



# The Psychosocial Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic On Adolescents: Qualitative Determination of the Experiences of Adolescents And Their Parents

Covid 19 Pandemi Sürecinin Ergenler Üzerine Psikososyal Etkisi: Ebeveyn ve Ergen Deneyimlerinin Belirlenmesi: Nitel Çalışma

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatic ramifications all over the world, with unprecedented psychological, social, and economic consequences taking their toll on many people's lives in addition to increased morbidity and mortality rates. The pandemic has numerous psychosocial impacts on adolescents. This paper focused on adolescents' and their parents' views to determine the psychosocial impacts and challenges of the pandemic affecting adolescents. **Design and Methods:** This study adopted a qualitative phenomenological research design. The sample consisted of nine parents (eight mothers and one father) and nine adolescents. Participation was voluntary. Data were collected online through in-depth interviews, which were audio and video recorded and then transcribed. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. **Results:** Participants' experiences were divided into three periods: "initial reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic," "growing up with the COVID-19 pandemic," and "post-pandemic future." Adolescents were nervous and afraid of getting sick and dying. They believed that the pandemic had adverse physical, psychological, behavioral, and academic impacts. They were hopeless about the future.

**Conclusion:** Adolescents growing up with the pandemic face many physical, psychological, academic, and behavioral problems. **Practical implications:** Healthcare professionals should support adolescents and their parents during the pandemic and adopt multidisciplinary care approaches to help adolescents grow into healthy adults.

**Key words:** The Covid-19 Pandemic, Adolescents, Parents, The Psychosocial Impact, Qualitative, Experiences

## ÖZET

**Amaç:** Covid 19 pandemisi etkileri toplumlar üzerinde önemli izler bırakmaktadır. Morbidite ve mortalitenin ötesine geçerek psikolojik, sosyal ve ekonomik olmak üzere birçok yönden sonuçları olabilir. Ergenlerde pandemiye bağlı olarak psikososyal etkiler ortaya çıkarılabilir. Bu çalışmada amacımız Covid 19 pandemi sürecinin ergenler üzerine olan psikososyal etkilerini ve zorluklarını ergen ve ebeveyn gözüyle derinlemesine yapılan görüşmelerle keşfetmekti. **Gereç ve Yöntem:** Çalışmada nitel araştırma deseni olarak fenomenoloji yöntemi kullanıldı. Çalışmaya gönüllük esasına dayalı olarak 9 ebeveyn (8 anne ve 1 baba) ve 9 ergen (11-18 yaş) ile derinlemesine görüşmeler yapıldı. Görüşmeler çevirim içi olarak yapıldı, ses ve görüntü kaydı alındı. Ses kaydı olarak elde edilen veriler yazıya geçirildi ve tanımlayıcı fenomenoloji yaklaşımı kullanılarak tematik olarak analiz edildi. **Bulgular:** Ebeveynlerin ve ergenlerin deneyimleri üç zaman dilimine ayrılabilir: Ergenlerde; "Covid 19 pandemisine ilişkin tepkiler", "Covid 19 pandemisi ile büyümek" ve "Pandemi sonrası gelecek". Pandemi ortaya çıktığında ergenlerin tepkileri hastalanma ve ölüm korkusu ve anksiyete ile ilgiliydi. Ergenler için pandemi ile büyümek ise fiziksel, psikolojik, davranışsal, akademik başarıda değişimler söz konusu idi. Ergenlerde gelecekle ilgili olarak hayallerinin olumsuz etkilendiği ve umutsuzluk olduğu bildirdi. **Sonuç:** Bu çalışmada sonuçları Covid 19 sürecinde büyüyen bir ergen olmanın; fiziksel, psikolojik, akademik ve davranışsal olarak birçok sorunun ergen ile birlikte geleceğe taşındığını göstermektedir. Gelecekte sağlıklı yetişkinlerin oluşabilmesinde pandemi sürecinde ergen ve ebeveynlerin sağlık profesyonelleri tarafından desteklenmesi ve bakımda multidisipliner bakım yaklaşımlarının tercih edilmesi gerekmektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Covid-19 Pandemisi, Ergenler, Ebeveynler, Psikososyal Etki, Nitel, Deneyimler

