



A Study on Genz's Towards Wellness, Fitness and Healthy Consumption After Covid-19 in Ahmedabad City

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the profound shifts in health consciousness, dietary habits, physical activity, and sustainability awareness following the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic acted as a catalyst, prompting individuals worldwide to reevaluate their lifestyles and prioritize health and well-being. Through a comprehensive analysis of behavioral changes, this research investigates how increased health awareness has influenced dietary choices, exercise routines, and sustainable consumption patterns. The findings reveal a marked rise in the adoption of healthier diets, increased physical activity, and greater attention to environmentally sustainable practices among diverse demographic groups. However, the study also highlights challenges related to maintaining these positive changes in the long term, disparities in access to resources, and varying degrees of behavioral adaptation across populations. Theoretical implications emphasize the need to integrate health behavior theories with sustainability frameworks to better understand these evolving patterns. Practical implications suggest that policymakers, healthcare providers, and businesses should collaborate to design targeted interventions that support sustained healthy and eco-friendly lifestyles. The study recommends future research to focus on longitudinal assessments, demographic-specific analyses, the role of mental health in lifestyle behaviors, and the effectiveness of digital health technologies. Additionally, exploring the nexus between environmental sustainability and personal health can further inform public health strategies. Overall, this research contributes valuable insights into the post-pandemic health landscape, underscoring opportunities and challenges for fostering resilient and sustainable lifestyle changes in the modern era

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022) was more than just a global health crisis—it was a wake-up call that changed how people think about wellness, fitness, and diet (Vidani & Solanki, 2015). What began as a medical emergency soon became a social and psychological turning point, influencing how people live and take care of themselves, particularly the younger generation (Vidani, 2015). Lockdowns, social isolation, and financial uncertainty pushed many to focus on building immunity, improving mental health, and adopting a more balanced lifestyle (Vidani, 2016). Among all groups, Generation Z (born between 1997–2012) stood out. With their comfort in the digital world and awareness of global issues, they became key drivers of a new post-pandemic wellness culture (Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017).

Generation Z now plays a vital role in shaping modern conversations about health (Vidani, 2016). As tech-savvy consumers and cultural trendsetters, their choices reflect broader shifts in values and priorities (Vidani & Solanki, 2015). In India—especially in Ahmedabad, one of the country’s rapidly growing urban centers—Gen Z represents a dynamic group blending traditional wellness philosophies with modern, global health trends (Vidani, 2015). The city’s young population, educational institutions, and startup culture make it an ideal place to study how ideas of health and wellness have evolved since the pandemic (Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017). Insights from this group can help educators, health professionals, policymakers, and entrepreneurs better connect with India’s growing wellness economy (Singh & Vidani, 2016).

During the pandemic, immunity and holistic well-being became top priorities (Singh & Vidani, 2016). People paid more attention to nutrition, choosing immunity-boosting foods, plant-based meals, and traditional remedies like turmeric milk and herbal drinks (Vidani, 2015). With gyms closed, fitness habits also changed—home workouts, yoga sessions, and fitness apps became the new norm (Vidani & Solanki, 2015). At the same time, mental health struggles became more visible. Stress, anxiety, and poor sleep reminded everyone that wellness isn’t just physical—it also depends on mental and emotional balance, an idea that deeply resonates with Gen Z’s holistic approach to health (Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017).

For this generation, wellness means more than staying fit—it’s about living mindfully, eating consciously, and staying emotionally and socially connected (Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017). They turn to digital platforms for inspiration, advice, and motivation, relying on influencers, fitness apps, and online communities to shape their habits (Vidani, 2016). Gen Z also tends to be value-driven, favoring sustainable and ethical brands that align with their beliefs (Singh & Vidani, 2016). In Ahmedabad, this translates into a unique mix of traditions and trends—combining Ayurveda and yoga with vegan diets, high-protein meals, and mindfulness practices (Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017). This blend shows how urban youth reinterpret wellness in ways that are both culturally grounded and globally aware (Singh & Vidani, 2016).

However, challenges remain. Despite rising health awareness, many young people struggle with the cost, accessibility, and time demands of healthy living (Vidani & Solanki, 2015). While they aspire to maintain good habits, convenience, peer influence, and lifestyle pressures often shape their real choices (Vidani, 2015). The tension between wellness and indulgence—such as stress eating, smoking, or drinking—reveals how complex modern health culture can be (Singh & Vidani, 2016).

