

LIFE IN LOCKDOWN | CHILD & ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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The COVID pandemic is focusing Global attention on child and adolescent mental health Like never before.

Before the pandemic Mental Health conditions affected about 1 in 8 children and adolescents aged 6-18 years.

It was also estimated pre-pandemic That around 50 per cent of mental health conditions arise before age 14 and 75 per cent by the mid-20s

Our review, *Life in Lockdown,* explores the immediate effects of COVID-19 on children and implications for policies, programmes, research

What has been the immediate impact of COVID-19 and associated containment measures on the mental health and psychosocial well being of children and adolescents?

Which risk and protective factors have affected the mental health of children and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how have these factors varied across subgroups of children and adolescents?

Findings were based on 84 peer reviewed sources and covered more than 130,000 children across 22 countries.

Key Findings: Attitudes, behaviors and mental health conditions

Increase in sadness, loss of interest in activities, hopelessness, low energy, irritability.

FEAR AND ANXIETY

Moderate and mild anxiety reported by children and parents across regions and age groups.

SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR

Limited evidence but these should not be assumed to have increased as a result of the pandemic.

TRAUMA AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS

Increased stress and adjustment issues among adolescents due to fear of infection, quarantine, lockdowns and disruptions.

EXTERNAL BEHAVIOR

Increase in anger, negativity, irritability and inattention, particularly children with ADHD/autism.

ALCHOL AND SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE

Increase in hazardous and problematic alcohol and substance use among adolescents, especially boys.



LIFESTYLE BEHAVIOURS

Increase in sedentary behavior, screen time, irregular sleep patterns.



POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES

Benefits from quality family time, less exam stress and bullying, and engaging with positive activities at home.



Key findings: Risk and protective factors

COPING STRATEGIES

Physical activity, daily routines, regular communication, access to ICT, more flexible schedules, more family time.

RISKS

Stigma based on ethnicity, lockdown and isolation and risk perception related to COVID were significant causes of anxiety and stress.

PARENTING

Family strife and separation had negative effects while positive parenting and communication were strongly supportive factors.

SEX/AGE

Girls suffered greater depression, anxiety; boys more substance abuse; older children more than younger ones.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Children who reported pre-existing adverse childhood experiences and maltreatment were at increased risk of stress.

LOCATION

Children in rural areas or more affected areas by COVID had high mental distress.

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Children living in poverty or lower socioeconomic status at greater risk of stress and depressive symptoms.

PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS

Children with pre-existing neurodevelopment conditions, mental health and health conditions had the greatest fears related to COVID. And disruption of health services had serious effects on them.

Key findings: implications for policy and programming and research

FAMILY FRIENDLY POLIICES

Early childhood development Parenting programmes. Social protection. Pro-family work policies that provide for flexible schedules.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Improve access to ICT and enhance safeguards against online protection risks.

STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

Broaden and deepen dialogue and intervention on mental health stigma and discrimination in general.



INTERVENTIONS AND SERVICES

Investment in quality mental health care services. Support to frontline workers. Scale age-appropriate and gender-sensitive interventions.

PHSICAL ACTIVITY AND GOOD NUTRITION

Access to physical recreation and improved nutrition support enhanced mental well being of children.

SAFE SCHOOLS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Bullying prevention. Catch up activities. Reduce exam stress. Make more inclusive. Support teachers.

AT RISK YOUNG POPULATIONS

Greater attention for those with preexisting mental health conditions and those more affected by pre-existing adverse childhood experiences or contexts.

Through its Children and COVID-19 Research Library UNICEF Innocenti: Children and COVID-19 Research Library (unicef-irc.org)

UNICEF Innocenti is committed to curating The best emerging evidence of the impact of COVID On the world's youngest citizens, including Their mental health.

www.unicef-irc.org/covid-children-library/ florence@unicef.org @UNICEFInnocenti

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