

# A study of reading habits and lifestyle changes during Covid-19 pandemic

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## ABSTRACT

*Reading makes a person a better person. The study was based on investigating the reading habits of people during the corona virus pandemic. During Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, libraries were closed and therefore visiting libraries and reading books and other material was merely a dream for a common man. Few academic and research libraries were providing access to their online resources but public libraries were completely closed. Book lovers were not in a position to buy books from the market or online as only essential services were allowed. In this paper the authors have carried out one survey to study the reading habits of people and lifestyle changes during pandemic and how they were updating and coping up with it. The findings of the study were that most people especially the working class who this study was mainly comprised of engaged in reading a lot. They also engaged in other activities like washing, exercising and cooking. Therefore, peoples reading culture during the corona lockdown was given much attention.*

**Keywords:** Reading habits, Reading culture, Covid-19 Pandemic, E-Books, Audio Books, Print Books

**Library of Congress Classification:** ZA

## 1. INTRODUCAION

With the spread of Corona virus in the year 2020 and 2021, all book stores were closed and also Amazon or online shops were also providing only essential things in a later stage. Almost all people were at home and few were working from home. Though book lovers had free time, they were not able to buy new books either from the local market or online. During this time along with lifestyle, reading style of people has also changed. Digital reading and learning culture developed more than earlier and gained popularity. Reading or listening to good books, doing yoga, pranayama and other household activities was an option to many. Hence, this paper will establish the reading habits of people during the corona virus pandemic.

## 1.1. BACKGROUND

Corona virus pandemic was characterised by a widespread country lockdown. However, despite the challenge of physical contact, work activities, and school programs had to continue but people had to adjust by adopting new ways of doing their businesses. Kumar and Dwivedi (2020) observed that, lockdown impacts people on their daily routines and habits. These include Sleep, eating habits and internet usage. For many people enjoying the advantage of fast technological options, reading could be done with the use of audio books. An audio book according to Larson (2015) is an electronic book format which is listened to instead of being read in the traditional sense. Further, cognitive constructivist theory who are concerned with new literacy's perspectives (Leu, et.al2004&2013) recognize that literacy is persistently evolving and challenge teachers to transform reading instruction in response to emerging technologies and new possibilities for communication and collaboration within the literacy classroom.

For students to tap into the potential advantages of such reading devices, they need new literacy's, or "skills, strategies, and dispositions necessary to successfully use and adapt to the rapidly changing information and communication technologies by using the audio books and contexts that continuously emerge in our world" (Leu et. al 2004, p. 1572). However, the study was to establish how many people during the lockdown engaged in reading using such technologies.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the reading habits of the people during lockdown
- To study how different people are coping up with the change
- To study the lifestyle of people while working from home
- To study time management and hobbies people are following

## 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Following research questions were circulated among 250 people of different backgrounds using Google form and LinkedIn Poll. The options were given to select for all 13 questions and one last question was of descriptive type.

1. What is the geographical location of the study population during lockdown?
2. What is their profession?
3. How do they update themselves about the current pandemic?
4. What do you prefer to read/listen to?
5. Who prefers to listen to audio books?
6. When do you prefer to listen to audio books?
7. How many hours do they watch TV during lockdown?

8. How many hours do they watch YouTube videos?
9. What activities do they practice daily for health benefits?
10. Are they doing all the housework on their own?
11. Will their routine during lockdown affect their work and business after lockdown?

#### **1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The corona virus pandemic impacted many economies, businesses, and lifestyles in diverse ways. Learning institutions had to adjust in the manner they conducted their education and reading businesses in order to keep afloat with their ways of operating so as to remain relevant in the industry. Hence, many scholars reviewed the impact of Corona virus on people's lifestyles and captured varied experiences. The literature review in this study will examine various studies conducted in determining how the reading habits of people in learning institutions were affected during the pandemic. What is notable however is that E-Libraries have become more relevant in the present situation of COVID-19 pandemic as most countries underwent complete lockdown in the world of which physical contact was limited to conduct any activity?