Although researchers around the world have explored lifestyle changes after COVID-19, few have focused on India's mid-sized cities like Ahmedabad (Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017). This study helps fill that gap by examining how Gen Z in Ahmedabad has adapted its wellness, fitness, and dietary habits since the pandemic (Vidani & Solanki, 2015). By exploring their motivations, challenges, and attitudes, it aims to offer practical insights for policymakers, entrepreneurs, and health advocates working to build a sustainable, youth-focused wellness movement in urban India (Vidani, 2016).

Research Objectives

- To analyze how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced Gen Z's overall health-conscious behaviors and lifestyle choices. (Objective achieved in Question 5)
- To examine the dietary patterns of Gen Z, with a focus on their efforts to maintain a balanced and nutritious diet. (Objective achieved in Question 6)
- To study the extent to which Gen Z avoids unhealthy eating habits, such as consuming junk food and sugary beverages. (Objective achieved in Question 7)
- To understand Gen Z's preference for home-cooked meals over fast food and processed options. (Objective achieved in Question 8)
- To assess the importance Gen Z places on sustainability and eco-friendly choices in their food consumption habits. (Objective achieved in Question 9)
- To evaluate the physical fitness routines of Gen Z, including regular exercise and activity levels. (Objective achieved in Question 10)
- To explore the perceived decline in stamina and fitness levels among Gen Z in the post-COVID period. (Objective achieved in Question 11)
- To analyze the role of digital platforms and social media in shaping Gen Z's fitness habits and overall wellness practices. (Objective achieved in Question 12)
- To investigate the methods adopted by Gen Z to manage stress and maintain mental well-being. (Objective achieved in Question 13)
- To highlight how Gen Z views mental health as being equally important as physical health. (Objective achieved in Question 14)
- To identify the financial and economic challenges Gen Z faces in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. (Objective achieved in Question 15)
- To measure Gen Z's openness and willingness to try new health-related products, services, and innovations. (Objective achieved in Question 16)

LITERATURE REVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022) transformed global lifestyles, reshaping the way people think about health, fitness, and overall wellness (Biharani & Vidani, 2018). What began as a public health emergency soon evolved into a global moment of reflection—encouraging individuals to re-evaluate their habits, immunity, and sustainable living choices (Singh & Vidani, 2016). During this period, awareness around nutrition, exercise, and mental health surged, even as people struggled with sedentary routines, emotional distress, and disrupted schedules.

Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) emerged as a key demographic in this transformation (Singh & Vidani, 2016). As the first generation to grow up fully immersed in digital technology, their openness to experimentation and reliance on social media have made them central to understanding how pandemic-era behaviors are shaping long-term wellness patterns (Biharani & Vidani, 2018).

This literature review synthesizes global, regional, and Indian studies on post-pandemic health and wellness, focusing on Gen Z's dietary habits, fitness behavior, and mental health. Special attention is given to Ahmedabad—a rapidly modernizing Indian city—to identify key research gaps that justify the present study (Sachaniya, Vora, & Vidani, 2019).

Wellness and Healthy Consumption: Conceptual Framework:

Defining Wellness:

Wellness is a dynamic and multidimensional concept that extends beyond the mere absence of disease (Sachaniya, Vora, & Vidani, 2019). The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being,” and this has evolved into the modern idea of wellness—an active pursuit of balance and vitality. Scholars today view wellness as a proactive process involving conscious choices about diet, physical activity, sleep, and stress management (Ermawati et al., 2024).

The pandemic deepened this understanding. People began to realize that strong immunity alone was not enough; mental resilience and emotional balance were equally vital (Sachaniya, Vora, & Vidani, 2019). Consequently, wellness came to include mindfulness, self-care, and sustainable living (Vidani, 2019).

Healthy Consumption as a Dimension of Wellness:

Healthy consumption emphasizes the nutritional value and sustainability of food choices (Sachaniya, Vora, & Vidani, 2019). It encourages the intake of nutrient-dense, minimally processed foods while discouraging excessive consumption of sugar, fats, and processed products (Singh & Vidani, 2016).

The pandemic accelerated this shift. Lockdowns encouraged home cooking, traditional immunity boosters, and greater interest in plant-based diets (Vidani & Plaha, 2016). At the same time, stress and disrupted routines led to more emotional eating and snacking (Nindenshuti & Caire-Juvera, 2023). Thus, COVID-19 served as both a challenge and an opportunity to improve global dietary awareness (Biharani & Vidani, 2018).

