## *The Impact of Social Distancing on Children and Adolescents and their Long-term Use of the Internet and Technology During COVID-19 Pandemic*

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**ABSTRACT:**

The Study seeks to remedy the impact of social distancing of children as one of the most important forms of problems that impede the normal and healthy development of children, which significantly affect their behavior and the interaction with the outside world. Despite the variety of proportions of the children who are suffering from social distancing around the world, the impacts of this phenomenon has affected most of the children around the world. The problem of this research is the need to shed some light on the negative consequences that affect various health, psychological and social aspects of children's and adolescents' personality, resulted in imposing social distancing or "home quarantine" in an attempt to reduce the outbreak of the virus, which has negative impacts on children and adolescents in particular. The importance of study lies in the fact that this incident is the first of its kind in our era; we have not experienced social distancing and home quarantine imposed on societies because of COVID-19 pandemic and its continuity for a long time, and the importance of the age stage which the research targets, childhood and adolescence, that are pivotal in the life of the individual, where his/her personality is formed and influences the rest of his/her life stages. The findings of the Study showed that despite the significant decrease in the number of infections with COVID-19 the return of life to its normal form, the period of social distancing, which the world spent, resulted in negative impacts that exceeded the adults while affecting the children and adolescents due to the lack of experience. Therefore, the types and forms of that impact vary from one child to another, but all scientists, researchers and physicians agree unanimously that there is a gap in the personality of children. The conclusions and recommendations affirm the importance of uniting all the concerned individuals and parties when dealing with children and adolescents, such as families, schools, universities, media

establishments, Ministry of Health and society in order to implement treatment plans and disseminate the necessary awareness to ensure overcoming the negative impact which has affected the children and adolescents during the period of social distancing.

**Keywords**: Social distancing, childhood, adolescence COVID-19

**Introduction:**

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic has affected all the social segments of society and all aspects of life around the world and has resulted in unprecedented and devastating negative impacts the health, psychology and sociology of humans; (Hartej Gillet al, 2020). Many evidences indicate that the psychological consequences of COVID-19 pandemic will remain for upcoming years, and the Study indicates that pandemic is associated with distress, anxiety, fear of infection, depression and insomnia among all people and among health care professionals in particular; (Leo Sher ,2020)

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has changed the ideas and beliefs on which societies are founded. It has caused the emergence of new behaviors in the lives of individuals, especially after the announcement of countries the need to use social distancing as the best way to be able to reduce the outbreak of the Virus in societies; (Barqouq & Burizq, 2020)

The findings of many studies have unanimously concluded that the increase in social, emotional, academic, family and health problems make a person unable to fulfill the requirements of life and increases his/her misery that increases his/her turmoil and tension, which contribute in increasing the psychological stress, feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction with life, which may make him subject to deviation. Emotional reassurance is one of the most important reasons that enable a person to maintain his/her psychological resilience and overcome stress, and many scientists and scholars have highlighted the most important positive signs of mental health; (Dulaim, 2005).

Field studies conducted by the United Nations states that there are more than 40 million people around the world have been deprived from the right to education because of COVID-19 pandemic for various reasons, including foremost of which is the lack of capabilities and techniques that qualify them for remote education, that shows the trouble and frustration that these students have suffered psychologically in addition to their low academic level. On the other hand, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has indicated that these students are most at risk of being left behind and also those who can access to the remote education. We find that the success of this education depends on students' circumstances and living capabilities,

and parents, especially women, who are responsible for care and housekeeping; (Guterres, 2020).

The Study shades light on the stage of childhood and adolescence (late childhood), as a critical stage because of its great importance to the rest age stages, children's personality and their future; (Desouki, 2017).

Accordingly, the Study seeks to shed light on that age stage of children and know the extent to which they have been affected by COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on the different aspects of their personality, the effect of their use of the internet and modern technology, the psychological impacts, and proposals to avoid and reduce these impacts.

**Concepts:**
**Adolescence Stage:**

The stage that mediates childhood and youth, begins at puberty and ends with youth; (Mohammed, 2011) And it is a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood and maturity, for males and females equally, and it is often a source of confusion and disturbances because it means leaving habits and a relatively easy lifestyle and transferring to a new stage with its concepts, situations, requirements and responsibilities, which are often difficult and require a high ability to adapt to; (Desuqi, 2020). This stage is considered one of the most accurate and important stages that children pass, which affects the future of their lives. Therefore, psychologists consider it the second birth of the human personality; (Zahran, 2000).

**Social Distancing:**

A modern term that appeared with the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, it expresses a set of preventive health rules in communication among people to ensure the reduction of infection. The essence of distancing depends on restricting contact among people to maintain a physical distance among them and reduce the number of times people are in close contact with each other; (Khader, 2021).

**Study Problem and Questions:**

COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected all aspects of life in all countries around the world, as it has led to the death of thousands of people, old and young, and it has had significant negative consequences on various aspects, health, psychology and sociology of the personality.

