

PRESCHOOLERS' EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL REACTIONS TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC 2020

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ABSTRACT

Countries all over the world, including Pakistan, are struggling with how to better protect children from the negative impact of the coronavirus physically and psychologically. The sudden enforced social isolation caused by COVID 19 has struck badly the global community's daily activities, especially on preschoolers, it is leaving immense influence. To promote and implement social distancing guidelines, most schools are closed, and switched to home-based or online learning as part of the steps to minimize the spread of the virus. Sudden shift in the learning environment, as well as restricted social experiences and activities contributed in the children's mental and emotional development in a destructive way during this unusual situation. The purpose of this study was to investigate the psychological impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on preschool children and recognize emotional and behavior changes in them. The perspectives of teachers and parents have also been taken to know about the potential strategies for improving the pre-schoolers' behavior in order to avoid the negative consequences of this crisis on their future.

Keywords: Pre-schoolers, covid19, emotional response, behavioral response.

INTRODUCTION

The (COVID-19) outbreak, which started in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, has spread globally. Together with the obvious physiological implications, the pandemic represents a substantial threat to people's emotional well-being and has resulted in significant behavioral changes (Balkhi & Riaz, 2020). Quarantine, according to data from previous outbreaks, can put a significant stress on the community and cause mental health issues. The number of researches, have focused on general population (Krishnamoorthy & Sakthivel, 2021) , and the emotional effect of isolation on children is unknown (Francisco & Orgilés, 2020). In Pakistan so many people have talked about rising level of depression (Mamun & Ullah, 2020), anxiety (Mumtaz, 2020), PTSD and OCD (Ifthikar & Alex, 2021) other mental disorders due COVID 19 But there are very few who have discussed the emotional reaction of kids how they have been effected due to COVID restriction

Government limitations should have a significant impact on minors. First, due to their lack of independence, children are extremely dependent on other people (- & Mruna, 2017). That is, kids rely on adults for help not only with everyday work but also with mood regulation. Children may receive less or unreliable support as a result of their parents' increased duties (Pereda & Díaz-Faes, 2020). Furthermore, due to their poor cognitive abilities, young children may have difficulty grasping the depth of the problem and understanding the dramatic change in daily life, leading to feelings of inadequacy and inability to control (Christner & Paulus, 2021). These are factors can contribute to stress in young children (Hagin & Paccione-Dyszlewski, 2020). Stress reactions can manifest in disruptions in sleep, toileting and feeding for infants and young children. Small children and adolescents can withdraw or show fear, anxiety and behaviors that are externalized. Careful adults and friends may help them deal with these emotions in many

situations, but others will require more support (Jenco, 2020).

It is said that Children may also express fear of disease COVID 19 while hearing from elders and watching it on news, a threat to their family's lives, concern about being separated from their fellow students, and/or more serious concerns about dying (Campbell, 2021). Parents must pay attention to and react to such phrases, as sudden high-stress events (such as a loved one's death) can raise a child's likelihood of developing a psychological illness later in life (Demaria & Vicari, 2021). The lack of treatment these children receive may be the reason for their more pronounced psychological symptoms at such a difficult moment. The impact of the lockdown on family mental health should be considered in policies, and support for immediate and future care should be promoted (Idoia & Picaza, 2020).

Young children's needs emotional support from friends and family since Emotional maturity skills do not develop independently of one another, and their growth is closely influenced by environmental development (- & Arora, 2020). For example, as one's awareness of one's own emotional experience rises, so does one's ability to deal with others and appreciate the sources of sentiments and their outcome variables (Saarni, 2011). Chinese pediatricians advised mothers and family members to increase communication with their children in order to address their problems and fears, play cooperative games to help relieve feelings of isolation, encourage strength-building actions, and use psychological treatment of music to decrease the child's anxiety, anticipation, and stress (Jiao & Somekh, 2020).

