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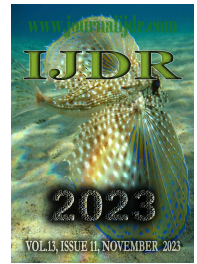
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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PSYCHO-SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF COVID-19 ORPHAN CHILDREN IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought approximately unparalleled challenges, leaving a profound effect on people and households worldwide. One in particular inclined group that has emerged from this crisis is orphaned children who have lost one or both father and mother to the virus. This observe ambitions to offer an exploratory analysis of the psycho-social profile of COVID-19 orphaned children, losing light on their emotional, cognitive, and social well-being. Through a complete overview of present literature and empirical facts, this study synthesizes reviews related to the psychological and social studies of orphaned children inside the wake of the pandemic. It examines the immediate and lengthy-term effects of parental loss on emotional stability, coping mechanisms, shallowness, and mental health outcomes. The findings spotlight the variability in how orphaned children understand and reply to their situations, with a few showing outstanding resilience, at the same time as others struggle to evolve along the ability interventions to address their particular psycho-social needs. This study contributes to a deeper knowledge of the problematic reciprocation among the COVID-19 pandemic, parental loss, and the psycho-social well-being of orphaned children. It underscores the significance of a holistic method that mixes mental health, instructional assistance, and network engagement to mitigate the destructive effects of parental bereavement. Ultimately, the study advocates for suitable interventions that understand the range of orphaned children reviews and empower them to navigate their adventure toward recovery and resilience inside the aftereffects of this global disaster.

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INTRODUCTION

Corona-virus Disease in 2019 (COVID-19) has declared as the one of the biggest global pandemics in the world and it affected broad areas of each countries (Brooks et al., 2020). The spread of corona-virus disease has created many uncertainties and that leads to personal and global effects (Jacob, et al., 2020). The reaction of COVID-19 in the course of the primary 12 months concentrated on to infection prevention, detection, and reaction as well as morbidity and mortality mitigation (Lowe et al., 2022). On March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared COVID19 a pandemic and by 30th April, 2021, more than one hundred and forty five million cases has reported and there are 3 million COVID-19 fatalities all over the globe (World Health Organization, 2021). COVID-19 pandemic severely affected millions of children in all over the world (UNICEF, 2019). The report made by UNICEF (2019) states that the United Nations Children's Fund has announced there are 153 million orphans due to

Covid19 pandemic. Orphan hood increases the possibility of poverty, abuse, delayed development, mental health challenges, reduced access to education, and institutionalization (Lateef et al., 2021). Children orphaned by COVID-19 may experience depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and anxiety, which can affect their learning in school. Orphaned children have complex needs that cut across bureaucratic silos, including grief counseling, mental health support, and school transitions, among others. Despite the profound implications for these children, their families, and their communities, COVID-19 orphans have been largely overlooked in policy responses to the pandemic (Jeryda et al., 2023). Adolescents are more likely to become orphans because of COVID-19 than younger children. The number of children affected by orphan hood resulting from the death of a caregiver is rising inexorably, month after month. Orphaned children are at risk of abuse and mental health problems such as depression and anxiety (Fegert et al., 2020). Orphan hood, defined as the demise of one parent or the death of both father and mother, and death of caregivers also may have intense effects (UNICEF, 2017).

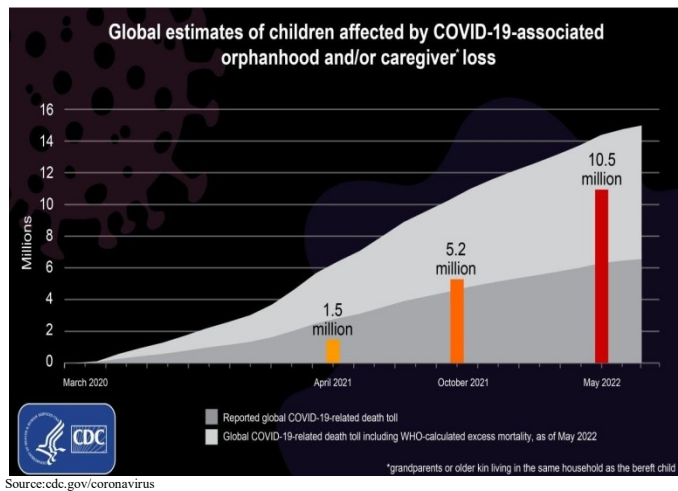


Figure 1.

