

Psychological condition of Children during Lock down of Covid 19

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ABSTRACT

Almost one in four children living under COVID-19 lockdowns, social restrictions and school closures are dealing with feelings of anxiety, with many at risk of lasting psychological distress, including depression. Even as several countries gradually begin lifting their lockdowns, many schools remain closed—affecting almost 1.3 billion children and students worldwide—and strict social restrictions are likely to remain in place across the globe. This leaves children and youth who are already at risk—such as those living in challenging home environments or children who are lacking social support or whose families are already facing poverty—especially vulnerable. Research shows that feelings of helplessness, loneliness and fear of being socially excluded, stigmatized or separated from loved ones are common in any epidemic, while prolonged stress, boredom and social isolation, as well as a lack of outdoor play, can lead to a higher number of mental health conditions in children, such as anxiety and even depression.

Key Words: *Psychological Condition, Children, Lock Down, Covid 19*

INTRODUCTION

A normal psychological condition is generally described as a mental condition in which the qualities of a mental state are relatively constant even though the state itself may be dynamic. Psychological condition varies in different stages of life span like, childhood, adolescence adulthood, elderly etc. This condition is more

fluctuating normally during childhood and adolescence as compare to other stages of life span.

Thus childhood being sensitive part of life span in terms of health, education, behavior, psychology etc, needs for more attention during challenging time. It is quite possible that during current the situation of lockdown, children may face many psychological and behavioral issues like

Anxiety, Depression, stress etc. Children may exhibit behavioral and emotional changes due to the extended lockdown situation in the wake of the corona virus pandemic.

Numerous options such as going to school, spending time at gardens or parks with friends, going for a walk, hugging, playing games have been restricted for hygiene. Especially toddlers and preschool children may not feel safe because they are in a new and uncertain routine. Within this period, children can unconsciously show some regression in their behavior as a coping skill, returning to a developmental stage where they feel safer. Interrupting the relationship with the parent and trying to deal with this emotional loss in quarantine conditions can be an unforgettable experience for children.

Further mental issues among children are evident in the way children typically learn, behave, or handle their emotions, which cause distress and problems getting through the day. Along with other conditions and concerns that affect children's learning, behavior, and emotions include learning and developmental disabilities, autism, and risk factors like substance use and self-harm.

In this article an attempt is being made to look at current situation of children across the globe.

Global Scenario

The corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the social distancing measures that many countries have implemented have caused disruptions to daily routines. As of April 8, 2020, schools have been suspended nationwide in 188 countries, according to UNESCO. Over 90% of enrolled learners (1.5 billion young people) worldwide are now out of education. The UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay warned that "the global scale and speed of the current educational disruption is unparalleled". (The Lancet: Child & Adolescent Health) JUNE 01, 2020.

In UK, for children and adolescents with mental health needs, such closures mean a lack of access to the resources they usually have through schools. In a survey by the mental health charity Young Minds, which included 2111 participants up to age 25 years with a mental illness history in the UK, 83% said the pandemic had made their conditions worse. 26% said they were unable to access mental health support; peer support groups and face-to-face services have been cancelled, and support by phone or online can be challenging for some young people.

While Zanonnia Chiu, a registered clinical psychologist working with children and adolescents in Hong Kong said that, School routines are important coping mechanisms for young people with mental health issues.

When schools are closed, they lose an anchor in life and their symptoms could relapse. “Going to school had been a struggle for [some children with depression] prior to the pandemic, but at least they had school routines to stick with”, where schools have been closed since Feb 3. “Now that schools are closed, some lock themselves up inside their rooms for weeks, refusing to take showers, eat, or leave their beds.” For some children with depression, there will be considerable difficulties adjusting back to normal life when school resumes. According to Chi-Hung Au (University of Hong Kong), Hong Kong, China, “Children with special education needs such as those with autism spectrum disorder are also at risk. Children can become frustrated and short-tempered when their daily routines are disrupted”. He advised parents to create a schedule for their children to reduce anxiety induced by uncertainty. With speech therapy sessions and social skills groups suspended, he cautions that stopping therapy can stall progress, and children with special needs might miss their chance to develop essential skills. He also point out that creative ways, such as online speech and social skills training, are needed to make up for the loss. (The Lancet: Child & Adolescent Health) JUNE 01, 2020

With the above global scenario, the article further tries to highlight the scenario at the National level.

