

## EFFECT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN

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### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic had a large global impact on the lives and education of more than 1.6 billion children at its peak. To combat the pandemic, India, like many other countries, has implemented a policy of school lockdowns beginning in mid-March 2020. Because of the lockdown, schools embraced and pursued remote learning via video conferencing methods. Teachers, students, and their families have faced a variety of issues, including increased stress and worry, which has harmed their mental health. The purpose of this paper is to review the mental health of children and adolescents affected by the COVID-19 epidemic.

### INTRODUCTION

Lockdowns were implemented in India on March 24 and have gradually been relaxed since September 2020, but schools remain closed and online classes have replaced classroom teaching. This circumstance provides children and teenagers with ideal settings for greater internet use and seclusion. Parents are concerned about their children's mental health as a result of school closures, social isolation, and increased internet use. The increased availability of internet access makes it more difficult for parents to restrict this access, and regular and unsupervised internet use has been linked to self-harm and suicidal behaviour in teenagers with psychiatric risk factors (Al-Tawfiq, Ali & Ziad, 2020).

Pandemics have been linked to deteriorating mental health in the past. The circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 epidemic have heightened stress and anxiety in people, including high school pupils. Another study indicated a considerably greater proportion of youth with psychological disorders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is not as fatal in children and adolescents as it is in adults, but it causes significant psychological suffering in this age range (Huang & Chaolin, 2020). Adolescents are experiencing acute and chronic stress as a result of parental anxiety, disruption of daily routines, growing family violence, and house confinement with little or no access to peers, teachers, or physical activity.

### THE EFFECT ON YOUNG CHILDREN

The pandemic and lockdown have a stronger influence on emotional and social development in young children and adolescents than in adults. In one of the earliest studies conducted during the ongoing pandemic, it was discovered that younger children (3-6 years old) were more prone than older children to exhibit symptoms of clinginess and anxiety of family members becoming sick (6-18 years

old). The older children, on the other hand, were more likely to be inattentive and inquisitive about COVID-19 (Grover & Sandeep, 2020). Despite this, all children, regardless of age group, had serious psychological disorders such as increased irritability, inattention, and clinging behaviour.

#### THE EFFECT ON HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

Unfortunately, nationwide school and college closures have had a detrimental impact on more than 91 percent of the world's student population. Children and adolescents who are confined at home experience uncertainty and worry as a result of disruptions in their education, physical activity, and socialisation chances (Das, 2020). The absence of a structured educational setting for an extended period disrupts habit, boredom, and a lack of inventive ideas for engaging in various academic and extracurricular activities.

It has been reported that panic buying during times of stress is instinctive survival behaviour. Hoarding behaviour among youngsters has increased in the current pandemic era. It has also been discovered that among adolescents, social distancing is largely perceived as a social responsibility, and it is more genuinely followed if driven by prosocial motivations to keep others from being ill (Sher, 2020).

#### ADDED DIFFICULTIES

- Being a parent is a constant story, especially when mixed with the realities of COVID 19, social isolation, and self-quarantine. The best way for parents to help their children is for them to first help themselves.
- Self-care during these times is not immoral because it allows guardians to be steady, peaceful, and soothing parents for their children. Parents will also be able to better understand their children and make them feel reassured, relaxed, and focused in this manner (Wang & Cuiyan, 2020).
- Untreated mental health issues can interfere with children's functioning at home, school, and in the community. Because they are the first to notice changes in a child's emotions or behaviour, parents and teachers should be trained to detect and treat early indicators of mental health disorders in children (Dohrenwend & Barbara, 1982).
- It is critical to be calm and proactive in your interactions with children and to check in with them to see how they are doing. Their emotions will fluctuate frequently, and you must demonstrate that this is normal (Iqbal, Naved, & Kaiser, 2020).
- Mild anxiety symptoms, such as difficulty sleeping or focusing, have become prevalent. However, children are incredibly resilient, and most will be able to cope with the help of their parents and classmates (Lu & Han, 2020).

#### HOW TO SAFEGUARD KIDS' AND YOUTHS' MENTAL HEALTH

**At the individual level:** We must empower our youth and assist them in becoming more resilient persons. There are several ways to accomplish this. Stress management workshops, self-help e-courses, and, of course, physical exercise routines, and professional therapy support must all be implemented by organizations (Rossi & Rodolfo, 2020).

**At the local level:** These are communities such as academic course batches, for example. Academic institutions must make training in psychological first aid and suicide prevention necessary for their respective populations, including students. The purpose here is to foster peer support as well as a caring community culture (Deblina, 2020).

**At the organisational level:** We must ensure that youth mental health is on the agenda at the highest levels of leadership, whether at the academic, institutional, or governmental levels. It is our job as a country and as a community to protect our youth and to be there for them during their most difficult times. We must equip our pupils with the tools they need to become resilient, well-rounded people (Ruan, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

According to a report by World Health Organization (2021), COVID-19's current predicament has had an impact on the students' mental health, particularly in some areas. Although students are discovering ways to deal with the uncertain situation, such as creating a schedule for daily activities, getting involved in skill development, and increasing use of social media for entertainment and also to gain information about safety measures, the ramifications of uncertainty, feelings of depression, and differences in male-female and urban-rural students can be seen on a scale (Saladino, Valeria, Davide Algeri & Vincenzo, 2020).

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