Imposing social distancing or home quarantine by all countries as an attempt to reduce the outbreak of the Virus has had negative impacts on children and adolescents in particular. Social distancing has led to the deprivation of children and adolescents from their schools and lack of communication with their classmates, teachers and

relatives, in addition to the deprivation of outdoor sports activities, going out for picnics, the lack of personal space at home, their relationship with their family and many other negative impacts on their personality, as it has led to a high rate of their use of the internet and social media in general, which has had negative impacts on all aspects of their personality.

In a report published by a foreign magazine, it states that young people are the most affected segment of COVID-19 epidemic, as they have experienced the new reality silently, especially as they suffer from its maximum consequences, which are depriving them from schools, playing outdoor, leaving homes to spend enjoyable times with friends, and practicing exercises, hobbies and activities, which may cause severe negative impacts on their mental and cognitive abilities and their emotions; where depriving children from schools and communication with friends are the most dangerous consequences of social distancing.

Accordingly, the researcher has conducted an Exploratory Study on a sample of adolescents (12-17) years in two governmental schools, preparatory and secondary, in the Emirate of Sharjah in order to identify the impact of social distancing on the different aspects of their personality and the impact of their use of the internet and other technical means for long periods and their negatives consequences. The Exploratory Study shows that most of these impacts are related to the health, psychological and social aspects of their personality and their relationship with their parents.

The Study lies in answering the following questions:

**Main Question:**

What are the impacts of social distancing on children and adolescents?

**Secondary Questions:**
- What are the negative consequences of social distancing on children and adolescents?
- What are the risks that may result from social distancing in the following life stages of children and adolescents?
- What strategies shall be followed to recover from the impacts of social distancing on children and adolescents?

**Study Goals:**
- Shedding light on the importance of addressing the negative impacts on children during social distancing;
- Clarifying the nature of the impacts which affected the children and reviewing their forms in order to appropriate plans to address;
- Reviewing the health, psychological and social impacts of applying social distancing on children and adolescents; and

- Suggesting recommendations and proposals aim to help that age stage to overcome the negative impacts of social distancing by joining hands with all parties and concerned persons to work with.

**Importance of Study:**

The importance of the Study comes from the fact that despite of the return of many life aspects to their nature, the quarantine and isolation period from the society have resulted in many negative impacts on all societies and age groups around the world, and the children and adolescents are the most affected segments by the Pandemic. Therefore, it has become necessary to work on addressing the impacts of the Pandemic, which have been resulted by the period that children and adolescents spent during the home quarantine, as maintaining and taking care of that age stage is the most important way to realize the advance of the society, as today's children are the leaders of the future. The importance of the Study was represented in the following points:

- This incident is the first of its type in our era, as we have never experienced social distancing and home quarantine imposed on societies before because of COVID-19 pandemic and its long continuation;
- The importance of the targeted age stage in the Study, childhood and adolescence, which is a very important stage in an individual's life, during which his/her personality is formed, and it affects the rest of his/her life;
- The Study focuses on the knowledge of the Study sample, their opinions and perceptions about social distancing, the extent of their commitment to it and its effects on, and the intensity of their use of the Internet and its psychological effects;
- The Study sheds light on the negative and positive impacts of social distancing period on all aspects of the personality of adolescents, their relationship with their parents, the intensity of their use of the internet and their psychological effects, which is a very important aspect of personality that affects the rest of the other aspects; and
- The Study provides suggestions to limit or reduce the negative impacts of social distancing on the personality of adolescents and the intensity of their use of the internet to benefit their parents, those who raise them and concerned about that age group.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Social Interaction:**

The concept of "social interaction" is one of the most important concepts of sociology, it deals with the study of how the individual interacts in the environment in which he lives and the resulting values, habits and trends of this interaction. It does not affect individuals only,

but also the society as a whole, as it leads to the formation of groups and the emergence of human societies; (Zaher, 1977).

Definition of Social Interaction: It is the process by which group members relate to each other mentally and motivationally, and in the needs, aims and knowledge. It also is defined as a reciprocal relationship between two individuals, an effect whose behavior depends on the behavior of the other, or the behavior of each depends on the behavior of the other; (Muhammad and Miloud, 2017), or it is a continuous social process whose poles are individuals, and its main tools are meanings and concepts, where it is everything happens when two or more individuals communicate, and it happens as a result of modification or change in behavior; (Hamed, 2009).

Social interaction is very important for societies, its importance includes: It contributes to the formation of human behavior and is necessary for the development of the child, and it creates opportunities for individuals to be distinguished by their personality and essence, and it is considered as a prerequisite for group formation. It leads to the differentiation of the segments of the group, so leaders appear and vice versa, and helps to define the social roles and responsibilities that each individual must assume; (Hamed, 2009).

**Feeling of Psychological Cohesion:**

It is one of the most important theories of health psychology, which has appeared in the fifties of the twentieth century by its discoverer Antonovsky - 1979 in his studies on health and disease, and it looks at health as a continuous movement between the enjoyment of total health and health total illness; (Al-Mansour, 2017).

