

# The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of children and adolescents

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## ABSTRACT

The pandemic coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) has caused considerable changes in everyday living and normal activities, as well as severe health, economic, financial, and social effects. Lockdowns and physical/social separation measures were deployed in numerous nations throughout the world beginning in March 2020. COVID-19 has claimed

the lives of hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. This tremendous loss of life, along with the rapid changes in daily living brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, may have a negative impact on child and adolescent mental health. There is a paucity of scientific research on the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of children and adolescents.

**Key Words:** *Telepsychiatry, COVID-19*

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## INTRODUCTION

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity for more family time, time to resume hobbies/interests, and an individualized pace of learning (for children and adolescents who find traditional school environments challenging), many children and adolescents may be at increased risk due to domestic violence and maltreatment as a result of pandemic-related isolation measures. Children and adolescents with a history of mental health issues, trauma, parental mental illness, or severe parental/caregiver distress may be at increased risk during this pandemic. The mental health repercussions of COVID-19 are more likely to harm disadvantaged children and adolescents.

Little contact with peers, fear of family member illness/death, decreased structure and less direct contact with teachers at school due to school closures are some of the factors that can increase anxiety, and behavioral difficulties, and negatively affect child and adolescent mental health during this time. Increased internet usage by teenagers, as a result of isolation and physical distancing techniques, offers the benefits of social networking, but it also carries disadvantages.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic may include the exacerbation and/or worsening of preexisting psychiatric conditions in children and adolescents, as well as the potential onset of new mental health challenges, particularly anxiety and stress-related disorders, in at-risk children and adolescents. The lockout may have resulted in a change or even disruption in care for some children or adolescents with pre-pandemic mental problems. Children and adolescents with chronic psychiatric and/or neurodevelopmental conditions, such as autism spectrum disorders, psychotic disorders, and intellectual disability, may be affected, particularly those who received a significant portion of their mental healthcare and services in-person during the pre-pandemic period. The mental health of children and adolescents treated in inpatient

institutions when parents' attendance is restricted due to physical separation measures may be compromised. Although rapidly-expanding tele psychiatry use has aided in the continuity and provision of psychiatric care in many parts of the world during this pandemic, the scarcity of in-person care may pose a challenge for many children/adolescents/families, particularly those without access to technology or living in unsafe environments. According to available information, a considerable majority of adults, particularly parents, had considerably higher levels of anxiety and stress throughout the pandemic. Increased worry and stress among parents/caregivers may have an impact on the lives of children and adolescents. Furthermore, parental job loss and financial issues may result in decreased access to mental healthcare for many children and adolescents, in addition to adding to parental stress and harming child and adolescent health.

Given that infancy and adolescence are critical ages of brain development, the psychological impacts of disaster-related stress experienced during these years can be long-lasting. According to a 2013 research that looked at the "psychosocial responses of children and their parents to pandemic catastrophes" (398 parents), "30% of isolated or confined children" satisfied the criteria for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), according to "parental accounts." Another research looked at the risk variables for PTSD in 217 young people who had been involved in a maritime catastrophe during their teens. The study followed participants for five to eight years after the disaster and discovered that the emergence of PTSD was significantly associated with 'being female, with pre-disaster factors of learning and psychological difficulties in the child, and violence in the home, with the severity of exposure, and with the severity of the exposure. In April 2020, the European ADHD Guidelines Group highlighted the challenges faced by children and adolescents with ADHD during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the form of heightened behavioral problems, and recommended the use of telepsychiatry for

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continuing 'all relevant service provision' for this patient population during the current pandemic, given the pandemic-related physical distancing requirements.

Not all children and adolescents will have negative mental health outcomes. Strengthening and strengthening resilience-promoting variables can be a critical step in decreasing the pandemic's negative mental health impact on children and adolescents. Given the widespread and considerable effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, developing and executing appropriate preventative and response strategies is critical. To address the mental health needs of children and adolescents throughout this time, targeted treatments and "response strategies" are required. Educating parents on how to assist and comfort their children and adolescents throughout this epidemic might be one of the most effective preventative approaches.

Effective parental coping and self-care can promote more responsive parenting; moreover, keeping some stability in the child/routine of adolescents might be useful. As a result, during the pandemic, actions and resources to assist parents' ability to do so should be studied and implemented. Measures to provide social support for kids, particularly at-risk youth, may be advantageous during the epidemic. At-risk children, such as disabled children or teenagers, or those who

have lost their parents/primary caregivers, must be closely monitored and given special attention. During the pandemic, measures to maintain the continuation of child protection services are required. Tele psychiatry has the potential to be useful during the COVID-19 epidemic, particularly in maintaining continuity of treatment for a large number of children and adolescents with mental problems. During the epidemic, tele psychiatry has quickly supplanted regular outpatient appointments in many regions of the world. More study is needed to examine telepsychiatry utilization in children and adolescents, as well as strategies to increase the efficacy and accessibility of telepsychiatry. To ensure that children receive adequate support, healthcare providers, teachers, and social workers must be trained on the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on their mental health.

More study is needed, particularly from more diverse geographical areas, because cultural variables may influence the unique consequences of the pandemic on kids in different countries. Longitudinal studies are also needed to better understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of children and adolescents, as well as risk and resilience factors, in order to design more specific and targeted interventions and minimize the pandemic's long-term effects on child and adolescent mental health.