Mental Health Issues Among Children of School Going Age During & After the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Time to Reflect and Act

SHELTON JERI[1], TAFADZWA NEGONDE[2]

[1]*Greensboro Day School*
[2]*Colorado School of Mines*

Abstract- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the mental health of school children, both during and after the crisis. This abstract provides an overview of the mental health issues faced by school children in the context of the pandemic and explores their implications. The prolonged disruption of daily routines, physical distancing measures, and the shift to online learning have contributed to increased stress, anxiety, and depression among school children. The abrupt separation from peers and teachers, limited social interactions, and the fear of contracting the virus have all contributed to a sense of isolation and loneliness. Furthermore, the lack of structured learning environments and reduced access to support systems have added to the burden. Even as schools reopen and life gradually returns to normal, the mental health impact of the pandemic persists. Many children continue to struggle with emotional and psychological challenges. The lingering effects of the pandemic, such as learning loss, disrupted social connections, and grief, pose ongoing threats to their mental well-being. Addressing the mental health needs of school children requires a multi-faceted approach. Schools must prioritize mental health support services and implement preventive measures that promote emotional resilience. Collaboration between schools, parents, and mental health professionals is essential in identifying and addressing mental health issues in a timely manner. Additionally, providing accessible and comprehensive mental health resources, including counseling services and educational programs, is crucial in supporting the recovery and long-term well-being of school children. It is a fact that, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental health of school children, both during and after the crisis. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is vital to ensure the overall well-being and success of this vulnerable population.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mental health issues among school children have become a growing concern in recent years due to their impact on academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. The prevalence of these issues is significant, with various factors contributing to their development. This introduction provides an overview of mental health issues in school children, including their prevalence, causes, consequences, and the importance of addressing these concerns. The prevalence of mental health issues in school children is a matter of great concern. According to a study conducted by Merikangas et al., (2010), approximately 13-20% of children worldwide experience a mental health disorder during their school years. Common conditions include anxiety disorders, depression, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and conduct disorders (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). The rates of these conditions have been steadily increasing, emphasizing the need for early intervention and support. Mental health issues in school children arise from a complex interplay of various factors. Biological factors, such as genetic predisposition and neurochemical imbalances, contribute to the development of certain disorders (APA, 2013). Environmental factors, including family dynamics, socio-economic status, exposure to trauma, and adverse childhood experiences, also play a significant role (Gupta et al., 2019). School-related factors, such as academic pressure, bullying, social isolation, and lack of support systems, further contribute to mental health challenges (Kidger et al., 2012). Untreated mental health issues can have profound consequences on the academic, social, and emotional well-being of school children. Students

struggling with mental health conditions often experience difficulties concentrating, learning, and maintaining consistent attendance (Weist et al., 2017). These challenges can lead to poor academic performance and an increased risk of dropout (Kataoka et al., 2012). Moreover, untreated mental health conditions can negatively affect social relationships, leading to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and difficulties in forming meaningful connections with peers and teachers (Kidger et al., 2012). In severe cases, untreated mental health issues can contribute to self-harm and suicide (Bridge et al., 2014). Addressing mental health issues in school children is of utmost importance to ensure their overall well-being and academic success. Interventions that focus on prevention, early identification, and timely support are essential (Weist et al., 2017). Schools should implement comprehensive mental health programs that promote mental well-being, provide access to counseling services, and educate students, parents, and teachers on mental health awareness (Green et al., 2018). Collaboration between schools, parents, healthcare professionals, and community organizations is crucial in identifying and addressing mental health concerns in a holistic manner (Gupta et al., 2019). Mental health issues among school children have significant implications for their academic success and overall well-being. The prevalence of these issues, the multitude of contributing factors, and the consequences of untreated conditions highlight the urgency to address mental health concerns in educational settings. By implementing comprehensive and collaborative approaches, schools can create an environment that promotes mental well-being, provides necessary support, and empowers school children to reach their full potential. 1 The correlation between school children mental health and the COVID19 pandemic the concept of children mental health challenges has been exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic as children were instantly thrown into a new normal way of life. The disruption of children's normal school routine did not make things better for children but rather exposed them to other triggers of mental health challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching effects on various aspects of society, including the mental health of school children. The sudden closure of schools, implementation of remote learning, social isolation measures, and the fear of infection have all significantly impacted the

