



Psychological Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Adolescents: Is There a Silver Lining?

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To the Editor: Corona virus disease (COVID-19) was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in March 2020. Since then there has been literature emerging about the possible psychological impact of the illness, lockdown and quarantine among children [1, 2]. Children with special educational needs may become more frustrated, possibly due to their need to stay on a rigid schedule [3].

The possibility of loss of months of curriculum, anxiety, depression, and stress-related symptoms are likely to occur amongst children and adolescents. However, they may be protected from some of the issues that are only possible while attending school. Bullying is a common problem in school. It is particularly common in children with special needs like, autism, intellectual disability etc. The children with Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can be the bully, lone victim, or bully-victim [4]. By closing of schools, it is not just the victims of bullying, but “bullies” might also have been benefitted. The problem of drug abuse begins mostly at school age [5]. These group of children have an opportunity to stay clean and under parental supervision. Majority of children with psychiatric problems have a diagnosis of intellectual disability, autism-spectrum, and learning disorders. The pressure of scholastic performance plays another major role in contributing to their stress leading to anxiety/depression. Such children have also gotten a break from their unavoidable “stressor”. These positives are unlikely to make long term impact since school closure is likely to be temporary. However, lockdown has revived the concept of “free time” that is important for introspection and creativity for

children. Few children would have learned ‘new’ skills, hobbies, music, leisure reading, playing indoor games, physical activity or spending quality time with elders. It was lacking due to hectic schedule of studies or tuition classes.

The intention of highlighting the positive aspects of the situation is not to downplay the harms, but to instil hope and optimism to those who are fearful, and suffering. The parents should increase the age appropriate communication with their children to address their fears and concerns to reduce their boredom. Certainly, the ultimate impact of this pandemic on the mental health of the children and adolescents across the globe is yet to be estimated.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest None.

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