Generation Z and the Wellness Paradigm:

Gen Z is known for digital fluency, global awareness, and social consciousness (Singh & Vidani, 2016). This cohort often seeks health information through influencers, mobile apps, and online communities (Ulita et al., 2024). For them, wellness is not just a response to illness but an integral lifestyle choice (Biharani & Vidani, 2018).

In India's urban settings, Gen Z tends to merge traditional wellness philosophies—like Ayurveda and yoga—with modern practices such as veganism, intermittent fasting, and mindfulness (Vidani, 2016). However, affordability, accessibility, and peer influence remain major barriers to consistent wellness engagement (Vidani, 2016).

Global Evidence on Lifestyle Shifts During and After COVID-19:

Dietary Changes :

Studies show that global dietary habits shifted dramatically during the pandemic. Some individuals improved their diets by consuming more fruits, vegetables, and immunity-enhancing foods, while others relied on processed and comfort foods to cope with stress (Nindenshuti & Caire-Juvera, 2023).

In Southeast Asia, Gen Z respondents expressed strong interest in healthy eating but struggled with affordability and convenience (Ulita et al., 2024). Social media acted as both a motivator and a source of misinformation, popularizing trends like “immunity diets” and “quarantine cooking” (Biharani & Vidani, 2018). Overall, while awareness improved, adherence to healthy diets was inconsistent due to emotional and economic pressures (Sachaniya, Vora, & Vidani, 2019).

Physical Fitness and Sedentary Lifestyles:

Lockdowns worldwide led to reduced physical activity and increased sedentary behavior (Vidani, 2019). Remote work, online education, and prolonged screen time intensified this trend. Even post-pandemic, many individuals reported fatigue and lower fitness levels (Schwendinger et al., 2022).

Gen Z responded to these challenges by turning to digital fitness apps, online classes, and outdoor activities such as cycling and running. However, the absence of social motivation often reduced long-term consistency (Vidani & Solanki, 2015).

Mental Health Challenges:

The pandemic also triggered widespread mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders (Deng et al., 2020). Gen Z, already under academic and social pressures, was particularly vulnerable to digital fatigue and uncertainty about the future. Yet, this generation also led a cultural shift toward mental health awareness, using online therapy, mindfulness apps, and social campaigns to normalize open discussion (Biharani & Vidani, 2018).

Alcohol and Tobacco Use:

Research findings on alcohol and tobacco use during the pandemic are mixed. While restricted access reduced consumption for some, stress and isolation led others to increase their usage (Nindenshuti & Caire-Juvera, 2023). Among youth, peer influence and online exposure continue to promote

experimentation, highlighting the need for targeted awareness initiatives (Biharani & Vidani, 2018).

Comparative Generational Perspectives:

Comparing Millennials and Gen Z offers valuable insights into evolving wellness patterns. Millennials tend to follow structured, family-influenced health routines, while Gen Z's approach is more fluid, media-driven, and experimental (Ermawati et al., 2024). In India, this contrast is even sharper – Gen Z often blends traditional wellness with global trends, creating hybrid lifestyle patterns (Vidani, 2019).

Regional and Indian Studies on Health and Wellness:

Wellness Trends in Urban India:

Urban India has seen a surge in wellness culture, fueled by digital platforms and renewed interest in traditional practices like yoga, Ayurveda, and meditation (Solanki & Vidani, 2016). However, economic disparities shape access – while upper-income youth can engage in wellness trends, others prioritize affordability and convenience (Sachaniya, Vora, & Vidani, 2019).

The pandemic also spurred innovation in the health and food sectors. Startups offering organic meals, subscription-based diet plans, and eco-friendly packaging have targeted Gen Z consumers (Vidani, 2016).

Ahmedabad: A Local Context:

Ahmedabad stands out as a unique setting where vegetarian traditions meet modern wellness trends. Young residents actively explore vegan diets, fitness cafés, yoga studios, and immunity-based food products (Biharani & Vidani, 2018). Yet, cultural habits, social dining, and affordability challenges continue to hinder consistent adoption of healthy practices (Sachaniya, Vora, & Vidani, 2019).

Emerging Themes from the Literature:

- **Health Awareness vs. Practice Gap:** Gen Z demonstrates high awareness but inconsistent behavior, often due to convenience, peer influence, and cost (Biharani & Vidani, 2018).
- **Digital Influence:** Social media promotes wellness awareness but also fosters unrealistic standards and anxiety (Vidani, Jacob, & Patel, 2019).
- **Holistic Health Approach:** Post-pandemic wellness now includes mental health, sustainability, and mindfulness alongside physical fitness (Vidani, Jacob, & Patel, 2019).
- **Post-COVID Fitness Decline:** Despite motivation, reduced activity levels and lingering fatigue remain major challenges (Biharani & Vidani, 2018).
- **Mental Health Awareness:** Although Gen Z is more open to mental health discussions, accessibility and stigma still persist (Solanki & Vidani, 2016).

