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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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**The Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic lockdown on Psychological and Mental Health of Child and Adolescent with Special Needs**

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ABSTRACT

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**Introduction:** COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the population in many areas, including daily activities, education, and learning for children, adolescents, and school students. Also, COVID-19 epidemic not only harmed people's physical health, but it also harmed their mental health, particularly among the most vulnerable, such as children, adolescents, and children with special needs. **Objective:** The purpose of this study is to explore and identify the effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic lockdown on the psychological and mental Health of Child and Adolescent with special needs. **Methodology:** This descriptive study tackles the research's conducted from Google Scholar, PubMed, CINAHEL, EBSCO, and ProQuest that is discussing the effect of the COVID-19 lockdown on special needs students. **Result:** The result from research studies report that the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown causes serious psychological and mentally on special needs children and adolescents that caused a negative impact on their health. **Conclusion:** Children and teenagers have been harmed by the COVID-19 outbreak and these researches were crucial, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, in determining the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of children and adolescents.

**Keywords:** COVID-19 lockdown Pandemic, psychological health, Mental health, Special needs child and adolescent.

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**Introduction:**

COVID-19 widespread had an effect on the populations in numerous ranges, counting day-by-day exercises, instruction, and learning for children, adolescents, and school pupils. (Alonzi,

La Torre, & Silverstein, 2020). This pandemic turned education on its head, causing it to move from face-to-face to online learning. Whereas these changes influenced all schools and colleges,

certain refinements between schools and colleges and therapeutic and well-being science colleges have been point by point (O'Sullivan et al., 2021). The COVID-19 epidemic not only harmed people's physical health, but it also harmed their mental health, particularly among the most vulnerable, such as children, adolescents, and children with special needs (González-Sanguino et al., 2020). The mental effect of COVID-19 still presented till now for the normal and special need people while doing their activities. So, the purpose of this study was to identify and explore the experiences of children and adolescents during COVID-19. The issue was plainly stated by O'Sullivan et al., (2021) that "there is a paucity of data on the impact of COVID-19 on this category (young people)". The goal of this study was to identify and learn about the personal experiences of special needs children and adolescents during the lockdown.

### **Lockdown in the countries and effect on the psychological and mental Health of Child and Adolescent with special needs**

The fast spread of the infection among the populace of numerous nations all through the world provoked lockdowns planning to confine people's development and ensure national borders from remote specialists who help with the disease's spread. This shows that numerous nations responded to outbreaks that happened somewhere else instead of domestic (Buelens,2021). This technique prevents the spread of the disease by restricting movement and limiting human contact through mobility limitations, working remotely, and forbidding big gatherings (Onyeaka et al., 2021) Following the WHO's announcement of COVID-19 as a pandemic in March 2020, numerous governments around the world began a global lockdown. According to World Meter that been discussed by Onyeaka et al., (2021) and Lotta, et, al. (2022), on the 10th of March 2021 of the 220 countries and territories affected by COVID-19, there were no deaths reported in 13 countries (Cambodia, Dominica, Timor-Leste, New Caledonia, Falkland Islands, Macao, Laos, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Greenland, Holy See, Saint Pierre & Miquelon, Wallis & Futuna, Anguilla, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Vanuatu, Micronesia) and only one death was reported in seven

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countries (Bhutan, Faeroe Islands, Saint Barthelemy, British Virgin Islands, Grenada, Montserrat, Western Sahara) (Buelens,2021). This decline indicates that there is an improved capacity to manage the disease that controls are effective (Kimhi et, al. 2020). The global lockdown is a one-of-a-kind occurrence spurred by a desire to save lives from the pandemic's catastrophic effects. Domestically, the government-imposed restrictions on people's movements and ordered their confinement to their homes, effectively reducing, if not completely halting, human connection (Buelens,2021; Asif and Tisha, 2022). Countries, on the other hand, closed their national borders, restricting the movement of people and products, and thereby jeopardizing prior economic and human relations. The virus's 'part' in the worldwide lockdown has had an impact on food security, the global economy, education, healthcare, increasing depression and other mental health disorders, as well as spousal abuse. (Onyeaka et al., 2021; Martini, 2020). According to the UAE's lockdown policy, which began on March 24th. Employees were also encouraged to work from home as much as possible. Furthermore, family gatherings of up to 5 people are permitted, buses and taxis operate, as usual, the Dubai metro operates from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., and gyms, theatres, prayer rooms, public seating spaces, and other entertainment facilities remain closed. (Shanableh et al., 2022). Shanableh et al., (2022), collected and analyzed data on the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on people's mobility trends, air quality, and utility consumption in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (UAE). Mobility began to improve in April 2020, although it did not reach the pre-pandemic levels reported in February 2020. Following the implementation of different lockdown measures in March 2020, mobility in the sector rose by around 25%. The enhanced movement in the sector lasted until late May 2020, when the lockdown restrictions were removed, and high vaccination rates were attained. (Shanableh et al., 2022). But, with the lockdown lives changed and students with special needs faced many difficulties to learn cause them to have psychological and mental problems as the lockdown, school closures, missed life events, and financial consequences have all had an impact on people's physical and mental health in the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak (Alonzi, La Torre, & Silverstein, 2020).

