

# The Impact of COVID 19 on Children

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## Abstract

For every child, early moments matter. Children's lives have been turned upside down by COVID19. For some children, with the right support and resources, the situation will be manageable, but for others the effects of the pandemic will cast a long shadow over their lives. The response to coronavirus already is exposing the fragile situation that many children and young people live in (UNICEF, 2020). Hundreds of thousands of children who rely on school, health and social systems and the support of the voluntary sector are being left unprotected as these systems are weakened. The risks to children's health, wellbeing and future opportunities are serious and need immediate intervention. Hundreds of thousands of children will face hunger, violence, ill-health and lost opportunities that could follow them into adulthood. This review article aims to highlight the impact of COVID 19 on children.

**Keywords:** Children, COVID19, The impact.

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## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic is harming health, social and material well-being of children worldwide. Today, there are more than 2.2 billion children on Earth. Nearly two billion of these live in a developing country. COVID-19 has impacted the lives of people around the world including children and adolescents in an unprecedented manner [1]. School closures, lock down, social distancing and confinement increase the risk of poor nutrition among children, their exposure to domestic violence, increase their anxiety and stress, and reduce access to vital family and care services [2]. As families lose their sources of income due to COVID-19 and the global economy has been plunged into a recession, more households are falling into monetary poverty. For the poorest families, including those who do not have access to social protection, the situation is terrible. The global socioeconomic crisis caused by the pandemic could push 142 million more children into monetary poor households by the end of the year, according to projections as of November 2020. The total number of children living in poor households globally could reach just over 725 million in the absence of any mitigating policies. Nearly two-thirds of these children live in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia [3]. However, some positive changes could also come out of this global crisis. This paper discusses the impact of COVID 19 pandemic on children.

## Positive Impacts

### Familiarizing school children with technology

Children's education is estimated to be greatly affected by school closings. Technology is corresponding to education but it also has the potential to substitute the classroom teachings completely. There are children in the current world who still do not have access to computers, tablets or even the internet. It is essential that these children be familiarized with the computer as well as the virtual activities. Virtual learning can acquaint students with the online world. Along with online learning, students must to be educated the sensitivity to act properly in the online world. One of the benefits of virtual learning is that it also makes the interaction between teacher and student more personal. UNESCO also has actively encouraged distanced learning solutions, and this includes using digital teaching aids. Those children who have access to these will be given the opportunity to learn educational methods that will benefit them later in life.

### Greater awareness

UNICEF, the World Health Organization and health specialists have advised parents to discuss the pandemic in detail with their children. For example, UNICEF has developed six ways to help and comfort children during the pandemic. These include parents being calm and proactive, stick to a routine, let the child feel their emotions, be honest, reassuring them and

explaining what practical measures they can take to keep themselves and others safe. UNICEF, 2020.

### **Family bonding**

The Covid-19 pandemic has reformed the personal relationships in family, forcing to live closer together with children and family members. The parents had some quality time with their children and keep them busy with some interesting activities. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed family life and relationships. A study investigated changes in family time use, household work, child care, leisure activities, income and expenditures along with relationships between spouses and children using a sample of 627 married persons surveyed online from May 19 to 25, 2020. The results showed that the amount of time spent on household work, child care, and family leisure have increased [4].

### **Negative Impacts**

#### **Impacts of School Closures**

Schools provide the knowledge, health, and development of children and are important to falling societal biases. Prolonged school nonattendances have negative effects on both children and families [2]. Several previous studies based on student absenteeism and past school closures have focused on the impacts of being out of school on learning outcomes [5, 6]. These research studies can help us understand the potential effects of current school closures on learning and the mechanisms by which educational inequalities occur. School closure results in poorer academic attainment, gaps in skills improvement, attitudes and behaviours essential for educational success, and better prospect of school dropout. School closure has also been linked to dangerous behaviours such as smoking, juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, drug use, risky sexual behaviours or unwanted pregnancies, as well as other effects in adulthood (e.g. unemployment, alcoholism) [7, 8].

