

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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The lengthy closure of schools have impacted teachers, staff, and students alike. Even young children, especially their mental health, can be affected by the pandemic. School closure entails lack of access to resources (e.g. proper learning environment and classrooms, learning materials, pedagogical support) that children usually have via their schools. Children also experience fear, uncertainty, crucial routine changes, and physical and social isolation (Imran et al., 2020; Lee, 2020).

Children's limited understanding of the pandemic makes them especially vulnerable during this event. At home, they have limited coping strategies, and these limitations are also exacerbated by social class. Furthermore, children understandably cannot communicate their emotions as well as adults. School closure has separated them from peers and became a hurdle to opportunities for play. Impairment in social interactions, along with anxiety, depression, and disruption in sleep and appetite, are common presentations of the impact of the pandemic on children and adolescents (Meherali et al., 2021; Imran et al., 2020).

The challenges of online learning may also add to the distress of children, especially for children with physical disabilities. Furthermore, children with special education needs (e.g. autism spectrum disorder) are at risk during this pandemic due to the frustration that may accompany the disruption in their routines (Imran et al., 2020; Patel, 2020).

Given these, there are added responsibilities to parents as they take on both caregiving and teaching roles. As such, caregivers should aim to spend quality time with their children

(Patel, 2020). However, it is also suggested to have nationwide assistive technologies and education strategies for children, with or without special needs, and their parents that can be accessible regardless of their financial capabilities.

References

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