

## Letter to the Editor

# Let's Be Ready: COVID-19 Related Restrictions Can Lead to an Outbreak of Social-Communication Problems in Children

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Dear Editor,

Young children are developing at a fast pace and are able to learn from modeling and imitation. Engaging in social interactions and experiencing social behaviors are crucial during childhood development. During the COVID-19 lockdown, children are not able to participate in, or experience, the social behaviors vital for their socio-emotional-cognitive development, well-being, and mental health.

Previously employed parents work away from home and work part-time online, while playgrounds and kindergartens are closed, and childminder services are restricted. Indeed, these parents probably will not spend much time with their children. They work, but only the form of their work has changed. Parents, especially working parents with one child, may keep their children busy with digital devices and individual sedentary activities while they are working.

This means that children are deprived of the environmental experiences necessary for sensory-motor development. While, pre-school-aged children who have to learn communication and social skills with their peers are in social isolation. Previous studies have shown that early social isolation and deprivation can lead to neuroendocrine dysregulation (1-4), impaired cognitive functions (5, 6), and impaired social communication skills (7-9).

Although, these extreme changes in social experiences are having a serious effect on young children's development, we have few research studies carried in these areas. The aim of this letter was to share professional viewpoints about COVID-19 related restrictions' impacts on children's social-communication skills in the future. We would recommend researchers and clinicians to pay special attention to the effects of COVID-19 restrictions on children's socio-communicative development.

It may not be far-fetched to think of a global movement in education, welfare and rehabilitation systems to overcome these problems. International organizations such as UNICEF are expected to play a more effective role in this area.

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