

Psycho-social issues of children during covid-19: Role of professional social workers

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Abstract

Introduction: Covid-19 was a public health emergency of international concern that impacted the well-being and progress of all human beings irrespective of age. But children were challenged drastically to into the new normal that collapsed their psychosocial equilibrium which is the basic foundation of personality development, emotional resilience and capacity of any person. This study focuses on how Covid-19 pandemic effected upon the various psycho-social domains of children around the world. **Objectives:** This paper is intended as a narrative reviewing of articles mainly related to psycho social issues of children during Covid-19 Pandemic, and to understand the role of professional social workers during the pandemic. **Methodology:** This paper is based on secondary data available through Google Scholar, Pubmed, ProQuest. In addition secondary data will be used by refereeing published national and international articles, online books, and Government websites for this study. **Analysis:** The major findings were schematized under the thematic areas such as major psycho-social issues faced by children during Covid-19 pandemic, parenting and family related problems, children having special needs, problems faced by underprivileged children, academic related dilemma, impact of covid-19 preventive strategies, and lack of quality professional services

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and the role of social work profession. The study could also formulate a framework of reference for social work professionals to work on a targeted group basis during pandemic like COVID-19 which will ultimately help the children. **Conclusions:** It is observed that there is an intervening need for social work interventions to address the psycho-social issues among children during disasters in a more systematic and professional way. Professional social workers played crucial role in different fields like school mental health, community mental health, and digital utilization in interventions to handle the covid-19 restrictions and in other government and non government projects.

Key Words: *Psycho-social issues of Children, Covid-19, Mental Health Issues, Professional Social Workers*

Introduction

There are more than 2.2 billion children in the world who constitute approximately 28% of the world's population. Those aged between 10 to 19 years make up 16 % of the world's population (UNICEF, 2019). COVID-19 has impacted the lives of people around the world including children in an unprecedented manner. Throughout the world, an essential modus of prevention from COVID- 19 infection has been isolation and social distancing strategies to protect from the risk of infection (Shen et al., 2020). In this milieu one of the chief measures taken during lockdown was the closing of schools, educational institutes and activity areas. The *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization* estimated that approximately 1.38 billion children were out of school or childcare globally because of COVID-19 restrictions (Cluver, et al., 2020). These inexorable circumstances which are beyond normal experience, lead to stress, anxiety and a feeling of helplessness in all. It has been indicated that compared to adults, this pandemic may continue to have increased long term adverse consequences on children and adolescents (Shen et al., 2020). The extent to which those deviated normality contributed in resulting psycho-social issues is immeasurable on this age group and it depend on many vulnerability factors such as the developmental age, current educational status, having special needs, pre-existing mental health condition,

being economically under privileged and child or parent being quarantined due to infection or fear of infection. This study intends to converse about the findings of studies on psycho-social aspects of children during COVID- 19 pandemic.

Material and methods

The study carried out the search for secondary data through PubMed, ProQuest, and Google Scholar databases that were published from January 2019 to March 2022. In the beginning used the key term such as COVID-19 in children and again filtered using phrases like psycho-social issues of children, mental health issues, professional social workers and pandemic. Only articles in English language peer reviewed journals were included. Grey literature such as conference proceedings, online books, newspaper articles and Government websites was also included due to possibility lack of sufficient information. The findings also were taken from case studies and review articles and Advisories by the World Health Organization, American Psychiatric Association and Government of India Ministry of Health. Being a narrative review, this paper do not attempted computation of effect sizes or do a risk of bias assessment for included papers. The paper mainly focuses on the findings deducted on reviewing the ten articles chosen from the available literature that are appropriate to the objectives of the study and were categorized under ten headings divided in various thematic sections. The data is qualitatively analyzed and reported in the paper. A summary of the papers included in this narrative review is presented in (Table 1.)