For instance, a survey was conducted in India by Parikh, Vyas and Parikh, (2020) on the reading habits of various library users (volunteers) during the corona pandemic. The study discovered that, COVID-19 lockdown at home inspired library users to invest their time in reading more digital content and in particular eBooks, raising a debate for relooking at library policies for procuring more digital content and eBooks. This establishment meant that people had to adjust from their usual way of conducting business but opted for new ways of continuity in order to maintain their activities. Further, the study show that most of the academics only read between one to three hours per day and depended on the use of phones .This scenario to some extent indicates a reduction to a normal time that academics could have committed if the pandemic was not there. The assumption to the time reduction could mean that people had to allocate time to take care of their families as this period everyone was affected directly or indirectly by corona.

Similarly, Tyagi et al. (2020) carried out a cross-sectional survey on readership among college students during COVID-19 lockdown in a Northern City of India. The findings of this study indicate that most of the students read during lockdown. The lockdown offered the students the opportunity to read as much as they wanted an indication that they had more time to themselves to decide on what they could read. However, the study did not show which materials they read most.

Reading is a habit and can be addictive. During idle times, some people take reading to suppress some emotional stress. During COVID-19 period, some people's reading habits were activated due to time that was available and other emotional stress, hence some studies observed that some people's reading habits were increased from the usual. For instance, Adeyemi (2021) in his study tried to explore the influence of COVID-19 Lockdown on the reading habit of Nigerian inhabitants. In his study he found that the COVID-19 lockdown positively influenced the reading habits of the Nigerians. During the study

it was observed that most Nigerians only read for one to two hours in a day before the lockdown. But there was a significant increase with many of them improving their reading hours significantly to three or four hours during lockdown. It was also found that most Lagos state inhabitants used their phones to read during the COVID-19 lockdown. The findings of this study established that less than half of Lagos state inhabitants did not read for entertainment during the COVID-19 lockdown but read to kill boredom and necessarily read for pleasure. However, in some sections, students had to read in order to catch up with school work and hence they had to find means and ways of accessing the electronic resources for them to continue with their studies despite the limitation in the physical contacts.

In this regard, a study was conducted by Adigun et al. (2021) to understand the impact of Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown on reading engagement of students of selected secondary schools in Nigeria. In this study students indicated that they had enjoyed reading while the duration of time which they spent on reading is not commensurate with their claim in context of reading. In the study it is also found that the students who read during the corona crisis were in the minority. Nigerian students had the facility of the internet to browse the digital resources for reading. But there were some issues related to the internet facility and accessibility of digital resources which could not be utilized in meaningful reading activities. Therefore it is quite difficult to conclude that the reading that was taking place in the corona period among students can be generalised to be academic work. The reading content can be generalised to anything that was fascinating and not really catching up with school work. This resonates with the previous scholar Adeyami (2020) who observed that students were reading for pleasure as well as to kill boredom.

Students however tend to use audio books to remove boredom and also to enhance comprehension. This was proven by a study that was conducted by Wolfson (2008) regarding the need to use Audio books among adolescent readers to improve fluency, expand vocabulary, activate prior knowledge, develop comprehension, and increase motivation to interact with books. He observed that removing the restraints of word recognition and decoding allows a very positive focus on the meaning behind an author's words. This provides an opportunity for many students, including those with special needs to experience the same books as the other students. Further, he observed that best practices may be adapted to develop literacy skills before, during, or after listening. Specific skills that can be demonstrated include recalling details, understanding sequence, making predictions, drawing conclusions, making inferences, and retelling. For proficient readers, audio books present opportunities to develop comprehension skills and syntactic, and pragmatic. Hence, it is important to note that in order to build knowledge, one need to read aloud.

COVID-19 lockdown period was a period when people were subjected to make decisions on what they could do within their physical limits. As such, it is not only reading that people opted for in order to kill boredom but engaged in varied activities such as social media ,watching television and cooking.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study employed an online survey method of research to collect data from a selected population of people who were predefined. The aim of the method used was to have primary information regarding the reading habits of people during the corona virus lock down.

The main argument for using survey research is that it helps gather the most authentic data sets in the systematic investigation. As such, it helps in the gathering and collection of first-hand information from defined respondents