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## INTRODUCTION

Novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) broke out at the end of 2019 and has taken hold of the whole world since then, with an unprecedented surge in the number of cases and deaths. COVID-19 generally presents with mild symptoms in infants, children, and adolescents. Although rare, some develop severe COVID-19 symptoms and require intensive care and ventilation.<sup>1</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has affected large populations worldwide. However, there is very little research investigating the psychosocial effect of the pandemic on children and adolescents.<sup>2</sup> We should be more concerned about the possible psychosocial and mental health problems that adolescents may develop due to school closures, restrictions, and lack of peer interaction.<sup>3</sup> Children and adolescents make up 42% of the world's population. If we do not recognize and meet their acute psychosocial needs, we might have to deal with its psychosocial repercussions in the future.<sup>4</sup> Xie et al. (2020) focused on the long-term effects of staying at home due to school closures. They reported that children and adolescents stuck at home during the pandemic spent too much time on screen, overate, and experienced sleep disturbances and fatigue.<sup>5</sup> Lockdowns and other preventive measures increase the risk of long-term Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in adolescents.<sup>6-9</sup> The current situation is exacerbated by prolonged lockdowns, fear of infection, frustration, boredom, insufficient information, lack of peer interaction and personal space, and financial losses.<sup>6,10,11</sup> Parents report that their children spend too much time on screen, feel more nervous, agitated, and unhappy, and experience mental problems during nationwide lockdowns.<sup>12</sup>

When the pandemic is considered in terms of its effects on children's health care and child health, it is reported that children stay at home more to be protected from infection, and in this process, children become vulnerable to neglect and abuse. In this direction, it is reported that a special work area has emerged for community health nurses and pediatric nurses serving in primary care.<sup>13</sup> In the pandemic, children, as well as the elderly, are at risk for pneumonia. Against diseases that threaten child health such as pneumonia, children in orphanages should be considered as a group in need of protection and counseling by pediatric nursing.<sup>14</sup> In addition, children with special health care needs such as disabled children have difficulty in accessing health services in this process. As a result, the need for restructuring of nursing services arises.<sup>15</sup> In addition to all these, measures taken for infection control in school-age children threaten the mental health of children due to social isolation and pose a threat to children in the healthy group.<sup>16</sup>

Many children have lost access to the most basic needs (schooling, socialization, skill-based learning, social support, physical activities, etc.) and faced numerous uncertainties due to the lockdowns and restrictions since the onset of the pandemic. This period has put more strain on parents. We need more data to detect at-risk children and adolescents to address long-term problems.<sup>17</sup> This paper focused on adolescents' and their parents' views and experiences to examine the psychosocial effects of the pandemic on adolescents. We assume that our results will help authorities develop interventions and care programs.

## METHOD

### Design

This study adopted Husserl's phenomenological methodology. Phenomenology focuses on phenomena that we cannot fully understand but to which we are not entirely alien. Phenomenology helps researchers identify human experiences and problems.<sup>18</sup> The methods and results were reported using the 21-item Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) developed by Q'Brien et al. (2014).<sup>19</sup> Data were collected through in-depth interviews. The objective of in-depth interviewing is to explore interviewees' feelings, points of view, and perspectives through open-ended questions.<sup>20</sup>

### Participants

Participants were recruited using snowball sampling. This is a sampling technique where researchers find one member of a population (a neighbor, friend, etc.) and then ask him/her to refer to other potential subjects who meet inclusion criteria. This process continues until enough participants are recruited. Snowball sampling is also referred to as chain referral sampling. There are no definite rules regarding sample size in qualitative research. It is ultimately a matter of judgment and experience based on data saturation.<sup>20</sup> The inclusion criteria were: (a) adolescents aged 11 years or older and (b) volunteering.

