IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON CHILDREN: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This pandemic has not only affected the health conditions but has also influenced the mental health of children. However, they run the risk of becoming one of their most visible victims. Although the majority of them have been spared the direct health impacts of COVID-19 thus far, the problem has a significant impact on their well-being. Children of all ages and countries are influenced, in particular, by socioeconomic consequences and mitigation measures that, in certain cases, may inadvertently inflict more harm than good. This is a global disaster with long-term consequences for particular young individuals. Furthermore, the epidemic's negative consequences will not be distributed uniformly. Children, as well as those who are already disadvantaged or vulnerable, are more likely to be affected in the poorest countries and neighbourhoods. Fear and alarm have spread throughout the world because of the COVID-19 outbreak and shutdown¹. Children and adolescents are susceptible to long term mental health condition due the pandemic. Numerous vulnerabilities affect the quality and severity of the impact on children, including developmental stage, educational attainment, pre-existing mental health disorders, economic disadvantage or isolation as a result of an infection, or fear of infection. The research's primary objective is to identify and analyze the pandemic's impact on children.

Keywords: Pandemic, Children, Impact

Introduction

To date, children have largely been spared the severe, more prevalent clinical symptoms associated with ageing. Numerous reports of children being hospitalised and dying as a result of the virus have appeared; however, these are the exceptions and are mostly certainly related to pre-existing conditions. A youngster was far more likely to lose COVID-19 than a parent,


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family member, or caregiver\textsuperscript{2}. It is vital to assess the psychological impact of such a loss on youngsters. When health care facilities are congested with a large number of patients requiring treatment, children and pregnant women\textsuperscript{3} have a lower likelihood of receiving routine care.\textsuperscript{4} Children of frontline workers were also had to adapt to changing childcare arrangements. Children who already suffer considerable health care challenges in places of armed conflict may be further isolated from care and access to already congested healthcare facilities\textsuperscript{5}. Separation and lockout rules, travel limitations and border closures, and monitoring programmes can all have a detrimental effect on children. Face-to-face child services have historically included education, nutrition programmes for mothers and newcomers, immunisation, alternative care, community-based child protection programmes, and case management for children who require additional personal care, such as disabled children or abuse victims. Beyond physical health, the epidemic has far-reaching repercussions. As we will see in the following part, the pandemic had a detrimental effect on children's mental health, social development, security, privacy, and economic security, among other things. Children\textsuperscript{6} are particularly susceptible in refugee camps and in densely populated areas. While children are not affected by the epidemic, the virus's greater impact on children has the potential to be disastrous and have long-term consequences for communities. As the COVID-19 epidemic spreads across India and the world, one thing is certain: the current outbreak has an impact on society's mental health as well as its physical and economic health\textsuperscript{7}. Various population groups will be impacted in different ways. Children, in especially, will have a difficult time comprehending, digesting, and dealing with the changes that COVID-19 will bring to our environment. Children have limited access to socialisation, play, and even physical touch, which are critical to their mental well-being and

\textsuperscript{2}Rukumani, Dr.J. (2020). ANALYTICAL STUDY ON ROLE OF NURSING OFFICERS IN CURING COVID PANDEMIC.

development under the current lock-up and movement restrictions. School closures prevent students from attending classes and limit their interactions with their peers. Children may be perplexed by their current situation, leading to sadness and concern, which only worsens as a result of excessive exposure to mass and social media, particularly among teenagers. Some adults may struggle to explain and express the current situation to children in a way that this age group understands, adding to their anxiety and irritation. COVID-19 places additional load on parents and caregivers. This makes it difficult for them to care for their children and remain committed. Children, who are excellent observers of people and settings, will notice, absorb, and react to their caregivers' and community members' stress, which will invariably have an impact on their well-being. And that's just the start. Stress levels in low-income households will be five times higher. The situation is particularly difficult for children who lack parental care or alternative care, such as street children or migrants on the move.

Previous public health crises have demonstrated a significant risk of increased violence, such as sexual violence, domestic violence, and physical punishment of children and women.