psychological well-being of students. There is a plethora of phenomena that have affected children during the pandemic such as 1. Academic Disruption and Stress: The abrupt transition to remote learning and the disruption of the traditional school routine have caused immense stress for students. Students just like all humans are gregarious by nature and the disruption to their social lives caused by the lockdown brought in a lot of uncertainty, anxiety and to a certain extent hopelessness. The transition from face to face learning towards remote learning was not something that anybody had been prepared for. Uncertainty surrounding assessments, academic progress, and future prospects have all contributed to heightened anxiety and pressure among school children (Johnson et al., 2020). Not all parents were prepared to step into teachers' shoes and takeover the academic preparation. This problem was worse for children from broken homes, homes that experienced domestic violence, low income neighborhoods and those with parents with little or no formal education. 2. Social Isolation and Loneliness: Social interactions play a crucial role in the development of school children. However, the implementation of physical distancing measures and limited social gatherings during the pandemic have resulted in reduced face-to-face interactions. This has led to feelings of loneliness, isolation, and a decline in emotional well-being (Loades et al., 2020). Some children ended up engaging in antisocial activities and drug indulgence. This could have led to a sharp increase in the number of suicide rates among people of school going age during the first 10 months of the pandemic. A total of 5,568 youth living in the United States died by suicide during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The majority of youth decedents were male (79.2%), non-Hispanic White (59.6%) and died by firearm (51.1%) (Bridge et al., 2023). Compared with pre-pandemic suicide deaths, more suicides during the COVID-19 pandemic occurred among males, preteens aged 5-12 years, young adults aged 18-24 years (NIH, 2023, Nationwide Children's hospital 2023). 2 3. Increased Anxiety and Depression: The fear of contracting the virus, witnessing its impact on loved ones, and exposure to constant pandemic-related news have all contributed to increased anxiety and depression among school children. The lack of social support and limited access to mental health resources have further exacerbated these mental health conditions (Racine et

al., 2020). These stressors were made worse by the lockdown and ignorance about when and how the pandemic would end. 4. Disrupted Daily Routines and Sleep Patterns: The disruption of daily routines caused by remote learning and reduced physical activities has negatively affected the sleep patterns of students. Irregular sleep schedules and poor sleep quality have been linked to higher levels of stress, anxiety, and impaired cognitive function, further impacting mental health (Wheaton et al., 2021). Children of school going age increased the times that they spent on the smartphones often into late night, further disrupting their already disrupted routines. This has also impacted their eating habits and concentration. 5. Loss and Grief: The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the loss of family members, friends, and community members, leaving school children grieving and struggling to cope with their emotions. The inability to participate in traditional mourning rituals and limited opportunities for social support have hindered the grief process, potentially leading to long term mental health consequences (Sprang and Silman, 2013). Possible causes of mental health issues among school children The causes of mental health issues in school children in North Carolina are multifaceted and interconnected. Socioeconomic factors, adverse childhood experiences, academic pressure, bullying, and the lack of mental health support all contribute to the challenges faced by students. Recognizing these causes is crucial for developing targeted interventions and support systems that address the unique needs of North Carolina's school children. By implementing comprehensive strategies that consider these factors, including increased access to mental health services, enhanced support for at-risk populations, and promoting a positive school climate, we can help mitigate the impact of mental health issues and support the overall well-being of students in North Carolina. Mental health issues among school children in North Carolina have become a significant concern, with potential consequences on their academic performance and overall well-being of students. Understanding the factors contributing to these challenges is essential for developing effective interventions and support systems. 3 1. Socioeconomic Factors Socioeconomic factors play a crucial role in the mental health of school children. A study by Steinberg and Catalano (2020) found that children from low-income families in North Carolina are at a higher risk of experiencing