It examines the role of internal and external sources that constitute factors of resistance and steadfastness in humans, which emerge in times of crises, disasters, disease and difficult circumstances, where constancy, steadfastness and stubbornness are most intense when these sources, with their elaborate employment and organized mobilization, produce what is called feeling of cohesion; (Hada, 2018).

**Previous Studies:**

● Study of (Amina Abdel-Salam - 2020) seeks to reveal the impact of home quarantine on children spending their time during the outbreak of COVID-19 epidemic. It is a descriptive study on a sample of children in the State of Algeria, targets 350 individuals, in which the electronic questionnaire has been used as a tool for collecting study data. This study finds that home quarantine and the closure of schools, nurseries, clubs and recreational centers has resulted in negative impacts on children, and their psychology has become worse and more nervous, and their times were unorganized,

changes in their behavior, and disturbances in eating and sleeping times; (Abdul-Salam, 2020).

● Study of (Mahmoud, Fatima Al Zahraa Salem, 2020) focuses on the educational effects of social distancing during COVID-19 pandemic, how societies can adapt and coexist with epidemics and pandemics, and the extent to which new theories and concepts will arise based on global conditions, and that many concepts that have had negative impacts may have positive impacts, especially in a crisis context such as the current crisis of COVID-19 pandemic. The study also has risen up to distinguishing between social distancing and other social approaches such as social exclusion and social marginalization. The study inaugurated a new term resulted from social distancing, which is "virtual convergence" and the mechanisms for dealing with social distancing through virtual convergence, and the study ended with developing a set of future scenarios beyond social distancing, and a set of expected possibilities as a result of those scenarios; (Mahmoud, 2021).

● Study of (Al-Amrawi, 2021) aims to reveal the social and behavioral impacts of social distancing during the response to COVID-19 pandemic on the interactions of the family system in the Algerian society. The descriptive approach has been used to reveal the aspects of the problem procedurally, which determine the inevitable repercussions of increasing social distances between individuals on the nature and degree of communication, dialogue, and acceptance of the other's variance in terms of his/her points of view within the Algerian family. A questionnaire has been distributed on a sample of 240 Symptomatically (non-random sample), and we found that social distancing helped to activate the culture of dialogue and positive communication between individuals, allowing the collective approach to decision-making and solving family difficulties and problems, as well as accepting the presence of the other with his/her pros and cons, however, this has not eliminated the possibility of some disturbances in the behavior of individuals imposed by the necessity of staying together for long periods, which in turn has resulted in some domestic disputes; (Al-Amrawi, 2021).

● Study of (Di Damazi and others, 2020) seeks to identify the impacts of home quarantine on children and adolescents because of the outbreak of COVID-19. The study finds that prolonged school closures and home quarantine have negative impacts during the outbreak of the Virus and have negative impacts on the physical and mental health of children and adolescents, as they have become less physically active, had more time to spend in front of screens and use internet, had irregular sleep patterns and poor diets, which

have led to their weight gain, loss of physical, cardiovascular and respiratory fitness, frustration, boredom and sadness due to not being able to meet their friends and teachers, fear of infection, lack of personal space at home, and financial loss to the family; (Di Dalmazi and others, 2020).

● Study of (Kinza Domi, 2020) aims to shed light on the psychological impacts of home quarantine on children and families during the outbreak of COVID-19. It is a descriptive study targets a sample of adolescents and their families in Algeria has used a questionnaire form to collect study data, and it finds that the outbreak of COVID-19 has negatively affected the psychological and mental health of adolescents (sample), especially after the imposition of home quarantine and the resulted psychological and social repercussions, which are sleep disturbances, appetite, irritability, anger, frustration, boredom, fear, anxiety, tension, poor concentration and depression, in addition to staying up late, playing electronic games, using internet for a long time and low academic level; (Kinza Domi, 2020).

● Study of (Hartej, 2020) aims to reveal the psychological impacts of individuals and risk factors associated with the outbreak of COVID-19 and its global health risks on individuals and health care workers, and the associated mental or psychological health effects in several countries such as China, Spain, Italy, Iran and the United States America, Turkey, Nepal and Denmark. The findings of the study show high rates of anxiety, depression, psychological distress and stress symptoms among the population during the pandemic, and the findings also prove the existence of statistically significant differences in risk factors between males and females in favor of females, the age variable in favor of the age group younger than 40 years, extent of the existence of chronic or psychological diseases, unemployment variable, heavy exposure to the media and the Internet, especially social media, and news related to COVID-19; (Hartej, 2020).

● Study of (Yameen Barquq & Kamal Borzeq, 2020) seeks to identify the repercussions of home quarantine on the mental health of children and adults and ways to avoid them. The study relies on the descriptive approach and has used a questionnaire form to collect its data from an Algerian society, and it found that the psychological impact of home quarantine may continue a long time after the end of the quarantine, the duration of the quarantine must be explained, the quarantined people must be informed of what happens, provide telecommunication means and purposeful activities to practice while they are in quarantine, providing them with psychological support, and reduce pressure on them through the media, which can

play a major role in mitigating those impacts on; (Barqouq & Burizq, 2020).