**Impact on Education**

Many changes occurred because of Covid-19, and it took some time for everyone to adjust to the new normal. Covid-19's impact was felt all over the world, resulting in the closure of schools and other educational facilities. Most governments agreed to temporarily close schools in order to mitigate the impact of Covid-19. It was reopened for a few grades before being closed again, causing an increase in infection rates. Even though schools are closed, students can still attend classes through various educational initiatives such as online

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classrooms and on-line radio broadcasting\textsuperscript{15}. While this is a good thing, many students who do not have the financial resources to attend online classes suffer greatly as a result. Many students have difficulty obtaining the necessary equipment for online education. Teachers that are chalkboard, chalk, book, and classroom professionals are new to digital education, but they adapt and manage it as experts to assist students in their current situation. Many instructors, on the other hand, are seeking for other ways to support their families. Educated parents encourage their children throughout the epidemic, but we must acknowledge that some alphabets feel powerless to help their children with their education.\textsuperscript{16} There are children in India that go to school solely for the sake of eating. Many children who were unable to bring food from home benefited from the excellent midday meal programme. Because of the school's closure, many pupils went hungry. Exams are frequently postponed or cancelled, causing confusion among pupils and leaving no time for study. The majority of young people in school work for children in order to support their families. There is a good likelihood that the financial and opportunity costs of educating women\textsuperscript{17} and transgender children will affect their parents' financial and opportunity costs. This pandemic destroyed not just students, but also low-budget institutions and universities, forcing them to close. In the middle of the Covid-19, there are both positive and negative situations. Technology facilitates education by allowing students and teachers to connect remotely, such as through online classrooms, webinars, and digital evaluations. The sad reality is that many youngsters across the country do not have it. Everything is being done to ensure the safety of children at home, so that the potentially fatal sickness does not infect them. We weren't expecting it, but it occurred, and now we have to face it together. However, if we are to face a similar situation in the future, we must modernise our infrastructure and devise measures to deal with it, including educating every child in the thick of the epidemic. COVID-19 forced the closure of schools all around the world. More than 1.2 billion young people worldwide are not in school. According to research, online learning improves information retention and takes less time, implying that the coronavirus's alterations are retained. While infection rates in COVID-19 countries vary, school cancellations affect nearly 1.2 trillion children in 186 countries as a


result of the pandemic. Children up to the age of 11 return to crèches and schools in Denmark on March 12, but children in South Korea take roll call calls from their teachers online. With the rapid departure from the classroom in many parts of the world, some are concerned about whether the acceptability of online learning will be post-pandemic and how this would affect the global education sector. The epidemic was widespread in 45 European and Central Asian countries, affecting 185 million students. The unexpected nature of this crisis caught teachers and administrators off guard, prompting them to develop emergency remote learning solutions almost immediately. One disadvantage of distant emergency learning is the lack of a physical connection between teacher and learner. This simply cannot be accomplished through broadcasting. Several countries have taken the lead in improving remote education through the use of various technologies such as social media, e-mail, telephone, and even the postal service. As a result of the introduction of e-learning, in which instruction is delivered remotely via digital platforms, education has undergone significant changes.

Psychological Impact

In the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the demand for mental health counselling has skyrocketed, with anxiety and adjustment issues at the top of the priority list. Furthermore, during the COVID-19 shutdown, domestic violence in India reached a 10-year high. COVID-19, as well as the effects of quarantine and national lockouts, have caused and will continue to cause acute panic, anxiety, obsessive behaviour, paranoia, and depression, as well as the long-term development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). When it comes to completing developmental milestones in childhood, mental health is just as important as physical health. It improves the emotional well-being and social skills of children. Furthermore, mentally healthy children outperform their peers in their homes, schools, and communities, increasing their chances of enjoying a happy and prosperous life. Poor mental health, on the other hand, can have a significant impact on children's learning, behaviour, and emotions during infancy. The COVID-19 epidemic spawned a tangle of issues, many of which will continue to be felt for years to come.

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which have mental health repercussions for everyone, especially children and adolescents. Sorrow, concern, uncertainty, social isolation, excessive screen time, and parental exhaustion have all had negative consequences on children’s mental health. Children’s friendships and family support have substantial stabilising benefits, but the COVID-19 epidemic has rejected them. Certain young people, however, are more vulnerable to significant symptoms such as intense anxiety, melancholy, and suicidal ideation. Mental health issues, past trauma or abuse, family instability, or the death of a loved one can all make young people more vulnerable to major mental illnesses. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the mental health of millions of children was jeopardised, and at least one in seven were forced to stay at home due to public health restrictions – or suggestions – across the country. Since the virus spread uncontrollably this year, more than 330 million children have been trapped in their homes for at least nine months, until March 2021. The majority of parents and children expressed concern about the lockdown. The inability to meet friends and family members outside of the home was the most difficult challenge for children.22 Young children (3–6 years) had more emotional symptoms, fewer behavioural difficulties, and were less hyperactive than older children (7–10 years). The extent to which children missed other children, as well as the child’s age, were all found to be negatively associated with the overall satisfaction of children's lives. Being a single parent or having a single child both increased child difficulty. When combined, these data reveal information about children's and families' psychological well-being during government lockdowns, as well as the relationship between child coping and demographic background. They have implications for possible intervention opportunities, such as advocating for policies that strengthen social ties, with a particular emphasis on single parent households, children only, and families experiencing housing instability. Inattention, distraction, and panic were among the most frequently reported psychosocial and behavioral problems among children and adolescents throughout the epidemic, according to reports. Individuals with a history of mental illness are at a significantly increased risk..

