

IMPACT FACTOR: 5.47

ISSN 2278 - 9529



GALAXY

INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH JOURNAL

Refereed and Peer-Reviewed
Open Access e-Journal

Vol. X, Issue-2 (March 2021)

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Pandemic and Psychology of Children in Conflict with Law and Children in Need of Care and Protection

Dr. Ujwala T. Musale
2nd Jt. Civil Judge Senior Division
and Principal Magistrate Juvenile Justice Board, Washim.

Article History: Submitted-01/03/2021, Revised-17/03/2021, Accepted-28/03/2021, Published-10/04/2021.

Abstract:

The situation of the world during this period that is COVID- 19 is not less than a world war. The fears and anxieties in the mind of youngsters creates number of questions to their parents during this period of pandemic. For managing the stress and anxieties in the children there is need to create safe physical and emotional environment, need to keep children busy and need to maintain a routine. Open conversation with the children is also essential. The teachers, counsellors, doctors, caretakers in the child care institution are playing a vital role in managing the psychological and emotional balance of the children.

Keywords: Pandemic, psychology, children, conflict, law, protection, care.

Introduction

The whole world is currently focused on measures to reduce the transmission and economic effect of the disease (COVID-19) the pandemic. Children are exposed to maximum amounts of information and high risk of stress and anxiety in the adults around them due to speedily changing situations and media. At the same time children are experiencing material changes to their routine life and social infrastructure. Generally, parents of normal children would do anything for protecting their children from anxiety, distress and might avoid discussion about the difficult feelings and situations.

Now the question is how to deal with the children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection in child care institutions like observation home, special home during this pandemic. The situation of the world during this period that is COVID-19 is not less than a world war. The COVID-19 has created fears and anxieties in the mind of youngster and that

creates number of questions to their parents. The COVID-19 has caused a global concern for public health emergency. The elderly population who are at the larger risk and along with them even young children are not spared by the virus. Now the main problem is how to handle the children and how to teach them to isolate themselves. Generally, the children love to play with their friends and loved to be at crowded places such as school, parks, playgrounds etc, so they have lots of chances to capture the infection. The children may act as a major disease transmittibility to the institution and can increase the pandemic. The sensitivity to the infection can be increased due to factors like poverty, unawareness, malnutrition and special health care needs. Self-isolation and lockdown situation will cast more burden on children which makes them apprehensive and restless.

- The juvenile justice (care and protection of children) Act, 2015 defines the child in conflict with law means a child who is alleged or found to have committed an offence and who has not completed 18 years of age on the date of commission of such offence.
- The juvenile justice Act, also defines the child in need of care and protection means the child who is found without any home or settled place of abode and without any ostensible means of subsistence or to working in contravention of labour laws, found begging or living on the street, mentally or physically challenged, having no one to support or look after or have unfit parents or no one ready to take care of them, missing child, who is victim of any armed conflict or natural calamity, who is at imminent risk of marriage before attaining the age of marriage.

The children in conflict with law can reside with their parents or guardians after releasing them on bail. If the child in conflict with law is not released on bail in such a case, he or she can be kept in the observation home. In case of children in need of care and protection most of the children who are without home or not having parents and the children specified in the above definition are residing in the observation home or special home which are called child care institutions.



A. Anxiety, Fears and Misconception in children

The children in the observation home are normally not having care by their parents and therefore they are undergoing fears and anxiety. The anxieties and fear are the typically occurring part of the normal development of all the children but it is the major part of the children in the observation home. The children in observation home feeling helpless and discomfort, distress because they do not have an idea when would this may be over and when they will return to their normal days. The children are keen observers. They can easily understand the fear and anxiety in the surrounding community people. Children's views about COVID-19 situation is depends upon the conduct of the people around them.

i) Emotional and psychological well-being of the children during the pandemic.

The reactions of the children to this difficult event that is pandemic are different and unique. Some children may require more attention or may have difficulty and problems with the self-care, eating, sleeping and learning. The adults can help them by showing patience and empathy towards them. The primary factor in child's life during this event is presence of caring and supportive parents or adults. The children in the observation home not get care by their own parents also not having parents to share their feelings but they can benefit much from care furnished by the other adults for example foster parents, caretakers in the observation home, friends who can offer them sensitive care. The care and protection offered to the children by the caretakers and staff members will definitely help them to protect from a pandemic's harmful effects.

