Original Research

The Epidemic Impact of COVID-19 and Its Related Limitations on Educational Problems and Psychological Care of Children with Special Needs by Parents / Family

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Abstract:

Background:

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of COVID-19 epidemic and its related limitations on educational problems and psychological care of children with special needs by parents/ families.

Method:

Method for the present study was searched from a review by keywords in websites and magazines, and quarterly journals. Abstracts of published articles were studied and finally, 18 final articles were selected for comprehensive review and data extraction.

Results:

The findings of this study showed that children with special needs according to the problems that we mentioned above were faced with academic failure due to the prevalence of corona in the world, also, these children are in terms of mental health and the stress and anxiety that is created for them

Conclusion:

The results showed that COVID-19 epidemic had a negative impact on students' education and people's use of virtual education leads to disrupted people's learning and also access to the necessary facilities for virtual education was not possible for many people and the virus has also had a negative psychological effect on children.

Keywords: COVID-19 Epidemic, Academic Problems, Psychological Care, Children with Special Needs

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Introduction

A new type of the corona virus was identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and spread rapidly throughout China. Corona virus which is a RNA virus, is widespread among humans, other mammals and birds and causes respiratory, intestinal, liver and neurological diseases (1). Corona virus may be associated with respiratory infections such as colds or more severe illnesses such as measles and mumps. (2) Symptoms of the virus different from mild to severe status. Signs and symptoms of infection include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing (3). The scope of epidemic of this disease spread from Wuhan City to 30 provinces in China and then to other countries. So that now in all countries of the world cases of this disease have been reported. One of the most important symptoms of this disease is acute respiratory symptoms which lead to the death of the patient in 2% of cases. AccordingAccording to the prevalence power and transmission of this disease, the World Health Organization declared a state of emergency on February 4 and recommended that countries reduce and expand the person-to-person transmission of the disease by reducing contact, especially with patients and staff in patient care departments and controlling the global sepread it (4). Unfortunately, this method did not work alone and an increasing number of patients showed that there were a large number of asymptomatic carriers in the community, which forced some areas to complete quarantine (such as China and Italy) or Implement preventive care at the macro and national levels in addition to patients (such as Iran, UAE, South Korea) in the city, province or even country (5). The spread of corona virus in the world and in Iran has caused a lot of damage to education and schools in addition to changes in behaviors and political, economic, environmental concepts. In a way, many schools and universities were closed and education was pursued in the country's education system virtually. Teachers and students, willingly or unwillingly, were forced to continue their education through cyberspace and the media which created opportunities and challenges for education, as well as teachers and students, whose awareness and knowledge of them can be useful in improving the situation and gaining the necessary preparation for similar situations (6).

Many educational users, including students, especially students with special needs, encountered problems during this period of illness. 80% of students with special needs live in developing countries where access to education has become an ongoing challenge. The impact of Covid-19 disease will be worse for people in lower socio economic groups and children with disabilities are likely to be at greater risk of falling behind in school. Many countries have adopted distance learning methods to reduce the impact of problems in education in which students with special needs faced many obstacles (7).

Creating the virtual learning environment and closing schools is different from summer vacations which are expected to expand the learning gap between children with special needs who belongs to low- and high-income families. Children with special needs of low-income families live in conditions where it is difficult for them to study at home because they will be deprived of many aspects of support (8). Corona virus affected children psychologically in addition to causing many students to drop out of school. Children were confined to quarantine at home and did not work outside the home, hence factors such as long-term fear of Coronavirus infection, reduced contact with people in the educational environment such as classmates, teachers, friends and other students, lack of adequate space at home, feelings of failure and boredom, and finally financial problems of parents had lasting effects on mental health of children (9).

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Fear of illness, fear of death, spreading false news and rumors, interfering with daily activities, travel prohibitions or restrictions, reducing social relationships (co-workers, friends and family), job and financial problems, and dozens another consequence of these conditions will be threat the mental health of people in the community. Undoubtedly, one of the most important factors is anxiety related to coronary heart disease (2) Research shows that the occurrence of diseases such as respiratory diseases due to serious physical problems and reduced quality of life of patients will cause anxiety caused by the disease (3).

Anxiety is a common symptom in patients with chronic respiratory disorders and can significantly reduce the quality of life of patients (10). Anxiety is the fear of being sick. A person with this disorder has a persistent mental preoccupation with, or is likely to have, an undiagnosed serious medical condition. Although anxiety may be due to a non-physical-non-physical symptom or feeling, but person's discomfort is not primarily due to the physical complaint, but rather to the anxiety about the meaning, importance or cause of the complaint, in other words, the person's concern about the complaint that is, he/she may be diagnosed with a disease (11).

