THE EFFECTS OF PANDEMIC ON CHILD PSYCHOLOGY

by:
Mary Grace V. Montemayor
Administrative Assistant II - JCPJRMHS

This pandemic continuously challenges our daily existence and even our relationships. We are forced to stay at home and physically isolate ourselves from the people we used to encounter every day. But children are struggling too as much as we are. Children have to adjust their routines — schools are closed, playing outside is prohibited; home confinement is the new protocol. Consequently, adjusting to the new normal may take a toll on their mental health as well.

Anxiety is one of the most common effects of the changes children have to go through because of the pandemic. As Fournier and Burkhart (2020) described, the spread of the coronavirus disease is “anxiety-provoking.” May it be actual experiences or portrayal in news and social media, things are overwhelming, especially for a child.

We know that children are innately curious, and they tend to ask so many questions. When unanswered, they try to make sense of what is happening around them on their own (Dalton, Rapa, & Stein, 2020). Thus, worrying becomes even more inevitable. Experts suggest that the best way is to communicate with the child. Exposure to accurate and age-appropriate information will help a child lessen his/her fear.

Fassler (2020) highlighted the importance of explaining the situation based on what a child can handle and process. With a limited capacity to process information, too much media exposure can also spark greater fear and stress on children. Thus, various organizations are designing informational materials such as videos and books based on a child’s developmental level. For instance, Gharib (2020) wrote about an article that published a comic that explores COVID-19.
Additionally, children are highly observant of the people around them. As Dalton et al. (2020) further explain, even as young as two years old, children can notice, for instance, if their grandparents stopped visiting them. Children, therefore, will feel “unsettled and upset.” If routines are continuously being disrupted, signs of distress may be further developed. According to an interview with Dr. Raviv, young children may experience nightmares, have shorter tempers, and throw more tantrums (Farber, 2020). Physiological changes and physical manifestations of distress may be evident as well. This includes changes in appetite and sleep patterns, low energy, or even stomach and headaches.

Another thing that may be affected is a child’s cognition. If you are a parent, you might observe that your child has increased forgetfulness or is easily distracted. This also explains why even children who are generally active and highly motivated suddenly do not have the urge to study. Like adults who find difficulty being productive, some children are noticeably unmotivated to perform their tasks.

Social distancing, isolation, and disrupted daily routines resulting from the pandemic significantly affect a child’s mental health and well-being. Although, as Fassler (2020) and other experts say that the majority of the children are resilient even with exposure to severe stress and trauma, they will suffer immediate effects. Anxiety, signs of distress, cognitive difficulties, and emotional difficulties are some of the things children are struggling with. Just think about the higher risk this poses to children who are previously diagnosed with a mental health problem. With all these, it will be crucial for the children to feel safe and reassured that they are not alone in this battle.
References:


