THE WELCOME GENERATION: GEN Z AND THE PANDEMIC

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The global health disaster COVID-19, as well as its economic and social consequences, has impacted practically every facet of life for people of all ages. People of all ages, on the other hand, are affected in diverse ways. Financial stress, social isolation, and the constant dread of personal health are all having a big impact on the general psyche. Many people have had to cope with unemployment, school closings, the death of a loved one, or loneliness.

The COVID-19 dilemma poses significant threats to young people, particularly vulnerable youth, in the areas of education, employment, mental health, and disposable income. Furthermore, while youth and future generations will bear the brunt of the crisis' long-term economic and social implications, short-term economic and equitable concerns may take precedence.

Children, teens and even on their 20’s or sometimes we call Generation Z have experienced these impacts on their social, emotional and physical well being. COVID-19 lockdowns have cost school children around the world 1.8 trillion and still counting hours of in-person learning. Every child's right to attend school and learn is essential to their development, safety, and well-being. The global statistics are clear: while the virus itself may not pose a direct threat to children and teens, the pandemic's social and economic consequences are, particularly for those living in vulnerable situations.

Are adolescents truly lost?
During the COVID-19 pandemic, media headlines regarding the mental health of the adolescent population projected catastrophic short- and long-term repercussions of the pandemic, as well as the steps taken to curb the virus's spread. Headlines claiming that the pandemic has resulted in a "lost generation" of youth who have been deprived of important developmental opportunities have gotten a lot of attention. As a result, it's a good moment to evaluate if the present generation of adolescents is truly lost.

The Gertrude Stein coined the term "lost generation" to describe a group of writers, poets, and musicians active in Paris during the 1920s. Their work is often characterized by common themes, such as disillusionment with post-World War I society, loss of identity and tradition, and uncertainty about the future. This effect of pandemic may give rise to another lost generation. Despite being separated by a century, millennials and the lost generation share common experiences and hardships.

This pandemic has been unquestionably difficult for young people venturing out into the world. Imagine having no one there for you as you enter adulthood – no family or support network, or perhaps your parent is too busy to provide you with the love and advice you require. For millions of young people today, this is a reality.

Communities and governments strive to offer social support for youths and young adults in the form of health and education, as well as pathways to productive employment or entrepreneurship. Even in prosperous countries, providing adequate resources for health, education, and employment is a struggle. It is painfully obvious that the pandemic will undo years of steady development. However, there is reason to be optimistic. We know that opportunity can be found in adversity and that a more sustainable and fair future may be built for tomorrow's adults.

Welcome Generation: Forge ahead
Today, people in their teens and twenties are referred to as COVID's lost generation, implying that they have lost their way at a period when they require the most diverse possibilities and must try new things. But I think it's a stretch to suggest they're lost just because the roads they take aren't visible to grown-up eyes.

In the recent United Nations General assembly, Korean superstars BTS mentioned “A better moniker for this generation would be the 'welcome generation,' because instead of dreading change, this generation says 'welcome' and keeps moving forward.” BTS stated that many young people are becoming increasingly worried about the environment and are "looking for answers to the concerns of where we must live in the future,"

The disruption created by COVID-19 will pass, but the need for lifelong learning, particularly for those whose education has been disrupted by the pandemic, will be with us for decades unless we take proactive measures now.

It begins with family strengthening so that children can grow up in solid connections. We must provide additional social protection services and direct financial assistance to suffering families in these difficult times so that they can stay together. We must ensure that all children and youth have access to education and invest in closing the digital divide. We must also not overlook the pandemic's impact on mental health. Young people, particularly those who have no one to turn to, require psychological support, guidance, and encouragement from mental health professionals, caretakers, mentors, and peers now more than ever.

Above all, in the midst of uncertainty, we must listen to the voices of children and young people and be receptive to their needs. By supporting youth-led activities, we can create young networks and inspire a deeper sense of ownership and control. Even in this unprecedented period of physical separation, young people are responding to the challenge with zeal, empathy, and inventiveness. Young people are stepping up to lead
the way forward, whether it's by leveraging new methods to learn and stay occupied, giving ideas for assisting their communities, or sharing stories to lift our spirits and inspire togetherness. After all, it is the role of youth in fostering inclusive and resilient communities in their community or even the world.

Reference:

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