Psychosocial issues of children during the pandemic

Among children the pandemic and lockdown have a larger blow on emotional and social development compared to that in the grown-ups. In one of the preliminary studies during the on-going pandemic, it was found younger children (3-6years old) were more likely to manifest symptoms of clinginess and the fear of family members being infected than older children (6-18 years old) whereas the older children were more likely to experience severe psychological conditions of increased irritability, inattention, persistent inquiry

regarding COVID-19 and clinging behavior were revealed by all children irrespective of their age groups (Viner et al., 2020a). Based on the questionnaires completed by the parents, findings reveal that children felt uncertain, fearful and isolated during current times. It was also shown that children experienced disturbed sleep, nightmares, poor appetite, agitation, inattention and separation

| | Thematic Area | Author and Year | Articles | Findings | Conclusions |
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| 1 | Mental health effects of School Closures | Lee, J. (2020) | Mental health effects of school closures during COVID-19. <i>Lancet Child & Adolescent Health.</i> | <p>School routines are crucial for young people with mental health challenges as schools help them to cope and structure their behavior.</p> <p>Children with special education needs are at high risk. Also since the pandemic and lockdown has caused economic distress, there are indications of increased abuse towards children.</p> | Since the pandemic is ongoing it is crucial to provide psycho social support to the minors who are highly vulnerable and are exposed to various economic and social stressors. |

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| 2 | Behavioral and Emotional Disorders in Children | Jiao, W. Y., Wang, L. N., Liu, J., Fang, S. F., Jiao, F. Y., Pettoello-Mantovani, M., & Somekh, E. (2020) | Behavioral and Emotional Disorders in Children during the COVID-19 Epidemic. The Journal of Paediatrics. Commentary | <p>A collaborative working group of China-EPA-UNEP-SA found clinginess, difficulty in attention, and being irritable as commonest psychological conditions shown by all minors.</p> <p>Media entertainment was largely successfully used by families as a means to relieve their children's distress.</p> | <p>The measures suggested to the parents and their families were to increase communication with minors, playing collaborative games, encouraging physical activity, and music therapy.</p> <p>Moreover, parents need to focus on sleep problems and nightmares in children, and forbid augmented sleep during the daytime</p> |
| 3 | Stress in students due to postponement of exams | Ng Kang chug, (5 April 2020) | Corona-virus: stress over university entrance exams has skyrocketed amid Hong Kong school closures, study finds. (survey) South China morning post | The March poll, which interviewed 757 students before the first postponement of the Diploma of Secondary Education (DSE) exam – showed that over 20 per cent reported that the level of stress faced by them was maximum (10 / 10). The students reported feeling 'helpless' in this condition | Authorities to be more transparent in their negotiations and to allow candidates sufficient notice to prepare emotionally as well. Students to be timely provided counseling. |

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| 4 | Associations of social distancing with Mental and Social Health in adolescent. | Oosterhoff.B,et al (2020) | Adolescents' Motivations to Engage in Social Distancing during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Associations with Mental and Social Health. | <p>98.1% respondent adolescents shared that they engaged in at least some method of maintaining social distancing.</p> <p>They found that different motivations for social distancing were related with the symptoms of anxiety and depression and feeling of burdensomeness and belongingness.</p> | Among youth it is found that social distancing is viewed primarily as a social responsibility and is followed more sincerely if it is motivated by prosocial reasons to prevent others from getting sick, hence prosocial motivation for this cause should be encouraged. |
| 5 | Diagnosis, treatment, and prevention COVID 19 infection in children | Shen K, Yang Y, Wang T, Zhao D, Jiang Y, Jin R, et al. | Diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of 2019 novel coronavirus infection in children: experts' consensus statement. World J Pediatr 2020. | <p>“Coronaphobia” effected the patients’ visits and increased existing health anxiety in some people</p> <p>An expert committee was called to gather consensus and standardize COVID 19 prevention and management in children.</p> <p>It was found that psychological counseling improves rate of recovery. If children have complaint of mood swings, fear or psychological disorder timely psychological management is warranted.</p> | Methods of promotion of healthy and balanced diet, maintaining oral health, physical exercise, proper rest, avoidance of fatigue, and enhancing immunity are prescribed measures to prevent infection, and improving mental health |

