



# EXPLORING THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 OUTBREAK ON CHILDREN AND ADOLSCENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

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## ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has sparked fear and uncertainty across the world. Thereby the youth have undergone temporary and chronic psychological and physical health implications. This can become a risk factor as it affects youngsters' growth and development. Numerous risk variables appear; including development phase, education level, and a history of psychological disorder, have an impact on the quality and severity of the effect on individuals. The population has been informed regarding the widespread biological impacts of the recently found virus, along with the precaution to avoid contamination as well as to help alleviate the symptoms if it arises. Even though major attempts have been concentrated toward comprehending the COVID19 outbreak, just a slight degree of worry has been expressed concerning the pandemic's effects on psychological wellbeing including solutions for preventing stereotyping. This effect of the pandemic affecting individuals and society can hinder their physiological, psychological, and social development. This paper aims to concentrate on various risk factors to mental health such as disruption in daily routine, social isolation, lack of physical activity, family stress, physical violence among youth, and how to improve their mental well-being in order to prevent a negative impact upon the mental health of next-generation youth.

**KEYWORDS: COVID – 19, Pandemic, Mental health, Children, Adolescents**

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## **I. OVERVIEW**

The COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies an all-encompassing role in the global health crisis of our time. COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization in March 2020, placing everyone on high alert. The coronavirus, also known as COVID 19, is a contagious disease caused by coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) which causes the severe acute respiratory syndrome.

Children and adolescents across the globe seem to be affected by the impacts of COVID 19. While youngsters tend to be less susceptible to the infection, the pandemic's negative effects may become extremely severe. Youngsters would remain more susceptible to the pandemic's biological, psychosocial, and environmental factors. Also, the implementation of population-wide control steps to prevent virus transmission has affected the youngsters by disrupting their everyday activities due to the community alienation as well as their limited capability in order to perceive and understand the outbreak's temporary and permanent repercussions. The trauma and anxiety experienced by young people during their developmental period can have long-term consequences during adulthood.

COVID 19 poses a risk to growth because of the adversity of illness, social isolation, routine disruption, and the stressful environment around them. Such circumstances can cause toxic stress, with long-term consequences for brain growth, and long-term deterioration in memory, emotional and physical health, and working ability in future adults. People are currently amid an unpredictable worldwide circumstance characterized by numerous characteristic stressors. Individuals are affected by many factors which include their physiological, cognitive, emotional and socioeconomic problems. The variability and complexity of physical and psychosocial stimuli in the COVID-19 pandemic necessitate a multifaceted response, which has uncertain implications on youths psychosocial functioning.

## II.EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

The coronavirus pandemic has created widespread, environmental, and socio-economical disruptions, as well as a severe overburdening of the health and education setup. The global community's daily activities, particularly among young people have been significantly disrupted by the unpredictably enforced through social isolation. To promote and adhere to social distancing protocols, most schools switched to home-based online schooling for adhering to the precautions designed for limiting virus transmission. A sudden modification of the educational setting along with reduced human interaction creates an unusual experience for youngsters' cognitive development. Since many mental health problems develop during childhood, assessing and analyzing the emotional and mental influence of the widespread coronavirus on youth is vital.

The public protocol limitations have restricted the youth and disrupted their daily routine. As a result of the lack of effective communication and human interaction, youngsters may become more dependent on their parents and it can affect their cognitive development and emotional wellbeing. The transition away from traditional classrooms has resulted in a rapid change in the learning atmosphere. Many young people do not experience an obvious sense of isolation, as they compensate by spending time with family and the internet. Increased screen time use is often associated with poor eating patterns, and a lack of control over internet use increases exposure to cyber offenders, possible fraud, and access to inappropriate content.

Through interactions, with peers' adolescents are supposed to build interpersonal skills, empathy, and a feeling of belongingness. When they return to social settings, their detachment from social outlets and peers will have implications. Adolescents may be frustrated by incidents and experiences they have not experienced. Problems such as poor academic performance, heightened agitation, hostility, and deterioration can be evident. They even become more susceptible to the harmful impacts and are more likely to experience PTSD, depression, drug abuse, and anxiety disorders, among other things. Furthermore, the pandemic has interrupted children's regular activities, contributing to disruption in sleep pattern and increased levels of stress. Ambiguity about their prospects, education, acquaintance, and lethargy as a result of the outbreak poses a danger to their mental health and puts them at risk.

The pandemic has exposed parents and their kids to both primary and secondary stressors which led to emotional upheaval. Numerous months of home stay enabled parents and guardians to work from home. As a result of which the parental stress is transposed to the children, which can pose serious risks to children and adolescents later development by affecting their socio-emotional wellbeing and putting them at risk of depression and anxiety.

Social isolation has led to an increased level of domestic abuse like mistreatment and disregard because of parental uncertainties prevalent during this time. Owing to the restriction on movement induced by lockdown, underprivileged youth are more likely to be mistreated and become victims of exploitation and assault. Frustration and family conflict can manifest themselves as violence against children. This makes the person more exposed to anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts. School closures, along with economic difficulty, may force them into child labour.

The parent-child relationship during the pandemic becomes more challenging when children with special needs or who have a medical condition are more susceptible. These children who are differently-abled such as ADHD, spastic paralysis, cognitive impairment along with socio-emotional issues, encounter challenges. Due to the closure of special education and day care facilities, the kids no longer receive exposure to resources, social circle interaction or the opportunity for improving essential cognitive and social abilities. These circumstances can however lead to temper tantrums and parent-adolescent strife. It is challenging for families to handle differently-abled toddlers and adolescents due to the absence of professional guidance, as they were dependent on institutions and therapist for support and assistance.

Children and adolescents are in a critical stage of development. They may struggle to understand the concept and importance of mental wellbeing. They have a limited understanding of the pandemic and its dangers because they lack coping mechanisms and are unable to express their emotions, unlike adults. So there comes a heightened need to preserve their mental health.

### III.SUGGESTIVE MEASURES

There is an essential need to incorporate education to increase youngsters' accessibility to services and facilities throughout the present crisis. For this, an uninterrupted and virtual collaboration network is required. The government as well as the public health organizations must understand the effects of this unusual situation on youths by enacting mitigation steps and making investments to minimize the damage.

Parents should be patient and cope with the situation effectively to counter negative habits. Parents who engage their children in healthy activities can help to ease stress and fear, as well as provide comfort to the overall situation. It is important to provide children with additional knowledge about COVID-19 from a variety of outlets. Children will be more informed of the reasons for quarantine and will learn more about COVID-19 as a result of this. Furthermore, children should be taught coping strategies that enable them to self-regulate their feelings without relying on others. Because of the pandemic's indirect isolation, children should perform better in a challenging situation with proper training and knowledge to support oneself. To guarantee the well-being of youth during the COVID-19 outbreak caregivers, educators, doctors, support groups, the national health services and policymakers must all work together.

### IV.CONCLUSION

Mental health is inclusive to all age groups. A strong educational and health service would be able to protect and maintain the psychological and emotional well-being of the next group of adults. To resolve this crisis, sufficient resources are needed. It is important that parents, academic establishments and medical experts actively participate in preserving youngsters' psychological well-being by clear and direct conversation and encourage expert support for overcoming stress. Youngsters who are particularly vulnerable to mental health crises should be given special care in a collaborative approach. As a result, it is crucial to take a close look at this issue to ensure that youngsters, along with their caregivers obtain enough mental assistance for improving overall psychological wellbeing.



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