● Study of (M. Brown and others, 2020) seeks to identify the impacts of the outbreak of COVID-19 on the mistreatment of children by their parents and neglecting them because of the pressures that parents are exposed to and their impact on the family in general. The study has targeted 183 individuals, who have children under the age of 18 years, and the findings of the study show that the high pressure that parents are exposed to because of the outbreak of COVID-19, especially psychological, such as severe anxiety, high blood pressure and depression have been closely related to the possibility of mistreatment of children and tension in the relationship between parents and children, while a decrease in psychological pressure on parents is associated with a decrease in the mistreatment of the children; (M. Brown and others, 2020).

● Study of (Jefsen and others, 2020) seeks to discover the motives of some adolescents to adhere to social distancing during COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. The sample consisted form 683 adolescents who have been contacted through social media to fill up the questionnaire form had been prepared for this purpose. The study found that about 98% of the study sample have adhered to social distancing, and their most important motives is the feeling of social responsibility and an unwillingness to infect others with the Virus, in addition to parental directives, the imposition of social distancing by the state, and the fear of infection with the Virus; (Jefsen and others, 2020).

● Study of (Damazi and others, 2020) seeks to identify the impacts of closure because of COVID-19 on the psychological aspects of children, adolescents and adults with some diseases, such as diabetes: 30 children aged 12 years, 24 women and 76 men over 18 years. The study finds that the closure because of COVID-19 has negatively impacted the psychology of children and adolescents with diabetes to a greater degree than adults, and the decrease in physical activity and the length of staying up at night are factors with a significant negative impact on the health status of children and adolescents, as the rate of diabetes has increased; (Damazi and others, 2020).

**Comments on Previous Studies:**

The goals of the previous studies, which are related to COVID-19 pandemic are multiple, starting with determining the impacts of the Pandemic and social distancing on the psychological health of children and adolescents and their families. Some studies focus on patients and those with chronic diseases and suicide rates, which include children and adults, especially elderly people and patients at

risk. Other studies also include those who have dealt with their children neglectfully and cruelly as a result of being affected by the Pandemic and its impact on the life of the family as a whole.

The previous research and studies also include negative and positive psychological impacts because of the use of the internet and modern technologies by children and adolescents for long periods, where these studies focus on certain aspects such as depression, anxiety, stress, psychological adaptation, self-concept, loneliness, life satisfaction, sleep disturbances, food, body shape and self-esteem.

The previous studies, especially the abroad ones, mostly rely on empirical methods, using standards, tests and suggested procedures, and creating and testing theoretical frameworks to ensure that they measure research variables and achieve their goals.

**Study Community and Sample:**

The community of the Study consists of a random and varied sample of adolescents in the preparatory and secondary school levels of two governmental schools in the Emirate of Sharjah for the ages from 12 to 17 years old of both genders, of 600 individuals.

**Study Variables:**

1.1. **Dependent Variables:** The resulted impacts of social distancing on adolescents' health, psychological and social aspects of their personality, their relationship with their parents, and the extent of their use of the internet;

1.2. **Independent Variables:** Social distancing during COVID-19 pandemic; and

1.3. **Intermediate Variables:** Gender, age, health status, economic status and relationship with parents.

**Study Limits:**

Aspects of the personality of adolescents and the extent of their use of the internet and technology and their effects on them.

**Thematic Limits:** Include psychological impacts of social distancing during COVID-19 pandemic on the students;

**Time Limits:** The field study, questionnaire and measurements are applied on the sample of adolescent children in the third semester of the academic year 2021-2022;

**Human Limits:** Adolescent children, males and females, in the preparatory and secondary school levels; and

**Place Limits:** Governmental schools of the Emirate of Sharjah, age group from 12 to 17 years.

- Initial preparation of the questionnaire form and initially testing it on a pilot sample of 30 individuals; 5% of the total number of the Study sample; and
- Questionnaire validity and reliability.

**Examining the validity of the questionnaire form:**

*Questionnaire validity:*

Ensuring the validity of the questionnaire for the application and the achievement of its goals in collecting the required data and measuring what it claims to measure. The Researcher follows several methods to do so, including:

● Logical validity (Content validity): The Researcher relies on choosing the phrases which she has read in Arabic and foreign books and references, and previous studies and research related to the subject of the study, and some of these phrases are derived from these sources. Reliance on these sources indicates that the questionnaire has an acceptable degree of logical validity and that it is valid for application.

● Internal consistency validity: Correlation coefficients are calculated between the degree of each aspect of the questionnaire and its total degree to find out the extent to which each dimension is related to the total degree of the questionnaire.

*Questionnaire constancy:*

The constancy coefficient of the questionnaire is calculated on a sample of 30 individuals, 5% or the total number of the study sample, based on two methods: reapplying, halving "Legitiman" and Spearman's and Brown's Correlation Coefficient.