According to Piaget's cognitive development theory, 11-15 years of age is a formal operational stage where children develop the ability to use abstract thinking and logical and deductive reasoning.<sup>21</sup> Children in that stage have had to adapt to the new normal because they have ended up getting stuck at home, spending too much time with parents, losing access to schooling, engaging in online learning, and being physically separated from friends since the pandemic.<sup>22</sup> We interviewed people 11-15 years of age to determine how the COVID-19

pandemic impacted adolescents psychosocially. We achieved data saturation after we interviewed nine adolescents and their parents.

### Data Collection

Data were collected online between January 15 and February 15, 2021. In-depth interviews were conducted with each adolescent and his/her parent using an adolescent interview form and a parent interview form. Each interview lasted 25 to 30 minutes. Each participant was allowed to express their thoughts freely.

Two researchers interviewed all participants. One of the researchers served as a guide, while the other served as a reporter. They used the SPIDER (sample size, phenomenon of interest, study design, evaluation, and research type) to develop the data collection tools.<sup>23</sup> They evaluated the semi-structured interview form before data collection. The evaluation revealed that the questions were adequate. Afterward, they asked three experts to check it for intelligibility and relevance. Based on expert feedback, they removed two questions because they were similar and reworded two others. The interview questions were designed to elicit adolescents' and parents' views on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescents (Table 1). The researchers encouraged all participants to answer the questions honestly and express their feelings as deeply as possible. The researchers were completely unbiased during the interviews so as not to influence the participants. They recorded all interviews and took notes.

**Table 1: Main Questions in the Semi-structured Interview Form**

Form
Questions
1- What does the pandemic mean to you?
2- How did you/your child feel when you/your child heard the word "pandemic" for the first time and when the preventive measures were introduced?
3-How has the pandemic affected you/your child? Please explain.
4- What are your/ is your child's future dreams and goals? How has the pandemic affected your/your child's dreams and goals?
5-What feeling(s) (anger, sadness, disappointment, etc.) did the pandemic evoke in you/your child? Why?
6-How has the pandemic affected your/your child's academic life?
7-What have been the repercussions of the economic situation during the pandemic on you/your child? How has it affected you/your child?
8- What has your communication been like with your parents and other family members during lockdowns? Please explain.
9-How have you/has your child been coping with troubling thoughts since the pandemic?

### Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by an ethics committee (Date/No: 05.01.2021/6-3). All parents and children were informed of the research purpose and

procedure. Informed consent was obtained from those who agreed to participate.

### Data Analysis

The researchers used Colaizzi's seven-step method (1978) to analyze and interpret data and achieve validity and reliability (Table 2).<sup>24</sup> They transcribed the interviews and followed Colaizzi's phenomenological steps to evaluate the data and group similar themes. Afterward, each researcher consolidated the data and developed subthemes. The researchers used the inductive method to group the themes and the deductive method to put them into their final form. They discussed the parts on which they disagreed until they reached a consensus. They coded the results and checked them online for compatibility. They conducted the interviews and data analysis in Turkish and then translated them into English. They used the back translation method to check for agreement. They used direct quotations to present a coherent picture of participants' views and assigned codes to participants (Table 4). For example, PA1 referred to the first participant adolescent, while PP1 referred to the first participant parent.

**Table 2: Colaizzi's Phenomenological Interpretation Methodology**

1. Read all interviews
2. Extract significant statements
3. Formulate meanings for the statements
4. Organize meanings into clusters of themes
5. Compile an exhaustive description from the clusters of themes
6. Establish the fundamental structure of the phenomenon in question
7. Return to interviewees for further information

## RESULTS

The sample consisted of nine adolescents (six women and three men) and nine parents (eight mothers and one father). Adolescents had a mean age of 13.6 years (min: 11 and max: 17). Parents had a mean age of 41 years (min: 36 and max: 45). Six parents had a bachelor's degree. Four parents had a family member who had tested positive for COVID-19 (Table 3).

