



Impact of Covid-19 on Children

Sunayana Singh

Assistant Professor, Department of Zoology, MSJ Govt. College, Bharatpur, India

ABSTRACT: During this time of prolonged uncertainty, it's essential to prioritise the well-being of your child or children, who may be experiencing a sudden onset of anxiety or a lack of appropriate social interaction given the extended school holidays. We are seeing an increase in the number of children displaying unusual behaviour as a direct consequence of the circumstances brought on by the pandemic. Unfortunately, the changes can be very subtle, and may be mistaken for bad behaviour, rather than seen in context, which if not addressed correctly, could have long-term negative impacts on children. Many children under the age of three may be experiencing anxiety, which can play out in many forms, including the sudden onset of bedwetting, mood swings, nightmares, fidgeting, the inability to concentrate, and so on. Children are having to unlearn many of social norms, from "sharing is caring" to not sharing at all, given how the COVID is spread, and this can create confusing, anxiety-provoking messaging. Anxiety can also play out in children who have been social distancing by not going to crèche, by suddenly becoming a lot less confident in social settings and some may refuse to interact with their peers altogether. Anxiety may turn usually sociable and playful children into clingy, tearful kids who instead of being happy to go to crèche, only want to sit on their mothers' laps. Students are learning everything from fractions to history at home with little to no interaction with their friends. "They're struggling, they're struggling, they're struggling in every situation. School leaders say kids are dealing with stress, anxiety, depression and far worse. Some are being admitted to the hospital for suicidal thoughts and attempts. According to the surveys:

- Over half of the respondents say that their children have been struggling mentally and emotionally.
- Nearly 40 per cent of the respondents have expressed concerns about the damages that the Coronavirus crisis is having on the education of their children.
- Half of the parents and caregivers stated that distance learning was ineffective, due to lack in resources, limited access to internet, lack of support from adult family members and difficulties to connect with teachers.
- Nearly one out of five respondents mentioned a financial impact and having less money to spend on food.

As more families across the region stay at home amid economic downturns, anxiety and stress are increasing and with it the likelihood of domestic violence. The pandemic has added to the economic hardship, with the daily-wage workers and those working in the informal sector being the most impacted.

I. INTRODUCTION

41% of our population is below 20 years of age. This makes up for a sizeable chunk of the school-going population in need of education and skills for a robust workforce in the future. Nearly 1.5 millions schools were shut in India for 315 days, a significant part of 2020 and early 2021, due to the pandemic impacting about 250 million children. With the second wave now gripping the country, most schools are closed once again, with year-end exams cancelled or postponed. The pandemic has exacerbated concerns of equity and equality in several aspects of life, access to education being a significant one. Across 190 countries, 1.7 billion students were affected by the closure of educational establishments. While the advanced nations had the means and the method to offer remote learning to their students, the low-income countries faced several challenges in offering the same. According to UNESCO, high-income countries' digital education offerings covered 80% of the population, and in low-income countries only 50% of the student population received digital education. Erratic electricity supply and limited digital literacy coupled with the lack of devices were major impediments in access to digital education in most developing and under-developed countries.

Thus, a significant third of the world population was unable to access remote learning. In India, too, unstable internet connection and low broadband penetration in semi-urban and rural areas impacted digital learning opportunities. The adoption of digital technology was smoother among private schools in India, but government schools and the bulk of lower end schools were not able to take that digital leap seamlessly. In Brazil, for instance, 95% of the children from privileged families had computers at home, while only 14% of the students from low-income families had computers at home. In the USA, 100% of students from affluent families had computers at home, while only 25% from poor families did.

With the long gap in learning, coupled with differential access, unreliable assessment standards and inadequate checks and balance, the students are inevitably facing major learning gaps. In the UK, there was evidence of an increased 'word gap' among students at the transition from primary to secondary school. The Ofsted November 2020 report on



the situation before the second UK lockdown highlighted that the primary school children have experienced losses across a range of subjects or were at the same level as March 2020. Vast deficits were also evident in social and communication skill, listening skills, speech, phonics and motor skills. Some students could not even hold a pencil!

