

## Children of Quarantine: A Post COVID-19 Mental Health Dilemma

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**Abstract :** BACKGROUND: The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the way of living as we have known for all strata of society. While disease containment measures imposed by governmental agencies have been instrumental in controlling the spread of the virus, it has had profound collateral impacts on all populations. However, the disruption caused in the lives of one segment of population has been far more damaging than most others: the emotional wellbeing of our child and adolescent populations. This impact was even more pronounced in children who already suffered from neurodevelopmental or psychiatric disorders. In particular, school closures have not only led to profound social isolation, but also negative impacts on normal developmental opportunities and interruptions in mental health services obtained through school systems. It is too soon to understand the full impacts of quarantine, isolation, stress of social detachment and fear of pandemic, but we have started to see the devastating impact on C&A already. This review intends to shed light on the current understanding of psychiatric wellbeing of C&A during COVID-19 pandemic. METHOD: Literature search utilizing key words COVID-19 and children, quarantine and children, social isolation, Loneliness, pandemic stress and children, and mental health of children, disease containment measures was carried out. Over 200 articles were identified, out of which 81 articles were included in this review article. RESULTS: The disruption caused by COVID-19 in the lives of C&A is much more damaging and its impact is far reaching. The C&A ED visits for possible suicide attempts have jumped to 22.3% in 2020 and 39.1% during 2021. One study utilizing T1-weighted structural images, computed the thickness of cortical and subcortical structures including amygdala, hippocampus, and nucleus accumbens. The Peri-COVID group showed reduced cortical and subcortical thickness and more advanced brain aging compared to pre pandemic studies. CONCLUSION: Mental health resources for C&A remain under funded, neglected, and inaccessible to population that needs it most. Children with ongoing mental health disorders were impacted worst, along with those with predisposed biopsychosocial risk factors.

**Keywords :** COVID-19 and children, quarantine and children, social isolation, Loneliness, pandemic stress and children, disease containment measures, mental health of children

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