

Challenges Of The COVID-19 Pandemic For Child And Adolescent Mental Health: Promoting Psychosocial And Positive Well- Being

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Abstract: *In the history the outbreak of pandemic has caused much damage on humanity. There were different pandemics such as cholera pandemic and flu pandemic, Spanish flu, Asian flu, SARS, MERS, Ebola etc. but COVID-19 has shaken the entire world and irrespectively affected all people. Particularly, it caused mental health challenges for children and adolescents. (fear, worry, panic, stress, anxiety, depression, difficulty in sleeping, loss of appetite, isolation, emotional and relational problems and conduct restriction). Though COVID-19 has created greater opportunity for personal growth and family cohesion but brought huge damage on children and adolescents. Despite of all sensitization done by the government about the pandemic and preventive measures to be observed such as hand washing with sanitizer, wearing mask and practicing social distancing, people are not following them in day to day life. Thus, the appropriate psychosocial care programme needs to be developed to strengthen coping skills and promoting the positive psychological and emotional wellbeing of children and adolescents.*

Keywords: *Mental health, children and adolescents psychosocial support, and positive wellbeing.*

1. INTRODUCTION

All of us experiencing the same circumstances, state of mind and emotions we have never experienced before. It is not that there were no such pandemics in the past. In the history there were different pandemics outbreak in different centuries such as Cholera pandemic and flu pandemic (19th Century), Spanish flu and another cholera pandemic (early 20th Century) consequently, Asian flu, SARS, MERS, Ebola etc (1). The COVID-19 is in complete diverse of all pandemics and shaken the entire world and its people irrespectively. Particularly, it caused mental health problems in children and adolescents (fear, worry, panic, stress, anxiety, depression, lack of sleep, emotional and relational and conduct problem) (2). According to UNESCO, on 28th April 2020, over 188 countries have suspended schools and universities. There is no proper sensitization done to people about the pandemic and preventive measures to be observed such as hand washing with sanitizer, wearing mask and practicing social distancing (3). On the other hand this situation forced children and adolescents to encounter different mental health problems such as fear of losing a loved one, fear of death, fear of quarantine, physical violence against children, school and academic forced break, self-harming, suicidal thoughts, overload of information spread of scare, physical and social

distancing, being stuck in abusive and difficult families, increased incidence of domestic violence and isolation from support avenues. At this most crucial and critical situation children and adolescents should be given psychosocial support and thereby positive well-being (positive attitude, thinking & feeling and engaged in positive action and also focusing on solution, not on problem) ensured (4).

Epidemic and Pandemic

An **Epidemic** is defined as “an eruption of an infection that happens over a widespread geographic area (May be a village or town, a locality) and it also affects or disturbs an extremely high proportion of the population.”

Pandemic denotes the disease that spreads and affects the whole country or the entire world (5).

Types of Pandemic in the World

Spanish Flu (1918-1920)

The Spanish Flu was known as Influenza pandemic that spread between 1918 and 1920. It was caused by H1N1 virus and said to have originated in avian bird. It was estimated that over 500 million people were affected infected with the virus. Of which 20-50 million died. This virus caused rapid and sever lung damage. It killed more juveniles, aged or patients who have been weakened and affected with different disease.

Asian Flu (1956-1958)

The Asian Flu began in the East Asia 1957, caused by Influenza (Influenza A of the H2N2. Initially it was identified in China then spread to Guizhou to Singapore, Hong Kong in February 1957 and then found in the coastal cities of United States (69,800 death alone in US). More than 2 million people died due to the Asian Flu pandemic.

Flue Pandemic (1968)

The Flue pandemic was originated in China (Hong Kong) and triggered by an Influenza A virus (H3N2). It was also considered to be the third flu pandemic out broke with in the 20th century. During this pandemic there were 1 million people died of which 1, 00,000 people were from United States.

HIV/AIDS Pandemic (2005-2012)

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) were initially found in early 1980s. And it reached peak in 2012. Over 65 million infected worldwide of which 36 million died. About 1.1 million American people currently live with HIV and over 38, 000 new HIV infections have been reported every year (6).