The qualitative analysis yielded three main themes: (1) initial reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic, (2) growing up with the COVID-19 pandemic, and (3) post-pandemic future. The first main theme consisted of two subthemes: "fear" and "anxiety." The second main theme consisted of four subthemes: "physical changes," "psychological changes," "behavioral changes," and "changes in academic performance." The third main theme consisted of two subthemes: "despair" and "changes in family communication" (Table 4).

**Table 3. Demographic Characteristics**

Participant Adolescent	Age (child)	Gender (child)	Grade Level (child)	Participant Parent	Age (parent)	Degree (parent)	A Family member who tested positive for COVID-19
PA1	13	Girl	8	PP1	44	Bachelor's	No
PA2	11	Girl	6	PP2	40	Bachelor's	No
PA3	12	Boy	7	PP3	36	High School	Yes
PA4	15	Boy	9	PP4	41	Bachelor's	Yes
PA5	15	Boy	9	PP5	42	Bachelor's	No
PA6	12	Girl	6	PP6	38	Secondary School	Yes
PA7	15	Girl	9	PP7	43	Bachelor's	No
PA8	13	Girl	7	PP8	45	Primary School	No
PA9	17	Girl	11	PP9	40	Bachelor's	Yes

**Table 4: Data Analysis Process**

Main Themes	Subthemes	Quotation/Child	Quotation/Parents
Initial reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic	<i>Emotional reactions</i> Fear Anxiety	* To me, "virus" means staying indoors. PA1 *To me, "virus" means infectious disease and death. P2 * To me, "virus" means getting stuck at home. PA3 * The virus is dangerous; so, I think we should stay at home and follow the restrictions PA4, PA5 * I'm afraid of catching the virus and getting those around me sick. PA6 * I never want to have to deal with the COVID-19; I feel like I'm lost in space. PA7 * The virus makes me think that something is wrong. PA8 * To me, "virus" means restrictions, prohibitions, and getting stuck at home; I'm bored to death. PA9	* He's terrified of the virus and getting sick. PP3 * She's scared because her life is restricted. PP1, PP2 * She's afraid of dying and losing loved ones; she's developed OCD, she is doing too much cleaning. PP2 * He's exhausted by the restrictions; he is tenser. PP4 * She knows that it is a contagious disease, and she's afraid of getting sick. PP6 * To her, COVID-19 means living with rules, which upsets her. PP8 * She's in high school now, but she doesn't feel like a high school student. PP7 *The restricted life makes her more aggressive. PP9
Growing up with the COVID-19 pandemic	Physical changes	* I've put on too much weight. PA1 * I want to be alone, and I'm in my room all the time. PA2 *I feel like I'm under house arrest; I can't sleep. PA3 *I get tired too quickly, and I move more slowly than I did before the pandemic. PA7	* She's less mobile and moves more slowly than before the pandemic. PP1 *She just wouldn't get out of her room. PP2 * He's put on too much weight, and he has a hard time sleeping. PP3 *He just can't put up with activities; he gets exhausted too quickly. PP4
	Psychological changes	* I'm more introverted. PA1 * I'm disappointed by the fact that the pandemic has lasted much longer than I thought it would. PA4 *I had no idea that the pandemic would last this long. I feel incompetent and unhappy. PA7 * I've become more aggressive, unhappy, and hopeless since the pandemic. PA8	* She's more introverted. PP1 * She's shut herself off; she's become asocial and easily irritated. PP2 * He's sad that he can't go to school. PP3 *He misses his friends. PP5 * She's pretty restless, aggressive, and nervous. PP8 *She is less confident; she thinks her friends are better than her. PP7
	Behavioral changes	* I've become more introverted; I just want to be alone. PA2 I've become more addicted to technology. PA3	* She's become more addicted to technology. PP3 * She's shut herself off; she's become asocial and easily irritated. PP2
	Changes in academic performance	* I'm more stressed about exams because of the uncertainties surrounding distance learning PA8 *My teacher wouldn't use body language, which affects me negatively, PA3 * I'm a high school student, but I feel like I'm in secondary school. There is no competition at all in distance learning. It affects my motivation; I have poorer academic performance now. PA7 *I feel like schools will never open up again and like I won't be able to go to school again, and I'll just get married and pray for the best. PA8	* She believes she'll fail academically, and she needs support. PP1 *My kid already has communication problems, and distance learning has made things worse. She's doing worse academically because she's been removed from a classroom environment, and she can't have eye contact with her teacher. PP2 *Teachers give little feedback during distance learning, which harms my kid's motivation. PP5 *Distance learning is missing competition, so she's less confident now and has difficulty concentrating on classes. PP6 * She's in a constant state of panic; she thinks she'll fail academically. PP8