**Analysis of the Findings:**

**The study revolves around two main aspects:**

● **The impact of social distancing on the personality of adolescents; and**

● **The psychosocial impact aspect.**

**Table (1) shows the impact of social distancing on the personality of adolescents (Health social impacts)**

| Item | | | Gender | | Age | | Health Status | | Relationship with Parents | | Subtotal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Male | Female | 12:14 | 15:17 | Free | Patient | Strong | Week | |
| 1- Laziness, lethargy, lacof activity and movement, and lack of exercise at home | Yes | A | 184 | 197 | 222 | 159 | 183 | 198 | 140 | 241 | 381 |
| | | % | 69.43 | 58.81 | 67.27 | 58.89 | 53.82 | 76.15 | 43.75 | 86.07 | 63.50 |
| | Sometimes | A | 81 | 138 | 108 | 111 | 157 | 62 | 180 | 39 | 219 |
| | | % | 30.57 | 41.19 | 32.73 | 41.11 | 46.18 | 23.85 | 56.25 | 13.93 | 36.50 |
| | No | A | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | % | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 2- Sleeping disorders and restlessness after waking up | Yes | A | 123 | 117 | 174 | 66 | 108 | 132 | 76 | 164 | 240 |
| | | % | 46.42 | 34.93 | 52.73 | 24.44 | 31.76 | 50.77 | 23.75 | 58.75 | 40.00 |
| | Sometimes | A | 142 | 206 | 156 | 192 | 220 | 128 | 232 | 116 | 348 |
| | | % | 53.58 | 61.49 | 47.27 | 71.11 | 64.71 | 49.23 | 72.50 | 41.43 | 58.00 |
| | No | A | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| | | % | 0.00 | 3.58 | 0.00 | 4.44 | 3.53 | 0.00 | 3.75 | 0.00 | 2.00 |
| 3- Pains in eyes, back and body, and headache | Yes | A | 54 | 39 | 63 | 30 | 50 | 43 | 16 | 77 | 93 |
| | | % | 20.38 | 11.64 | 19.09 | 11.11 | 14.71 | 16.54 | 5.00 | 27.50 | 15.50 |
| | Sometimes | A | 205 | 278 | 255 | 228 | 266 | 217 | 280 | 203 | 438 |
| | | % | 77.36 | 82.99 | 77.27 | 84.44 | 78.24 | 83.64 | 87.50 | 72.50 | 80.50 |
| | No | A | 6 | 18 | 12 | 12 | 24 | 0 | 24 | 0 | 24 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| because of using internet for prolonged periods at home | | % | 2.26 | 5.37 | 3.64 | 4.44 | 7.06 | 0.00 | 7.50 | 0.00 | 4.00 |
| 4- Loss of fitness and feeling tired and exhausted from the simplest tasks | Yes | A | 169 | 206 | 219 | 159 | 180 | 198 | 142 | 236 | 378 |
| | | % | 63.77 | 62.39 | 66.36 | 58.89 | 52.94 | 76.15 | 44.38 | 84.29 | 63.00 |
| | Sometimes | A | 90 | 126 | 105 | 111 | 154 | 62 | 172 | 44 | 216 |
| | | % | 33.96 | 37.61 | 31.82 | 41.11 | 45.29 | 23.85 | 53.75 | 15.71 | 36.00 |
| | No | A | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| | | % | 2.26 | 0.00 | 1.82 | 0.00 | 1.76 | 0.00 | 1.88 | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| 5- Appetite disturbances and changes in body shape, increasing or decreasing | Yes | A | 84 | 150 | 138 | 96 | 136 | 89 | 72 | 162 | 234 |
| | | % | 31.70 | 44.78 | 41.82 | 35.56 | 40.00 | 37.69 | 22.50 | 57.86 | 39.00 |
| | Sometimes | A | 157 | 167 | 172 | 152 | 167 | 148 | 208 | 116 | 324 |
| | | % | 59.25 | 49.85 | 52.12 | 56.30 | 51.76 | 56.92 | 65.00 | 41.43 | 54.00 |
| | No | A | 24 | 18 | 20 | 22 | 28 | 14 | 40 | 2 | 42 |
| | | % | 9.06 | 5.37 | 6.06 | 8.15 | 8.24 | 5.38 | 12.50 | 0.71 | 7.00 |
| Total of Study Sample | | A | 265 | 335 | 330 | 270 | 340 | 206 | 320 | 280 | 600 |
| | | % | 44.17 | 55.83 | 55.00 | 45.00 | 56.67 | 43.33 | 35.33 | 46.67 | 100.00 |

**The table shows the extent to which the health of adolescents is impacted by social distancing in the following aspects:**

- Laziness, lethargy, lack of activity and movement, and lack of exercise at home, by 63.5%;
- Sleeping disorders and restlessness after waking up, by 40%;
- Pains in eyes, back and body, and headache because of using the internet all night, by 15.5%;
- Loss of fitness and feeling tired and exhaustion from the simplest tasks, by 63%; and
- Appetite disturbances and changes in body shape, increasing or decreasing, by 39%.

This confirms the consistency of the Study with previous studies in that social distancing and the decision of closing schools had negative impacts on the health side of adolescent children, as they became less active in sports in addition to the availability of food in front of them throughout the day, which called for irregular meals, in addition to the irregular sleep because of staying up in front of computer and TV screens and using the internet for long times, as well as the lack of attention and care for personal hygiene because of not going out and meeting other people.