In Piaget's cognitive development model, the preoperational stage is the second stage. This stage begins at the age of two, when children begin to speak, and lasts until about the age of seven. Children start to participate in play activities and learn to use symbols during this period. They do not yet grasp concrete reasoning (Cherry, 2020). Fear (Khan, 2021), depression (Nicole Racine, 2021), mood swings (Thomas & McNerny, 2020) and lack of attention (Araújo & Tarro, 2020), are the most common new-onset psychological issues in youngsters, much as they were during the COVID-19 epidemic. Behavioral early symptoms with pre-existing behavioral difficulties, such as ADHD or cognitive impairment, are more likely to worsen (Panda & Gulati, 2020). According to Vygotsky's thesis (1962), a child's growth is best understood in terms of social and cultural experiences. In particular, social contact is considered as a crucial component in development. The kid eventually learns to operate cognitively on their own with the help of more experienced individuals in the social surroundings (Cioni & Sgandurra). Due to limit social interaction it is very hard for young to learn new things which is effecting their growth (Combating covid-19's effect on children. OECD. (n.d.), 2020).

The current study intends to explore the perspective of teachers and parents regarding Preschoolers' emotional and behavioral reactions to COVID-19 Pandemic 2020.

METHOD

Objectives

1. To investigate the nature of the emotional responses during COVID 19 incarceration displayed by preschoolers.
2. To analyze the nature of preschoolers' behavioral changes during COVID 19 confinement.

Research Design

An exploratory research design is used for this study.

Sample

Using convenient sampling technique, a total sample of 20 people (10 teachers and 10 parents) was taken. Data was collected from various schools and homes in the city of Islamabad as well as Rawalpindi.

Investigative Techniques

The technique used for examining the present study's qualitative data was thematic analysis. It was typically used to describe the collection of information, such as transcripts.

Instruments and Measures

An informed consent (Appendix A) enabled individuals to participate in the study, and the demographic form was used to obtain their general information (Appendix B). The interview guide (Appendix A) was used to perform the semi-structured interview. The interview protocol of the other researches was somehow seen in this perspective and the interview protocol was made with the help of previous literature review.

This was translated in Urdu to easily connect with parents and teachers the parents and teachers share their suggestions, experiences, and observations about the subject at hand. Attendees expressed views freely. They asked about what kind of behavioral changes they have observed in the preschooler. There are 20 semi-structured interview questions which were asked from the sample taken. The demographic sheet was also made to know the different demographic characteristics of the sample taken which is for the current study. The demographic characteristics in the current study include the age, gender, education was asked. The interviews were noted in main points so that it can be easy to transcribe them and then I can do analysis on them.

Procedure

The indicators for the interview questions are as the behavior change, emotional reaction of preschooler's social support system, social interaction during COVID19. the researcher conducted some interviews face to face Due to COVID-19 crisis, which resulted in all schools being closed, things became a little more difficult. As a result, I had to perform the last few interviews over the phone. The interview questions were checked by the supervisor and it was translated in to Urdu for the convenience of the elderly. The interview guideline was used (Appendix C) which consisted of 20 open ended questions.

After that pilot interviews were conducted to check whether the questions are fulfilling the objective of the research. Two pilot interviews were taken before the actual data collection. After the pilot interviews, the improvements were made in the interview questions and final version was made.

Ethical Considerations

For parents I took participants verbal consent for participation, which was recorded prior to the interviews. Informed consent was signed before any interview. The educators was addressed ahead of time and consents was given. The Names of the examples was kept obscure and the proper reactions was used distinctly for research purposes. In case of getting the underwriting from IRB, assent confirmations were supported from the HOD, and with the help of their support I went to the schools to assemble the data. In protecting the participants from possible injury, privacy and confidentiality is an essential move. The participants in the research were assured about the confidentiality and their personal information will be maintained. This was important so that they can cooperate in the study and can provide us with the minor details. They were assured that their identity will not be disclosed. Qualitative researchers are responsible for honestly assuring research participants their identity and protection to dignity, protection from injury, and the right to withdraw their active participation at any time without unfair consequences.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The current research was conducted to study Preschoolers' emotional and behavioral reactions to COVID-19 Pandemic 2020. This paper sheds light on children's attitudes and some of the noticeable changes that parents and teachers have seen. According to the results of the interviews, teachers and parents had similar views on the impact of the global epidemic on children's activities on some occasions, but they had different views on other grounds. The analysis unveiled the different sense of change in emotional and behavioral response of preschooler's due to COVID 19 from teachers and parent's perspective. According with their own perceptions, everyone experienced a variety of moods and emotions during this unpredictable time. Parenting has never been convenient, but homeschooling, working from home, and the financial instability around COVID-19 have made it much more challenging (Desk, 2020). Taking a theoretical approach, sociocultural theory claims that socialization is at the heart of how kids learn, assisting them in understanding the world around them (McLeod, 2020). Although adults and children may and do educate each other, numerous studies have demonstrated that all students learn from associating with peers their own age. Toddlers learn to adapt to social circumstances in social settings, according to research. This could occur in the classroom, on the park, or with certain friends (Beane, 2021).