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| 6 | Mental health of children and adolescents | Singh, S., Roy, D., Sinha, K., Parveen, S., Sharma, G., & Joshi, G. | Impact of COVID-19 and lockdown on mental health of children and adolescents (2020) | <p>The containment measures like school and activity centers closures for long periods together expose the children to the debilitating effects on educational, psychological, and developmental attainment as they experience loneliness, anxiety, and uncertainty.</p> <p>Compulsive use of internet gaming and social media puts them at higher risk. Children with mental health conditions are not used to variation in the environment that resulted exacerbation in symptoms and behavioral problems.</p> <p>The children who receive training, therapy, and other treatments are at high risk of being derailed from therapy and special educations. Economically underprivileged children are particularly prone to exploitation and abuse.</p> | <p>The impact depend on several vulnerability factors such as the developmental age, educational status, pre-existing mental health condition, being economically underprivileged or being quarantined due to infection /fear of infection.</p> <p>Collaborative network of professional by using both face to face as well as digital platforms and ‘tele mental health compatibility’ to prevent post-pandemic mental challenges</p> <p>The focal point of the health care system and policy-making should be prevention, promotion, and interventions corresponding to the public mental health system to meet the mental health needs of the population at large by taking the regional contextual parameters into account</p> |
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| 7 | Mental health impact and intervention for children | Panicker, A. S., & Nedungottil, C. | The invisible sufferers of the COVID-19 pandemic: Mental health impact and intervention for children and adolescents (2021) | <p>Magical thinking influences the thinking patterns in young children within the age of 4-7 years [3], in which children assume that their thoughts, wishes or unrelated actions can cause external events.</p> <p>Children separated from caregivers require special attention as separation from parents or parental loss during childhood has long-term adverse effects on mental health including higher risk of developing mood disorders and psychosis and risk of death by suicide in adulthood</p> | <p>Well preparedness and awareness among mental health professionals as well as the general public is needed regarding the potential short- and long- term negative mental health impact on the children</p> <p>communities can also serve as valuable resources where parent –teacher committees can work together for planning for meeting the children’s educational requirements as well as support for disadvantaged students</p> |
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| 8 | Mental health considerations for children and interventions | Imran N, Zeshan M, Pervaiz Z. | Mental health considerations for children & adolescents in COVID-19 Pandemic (2020) | <p>Young children sense their parents' stress and may display their worries in ways that caregivers may interpret as misbehavior, oppositional/defiant behavior, and temper tantrum.</p> <p>Interventions should focus on basic principles of reassuring the children, educating them about the situation in age appropriate ways, and maintaining daily routines</p> | <p>Ignoring the immediate and long-term psychological effects of COVID-19 Pandemic would be disastrous, especially for children</p> <p>Parents need to look after their own mental health, coping strategies, and model positive psychological attitude in order to support children and adolescents to get through this difficult time.</p> |
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| 9 | Mental health considerations in children | Rajkumar, R. P. | Mental health considerations in children and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic: a literature review (2020) | <p>Emotional disturbances were noted in substantial numbers of children. In younger children (aged 3-6 years), these were mainly non-specific, such as clinginess, fearfulness and irritability.</p> <p>In older children, symptoms of anxiety and depression were noted in 19-22%. Children with pre-existing disorders, such as ADHD, were at risk of symptom exacerbation. an elevated risk of unhealthy lifestyle behaviors, an increased risk of child abuse or neglect, and the need for special care in children with neuro-developmental disorders.</p> | Emotional and behavioral symptoms are a common reaction in children and adolescents, perhaps more so in children with additional risk factors. The management of these problems requires concerted cooperation between mental health professionals, families, and local authorities. |
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| 10 | Interventions for children during COVID 19 | Zepeda, M., Deighton, S., Markova, V., Madsen, J., & Racine, N. | ICOPE with COVID-19: A brief telemental health intervention for children and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic.(2021) | Results from the child questionnaires demonstrated a significant decrease in the social anxiety subscale from pre- to post-intervention, $t(9) = 3.37, p = .008, d = 0.1.07$. Trends towards a decrease in symptoms were also observed for the total anxiety score, $t(9) = 2.30, p = .073, d = 0.64$, and separation anxiety, $t(9) = 1.87, p = .095, d = 0.59$. | iCOPE with COVID-19 manual is a short, three session, cognitive-behavioral intervention that can be successfully delivered to children and adolescents to address anxiety associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. There is some early evidence that a brief intervention that targets thinking, behavioral, and affective coping tools can help to reduce anxiety symptoms in children and adolescents, even after a brief intervention. |
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(Table 1)

related anxiety (Jiao et al., 2020). Studies show that young children show more clinginess, disturbed sleep, nightmares, poor appetite, inattentiveness, and significant separation problems (Singh, S. & et.al, 2020).