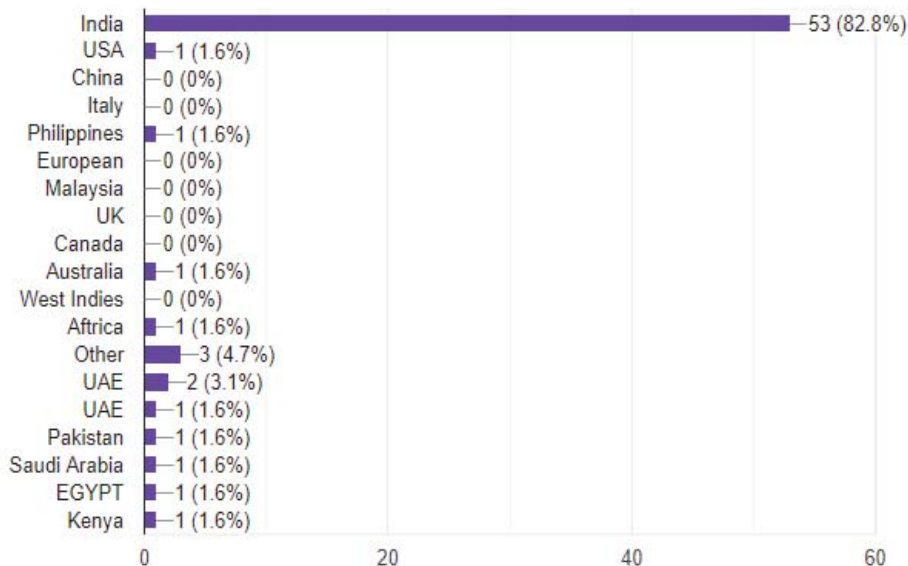
## 3. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY AND DISCUSSIONS:

COVID-19 lockdown according to the study brought out many experiences among the people. The findings of the study were based on a survey conducted representing global corona virus lockdown experiences on reading habits of individuals and their experiences. The findings are presented according to the research questions presented.

### 1. What is the geographical location of the study population during lockdown?

Country

64 responses

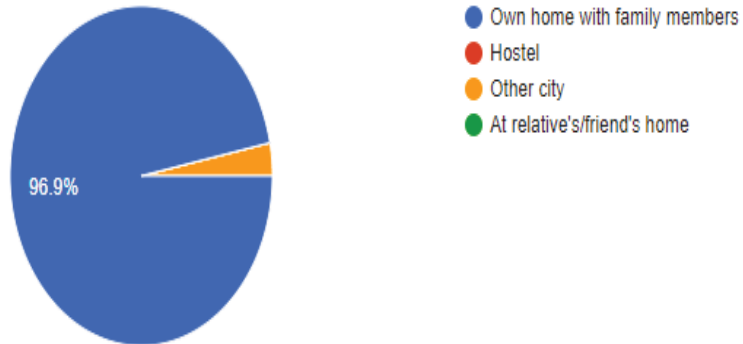


Graph 1: Geographical Location of the Population

The location of the respondents were captured from all over the world with India having the highest respondents at 82.8% and the least with 0%

During lockdown period are you at

64 responses



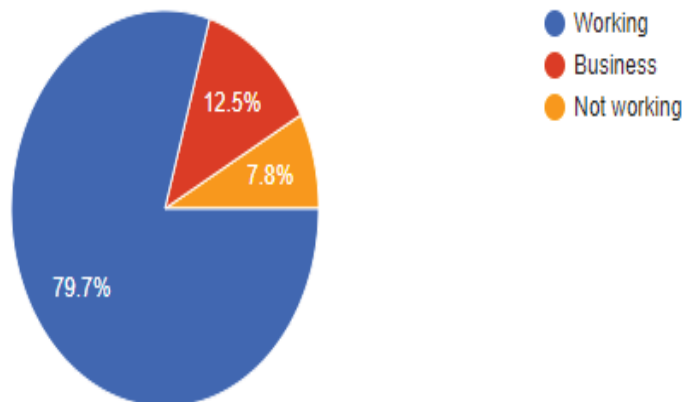
**Graph 2: Residence of the respondents during lockdown**

The study established that during the lockdown period 96.9% of the respondents were with family members at their own homes while 3.1% were in other cities