Many participants were worried about their kids. As they described as
"Bachye buhat laparwa ho Gaye Han baat mana chor de ha belkul" (MR.S)

For some people it very hard to control their kids as they are not serious about education and everything else due to lack of social interaction the kids have no motivation to study. Being away from school and

transitions (primary school age) has made them careless. As participant said that “*Bachye buhat ghair zemdar ho Gaye Han pharhai ma belkul dil nahi lagtye*” (MR.JK) Mostly if we compare response of teachers and parents both have mentioned the careless attitude and anger in children during covid 19 lockdown. One of the participant mentioned “*that the whole day, my kids were at mad with each other. Finally. Nervousness, I began shouting at them with my hands pressed against my ears and furious tears streaming down my face!*”

Table 1

Thematic findings, frequencies and percentages of participant’s responses of Q1: Iss waba ka duran students ko laye kar ap ka liye sab sa bhara challenge kia tha” Q2 : “kia corna virus ka duran talbayeilmu ka rawya sa istadazah par koi asar parha ha ” (n=10)

Themes	Responses in terms of codes	Gender		n=10	Verbatim
		Male n=2 f(%)	Female n=8 f(%)		
Impact of students behaviour on teachers	Frustration Lack of motivation	0(00)	2(25)	20	Bachye dahan nahi datye tu mood karab hota ha Motivation katam ho gai ha bachun ko parhnaye ke bachun ka lack of interest ke waja sa
Sub theme: Challenges faced by	internet connectivity problems	00(00)	1(12.5)	10	Net ka buhat issue ha sahi sa parhaya he nahi jata
Teachers in covid 19	basic understanding of technology	1(50)	2(25)	30	kuch parents ko knowladge nahi ha apps use karnaye ka bachye parh nahi patye sahi sa kam submit nahi kartye
During lockdown	Engagement and in-depth learning.	1(50)	3(37.5)	40	Classroom wala environment nahi ha iss liye mushkal hoti ha har chez explain karnaye ma

Note: f=Frequency, %=Percentage

Table shows the results of findings of question 1 and 2 challenges teachers had to face in online education and how it effect their behavior. Majority of the respondents (4) said that in depth learning was not possible (3) respondents reported lack of knowledge about to use technology among parents was big hurdle for teachers to teach. Only 1 participant just responded who was female said internet connectivity was also big issue for them. 2 participants said since children do not pay much attention that decrease motivation in teachers to teach the online class.

That really shows that parents are having hard time with kids’ behavior this is a scary situation, no

matter how one spins it. It is important for parents and teachers to celebrate the little wins each day and remind yourself that you're a good parent doing your best in a tough situation. The COVID risk as well as family risk index, in fact, lead to the emotional problems of parents, but their effect was minor in terms of accounted variance, according to the findings of this report. Individuals with higher depression and anxiety had a lower SES, and their working conditions had deteriorated during the lockdown (Morelli & Chirumbolo, 2020).