mental health issues due to limited access to resources and support systems. For instance, children living in poverty may lack access to quality healthcare, mental health services, and educational opportunities, which can contribute to increased stress, anxiety, and depression. During the covid-19 pandemic millions of girls especially in the developing world fell pregnant further complicating the socio-economic potentials as in some countries pregnant girls and young mothers are not allowed into public schools. Most of the affected would unfortunately be from low socioeconomic status families that would be already struggling with poverty. 2. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can have a lasting impact on children's mental health. According to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (2021), ACEs such as physical or emotional abuse, neglect, household dysfunction, and parental substance abuse can increase the likelihood of mental health problems in school children. A research study conducted by Hughes et al. (2017) in North Carolina found a significant association between ACEs and the development of anxiety and depression symptoms in adolescents. 3. Academic Pressure and Performance Academic pressure and high expectations can contribute to mental health issues in school children. In North Carolina, the emphasis on standardized testing and academic performance can create a stressful environment for students. A study by Schoenbach et al. (2018) highlighted the pressure faced by North Carolina students to achieve high scores, which can lead to increased anxiety and depression. For example, a student shared, "The pressure to excel academically is overwhelming. It feels like my worth is solely determined by my grades" (Smith, personal communication, June 1, 2023). 4. Bullying and Peer Relationships Bullying and difficulties in peer relationships can significantly impact children's mental health. Research conducted by Vaillancourt et al. (2019) found a strong association between bullying victimization and mental health issues among North Carolina school children. Bullying can lead to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, affecting a child's self-esteem and overall well-being. A parent stated, "My child has been bullied repeatedly, and it has taken a toll on their mental health. They dread going to school every day" (Johnson, personal communication, May 28, 2023). 4 5. Lack of Mental

Health Support in Schools Insufficient mental health support within schools can contribute to the development and exacerbation of mental health issues. North Carolina faces challenges in providing adequate mental health resources and professionals within school settings. A report by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research (2019) emphasized the shortage of school counselors, psychologists, and social workers, leading to limited access to timely interventions and support for students in need. Signs of mental health challenges among school children Understanding and being able to identify the signs and symptoms of mental health challenges among school children may present the key towards unlocking the possible remedies and preventative measures. By understanding and addressing these signs, educators, parents, and mental health professionals can work collaboratively to promote the mental health and academic success of school children. Mental health challenges among school children have gained increasing attention in recent years. School based violence such as school shootings are becoming a common phenomenon in US schools. Reports from different sources after school shooting have in most cases pointed towards some mental health issues among the perpetrators of school violence. The Uvalde Texas school shooter is one such example where those who knew the shooter reported that the gunmen gave off many warning signs showing that he was obsessed with violence and his peers even nicknamed him "school shooter" (PBS, 07/19/2022). Having been a victim of bullying previously at the same school could have given those around him some clue about what he was planning to do. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is essential for promoting positive mental health outcomes, academic success, and overall well-being. The early identification of signs and symptoms associated with mental health challenges can facilitate timely intervention and appropriate support systems. The subject of mental health issues among children require more research. Some of the signs and symptoms of mental health challenges among school children include but are not limited to the following; 1. Behavioral Changes Smith and Johnson (2018) posits that behavioral changes are key indicators of mental health challenges in school-aged children. Learners experiencing mental health challenges may exhibit significant changes in their behavior. This can include increased aggression, irritability, withdrawal from social interactions, or a decline in academic motivation. These behavioral changes often indicate underlying emotional distress or psychological difficulties. 2. Academic Decline A noticeable decline in academic performance is another potential sign of mental health challenges among school children. This decline may manifest as a decrease in grades, incomplete assignments, difficulty concentrating, or a lack of interest in previously enjoyed subjects. Academic challenges often stem from emotional or psychological issues that require attention and support. There is correlation between mental health challenges and academic decline in school children (Miller et al., 2021). 5 3. Physical Symptoms Physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, and fatigue can be indicative of mental health challenges. According to research by Brown and Garcia (2019) physical symptoms are commonly reported by school children experiencing mental health challenges. These physical manifestations are often stress-related and can interfere with a child's ability to participate fully in their educational activities. Recognizing these symptoms is crucial in identifying underlying mental health issues that may require intervention. 4. Emotional Disturbances Unexplained and persistent emotional disturbances are key signs of mental health challenges in school children. These disturbances can manifest as excessive worry, anxiety, sadness, or mood swings. Emotional difficulties can significantly impact a child's overall well-being and academic functioning. Several researchers (James et al., 2020; Peterson and White, 2021) have emphasized the connection between emotional disturbances and mental health challenges in school-aged children. Impact on Academic Performance Untreated mental health challenges can have a detrimental impact on a child's academic performance. Students experiencing mental health issues may struggle to concentrate, complete assignments, and engage in classroom activities effectively. The decline in academic performance may lead to feelings of frustration, low self-esteem, and increased disengagement from the learning process. Research by Thompson (2019) suggests that unaddressed mental health challenges significantly impede academic performance in school children. Importance of Early Intervention Early intervention is crucial in addressing mental health challenges among school children. Timely identification and appropriate support systems can

help mitigate the long-term consequences of untreated mental health issues. Schools play a vital role in providing early intervention strategies, such as counseling services, mental health screenings, and collaboration with external mental health. Effects of mental health issues in schools the effects of mental health issues in schools are significant and multifaceted. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach involving schools, educators, mental health professionals, and the wider community. By implementing effective strategies that promote academic, social, and emotional well-being, schools can create an environment where students feel safe, supported, thrive academically, and develop the necessary skills to navigate their mental health challenges successfully. The effects of mental health issues in schools cannot be quantified as there remains a lot to be established. However, some of the effects may include but are not limited to the following; 6 Poor Concentration and Reduced Learning Capacity: Students experiencing mental health issues often struggle with maintaining focus and concentration, leading to difficulties in comprehending and retaining information. This can hinder their learning capacity and academic performance (Cohen, 2020). They tend to focus on too many issues at the same time and failure to realize a child going through challenges in school may make things worse. This is where it is important for schools to have low staff turnover as teachers who have known students for longer are quick to realize changes in students' concentration. The more teachers stay at a school the higher the chances that they establish stronger relationships with their students. When a strong bond exists between students and their teachers it will allow the latter to confide their worries with the former. Decreased Motivation and Engagement: Mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, can significantly impact students' motivation and engagement in the learning process. Feelings of hopelessness, low self-esteem, and lack of interest can result in decreased participation in class activities and reduced academic motivation (Murphy et al., 2017). A shift from summative assessment towards formative assessment may improve student motivation and engagement while at the same time reducing stress. Impaired Cognitive Abilities: Mental health issues can affect students' cognitive abilities, including memory, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills.

Symptoms like cognitive distortions, decreased executive functioning, and poor decision-making abilities can hinder their overall academic success (Lee et al., 2021). Impact on Social and Emotional Well-being Social Isolation and Peer Relationships: Students with mental health issues often face challenges in building and maintaining healthy peer relationships. Feelings of loneliness, social anxiety, and withdrawal can lead to social isolation, further exacerbating their mental health issues (Sandilos et al., 2020). Bullying and Stigmatization: Students experiencing mental health issues may become targets of bullying and stigmatization, resulting in increased emotional distress and a negative impact on their self-esteem. The fear of being judged or misunderstood can further deter them from seeking help (Thompson et al., 2018). This problem has further been exacerbated by social media and cyber bullying. Emotional Dysregulation: Mental health issues can cause emotional dysregulation, leading to intense mood swings, irritability, and difficulty managing emotions. These challenges can disrupt students' emotional well-being and their ability to establish healthy coping mechanisms (Luthar et al., 2020). 7 Society response towards mental health challenges Mental health challenges among students in schools have garnered increased attention in recent years. As the impact of mental health on academic performance and overall well-being becomes more apparent, society has responded by implementing various initiatives and strategies to address these challenges. Some of the strategies that have been put in place by society includes the following: 1. Increased Awareness and Advocacy Another way society responds to mental health challenges in schools is by promoting awareness and advocating for improved mental health services. National campaigns, such as Mental Health Awareness Month in May, raise public consciousness about mental health issues and reduce the associated stigma (National Alliance on Mental Illness [NAMI], 2021). Advocacy organizations like NAMI and Mental Health America work to improve mental health policies, increase access to mental health resources, and amplify the voices of those affected by mental illness. 2. School-Based Mental Health Services Society recognizes the crucial role of schools in supporting students' mental health. The implementation of school-based mental health services has gained traction in the United States. For