**2. What is their profession?**

Profession

64 responses



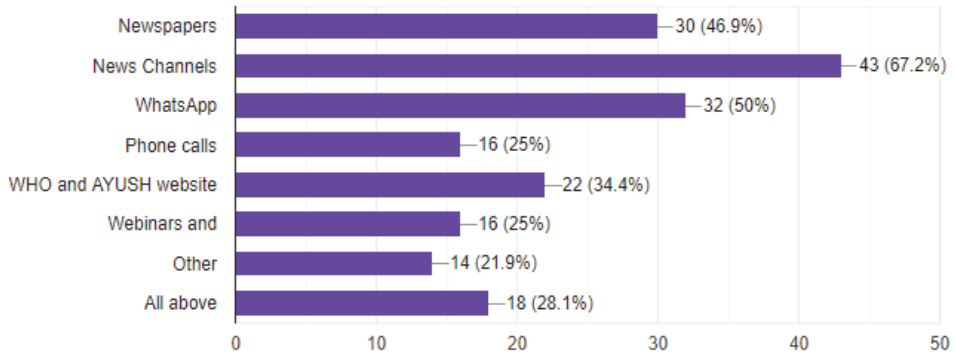
**Graph 3: Profession of the respondents**

The study indicates that 79.7% of the respondents during the lockdown were working class while 12.5% were involved in business and 7.8% were not working.

**3. How do they update themselves about the current pandemic?**

How you update yourself about current pandemic

64 responses



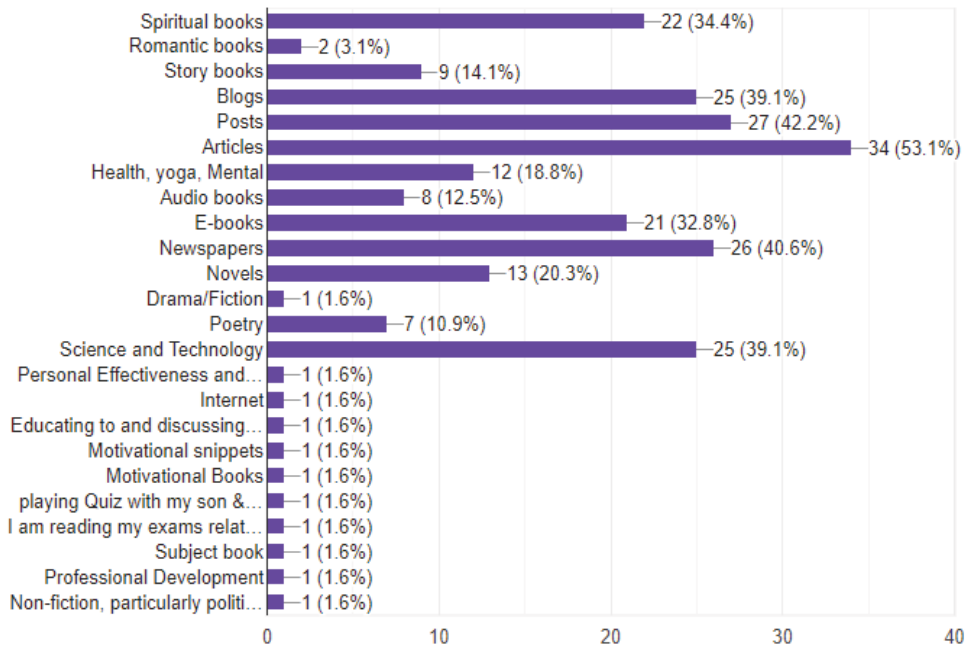
**Graph 4: How the respondents update themselves**

The findings of the study were that 67.2% were getting information update through news channels, 50% through Whatsapp, 46.9% through Newspapers while 21.9% through other means

**4. What do you prefer to read/listen to?**

Which reading material are you enjoying reading in this pandemic

64 responses



**Graph 5: Reading and Listening habits of the respondents**

Reading during the Corona lockdown was adopted as a habit. The findings of the study in this regard was that 53.1% of the respondents enjoyed reading articles to update their knowledge, 42.2% enjoyed reading posts, 40.6% were reading online newspapers to know what's happening around, 39.1% enjoyed blogs, 34% preferred to read spiritual books for their peace of mind and enlightenment, 27% were busy in reading various posts on social media, 20.3% read novels, while 12.5% enjoyed listening to audio books

**5. Who prefers to listen to Audio books?**

|                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Working professionals     | 50% |
| Retired/Unemployed people | 0%  |
| Students                  | 17% |
| Differently abled people  | 33% |

**Table 1: Audio books preference in respondents**

The study established that among those who listened to audio books, 50% were professionals, 33% were differently abled and 17% were students.

