

A Comprehensive Analysis of the Possible Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Growth and Development of Children

Dr. Samapika Das Biswas^{1*}

ABSTRACT

The 2019 Corona Virus – COVID 19 may not have impacted as a disease on the health of the children so far as supported by the medical literature however it has deeply impacted the mental and physical growth of the children. Being confined within the four walls of the homes or quarantined in institutions, unable to employ energy into physical activities, increased screen time due to online classes, disrupted sleeping hours and food habits is causing psychological burden for the children. Children, although not being directly impacted by the epidemic, are paying a high price as a result of the pandemic's indirect effects, such as inadequate nutrition, mental health consequences, social alienation, screen addiction, and a lack of education and health care, especially among disadvantaged communities. Catering to the mental and physical growth of the children with more effort than before is necessary now to save the future generation from facing a dark future.

Keywords: *Impact, Psychological Burden, Social Alienation, COVID-19, Quarantine*

Children are assumed to be the biggest victims of this pandemic. Children of all ages from all countries are being affected by the socio, economic impact caused by COVID-19. The first cases of the novel Coronavirus were reported by Wuhan Municipal Health Commission, China, for the Wuhan, Hubei Province where multiple cases of pneumonia were identified on December 31, 2019 (WHO, 2020) The rapid outbreak of the virus around the world has crippled the civilization causing millions of deaths. The pandemic is a universal crisis and for some children it is going to be a lifelong impact. It is believed that the harmful impact of the pandemic is going to hit the poorest and developing countries the most. Children and teenagers have had their routines severely disrupted as a result of school closures and a lack of recreational activities. In the light of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, most parents had to reorganize their work style to working from home as well as child care. As a result, this sudden overload has been putting parents under extra stressful conditions, potentially increasing the risk of children face emotional and behavioral problems (C. Crescentini, 2020) It has now become very important to make sure

¹Assistant Head of the Department, Basic Science & Humanities; Associate Professor & Counsellor, Institute of Engineering and Management, Kolkata

^{*}Corresponding Author

Received: June 24, 2021; Revision Received: September 01, 2021; Accepted: September 15, 2021

© 2021, Das Biswas S.; licensee IJIP. This is an Open Access Research distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any Medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

A Comprehensive Analysis of the Possible Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Growth and Development of Children

to reflect on the impacts caused by the pandemic on the growth and development of the children.

In this analysis we are going to refer to the reports published by the international organizations such as WHO and UNICEF on the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on the growth and development of the children. Unless we realize the impacts there won't be any measure to cope with these impacts. Therefore, this is going to be a comprehensive analysis of the possible impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on the growth and development of Children.

Poverty

Due to the global economic downfall and recession more families are forced into poverty. For the families that who do not have any sort of insurance or savings this situation is proving to be even more crucial. Due to the lockdown many are jobless and have lost their source of income. According to a study published by UNICEF (Hub, 2020) the global socioeconomic crisis triggered by the Covid -19 pandemic could drive 142 million children into poverty in developing countries. Children do not experience poverty like how adults do. For children it is important to examine their material shortcomings and potential deprivations multidimensionally and not just by income. This includes losing the education opportunity, health care, housing, nutrition etc. According to the analysis carried jointly by Save the Children and UNICEF around 45% of children were already lacking any one of the above-mentioned needs prior to the pandemic. And the figure is expected to increase if goes unattended by the national and international communities (WHO, 2020)

Learning Crisis

Schools globally have been closed due to the lockdown imposed by the countries for over a year now. This has drastically impacted the learning process. Though schools are making every possible effort to conduct online classes. However, in poorer countries not all families are able to afford all the technical support required to avail online classes.

Learning Crisis existed even before the pandemic, the crisis has increased now after being hit by the pandemic. According to the report published by UNICEF (Hub, 2020) one in three of the children- 463 million children globally have been hit by the learning crisis hard and are unable to access remote learning.

For some children remote learning, the technology required may be all of these are available however their learning is still disrupted due to the skill gaps or teacher or parental support. Learning capacity varies from child to child and distance education might not prove to be a very effective mode of learning for all rather may create learning gaps.

Increased Risk of Child Abuse

COVID-19 has brought about depression in almost every household. Job loss, reduced income, loss of life, being affected by the virus, living in quarantine, lack of social interaction all together is causing mental depression. Especially for children being confined within the walls of their home and unable to exhaust their growing energy is making them more hyper and behave unruly at home. This in turn outrages the parents who are already depressed due to any of the above-mentioned reason resulting in child abuse.

A Comprehensive Analysis of the Possible Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Growth and Development of Children

In developing countries child marriage is still an existing struggle and it is being forecasted by UNICEF that in the coming 10 years over 10 million girls will face the risk of child marriage due to the poverty caused by the pandemic (Hub, 2020)

Malnutrition

Numerous shocks have been caused by the pandemic. In order to avoid transmission of the virus the food system has also been disrupted. In many countries schools provide nutritious meals to its students alongside free education. Due to the schools being closed those children are missing out on these meals as it is their family is hit by poverty already. UNICEF (Hub, 2020) also reported that “As many as 132 million people may have gone hungry in 2020, of that 44 million are children. Poverty is another cause because of which many children are unable to have three meals of the day. Some are sustaining just by procuring one meal day which is also not nutritious but it is just to meet the hunger.

Psychosocial Impact

Child psychology is even more complicated than adults. It has been reported that, children have been facing multiple psychosocial and behavioral problems such as stubbornness, lack of concentration, disobedience etc during this pandemic. Children also face anxiety and depression. Unable to express themselves and also for some parents failure to understand the reason for the behavior of their children deepens the problem. Being locked inside their homes, unable to meet their friends, accepting this new normal altogether is a big shock for the children. Their normal growth and development process has been hampered and it's deteriorating the mental health of the children.

CONCLUSION

This pandemic may not have hit the children directly but have not hit them any less. They are the future of every nation. The way we nurture them today will define how they will behave tomorrow. Every nation, every family is going through a tough time. But childcare cannot be ignored. While the focus has shifted to catering to the aid of the Covid-19 affected people it is now time to also focus on the above-mentioned impacts that the pandemic is causing on the children across the globe. National and international bodies responsible for child welfare in support of the government would need to work aggressively. It is not only the institutions but also families need to do their bit to cater to the needs of the children as much as possible so that children don't go ignored.

REFERENCES

- C. Crescentini, S. F. (2020). Stuck outside and inside: an exploratory study on the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on Italian parents and Children's internalizing symptoms. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 586074.
- Hub, U. D. (2020, March). *Covid 19 and Children*. Retrieved from UNICEF: <https://data.unicef.org/covid-19-and-children/#:~:text=With%20COVID%2D19%20putting%20enormous,risk%20of%20disease%20or%20death>.
- WHO. (2020, April 27). *WHO Timeline - COVID-19*. Retrieved from World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/news/item/27-04-2020-who-timeline---covid-19>

Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

A Comprehensive Analysis of the Possible Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Growth and Development of Children

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Das Biswas S. (2021). A Comprehensive Analysis of the Possible Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Growth and Development of Children. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(3), 1482-1485. DIP:18.01.136.20210903, DOI:10.25215/0903.136