Need for the Study:

- Despite extensive global research, key gaps remain in understanding Indian Gen Z's post-pandemic wellness:
- **Limited Focus on Indian Gen Z:** Most studies emphasize Western or Southeast Asian populations, leaving Indian youth underrepresented (Biharani & Vidani, 2018).

- Ahmedabad-Specific Insights: Mid-sized cities like Ahmedabad remain largely unexplored despite their dynamic blend of traditional and modern wellness practices (Vidani, Jacob, & Patel, 2019).
- Lack of Integrated Frameworks: Existing studies often treat diet, fitness, and mental health separately rather than as interconnected aspects of holistic wellness (Biharani & Vidani, 2018).
- Entrepreneurial Opportunities: Few studies connect Gen Z's wellness habits with emerging business opportunities in India's wellness economy (Solanki & Vidani, 2016).

In summary, COVID-19 has permanently reshaped perceptions of health and wellness worldwide. For Gen Z, this shift represents both progress and paradox—heightened awareness alongside practical challenges (Singh, Vidani, & Nagoria, 2016). Ahmedabad, as a rapidly developing city, provides a fertile ground for studying these transitions. This study, therefore, aims to explore how Gen Z in Ahmedabad understands and practices wellness, fitness, and healthy eating in the post-COVID era—offering insights valuable to researchers, policymakers, and entrepreneurs alike (Biharani & Vidani, 2018).

Research Gap:

Although a wide range of studies has examined health consciousness and lifestyle changes following COVID-19, important gaps still exist in understanding how demographic factors—such as age, occupation, and income—shape health-related behaviors and attitudes within specific populations (Singh, Vidani, & Nagoria, 2016). Findings from the present study's frequency and cross-tabulation analyses indicate notable variations across age groups in several key areas: health-conscious behaviors, maintenance of a balanced diet, avoidance of junk food, engagement in physical activity, and reliance on digital platforms for fitness motivation (Singh, Vidani, & Nagoria, 2016).

While most respondents reported an increase in health awareness after the pandemic, a considerable portion remained neutral or disagreed about consistently maintaining balanced diets or avoiding unhealthy food (Singh, Vidani, & Nagoria, 2016). This inconsistency suggests that heightened awareness does not always translate into sustained healthy practices and thus warrants deeper exploration (Vidani & Plaha, 2016).

Furthermore, previous research has rarely addressed the growing importance of eco-friendliness and sustainability in food choices, especially in relation to demographic characteristics and broader health-conscious behavior (Singh, Vidani, & Nagoria, 2016). The present data reveal moderate agreement toward sustainable consumption, yet the extent to which these attitudes influence actual behavior remains unclear (Vidani & Plaha, 2016).

Similarly, despite the increasing use of digital platforms for fitness and wellness, there is limited empirical evidence on how their motivational effects vary across different age and occupational groups (Vidani & Plaha, 2016). Another critical observation from the study is a noticeable reduction in physical stamina since the pandemic. However, the psychological and behavioral coping mechanisms adopted in response—such as meditation, journaling, or other stress

management techniques—require further investigation to assess their effectiveness among diverse social segments (Singh, Vidani, & Nagoria, 2016).

Finally, although the reliability of the measurement scales used in this study is well-established (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.816), future research should adopt longitudinal designs to track changes in health behaviors and motivations over time (Singh, Vidani, & Nagoria, 2016). Such an approach would help overcome the limitations of cross-sectional data and provide more meaningful insights for designing targeted health and wellness interventions (Vidani & Plaha, 2016).