Especially young children need time with their care givers and other important people in their lives therefore the creative approaches like writing letters, online video chats are useful in staying connected. The adults namely the staff members and caretakers can provide opportunities for the children to access books, websites and other activities in child friendly ways. Availability of child friendly atmosphere in the child care institutions is essential for handling their emotional and psychological stress. The adults in the observation home should limit the exposure of children to social media, media coverage and discussion of adults about the pandemic because these medium for communication may be less age appropriate. The constant discussions about threats to public safety can cause unnecessary stress for children.

ii) Necessity to create safe physical and emotional environment

Firstly, the adults like caretakers, teachers, cook, counsellors and visiting doctors in the observation home should reassure the children about their safety and tell them that it is adults' job to make sure their safety. Secondly, the adults should maintain regular bed times and meals, daily schedules for learning and play of the children. Thirdly, the adults should assist children's development of regulation and should create child friendly atmosphere. In addition to that, the caretakers and other staff members should make them sure that they can meet their basic needs like clothing, shelter and food.

iii) Keep children engage

When the children get bored their levels of disruptive behaviors and worry may increase. Therefore, it is essential to keep them engage and provide options for some safe activities like outside play, music, games, play art and indoor games like carrom etc, and involve them in spontaneous group discussion to produce innovative ideas. The children who are released on bail and residing with their parents can suffer mental distress due to different approach of society towards them. In that cases role of parents is important in keeping them busy. The parents should provide different options to them inside the home itself during this period and manage their distress and discomfort.

iv) To Maintain a daily routine of the children

By maintaining a routine in daily schedule of the children is useful in keeping them happy and without stress. The following are some ideas to maintain their daily routine.

- To wake up the child, dressed him or her properly and give them breakfast at the normal time.
- Fix the time for their playing.
- Fix the time for their learning and exercise.
- Discuss the whole day and have a dinner together as a family.
- To maintain the normal bed time routines.



v) **Keep the children engage in online learning at home itself**

Some children may consider this COVID-19 time to be similar to long school breaks or summer vacation, but it not the same. The parents can start a morning meeting and schedule list like the teachers. A list of subjects and activities for the day can be prepare by the parents and adults in the observation home for their children. Taking a break for lunch will be helpful for the children during the activities and online studies.

For maintaining social distancing and for mitigating the growth of the virus, many schools moved children to online learning at home. The parents in the houses and adults in the observation home should watch during the online learning for avoiding misuse of technology by the children.

B. Have a open discussion with the children

The caretakers, teachers other adult members in the observation home and parents should inspire the children to ask questions and convey their feelings. The children may have different reactions to the anxiety and stress therefore the adult members should be patient and understanding. Discussion of good hygiene practices with the children is very much essential. The activities like stories, drawing, craft making, may help to open a discussion.

C. Preventive involvement

The preventive involvement like immunity improving drugs, social distancing through school dismissal and closure of children's programs are most likely to be used in the COVID 19, Pandemic.

i. Prevention in schools regarding infectious disease

The schools should support by the health care departments and health care providers, in effective implementation of hygiene, infection control policies and practices. The enclosed environments, insufficient hand surface and shared equipment in the schools, primarily foster transmission of the infection of COVID-19.

a) **Community Mitigation**

Due to unavailability of vaccines in this pandemic, community mitigation is one of

the few methods available to restrict the spreading of disease. The basic hygiene practices such like hand washing, keeping ill students and staff members away from school and early evaluation from the physician if they become ill should increase by the schools. School dismissal, in combination with other community mitigation strategies such as canceling large events for example games like football, kabaddi and urging families to stay at home could increase social distancing and that could prevent the students from infection of COVID-19. An important role in the lives of children can be played by the school. Care should take including school building, school busses and staff if students are dismissed. In addition to that the faculty may be able to provide lessons and other services via internet mail and telephone. The children in the child care institutions like observation home, special home have greater chance of infection than those cared for at home therefore, maximum care is needed for them.

ii) Treatment services

Protecting children from exposure to the virus in the case of a pandemic should also address complexities of medication availability, infection control in hospitals and other health services. Providing medical facility and medical treatment to the children in the observation home is very much essential to control the infection in the children. Visits of doctors specialized in specific field is also useful in treating the children properly. Visits of psychologists is also essential during this Pandemic. Sometimes the children cannot express the anxiety and feeling of loneliness suffered by them which can be easily diagnosed and cured by the psychologists.

iii) Connect with culture

During this pandemic the children and the parents gets a great time to connect with their culture due to closure of schools and parents working from home.

- The children can connect with the culture by reading the books about their culture.

D. Help them for staying active

The teachers in the observation home should give training of meditation and yoga to the children for making them active. This is great time to do the following as a family.



- Do crafts together or make art in a group.
- Play cards and carrom.
- Cook together and talk about the recipe.
- Make a photo book together.
- Sing, play harmonium or other instruments.
- Do puzzles.
- Fix the routine.

E. Conclusion

Positive viewpoint of the adults is very much essential for supporting the children emotionally and psychologically. Pandemic is an opportunity for the parents to spend their time with their children and keep them busy. As long as adults are helping the children to stay secure, comfortable and confident that will put them in the best position to make gains in the future. The children are dealing with a lot of change, stress and isolation as a result of the pandemic and for overcoming all these consequences participation of the adults in the child care institution like teachers, counsellors and caretakers are playing a vital role. In case of other children who are residing with their parents, role of parents is important.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are different in different people. For many people being sick with COVID-19 would be a little bit like having the flu. People can get a fever, cough or have a hard time during taking deep breaths. Parents and caretakers play an important role in teaching the children to wash their hands, teach to use masks and teaching them to keep social distancing. They can help the children for managing their stress and help children cope with emergencies. Parents and caretakers should learn about supporting their children during a COVID-19. They should help their children for staying active and can easily solve the psychological or emotional problems.

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