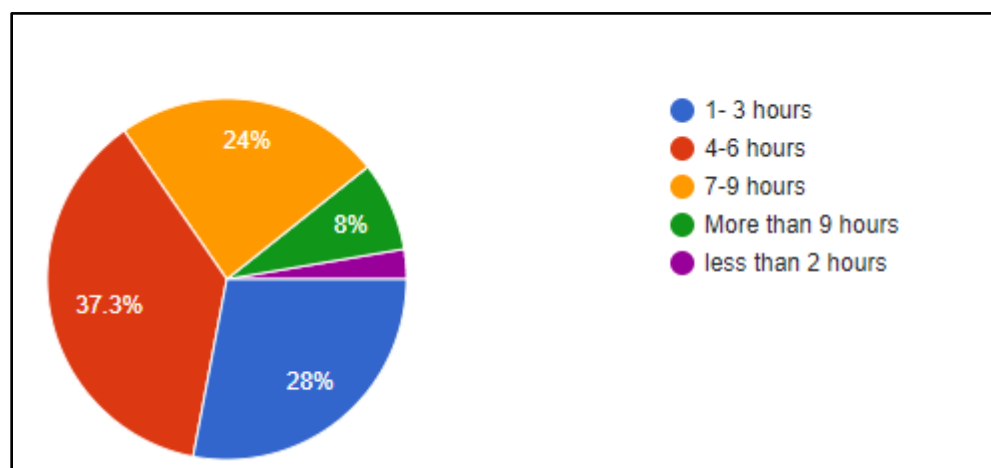
**TABLE 2: PHYSICAL FITNESS ROUTINE OF THE PARTICIPANTS DURING THE 2<sup>ND</sup> WAVE OF PANDEMIC**

<b>Physical Fitness routine Variables</b>	<b>Levels</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1. Sleeping pattern/duration	less than 5 hours	6.7%
	5-6 hours	24%
	7-8 hours	60%
	more than 8 hours	9.3%
2. Time spent on virtual screen in a day	less than 2 hours	2.7%
	1- 3 hours	28%
	4-6 hours	37.3%
	7-9	24%
	More than 9 hours	8%
3. yoga/ exercise in a week	Daily	47.4%
	2-3 days a week	26.3%
	4-5 days a week	10.5%
	none	15.8%
4. Time spent in physical exercises	30 minutes	61.8%
	1 hour	21.1%
	1 hour 30 min	6.6%
	45 min	9.2%
	1 hour 15 min	1.3%
5. Place of exercise	Home	89.5%
	Park (relaxation time)	1.3%
	both home and park	9.2%
6. Preference of fitness exercise at home	static stretching	12%
	yoga	49.3%
	cross fit	2.7%
	high intensity exercise	6.7%
	strength training	8%
	none	12%
	Others (walking around the house, aerobics, skipping, meditation, cardio exercises and warm up and jumping	1.3%
7. Level of awareness with yoga and breathing exercises	excellent	24%
	Very good	13.3%
	good	33.3%
	fair	18.7%
	poor	24%

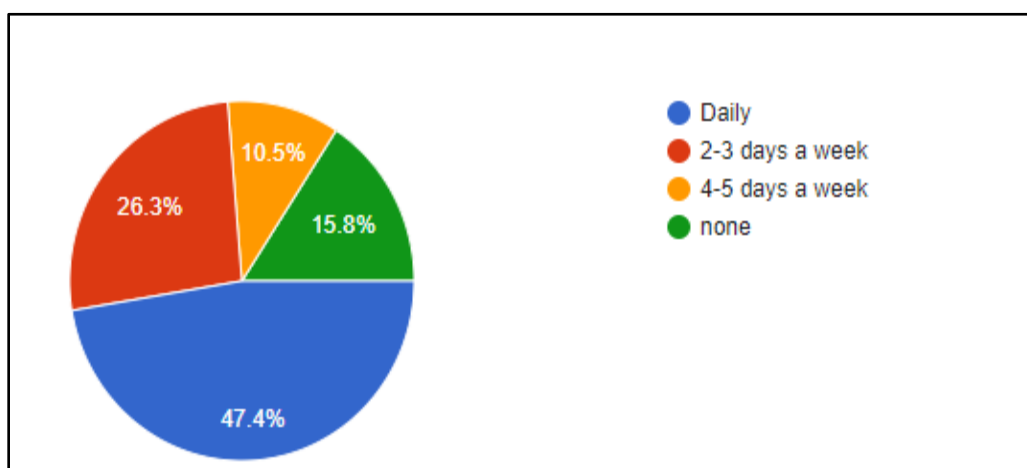
**GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PERCENTAGES OF THE COVID PHYSICAL FITNESS ROUTINE OF THE PARTICIPANTS**