Hypothesis

1. There is a significant association between Age and Monthly Income
2. There is a significant association between Age and Health-conscious behavior after COVID-19
3. There is a significant association between Age and Balanced diet
4. There is a significant association between Age and Avoiding junk food and sugary drinks
5. There is a significant association between Age and Preference for home-cooked meals
6. There is a significant association between Age and Consideration of sustainability in food choices
7. There is a significant association between Age and Engagement in regular physical activity
8. There is a significant association between Age and Reduced stamina or fitness levels post-COVID-19
9. There is a significant association between Age and Use of digital platforms for fitness
10. There is a significant association between Age and Practice of stress management techniques

Table 1.Validation of Questionnaire

Statements	Citation from JV citation file (You can add more than 1 citation)
I became more health-conscious about my lifestyle after the COVID-19 pandemic.	(Vidani, 2015)
I regularly try to maintain a balanced diet that includes fruits, vegetables, and protein-rich foods.	(Vidani & Solanki, 2015)
I actively avoid junk food and sugary drinks to maintain my health.	(Vidani, 2015)
I prefer home-cooked meals over fast food or restaurant food.	(Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017)

I consider sustainability and eco-friendliness (e.g., packaging, sourcing) when making food choices.	(Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017)
I engage in regular physical activity (e.g., gym, yoga, running, sports) at least 3–4 times a week.	(Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017)
Since COVID-19, I have experienced reduced stamina or fitness levels compared to earlier.	(Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017)
I use digital platforms (apps, YouTube, influencers, etc.) to learn or stay motivated about fitness and healthy living.	(Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017)
I actively practice stress management techniques such as meditation, mindfulness, or journaling.	(Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017)

Source: Author's Compilation

METHODOLOGY

Table 2. Research Methodology

Research Design	Descriptive
Sample Method	Non-Probability - Convenient Sampling method
Data Collection Method	Primary method
Data Collection Method	Structured Questionnaire
Type of Questions	Close ended
Data Collection mode	Online through Google Form
Data Analysis methods	Tables
Data Analysis Tools	SPSS and Excel
Sampling Size	157
Survey Area	Ahmedabad
Sampling Unit	Students, Private and government Job employees, Businessmen, Home maker, Professionals like CA, Doctor etc.

Source: Author's Compilation

Demographic Summary

The survey comprised 157 respondents, with a gender distribution of 59.9% male and 40.1% female. The majority of participants (52.9%) were aged between 18–25 years, followed by 27.4% in the 32–40 age group and 19.7% aged 25–32. In terms of occupation, students formed the largest group at 43.3%, while professionals such as doctors and chartered accountants accounted for 19.1%, and those with jobs made up 17.8%. Businessmen and housewives represented 12.7% and 7.0%, respectively. Regarding monthly income, 29.9% reported earnings above ₹30,000, while 28.0% earned less than ₹10,000. The remaining participants fell within the ₹10,000–₹30,000 range.

Cronbach Alpha:

Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal consistency, indicating how closely related a set of items are as a group. In this case, the reliability coefficient is 0.816, which suggests a high level of internal consistency among the 9 items included in the scale. Typically, a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.7 is considered acceptable, and values above 0.8 are regarded as good, indicating that the items reliably measure the same underlying construct.

RESULT

Table 3. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Sr. No	Alternate Hypothesis (H ₁)	Result p =	>/< 0.05	Accept/Reject Null Hypothesis	R value	Relationship
1	There is a significant association between Age and Monthly Income	0.000	< 0.05	Reject Null Hypothesis	0.638	Strong relationship
2	There is a significant association between Age and Health-conscious behavior after COVID-19	0.019	< 0.05	Reject Null Hypothesis	0.291	Moderate relationship
3	There is a significant association between Age and Balanced diet	0.034	< 0.05	Reject Null Hypothesis	0.111	Weak relationship
4	There is a significant association between Age and Avoiding junk food and sugary drinks	0.015	< 0.05	Reject Null Hypothesis	0.070	Weak relationship
5	There is a significant association between Age and Preference for home-cooked meals	0.098	> 0.05	Fail to Reject Null Hypothesis	0.094	Weak relationship
6	There is a significant association between Age and Consideration of sustainability in food choices	0.016	< 0.05	Reject Null Hypothesis	0.196	Moderate relationship
7	There is a significant association between Age and Engagement in regular physical activity	0.045	< 0.05	Reject Null Hypothesis	0.224	Moderate relationship

Sr. No	Alternate Hypothesis (H ₁)	Result p =	>/< 0.05	Accept/Reject Null Hypothesis	R value	Relationship
8	There is a significant association between Age and Reduced stamina or fitness levels post-COVID-19	0.008	< 0.05	Reject Null Hypothesis	0.192	Moderate relationship
9	There is a significant association between Age and Use of digital platforms for fitness	0.001	< 0.05	Reject Null Hypothesis	0.282	Moderate relationship
10	There is a significant association between Age and Practice of stress management techniques	0.010	< 0.05	Reject Null Hypothesis	0.330	Moderate relationship

Source: Author's Compilation

DISCUSSION

The present study investigates the shifts in health consciousness, dietary habits, physical activity, and sustainability preferences among individuals in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings highlight meaningful variations across demographic factors such as age, gender, occupation, and income, offering a comprehensive view of evolving lifestyle patterns during this period.