#### **Changes in the children's physical activity and sedentary behavior**

About 36% of parents reported their children's physical activity had decreased whereas children's sedentary behavior had increased during COVID-19 period as compared to before the pandemic. This form was not surprising given school closures and team sports or activity class cancellations; most children were spending their whole days at home with little activities [9].

#### **Lack of competitive environment**

Schools deliver the social and competitive actions that many children enjoy and interacting with children from different area, helps them to adjust to varied environments and develop social connections. Viner *et al.*, [10] carried out a rapid systematic review of 16 papers during the pandemic and concluded that school closures and social disconnection could hinder

the psychological and personal development of children.

### **Impacts of physical health**

#### **Obesity**

A small longitudinal observational research conducted in Verona Italy during this pandemic, has shown that the negative trends in lifestyle, were observed amongst obese children and adolescents. The COVID-19 pandemic has more threat factors that might worsen the epidemic of childhood obesity due to lack of structure, unhealthy diet, decreased physical activity, increased screen time, lengthy quarantine and changes in sleeping routine [11]. This obesogenic behavior needs to be taken seriously and undertook as it could have intense significances which are not simply changeable. Furthermore, we should have in mind that adult obesity and its comorbidities are related with COVID-19 mortality.

#### **The risk of malnourishment**

Due to the effects of the pandemic, there is also the concern of malnourishment as many. School children depend on school meals especially in developing and poor countries. In fact, school meals and snacks could represent up to two thirds of the nutritional needs in children in the USA [12]. Children from low-income families, who are already at greater risk for poorer health and low academic performance than children from high-income families, may be further disadvantaged by nutritional deficits. There must be improved strategies to adapt how, when, and where to provide nutritional support to children.

#### **Maltreatment & Child abuse**

The COVID-19 pandemic may have caused major changes for many children and their families, not just because of the lockdown, restricted measures, social isolation, changing demographics and the reduction of available health services, but also due to the abrupt and possibly long-term rise in child poverty and family uncertainty. Child line care has experienced a rise in demand for its services since schools and childcare facilities were compulsory to close due to the coronavirus outbreak around the world. The Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children [13] said it has recorded an increase in users of the Child line website of 26% in the week the schools closed compared with the week previous.

#### **Impacts of psychological health**

Implications of the COVID-19 outbreak resulting negative impact on children's emotional and behavioral well-being [14]). It is found that separation from the primary caregivers can make a child more vulnerable and be able to pose a hazard to a child's mental health [15]. The children may develop feelings of sadness, anxiety, and fear of death, fear of parents' death and fear of being secluded in the hospital which may have a very harmful effect on their psychological

development [13]. Compared to adolescents, younger children need additional consideration of their parents. They need their parent's physical existence and essential to occupy in more indoor play related activities with them. Parents should allocate time to provide the child with complete positive consideration and comfort. Effective communication has major benefits for children and their family's long term psychological wellbeing. Children need direct information about variations within their family. Parents need to be genuine about some of the uncertainty and psychological challenges of the pandemic, without overwhelming children with their own dreads.

### Children at risk of child labour and forced labour

COVID-19 will lead to an increase in great scarcity and many parents have lost their job, are the key factor of child labour [16-18]. To prevent this risk, it is essential that countries maintain and enforce regulation prohibiting child labour (in particular legislation on the minimum age for work) and adequately resource labour inspectorates to work effectively. Governments have also a key role to play to support companies to sustain and expand responsible business conduct which are essential to combatting child labour in supply chains [2].

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic will have influential, long-term impacts on children universal. Even though some of these may be positive, we believe that the negative impacts will be distressing and could affect millions of children in some way. International healthcare organizations, children's welfare organizations and governments need to work together to minimize the impact the pandemic will have on children in the post COVID-19 period.

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