In the context of cognitive development in children, magical thinking influences the thinking patterns in young children within the age of 4-7 years (Dalton, L. et al, 2019), in which children assume that their thoughts, wishes or unrelated actions can cause external events. For example, an illness can be caused by a particular thought or behavior of the child. The unpredictability

that children face during the pandemic, both from the external situation as well as familial situations, can be perceived by children as a threat leading to underlying anxiety. In order to avoid triggering further familial insecurities and instabilities, children tend to avoid expressing these conflicting feelings and sharing their own concerns, ultimately leaving children to cope with their feelings on their own (Dalton, L. et al, 2019). Children screened for behavioral and emotional distress due to the Covid-19 pandemic have presented with clinginess, distraction, irritability and fear that family members can contract the deadly disease (Jiao, W. Y. et al, 2020). They may respond to stress in different ways, that is, by becoming clingier and anxious, withdrawn, bedwetting and regressive behaviors (WHO. 2020). At the same time, children can manifest anxiety as externalizing behaviors, such as acting out or arguing, rather than the more typically assumed tearful, sad, or worried responses (Dalton, L. et al, 2019)

The main social problems faced by children include the remote or online learning that presents challenge for all families as they require reliable access to technology and also lack the time and resources to support remote learning (Masonbrink, A. R., & Hurley, E. 2020). Children from low-income households live in conditions that make home schooling difficult and during stressful times, children require a safe, reassuring and secure relationship with their caregivers, with whom they can openly express their feelings and questions. In order to ensure effective communication, it is crucial that the child's developmental stage be taken into consideration so that the family members neither underestimate nor overestimate what the child understands (Stein, A. et al, 2019). The family communication style should focus on normalizing emotional reactions and reassuring children, which would help to contain anxiety (Dalton, L., Rapa, E., & Stein, A. (2020).

Children are also at risk for child abuse and neglect. Reports of domestic violence to police have tripled during the lockdown since February 2020 in China. In India, during lockdown over a span of 10 days (March 20-31), from 3.07 lakhs calls received by Child line India Foundation (CIF), a free emergency phone service for supporting children, 92000 (30%) were related to issues

related to protection against abuse & violence against children (Press Trust of India. (2020). Social distancing measures can result in social isolation in an abusive home, in which they are either passive observers of violence or are victims of abuse in the home environment. Witnessing violence in the families and marital discord can have debilitating impact on children. They can be triangulated to the couple subsystem deferring their emotional development and further affecting their mental health (Bell, L. et al, 2001). Children witnessing violence between parents can also be a victim of maternal stress, paternal irritability and inconsistent parenting eventually developing externalizing as well as internalizing behaviors (Holden, G. W., & Ritchie, K. L. (1991). The abuse is also likely to be exacerbated during economic uncertainty & stress secondary to the ongoing pandemic (Lee, J. (2020)). Children who are more vulnerable for abuse include those who have a history of previous trauma, physical and or mental health problems, and children with parents who are divorced/separated, incarcerated parents or having mental/chronic physical health problems (Imran, N. et al, 2020). Children growing up in families from the lower socio-economic strata are particularly vulnerable for abuse and neglect because of possible preexisting psychosocial stressors as well as developmental & behavioral disorders. Children in unstructured environments with low parental monitoring have increased likelihood for sedentary activities, unintentional injuries as well as engagement in risky health behaviors (Rajmil, L. et al, 2014).