Post-pandemic future	Despair	<p>* I'm tired of spending time with my parents at home. PA1</p> <p>* I'm pessimistic and hopeless about the future. PA6</p> <p>* I wanted to be a brain surgeon, but now, under these circumstances, it seems impossible; I feel incompetent. PA7</p> <p>* I feel like schools will never open again, like the pandemic will last forever, and I will just get married and pray for the best. P8</p> <p>* There is too much conflict between me and my dad; I feel like our relationship will never be the same again. P3</p>	<p>*We, as parents, have a hard time managing the situation; our kids' dreams are changing, and their goals are getting smaller and smaller. PP1.</p> <p>* We've had more conflicts at home. I think that kids will cast parenting in a negative light in the future. PP3</p> <p>*She thinks her friends are better than her; she's less confident and less hopeful. She thinks that she'll never be able to leave home and that she'll just grow up and end up getting married. PP8</p>
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## Theme 1: Initial Reactions to the COVID-19 Pandemic

### Subtheme 1: Emotional Reactions

The most common reaction to the pandemic was having a fear of getting sick and dying. Most participants stated that they were afraid of contracting the virus and transmitting it to family members. The fear of getting sick led to the fear of death. The extraordinary measures due to the pandemic (lockdowns, school closures, etc.) caused anxiety in adolescents and made it difficult for them to stay at home.

*"To me, the virus means infectious disease and death." PA2*

*"The restricted life makes my kid more aggressive." PP9*

## Theme 2: Growing up with the COVID-19 Pandemic

The main theme consisted of four subthemes "physical changes," "psychological changes," "behavioral changes," and "changes in academic performance."

### Subtheme 1: Physical Changes

All participants made similar statements regarding the changes in adolescents since the onset of the pandemic. They noted that adolescents had experienced sleep disturbances and fatigue, had poor diets, and put on weight, had been less mobile, and had difficulty carrying out daily routines since the pandemic.

*"I get tired too quickly, and I move more slowly than I did before the pandemic." PA2*

*"My kid just can't put up with activities; he gets exhausted too quickly." PP4*

*"I've put on too much weight." PA1*

*"I feel like I'm under house arrest; I can't sleep." PA3*

*"My kid has put on too much weight, and he's having a hard time sleeping." PP3*

### Subtheme 2: Psychological Changes

Adolescents experienced mood swings due to the restrictions and news on social media. Parents stated that their children were isolated from their friends due to school closures, which lasted much longer than they thought they would. Adolescents reported withdrawal, unhappiness, anger, sadness, and disappointment.

*"I'm disappointed by the fact that the pandemic has lasted much longer than I thought it would." PA4*

*"I had no idea that the pandemic would last this long. I feel incompetent and unhappy." PA7*

*"My kid has shut herself off; she's become asocial and easily irritated." PP2*

*"My kid's sad that he can't go to school." PP3*

*"My kid misses his friends." PP5*

### Subtheme 3: Behavioral Changes

Adolescents reported that they had experienced anger and anxiety and become addicted to technology due to distance learning and nationwide lockdowns since the pandemic. Parents also stated that their children had become more introverted and more addicted to technology since the pandemic.