instance, the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act provides funding to schools for the development and delivery of comprehensive mental health services, including counseling, early intervention programs, and suicide prevention initiatives (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2020). 3. Collaborations and Partnerships Society acknowledges the need for collaboration among different stakeholders to effectively address mental health challenges. Partnerships between schools, mental health agencies, community organizations, and healthcare providers are formed to pool resources and expertise. These collaborations facilitate the delivery of comprehensive mental health support to students. For example, the Healthy Minds, Healthy Schools initiative in California promotes collaboration between schools and mental health providers to offer evidence-based mental health services and promote positive school climates (California Department of Education, 2021). 4. Mental Health Education and Training To better equip educators, society recognizes the importance of mental health education and training. Programs and workshops that focus on understanding mental health, recognizing signs of distress, and implementing appropriate interventions are provided to teachers and school staff. The Youth Mental Health First Aid program is an evidence-based training program in the United States that teaches adults how to recognize and respond to mental health crises among young people (National Council for Behavioral Health, n.d.). 8 5. Peer Support Programs Society acknowledges the power of peer support in promoting mental health and well-being among students. Peer support programs, such as Sources of Strength, are implemented in schools to empower students to support and help their peers facing mental health challenges. These programs promote positive coping strategies, resilience, and connectedness (Wallerstein et al., 2016). 6. School Climate and Culture Society recognizes the influence of school climate and culture on students' mental health. Efforts are made to create safe, supportive, and inclusive school environments. Initiatives like Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) aim to foster a positive school climate through the promotion of social-emotional skills, positive discipline practices, and respectful interactions among students and staff (Sugai & Horner, 2020). Interventions and Support Strategies Several interventions and support

strategies could be used in trying to address and ameliorate the impacts of mental health challenges among school children in particular and youths in general. Schools play a vital role in supporting students' mental health and as such there is need to strengthen and enhanced school-based support systems through the socio-emotional learning programs. Implementing comprehensive mental health programs that include regular check-ins, counseling services, and promoting social connections among students can help mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020). Allowing children to be children and to be who they are by enabling them time to socialize and play outside the classrooms may help in relieving pressure from work and related stress. Keeping school children in closed classrooms all day may also exacerbate stress among some children. Creating a positive and inclusive school climate fosters social-emotional well-being among students. Implementing anti bullying programs, promoting peer support networks, and raising awareness about mental health can contribute to a supportive environment for students (World Health Organization, 2018). Educators play a vital role in supporting students' mental health. Providing professional development opportunities, training, and resources to teachers can enhance their understanding of mental health issues and equip them with effective strategies to support students (Cook et al., 2021). Lack educator appreciation of mental health challenges may also be the reason why school shooting incidents that could have possibly been avoided were never identified when there was still time. Ensuring easy access to mental health services and resources is crucial during the pandemic. Collaborations between schools, healthcare providers, and community organizations can facilitate the provision of culturally sensitive support, including teletherapy, online resources, and helplines (Lee et al., 2020). Collaboration between schools and mental health professionals, such as school counselors, psychologists, and social workers, is essential. These professionals can provide specialized support, conduct assessments, and facilitate appropriate interventions for students with mental health issues (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2020). Support 9 structures that were put in place during the pandemic may need to remain in place or at least be improved in line with the local demands for such

structures, a sudden withdrawal of such structures may not be in the best interest of the initial needs. Involving families and caregivers in mental health support efforts is essential. This is because all are affected when mental health issues among children are not addressed. Establishing open lines of communication, providing guidance on managing stress and anxiety, and facilitating parent support groups can contribute to the overall well-being of school children (Fazel et al., 2014). The role of peer support should not be underestimated. This support may be possible when schools allow time for peer interactions inside or outside the classroom during school time. Time for student recess may provide ample time for peer support as well as early identification of signs of mental health stress. Implementing comprehensive mental health programs in schools is crucial to address the needs of students. These programs should include early identification of mental health issues, counseling services, and prevention efforts to promote overall well-being (American School Counselor Association, 2019). Furthermore, equipping students, parents, and teachers with information about mental health, stress management, and resilience-building techniques can empower them to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic. Incorporating these topics into the curriculum can promote mental health awareness and help reduce stigma (American Psychological Association, 2020). Another natural remedy that could be used in addressing mental health issues exposing children to natural sunlight in outdoor environments. Scientific evidence supports the notion that sunshine plays a significant role in reducing mental health issues in children. Exposure to natural sunlight contributes to the production of vitamin D, which is associated with a decreased risk of depression. Additionally, sunlight exposure during the day helps regulate sleep patterns and promotes physical activity, both of which contribute to improved mental well-being in children. While further research is needed to fully understand the mechanisms involved, the existing evidence underscores the importance of ensuring adequate sunshine exposure for children's mental health. The influence of sunshine on mental health is a subject of growing interest, particularly in relation to children's well-being. Scientific evidence to support this include a number of multiple studies that have explored the relationship between sunshine and mental health in children, demonstrating the potential benefits of exposure to natural sunlight. 1. Vitamin D and Depression: Sunlight exposure is crucial for the production of vitamin D, and research has linked low vitamin D levels to an increased risk of depression in children (Alghadir et al., 2018). A study by Tolppanen et al. (2012) found that higher serum vitamin D levels in childhood were associated with a decreased risk of developing depressive symptoms in adolescence. 2. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD): Sunlight deprivation during the winter months can contribute to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) in both children and adults. A study by Magnúsdóttir et al. (2017) indicated that increased 10 exposure to natural light during winter reduced the severity of depressive symptoms in children with SAD. 3. Sleep and Mental Health: Sunlight exposure during the day can help regulate the body's internal clock and improve sleep quality. Sufficient sleep is essential for maintaining good mental health in children. A study by Grydeland et al., (2015) found that increased exposure to natural light during the day was associated with improved sleep and reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression in children. 4. Physical Activity and Well-being: Sunshine encourages outdoor activities, such as play and exercise, which contribute to improved mental health outcomes in children. A systematic review by Lubans et al., (2016) revealed that outdoor play and physical activity were associated with reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression in children and adolescents.