Parenting and family related problems during the pandemic

COVID-19 pandemic has been acting differently in children. The children who are in isolation require special attention as these children might be at risk of developing mental health problems due to grief caused by of parental separation. As during the formative years of life, the role of parents is very crucial, any disruption in the form of isolation from parents can have long term effects of perceived attachment of the child. It is found that separation from the primary caregivers can make a child more vulnerable and can pose a threat to a child's mental health (Cooper, 2020; Jiao et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020). The

children may develop feelings of sadness, anxiety, fear of death, fear of parents' death and fear of being isolated in the hospital which may have a very detrimental effect on their psychological development (Wilson, R et.al, (2020); CDC, (2021); Dalton et al., 2020).

Parental stress has a negative impact on children, as adults preoccupation with the implications of COVID19 might compromise their ability to sensitively recognize and respond to children's cues or distress (Dalton, L.et.al, 2020). Adults tend to mask their own feelings and focus conversations with the child on the practical aspects of the illness. They also specifically use technical or factual language to try and minimize children's distress (Krauel, K. et al, 2012). This absence of emotion-focused conversation can induce anxiety and doubts in children regarding the actual emotional state of the adults around them. A study on parents with children less than 12 years of age in the United States has indicated a high level of psychological distress among people who suffered financial losses. Among these parents, 40% expressed high level of distress secondary to difficulties in dealing with work responsibilities and child care and more than 50% also admitted that the financial difficulties due to social isolation affected their parenting skills. People financially affected by COVID-19 outbreak are experiencing more psychological distress than others (Keeter, S, 2020). Parents can also result in parental self-doubt and sense of inadequacy, difficulty in understanding and empathizing, increasing sense of sadness, depression and lack of control, which can in turn trigger parental trauma or stress response (Imran, N. et al, 2020).

Problems faced by children having special needs

There is about 1 in every 6 children within the age group of 2-8 years who have some or the other neuro-developmental, behavioral or emotional difficulty (CDC, 2021). These children with special needs [autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, cerebral palsy, learning disability, developmental delays and other behavioral and emotional difficulties] encounter challenges during the current pandemic and lockdown (CDC, 2021). They have intolerance and an aggravation in the symptoms due to the enforced restrictions and unfriendly

environment which does not correspond with their regular routine. Also, they face difficulties in following instructions, understanding the complexity of the pandemic situation and doing their own work independently. With the closure of special schools and day care centers these children lack access to resource material, peer group interactions and opportunities of learning and developing important social and behavioral skills in due time may lead to regression to the past behavior as they lose anchor in life, as a result of this their symptoms could relapse (Lee, J. 2020). To cater to these challenges, it is difficult for parents to handle the challenged children on their own, as they lack professional expertise and they mostly relied on schools and therapists to help them out (Dalton et al., 2020). The suspension of speech therapy and occupational therapy sessions could have a negative impact on their skill development and the achievement of the next milestone, as it is difficult for them to learn through online sessions (UNICEF, 2020a). The children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), struggle to make meaning of what is going around them from the cues they get from their caregivers. It is difficult for them to remain confined to a place and not to touch things, which might infect them. Due to being confined to one place the chances of their hyperactivity increases along with heightened impulses and it becomes difficult for the caregivers to engage these children in meaningful activities (Cortese et al, 2020). Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) among the children is estimated to be of 0.25%–4% among children (CDC, 2021). Children with OCD are suspected to be one of the most affected ones by this pandemic. Due to obsessions and compulsions related to contamination, hoarding, and somatic preoccupation, they are expected to experience heightened distress. The lockdown, which has made the healthy population distressed about possessing enough food and prevention related resources like masks and sanitizers, has made it worse for people with hoarding disorder (APA, 2020)

