

Children - The Biggest Casualty of Covid-19 Pandemic

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On a global level, COVID-19 has shaken our world, causing catastrophic damage to children and families. There are a variety of stressors that affect families and children, ranging from loss of employment to supply shortages. One thing that can be reasonably said is that most people are unlikely ever to be as precise as they once were before the Covid pandemic, a time that seems far from reality today. *Much of the last two years have been a blur for many, with days of the week—becoming merely "yesterday" and "tomorrow" or "just one more day."* Since early 2020, the world has been plagued with fear of uncertainty, anxiety, and paranoia. Many of our life's interpretations have suddenly been turned on its head. Misinformation and speculations are born out of fear — both dystopian predictions and promises.

Notwithstanding our innate nature and circumstances, we chose to believe what we wanted and propagated these views widely. Still, nearly every government has jerked its knees in response. *A more subtle effect of the covid-19 pandemic has been the alteration in our experience of reality. A billion versions exist now, each one accurate to its own observer.* We have versions of our great big world and versions of our individual lives. Covid-19's tangible and emotional agony will most likely leave the vast bulk of us relatively unscathed. However, it appears that little has been addressed about those who have been the most adversely affected and scarred—the young children.

We are well aware that children are not the face of this pandemic. However, they are at a risk of being among its biggest casualty. Their social-emotional well-being is profoundly affected by the COVID-19 issue, even though they have been mostly spared from the direct health consequences till now. Each and every kid in the world is afflicted by the socio-economic repercussions and in some cases by preventive attempts which may as well unwittingly cause more damage than good. *This is a global catastrophe that will have a lifetime impact upon such children.* However, they run the danger of becoming one of its most infamous casualties. Regardless of the reality that COVID-19 has so far mainly spared them from direct health repercussions, the pandemic has made its presence known by impacting their social and emotional well-being. Each and every child, regardless of age or geographic area, is subject to socio-economic consequences, as well as preventive methods that may unintentionally cause more harm than good. *It is also worth noting that the consequences of this pandemic will not be dispersed equitably.* Most likely, they will have the most detrimental effects on children in the nations with poor healthcare systems, impoverished neighbourhoods, and the most disadvantaged groups.

Children have been caged up at home for more than a year now, unable to go outside and socialize with friends, denied freedom and recreational activities. They have not sat in classes, burst out laughing with their peers, traded objects, or hurried out cheerfully at the end of the day, looking forward to returning the next day and picking up where they left off. Several pieces of research have conclusively proven that Covid-19 has negatively damaged the mental health of many children. The lack of peer group support during a time in life when social engagement is critical for: cognitive development, self-concept formation, and, ultimately, mental health has resulted in detrimental feelings of isolation and, in some cases, anxiety. Children in early childhood learn socialization as well as some core principles and life skills, which is evident when talking about the youngest school children.

Moreover, they have no way of comparing the pandemic milieu to what they used to know as the norm. In fact, they will remember this period with a mysterious ambiguity paired with rigorous conformism. This might have a long-term impact on their worldview.

COVID-19's lethal grip has brutally and forcibly taken either one or, in more heartbreaking situations, both parents from over a thousand children in Delhi since the virus emerged in India. According to Mr. Anurag Kundu, Chairperson of DCPCR, the government body has asked users on social media to contact their helpline number about situations where children need critical supplies and have lost a parent(s) or are suffering to sustain themselves owing to the disease. Following that, Mr. Kundu discussed the flood of requests for adopting orphaned children as a result of the pandemic. Adoption, he continued, is a wonderful idea. While it gives young children stability and affection, it also gives them a new point of reference to view their world. As the session progressed, he held out hope that more individuals would step forth to adopt children. Adoptions must, however, follow the proper legal procedure exclusively. He emphasized not trusting anything on social media. Foster care, according to the JJ Act of 2016, is "an arrangement whereby a child is put for the purpose of alternative care in the domestic setting of a family, generally for a short term or extended period of time, with unrelated family members for the purpose of care and protection." *As a consequence, it is easy to understand why, in all Indian contexts, Foster Care, particularly in the individual model, is regarded solely as an alternate model of child care and protection, and is never regarded as a valid form of family structure.* The Kinship model requires that the child be placed with an extended family — someone with biological links to the child, regardless of closeness or distance. In such an arrangement, the relatives must be willing to support a child and be held accountable for them.

The most essential aspects for children who have lost parents or other family members are outreach, financial and educational aid, and social-emotional support. DCPCR has been proactively trying to locate and reach out to families. The agency used the death database to swiftly identify children who had lost one or both parents. In terms of children's schemes, Mr. Kundu feels that governments should be more flexible and broad in their definition of Covid-19. It is not adequate to minimize governance to a simple transaction. It is imperative that these families, especially the children, have potent means to channel their anxieties, distress, grief, and suffering. In order for these families to grieve the loss of a loved one, counselling is absolutely necessary. This is an important role for schools to play in this process as well. The affection, care, and stability that parents offer to their children cannot be substituted by government support. Parental death results in a loss of income, for which the financial support can at best compensate.

Every caregiver, educator, and fully adult human has a fundamental responsibility to help in healing the children. Our children's future would be lost if we let them grow up with fear and a dim view of what the world has to offer. Scepticism would triumph and that is something the human race does not deserve.