**6. When do they prefer to listen to audio books?**

|                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| While driving / flying  | 30% |
| Free time/ Before sleep | 61% |
| Morning walk            | 9%  |
| While working at office | 0%  |

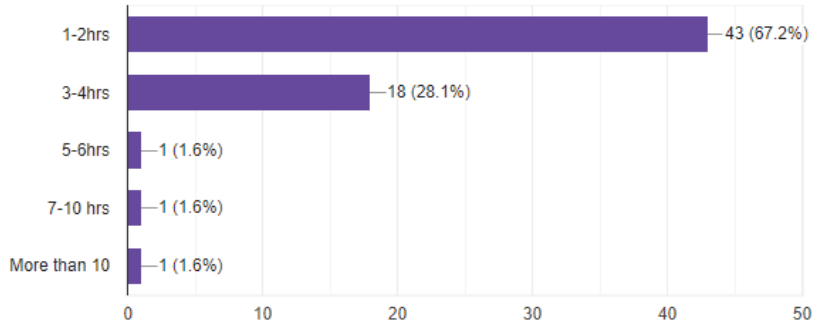
**Table 2: Audio books reading time preference in respondents**

When asked as to when they preferred to listen to audio books, 61% started during free time or before sleep, 30%while driving or flying , 9% during morning walks and )% while working at the office.

### 7. How many hours they watch TV during lockdown

How many hrs you watch TV during lockdown periox

64 responses



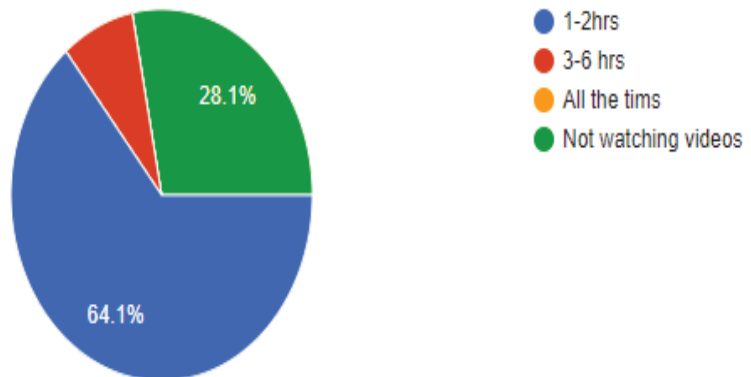
**Graph 6: TV watching habits of the respondents**

The study established that 67.2% of the respondents watched TV for 1-2hours during lockdown, 28.1% watched TV for 3-4hours and 1.6% watched for 5-6hrs, 7-10hrs and more than 10hrs respectively.

### 8. How many hours do they watch YouTube videos?

For how many hours you watch YouTube videos in this lockdown period

64 responses



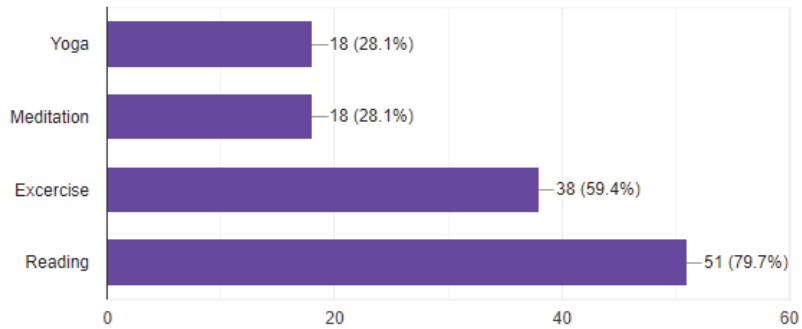
**Graph 7: You Tube watching habits of the respondents**

The findings of the study on how many hours' respondents watched YouTube videos indicate that 64.1% watched YouTube for 1-2hours, 28.1% were not watching any YouTube videos while the rest watched for 3-6 hours

9. What activities do they practice daily for health benefits?

What do you practice regularly

64 responses



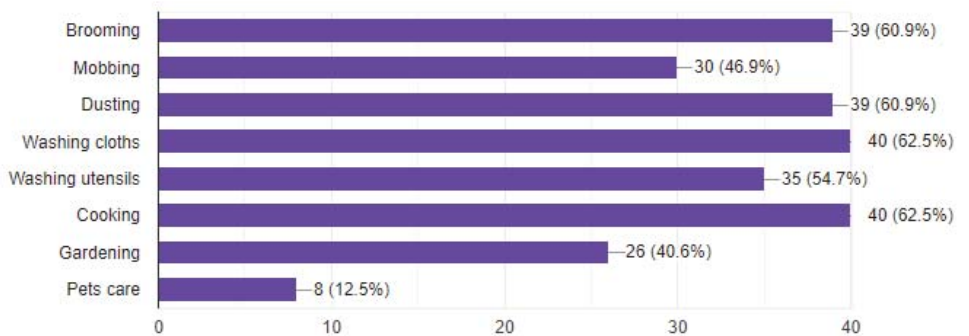
Graph 8: Other health related activities of the respondents

