



## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH OF ADOLESCENTS

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### Abstract

*The pandemic COVID-19 is a global challenge which has infected and killed peoples worldwide. Some peoples do not persist any symptom while some have fever, sore throat, cough, fatigue, weakness and muscular pain and in some cases, severe pneumonia, sepsis, acute, respiratory distress and septic shock all leading to death. It has negatively affected the economy and social integrity of countries. Along with great increase in mortality and morbidity due to this pandemic in India, COVID-19 has caused mental as well as physical health issues among general population, children, adults, elderly, migrant, workers, healthcare workers and their families. Thus, Pandemic produced by COVID-19 has a significant impact on society and has also affected children and adolescence.*

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Mental Health, COVID-19.



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### Introduction

Corona viruses are a big family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. A novel corona virus is a advance strain that has not been previously identified in human being. The new virus was later named the "COVID-19 virus". Severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus-2 is a novel severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus. It was first isolated in three people with pneumonia connected to the cluster of acute respiratory illness causes in Wuhan. Most people infected with the virus experienced mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some become seriously ill and require medical support. Old age people and those with underlying medical conditions like chronic respiratory problems, diabetes, cardiovascular disease or cancer are more had more likely developed serious problems. The virus spreaded

from an infected person's mouth and nose in small liquid particles when they, sneeze, speak, cough and breathe. Adolescents today are living in an increasing stress-ridden climate. Anxiety and stress among adolescent is very common and natural. The all pervasive competitive atmosphere, be it academic or social, encourages adolescents to constantly compare themselves with their peers and this stress has tremendously increased during COVID period. Adolescents are experiencing acute and chronic stress because of parental anxiety, disruption on daily routines, increased family violence and home confinement with little or no access to peers, teachers or physical activities. Mental health is a condition of psychological maturity and it is a condition of personal as well as sound functioning with a maximum effectiveness and satisfaction. Mental health is a way of describing social and emotional health to develop in a healthy way, build strong relationships, adapt to change and deal with life's challenges. According to Kornhouser (1985), Mental health connotes those behaviours, perceptions and feelings that determine a persons overall level of personal effectiveness, success, happiness and excellence of functioning as a person. Stress, anxiety, tension, phobias and depression are some of the major factors which affect adolescents' mental health. The mental health challenges of adolescents are even greater among adolescents with pre-existing mental health conditions during period of crises, which may be a result of isolation, feelings of uncertainty lack of daily routines, lack of access to health services provided though schools and lack of advanced emotional development (Lee, 2020). When left untreated, mental health disorder can cause serious problems, even life threatening consequences; it can affect adolescent quality of life, physical health, as well as study. According to National Mental Health Survey (2016) prevalence of mental disorder in age group 13-17 years was 7.3 percent and nearly equal in both genders and nearly 9.8 millions of children 13-17 years are in need of active intervention. Report of World Health Organization (2017) also says 20 percent of world's children and adolescents have mental disorder or problems and half of the mental disorders begin at the age of 14 years. Resilient adolescents can cope effectively and are poised to enter adulthood with a good chance of positive mental health. Mental health is perceived as a positive source contributing to asset development individually, socially and economically (WHO, 2004).

The COVID-19 Pandemic has posed unprecedented stress to young people. Despite recent speculative suggestions of poorer mental health in young people in India since the start of the pandemic, there have been no systematic efforts to measure them. As emotional symptoms in adolescents can become associated with many serious mental health outcomes includes long-term physical health consequences and healthcare burden. So, the effect of

COVID-19 on adolescents' mental health could be more damaging in the longer run than the infection itself. The psychological toll of covid-19 among adolescents is a focal point these days due to the severe and enduring impact on their mental health, which leads to poor mental health outcomes as well as poor physical health outcomes such as the development of cardiovascular diseases (Gavin et al., 2020). Physical distancing has impacted mental health by depriving social contacts, especially among the adolescent (Wang et al., 2020; Jaio et al., 2020; Holmes et al., 2020). Due to negative outcomes associated with poor mental health status among adolescents, such as suicide, behaviour problems, emotional distress build resilience and to reduce anxiety among adolescents, it is imperative to review the impact of covid-19 on adolescent health in India and abroad in order to understand the global state of adolescent mental health and to provide strategies that may prevent poor mental health outcomes, such as anxiety and depression (Kar et al., 2020).

### **Impact of COVID-19 on mental health**

The potential negative effect of the pandemic on mental health of adolescents is evident. The stressors and motivations to practice social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic seem to be difficult for adolescents to process, which indicates in poor mental health outcomes (Oosterhoff et al., 2020). Social support is another factor in determining the mental sustainability of adolescents during pandemic. Adolescents had perceived low to moderate social support during the covid-19 pandemic, which contributed to increase in anxiety and depression (Qi et al., 2020).

Addiction is another concern for adolescents' mental health during the pandemic. Due to stay at home, school closures, students are seeking new ways to connect and to socialize in manners that are not productive for optimal health. The results of these behaviours are smart phone addiction and internet addiction. Both forms of addiction led to poor mental health outcomes for adolescents. It is well known that pandemics pose a threat to mental health (Mak et al., 2010; Lung et al., 2009). Pfefferbaum and North (2020) reported that the COVID-19 Pandemic is expected to have a substantial impact on mental health. Findings of Shukla et al. (2021) shows that participants with no personal experience (97.41%) or known acquaintances (82.58%) with COVID-19, yet endorsed moderate to severe impact of COVID-19 on their academics, work and social life. These impacts in turn associated with negative affect. Raj Kumar (2020) and Vindegaard et al. (2020) also found a consistently negative impact of COVID-19 on mental health, with 16-18% participants showing symptoms of anxiety and depression. (Qi et al., 2020).