*"I've become more introverted; I just want to be alone." PA2*

*"I've become more addicted to technology." PA3*

*"My kid's become more addicted to technology." PP1*

*"My kid's developed communication problems; she's turned into an introverted and asocial person" PP.*

#### **Subtheme 4: Changes in Academic Performance**

Distance learning adversely impacted how adolescents perceived their academic performance. Some adolescents stated that they had a hard time concentrating because their teachers did not use body language and did not make eye contact. Moreover, they believed less in academic success and changed their dreams because distance learning lacked a competitive atmosphere that they needed to thrive academically. Parents thought that children were already a disadvantaged group in terms of communication. They believed that their children could not benefit from distance learning as they would from in-class instruction, which adversely affected their academic performance. According to parents, their children were less capable of coping with stress, experienced more role confusion, and were more worried during the pandemic than before due to the uncertainties surrounding distance learning.

*"I'm more stressed about exams because of the uncertainties surrounding distance learning." PA8*

*"My teacher wouldn't use body language, which affects me negatively." PA3*

*"I'm a high school student, but I feel like I'm in secondary school. There is no competition at all in distance learning. It affects my motivation; I have poorer academic performance than before." PA7*

*"My kid already has communication problems, and distance learning has made things much worse. She is doing worse academically because she's been removed from a classroom environment, and she can't have eye contact with her teacher." (PP2)*

*"Teachers give little feedback during distance learning, which harms my kid's motivation." PP5*

*"Distance learning is missing competition, and so my kid is less confident now and has difficulty concentrating on classes." PP6*

#### **Theme 3: Post-pandemic Future**

Adolescents stated that they had to change their dreams because they had been less confident since the onset of the pandemic. Some adolescents noted that they had no hopes for the future and felt like they had to live a life they did not want.

*"There is too much conflict between me and my dad; I feel like our relationship will never be the same again." PA3*

*"I'm tired of spending time with my parents at home." PA1*

*"I wanted to be a brain surgeon, but now, under these circumstances, it seems impossible; I feel incompetent." PA7*

*"I feel like schools will never open up again, like the pandemic will last forever, and I will just get married and pray for the best." PA8*

*"We, as parents, have a hard time managing the situation; our kids' dreams are changing, and their goals are getting smaller and smaller." PP1*

*"We've had more conflicts at home. I think that kids will cast parenting in a negative light in the future." PP3*

*"My kid thinks her friends are better than her; she is less confident and less hopeful. She thinks that she'll never be able to leave home and that she'll just grow up and end up getting married." PP8*

#### **DISCUSSION:**

This current study focused on how adolescents and parents thought the pandemic impacted adolescents psychosocially. The results shed light on how adolescents reacted to the pandemic, what it was like for them to grow up with the pandemic, and how they envisioned the post-pandemic world.

The results demonstrated that the preventive measures against the COVID-19 pandemic caused intense fear of infection and death, leading to enduring anxiety in adolescents. Parents expressed that their children's dreams have changed, their goals have become smaller, and they have difficulty in managing this process due to the psychosocial negative effects of the pandemic during their stay at home. They stated that they had difficulty spending time with their children and shielding them from gloomy news about the pandemic. The pandemic has had devastating impacts on all countries, facing surging numbers of

cases and deaths. While most research has focused on the detrimental effects of the pandemic on adults, there is very little research investigating the acute psychosocial needs of children during the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> Children become emotionally vulnerable and experience physical and mental problems as they watch the grim news about the pandemic, hear their parents talk about it every day, and see how it affects their own lives.<sup>7</sup> What further exacerbates the situation for children and adolescents is prolonged lockdowns, fear of infection, disappointment, boredom, little to no peer interaction, financial problems, and lack of information and personal space.<sup>6,9,10</sup> More children aged 5-11 and 12-17 were admitted to emergency mental health clinics in 2020 than in 2019.<sup>25</sup> This experience suggests that the pandemic may have permanent effects ranging from mood swings to PTSD.<sup>2</sup>