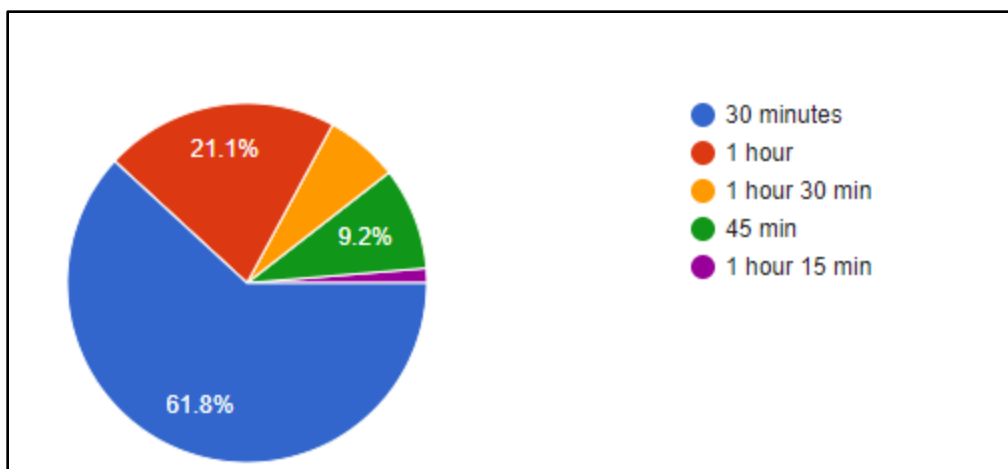
**SLEEPING PATTERN**



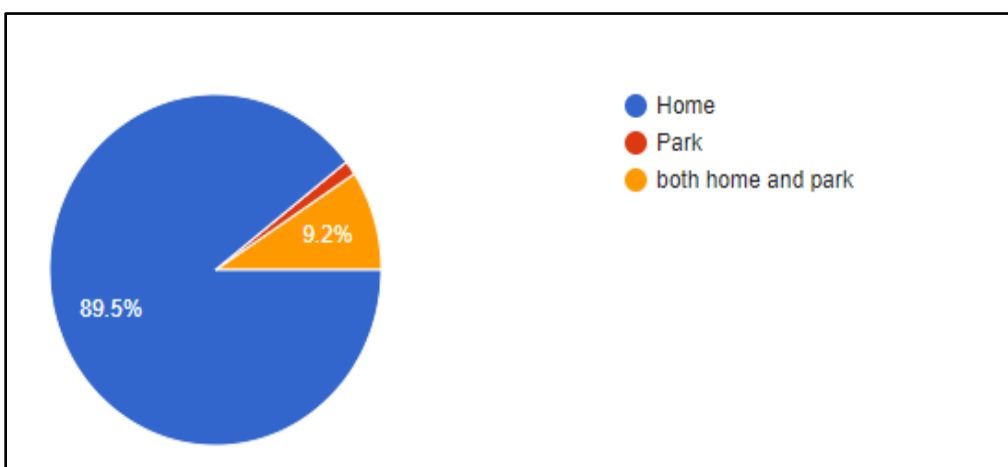
**TIME SPENT ON VIRTUAL SCREEN IN A DAY**



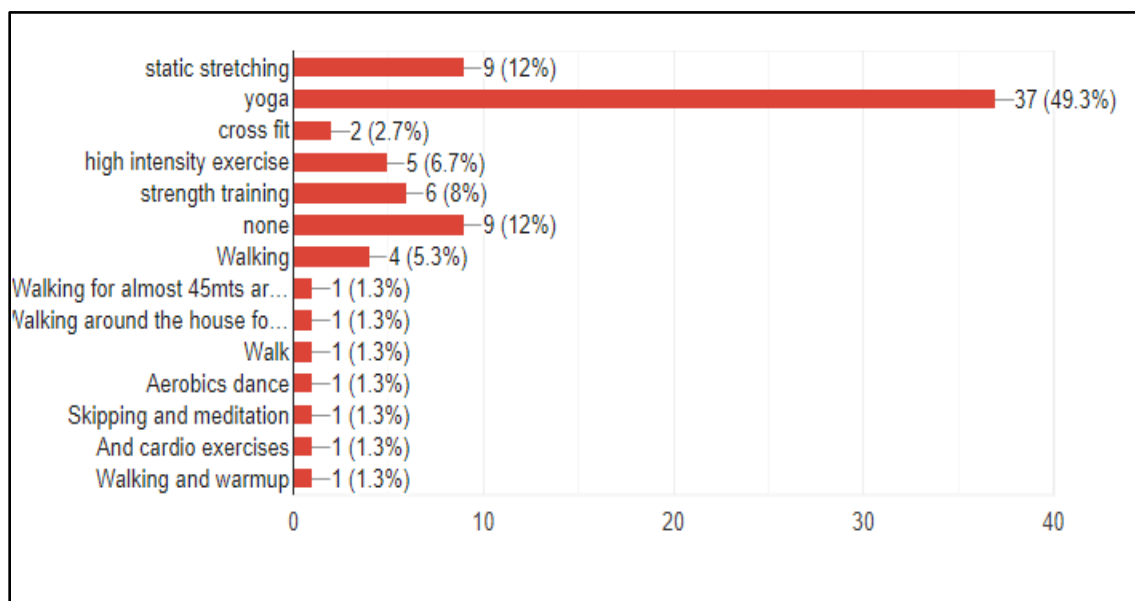
**FREQUENCY OF DOING YOGA/ EXERCISE IN A WEEK**