The COVID-19 pandemic can result in affected person dying within weeks, families or caretakers will face lots of struggle and pain in take care of the children due to the immediate loss of their parents or caregivers (Merrill *et al.*, 2021). Evidences suggest that the institutionalization -a common response even when there may be a surviving parent-can bring about developmental delays and multiplied abuse (Kentor *et al.*, 2021).

Children losing their primary caregivers have high risk of experiencing mental health issues, bodily, emotional, and sexual violence, and circle of relatives' poverty (Goodman *et al.*, 2022). These destructive experiences improve risks of suicide, adolescent pregnancy, infectious sicknesses such as HIV/AIDS, and chronic sicknesses. In India, estimation of Orphan hood is 2,196,800 (Death of one parent or both the parents), the data of children who lost their primary caregivers is 2,251,700 hundred (Death of one or both the parents or custodial grandparents). The estimation of children who lost primary or secondary care givers due to the Covid -19 pandemic includes 3,532,900 (Death of single parent or both the parents, death of custodial grandparents, and/or demise of other co-residing grandparents).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

International Reviews

Rusan Lateef, A. *et al.*; (2021) in this study "A scoping review on psychosocial consequences of pandemics on parents and children: Planning for today and the future" enhances to answer the subsequent research questions: (1) what are the psychosocial consequences of pandemics on parents of children and teenagers? (2) What are the psychosocial effects of pandemics on child and children? With the utility of inclusion criteria, 29 articles had been decided on for evaluation. The reviews revealed that, among each family contributors' emotions have an impact on one another. It also highlighted that parents are facing more psychological issues when comparing to the older adults without children. During endemic period, mother and father require informal (social) and formal (specialized professional) guide related to take care of their children. In this study, psycho-social results of pandemics on kids/children are understudied, indicating the need for more research on children/youngsters beneath the age of two decades.

Clinical prevention and intervention hints to help the psycho-social wellness of parents, children and youngsters in the course of a plague are discussed. Jörg M. Fegert *et al.*; (2020) in the study "Challenges and burden of the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) among child and adolescent mental health: a narrative review to highlight clinical and research needs in the acute phase and the long return to normality", it states that, due to the numerous mental health threats related to the

contemporary pandemic, Child and adolescent psychiatrists need to make sure the continuity of care in the course of all phases of the pandemic. COVID-19-associated psychical and psychological health problems will disproportionately hit kids and young people who are already deprived and marginalized. Kaitlyn A Merrill *et al.*; (2020), "Potential psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on children: a scoping review of pandemics and epidemics" envisages Youngsters have faced good sized challenges with 12% of articles indicating loneliness/melancholy, 19% tension, 7% grief, 10% stress-related problems, 25% child abuse, 8 % family conflict, and 12% stigma all through pandemics/epidemics. Pandemics and epidemics have had diverse and big negative results for children. Findings can inform the improvement and implementation of resources throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to shield children's health and well-being.

National Reviews

Dr. J.O. Jeryda Gnanajane Eljo, Priya Antony. P and A. Asha (2023) conducted a study on "Post – Pandemic Psychological Problems of the COVID 19 Orphaned Children" this study revealed that Orphan hood will result a vortex of repercussions which includes child displacement, separation of siblings, newly formed families, institutionalization, child marriage, faculty dropouts, starvation, and so forth and so on. In every instance of this type, there will be an emergency problem regarding the intellectual fitness of COVID 19 children. There is a critical want for long-term solutions to deal with those mental fitness demanding situations.

