



Stress and Parenting During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Psychosocial Impact on Children

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To the Editor: The literature on the mental health consequences of public health emergencies, especially for children from developing countries, is sparse and has become available only very recently. Understanding the uncertainties and emotional upheavals experienced by parents and their association with the mental health of children would enable the clinicians to design culturally sensitive intervention programs. The study examined the relationship between parenting stress and emotional and behavioral problems among Indian children during COVID-19 times. A total of 199 parents (Mothers = 72.8%) responded to an online survey that assessed parenting stress [1], positive and negative emotions [2], and emotional and behavioral problems of children [3]. The project was cleared by the ethics committee of the institute. The mean age was 10.1 y (SD = 4.40) and the Male to Female ratio was 1.11:1. Parents reported significantly higher parenting stress ($F = 24.88$, $P = 0.0001$), higher negative affect ($F = 11.58$, $P = 0.0001$), and lower positive affect ($F = 13.19$, $P = 0.0001$) when their children's score on the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was in the abnormal range. Stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed that 35.7% of the variance in the total SDQ scores was accounted by total parenting stress, negative affect, and positive affect ($F = 37.70$, $P = 0.0001$).

Six months after the COVID-19 outbreak, a significant proportion of parents reported parenting stress possibly due to the fears and uncertainties surrounding the virus, decreased social interactions, and increased childcare and family responsibilities [4]. The novel contagion has changed family life, disrupted daily routines, and many

parents have been forced to work remotely along with the additional burden of home-schooling their children. The uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, the extension of school closures for an indefinite period have added to the parental workload and further exacerbated anxiety. Although lockdowns and quarantining are necessary preventive measures during large-scale infectious disease outbreaks, prior research indicates that such measures, particularly if prolonged as in the current pandemic, can have a detrimental impact on wellbeing [5]. Pediatricians need to be mindful of the unintended mental health implications of public-health measures taken to curtail the transmission of the virus. Screening families for symptoms of stress and providing anticipatory guidance would help in promoting subjective wellbeing and mitigating disaster-triggered psychological trauma.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest None.

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