

Correspondence

COVID-19 impact on learners: challenges and responses

ABSTRACT

The effects of coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic among the learners are shown in the rising cases of mental health issues. Young people are forced to stay at home and limit their physical and social interaction with peers. This paper contributes to address the well-being of the young learners.

Keywords educational setting, public health, young people

The recent editorial pointed that education is one of the best predictors of life chances and challenges among children.¹ Many educational institutions are temporarily closed to contain the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Such measure has been detrimental to the education and well-being of many young people. As of 25 March 2021, UNESCO reports that around 164 million learners still lack access to education.² While many schools have shifted to online learning, such modality poses a challenge for learners who have limited access to the internet. Since schools are shuttered, many teachers and learners find it difficult to obtain learning resources. Moreover, some learners are embroiled in domestic violence, which makes learning at home strenuous.

As the battle against COVID-19 continues, many learners struggle with mental health issues. Young people are forced to stay at home and have limited physical and social interaction with peers. As a result, many feel that their freedom is curtailed and they feel alone. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that there are young people who suffer from anxiety and depression due to the pandemic.³ To cope with stress, some resort to substance abuse, gambling, and spend more time in online games. According to studies, it is also alarming that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated suicidality among young adults.⁴

Many countries have taken steps in the right direction towards the eradication of COVID-19. However, along with efforts to safeguard physical health, adequate attention must

also be given to the other dimensions that contribute to a person's well-being. According to numerous studies, one such area is spirituality, which can mediate positive mental and physical health. Since beliefs and practices are commonly used in medicine to cope with illness and other stressful life challenges, spiritual beliefs can have physiological consequences that impact physical health, affect the risk of disease, and influence response to treatment.⁵ As such, spiritual care can be considered part of a holistic approach to help young people navigate the uncharted waters of the COVID-19 pandemic. Holistic care includes purposeful communication and interaction anchored in understanding and empathy. The limited number of research on holistic care is an opportunity and invitation to explore novel solutions to the adverse impact of COVID-19 in our lives.

References

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