A study by Azim Premji Foundation highlighted that 82% of children across 5 Indian States have lost at least one specific mathematical ability, such as identifying numbers, performing operations or problem solving, when compared to last year. Similarly, 92% of children, on an average, have lost at least one specific language ability such as oral expression, reading fluency, writing skill and reading comprehension, compared to the previous year. This is seen uniformly across all classes.

Dr. Laura Phillips is a neuropsychologist with the Child Mind Institute in Midtown. She said it's important for parents to make sure their kids have a daily routine that includes physical activity, which is critical; they make time for socially distanced or Zoom playdates, and limit exposure to news. Parents know their children. Every child has a baseline behaviour. If they do something that deviates from their normal, baseline set of behaviours, then it may very well be that your child is being impacted by the uncertainty brought on by the pandemic. The first step in dealing with anxiety in kids is to recognise what could be spurring it on. For this, it's essential that parents become aware of their own emotional states, as their own anxious behaviours and feelings could be spilling over to the child, who is a lot more in tune to the parents' way of being than what is commonly understood. Then, for school-going children, it's best to deal with it cognitively through reasoning, or explaining to them and talking to them about what is happening; both around them and to their own emotional state of being. For children who are in the process of developing their cognitive skills and can't yet reason, it's best for the parents to be extra sensitive to their children's needs. It may be a good idea to balance being understanding and empathic towards your child's behaviour, no matter how difficult it may be, with gentle encouragement. Alternatively, if you're uncertain if your child's behaviour is normal or not, and you do not know what to do, consider phoning a trusted, medically trained nursing service who has the expertise to help you navigate this uncertain period.

II. DISCUSSION

School leaders say kids are dealing with stress, anxiety, depression and far worse. Some are being admitted to the hospital for suicidal thoughts and attempts. "I really think this has to be a priority for everyone right now," said Karrie Lamacchia, Director of Pupil and Personnel Services in the Baldwinsville School District. "I think we have to look at the severity of the issues that are on hand right now. In a perfect world, we would be increasing mental support." Parents should check on their children three to four times a day to make sure they are okay. "Simple things like ask your child every day how they're feeling because that teaches them how to express their feelings and acknowledge what's going on with them."

In April, rising cases of children and adolescents were shocking. Researchers are investigating whether corona infection has become more severe for children. Amy Edward, an associate professor at the University Hospital in Ohio, said that the investigation was not considered in children from this perspective. Children experiencing long-term symptoms of corona are usually not shown in hospital. They are battling at home.

The second wave of corona virus in the country was not over yet that the doctor of Lucknow's Civil Hospital has expressed great apprehension about the third wave of corona on children. It is worth noting that in the past, doctors and experts have said that in the third wave of corona, the danger may be highest on children. At the same time, doctors and experts have emphasized more and more vaccination to people above the age of 18 years. Corona virus variant B1167 is being considered as a major reason for the second wave in India. It affects the lungs the most. Due to this, the corona infected are seeing problems like breathing difficulties and lack of oxygen, which are becoming a major reason for the death of the patient. Dr. Anand Kishore, a pediatrician at Lucknow Civil Hospital, said that it is feared that children will be more than 18 in the third wave. For this, it is very important for the parents to get vaccinated.

India is currently struggling with the second wave of this epidemic, but it is also expected that its third wave is coming. Most experts are not denying the possibility that a third wave will arrive in India. Most experts say that the third wave of corona epidemic in India may come after September this year.