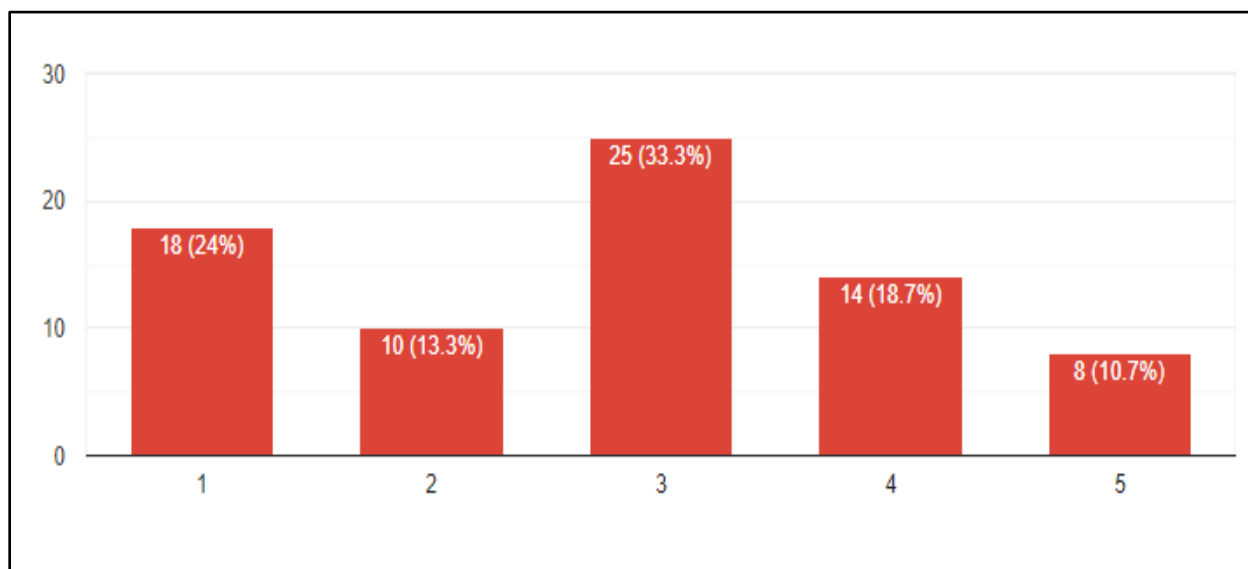
**TIME SPENT IN PHYSICAL EXERCISE**



**PLACE OF DOING EXERCISE**



**PREFERENCE OF FITNESS EXERCISES AT HOME**



### **LEVEL OF AWARENESS WITH YOGA AND BREATHING EXERCISES**

2. To understand the perception of 2<sup>nd</sup> Wave of Covid-19 situation, its affect on mental health and how during confinement, physical exercises and yoga benefitted for their well being and mental health, responses of the participants were analyzed from their relevant excerpts

### **PERCEPTION OF 2<sup>ND</sup> WAVE SITUATION**

With the number of states reported their highest fatalities in the first week of May, 2021. India was reporting more than 380,000 cases and 3,500 deaths daily in the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of pandemic. It was impossible to find hospital beds. Supplies such as oxygen were incredibly scarce, and there was a huge backlog with diagnostic testing. Many people with sick family members and friends in India were checking in on them. This time around, younger people were sick (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/04/30/indias-covid-19-crisis-is-dire-warning-all-countries/>). Due to this, participants shared worried and fearful experiences. Majority of the participants reported the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of pandemic is like a “tsunami” and has “compounded the sense of fear and despair among the people.

Participants reported the situation as very dangerous, scary, highly spreadable, worst, grim, hard and tough, destructive and preferred to stay home only precaution.