Mahta Alsadat Aarabi *et al.*; (2021) "Psycho-social consequences associated with COVID-19 in people with ASD and their families: A literature review" says that COVID-19 will increase tension, misery, melancholy, financial problems, loss of a job, and even marital battle. Access to vital offerings and transmission issues also are the end result of speedy social and environmental adjustments.

Nishtha Chawla *et al.*; (2021) "Psychological Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review", the objective of this study is to synthesize literature related to the mental effect of COVID-19 among children and young people. Psychological effect on children/teenagers is extensive, both due to the concern of the illness or social isolation related to COVID-19. One can also focus on improving sleep habits and bodily recreation and regulating internet use for maintaining psychological well-being.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Aim: This study aims to bring out the Psycho-social problems of Covid-19 Orphan Children in India.

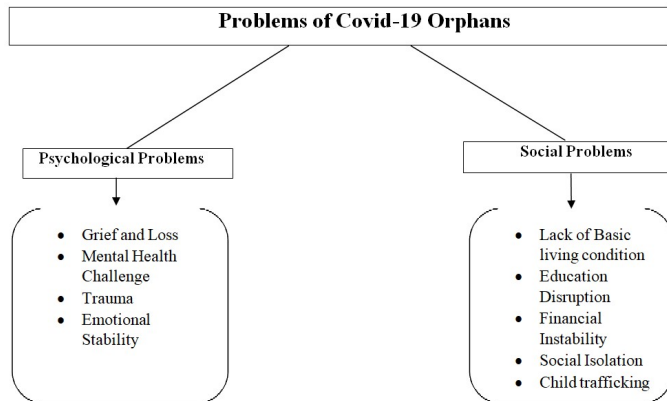
Objectives

- To find out the psychological problems of children orphaned by Covid-19.
- To understand the social problems of children orphaned by Covid-19.
- To suggest recommendations to overcome the psycho-social problems of Covid-19 children.

METHODOLOGY

This study is carried out by reviewing secondary sources from Google scholar, Academia, Journals, Articles and other Web Sources, by setting the time frame from 2009 to 2023 and focusing the search key words – "Covid19, Children, and Psycho-social impacts". The psycho-social problems of Covid 19 Orphan Children are encountered in this article. This study also gives suggestions to overcome the psychosocial problems of Covid 19 Orphan Children.

Problems of Covid-19 Orphan Children:



The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the psychological and social well-being of orphaned children (Merrill et al., 2021). Through the reviews collected the researcher had identified the following psycho-social problems affected by the Covid 19 orphan children.

Psychological Problems of Covid-19 Orphaned Children:

Grief and Loss: Orphaned children experience the intense loss of one or both parents, which could result in severe grief and emotional distress.

Mental Health Challenges: The lack of parental figures both mother and father can boom the hazard of intellectual fitness issues inclusive of depression, anxiety, put up-traumatic strain sickness (PTSD), and adjustment issues.

Trauma: Witnessing the illness and dying of a discern because of COVID-19 can bring about annoying reports which could have lengthy-time period outcomes on a child's mental well-being.

Emotional Instability: Orphaned children might struggle with emotional instability, mood swings, and difficulty in regulating their feelings. Since 41% of Indians are below the age of 18, it is important to note their mental health desires need to be met during the time of Covid19 pandemic and also after the pandemic. These effects extend beyond fitness and welfare; they have got an effect on plenty of regions of children's lives, which includes their right into entry in schooling, safety, and poverty (UNICEF, 2020). Children who have lost one or both the parents due to the pandemic are manifestly quite prone. Concerns about the well-being and financial well-being of their loved ones can have an emotional effect on children. These children frequently experience anxiety, despair, sleeplessness, and loss of appetite. Children who are separated from their parents due to COVID-19 are high-quality sufferers. Children of parents with Covid 19 or their parents are in quarantine also reported psychosocial issues. The observer's evaluation showed that covid-19 lead poisoning, which is currently pandemic, can cause excessive and disruptive psychopathology in a few children. These youngsters have been stated to have temper problems, personality issues, substance misuse, tension disorders, and suicidal ideation.

