



## “Impact of COVID-19 on Early Childhood Education: A Literature Review”

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### **Abstract**

Early childhood education is similar to a training program given to young children. During class, children will gain the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development needed in order to help them have a brighter future. If done right, early childhood education can help in developing a lifelong love of learning in children. Early childhood education is basically for children between the ages of three and five. It is more commonly referred to as preschool, pre-kindergarten, daycare, nursery school or simply early education. Despite the different names, they all have the same purpose – to prepare children for elementary school. The COVID-19 world health crisis has profound implications for the care and education of younger kids in houses and pre-schools, the lives of preservice and in-service instructors. This article starts by using discussing the consequences of a world health pandemic for training and the demanding situations of accomplishing a literature evaluation on any such hastily evolving topic. Preparation for this article required searching the COVID-19 literature more expansively to include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research; policy documents from respected global and national organizations; literature reviews conducted by professionals representing diverse fields, and resources prepared by prominent professional associations. This paper is based on the secondary data with objectives of to study the impact of COVID-19 on early childhood education and study on the existing literature regarding impact of COVID-19 on early childhood education and care.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Early Childhood Education, Literature Review & Impact

## Introduction

The significance of many industries and people has been highlighted by using COVID-19, and early youth education should be no exception. Not handiest do early childhood educators meet critical desires for children and households, but in addition they hold our economy and society functioning.

From ages 0-5, children experience a vital period of brain development. During this time, the brain develops greater than at every other time in someone's lifestyles. The exceptional of a toddler's early reports and training form the kid's capacity to study and succeed for an entire life. The baby's earliest relationships with the adults in his or her life. Caring, responsive relationships are essential to an infant's early mind improvement. While these relationships begin at home, they make bigger to the kid's interactions with those who offer care when Mom and Dad are away. Children also want plenty of opportunities to play and discover in secure and strong environments. They need to be spoken to, study to, performed with, and exposed to diverse books, songs, and sensory reports.

In addition, childcare people make it viable for households to go to work and earn an income. Without childcare, adults with youngsters can't maintain stable employment. Without a dependable group of workers, the economic system will not return to everyday and certainly receiver's flourish.

Early childhood education and early childhood educators are a need for children, households, agencies, and the economy as a whole. Public investment in childcare is a funding within the health and wealth of the whole society.

COVID-19 has profoundly impacted early childhood education and the educators who work with kids at some point of this vital duration of improvement. Although childcare carriers have played a key function in supporting other important industries during the disaster, maximum have struggled, and lots of have shut down. The results of COVID-19 on early childhood schooling consist of: Temporary shutdown (for many), Declining enrollment, Insufficient authorities funds, Physical chance (near contact with youngsters necessary), Limited crucial resources. Higher charges because of new health and safety measures, staffing wishes, and many others. Most childcare carriers perform on razor-thin margins at some stage in the nice of instances, making it a conflict to live afloat during the coronavirus pandemic. It's additionally tough to locate cleaning elements, maintain school rooms with younger children properly easy and safe, and hold enough personnel to social distance.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, childcare workers earn a median of \$23,760 yearly. Many of those, who take care of and educate our youngest children earn poverty wages and rely upon government help. And now, a lot of these people are out of labor. Those who maintain operating undergo high dangers and excessive strain for low pay.

The unfavorable situations unleashed by way of COVID-19 have not spared every person, but the impact of it has been felt in another way by way of special corporations of humans. For no different organization does it have a permanent, irreversible, and irredeemable impact as in the case of youngsters among 3-6 years. It is a fact that early childhood years in a person's existence are the most vital in terms of development of bodily, sensorimotor, social, emotional, linguistic and cognitive faculties. Brain development is most speedy in these years and the rest of someone's life in phrases of studying and development is substantially decided with the aid of how they're nurtured on this segment. Several longitudinal studies have displayed excessive correlation between early child education programmes and a better future, as an example, in phrases of attainment of better training, higher employment and lower crime charge. Losing out on receiving the best developmental inputs at this stage of their lives is sure to have a damaging impact at the lives of tens of millions of kids across the world.

### Objectives

- ❖ To study on impact of COVID-19 on early childhood education
- ❖ To study the adverse impact of COVID-19 on children and their development
- ❖ To study the status of early childhood education in India during the pandemic situation
- ❖ To examine the impact of COVID-19 the extent to which the challenges impinge on child development
- ❖ To study on the existing literature regarding impact of COVID-19 on early childhood education and care

### Review of Literature

Xafis (2020) noted that Children are inherently susceptible because they rely upon adults to have their maximum primary wishes met. When those adults lack the wherewithal to deal with the immediately, pressing, and multiple adaptive needs an epidemic locations on households and when assist systems do now not exist, falter, or cease, it is able to result in unmitigated catastrophe for the very younger. The most affected "are the ones individuals mechanically deprived by the social injustice created by way of the misdistribution of strength, money and sources". Particularly for children who are living in poverty, chronically sick, have disabilities, revel in housing and food insecurity, live in far off regions, are marginalized through mainstream society (e.g., indigenous humans and migrant people), or are tormented by forget about or abuse, troubles are exacerbated by means of pandemics. As regarding as those immediate and observable outcomes of Covid-19 for younger children are, even less is known about what the long-time period outcomes may be.