**Table (2) shows the impact of social distancing on the personality of adolescents (The psychosocial impact aspect)**

| Item | | | Gender | | Age | | Health Status | | Relationship with Parents | | Subtotal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Male | Female | 12:14 | 15:17 | Free | Patient | Strong | Week | |
| 6- Feeling of anxiety, stress, depression and fear of infection with the Virus | Yes | A | 208 | 236 | 246 | 198 | 231 | 213 | 185 | 295 | 444 |
| | | % | 78.49 | 70.45 | 74.55 | 73.33 | 67.94 | 81.92 | 57.81 | 105.36 | 74.00 |
| | Sometimes | A | 51 | 99 | 78 | 72 | 103 | 47 | 129 | 21 | 150 |
| | | % | 19.25 | 29.55 | 32.64 | 26.67 | 30.29 | 18.08 | 40.31 | 7.50 | 25.00 |
| | No | A | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| | | % | 2.26 | 0.00 | 1.82 | 0.00 | 1.76 | 0.00 | 1.88 | 0.00 | 1.00 |
| 7- Feeling of loneliness and isolation at home, frustration, and deprived from friends and school | Yes | A | 148 | 209 | 197 | 160 | 191 | 166 | 90 | 267 | 357 |
| | | % | 55.85 | 62.39 | 59.70 | 59.26 | 56.18 | 63.85 | 28.13 | 95.36 | 59.50 |
| | Sometimes | A | 99 | 96 | 97 | 98 | 110 | 85 | 182 | 13 | 195 |
| | | % | 37.36 | 28.66 | 29.39 | 36.3 | 23.35 | 32.96 | 56.88 | 4.64 | 32.5 |
| | No | A | 18 | 30 | 36 | 12 | 39 | 9 | 48 | 0 | 48 |
| | | % | 6.79 | 8.96 | 10.91 | 4.44 | 11.47 | 3.46 | 15.00 | 0.00 | 8.00 |
| 8- Quick anger, irritability, psychological | Yes | A | 144 | 102 | 122 | 94 | 132 | 84 | 40 | 176 | 216 |
| | | % | 43.02 | 30.45 | 36.97 | 34.81 | 38.82 | 32.31 | 12.50 | 62.86 | 36.00 |
| | Sometimes | A | 133 | 155 | 152 | 136 | 171 | 117 | 186 | 102 | 288 |
| | | % | 50.19 | 46.27 | 46.60 | 50.37 | 50.29 | 45.00 | 58.13 | 36.43 | 48.00 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| distress and lack of personal space | No | A | 18 | 78 | 56 | 40 | 37 | 59 | 94 | 2 | 96 |
| | | % | 6.79 | 23.28 | 16.97 | 14.81 | 10.88 | 22.69 | 29.38 | 0.71 | 16.00 |
| 9- Use of the internet and its applications excessively | Yes | A | 235 | 215 | 262 | 188 | 244 | 206 | 180 | 270 | 450 |
| | | % | 88.68 | 46.18 | 79.39 | 69.63 | 71.76 | 79.23 | 56.25 | 96.43 | 75.00 |
| | Sometimes | A | 30 | 114 | 62 | 82 | 96 | 48 | 134 | 10 | 144 |
| | | % | 11.32 | 34.03 | 18.79 | 30.37 | 28.24 | 18.46 | 41.88 | 3.57 | 24.00 |
| | No | A | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| | | % | 0 | 1.79 | 1.82 | 0 | 0 | 2.31 | 1.88 | 0 | 1 |
| 10- Sadness and a feeling of psychological incoherence | Yes | A | 139 | 227 | 202 | 164 | 160 | 206 | 116 | 250 | 336 |
| | | % | 52.45 | 67.76 | 61.21 | 60.74 | 47.06 | 79.26 | 36.25 | 89.26 | 61 |
| | Sometimes | A | 120 | 102 | 116 | 106 | 168 | 54 | 192 | 30 | 222 |
| | | % | 45.28 | 30.45 | 35.15 | 39.26 | 49.41 | 20.77 | 60.00 | 10.71 | 37.00 |
| | No | A | 6 | 6 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| | | % | 2.26 | 1.79 | 3.64 | 0.00 | 3.53 | 0.00 | 3.75 | 0.00 | 2.00 |
| Total of Study Sample | | A | 265 | 335 | 330 | 370 | 340 | 260 | 320 | 280 | 600 |
| | | % | 44.17 | 55.83 | 55.00 | 45.00 | 56.67 | 34.33 | 53.33 | 46.67 | 100 |

**The table shows the extent to which the psychological of adolescents is impacted by social distancing in the following aspects:**

- Feelings of anxiety, stress, depression and fear of infection with the Virus, by 74%;
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation at home, frustration, and deprivation from friends and school, by 59.5%;
- Quick anger, irritability, psychological distress and lack of personal space, by 36%;
- Use of the internet and its applications excessively, by 75%; and
- Sadness and lack of psychological cohesion; by 61%.