Problems faced by underprivileged children

Social inequality has been associated with the risk of developing mental health challenges. The pandemic and lockdown world has experienced global economic turn-down which has directly worsened the pre-existing social

inequality. In developing countries, with the imposed lockdown, the underprivileged children face acute deprivation of nutrition and overall protection. The prolonged period of stress could have a long term negative impact on their development. For instance, 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. These include children working on farms, fields in rural areas, children of migrants and street children (Dalton et al., 2020; Rosenthal et al., 2020). An increasing number of poor and street children now have no source of income, making them a high risk population to face abuse and mental health issues with greater vulnerability and exposure to unfavorable economic, social and environmental circumstances (Birla, N. 2019). A home represents a source of security and safety in most families. However, for the poor and the underprivileged it is just the opposite. With the restriction of movement due to lockdown, these children have increased risk of being exploited and become victims of violence and abuse (Cooper, 2020; United Nations, 2020). The Deputy Director of 'CHILDLINE 1098' India, announced that India saw a 50 per cent increase in the calls received on helpline for children since the lockdown began (PTI, 2020). This increase in rate is alarming and has made an increasing number of child victims in their own homes. During the time of lockdown an increasing number of poor families have no source of daily wages which lead to frustration and feelings of helplessness. By the reason of displacement, the frustration and family conflict may manifest itself in the form of violence towards children. This can make the child more vulnerable to depression, anxiety and suicide (Jiao et al., 2020; Petito et al., 2020; Solantaus et al., 2020) School closure coupled with economic adversity may force children and adolescents into child labor. Likewise, children without parents or guardians are more prone to exploitation (United Nations, 2020). In order to cover up the loss of education many schools have offered distance learning or online courses to students. However, this opportunity is not available to underprivileged children as a result of which they face a lack of stimulation and have no access to online resource material to study. A study pointed out that in neglected families, in comparison to boys, girls have decreased access to gadgets, and this may diminish their involvement in digital

platforms of education. Due to this gender inequality, increasing number of girls is prone to bear the consequences of school dropouts once the lockdown is lifted (Cooper, 2020; PTI, 2020).

Academic related dilemma during COVID-19

Globally, the pre-lockdown learning of children and adolescents predominantly involved one-to-one interaction with their mentors and peer groups. Unfortunately, the nationwide closures of schools and colleges have negatively impacted over 91% of the world's student population (Lee, 2020). The home confinement of children is associated with uncertainty and anxiety which is attributable to disruption in their education, physical activities and opportunities for socialization (Jiao et al., 2020). Absence of structured setting of the school for a long duration result in disruption in routine, boredom and lack of innovative ideas for engaging in various academic and extracurricular activities. It is presumed that children might resist going to school after the lockdown gets over and may face difficulty in establishing rapport with their mentors after the schools reopen. Consequently, the constraint of movement imposed on them can have a long term negative effect on their overall psychological wellbeing (Lee, 2020). Local and central government bodies and school boards have now started to initiate policies and guidelines for gradual reopening of schools. However, we need to look into the long-term impact of the educational and social isolation that children and adolescents have experienced as they slowly start to emerge from their months of home confinement. (Panicker, A. S., & Nedungottil, C. 2021)

Impact of COVID-19 preventive strategies

Children can be quarantined at home or in local hospitals or collective medical observation centers if the child is infected, suspected of being infected or when caregivers are infected or have died from the disease. Children separated from caregivers require special attention as separation from parents or parental loss during childhood has long-term adverse effects on mental health including higher risk of developing mood disorders and psychosis and risk of death by suicide in adulthood (Santavirta, T. et al, 2015). Separation

from caregivers pushes children into a state of crisis which might increase the risk of psychiatric disorders (Norredam, M. 2015). Apart from separation from parents, children in quarantine can also be psychologically affected by the negative impact of stigmatization, fear of an unknown disease and social isolation (Liu, J. J. et al, 2020) Children who were isolated or quarantined during pandemic diseases were found to be more likely to develop acute stress disorder, adjustment disorder & grief and 30% met clinical criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (Sprang, G., & Silman, M. (2013)).

When children are out of the school environment (weekends and summer holidays), they tend to be physically less active, have longer screen time, follow irregular sleep patterns and follow less favorable diets, thus making them more prone for weight gain and loss of cardio-respiratory fitness (Wang, G.2020). Irregular sleep patterns and late awakening can be associated with behavioural issues among preschool children (Vilar-Compte, M. 2020). The negative effects on health are likely to be much worse as children are confined to their homes without outdoor activities or interaction same aged friends during the current outbreak (Wang, G.2020). Increased screen time and excessive social media usage can also make children vulnerable to online predators, cyber bullying as well as potentially harmful content.