The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in monumental changes to education throughout the world. According to UNESCO (2020), nearly 90% of the world's student population-over 1.5 billion learners in 165 countries-have had their learning experiences disrupted by precautions and policies implemented to quell the spread of the disease. Jaime Saavedra, Global Director for Education, describes it as the "largest simultaneous shock to all education systems in our lifetimes" (World Bank 2020). More specific to early childhood

education, this international health crisis has precipitated unprecedented, sweeping, and dramatic changes in the lives of children and their families, pre service and in service teachers of young children, and early childhood teacher educators. Worldwide, the Covid-19 has also pushed the early childhood education system to the verge of collapse and mobilized leading early childhood organizations to advocate for Covid-19 financial packages to protect early education programs (NAEYC 2020).

In June 2020, Early Milestones collected survey responses from 1,207 licensed child care providers in Colorado. Through this research, we learned that nearly 10% of Colorado's providers have closed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and enrollment has decreased by more than 30%. Though many providers have reopened, the following factors leave many others uncertain about their future: - Concerns about health risks to children and staff, - Enrollment disruptions, and - Increased health and safety costs. Providers who receive public funding have fared better during this crisis. Without financial help, the costs of new health and safety protocols make it difficult for many providers to reopen or remain open.

As per the parental perception about the impact of COVID 19 on early childhood education Shyambhavi (Ghaziabad), a working mother of two boys, shares that her younger son, four, was slated to start pre-primary school this year. That has obviously not come to pass and now her older son, nine, teaches the younger brother a rhyme or two, but beyond that, there is no progress. He does not like it when she tries to teach him. She rightly says that the kids require play-based learning, for which she is neither trained nor has the energy. Online teaching, the poor substitute of classroom teaching, is proving ineffective when it comes to ECE, as it lacks in real interaction and physical proximity with the teacher and classmates. Kamini (New Delhi), mother of a five-year-old son, has decided to make him repeat the class that he is in currently, as she feels that he is completely listless during online classes, which his school is conducting. Maya (New Delhi), mother of two boys aged 5 and 3, who works as a domestic helper, laments that she and her husband are uneducated and depended completely on the nearby NGO-run ECE centre for their education. Now it pains them to see the boys loitering about, doing nothing or watching TV, while the parents continue to scrape a livelihood in a disease-ridden city.

Sara Lawrence Lightfoot (1978) coined the word childism to refer to the mistaken assumption that children's emotions do not run as deep as those of adults and that children can be expected to recover more readily from adversity than mature individuals. This adult-centric view tends to minimize the effects of change and crisis on young children, assumes that they are oblivious to bad situations, and expects them to be exceptionally resilient. For some families, COVID-19 quarantine resulted in parents spending significantly more time in the company of their children and witnessing, firsthand, worrisome changes in behavior (Evans et al. 2020; Waddoups et al., 2019). Families could see for themselves that young children are at the epicenter of the disaster as support networks fell away. Perhaps the COVID crisis will help the general population to abandon childism, recognize that children's social and emotional development are just as important as their schoolwork, and acknowledge that inherent vulnerability of the youngest human beings.

According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, the emotional and physical health, social skills, and cognitive-linguistic capacities that emerge in the early years are all important prerequisites for success in school and later in the workplace and community. Unicef has stated that “during the critical early years, children need responsive care, adequate nutrition, stimulation and protection to develop their social, emotional and cognitive skills.” It is thus the reason why early childhood education is imperative for the development of our nation’s youngest citizens.

While every educational institution in India shut down in March 2020 and most moved online to ensure continued learning during the pandemic, we have approximately 165 million children in the 0-5 years age group who have lost out on early childhood care and learning as centres dedicated to their development continue to remain closed. According to Unicef, school closures can lead to drastically negative outcomes for children. Closing schools exposes children to multiple risks. The longer schools are closed, the more children suffer from extensive learning losses with long-term negative impacts, including future income and health. Depending on their age, gender, and disability or socio-economic status, many children (especially adolescents) do not return to school after long closures and many more are expected to suffer permanent losses to their learning. In addition, children rely on schools for nutrition, psychosocial support and health services.