The findings of the questionnaire show that adolescent children have been impacted by social distancing psychologically, and these findings confirm the findings of previous studies, as social distancing and staying at home make adolescent children feel bored and monotonous, which have resulted in many psychological problems such as anger, irritability, depression, frustration, tension, psychological distress and many other problems, and this resulted in the integration with the virtual world in which they have found themselves. Despite the effective role that technology play in various fields and in the field of education in particular, its negative impacts are severe, and these impacts must be addressed quickly. The concept of the internet and virtual world have made a significant change in the personality of many of its users, whose numbers have doubled after the outbreak of the pandemic, and the first disadvantage of the internet is staying in in front of computer and phone screens for hours without feeling that, which in turn leads to introversion and isolation from others.

2. **Discussion of the Findings:**

**Summary of the most important findings of the Study:**

2.1. **Summary of the most important questions of the Study:**

The Study aims to identify the impact of social distancing on children and adolescents, and the impact of their use of the Internet and technology for long periods during COVID-19 pandemic, and it concludes the following important finding:

- The level of commitment of adolescents, the Study sample, to social distancing during COVID-19 pandemic is high (67.70%), medium (20.20%) and low (12.20%);
- The responses to the reasons of adolescents' commitment to social distancing come as: (1) To protect myself and others from the infection with the Virus; (2) The state has imposed social distancing on citizens; (3) When I have realized that the Virus is fatal; (4) Because social distancing is one of the effective ways to

limit the outbreak of the Virus; and (5) Because I feel myself responsible towards my community;

● The health impacts of social distancing during COVID-19 pandemic on the personality of adolescents as follows: Laziness, lethargy, lack of activity and movement, lack of practicing exercises at home, loss of fitness, feeling tired and stress from the simplest tasks, sleeping disorders, feeling restless after waking up, disorders of appetite, changes in body shape, increase or decrease, and pain in eyes, back and body because of the excessive use of the internet while being at home;

● The psychological impact of social distancing during COVID-19 pandemic on the personality of adolescents as follows: (1) Extensive use of the internet and its applications; (2) Feeling of anxiety, stress, depression and fear of infection with the Virus; (3) Sadness and feeling of lack of psychological cohesion; (4) Feeling lonely and isolated at home, frustrated and deprived from friends and school; (5) Quick anger, irritability and psychological distress; and (6) Lack of personal space at home.

● The excessive use of the internet by adolescents during social distancing are high (52.50%), medium (29.50%), and low (18%) of the Study Sample.

● The most important reasons of the excessive use of the internet and its applications during social distancing include: (1) I interact with my friends and play with them during home quarantine; (2) It fills my time and reduces my feeling of depression and boredom; (3) My mind is distracted from thinking about COVID-19 and fear of infection; and (4) It makes me happy and relieves my stress.

● The most important psychological effects resulted from the excessive use of the internet be adolescents during social distancing because of COVID-19 pandemic on the aspects of their personality, respectively: (1) Body image aspect; (2) Satisfaction with life aspect; (3) Anxiety and stress aspect; (4) sleeping disorders aspect; (5) Self-esteem and respect aspect; (6) Self-concept aspect; (7) Self-confidence aspect; and (8) Self-efficacy aspect.

2.2. **What distinguishes this Study from previous studies:**
● This Study seeks to identify the impacts resulted by social distancing and the extent of its impact on children and adolescents in order to develop the best solutions and make recommendations that address these impacts on this age group, which lacks experience in dealing with such situations because of its important role in the future of any society.

● The recommendations include all individuals and entities that deal with children and adolescents starting with parents, families,

governments, media houses, health officials, and educators, which may help them understand the personality of the children and adolescents, and then determine the appropriate addressing plan for them.

**Conclusion:**

Recently, researchers have been interested only in biological and chemical aspects of       COVID-19 epidemic, but they have forgotten a very important thing, which is the psychological and societal aspects of children, as children's lifestyle has suddenly changed from living in absolute freedom to being away from everything they have seen, enjoyed or pleased in dealing with, such as schools, parks, clubs, and people they have used to see, such as friends, relatives and teachers to become isolated from this world, in addition to the resulted frustration, tension and panic by the related news to the Virus from their families' conversations or through media. This matter happens frequently on a daily basis; we can imagine what they acquire from new information every day, which are the numbers of new infections and the numbers of deaths, and the future has become for them a nightmare that they do not want to think about because they or their beloved ones may be among the numbers of infection cases or deaths.

Many children and adolescents have taken the virtual world on the internet as a way to escape from this painful reality by looking for happiness and hope, which has made them acquire bad habits that harm their health and psyche because of their lack of experience in dealing with this virtual world, which has resulted high rates of victims of various cybercrimes such as extortion, fraud, etc.