National Scenario

According to child therapists and psychologists Children’s mental health has been the biggest casualty during the lockdown. Worried parents have kept these professionals busy calling about psychosomatic disorders their children execute.

As shared by Dr. Harish Shetty, social psychiatrist for LH Hiranandani hospital, Mumbai “Anxiety travels faster than a virus. I get four six calls a week from parents whose children are showing behavioral changes during lockdown.”

Mr. Harish Shetty further shared a case where a six-year old woke up continuously with nightmares of the virus chasing him. “Children dream of their days in school, playgrounds but now they are cooped up inside and are not making happy memories”.

“Some cases have been so severe that they were asked to come to the hospital for medications... Once the lockdown is lifted, there will be an avalanche of such cases,” said the doctor. (The Economic Times)

According to online survey conducted by children's organization Child Rights and You (CRY) has found “Healthcare and education of children have suffered considerably across the country during the lockdown meant to curb the COVID-19 spread.”

One in every four (27 per cent) four of the respondents, the parents or primary caregivers, reported non-accessibility of regular healthcare services for children during the lockdown—highest from the North (31 per cent), followed by the South (21 per cent). In other regions, lack of access to regular healthcare facilities was experienced by less than 20 per cent of the parents.

Even though children have not been the face of this pandemic as they have largely been spared of the direct health effects of COVID-19 so far, findings of the study indicate that they have been among its biggest victims with multiple side-effects on their physical and psycho-social well-being, the CRY said.

Thus following Common reactions to COVID-19 among Parents are depicted.

- Concern about protecting children from the virus because they are at higher risk of serious illness.
- Concern that regular medical care or community services may be disrupted due to facility closures or reductions in services and public transport closure.
- Feeling socially isolated, especially if children live alone or are in a community setting that is not allowing visitors because of the outbreak.

- Guilt if children help them with activities of daily living.
- Increased levels of distress if children:
- Show mental health concerns before the outbreak, such as depression.
- Live in lower-income households or have language barriers.
- Experience stigma because of age, race or ethnicity, disability, or perceived likelihood of spreading COVID-19.

Conclusion:

Children and adolescents are likely to experience high rates of depression and anxiety after current lockdown and social isolation e. Clinical services along with specific Social Work interventions need to be prepared.

Based on the above background information and observation made, the article concludes Possible Social Work Intervention with parents as follows:

Social Work Intervention

- Medications for children should be kept handy
- Keep a 4-week supply of prescription and over the counter medications ready.
- Monitor other medical supplies (oxygen, incontinence,

dialysis, wound care) needed and create a back-up plan.

- Stock up on non-perishable food (canned foods, dried beans, pasta) at home to minimize trips to stores.
- If child is living in a care facility, monitor the situation and speak with facility administrators or staff over the phone. Ask about the health of the other residents frequently and know the protocol.
- Help the children to cope with stress and reduce anxiety.
- Keep it positive, Maintain Daily Routine, Manage Bad Behavior, Spend time Together, Go Out When Possible
- Specific Psychological Remedies include: Comfort calling to the Children saying away in residential schools and are away from home
- Virtual Family get together may work wonders.
- Parents should not leave the jobs in hands in spite of all the odds as this may increase their financial burden
- To “take it easy” attitude as far as studies of the children are concerned as this may add on the already stress created by online learning practices.

- Call the government helpline numbers or consult nearest Counseling centre if need arises.
- Do not hesitate or feel shy to ask for help related to groceries/ stationeries etc.

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