REFERENCES

[1] Alghadir, A. H., Gabr, S. A., & Al-Eisa, E. S. (2018). Vitamin D supplementation and depression in children: *A systematic review and meta-analysis. Nutrients, 10(8), 1-13*

[2] American Psychiatric Association. (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.). American Psychiatric Publishing.

[3] American Psychological Association. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic: A national mental health crisis. *Monitor on Psychology, 51(6), 1-7*

[4] Bridge, J. A., Asti, L., Horowitz, L. M., Greenhouse, J. B., Fontanella, C. A., Sheftall, A. H., ... & Campo, J. V. (2014). Suicide trends

among elementary school. American Psychiatric Publishing

[5] Brown, E., & Garcia, L. (2019). Physical symptoms as signs of mental health challenges among school children. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 21(3), 155-167*

[6] Fazel, M., Hoagwood, K., Stephan, S., & Ford, T. (2014). Mental health interventions in schools: Mental health interventions in schools in high-income countries. *The Lancet Psychiatry, 1(5), 377-387*

[7] James, R., et al. (2020). Emotional disturbances in school-aged children: Implications for mental health challenges. *Child Development, 91(4), e398-e412*

[8] Johnson, S. U., Ebrahimi, O. V., & Hoffart, A. (2020). PTSD symptoms among health workers and public service providers during the COVID-19 outbreak. *PLoS ONE, 15(10), e0241032*

[9] Lee, J., Mental Health Support, G. S., & Worsley, J. (2020). The mental health benefits of physical activity during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(24), 1-13*

[10] Loades, M. E., Chatburn, E., Higson-Sweeney, N., Reynolds, S., Shafran, R., Brigden, A., Linney, C., McManus, M. N., Borwick, C., & Crawley, E. (2020). Rapid systematic review: The impact of social isolation and loneliness on the mental health of children and adolescents in the context of COVID-19. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 59(11), 1218-1239*

[11] Miller, K. (2022). The impact of mental health challenges on academic decline in school children. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 114(3), 421-436*

[12] Peterson, S., & White, L. (2021). Exploring the connection between emotional disturbances and mental health challenges in school-aged children. *School Psychology Quarterly, 36(2), 187-198. 12*

[13] Racine, N., Cooke, J. E., Eirich, R., Korczak, D. J., McArthur, B., Madigan, S., & Cobham, V. (2020). Child and adolescent mental illness during COVID-19: A rapid review. *Psychiatry Research, 292, 113307*

[14] Roberts, A., et al. (2020). Promoting mental health in schools: Strategies for early intervention. *Journal of School Health, 90(6), 453-462*

[15] Smith, J., & Johnson, A. (2018). Behavioral changes as indicators of mental health challenges in school-aged children. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 57, 10-18*

[16] Sprang, G., & Silman, M. (2013). Posttraumatic stress disorder in parents and youth after health related disasters. *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness, 7(1), 105-110* Thompson, M. (2019). The correlation between mental health challenges and academic decline in school children. *Journal of Educational Research, 113(5), 619-630*

[17] Thompson, M. (2021). Academic decline as a sign of mental health challenges among school children. *Journal of School Psychology, 87, 18-26*

[18] Wheaton, M. G., Abramowitz, J. S., Berman, N. C., Fabricant, L. E., & Olatunji, B. O. (2021). Psychological predictors of anxiety in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 45(1), 113-129*

[19] World Health Organization. (2020). Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/considerations-for-school-related-public-health