Table 2

Thematic findings, frequencies and percentages of participant's responses of Q1: "lockdown ka duran ap na bachun ka rawaye ma kia tabdali mahsus ke ha" (n=10)

Themes	Responses in terms of codes	Gender		(%) n=10	Verbatim
		Male n=4 f (%)	Female n=6 f (%)		
Behavioral response	Frustration	1(25)	0(00)	10	Buhat gussa ata ha mari bati ko
Sub theme: Dissatisfaction Observed	Careless attitude	3(75)	3(50)	60	Ghar ma rah rah kar bachye buhat careless ho gaye han
In kids	Irritation	0(00)	3(50)	30	tna irritate hota ha mara bata ghar ma ab

Note: f=Frequency, %=Percentage

Table shows the results of findings of question 1 change in behavior. Majority of the respondents (6) said that they have observed the careless attitude, other than that (3) respondents said they have observed irritation. Only 1 participant just responded who was male noticed that their child seems frustrated while staying at home. All mothers said that they have observed careless attitude in their children during lockdown.

Another finding was children has developed the fear of losing someone close to them because of current situation, Coronavirus is a significant threat to everyone's family's health, but if it does not reach someone house. If we talk about our culture it's very common that Parents talk about it. Young kids may become fearful after listening to the news and overhearing an adult discussion about the pandemic (McBride, 2021). Jean Piaget, a psychologist, introduced a cognitive-developmental stage theory helps understand how children's thought evolved as they connected with the world around them (McLeod S., 2018).

Table 3

Thematic findings, frequencies and percentages of participant's responses of Q2: "woaba ka duran bachun ka andar kes tarhan ka kadhsat pada hoye han" (n=10)

Themes	Responses in terms of codes	Gender		(%) n=10	Verbatim
		Male n=4 f (%)	Female n=6 f (%)		

Emotional response	Fear of losing someone	0(00)	1(16.67)	10	Frequently Death ke news soun kar bachye dar gaye han buhat Corona ke waja sa bachye har kese sa dor rahyte or milyen sa be ghabratye han
Sub theme Psychological and personality issues	Anxiety of social interaction	2(50)	3(50)	50	
	Lack of confidence	2(50)	2(33.33)	40	Ddtne zada dar sa ghar ma kese naye bandye sa belkul nahi mil sakhtye dartye han or confuse hotye han

Note: f=Frequency, %=Percentage

Table shows the results of findings of question 2 with the theme of emotional response of kids. Majority respondents (5) said that they have observed the anxiety in their kids while meeting new people due to lock down, other than that (4) respondents said they have noticed the lack of confidence. Only one which was women mentioned her child has developed a fear of losing someone close there were some male participants who mentioned lack of confidence in their kid.

During lockdown environmental support is not possible as much as a result it might be affecting child behavior. According to Piaget when you are interacting with new people and going out Schooling and the literate activities that go along with it seem to result in significant increases in human knowledge (Khoury, 2019). Not only are fundamental mental abilities enhanced, but the range of intelligence is greatly expanded, and a new capacity to think of and interpret representational structures emerges (National Research Council (US) Panel to Review the Status of Basic Research on School-Age Children, 1984). In another finding was homeschooling experience for parent and teachers during lockdown in covid situation. The research finding indicated that homeschooling allows us to teach our children, forgiveness, compassion, respect, and love (Chris & Baird, 2019).

Table 4

Thematic findings, frequencies and percentages of participant's responses of "Q4 students muhsarti tor par kasye mutaseer hoye han?" Q5: "ap na bachun ka andar khuf or adam itmadai ke kami mahusus ke ha"?" (n=10)

Themes	Responses in terms of codes	Gender		n=10	Verbatim
		Male n=2 f(%)	Female n=8 f(%)		
How the pandemic is affecting children's social skills	deterioration in social skills, having to deal with boredom, not getting the cognitive and social stimulation	2(100)	5(62.5)	70	Ghar ma rah rah kar bore ho gaye han or social life katam ho gai ha

Sub theme:	yes	0(00)	1(12.5)	10	
Personality changes					
Have you noticed fear					Ek dosrye sa dor rahtye han dartye han
Lack of confidence in them	yes	0(00)	2(25)	20	Confidence katam ho gaya ha

Note: f=Frequency, %=Percentage

Table 11 shows the results of findings of question 4 and 6 with the theme of how the pandemic is affecting children's social skills. Majority of the respondents (7) concluded that it is effecting on large scale deterioration in social skills, having to deal with boredom, not getting the cognitive and social simulation is one the major problems , other than that (2) respondents said that they have noticed lack of confidence . Only 1 participant responded that they have also noticed fear in them.