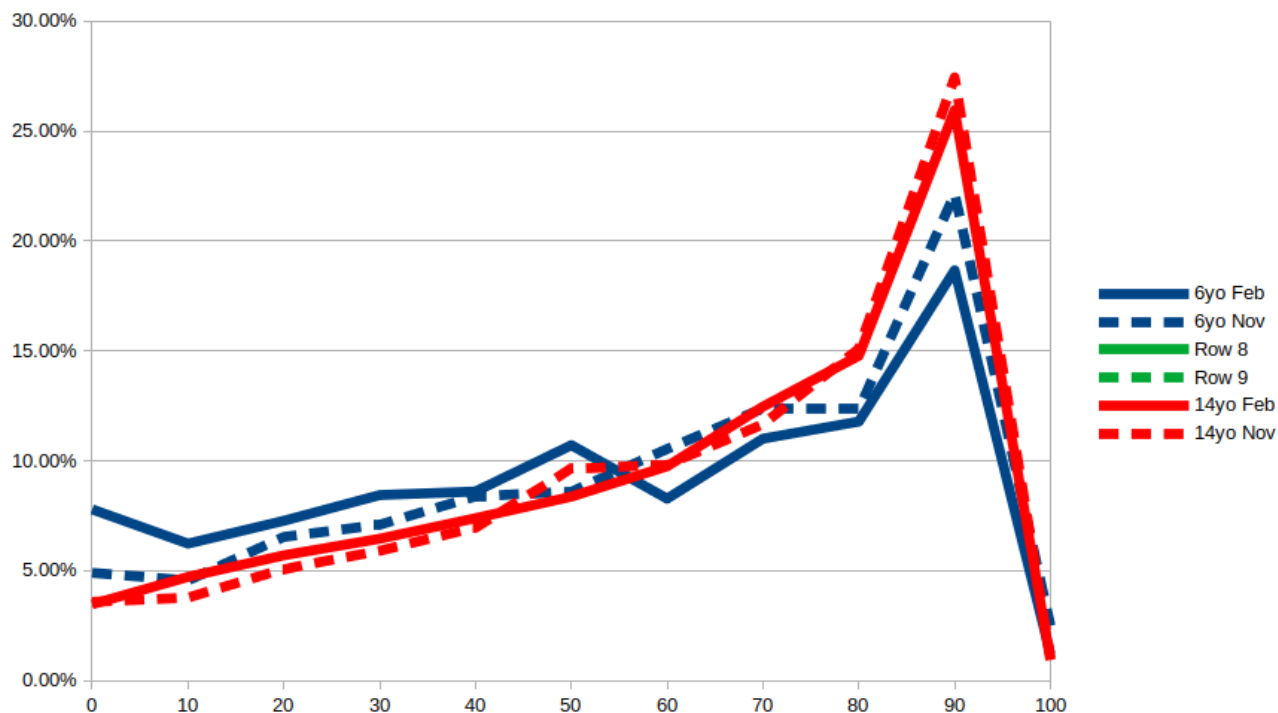
III. RESULT

The Supreme Court has stated that we need to prepare for the third wave of Coronavirus. The Supreme Court has also stated that the situation can have an impact on children. There is a need to create buffer stock of oxygen urgently. The oxygen emergency case is being heard at the Supreme Court, these are the observations that have been made by the top



court. Delhi government had demanded 700 metric tonnes. The Supreme Court has informed not only the central government but also the Delhi government to prepare for the oxygen crisis that may come forward in phase 3. People have been struggling in the second wave as well.

Below, I show you two of those ages, the 6 and 14yo



The X axis is the BMI (Body Mass Index) percentile and the Y axis is the percentage of of kids in each one of those decile buckets (we can discuss later why this curve isn't flat).

Each color represents an age. The solid line represents the February BMI (Body Mass Index) distribution, the dotted line is the November distribution. Where the dotted line is "above" the solid line, you can see that kids have shifted into that decile from above or below. Using the dotted blue line, you can see that 6yos did have an interesting shift into the 60-90th percentile groups. Both those shifts are tiny.

The impact the Coronavirus outbreak has had on children and young people is to be explored by Holyrood’s Education and Skills Committee as it announces its work in response to the current public health crisis.

The Committee will hear from young people and teachers about what impact the cancellation of the 2020 exams will have on them as well as their views on the planned assessment process.

The wellbeing of vulnerable children will also be explored. The Committee has already written to a number of organisations about the wellbeing of children in poverty, those with additional support needs and those monitored for child protection reasons. Now it would like to hear from those directly affected to hear first hand the impact school closures is having.

The Committee also wants data from the Government on which children are getting free school meals they are entitled to and whether vulnerable children are attending school alongside keyworker children.

Committee Convener, Clare Adamson MSP said:

“We have seen the people of Scotland respond as never before to the challenges we all currently face. We have seen communities come together in support of each other and friends and families connect in new ways.