Orphans and other vulnerable youngsters and children (OVCA) were much more likely to have conduct issues (34.90%), observed with the aid of peer troubles (15.80%), emotional troubles (14.70%), hyperactivity (8.60%), and terrible prosocial conduct (3.40%). It becomes proven that institutionalized orphans and different vulnerable children and youngsters had a robust courting with emotional and behavioral issues. Additionally, generalized anxiety, behavioral issues, and peer courting troubles are surprisingly related to other orphans who were laid low with AIDS. Children who already have psychiatric illnesses such as ADHD, anxiety, despair, mood issues, or behavioral problems may additionally go through destructive outcomes on this traumatic pandemic condition.

Social Problems of Covid-19 Orphans

- Lack of Basic Living Conditions:** Orphaned children frequently struggle to meet their urgent requirements for things like food, housing, and clean water.
- Education Disruption:** Loss of parents can cause a child's education to be disrupted, resulting in learning gaps and less access to educational opportunities.
- Financial instability:** Because they no longer have their parents' financial assistance, orphaned children may experience financial instability and hardship.
- Social Isolation:** Children without the emotional support and interactions with others they once had might experience social isolation and a sense of loneliness as a result of losing their parents.
- Child trafficking:** As a result of COVID-19, many children who lost their parents became vulnerable to trafficking. Social media sites that posted information about orphaned children also started engaging in criminal activity including selling children and human trafficking. Orphans had no one to care for them; therefore smugglers saw it as an ideal chance to take advantage of their weaknesses. They plan to import children and fix price for each child. Children who are bought and sold will suffer emotional as well as physical effects. Innocent youngsters also found it simple to make money. In this case girls are more open to sexual assault and harassment. There have been cases where fathers forced their children into manual labor after the death of the mother. Twenty million children lack parents or legal guardians, and over 35 million children need protection, according to Anurag Kundu, chair of the Delhi Commission for the Protection of Child Rights. Because of this young children's futures are unknown. They are now in a situation brought by the epidemic where some newborn babies will grow up not even know where their parents are. Their human rights are also being violated since they lack education and engage in illicit child labor. It becomes the responsibility of the entire society to defend the rights of children's safety, especially the government and non-governmental groups should have to implement purposeful strategies to protect the right of each children.

RESULTS

- Schools have to provide non- academic services and support that reduce barriers to learning. This service can be enhanced by the school authorities to bring up the psycho social well-being of children.
- Covid 19 pandemic has paved way for the social effects which leads to poverty, unemployment, economic instability and various other problems which in turn it reflected the life of the children especially orphan children. This can be enhanced by the school authorities by taking several positive steps for example providing meals, access to free education etc.
- Children themselves became the victim of poverty and they themselves have to take care of their own household activities and their educational needs. This creates a lot of stress within them rather enjoying their childhood.
- Also the unavailability of teachers, peers and others involving in care giving of the children leads to very pathetic situation which in turn negatively affects the mental health of the children orphaned by Covid -19.
- Children who were in the adolescent age were also be the direct victim for the abuses happening around them such as sexual abuse, gender-based sexual abuse(GBSA),higher risk of sexually transmitted diseases, early marriage and teenage pregnancies. This will negatively affect psycho sexual development of the children particularly in the case of girl children.

DISCUSSION

In the reference stated in Rusan Lateef, A. et al; (2021) it says about the psychosocial problems and consequences of Covid 19 orphan children. The study highlights that the children were the primary

sufferer for this Covid 19 pandemic and they will be affected more due to this cause. Also Kaitlyn A Merrill et al; (2020) study states that children are facing 12 % loneliness, 19% tension, 7% grief, 10% stress-related problems, 25% child abuse, 8 % family conflict, and 12% stigma all through pandemics/epidemics and in the study done by Jörg M. Fegert et al; (2020) explained, children face severe mental health issues during their developmental stage and we have to give proper medication and clinical support to the children in need. This should be addressed at the earliest possible time and proper assistance should also be given. Dr. J.O. Jeryda Gnanajane Eljo et al; (2022) study revealed that Orphan hood will lead to many challenges which includes child displacement, separation of siblings, newly formed families, institutionalization, child marriage, faculty dropouts, starvation and soon. This has to be addressed at the early as possible to assist the children in need. Mahta Alsatat Aarabi et al; (2021) discussed that financial issues are the major problems faced by children and their parents during Covid 19 pandemic. Nishtha Chawla et al; (2021) suggested that focus on improving sleep habits and bodily recreation and regulating internet use will maintain psychological well-being among children.

