

STUDY ON IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHILDREN AND SENIOR CITIZENS

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ABSTRACT

Over the past year, a global pandemic has affected common life. From people losing their lives to jobs to homes, mankind has learned to live and spent their everyday life inside their respective houses. The covid-19 pandemic also known as the coronavirus has mainly affected children and old age. Although medical literature shows that children and old age are minimally susceptible to 2019-Corona virus disease, they are hit the hardest by the psychological impact of this pandemic. Widespread lockdown and preventative measures have isolated individuals, affected the world economy, and limited access to physical and mental healthcare. While these measures may be necessary to minimize the spread of the virus, the negative physical, psychological, and social effects are evident. Being quarantined in homes and health centres may impose a greater psychological burden than the physical sufferings caused by the virus. School closure, lack of outdoor activity, strange dietary and sleeping habits are likely to upset children's usual lifestyle and can potentially promote monotony, anxiety, agitation, annoyance, and varied neuropsychiatric manifestations. Meanwhile, the senior citizens are affected by both the virus, and the lockdown measures have seen the least benefits from these digital solutions. The age-based digital divide describes a longstanding inequality in the access to, and skills to make use of, new technology.

Keywords: Covid19 pandemic, Lockdown, Quarantine, Children and Old age.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had huge effects on the daily lives of most individuals in the first half of 2020. The lockdown has brought about a sense of fear and anxiety around the globe. This phenomenon has led to short term as well as long term psychosocial and mental health implications for children and senior citizens.

The quality and magnitude of impact on minors is determined by many vulnerability factors like developmental age, educational status, pre-existing mental health condition, being economically underprivileged or being quarantined due to infection or fear of infection. Millions of children could be adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we anticipate that the greatest impact could be on those in poor socioeconomic groups, who are already vulnerable and disadvantaged.

COVID-19 is changing older people's daily routines, the care and support they receive, their ability to stay socially connected and how they are perceived. Older people are being challenged by requirements to spend more time at home, lack of physical contact with other family members, friends and colleagues, temporary cessation of employment and other activities; and anxiety and fear of illness and death – their own and others. It is therefore important that we create opportunities to foster healthy ageing during the pandemic.

Children and senior citizens are not the faces of this pandemic. But they risk being among its biggest victims, as their lives are nonetheless being changed in profound ways.

OBJECTIVES

- ✓ This publication aims to explore the psychosocial ill-effects and mental health implications on children and adolescents due to Covid-19.

- ✓ To explore the increased negative effects the digital divide is having on the elderly population.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

➤ Research design:-

The research design used in this study is descriptive research. Descriptive research studies are those studies which are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular group of situations. It includes different kinds of fact-finding inquiries and surveys.

➤ Data collection:-

Secondary Data

The secondary data are those which have already been collected by someone else and which already have been passed through the statistical process. It is from the books reputed journal, RBI website and internet.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHILDREN

POSITIVE IMPACTS

● CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Children's education is expected to be badly affected by school closures. Those children who have access to internet connection and smartphones are given the opportunity to learn educational methods that will benefit them later in life. They could also get involved in different physical, learning, and creative activities during school closures that will help them to develop new skills.

● GREATER AWARENESS

Health specialists have advised parents to discuss the pandemic in detail with their children. These include parents being honest, reassuring them and explaining what practical measures they can take to keep themselves and others safe.

● DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPATHY

Spending time with their family could help some children to develop closer relationships with them and being aware of the impact of the pandemic could also help children to develop more humanity and empathy, as they realise the value of human life.