In the present context, various researches tried to establish association between the COVID-19 pandemic and rates of anxiety among adolescent (Qosterhoff et al. 2020; MC Elroy, et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2021). However, Chen et al. (2020) did not identify a significant correlation between the COVID-19 and anxiety among adolescents. Duan et al. (2020) identified an association between depression and COVID-19 related addiction in using social media like, smart phones addiction and internet addition. Guo et al. (2020) identified an association between covid-19 related stress and depression. However, Chen et al (2020) failed to establish a significant correlation between depression and COVID-19 related factors. Oosterhoff et al. (2020) reported that specific motivation to practice social distancing led to burdensomeness and belongingness among adolescents. Study of Tee et al. (2020) revealed that 16.3% of respondents experienced psychological impairments as moderate or severe due to the pandemic. Negative coping skills are risk factors for stress and trauma among high school students (Zhang et al.; 2020). Dumas et al. (2020) recognised the increased frequency of drug usage, such as alcohol and cannabis among adolescents during pandemic. Qi et al. (2020) revealed association between poor mental health outcomes such as anxiety and psychological issues and factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic; and also found higher rate of COVID-19 pandemic related anxiety among female adolescent.

### **How COVID-19 influenced mental health**

The first case of COVID-19 in India was reported on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2020 in the state of Kerala (Kachroo, 2020; Vaman et al., 2020). Gupta et al. (2020) investigated the clinical and epidemiological profile of first 21 COVID-19 patients in India and revealed that the mean age was 40.3 years and majority of them were males. The most common symptoms were cough fever followed by sore throat, headache as well as breathlessness. Mahajan and Kaushal (2020) also revealed that majority of the confirmed COVID-19 cases during lockdown 1 were in the age group of 20-49 and mostly were men. Barani et al. (2020) investigated the profile of COVID-19 patients detected between January 22<sup>nd</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> 2020. They found that attack rate per million was highest among the age group of 50-69 years old and lowest among the age group of under 10 years; attack rate was higher among males compared to females; and the secondary attack rate was 6 percent.

On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization announced that the emergence of a new Corona virus was a public health emergency of international concern. Infections diseases have become one of the major threats to global public health in 21<sup>st</sup> Century; such disease influenced both mental as well as physical health. Liang et al. (2020) reported the factors that

influence mental health problems among the youth approximately 14 days after the occurrence of COVID-19. They also found that low education level, post-traumatic stress disorder symptom and negative coping styles were the factors which influence the mental health of adolescents. COVID-19 has been found to be associated with adolescents' mental health changes, especially the fear of COVID-19 in a population with adequate exposure of COVID-19 anxiety and depression (Octavius et al., 2020). Study of Singh et al. (2020) showed that the nature and extent of impact depend on several vulnerability factors such as the development age, educational status and pre-existing mental health condition being quarantined due to COVID-19 infection or fear of infection. Studies found that adolescents show more clinginess, disturbed sleep, nightmares, poor appetite and inattentiveness etc.

The pandemic and lockdown country has experienced global economic turn-down which has directly worsened the pre-existing social inequality. In India which has the largest child population in the world with 472 million children, the lockdown has significantly impacted 40 million children from poor families. An increasing number of poor children and adolescents now have no source of income, making them a high-risk population to face abuse and mental health problems with greater vulnerable economic, social and environmental circumstances. Now a days (In September, 2022) approximately 40979 active cases, approximately 44009525 cases has discharged and approximately 528584 death cases has been find out in India.

Several challenges have been pointed out during this period as-uncertainty about future, health issues, detrimental global impact on health and well-being of people, decreased physical activity, psychological distress, increased sedentary behaviours. Lockdown, stress, depression, anxiety and loneliness, restrictions imposed by the government, flooding of information in the media and internet, feeling of alienation, anxiety-worry, fear of getting infected or infecting others manifested by nervousness, palpitations, chest discomfort, breathing problems, depression-low mood, tiredness, pessimism, poor sleep appetite, helplessness feeling, guilty, reduction in work out put.

### **Conclusion**

Stressful life style extended family confinement, worry, anxiety, overuse of the internet and social media are the factors that could influence the mental health of adolescents during covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is necessary to seek and to use all of the available resources and therapies to help adolescents mediate the adjustments caused by the pandemic.

## Suggestions to improve mental health

Mental health can be improved by following suggestions:

- Trying to hold on to the positive emotions when one experience.
- Practicing gratitude every day, either by thinking about what one is grateful for or writing it down in a journal.
- Taking a break from negative information. Know when to stop watching the news. Use social media to reach out for support and feel connected to others but one should be careful.
- Being physically active. Exercise and yoga can reduce feelings of stress and anxiety and improve individuals' mood and health.
- Good nutrition will also help to feel better physically as well as mentally.
- Positive psychology can enhance the emotional balance and they improve mental as well as physical health.

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