COVID-19 (The Novel Corona Virus)

What is Corona Virus?

Corona virus is a huge family of virus species which infect the animal cells. Some infect the pigs; some infect the chicken. There are several coronaviruses that cause common cold to severe diseases in humans such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Corona means crown and its spike are sticking in the membrane (7).

What is COVID-19?

Initially, this new virus COVID-19 was unknown but it was found in Wuhan, China in December 2019. Now this virus affected the most of the countries across the globe. The new virus COVID-19 spreads so fast between people because so far there was no such virus

COVID-19 until 2019. The China initially thought it was an epidemic but it spreads across the world within months. Then the World Health Organization (WHO) announced COVID-19 a pandemic in March. On the other hand by the end of the March more than half- million people infected and over 30,000 deaths. Corona virus pandemic made the people across the world to be more aware of the best practices such as hand washing, maintaining social distancing and wearing mask. Most of the countries in the world asked his people to stay at home. Till date no vaccines have been found for this virus but many researchers started and rigorously working on (8).

Evolution of COVID-19

SARS-2002 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) virus mutated with Bats and immediate host mutated with cats and then transmitted and infected to Human being.

MERS-2012 (Middle East Respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV). Virus mutated with Bats immediate host mutated with Camel transmitted and infected to Human being.

COVID-19-2019 (Corona) Through Pangolin was the cause of Covid-19, where this mammal is killing for meat, ritual and Medication where the first case of Covid-19 was found (9).

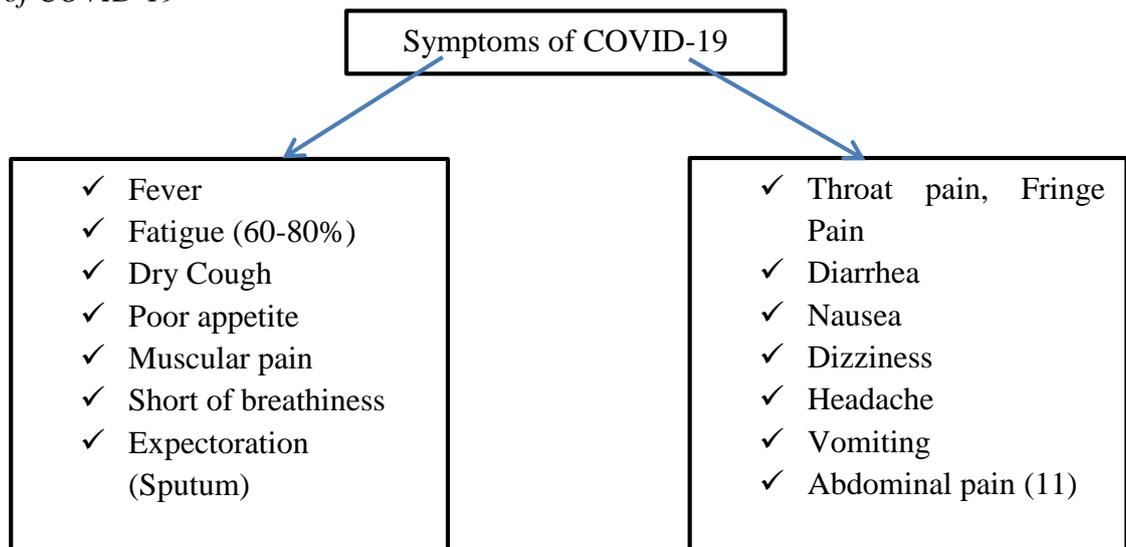
Transmission of COVID-19

Faecal (consisting of, contained in, or relating to the solid waste passed out of the body of a human or animal through the bowels)

Respiratory droplet

- ✓ Respiratory infections can be transmitted through droplets of different sizes.
- ✓ Spread 3 to 6 feet; stay on surface for 24 hours & some touches one of the mucous membranes.
- ✓ Airborne for 3 hours.
- ✓ (1:3 persons) Reproductive ratio = Degree of spreadability = Sneeze, Cough, spread the Respiratory droplet through airborne.
- ✓ Asymptomatic cases can also spread the virus (10).