The study wanted to know what respondents practiced daily for health. The findings were that 79.7% were involved in reading, 59.4% engaged in exercises, while 28.1% were into Yoga and meditation.

10. Are they doing all the housework on their own?

Are you doing all house work on your own like

64 responses



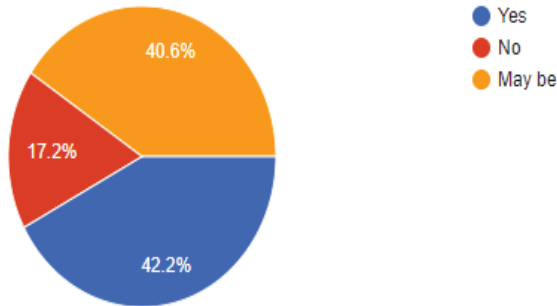
Graph 9: House work habits of the respondents during lockdown

The findings of the study indicated that 62.5% of respondents during lockdown were washing clothes and cooking on their own, 60.9% were brooming and dusting, 54.7% were washing utensils, 46.9% were mopping, 40.6% gardening and 12.5% were taking care of pets.

**11. Will their routine during lockdown affect their work and business after lockdown?**

Will this lockdown period routine will affect on your work/business after lockdown?

64 responses



**Graph 10: Routine of the respondents during lockdown**

Respondents were asked if the lockdown routines could affect their work and businesses. The response was that; 42.2% said yes it would affect them, 17.2% said No, it will not affect them and 40.6% were not sure of the effect as they indicated.

**4. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

**4.1. TO STUDY THE READING HABITS OF THE PEOPLE DURING LOCKDOWN**

The Covid 19 was a global pandemic that led to international lockdown leading to change of lifestyles among people. A survey study was undertaken to establish the reading habits of people during lockdown and the main respondents were captured from India. During the time of lockdown, the study established that 96.9% of the people were staying home with their families and only 3.1% were in other cities. It is evident from the findings of the study that the COVID-19 lockdown had to impose physical movements among people thus directly bringing about change of lifestyle. Among these respondents, 79.7% were working class, 12.5% were in business and 7.8% were not engaged in any activity.

The findings of the profile of the respondents point to the availability of time that people had at home to engage in personal activities with their families and this provided a rare privilege for the people to read in their spare time. Hence, the study established that 79.7% of the people during COVID-19 were involved in reading followed by exercising at 59.4% as a secondary activity. This corresponds with Tyagi et al. (2020) who carried out a cross-sectional survey on readership among college students during COVID-19 lockdown in a Northern City of India. The findings of this study indicate that most of the

students read during lockdown. Therefore, it is notable to state that the lockdown gave people enough time to read as much as they wanted.

In addition, the study indicates that the readers were mostly interested in reading articles as obtained from the survey which was at 53.1%. The study also indicates that 42.2% were interested in reading posts while 40.6% Newspapers. 12.5% preferred listening to audio books. It is however not clear whether this working population of respondents were also studying or they were reading for understanding purposes or it was just for leisure. This is in agreement with the study conducted by Ismail Olatunj Adeyemi (2021) who tried to explore the influence of COVID-19 Lockdown on the reading habit of Nigerian inhabitants. In his study he found that the COVID-19 lockdown positively influenced the reading habits of the Nigerians.

However, the study observed that there was low usage of Audio books as according to the findings, it was only at 12.5%. This raises unanswered questions as whether the working class were reading for academic purposes or it was just for leisure. If it was for leisure, maybe the usage would have been high. In the same view, the working class had a higher usage of Audio books at 50% , the differently abled at 33%. It can however be contended that since the study population involved the working class, then it influenced the usage of audio books as compared to the student category who were in the minority. It is further assumed that the students are the technology explorers and would have had a higher usage in this respect. The assumption is in line with Larson (2013) who stated that Audio books require skills, strategies, and dispositions necessary to successfully use and adapt to the rapidly changing information and communication technologies and contexts that continuously emerge in our world. It is in view of this that the differently abled due to their inability had a higher usage probably in the context of using them as assistive technologies. Therefore, reading habits of people during the COVID-19 pandemic were influenced by many factors.