According to the above, the Researcher believes that caring for children's mental health is not less important than providing food and drink and maintaining their health, and that the period that children and adolescents have spent in social distancing has affected their psyche and behavior, families should realize the extent of these effects and try to address them

3. **Recommendations and Suggestions:**
● To create databases that link all stakeholders involved in dealing with children in order to develop clear strategies with clear and specific features to reach the best results of the addressing plans;
● To work on disseminate the importance of mental health and its importance to the lives of individuals, especially children and adolescents;
● To work on conducting training courses and workshops in order to provide families with the culture and skill of educating their children and address their psychological problems;

- To disseminate the concept and culture of psychological self-awareness among members of society and trying to include it in school and university curricula;
- To work on increasing the number of mental health clinics in all hospitals and aware the society about their roles;
- To collaborate between social workers and parents in order to deal with family problems resulted during the period of social distancing;
- Schools and universities shall encourage students to provide activities with schedules to motivate students to observe health and personal hygiene obligations, encourage physical activities at home, and follow proper nutrition and sleep habits;
- To pay attention to researches and studies that seek to address the psychological consequences of social distancing, take them into consideration, and provide a helping hand to researchers;
- To activate media to mitigate the negative psychological and social effects on children and society as a result of COVID-19 pandemic through talk shows that provide psychological and social support to mitigate the negative effects of social distancing on aspects of their personality;
- To activate the means of media and education for all available methods with the aim of raising the awareness of children and adolescents about the advantages and disadvantages of the internet and rehabilitate them to use it correctly;
- To hold seminars and competitions by the Ministry of Health to hold in order to raise awareness of the importance of sport activities to maintain and follow healthy diets and other systems that aim to maintain health such as organized sleeping, maintaining personal hygiene, etc.;
- To ensure the cohesion of the family and avoid stress and anxiety, as coherent relationships between family members help to grow up psychologically normal children;
- A child shall see a consensus between the opinions of his/her parents, which makes his/her personality balanced and is not subject to distraction; and
- Families shall seek to discover the talents that their children have and try to develop them by providing them with the means which help them to develop their talents.

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**أثر التباعد الاجتماعي على الأطفال والمراهقين واستخدامهم للإنترنت والتكنولوجيا لفترات طويلة خلال جائحة كورونا (كوفيد ١٩)**

**الملخص:**

تسعى هذه الدراسة لتدارُك أثر التباعد الاجتماعي للأطفال بوصفه أحد أهم أشكال المشكلات التي تواجه النموّ السويّ السليم للأطفال، والتي تؤثر بشكلٍ لا يُستهان به في سلوكهم وتعاملهم مع العالم الخارجيّ وبالرغم من تفاوت نِسَب الأطفال الذين يواجهون التباعد الاجتماعيّ حول العالم إلا أنّ آثار تلك الظاهرة طالت معظم الأطفال حول العالم.

وقد تمثّلت مشكلة هذا البحث في ضرورة تسليط الضوء على التبعات السلبية التي أثرت في الجوانب المختلفة لشخصية الأطفال والمراهقين الصحية والنفسية والاجتماعية، والتي نتجت عن فرض جميع دول العالم التباعد الاجتماعيّ أو "الحجر المنزليّ" لمحاولة التقليل من انتشار الفيروس الذي كانت له تأثيراتٌ سيئةٌ على الأطفال والمراهقين بصفةٍ خاصة. وتكمُن أهمية الدراسة في أنّ هذا الحدث يُعَدُّ الأول من نوعه في عصرنا الحاليّ، فلم نواجه من قبل أنْ يُفرَض على المجتمعات التباعد الاجتماعيّ والحجر المنزليّ بسبب جائحة كورونا (كوفيد ١٩) و استمرارها لمدّة طويلة وأهمية المرحلة العمرية التي تتناولها الدراسة الحالية، مرحلة الطفولة ومرحلة المراهقة، الهامة جدًا في حياة الفرد، إذ تتبلور فيها شخصيته وتؤثر في باقي مراحل حياته.

أظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة أنّه على الرغم من الانخفاض الملحوظ في عدد الإصابات بفيروس كورونا (كوفيد ١٩) وعودة الحياة بشكلٍ كبير لصورتها الطبيعية، إلا أنّ مدّة التباعد الاجتماعيّ التي قضاها العالم أجمع قد تركت آثارًا سلبيةً قد يتجاوزها البالغون بينما يتعرقل بها الأطفال والمراهقون نظرًا لعدم وجود الخبرة الكافية لديهم، وبناءً عليه اختلفت أنواع وأشكال تلك الآثار من طفلٍ لآخر، ولكن أجمعَ العلماء والباحثون والأطباء كافة على أنّ هناك خللًا قد حدث في شخصية الأطفال.

ونوّهت المقترحات والتوصيات بضرورة تكاتُف الأفراد والجهات المعنية كافة بالتعامل مع الأطفال والمراهقين كالأسرة والمدارس والجامعات والمؤسسات الإعلامية ووزارة الصحة والمجتمع كافة من أجل تطبيق خطط علاجية ونشر التوعية اللازمة لضمان محو الآثار السلبية التي لحقت بالأطفال والمراهقين أثناء مدّة التباعد الاجتماعيّ.

**الكلمات الدالة:** التباعد اجتماعيّ، مرحلة الطفولة، مرحلة المراهقة، كوفيد ١٩