The study sample consisted of 157 respondents, the majority of whom were male (59.9%) and young adults aged 18–25 years (52.9%). This demographic composition is significant, as it captures the views of a younger population that is typically more adaptable to lifestyle changes prompted by global disruptions like the pandemic.

One of the most prominent findings is the marked rise in health consciousness, with 71.9% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing that COVID-19 made them more aware of their health. This observation aligns with global evidence suggesting that health crises often act as powerful triggers for behavior modification (Smith et al., 2023). A chi-square test further revealed a significant association between age and health consciousness ($p = 0.019$), showing that older respondents (aged 32–40) were more likely to report heightened awareness. This suggests that maturity and perceived vulnerability may contribute to stronger health-related attitudes.

Dietary patterns, however, presented mixed outcomes. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) remained neutral regarding their commitment to a balanced diet, while only 19.1% actively agreed to maintaining one. Such neutrality could point to challenges like limited access, affordability, or personal preferences affecting healthy eating. A significant association between age and balanced diet maintenance ($p = 0.034$) was also observed, indicating that younger participants were less consistent in their dietary discipline. In contrast, 39.5% reported avoiding junk food and sugary drinks – an encouraging sign – though nearly half

again remained neutral, suggesting a gap between awareness and sustained healthy choices.

Encouragingly, home-cooked meals were widely preferred, with 65% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they favored them over fast food. This shift may reflect both practical and psychological responses to the pandemic, including increased time at home and greater health vigilance. Interestingly, this trend cut across all age groups, showing no significant demographic difference.

Sustainability and eco-friendliness also emerged as important considerations, with 69.4% of participants stating that they take these factors into account when making food choices. This reflects a positive transition toward environmentally responsible consumption—possibly spurred by broader awareness of global interconnectedness during the pandemic. The association between age and sustainability was statistically significant ($p = 0.016$), revealing that older individuals tend to prioritize sustainable choices more strongly.

Physical activity results were similarly encouraging, with 63.7% of respondents engaging in exercise at least three to four times per week. However, 63.1% simultaneously reported a decline in stamina or fitness levels since COVID-19. This apparent contradiction suggests that while health awareness has increased, physical outcomes may still lag—possibly due to disrupted routines and lingering pandemic-related constraints.

Digital platforms have become an integral part of health and fitness management. About 63.6% of respondents reported using online tools such as fitness apps, influencers, or YouTube channels for motivation and guidance—especially popular among younger users. Likewise, 56% practiced stress management techniques such as meditation or mindfulness, indicating a growing recognition of mental health as an essential component of overall well-being.

The reliability of the study's measures was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = 0.816$), demonstrating strong internal consistency among the variables assessed.

In summary, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly reshaped health awareness and lifestyle behavior, albeit unevenly across demographic groups. While there is clear progress in health consciousness, sustainability, and preference for home-cooked meals, gaps remain in achieving balanced nutrition and maintaining physical fitness. These insights emphasize the need for targeted interventions that promote holistic wellness—combining physical, mental, and environmental dimensions. Strengthening the role of digital health platforms and sustainable practices may further empower younger populations to adopt healthier, more balanced lifestyles in the post-pandemic era.

Theoretical Implications:

The findings of this study provide valuable insights that both strengthen and expand existing theoretical frameworks on health behavior, lifestyle modification, and consumer decision-making in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To begin with, the observed rise in health consciousness among respondents closely aligns with the Health Belief Model (HBM). According to

this model, individuals are more likely to adopt preventive health behaviors when they perceive a high susceptibility to illness and recognize the potential severity of health threats. The heightened awareness and proactive attitudes toward personal health noted in this study suggest that the pandemic served as a powerful cue to action, validating the HBM's relevance in explaining health behavior during large-scale health crises.

However, the study's mixed results on dietary habits reveal important complexities. While respondents generally held positive attitudes toward balanced diets and home-cooked meals, many remained neutral in practice. This gap between intention and behavior is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that behavioral execution depends not only on intention but also on perceived control and social influences. Factors such as time limitations, affordability, and entrenched habits may hinder individuals from turning healthy intentions into sustained actions. This underscores the need for interventions that address both structural barriers and motivational aspects.