Lack of professional services

Mental health crises are also on the rise. From March 2020 to October 2020, mental health–related emergency department visits increased 24% for children ages 5 to 11 and 31% for those ages 12 to 17 compared with 2019 emergency department visits, according to CDC data (Rebecca, L. T.et al, 2020). Emergency visits could be mitigated with more widespread outpatient care, but even before the pandemic, kids often had to wait months for appointments. Only 4,000 out of more than 100,000 U.S. clinical psychologists are child and adolescent clinicians, according to APA data. School psychologists are also in short supply, leaving kids without enough support at school. (Ashley, A. 2022)

Role of social work profession

Social workers are to provide safe spaces for children or minors ensuring that they get proper shelter, health care and nutrition which will eradicate or reduce the psychological trauma that the children might experience because of lack of parental care, stigma, or rejection by other family members for fear of contamination (Okafor, A. (2021)). Social work professionals can perform multiple functions due to the complexity and dimensions of reality that exist in society. Their actions are focused on the solution of social problems and social change, which is a very extensive area of intervention, prevention, and assistance (Fernández et al., 2012). They can be taken as powerful resources since they are the agents of change for transformation into different settings like school, nurseries, college, varsities, and workplaces (Nepali, S. (2021)). A study conducted among school students in Sweden revealed that children have slightly lower self-esteem compared to before the pandemic, felt slightly less supported by their teachers, and felt slightly less well in their schools and classrooms (Vira & Skoog, 2021). One in five children had a mental disorder, but only about 20% of those children received care from a mental health provider. Whether kids are facing trauma because of child abuse or loss of a family member or everyday anxiety about the virus and unpredictable routines, they need even more support now-all amid a more significant shortage of children's mental health resources. (Abramson, 2022). Another report from the US says that mental health-related emergency department visits increased 24% for children ages 5 to 11 and 31% for those ages 12 to 17 compared with 2019 emergency department visits (R, 2020).

Recommendations

It is vital to develop strategy to enhance the children's access to mental health services, addressing psycho-social issues or need is crucial during and after the current crisis. For this direct and digital collaborative network of professionals from various disciplines is essential where they need to be equipped with quality of services through evidence based and scholar in identifying the need through scientific and universal approaches of their respective fields is required. For

this innovative child welfare policies and social research intervention studies needs to be formulated by the social work professionals and the same be encouraged and found that there is a gap in literature regarding the evidence to prove the raised topic of role of social works executed through various administrative agencies in the country. From the studies and reports it could be profession distinctively and the need for social work interventions is not seen where it indicates further research to explore more in new areas by incorporating social work implications. In addition a brief summary of framework for social work professionals to work on the basis of targeted group during pandemic like COVID-19 which will ultimately help the children is given in (Table 2.)

Limitations

The study couldn't be constrained to a particular area of sample. The study could not explore on entire literature available in a systematic review method fully due to time constraints. It was unable to track the efficacies of interventions or methods targeted towards the children by providing ample literature evidence due to the gap existing. The recommendations provided in this review regarding the social work method can be modified to suit the individual needs and circumstances of the places according to their local resources and geopolitical scenarios. There is a possibility of missing studies relevant to the care of children and in addressing more literature to prove the specific role of the profession by comparing with the pre-covid period.

| Sl | Target Group | Social Work Interventions | | |
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| | | Need/Problems | Therapies/Trainings | Social Work Methods & Rating Scales/Assessments |
| 1 | Children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological issues such as stress, anxiety, Phobia, increased irritability, inattention etc • Issues related to trauma, Abuse, negligence, parenting, Maltreatment, sleep disturbance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psycho-education through Tele-counseling, • Tele-therapy, • Providing face to face therapy following social distancing measures if necessary • CBT and Brief Psycho-Therapy using iCOPE Manual • Activity Scheduling • Sleep hygiene technique • Person Centered Case Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Work method • Rating scales such as HDRS, HAMS etc • Detailed Psychiatry History Taking • Detailed Psycho-social Assessments • Family Assessment |
| 2 | School Mental Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing the challenges of psychological issues of child • Misconceptions and access to disease information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tele counseling, • Group psycho-education to school teachers and school counselors related to mental health promotion • Group Psycho-Education • life skill training • Group Therapy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Work Method • Group video conferences • Focused Group Discussions |