Recommendations to overcome Psycho-Social problems of Covid 19 Orphans

To overcome the psychosocial problems faced by COVID-19 orphaned children, the following recommendations can be considered:

1. **Grief Counseling and Support:** Providing access to grief counseling services and implement effective support groups that can help children to cope emotional problems associated with parental loss. This can include individual therapy, group therapy, or support from trained professionals who specialize in working with children who have experienced loss.
2. **Mental Health Support:** Ensuring proper access to mental health services is very relevant for the Covid19 orphaned children who may experience depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, or other mental health challenges. This can be done through different kinds of therapies, counseling, or through psychiatric support systems to address their specific needs.
3. **Education and School Support:** Orphaned children may face disruptions in their education and transitions to new schools. Providing educational support, such as tutoring, mentoring, or counseling services, can help them navigate these challenges and ensure they have access to quality education.
4. **Stable and Supportive Living Environments:** Placing orphaned children in stable and supportive living environment, such as foster care or kinship care, can provide them with a sense of security and stability. It is important to ensure that these environments are safe, nurturing, and conducive to their overall well-being.
5. **Community and Peer Support:** Facilitating connections with peers who have experienced similar loss can be beneficial for orphaned children. Support groups or community programs that bring them together can provide a sense of belonging and understanding.
6. **Holistic Support Services:** Recognizing that orphaned children have complex needs that cut across various domains, it is important to provide comprehensive support services. This can include access to healthcare, nutrition, legal assistance, and other social services that address their overall well-being.
7. **Sensitizing Caregivers and Professionals:** Training caregivers, teachers, and other professionals who work with orphaned children on trauma-informed care and understanding their unique needs can help to create a supportive and nurturing environment.
8. **Advocacy and Policy Changes:** Raising awareness about the challenges faced by COVID-19 orphaned children and advocating for policy changes that prioritize their well-being can lead to systemic improvements in support and services.

By implementing these recommendations, it is possible to address the psychosocial problems faced by COVID-19 Orphaned Children and provide them with necessary support to heal and thrive.

Social work Intervention: The COVID-19 pandemic has left many children orphaned and in need of support. Social work interventions can help these children to cope with the problems associated with the immediate demise of parents and provide them with care and support according to their needs. Here are some interventions that can be used for the psycho-social betterment of Covid 19 orphaned children:

- **Kin Care:** Evidence shows that kin care is the best option for these children. Kin care involves placing the child with a relative or close family friend who can provide them with a stable and loving home environment.
- **Tailored Interventions:** Interventions should be tailored to offset specific challenges within each orphaned child's and household's unique circumstance. Community resources and assets should be investigated to support an adaptive, synergistic, and responsive approach that is informed by the needs of orphaned children and their most immediate caregivers.
- **Individual Therapy:** Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) can be an important intervention for children who have traumatic stress. This type of therapy can help children to understand and manage their emotions and develop coping skills.

CONCLUSION

It is important to note that the pace of COVID-19 pandemic orphan hood has risen drastically, and the consequences will affect orphaned children throughout the course of their lifetime. Action oriented support is needed for these children and prevent further harm. To assist the growth and well-being of COVID-19 orphaned children, it is critical to address these psychological and social issues. Giving them access to bereavement counseling, psychosocial support, and mental health services which can help them deal with their loss and overcome their obstacles. Their general well-being also depends on meeting their fundamental requirements, which include food, housing, and education. It is to be aware that based on unique situations and cultural contexts, the specific psychological and social issues faced by COVID-19 orphaned children may vary.

Conflict of Interest – None.

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