**THE RESPONSES OF THE PARTICIPANTS FOR THIS SITUATION WERE:**

'I think I am going through sometimes in anxiety because of seeing many family members in hospital during covid19. Don't know much and can't say over that but yes what I feel is what we can do we should do it and take our responsibilities seriously rather than blaming others. Of course we are to protect our peers' relations. A little bit dangerous but we are under the care and protection of Almighty'.

'It hits everyone's life with strong impact. Become very difficult to handle everything. Every new day we hear scary news. The second Covid-19 wave has hit India, and hit it hard. Record jumps in coronavirus infections on a daily basis have pushed health infrastructure to the brink in several states. While patients are scrambling to secure hospital beds, hospitals are running out of oxygen supplies and critical anti-Covid-19 drugs along with medical staff reportedly stretched to the breaking point. We are just hoping to not become positive but scared that at any moment we can get positive. Situation is definitely panicking. But the good thing is that we are enjoying with our family and spend more time in introspection'.

'This second wave has this much impact mainly due to negligence of us and government both because people stopped wearing masks stopped doing sanitization. In all we can say people become careless also govt didn't had any arrangement to tackle covid second wave. Right now the 2nd wave of corna virus cause worst situation. A New Mutant Strain – The double mutant variant of the virus has caused a significant rise in the number of infected cases. A New Mutant Strain – The double mutant variant of the virus has caused a significant rise in the number of infected cases. We need to be careful toward health and take precautions in strictly way'.

'I am very scared, as my fellow and friends are dying. We are taking all effective measures but my father doesn't act on such norms attentively. Take boil water every time. It could have prevented by taking necessary precautions. We should take care ourselves we should take the fruits and liquids and we should clean our surroundings Dangerous yet can be managed collectively if we stay home and stay safe, take precautions related to COVID'.

## **EFFECT OF 2<sup>ND</sup> WAVE PANDEMIC ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

Majority of the participants accepted that the pandemic lead to mental pressure due to confinement to home. As corona virus pandemic rapidly sweep across the world it include considerable degree of fear ,worry, nervousness, insecurity, frustrating, disturbing and concern among them. The deaths of near ones and family member along with job insecurity, lost of jobs also affected the mental well being.

‘Yes it really affect us mentally and physically because we are bound whole day at home, however its important but at the same time its very boring and frustrating... of having a life of this type always at home and feeling useless , everyone loves a environment that is safe and in which we are able to study properly like it was earlier and we had communication also with other without any threat of anything ,the life before this pandemic was best but now its useless, even online studies are just kind of formalities ,the best in which students learn was always going to college or school ,but now it is frustrating and we have to wait for everything to get normal’.

‘We all are poisoned for more than a year now so people are getting restless n going out. As an individual I can't control people not wearing mask do feeling like helpless and if I can save my family from this virus, this will be the biggest pandemic achievement’.

## **PERCEPTION ABOUT DOING YOGA EXERCISES DURING THIS PANDEMIC**

Majority of the participants responded yoga exercises very helpful during this pandemic and reported that:

‘It is absolutely wonderful to do yoga or exercises. It gives us peace of mind and good health as well. In my point of view doing exercise and yoga is the best way to keep yourself relaxed and your mental health and fitness good. Also doing yoga and exercise always helps you in your daily life. It’s good. It distracts you from negative thoughts’.

‘I think yoga is helpful to all during this pandemic because it helps to maintain your body and helps to fight any type of infection and most important thing it helps to increase immunity’.

‘Yoga is become vital part of our life. It not only for physical aspect but for mental health as well. During pandemic our life becomes slow and not energetic. So exercise is become important part of life’.

‘It's good for our respiratory system, as these viruses affect our lungs the most we need to keep our lungs more powerful and boost our immune system’.

To conclude, the findings of the study indicate that the second wave of COVID-19 was more deadly and fearful leading to stress and anxiety among the participants. Stressful situation occurs when a person exerts an impact on and responds to his/her environment (Sawhney, Bansal, 2013). However, they were more cautious and following COVID 19 precautionary guidelines more sincerely than the 1<sup>st</sup> Wave. It is also evident from the findings of the study that yoga and physical exercise has the potential to mitigate the ill physical as well as psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of the study strengthen the recommendations and suggestions made by researchers to engage in home-based exercise program during pandemic to prevent the negative psycho-physiological behavior of people (Altena et al. 2020, Chevance et al. 2020 Luzi & Radaelli 2020 Narici et al. 2020 Pecanha et al. 2020 ). It is recommended that whether you're staying at home or practicing safe social distancing while out and about, there's no need to give up the yoga and physical exercises that can help you maintain optimal health during the pandemic. Take steps now to ensure you're taking good care of yourself through age-appropriate workouts and movement.

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