Anxiety can increase the risk of disease by weakening the immune system in the body, and on the other hand, the risk of death in patients will be increase by reducing the level of immunity. Most research focuses on patient anxiety, but the fact is that healthy people to become involved with anxiety during an outbreak of a disease such as coronary heart disease, fear of illness and fear of death, along with the disruption of daily activities (12). Corona virus is a large group of viruses which known as a general health crisis that poses challenges to mental resilience and the most important signs is acute respiratory syndrome and includes symptoms such as cough, fever, and shortness of breath. During the Covid_19 epidemic, an increase in psychological problems including anxiety and depression has been reported (13). The results of research studies confirm that the emergency situation of Covid_19 outbreak is considered as a stressor; because it is a new and unexpected situation with a potentially serious impact on health, which also includes social constraints. However, there is no event in itself as a trigger for pathology or disease; Rather, perceived stress is the degree to which the individual considers the event to be stressful, which leads to different psychological and social responses to the situation (14).

Pay attention to the pathogenicity of this virus, the rate of spread as well as the percentage of mortality caused by this disease may be threat the mental health status of people at different levels of the community of patients, health care workers, families of children, students, patients psychologically and even personnel who are exposed to different occupations in different ways. Evidence from the literature suggests that large populations of health care professionals will be experience significant levels of anxiety, depression, and insomnia during Covid's epidemic (15).

Therefore, addressing Covid-19 and its psychological consequences and the educational problems for students with special needs children seems to be essential.

Research Methods

The present study, which is a review study, examines the effects of the coronavirus epidemic and its associated limitations on educational problems and psychological care of children with special needs by parents/ families. To this purpose, this study uses the keywords Covid-19 virus, the limitations of the corona virus and its impact on educational problems, psychological care of children during the corona virus epidemic was performed by searching reputable sites PubMed, Science Direct, Scopus, Google

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Scholar in the period July 21, 2020 to December 25, 2021. In addition, material published by the world's leading health and medical organizations, including the China National Health Commission and the World Health Organization was reviewed. Criteria for inclusion of the articles found in the present study included articles published in English on the sites and topics related to the impact of Covid-19 on educational problems and psychological care of children during the last two decades, including influenza, SARS and Mers. After the initial screening, which was done by reviewing the titles, articles with titles unrelated to the effect of Covid-19 on educational problems and psychological care of children were removed. Thus, out of 25 articles obtained, 18 articles entered the secondary screening stage (review of article abstracts). Finally, the most important findings of these studies were reported as a narrative review article.

Research Findings:

Following the outbreak of corona virus in the world, children with special needs exposed academic failure due to the problems we are referring to them. These children are also faced to the mental health and stress and anxiety that is created for them. Some of the educational problems caused by the virus for children with special needs include:

Problems with Inadequate Training:

Educating students with special needs depends on knowing exactly the characteristics of this group and familiarity with teaching methods appropriate to these characteristics. By changing the style of teaching online or distance learning, familiarity with these methods and tools used for them, including digital media, is added to these cases. The subsets of this problem were as follows:

- Low parental media literacy
- Low media literacy of teachers
- Total reduction in the quality of education

Problems related to the Facilities:

In the Corona period, due to the online training and the use of distance learning, software and hardware facilities played an undeniable role in the training process; For this reason, the format of parents' experiences of educational problems during this period was related to the lack of facilities. The sub-categories proposed in this area were as follows:

Lack of access for all students with special needs to tools such as smartphones, computers and tablets: Online and distance education in the first place requires the existence of electronic tools such as computers, tablets and smartphones to communicate. Many parents had problems in this area. Participants often stated that they had held their child's classes with their own phones and that they had encountered many difficulties in arranging their tasks.

Many of these students do not have access to the Internet and the high cost of connecting to the Internet imposes additional costs on families.

Problems of Shad's network in relation to students with special needs: The main software produced by the education system, namely Shad network did not support high-volume image files, so the upload of educational files by teachers was disrupted; also, the page readers did not comply with the software produced for virtual education such as Shad Network.