● LEARNING NATURE'S VALUE

Less traffic has led to reductions in overall pollution and noise, and there is anecdotal evidence that this has led to changes in our natural environment and provided more opportunities for children to see, and appreciate, wild life.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS

● EFFECTS ON EDUCATION

School closures carry high social and economic costs for people across communities. Their impact however is particularly severe for the most vulnerable and marginalized group. These include:-

- Interrupted learning.
- Confusion and stress for teachers.
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- Parents unprepared for distance and home schooling.
- Challenges creating, maintaining, and improving distance learning.
- High economic costs.
- Social isolation

● HEALTH ISSUES

One of the major consequences of lockdowns and school closures could be that some children will not be able to engage in outdoor physical activities, especially if they do not have access to outside space, which could increase weight problems and the disorders that are associated with them. The impact of nutritional deficiency is mostly seen in poor socioeconomic groups and school closures means that millions of children will not benefit from food programmes provided by their schools. School closures may also mean that children sit continuously for longer periods of time, for example at computers, and this could lead to issues like back pain, eye strain and disturbed sleep.

● AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES

Children are bound to miss interacting with their own peer groups, and we fear that being deprived of their company for any length of time will lead to drastic behavioural changes.

● ADDICTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE INTERNET

Due to school closures, many children will be actively encouraged to go online to continue their education. They will also want to keep in touch with their peers, and this could increase their use of social media, which could distract them when they are meant to be doing school work. They could also be exposed inappropriate content and cyberbullying.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON OLDER ADULTS

Older adults are more likely to have dire outcomes from the virus. And as a result, negative impacts override any possible positive impacts.

● THE AGEING BODY

The older are more afflicted with chronic rather than acute illnesses aside from locomotor difficulties – such as high blood-pressure, hypertension and diabetes, which require long-term medication. They are also more at risk of cancer, renal diseases and musculoskeletal disorders, particularly arthritis. Reduced mobility during this time prevents them from seeking regular medical attention, and leaves them dependent on others.

● MISINFORMATION AND ANXIETY

As they are less familiar with technology and apps, anecdotally speaking, older people are often exposed to, and fall prey to, misinformation about ‘miracle cures’ for COVID-19 as well as overhyped claims, conspiracy theories, unscientific medical claims, etc. This in turn leads to hysteria and anxiety. Instead, we need to invest time and energy to educate our elderly family members about fake news and its ill-effects, and improve their access to culturally sensitive and affordable mental health counsellors.

● THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The digital divide is a term originally used to describe the gap in access to new technology which exists between different groups of people. s the elderly has less access to technology than younger adults, but even those with access have less digital skills, and make more limited use of the technology they do have. The problem of the digital divide among the elderly is not new and has been a point of increasing scrutiny as technology has become a larger part of day-to-day life.

● SOCIAL ISOLATION AND SOCIAL DISCONNECTION

Social isolation, social distancing, social disconnectedness, and loneliness were found to be mediated with depression and anxiety. Cognitive skills and social

support networks could help older adults to foster meaningful connection and sense of belongingness during isolation period.

● **PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH**

Social isolation and social disconnection – a documented bidirectional and complex relationship between mental health issues and social disconnectedness, itself poses a serious public health concern among older adults especially due to the psychosocial reasons and physiological health problems such as mental health problems, cardiovascular, autoimmune, neurocognitive, neurobiological, and other at-risk health problems.

CONCLUSION

As the COVID-19 pandemic has progressed, the unforeseen side-effects have started to make themselves known. As lockdowns across the world change the day-to-day life of billions of people, the world has had to adapt to the changes.

In our opinion, the COVID-19 pandemic will have a far-reaching, long-term impacts on children worldwide. Although some of these may be positive, we believe that the negative impacts will be devastating and could affect millions of children in some way. There is a need to ameliorate children and adolescents' access to mental health support services geared towards providing measures for developing healthy coping mechanisms during the current crisis.

The outbreak of COVID-19 will also have a long-term and profound impact on older adults' health and well-being globally. Social isolation and loneliness are likely to become major risk factors that affect older adults' health outcomes. Some strategies to address these issues can be implemented in many countries. These strategies include: raising awareness of the health and medical impact of social isolation and loneliness across the health care workforce and among members of the public; developing innovative technology based interventions to mobilize the resources from family members, community-based networks and resources that address social isolation and loneliness in older adults; and engaging the health care system to begin the process of developing methods to identify social isolation and loneliness in health care settings.

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