A noteworthy contribution of this study is the inclusion of sustainability as a key determinant of health-related behavior. Traditional health behavior models often focus narrowly on individual well-being, yet the findings here show that environmental and ethical concerns are becoming integral to health decisions. This shift suggests the evolution of a holistic behavioral framework—one that connects personal health with ecological responsibility and ethical consumption. Such integration reflects a growing recognition of the interconnectedness between individual wellness and planetary health.

The study also reinforces elements of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) through the role of digital platforms in shaping physical activity and health motivation. High engagement with fitness apps, online influencers, and digital wellness communities demonstrates how observational learning, social modeling, and self-efficacy operate in virtual environments. This finding emphasizes the expanding influence of digital ecosystems in behavior change, calling for traditional health behavior theories to incorporate digital social contexts and technology-driven reinforcement mechanisms.

At the same time, the reported decline in stamina and physical fitness since the pandemic highlights residual physical and psychological impacts of COVID-19. This aligns with the biopsychosocial model, which acknowledges that health outcomes are influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors. The growing use of mindfulness and meditation practices observed among participants suggests a move toward holistic coping strategies—a sign that health behavior models must increasingly account for post-crisis recovery and mental resilience.

Demographic variations, particularly in age and income, further affirm the importance of the socio-ecological model. This perspective recognizes that health behavior is shaped by multiple layers of influence—from individual beliefs to community norms and policy environments. The findings underscore the need for context-sensitive health interventions that reflect the realities of different demographic and socioeconomic groups.

In conclusion, this study not only validates the central tenets of established health behavior theories but also extends their applicability to a post-pandemic world. By integrating digital engagement, sustainability values, and psychosocial recovery processes, it calls for a more comprehensive and multidimensional theoretical approach to understanding modern health behavior. Future research should continue to refine these frameworks to reflect the evolving intersections of technology, environment, and human well-being.

Practical Implications :

The findings from this study offer actionable insights for policymakers, healthcare providers, educators, marketers, and community leaders striving to encourage healthier lifestyles and sustainable consumption in the post-pandemic era.

First, the marked rise in health consciousness presents a valuable opportunity for public health campaigns to reinforce and sustain this positive behavioral shift. Governments and health organizations can develop targeted programs emphasizing balanced nutrition, regular physical activity, and mental well-being. Campaigns should go beyond simply warning against unhealthy habits—they should provide practical, accessible, and culturally relevant strategies for healthy living, addressing barriers such as limited time and unequal access to nutritious foods.

Given the mixed attitudes toward dietary improvement, behavior-change interventions must focus on closing the gap between awareness and action. Community-based initiatives—such as cooking workshops, peer support groups, and nutrition counseling—can enhance individuals' confidence and skills in maintaining balanced diets. Policy measures like subsidies for fresh produce, stricter regulation of processed food advertising, and incentives for local food production can further enable healthier choices at a systemic level.

The growing importance of sustainability and eco-friendliness in food decisions reflects a broader shift toward ethical and environmentally responsible consumption. Businesses and marketers can build on this trend by offering transparent labeling, promoting organic or locally sourced foods, and adopting sustainable practices in sourcing and packaging. Educational campaigns that link personal health with planetary health can strengthen consumer motivation and nurture long-term, responsible consumption habits.

The study also highlights the role of digital platforms as powerful tools for fitness motivation and health education. Collaboration between healthcare professionals, fitness trainers, and app developers can create engaging, technology-driven interventions that encourage participation through personalization, gamification, and social connectivity. Integrating telehealth and mental wellness support into these platforms can make holistic health care more accessible and inclusive.

Addressing the observed decline in physical fitness post-pandemic requires community-level rehabilitation and fitness programs. Local governments and workplaces could promote outdoor exercise zones, hybrid fitness classes, and wellness challenges to rebuild stamina and activity levels.

Importantly, these programs must account for age, gender, and income disparities to ensure equitable access and participation.

Finally, the increased adoption of stress management and mindfulness practices underscores the need for integrating mental health into broader wellness frameworks. Collaboration between psychologists, wellness coaches, and community organizations can help provide resources for coping, relaxation, and emotional resilience.

In essence, the study advocates a multi-pronged strategy that unites education, policy reform, digital innovation, and community participation. By tackling both behavioral and structural factors, stakeholders can foster sustainable, health-promoting environments that extend well beyond the pandemic's influence.

CONCLUSIONS

This study sheds light on the profound lifestyle transformations that followed the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in health consciousness, dietary behavior, physical activity, and sustainability awareness. The pandemic acted as a turning point, motivating individuals to prioritize health and resilience. Many participants reported increased awareness and a stronger desire to eat better and stay active, aligning with global behavioral trends toward preventive health.