Symptoms of COVID-19



Prevention of Covid-19

- Regular, effective Hand wash with soap and alcohol based spray.
- Cough ethics (Use Hanky, Use tissue paper and dispose it and cough in the Elbow).

- Social distance (one metre distance), avoid gathering, social party, and religious gathering.
- Avoid touching the face very often without hand washing.
- Avoid unnecessarily going out and better stay home (12).

Mental Health challenges for children and adolescents

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly hit the lives across globe. In particularly, children and adolescents' mental health is greatly affected. Their routine life has deeply been disrupted and thereby forced to face lots of mental health challenges. Meeting with peers has completely limited and the existing support system from neighbouring families and social support has been stopped. This caused much damage on the mental health of children and adolescents. On the other hand they failed to continue the medical services that haven been delivered to them in the past (13). Their leisure time out- of -home was cut and space of mobility has shrunken and there might be chance of domestic violence and child abuse due to the long-time isolation. Thus, the pandemic led to the negative consequences of rivalry among siblings, family conflicts, too much of fear, stress, more anxious about the future, abuse, substance abuse and suicidality (14).

Sibling Rivalry

Sibling rivalry often occurs due to jealousy and competition. One child or adolescent considers the other as his/her threat. If a girl child picks of the TV remote suddenly the older one grabs it. Similarly, when any eatables being shared among children the boy child wanted to have more quantity than the girl child. On the other hand the preferential treatment of the parents also results sibling rivalry (15).

Family Conflicts.

Parents' relationship has got greater impact on the children's mental health and their overall development. It's very vivid that all differences of parents make greater damage on all age of children and adolescents. The conflict between the husband and wife would create lots of emotional damages in children and adolescents such as cause insecurity, stressful environment, decreased cognitive performance, relationship issue, behavioural problem, eating disorder and substance use (16).

Stress and Anxiety

Stress is something the physiological response to the abnormal situation. On the other hand anxiety is response to unknown or vague threat about the future. This COVID19 caused much stress and anxiety in children and adolescents which resulted different symptoms such as headache, sleep problem, lower appetite, difficulty in concentration, fatigue, irritability and insecurity (17).

Child Abuse

Majority of the organizations across the world which work for the welfare of the children pointed out that the lockdown due to COVID19 would drastically increase the children maltreatment. The complete closer of the schools and nursery, the children and adolescents are forced to remain at home. On the other hand the increased stress level of the parents resulted in child abuse and neglect (18).

Substance Abuse

COVID19 and lockdown has got ripple effect on children and adolescents. This situation is greatly contributing to everyone to experience higher level of stress and anxiety. In particular,