Attitude Problems:

One of the main obstacles to the development of education for children with special needs is the negative attitude of educational parents and those involved in the field of education to this group; Due to the smaller number of students in this group than regular students and being in the minority, thinking about the problems of

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this group of children is often delayed. These problems were expressed by parents in two ways:

Students with special needs and their differences were not included in the education network programs, such as the lack of interface for the deaf with subtitles: Students with special needs and their differences were not included in the education network programs and the Shad network.

Teachers' irresponsibility towards educating students with special needs Teachers of children with special needs always put a lot of pressure on educating these children. Corona's special condition had multiplied this pressure several times. Many teachers did their best to serve their students, with some attending their students' homes in person and advancing the teaching work, but in a few cases, parents complained about their children being dropped out by school and her/his teachers .

Discussion

The world faced the outbreak of a terrible and destructive virus which quickly proved its existence and spread. In the second semester of the 2020-2021 academic year. It created challenges and colors and led to the formation of a new plan for overcoming the resulting interruptions. The new school year started during the last two years while many cities of our country (Iran) were in a state of red corona and our country (Iran) like many governments, schools shut down in order the control of this virus. In-person training and attendance for education has been the most important and widely used method of teaching and learning since the past, but now with the prevalence of coronary heart disease and the importance of health and social distance to prevent the spread of COVID-19 19 virus, educational institutions were forced to use virtual (offline) education to continue education. Virtualization of education, school closures, economic problems of families, lack of technology infrastructure and challenges for teachers and students have disrupted the order and structure of the education system during the two years of the corona outbreak in the country. But we should not be ignored that virtual education for students, especially students with special needs, also had its own challenges. Students with special needs are less likely to complete their education or even be deprived of education altogether. Eighty percent of these people live in developing countries, where access to education is an ongoing challenge. With Covid-19 outbreaks worldwide, schools are closed in 180 countries, and an estimated 1.5 billion children are out of school, with far-reaching consequences for people in socioeconomic groups. The lower it was, the more students with special needs were at greater risk of falling behind. To reduce the impact of disruption in face-to-face education, many countries have adopted distance learning methods, among which students with special needs due to lack of equipment, limited Internet access and lack of the necessary support for the possibility of following online school programs faced many obstacles (11).

The virus also affects the psychological care of children. By increaseing the behavioral problems, obsessions, problems with self-regulation, anxiety and fear, problems related to adaptation and coping strategies, experience of abuse, increased severity of mental disorders and depression and post-traumatic stress, are among the psychological consequences of the outbreak of COVID-19 disease in children. (4). In the current era, Corona and its changes and developments such as school closures, quarantine, compliance with health protocols, less travel, closure of recreation centers and the like; Children are increasingly faced with challenges such as lack of social support and emotional relationships with their peers. Also, there was issues and challenges that manifest themselves more than anything else in behaviors such as stress and violence. Cheong

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(2019) (16) in a field study on the level of satisfaction of students with special needs and online school services compared to face-to-face services stated that forty-six percent of this group claimed disability and related problems such as drug use, Difficulty concentrating, managing time, and difficulty taking exams cause them to fail in online learning (17).

Parents of students with special needs in the field of behavior management of their children faced problems that seem to be due to parents' lack of familiarity with appropriate methods for managing child behavior and need appropriate courses to increase skills. Parenting (such as controlling and managing a child's behavior) and planning for parents to familiarize them with parenting skills and controlling the child's behavior.

In the current situation, which is facing difficulties due to the laws related to social distance, holding face-to-face courses, it is possible to help parents by holding virtual courses and even providing brochures and letters in this field.

Conclusion

Many parents do not know how to get their child to do his homework and lessons. This can be rooted in motivational issues and lack of planning (18); therefore, it can be concluded that parents' skills in academic motivation and planning strategies also need to be strengthened. This issue becomes even more pronounced when research findings show that those families who have used objective and appropriate planning for their children's daily activities have less problems in these areas. Also in the field of academic problems of students with special needs during the Corona, showed that the parents of these students were confused in the face of academic problems of these students; Therefore, if parents are familiar with the methods and principles of teaching, homework and teaching and learning methods, however, parents may be confused about their children's educational problems.

Parents of students with special needs, according to the special needs of these students in psychological fields, especially academic motivation, need to be familiar with appropriate methods in these fields. Lack of these skills seems to make it difficult for parents to control their child's behavior, academic motivation, and maintain resilience while studying. In general, it can be concluded from the present study that in the corona era, when access to school and professionals has been significantly reduced or cut off, the role of the family, especially parents, has become much more prominent, and this is the importance of being equipped have doubled in skills of parents in all areas including psychology, education and parenting.

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