The results showed that the pandemic caused physical, psychological, behavioral, and academic problems in adolescents. Most adolescents suffer from dietary and sleep problems, put on too much weight, and are more immobile and more easily tired. Research shows that lockdowns and school closures due to the pandemic make children more likely to adopt a sedentary lifestyle, develop unhealthy eating habits and put on too much weight, spend excessive time on screen, experience sleep disturbances, and suffer from physical and mental fatigue.<sup>5-9,26</sup> Younger children and adolescents are at great risk as high levels of stress and isolation can cause various mental problems. The pandemic is an unprecedented public health crisis that jeopardizes children's rights, safety, and development.

The results depicted that adolescents had turned into introverted and asocial people wrestling with feelings of incompetence, disappointment, and despair since the pandemic. Children spend much more time at home with their parents due to the pandemic. However, school closures make some children more vulnerable to trauma, depression, and anxiety as they witness or become the victims of domestic violence and abuse.<sup>27</sup> The pandemic causes children to experience fear, anxiety, anger, and disappointment. What is more, the pandemic puts children already with mental health problems at greater risk.<sup>6,28,29</sup>

The results showed that the pandemic caused adolescents to shut themselves off and develop an addiction to technology. They also stated that they felt isolated and preferred to spend time alone rather than socializing with others. Some adolescents were unaware of their addiction to technology. However, their parents talked about it. Emotional and behavioral development in children depends on family, school, and society.<sup>7</sup> School closures and limited peer interaction prevent

children from developing social and emotional skills.<sup>4</sup> Children and adolescents who cannot socialize with their peers are more likely to turn to digital devices, resulting in an addiction to technology.<sup>30</sup> Dong, Yang, Lu, and Hao (2020) reported that one in every three children and adolescents was a problematic Internet user.<sup>31</sup> Children are most affected by isolation and fears during the pandemic. Therefore, we should understand their behavioral and psychological reactions well.<sup>32</sup>

The results showed that adolescents experienced changes in academic performance. The challenges and uncertainties of distance learning caused them to feel more distressed and less confident. Parents stated that children with communication problems were in a disadvantageous position when it came to distance learning because their teachers did not use body language and did not make eye contact. Distance learning is challenging for both parents and children because it lacks standards.<sup>33</sup> Although there is a small body of research on this topic, researchers argue that students with limited access to education and technology are more likely to suffer from educational inequalities and poor academic performance.<sup>34</sup> More research is warranted to better understand the impact of distance learning on academic performance.

Adolescents reported that they thought that they could never go back to school and would have to live a life they did not want. Parents noted that their children had had to change their plans and had become less confident and more pessimistic about the future since the pandemic. It is predicted that the pandemic will have long-term negative consequences, such as child labor, child trafficking, child marriage, sexual abuse, and death.<sup>35</sup> Children who have no access to schooling and peer interaction are more likely to experience anxiety and have difficulty analyzing and coping with their problems,<sup>36</sup> making them more vulnerable to pessimism and depression.<sup>29</sup>

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has caught children off guard, with irreversible destructive effects. The pandemic has adverse psychosocial impacts on adolescents. We should develop multidisciplinary practices and policies to mitigate those impacts. Healthcare professionals should support adolescents and parents during the pandemic to enable adolescents to turn into healthy adults. Besides, pediatric nurses should raise parents' awareness of children's physical and psychological health. In line with the negative effects of the pandemic, pediatric nurses should be guided in governments' future child health protection strategies, with their evidence-

based nursing practices. Pediatric nurses should use their educational roles to inform society and parents about child neglect and abuse and contribute to increasing awareness. Nurses should be aware of the psychosocial problems caused by the pandemic in adolescents, and they should make a health care plan to support the adaptation process. Researchers should conduct longitudinal studies with larger samples. Intervention studies also play a key in protecting and improving children's psychosocial health.

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