

Parent's Perspective on the Effect of Covid 19 on ECE Learners in Karachi, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Situation of COVID 19 got worsened in the month of February 2020 in Pakistan. Finally schools got closed from March 13, 2020. Restrictions on physical movement exerted hardship on parents, teachers and ECE learners. This study aims to know the parents perspective on the health, happiness and prosperity of ECE learners in Pakistan. Data is collected through purposive sampling method. Interview technique is used. 60 parents are interviewed during admission interview in an ECE setup at Karachi, Pakistan. There are some factors regarding parents perspective like parents feared of sending their children back to the schools, willingness to prepare their kids for new school routine, children have developed the habit of eating junk food, level of aggression has increased in children, children have adopted the habit of using mobile phones during their stay at home. Their learning has been stopped and due to in availability of physical activity they are prone to obesity. This research basically recommend that what strategy should we adopt for ECE learner for their progress in the academic area regarding the post COVID situation and how the parents contribute their effective role during the learning of their children after the due situation. It is concluded that the awareness programs on the education, mental and physical wellbeing of ECE learners should be provided to the parents.

Key words: Perspective, Effect, ECE, COVID 19, Learners

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Parent's Perspective on the Effect of Covid 19 on ECE Learners in Karachi, Pakistan

ECE has a great impact on the growth development of young children, learning and well-being as they progress through school, and social interaction. World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a global Pandemic on 11 March 2020. Young children were less exposed to Corona Virus (Bhopal et al. [2021](#); Sinha et al. [2020](#)), adverse effects in long term on children's' wellness cannot be overlooked hence Pakistan announced schools closure very soon as a result of pandemic. Schools stopped physical classes from 27 February in the province of Sindh, while the other provinces had stopped functioning physically from 14 March 2020. Learning became very much difficult for the children age between 3 to 6 due to restrictions on social interaction. Early childhood learning emphasis on learning through social interaction which results into improved learning, growth and wellbeing. Children from low income families have lack of resources and lack of access to expensive technology hence stop on social mobility effect the mental as well as physical health of children. (ILO & UNICEF 2020). This void of social interaction minimized the risk of transmission of disease but could not prevent stressful family environment which had created mental and physical hazards in short and long run. (Goldfeld et al. [2022](#); Schmeer et al. [2021](#)). Relax family environment is required with the curriculum to boost learning. Interaction between child and parent in a relaxed environment at home has high significance as a predictor of growth and development of Early Childhood Learner. (Lehrl et al., [2020](#)). The way parent spend quality time with children paves the way for strong family bonding, improved health and wellbeing of ECE learner. (Perrin et al., 2016).

During COVID 19 lock down learning moved from physical to online mode totally. Pandemic triggered the use of digital devices for digital communication. It became a challenge for the parents to manage house hold with their increased involvement in children's online learning. Children learning got fully exposed to parents. (Oke et al., [2021](#)). Extensive use of mobile phone, computer, tablet and other gadgets is not feasible for very young kids. (Hu et al., [2021](#)). It may create health hazards. Dependence on digital devices may hinder the growth and development of children in long run. (Wong CW et al 2021)

ECE learners are in the age bracket for vaccination. COVID 19 lock down not only void the physical schooling but also stopped the routine immunization of children which may increase the risk of polio, measles and other diseases. (Khalid & Jehan 2020; Baloch S M 2020). It may raise child morbidity and mortality rate if not managed successfully.

This study aims to explore the parent's views on their children's wellbeing, physical and mental health and happiness.

Research Questions

1. How did the COVID 19 effect ECE learner's families?
2. What were parent's perceived challenges in ECE learning?
3. In what ways did online learning help ECE learner's parents?

Methodology

This is a qualitative research, using interview technique. The data is collected through purposive sampling. 60 parents are interviewed during admission interview at an ECE set up in Karachi, Pakistan. Out of 60 parents 18 are living in a nuclear family setting, 34 are living in a joint family setting and 8 are single mothers living with their parents. Prior consent of parents is taken on a form for ethical reasons.

Data Analysis

S.A=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D.A=Disagree, S.D.A=Strongly Disagree

ITEMS	S.A	A	D.A	S.D.A
Children are safe at home	15%	62%	18%	5%
Children screen time has increased	87%	12%	1%	-
Children are out of routine	6%	94%	-	-
Children are adopting unhealthy eating habit	22%	46%	21%	11%
Children are showing psychological pressure through anxiety and aggression	30%	53%	12%	5%
Children are prone to obesity	35%	59%	2%	4%
Children are not taking online classes seriously	34%	41%	15%	10%
They enjoy moving images on screen	91%	6%	3%	-
They get depressed when unable to touch and feel the images	8%	90%	2%	-
They want to play and learn with their friends	3%	97%	-	-
Availability of ECE material increase pace of learning	1%	89%	7%	3%

Discussion

Children are effected by COVID 19 in various ways. Many effects have been explored many psychological, emotional and physical effects are yet to be explored. (Rodríguez-Rey R et al 2020)ECE learners are very young to express their feelings and fears completely. Mostly the data rely on parents perceptions. This study is conducted in a close environment .Parents are interviewed by an ECE practitioner on the proposed indicators. This study reveals that anxiety and fear has not only increased in children but adults are more adversely effected. Parents are less likely to send their children to schools. This may be due to financial burden because of no or low income during lock down. Only reliance is on the savings. Other reason may be considered as crowded places are conducive for the spread of virus. They think they can take care of the children at home in much better way. (Bate J, Malberg N 2020).Excessive talk on Corona Virus, Over reporting of deaths on media and continuous discussion among family and friends on the live threatening disease do not stop children thinking about the adverse situation and raise the level of anxiety.

Emotional, Social, Psychological, physiological growth and development determine the level of wellbeing. The aim of holistic development for the wellbeing of children is sacrificed when they are stressful.

Increased screen time has increased the risk of weak eye sight.Accessive use of mobile phone is negatively affecting the brain health. Playing online games and adopting the moves performed by characters changing their personality traits. Less or no activity with excessive eating loading fats on their bodies.

ECE learners enjoy learning by play. They have specialized material and expert teachers. They enjoy the online class as a video but still miss the interaction with their teacher and fellows.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Parents are less aware of children needs during and post pandemic. Awareness campaigns are needed by the parents to manage and support their children at time of pandemic. Initial workshops should be given to parents about ECE learning. ECE programs with the physical involvement of parents should be introduced.

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