Many studies have looked at the influence on physical health, but few have looked at the impact on people's mental and psychological health, particularly among children and adolescents. (Alonzi, La Torre, & Silverstein, 2020). The goal of this study was to look into the negative impacts of the lockdown on the vulnerable populations, such as children and adolescents, with a focus on children with autism spectrum disorders.

### **Purpose and objectives of the study:**

The purpose of this study is to explore and identify the effect of COVID-19 Pandemic lockdown on psychological and mental Health of Child and Adolescent with special needs.

### **Objectives:**

- 1- Identify the lockdown effects on psychological and mental health of students with special needs
- 2- Explore the causes of the psychological and mental problems of special needs students during COVID-19 lockdown.
- 3- Identify types of mental and psychological problems of special needs students in relation with COVID-19 lockdown.

### **Methodology:**

This research study is a descriptive study that tackles the research's conducted from Google Scholar, PubMed, CINAHEL, EBSCO, and ProQuest that is discussing the effect of COVID-19 lockdown on special needs students. The research's chosen from 2020 to 2022 from starting COVID-19 lockdown till the lockdown end and returned the life to normal and mostly discussed the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown on the psychological and mental health of child and adolescents with special needs. The researches were descriptive studies, qualitative, cross-sectional, interviews, and literature reviews about the effects of pandemic and the psychological with mental health of Child and adolescents that were total research study found about COVID-19 pandemic were 92 and 22 research studies mainly about COVID-19 lockdown pandemic, COVID-19 pandemic and psychological effect on children, COVID-19 pandemic and mental effect on adolescents, causes of mental problems during pandemic, types of mental problems during pandemic, and effect of

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COVID-19 pandemic lockdown on normal life's activities. The study results tackled about COVID-19 pandemic and psychological effect on children, the COVID-19 pandemic, and mental effect on adolescents and children, that were 8 studies and the remaining studies were used for introduction, literature review, discussion, and conclusion.

### **Results:**

The result from research studies that the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown causes a serious effect psychological and mentally on special needs children and adolescents that cause negative impact on their health. According to Witt, et, al. (2020), the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was evident in the increase in poverty, particularly among minorities who impacted society as discussed in his research study. Isolation and alienation, in particular, may have contributed to an increase in suicide, marital violence, and child maltreatment, particularly among people already suffering from mental health issues, so WWY, et al. (2020) also investigated children's vulnerability and resilience during COVID-19 and performed the first empirical evidence of the impact of school closure on children and their families. A large-scale cross-sectional study in Hong Kong included more than 29 thousand families to study lifestyle habits and psychosocial wellness among families with children, highlighting the characteristics of vulnerable groups. during school cancellations due to COVID-19, the study focused on parent-child interactions and parental stress. Simple and multivariate linear regression analyses were used in the study. Psychosocial challenges were shown to be more common in children with health problems or special needs, parents with mental illnesses, single-parent families, and low-income families. When compared to their position before the pandemic among Hispanic teenagers, done by Penner, Hernandez Ortiz, and Sharp (2021) suggested that remaining at home might have protective effects for children and adolescents with pre-existing mental health problems or from a minority group. Proper family functioning was linked to a large reduction.

In addition, data from 32,849 surveys completed by students in Australia was extracted to investigate the emotional well-being of teenagers during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. (Thomas, et al. 2022). Researchers analyzed data acquired previously with The Child Health Utility Index (CHU9D) to investigate the issues faced by adolescents. Scores were higher, especially among those with fewer friends. During the epidemic, this suggests a decline in social and emotional well-being. (Thomas, et al. 2022).

During the COVID –19 pandemic lockdown, 48 families were interviewed utilizing an online semi-structured interviewing method with open-ended questions. Understanding the negative effects of the pandemic on the mental health of children and adolescents includes feelings of social isolation, stress, anxiety, and suicide ideation (O'Sullivan et al., 2021). COVID-19 was discussed by the participants, who included parents, guardians, carers, and their children. Two methods were used in the sampling technique: convenience and snowballing procedures. This study looked at individual COVID-19 experiences, as well as the mental health of children and adolescents throughout this time that find mental health is affected by feelings of isolation and stressed. (O'Sullivan et al., 2021)

Another research study was qualitative. It followed the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research and used an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) technique (COREQ). The plan included semi-structured virtual online interviews with families that used a "funneling technique," in which conversations flowed from broad to specific topics. The interviews were taped, transcribed, and debriefed thereafter. Participants discussed their experiences during the Irish lockdown, during which schools were closed and no gatherings were permitted (Cheng, Moon, and Artman, 2020)