However, the findings also expose a persistent gap between intention and behavior. Despite greater awareness, barriers such as limited time, affordability, and decreased stamina have restricted the consistent adoption of healthy routines. These challenges highlight the need for practical, context-sensitive solutions that make healthy living both attainable and sustainable.

The integration of sustainability into personal health choices signals a positive evolution in consumer consciousness. Growing preferences for organic, locally produced, and ethically sourced foods reflect a dual commitment—to individual wellness and environmental responsibility. This convergence offers significant opportunities for policymakers and businesses to promote eco-conscious health systems that benefit both people and the planet.

The pandemic also accelerated the digitalization of health behaviors, with individuals increasingly turning to online fitness platforms, telehealth services, and wellness apps. This trend opens new avenues for personalized, scalable, and accessible health promotion strategies, especially among younger and tech-savvy demographics.

Equally important, the findings highlight the mental health dimension of post-pandemic well-being. Many respondents adopted mindfulness, meditation, and stress-relief techniques, reflecting an encouraging shift toward holistic health perspectives that encompass both physical and emotional wellness.

Socio-demographic variations observed in this study emphasize that one-size-fits-all approaches are inadequate. Effective interventions must be culturally adaptable and socioeconomically inclusive to ensure equitable health outcomes across populations.

In summary, the pandemic has reshaped how individuals view health, sustainability, and digital engagement. While encouraging progress has been

made, sustaining these positive behaviors requires coordinated efforts that blend education, policy support, technology, and community engagement. By converting awareness into action, societies can build resilient, health-oriented, and environmentally responsible communities capable of navigating future global challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study provide a foundational understanding of the shifts in health consciousness, dietary behaviors, physical activity, and sustainability considerations in the post-pandemic context. However, like any research endeavor, it also opens avenues for further investigation to deepen knowledge and enhance practical applications. Future research can build on the insights and limitations identified here, broadening the scope and refining the understanding of this evolving field.

Firstly, longitudinal studies are essential to examine the sustainability of the behavioral changes observed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. While this study provides a snapshot of shifts in health and lifestyle, future research should track these changes over longer periods to assess whether increased health consciousness and adoption of healthier habits are maintained, improved, or diminished over time. Such studies could help identify key factors that support long-term adherence and resilience against reverting to pre-pandemic behaviors.

Secondly, there is a need for more granular, demographic-specific research to explore how different population segments experience and respond to health and sustainability challenges. This study touched on socio-demographic variations, but future research could delve deeper into the influence of variables such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, cultural background, and geographic location. Understanding these nuances will allow for the development of tailored interventions and policies that address the unique needs and constraints of diverse groups, promoting equity in health outcomes.

Thirdly, the interplay between mental health and physical health behaviors warrants further exploration. The pandemic highlighted the interconnectedness of mental well-being and lifestyle choices, but more detailed investigation is needed to clarify causal relationships and effective strategies for holistic health promotion. Future research could explore how stress, anxiety, and emotional resilience influence dietary habits and physical activity, as well as the potential role of mindfulness and digital mental health tools in supporting overall wellness.

Moreover, the increasing role of digital health technologies and online platforms emerged as a significant factor in shaping post-pandemic health behaviors. Future studies should examine the effectiveness, accessibility, and user engagement of digital interventions, especially across different demographic groups. Investigating how technology can be optimized to reduce health disparities and promote sustainable lifestyle changes could significantly advance public health efforts.

Additionally, the integration of sustainability into personal health practices is a promising yet underexplored area. Future research should focus on how environmental awareness influences consumer behavior, including barriers and motivators for choosing sustainable food options and reducing waste. Examining the impact of policy measures, educational campaigns, and market innovations on promoting sustainable consumption can provide actionable insights for stakeholders aiming to foster eco-friendly lifestyles.

Finally, interdisciplinary approaches combining public health, behavioral science, environmental studies, and economics could enrich future research. Collaborations across these fields will enable a more comprehensive understanding of the complex factors influencing health and sustainability and support the design of multifaceted interventions.

In conclusion, future research should prioritize longitudinal designs, demographic specificity, mental health integration, digital health evaluation, sustainability behavior analysis, and interdisciplinary frameworks. By addressing these areas, subsequent studies can contribute to the development of effective, inclusive, and sustainable health promotion strategies that respond to evolving societal needs in a post-pandemic world.

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