

Children and adolescents experiences of the pandemic

Christine Gervais, PhD.
Professor, Nursing Department
Université du Québec en
Outaouais



1

Methodology

T1 (May 2020):
Lockdown



T2 (July 2020):
Progressive
reopening



T3 (November
2020): 2nd wave



T4 (May 2021):
3rd wave

229 children and adolescents
(aged 8-18 years old, X= 11)
Questionnaire and 40 semi-
directed interview

219 parents

2

Factors associated with depressive symptoms

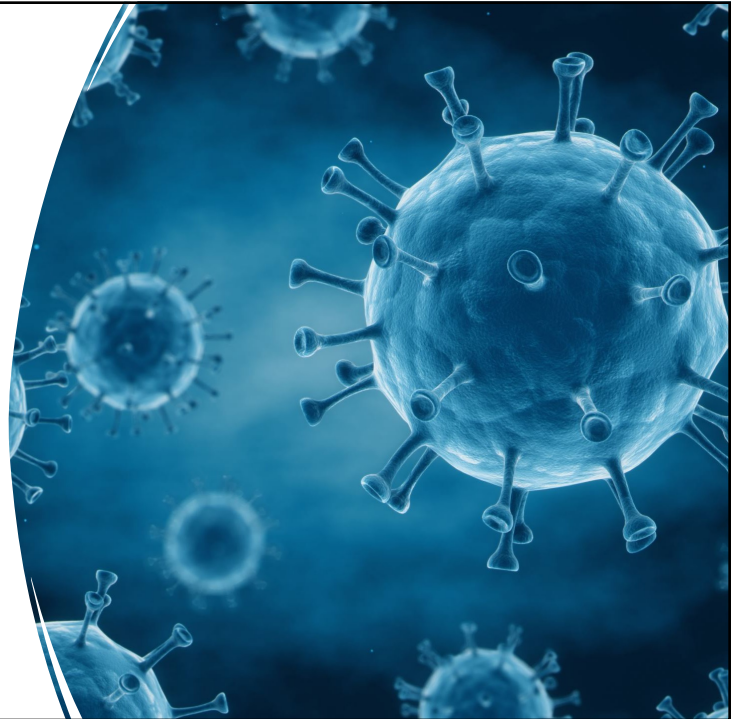
- Explained 55 % of the variance in children and adolescents depressive symptoms

| Significant | Non significant |
|---|---|
| Fear of COVID (5.6%) | Child age and gender |
| Sense of coherence - manageability (20.6%) | Family income, parent education, lost of income due to pandemic |
| Collective hope regarding the end of the pandemic (19.6%) | Sense of coherence - meaningfulness & comprehension |
| Positive school experience (things are going well at school and concentration) (5,8%) | Attachment to parents |
| Loneliness of their parent (3.2%) | Parent mental health (Depression, stress, anxiety) |
| | Family functioning, burden of care, social support, family-work conflicts |

3

Mains impacts of the pandemic

1. Individuals impacts
2. Collective impacts
3. Representations of the future



4

Individual impacts

Lack of social interaction

- *We've been around our family a lot, but friends, relatives, grandparents, it's seeing those people less I would say [that's the hardest with the pandemic] (Karim, 12 years old)*
- *...my class was closed down once, I had stayed online at home and not seeing anyone it's very difficult and I found that I lost contact with all my friends It's hard to get back in touch." (Charlie, 15 years old).*
- *"I don't like people, maybe it (the pandemic) has made me antisocial [...] With the pandemic, it's taken away some of that empathy you can have with people" (Julian, 15 years old).*

Fatigue in relation to health measures

- *...it's getting redundant, it's getting boring. At first we were like...you have to do it because it's going to improve our conditions, but now it seems like we're kind of losing hope... It's definitely flat you know, confine, disconfine, confine, disconfine. Being in flux all the time, you never really know what's going to happen to you. (Victor, 11 years old)*

Negative affects

- *It feels like, since we've been sitting in front of a screen all day doing nothing, sitting in front of something you're watching and you can't get up, it's like you haven't done anything. Even if you didn't expend any energy, you still have less energy." (Naomy, 11 years old).*

5

Collective impacts

Awareness of social issues

- *I think it taught them a lesson... That we must have good hygiene and also that we must not pollute too much. (Antonin, 9 years old).*
- *There are a lot of things that went on social networks that made us realize pollution, racism and things like that. So we pay more attention to what's around us. (Nour, 14 years old).*

Increased self-awareness

- *People changed, I think we all changed during the confinements. I think we changed more - not personality change, but more mentally, we understood things that were more important, we understood toxic relationships that we had. I think that's more what changed and stuff like that. (Sofia, 16 years old)*

Deterioration of the social climate

- *Everything, everything has been turned upside down, everything has been destroyed, many elders are dying, you know everything, everything has changed all of a sudden, so I would say that's the impact, it's that nothing is the same anymore. (Karim, 12 years old).*
- *People pull away, because you can't see them as much, so you have fewer strong connections. You have fewer discussions with them too, because you see them less. (Ines, 16 years old).*

6

Representations of the future

A healthier world

"I think it's going to open your mind about how you live, what you need to change. I think it will open the mind on how we live, on what we have to change. On human relations also how it is very important, it is necessary to keep that, I think that it will change the world also politically, economically » (Charlie, 15 years old)

"I think we'll have advanced in medicine, a lot. Learned to work really fast in medicine [...]. After that, the leaders are going to have more knowledge of how to handle a crisis [...]. I think the population is going to be like more aware of listening to the government's instructions, that everyone is going to be more careful about their personal hygiene." (Celeste, 15 years old).

An uncertain world to be wary of.

"I hope it [life] will be like it was before, but for sure it will be different because maybe we will be more suspicious of the people around us." (Adriana, 12 years old).

"I think people are going to be more aware that anything can happen and destroy the way of life that we're used to and they're going to more, maybe, enjoy the present time. » (Julian, 15 years old)

Biden, Putin r, the relationship with China... that's not very good in general... All stuff like that, that you see on the news, that you read about. You feel it (the future) is not going to be something good, whatever." (Marine, 15 years old).

7

Discussion

Providing listening, acceptance and emotional validation to children, as well as spaces and times for talking about COVID-19.

Broaden the definition of vulnerability in order to discern children whose well-being has been compromised by the pandemic and to better support them;

Creating more spaces and opportunities for children participation.

8

Thank you for your listening

christine.gervais@uqo.ca

<https://toutunvillage.uqo.ca/en>