Reading/Re-reading, Coding, Clustering, Iteration, Narration, and Contextualization were all used in the IPA thematic data analysis, which was done with NVIVO software. The IPA method involves grouping transcripts into broad themes before going on to more detailed ones. Because this approach emphasizes people's experiences, the researchers' subjective worldviews are reflected in

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their research, which may influence the findings. Because it prevents biases, this study approach may be beneficial to the research quality (Cheng, Moon, and Artman, 2020) This study's findings were organized into themes. Covid-19 has hurt children's mental health, adolescent mental health, and mental health issues for children and adolescents with autism. The author gave a thorough description of the study's findings and contributed to the field of mental health, however, he made no mention of the relationship between the research and the theoretical framework. The primary priority was to help children afflicted by Covid-19. It dealt with the tensions and strains that the COVID-19 crisis had on families. According to both parents and children, youngsters become socially distant and alienated as a result of not being able to interact with their peers and being compelled to stay at home during the lockdown. (Cheng, Moon, and Artman, 2020)

Also research done by Daly & Robinson, (2021) was about children's mental health, and it was divided into three themes: social isolation, the stress in their home-schooling, and anxiety generated by media and news. The concern about adolescent mental health was similar to the poor mental health results of young children. The teenagers were upset and anxious during the lockdown. Many parents also said that their children's anxiousness about future changes, such as secondary school, causes them to become distracted from their daily routine, pushing them to spend more time playing video games or on social media. (Daly & Robinson, 2021)

Hou, et, al. (2020) dealt with autistic children and teenagers' mental health issues. They described the lockout's scary reactions. Anxiety was prevalent among these adolescents. A father of an autistic child with special difficulties shared how his child's anxiety manifested itself in his connection troubles. Furthermore, learning about the pandemic did not affect existential anxiety, which is defined by a crippling fear of becoming ill.

### **Discussion:**

The findings revealed a variety of mental health issues, including despair, isolation, and anxiety (Aslan & Pekince, 2020). It's worth noting that

these negative mental and psychological health difficulties were more noticeable in children with Autism Spectrum Disorders which researchers conclude that the epidemic would have devastating impacts on children and adolescents, and given high suicide rates, they intended to investigate the implications, both immediate and long-term, so that they might help if necessary (Aslan, & Pekince, 2020; Qiu, et, al. 2020).

Social media and other networking sites were used to locate the participants and the way of communication with the researchers that is advanced technologies and some facing difficulties using it. (Qiu, et, al. 2020; O'Sullivan et al., 2021). Following an initial briefing and agreement, the interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams. The researchers were able to facilitate open-ended questions using a semi-structured interview so a result of COVID-19, families shared their experiences with government restrictions and altered family relations and the children faced many difficulties to learn and developed psychological problems cause the families to suffer a lot (Hou, et, al. 2020) Participants were also contacted to ensure that they were satisfied with their conversation and to answer any questions they had about the study this lead to encourage the families to express their feeling and enable adolescent to explain about their problems and direct them to psychological and mental consultation that can help them to decrease the problem till the life return to normal. In the research done in Ireland's the participants shared their perspectives on the pandemic and initial lockdown with conflicts faced during this time. (O'Sullivan et al., 2021; Hou, et, al. 2020). One of the study's shortcomings was that the sample set was not geographically evenly dispersed. Mothers were asked more questions than fathers, implying that gender played a role. Additionally, using the remote interview technique decreases nonverbal contact between the interviewer and the interviewee, which could expose important information about the session. (O'Sullivan et al., 2021). However, several research findings disagree with author point of view. Despite strict social distancing measures, 38.1%, 36.1 %, and 11.1 % of respondents voluntarily reduced social interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic in Taiwan: related factors and association with perceived social support, this

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online study found that 38.1 %, 36.1 %, and 11.1 % of respondents voluntarily reduced interaction with their friends, colleagues, or classmates, and family members to avoid COVID-19 infection. Furthermore, respondents who deliberately restricted connection and communication with others reported poorer felt social support, so it is recommended to the general public to encourage appropriate social distancing in-person visits and the use of protective face masks. The findings showed that changes in social contact during the COVID-19 pandemic are a complex process combining demographic factors and health attitudes. (Chue et al., 2020) This study found the exact reverse of what I experienced during the pandemic's lockdown period, but I'll have to conduct further research in my country to evaluate the differences.

### **Conclusion:**

Children and teenagers have been damaged by the COVID-19 outbreak. These researches were crucial, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, in determining the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of children and adolescents. (Carpenter, and Harvey, 2020) This research investigation was undertaken in the author's field, but there was a gap in that no theoretical framework was offered. Although prior studies have looked into the impact of the pandemic on children and adolescents' mental health, this descriptive study focused on a exploring and identifying the effect of pandemic lockdown on students with special needs and further research can be done to identify the ways to solve these issues because the problem can remain even without lockdown and life returns to normal.

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