### **Status of Early Childhood Education in India**

The developmental needs of a child in this stage i.e. among 3-6 years are multisectoral, regarding elements like nutrients, fitness, safety, care and play based schooling. Recognizing its importance, the Government of India commenced ICDS – Integrated Child Development Services scheme, which offers a bundle of six services, together with early adolescence care, development and education to almost 1/2 of India’s 160 million children (0-6 years) these days.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is furnished on the Anganwadi Centres (AWC) via Anganwadi employees (AWW). ECE is not purported to be a downward extension of formal training, however an aggregate of play-primarily based mastering using easy toys and charts, singing, storytelling and some quantity of bodily interest.

Experts have noted that the nutrients eclipses ECE in ICDS – each in terms of the price range received as well as the time and attention given to it by means of the AWW. This is because of several reasons like loss of good enough sources, infrastructure, personnel schooling and overburdening of the AWWs. Despite those shortcomings, AWCs remain the biggest providers of ECE in India. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused critical disruption to the whole ICDS device. A number of specialists have started to signal how, within the current situation, we should now not lose sight of infant nutrition, but hitherto, the thing of early adolescence education has regrettably obtained less interest.

The purpose at the back of ECE is faculty preparedness, i.e., to equip children among three-6 years with appropriate cognitive and sensorimotor talents earlier than they progress to formal schooling. ECE specialists opine that youngsters who do no longer receive the good enough stimuli up-till the age of six, do no longer attain the overall ability in their mind. This is an irreversible technique i.e. if that time-length is over, there may be no way of redeeming it.

In addition to ICDS, authority's pre-colleges, NGOs and private pre-colleges also offer ECE in India. There is no set of curriculum or method for ECE and all vendors follow their own standards. Many of these ECE centers have shortcomings, like excessive toddler-instructor ratio, beside the point pedagogical practices (most commonly using formal education in region of encouraged ECE modes of teaching) and being non-inclusive. Despite those problems, a big majority of youngsters between a while 3-6 had been receiving some form pre-faculty schooling before the current disaster struck.

COVID-19 has completely upended ECE for a variety of reasons. As soon as the pandemic hit, the ubiquitous AWWs, present in about 13 lakh anganwadi centres across India were given COVID-19 awareness training. They have been engaged in conducting IEC (information, education and communication) campaigns on precautions like masks and hand hygiene, which, albeit extremely crucial, ended up diverting them from their core job. The other providers of ECE, namely government pre-schools, NGO and private schools have shut down during the pandemic, with very few of them running online classes. Some of the private schools are charging full fees, have given out the books and syllabus, expecting parents to take up the responsibility of teaching their children. Overall, whichever economic bracket they belong to or region they live in, all children have been left out in the lurch.

## Conclusion

The global response to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has changed daily life in many ways for many people. Early childhood, the years from birth to age six, has been medically proven to be the most critical period that sets the stage for a child's growth and learning trajectory. Research from neurobiology and cognitive development experts suggests that 90 percent of brain development occurs in the first six years of life. While some pre-school operators across the country shifted to an online format to offer uninterrupted learning, a certain section of parents voiced their concerns about the increase in the time young children would spend in front of a screen and its impact and did not enroll their children into an online program for the rest of 2020. Although there is evidence that spending a long period in front of a screen can impact children, the effect of zero learning year on a child's long-term development is more harmful and can cause a multiplier effect as a child grows up. The government wishes to step in and step up. ECE has been mentioned inside the New Education Policy 2020, but governments have to step in via identifying what desires to be performed. It should involve professionals in the region and formulate SOPs for the modern-day situation. Also, interest have to be given to a protracted status demand of the civil society, that of amending the Right to Education Act to deliver ECE under its ambit. The Government additionally wishes to step up funding for ECE appreciably, which has been emphasized by way of a latest UNICEF report as

well. Few months have passed and there aren't any symptoms of the pandemic subsiding anytime quickly. It is a pressing want of the hour that everyone feasible tactics be hired in keeping with feasibility, and the kids get hold of what's owed to them for a higher tomorrow. This throws a lot of demanding situations, and needs a much broader stakeholder involvement however it's miles the responsibility of the person community to make sure the invisible rights of youngsters, and no longer lose any more treasured time. The authorities wishes to step in and step up. ECE has been mentioned in the New Education Policy 2020, however governments have to step in via figuring out what desires to be accomplished. It must involve specialists in the area and formulate SOPs for the present day state of affairs. Also, interest have to receive to a long status demand of the civil society, that of amending the Right to Education Act to deliver ECE under its ambit. The Government also needs to step up investment for ECE significantly, which has been emphasized by using a recent UNICEF file as nicely.

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