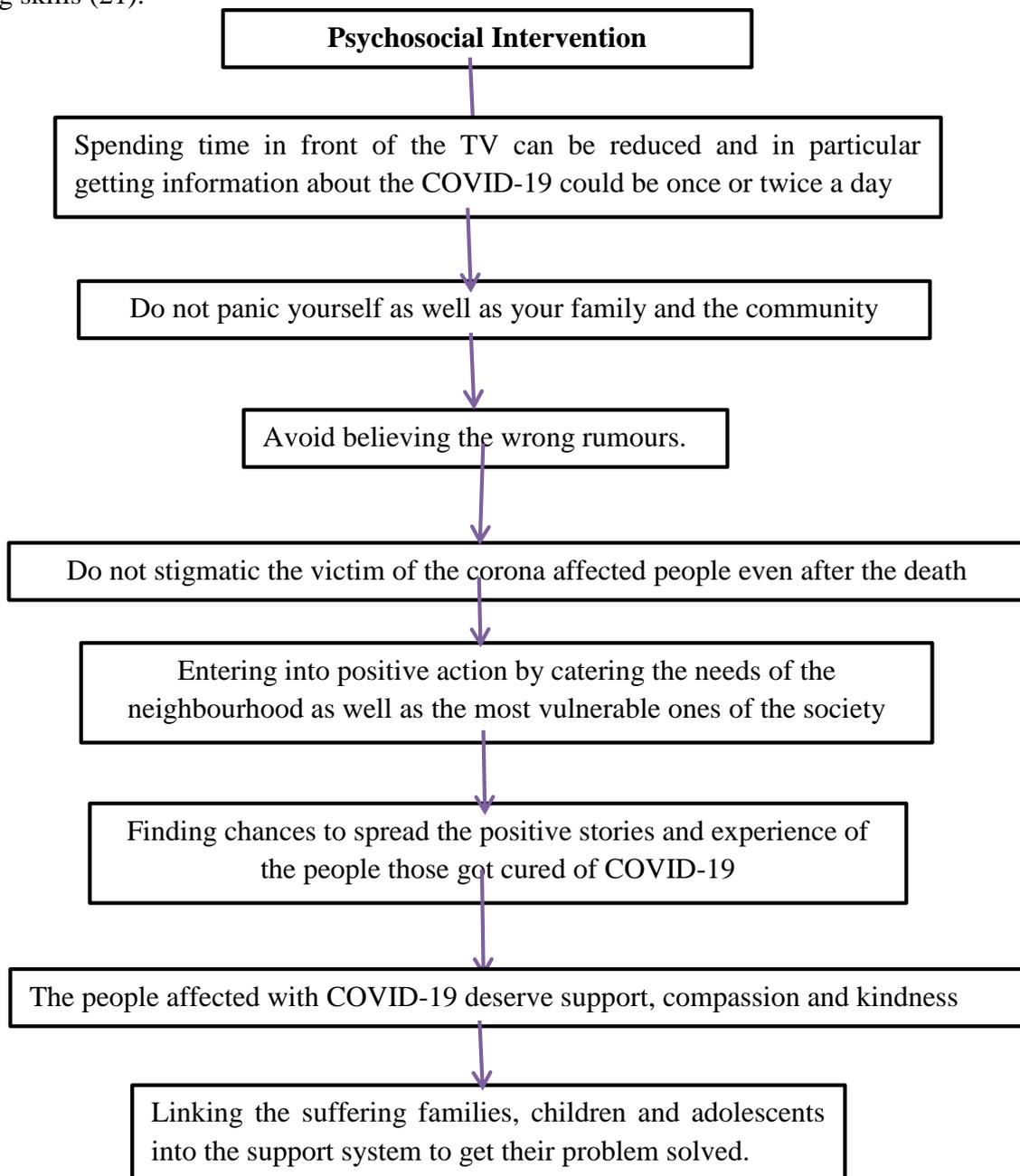
children and adolescents may go for more substance use than ever before. They can use the different substances such as, alcohol, smoking, street drugs, cocaine, prescription drugs and cannabis (19).

4.6. Suicide

There are so many factors are contributing for children and adolescents' suicide. Generally, the suicide among youngster is hidden and not disclosed at all. Especially during this COVID19 there is much chance for them to get suicidal thoughts. The possible factors are such as not able to go to school, poverty, no of family income, complete quarantine, loneliness, isolation, fear, stress, anxiety and domestic violence (20).