#### **4.2. TO STUDY HOW DIFFERENT PEOPLE ARE COPING UP WITH THE CHANGE**

COVID-19 lockdown made people adjust to their routine activities. The findings of the study established that 61% of people would listen to audio books before sleeping when they are free. 30% while they are driving or flying, 9% during morning walks. Further, the study established that 67.2% of the respondents watched TV for 1-2hours during lockdown, 28.1% watched TV for 3-4hours and 1.6% watched for 5-6hrs, 7-10hrs and more than 10hrs respectively. The reduction in the hours of watching television entails that people had a monotonous kind of lifestyle and to cope they had to switch to the activity of reading or listening to audio books or do something that would keep the normal as they feared to be traumatically affected. These findings relate with a study that was conducted by Fornili, et al. (20121) which established that measures implemented in many countries to contain the COVID-19 pandemic by subjecting people to lockdown resulted in a change in lifestyle with unpredictable consequences on physical and mental health.

#### 4.3. TO STUDY THE LIFESTYLE OF PEOPLE WHILE WORKING FROM HOME

The study population comprised of mainly the working class which was at 79.7% meaning most of the activities conducted in the study relate to this category of the study population. The findings of the study in this regard were that 62.7% were watching TV for only 1-2hrs and only 1.6% would watch TV for more than 10hrs. Further, others engaged in watching YouTube and the findings of the study indicate that 64.1% watched YouTube for 1-2hours, 28.1% were not watching any YouTube videos while the rest watched for 3-6hours. The question that would arise is as to whether the YouTube videos they watched were part of their routine work or was it part of entertainment as it indicated an increase as compared to watching television.

In addition, it was established that the working class engaged in other activities during the lockdown. The findings were that 79.7% were involved in reading, 59.4% engaged in exercises, while 28.1% were into Yoga and meditation. However, since they were mostly at home, it was equally time to catch up with house chaos as confirmed from the study. The indicated that 62.5% of respondents during lockdown were washing clothes and cooking on their own, 60.9% were blooming and dusting, 54.7% were washing utensils, 46.9% were mopping, and 40.6% gardening and 12.5% were taking care of pets. This entails that people had to adjust their work schedules and fit in other activities as they had an opportunity to do so in their time. Being active and engaging in a variety of activities during lockdown helped in treating psychological distress that people went through. Karaivazolou, et al (2021) observed that, during the COVID-19 lockdown, a significant percentage of the population reported clinically important anxiety, depressive and post-traumatic stress symptoms. Women, less-educated individuals and people with a psychiatric history appeared more vulnerable to the pandemic's psychological impact. As such, engaging in more activities was helpful in restoring their mental health.

#### 4.4. TO STUDY TIME MANAGEMENT AND HOBBIES PEOPLE ARE FOLLOWING

COVID-19 lockdown was characterised by un-programmed activities and as such people found themselves engaged in uncoordinated activities just to keep going. In view of this the respondents were asked as to whether they would easily adjust to their programmed lifestyles of work after the COVID-19 pandemic. This was in order to establish their time management they were following. The response was that; 42.2% said yes it would affect them, 17.2% said No, it will not affect them and 40.6% were not sure of the effect as they indicated may be. From the findings, time management was not followed as each activity was conducted based on individuals desire and probably dictated by circumstance and not routine.

### 5. CONCLUSION

COVID-19 pandemic lockdown was a period of uncertainty. People's lifestyles were put on hold; there were limitations in conducting normal business activities in order to safeguard human life. The study

established that in the process of being physically limited, people adopted various mechanisms to cope whilst at home. This study was mainly composed of the working class who engaged in reading. The main materials they read were from articles. They further watched more of the YouTube videos and not television. However, alongside, they engaged in exercises, and did house activities to keep busy whilst at home. What is however not clear is whether during the time of reading they preferred academic related articles or it was just for information purposes. Nonetheless, the study also discovered that the working class used less of the audio books but for those that used them, they listened to them in their free time before going to bed. Hence, audio books to some extent were used as a calming technique or mechanism to cope with the stressful COVID-19 lockdown.

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