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| 3 | Non Governmental Organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Resources in addressing the needs of children • Lack of skilled professionals • Lack of Governmental support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psycho- Education regarding psychological aids and Referring to mental health care professionals • Orientation on Project Proposal • Aid on Project Planning • Training on Fund Raising Strategies and resource allocation • Coordinating with care givers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Administration • Social Research • Project Evaluation and Review Technique • Critical Path Method • |
| 4 | Children's having Special Needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological issues such as stress, anxiety, Phobia, increased irritability, inattention etc • Socio Economic and living condition • Accessing medical services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tele-consultations, • Providing parent-focused interventions and mental-wellbeing interventions, • weighing high risks and benefits of psychotropic medications • Liaising with Palliative care and NGO's • Psycho-education on Disability Pension Scheme and other services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Work • Social Action • Detailed Psychiatry History Taking • Detailed Psycho-social Assessments • IDEAS Assessments • ICF Assessments |

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| 5 | Under Privileged Children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological issues such as stress, anxiety, Phobia, increased irritability, inattention etc • Socio economic status • Living Conditions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating material for community volunteers and NGOs for identifying high risk children e.g. underprivileged children, children of migrants, • provide psychological first aid • Psycho-social Rehabilitation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Organization • Group Work • Social Action • Detailed Psychiatry History Taking • Detailed Psycho-social Assessments |
| 6 | Parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressed emotion • Burned out • Psychological issues like Stress and emotional instability • Economic issues • care giver burden | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Therapy • Psycho-Education • Supportive Psycho-therapy • Coping Skill training • Strength Based Interventions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Work • Family Assessment • Detailed Psychiatry History Taking • Detailed Psycho-social Assessments • Rating scales such as HDRS, HAMS etc |

(Table 2)

Conclusion

Even though COVID-19 was infected among children in slow path the psycho-social distresses seeded by it is a threat which will grow as time passes by making them poses their condition as an adult highly vulnerable and is unthinkable among the special need and underprivileged child. Many cross-sectional studies have been conducted to analyze the impact of COVID-19 and lock down on children. The results of these studies show that the adversities affected on the psycho-social elements depend on several vulnerability factors such as the developmental age, educational status, pre-existing mental health condition, being economically underprivileged or being quarantined due to infection or fear of infection. Studies show that young children show more clinginess, disturbed sleep, nightmares, poor appetite, inattentiveness, and significant separation problems. The containment measures like school and activity centers closures for long periods together expose the children and youth to the debilitating effects on educational, psychological, and developmental attainment as they experience loneliness, anxiety, and uncertainty. Compulsive use of internet gaming and social media puts them at higher risk. Children with mental health conditions were undergone exacerbation in symptoms and behavioral problems. The children who receive training, therapy, and other treatments are at high risk of being derailed from therapy and special educations. Economically underprivileged children are particularly prone to exploitation and abuse. Children quarantined are at high risk for developing higher risk for mental health-related challenges. There is a need to ameliorate children and adolescent's access to mental health services by using both face to face as well as digital platforms. For this collaborative network of parents, social work professionals, psychiatrists, psychologists, pediatricians, community volunteers, and NGOs are required. There is a need for significantly identifying the potentials role of social workers in order to provide quality services and contributions to the welfare of the children in the society. This would be crucial to prevent during and post-pandemic mental challenges in the most vulnerable and underprivileged section of the society. The focal point of the health care system and policymaking agencies in this pandemic situation should extend

to the post level prevention, promotion, and interventions by strengthening, utilizing and incorporating the multidisciplinary expertise in the professions like social work is highly crucial.

Conflict of interest: The authors confirm that no conflict of interest exists with regard to this current work.

Source of funding: No funding was received

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