

CORRESPONDENCE

# Pediatric Mental Health during COVID-19 Pandemic: Concerns in Developing Countries

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Dear Editor,

We read with great interest the editorial on “Midnight’s children in the time of pandemic” [1]. The paper raised an important issue of mental health concerns in children in these testing times. Although the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been and will be further evident globally, the developing countries with frail health infrastructure and huge unmet needs (in terms of mental health) are likely to experience perilous aftershocks for several decades. We wish to express our apprehensions in this regard.

*Midnight’s children* with magical realism captivated the readers without many distracting aporias (blind spots) [2]. However, this is not very true for medical literature. The paucity of accounts on mental health and sleep in children during the pandemic from developing countries is a blind spot in the medical literature. Besides the resource constraint for research, the researchers from these countries also face difficulties in the publication of their research work due to a multitude of factors. The recent systematic reviews on the subject with no or very few studies from these countries echo this fact [3, 4].

Furthermore, the pandemic restrictions, economic slowdown, unemployment, out-of-pocket health

expenditure, and demise of earning members have pushed many families in these countries into the clutches of poverty and many children out of schools [5]. Such drastic life-changing experiences including the uncertainty and fear associated with the pandemic are likely to affect the health of young minds giving rise to many more ‘*Saleem Sinai*’s.

When the underdeveloped health infrastructure, telepsychology, and tele-rehabilitation services are struggling to meet the needs of children with neurodevelopmental disorders, providing care to otherwise healthy children with pandemic-related mental health problems will be taxing [6, 7]. Additionally, the colossal stigma associated with mental health in these countries further hinders access to care. Hence, screening, catering to these concerns, and strengthening pediatric mental health services in schools and communities are crucial for building a better future.

## ETHICAL STATEMENT

We confirm that we have read the Journal’s position on issues involved in ethical publication and affirm that this report is consistent with those guidelines.

### FUNDING

None.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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