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The Impact Of The Pandemic On Adolescents

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Abstract

Due to Covid-19, millions of families were forced to enter lockdown. This resulted in children being pulled from schools, adults losing jobs, and highly affected the social and emotional states of those affected by the pandemic. The presence of a financial stressor heightens the stress on a parent, and this is reflected into the children. Children being forced to stay home with little to no social interaction and financially and emotionally stressed parents causes unhealthy changes in young children's lives during the pandemic. We assessed the social and emotional stress applied to a child of the pandemic whose parents were affected both emotionally and financially. Our findings from the interview indicated that the child of the study was affected negatively both socially, and emotionally which followed our hypothesis.

Background

The related **aspect of child development:** Parenting styles, schooling, children's mental health, social capabilities such as sharing, teamwork, etc. The pandemic negatively affected children due to the increased emotional stress on both parent and child. Additionally, financial stressors increased as many parents were out of work.

How these aspects of child development affect the various **areas of child development:** The additional stress on parents during the pandemic could alter their parenting styles, and they may be more restrictive on what is allowed due to lockdown rules. Schooling changed for the children drastically because a majority were converted to online schooling. Some, like the child interviewed did not return in person, and instead attend an online academy.

Socially, the children of the pandemic struggle with making friends in a way different than previous generations who were never restricted from interacting with children their age. During a crucial part of social development these children were withdrawn from normalcy and reduced to the same environment constantly.

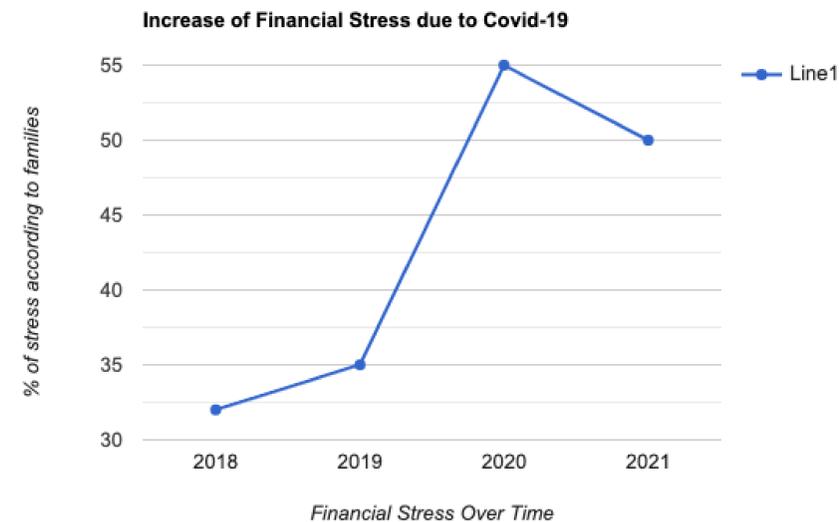
Emotionally, these children are struggling with not only their own personal change-based stress, but the additional stress of their parent's situation too. Parents may rely on their children for emotional support without realizing, and children of this age are not properly equipped to deal with such advanced emotions. The child interviewed found themselves sad, and often feeling lonely.

Method

- Research question: How was children's mental health affected by the pandemic?
- Hypothesis/assumption: Children were affected negatively both socially and emotionally by the pandemic due to the restrictions.
- Interview questions: How was your happiness affected by the pandemic? What changed about your day-to-day life that upset you in any way?
- **Social Questions:** During the pandemic, were you saddened or more stressed due to being isolated from friends and family? Did you lack social opportunities in a way you never had before?
- **Emotional Questions:** Were you often sad due to the restrictions and stress of the lockdown? Did you struggle to understand your feelings because they were new?
- Procedure (1) interview, and (2) reviewing the three research studies
- Include only the titles of the articles here and if possible, the location where these studies were conducted (e.g., in the USA, or any other countries)

Results

Children have been forced to stay at home isolated with their immediate family members with a significant increase in screen time. An Italian study on the psychological impacts of the pandemic on children showed that children are experiencing a significantly larger amount of various negative symptoms due to prolonged periods of isolation. These symptoms included difficulty concentrating, boredom, irritability, restlessness, nervousness, and feelings of loneliness. (Segre et al., 2021) The child interviewed most prominent symptom is feelings of loneliness. The child interviewed stated how his increase in isolation from family members during the pandemic upset him greatly. He was unable to be in contact with some of his family due to separate living situations. Children of divorce were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, due to typically not having both parents in one single household, or bubble. The child interviewed stated they had higher screentime, increased feelings of loneliness, and better capabilities at playing by themselves.



This graph represents the financial stress increase data collected from U.S families previous to the pandemic and during. It is very clear that families found themselves under much higher levels of stress during the pandemic than before. There is no research on post-pandemic to be collected, so this is the only information that can be offered. Due to the loss of jobs, housing, school and daycare services, parents were faced with difficulty of having many new factors to take into consideration during every day lives. With the adjustments of understanding and growing accustomed to the pandemic, as well as the return of normalcy to some jobs and child rearing facilities, stress levels among families have decreased.



Discussion

Ultimately, there won't be much qualitative data available on our chosen topic for at least a decade. We will have to compare this generation of adolescence and their development as citizens to prior generations in order to truly gather the effects of Covid-19 on social and emotional development in children. In our subject's case, he is suffering temporarily from symptoms of sadness and loneliness. The pandemic has caused him to lose time with loved ones and increase time spent behind a computer screen, or alone in a room. In conclusion the public can easily tell that children are being negatively impacted by the pandemic. However, the extent of damages to adolescence emotional and social development caused by the pandemic is unknown. Thus, the world will not be able to truly understand how detrimental Covid-19 was to the children's social and emotional development until the generation is around 50 years old. By this time, an adequate number of studies will be complete, and through comparing the "Covid" generation to others will show how it really changed the adolescence.

Recommendations & Future Directions

Covid-19 first started to affect the United States almost two years ago. This means the effects on children's social and emotional development will be limited. Recommendations for parents struggling to shape their child's emotional development would be frequent conversations about mental health, regarding both parents and children. A parent helping the child understand that they are struggling mentally or financially, and that this may affect the parent's behavior and child's reception. In the future, more information on how the pandemic affected adolescents will be known, but as of now, the long term effects cannot be concluded. In the future, children will have developed better self-sufficient skills after being secluded for so long. The child interviewed declared himself more proficient at imaginary situations and games to play by himself at home. This increase would not affect the children of previous generations, as they did not have the same limitations.

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