We've discovered that studying and working together has helped everyone's family get stronger. Homeschooling allows each parent to spend more time with the kids. (says: & Says:, 2019). Some teachers reported reduced workloads, allowing them to dedicate more time to students; students felt they received a more equitable amount of teacher attention; and feedback improved (Sara Bubb, 2020). We're also seeing a lot of issues with conduct. We've seen kids getting upset about not being able to see their peers or educators, as well as displaying exaggerated emotions and behaviors in response to the changes in school. Since we are all trying to achieve something natural and predictable, all of these complexities are even more prevalent and stressful. Uniformity and regularity have proven to be harder to achieve during COVID-19 (Gallagher & Evans, 2020).

LIMITATIONS

Despite these important results, there were some limitations to this research. We took a convenient sampling of Rawalpindi and Islamabad that was not representative of the entire population. Furthermore, this study is based on perspectives that may make it more subjective other researchers, on the other hand, have used this method of data collection, which is very popular in these types of studies. Future longitudinal studies should be performed to investigate the long-term impact lockdown on children well-being and to further notice emotional and behavior changes in them We looked at the parents' own assessment of their children's well-being, and it's possible that mothers who are experiencing a lot of anxiety and depression are more likely to view their child's well-being poorly, regardless of the children's actual well-being. Finally, due to the interview process there were many difficulties like A traditional face-to-face interview gives the evaluation time to get to know the participant and establish a trusting relationship. To conduct a phone interview, on the other hand, the enumerator must call the participant and introduce themselves over the phone, which may make it difficult to establish a mutually trusting relationship. There is also no space for questions with open-ended answers. There is also less space for open-ended answers or nonverbal signals in the query. Phone interviews should be brief, preferably about 10-20 minutes in length, to increase the likelihood of the respondent remaining on the line to conduct the questionnaires.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Despite these limitations, the current research has a number of significance for prevention and control strategies. These results indicate that during a lockout, parents and teachers can provide remote therapeutic support to children, reinforcing their individual skills and focusing on successful parenting and administrative effectiveness strategies. Similarly, the current findings may be used to implement social and

educational interventions for parents in order to prevent emotional stress in kids. These findings can also provide health professionals and clinicians with useful clues about how to best help families during a worldwide epidemics quarantine, such as giving parents guidance during this time. This could be extremely beneficial to both families and students. Talking about Fear and negative feelings associated with the pandemic, as well as loneliness, will be a significant protective factor for families' well-being. If adults know how to talk to their children well about disease outbreak in the best way, they will be more secure in their ability to manage their parenting duties and their children's emotions, which will have a good effects on their kid's well-being. They were recognized for describing online teacher-parent meetings as a novel concept. It can be claimed that online teacher-parent sessions will benefit both parents and teachers. Furthermore, such sessions are thought to be particularly beneficial if they are hosted in schools where parents and teachers may attend and where potential technological concerns can be handled.

CONCLUSION

Using a thematic approach based on interviews with parents and teachers, different themes emerged. It was expected that there will be differences and similarities across responses between parents and teacher about the behavioral and emotional change of kids during lockdown covid 19, its effects, and coping strategies and the findings supported the notion what measures parents and teachers are doing to improve child emotional wellbeing and their behavior. School systems are successful and kids excel when families are involved with their student development and look after their psychological health and well-being. This research will assist educators and parents in collaborating to promote their children's good behavior. Communication with kids about how they are feeling, understanding, and consistency to improve their routine and behavior all these steps can benefit! Set and celebrate attainable goals, for yourself and for your children during times of crisis. This research adds to the scant work on children behavior and emotional wellbeing in individualist and collectivist culture and can aid in raising the awareness about mental health of children.

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