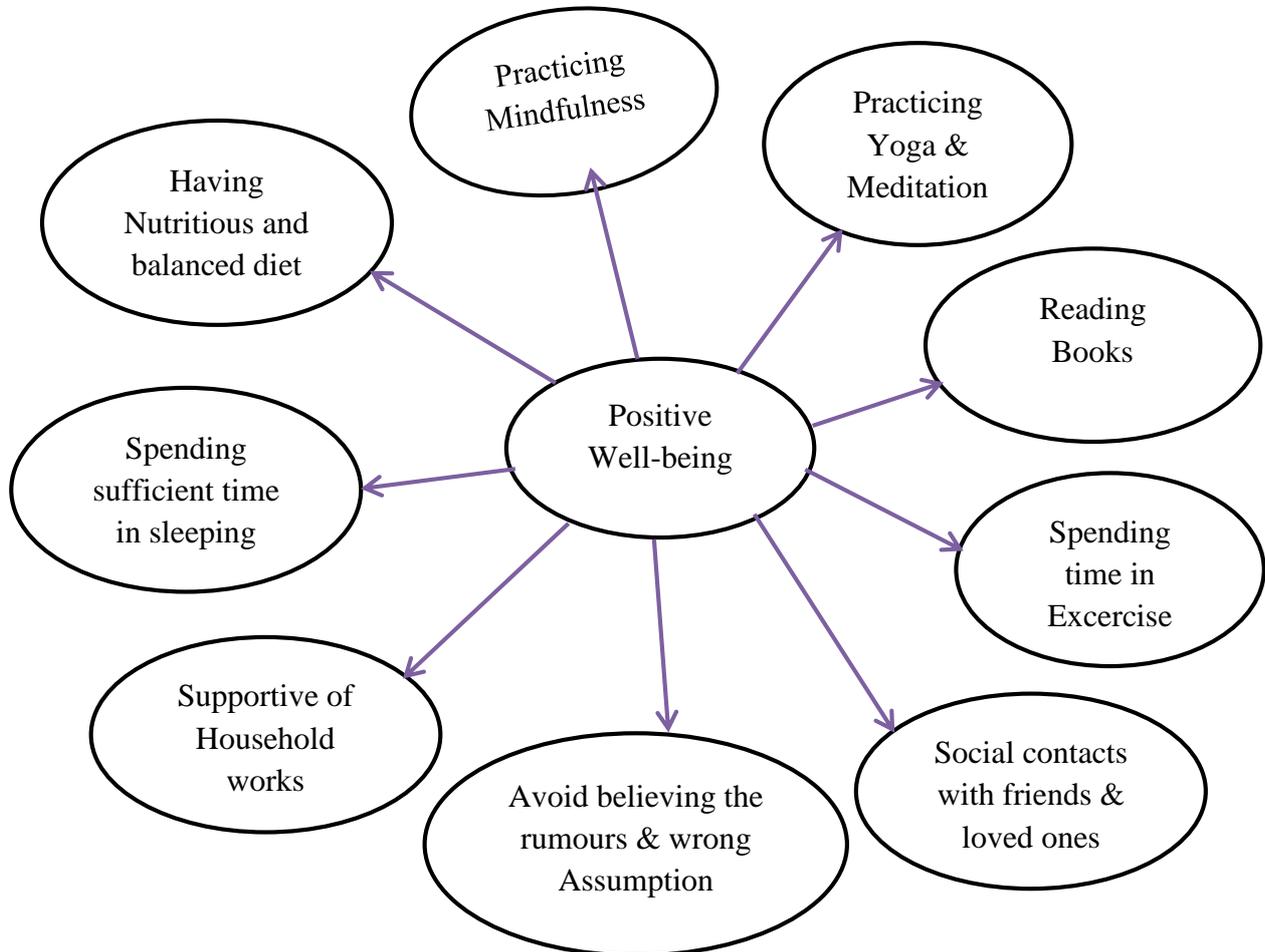
Psychosocial Intervention

The outbreak of all pandemic forced children and adolescents to suffer to certain extend. Similarly, Covid-19 caused much damage in children and adolescents. Psychosocial intervention could be of better support for them to manage this situation and enhance their coping skills (21).



Promoting Positive Wellbeing

The children and adolescents ought to improve positive habits, positive attitude and positive action which on the other hand will enhance positive model of life and can eradicate negative ways of thinking (22). Few techniques are



2. CONCLUSION

COVID-19 is been a great threat to entire globe and which caused huge damage on mental health of the children and adolescents. It has taken away the personal space of the children and adolescents. This critical situation forced them to remain at home and complete cut off from the external world and their mobility was limited. This pandemic situation demands a collective effort and commitment from all other stakeholders to combat against the challenges of mental health for the children and adolescents. The children and adolescents are said to be the most vulnerable ones and they ought to be well sensitized about the virus spread and proper psychosocial intervention done to protect and prevent them from all dangers. During this pandemic mental health of marginalized children and disadvantaged adolescents are at great risk. There should be creativity and flexibility in delivering the mental health services. The psychosocial care programme to be developed to strengthen the coping mechanism and to uphold of positive social, psychological and emotional wellbeing of children and adolescents (23).

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