**Impact on Family Dynamics**

Increased psychological suffering has resulted as a result of cultural upheavals and changes in standards that have become part of our new "normal," undermining the quality of parent-child

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relationships getting closer to equal duties at home) The closure of schools across India in March 2020 was imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In recent memory, children have spent more time at home than they have at any previous period in human history. A lack of outdoor and extracurricular activities, disruption of eating and sleeping routines, and time spent with peers have all been associated with feelings of boredom, misery, and fury, as well as a variety of neuropsychiatric diseases. Despite the notion that children's homes should be their safest haven, there is an increase in sexual, mental, and physical abuse of children nowadays. Conseqently, there has been an incredible worldwide mental health crisis, providing an unprecedented global challenge to psychological resilience on an unprecedented scale. This could lead to the emergence of a "second pandemic" of mental health crises in the near future. When their parents are imprisoned, children of single parents, particularly medical professionals caring for COVID-19 patients, are more likely to engage in physical combat with their parents. Separation between parents and children, whether temporary or permanent, can have a serious psychological impact on the child.

**Tackling the issues**

Fear, disappointment, grief, anxiety, rage, and loss are all frequent emotions among infants. The COVID-19 outbreak exacerbated the problem because it was protracted, confined, and widespread. Other concerns include increased screen time, strained family relationships, and a sedentary household environment. Being a parent can be difficult when confronted with the realities of COVID 19, societal alienation, and self-quarantine. The most effective way for parents to assist their children is for them to first assist themselves. In these situations, self-care is not egoistic because it enables caregivers to be a consistent, serene, and relaxing parent for their children. Parents will gain a better understanding of their children and will be able to put them at ease, relax, and pay attention. It is critical to maintain a calm and assertive demeanor when speaking with children and adolescents, as well as to observe how they communicate. Caregivers can engage children in creative activities like playing and sketching at school or at home to help them express and share negative emotions in a safe and supportive environment. This teaches young people healthy ways of expressing negative

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emotions like anger, fear, and grief. Due to the fact that children frequently accept emotional evidence from significant individuals such as parents and teachers, adults must appropriately control and calm their own emotions, listen to children’s concerns, discuss them politically, and reassure them. Psychological disorders left untreated can impair a child's ability to function in the family, school, and community. Parents and teachers should learn how to recognize and respond to early symptoms of mental health problems in children because they are the first to notice changes in a child’s emotions or behavior. Children and teenagers should be taught to express their emotions and to seek help from a trustworthy friend or family member. With early intervention, the long-term mental health consequences of the COVID-19 epidemic can be avoided. Mild anxiety symptoms, such as difficulty sleeping or concentrating, have become more common. However, children are quite resilient, and the majority of them can survive with the help of their parents and classmates. Certain young people, however, are more vulnerable to significant symptoms such as intense anxiety, melancholy, and suicidal ideation. Mental health issues, past trauma or abuse, family instability, or the death of a loved one can all make young people more vulnerable to major mental illnesses. Parents and caregivers are the people who are the most familiar with their children. These behavioral characteristics change as the child grows older. Thumb sucking, bedwetting, sleeping problems, loss of appetite, night terrors, behavioral regression, or withdrawal in children under the age of five. Among children aged 5 to 10, irritability, violence, clutching, nightmares, escaping school, poor focus, and withdrawal are common. Hyperactivity or fidgeting, difficulty sleeping and eating, upheaval, rising confrontations, body complaints, criminal behavior, and poor focus are all common in teenagers aged 10 to 19. In these trying times, try to create a positive environment at home to help young people feel happy and at ease.

**Conclusion**

This study adds to our understanding of the psychological context and the impact of the epidemic on young children. Initially, we used parental report measures to better characterise

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family dynamics during the COVID-19 outbreak. This can be especially limiting when measuring children's emotional experiences. Because human interaction was prohibited during the lockdown, the options for large-scale data collecting were limited. Future research should focus more directly on children's behavior and experiences during difficult times. Second, our sample contains an overrepresentation of parents with affluence, reducing the study's external validity. This sample distortion may be explained by the online questionnaire's requirement for a high-tech environment with reliable Internet access. While lower socioeconomic families are affected, additional research is needed to accurately assess the pandemic's effects across the socioeconomic spectrum. Additionally, because socioeconomic status was not considered, financial resources may have an effect on the relationship between child outcomes and household amenities.
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