

	<p>Journal homepage: https://jdlol.journals.ekb.eg/ Online ISSN: 2314-8837 Print ISSN: 2314-8829</p>	
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Covid-19: the virus that stopped the world. A Child perspective

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 has stopped the world and child life. The aim of this study was to report our project with distant learning. Methods: a project was conducted at elementary school with an interesting purpose: scientist for a day; Results: 25 children worked at this project with many interesting results especially about their wishes and their knowledge about COVID-19 nad future. Parents were able to classify their satisfaction about this project and about their sons partecipation with emotional status; Conclusions: distant learning is essential to help children during quarantine and focusing on a special issue demonstrate that they require more attention and needs many projects to be protagonists during this difficult era

ARTICLE INFO

Received 2021-07-27

Accepted 2021-12-06

Keywords

Covid-19; learning; children;
distance

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INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 pandemic has profoundly changed the entire world daily life; some fundamental data must be reported and analyzed in order to understand how education has changed and how this change has in some way altered normal routines. Let's refer then to the data reported on education of two important world realities: Save the children and Unesco (cOYNE 1, 2020)(dIEPETIK a, 2020)

In its 2020 report Save the children emphasizes:: The biggest global education emergency of our lifetime. We are facing an education emergency. During COVID-19 pandemic, over 2 billion learners were out of school. For the first time in human history, an entire global generation has had their education disrupted. New analysis in this global report shows how COVID-19 may impact the funding of education, as well as the countries most at risk of falling behind.

For many children school is also a safe place where they can receive meals, access healthcare, including mental health services, and play with their friends. Teachers can be children's front line responders and protectors. But with school closures, children are missing out on these essentials the school environment can offer. As the virus begins to subside in some countries, early childhood centres and schools are beginning to reopen and children are returning.

The report points out the discomfort by showing alarming data: the lack of schooling and therefore of distance learning generates more violence, school abandonment, poverty and ignorance. Other alarming data emerge from the UNESCO report. Distance learning has generated many family difficulties. Distance learning during the COVID-19 emergency in some schools showed that while many children report feeling motivated to participate in distance

learning, younger adolescents (ages 10 to 11) were slightly more likely to express concerns or doubts about their ability to do so. This may be because younger children tend to have fewer digital and soft skills to employ in an online learning context. During the lockdown, many parents had to add the responsibilities of distance learning to their normal daily responsibilities. Although many said they had the necessary digital skills, nearly one-third of parents said they did not have enough time to support their children's learning and school activities during isolation.

By March 2020, school closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic meant that more than 90% of children enrolled in school worldwide had to leave their desks. Italy was the first country in Europe to implement a nationwide lockdown. Children, teens and their families lived in near total isolation for about two months through May 2020 and schools remained closed until September. Excluding scheduled school disruptions, Italian students missed 65 days of regular school due to the lockdown measures taken to address COVID-19, compared to an average of 27 days lost among high-income countries worldwide.

Data from the Italian Education Ministry estimates that approximately 3 million children and teens between the ages of 6 and 17 may have struggled with distance learning activities during the lockdown due to a lack of connectivity or adequate IT tools in the family. Recent Save the Children survey shows that the top reason for not attending classes remotely is connectivity issues. As internet use increases during the COVID-19 pandemic, parents play an even more central role in helping children and teens take advantage of online opportunities while allowing them to use the internet more independently, whether for school or other activities.

Children, especially younger children, also expressed some concern and anxiety about their ability to participate in school activities during the period of distance learning. Younger children may need more hands-on support from teachers. (Wagner, 2020)

Thus Distance learning is not just the only opportunity for some groups of students. Based on these data the aim of this study was to report our experience with a special program about distance learning and COVID-19.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Our research it is based on these data and assumptions. Based on the explanation, the objectives of this study are to describe results of online teaching and learning for the students of elementary school, based on single project: what you need to know about COVID-19.

The project was born during the quarantine, based on two important factors: the Covid-19 pandemic annulled the limit of medical-scientific knowledge that preceded it and it generated a limit where there is not only a biological-health battle but a complex social, psychological, pedagogical, environmental, economic, political and cultural war. Never as in this historical moment have children lived without filters the same experiences as adults, such as the disappearance of loved ones, risk for parents on the "front line" or loss of work. This situation will have a significant impact on their physical, but above all, mental health.

The project was divided into two phases: a first organizational phase explaining to parents and children the purpose of the study and a second phase that was purely didactic. An internal review board approved the study (IRB 11/2020-Pediatric fertility lab). Oral and written consent was obtained by each parents.

During the initial phase of the pandemic it was essential to know about clinical risk and risk management. For those who deal with clinical risk, fundamental are the organizational phases: transformational leadership, the culture of safety that must integrate with safety initiatives, and finally the evaluation of the results secondary to these assumptions and the initiatives undertaken. The first phase therefore involved empowering children and raising awareness of the pandemic by using the experiment as a tool to mitigate the impact of the pandemic by making them protagonists. A lesson on Covid-19 administered by the children themselves was conducted to understand their awareness. Parents were asked to rate their children's degree of participation and enthusiasm before and after the study simply by giving a rating from 1 to 3 (1 little, no change, 3 enthusiastic). The delta before and after the experiment was then assessed. An expert then conducted a distance learning lecture on Covid-19 (2 hours of lecture planned).

RESULTS

The study group consisted of 25 children aged 10-11 years; After the lesson, we found that thanks to the children's continuous questions, the time spent was more than 3 hours. We were able to verify that the children use the video channel of the lesson for the rational part while the chat of the program for the emotional one (writing the questions almost anonymously). Analyzing the questions we found that 90% were relevant to the topic and personal.

From these results, the same children have requested to deepen the topic and so it was born a project entitled "Scientists for a day". They carried out a research on Covid-19 and a fundamental work was born: covid-19 the virus that stopped the world. Inside the work there

are notions about symptoms, hygiene measures, what is important to know and what they have learned about the virus (the work has been inserted and published inside a site of scientific divulgation "disinfection.org" connected to different international sites).

Inside the site the children have chosen iconography, diagrams and figures concerning the virus and safety rules; from the analysis of the results two tables have been composed, the table of knowledge and the table of wishes. From the table of knowledge about the virus, one point must be mentioned: according to the children, masks must be used even if one has a cold! From the table of desires, on the other hand, it emerges that, in addition to the need to manage more lessons with questions to experts on particular topics, to implement the possibility of smart-learning, they would like to be more protagonists and be active in learning.(Table 1 and 2)

It is interesting to note, at the end of the study, the delta of improvement in the emotional aspect of the children: over 80% went from a rating of 1 to a rating of 3, with gratitude reported by the parents.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Pandemic has changed the lifestyle of everyone, especially children. The absence of school has generated many problems, especially social and relational ones. The need for distance learning has been fundamental in all countries affected by the pandemic, but for young children it has not always been easy, especially to organize and to make them understand (Satiawan et al 2020)

Families have had to change their lifestyles in order to provide distance education for their children, and often this effort has not been supported by Countries. The need, therefore, is to organize distance learning in the best possible way in order to be more effective and comprehensible, especially for young children.

After this important project, we can answer an important question: Does remote learning work? Yes, if properly executed and if children are made the protagonists. In conclusion the society has a strategic role in shaping society behaviors. The synergy between family, school, and society can create a conducive environment for children so that the online teaching and learning can run well. Creating a conducive learning environment and achieving the school' goals in giving good education requires the help from the parents and society as the children guide to improve their future.