

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE RESULTING LIFESTYLE RESTRICTIONS: THE EFFECT ON CLASSROOM

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Thriving for excellence can be very stressful at all times. According to new rules, the environment of a classroom is not the same friendly as it was until before the outburst of the pandemic. The new reality imposed restrictions have made it very difficult for students to get along with the delivery of knowledge without being affected by the prolonged uncertainty, fear and anxiety towards infections, precautionary social isolation and the possible economic disruption. All the above could leave them feeling lost. The sudden lifestyle paradigm shift of an accomplished individual could result in major confusion. This year many adolescents are retuning back to school after extensive closures and the need for safety and support as the year kicks off is of great importance. With 75% of adult mental health problems starting by the age of 18 adolescence, according to the UKHLS findings (Smith et al., 2021), it's a key period in the development of long-lasting mental health difficulties.

A mental health crisis has been reported during the COVID-19 pandemic. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that since June 2020 almost a third of US adults have been suffering from anxiety or depression. This rate is almost two times higher for young adults, a group that has already seen a significant increase in the prevalence of mental health disorders over the recent past. Over two thirds of individuals ages 18 to 24 y were estimated to be at risk for depression or anxiety and a 25% reported considering suicide in the previous month. These estimates represent a large increase in depression rates compared to about 11% of all adults in 2019 and about 25% of college students prior to the pandemic, as the NHIS (2019) and the ACHA (2018) reported respectively. The rise in depression has occurred at the same time that a number of lifestyle restrictions like stay-at-home orders, campus closures, and social distancing measures have caused major disruptions to everyday life, altering the way people live, work, study, and interact.

This crisis has led to a deterioration of international student mobility as students were forced to decide whether or not to return home, with no clear prospect on when they could go back to campus. By March 2020 all 46 OECD (2020) countries had closed most of their schools, ranging between 7 to 19 weeks for the duration of school closure across OECD and partner countries. Online platforms were used with online learning tools ranging from programs conducted at their own pace to real-time lessons using virtual learning platforms.

As schools reopen, there are a few facts occurring that should be taken into account for future planning. First and foremost is what have we learned about the crucial skills that build on student's autonomy. Their ability to function individually without developing a sense of loss of direction is essential for the present and the future. But equally important for the future is for students and teachers to develop their digital skills being able to learn using a variety of distance learning approaches. This might prove very helpful, as students won't have to experience any future disruption on their learning potential, as well as their mental health, and also to expand their capacity beyond campus.

Some adolescents are more affected than others but the good thing is that at this age children are resilient and what supports them is feeling connected to their school

and family (CDC, 2021). Until today countries whose economies were characterized as emerging have been distancing themselves from important scientific areas such as IT or other similar sectors that will lead the next industrial revolution. May this reallocation of funding provide for these economies a chance to support their education system not to fall behind (Siriopoulos & Kassapi, 2019).

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