“But we cannot ignore the impact that the current measures will be having on some of the most vulnerable children. Those living in poverty and deprivation as well as those with additional support needs may not be getting the support



and services they most desperately need. Our Committee wants to find out what more needs to be done to ensure that none of these children's needs are missed as a result of this crisis.

"We also cannot forget for some young people, it feels like their futures have changed beyond imagination. There is uncertainty and fear about what the cancellation of the 2020 exams means for them."

The Committee will also be exploring the future of colleges and universities. As concerns about funding grow, it will ask what can be done in response.

"We can turn this pandemic into an opportunity to reform systems that provide for children and improve children's access to services including quality education with a focus on skills, primary health care, mental health support and services to counter domestic and gender-based violence" concluded Chaiban.

UNICEF will continue to support governments, the civil society, the private sector, foundations and individuals across the region in the following six areas:

- Repurposing and repackaging mental health and psychosocial support to address impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.
- The continuity of learning for all children and safety in schools including through bridging the digital gap and exploring low cost technology.
- Implementing a jumpstart package to equitable access to primary health care for children and mothers.
- Scaling up and adapting infant and young children feeding programmes and public messaging.
- Expanding social protection systems to reach the most affected children and families including through expanding cash transfer programmes.
- Promoting government budget allocations and public financing in social sectors with a specific focus on health care and education.

IV. CONCLUSION

The impact of the lockdown on children has been tumultuous, for some a practical dismantling of their daily life and routines. It has resulted in significant anxiety, behavioural problems and concerns for their mental health. Some children have become verbally and physically aggressive since the lockdown, which in turn has had a negative impact on siblings, some of whom also have additional needs. Not surprisingly, home schooling and preparation for returning to school are major concerns for families. Over two thirds of parents said they are struggling with home schooling their child, in many cases the result of children seeing home and school as entirely separate zones that do not overlap. The sanctuary of home also presents a challenge to children being ready to return to school. Given that for many families school itself is a major cause of anxiety, getting their children back into that zone will be a considerable challenge they cannot meet on their own. A number of obvious factors are combining and contributing to parental exhaustion – their child's mental health, social isolation, home schooling, shopping, the pressures of work or other caring responsibilities and lack of respite - all playing their part in creating a highly intense environment that is wearing away at parental resilience. That so many parents are mentioning mental exhaustion just six weeks into the pandemic is grave cause for concern. Children were suffering from significant anxiety (47%), with mental health problems (43%) and with behavioural problems (42%). In some cases it was leading to children being violent. Two parents confirmed the police had visited. For many children the struggle with home schooling is a result of a change in structure and routine that has turned their world upside down and caused significant anxiety.

67% of parents said they are having significant problems with home schooling their child • 57% of children are having significant problems with change in routine • 48% of families struggling to create structure and routine for their child.

REFERENCES

1. L. Zeniuk, X International scientific and methodological conference New educational technologies at a university (2013), <https://elar.urfu.ru/>
2. R. Tyshkovsky, Distant work for the top managers: what opportunities did the pandemic open to Russian managers, <https://hbr-russia.ru/>
3. Teachers expressed their opinion about the forced transition of the educational process from offline to online, <https://minobrnauki.gov.ru/>
4. O.V. Astafeva, E.P. Pecherskaya, T.M. Tarasova, E.V. Korobejnikova, Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems, 84, 382 (2020)
5. O.V. Astafeva, National Interests: Priorities and Security, 15, 4, 772 (2019)



6. A.P. Zhabin, S.A. Shchennikov, A.G. Abrosimov and others, Strategic educational alliances as a mechanism for transforming an innovative educational environment (2008)
7. S.A. Shchennikov, Open distance education (2002)
8. E.P. Pecherskaya, L.V. Averina, L.G. Karanatova, S.A. Kozhevnikova, The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences EpSBS, 365 (2019)
9. A.Sh. Kamaletdinov, A.A. Ksenofontov, Management sciences in the modern world. Collection of scientific conference reports, 279 (2019)
10. Yu. Fukolova, Harvard Business Review, 96 (2018)