

Adolescent well-being during the pandemic, through the lens of a conceptual framework



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Introduction

Countries in Europe and beyond had significant closures of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic¹. Remote learning was implemented where possible, but schools are not just places of learning. Impact on adolescent well-being was profound. During the pandemic, in 2020, a new conceptual framework of wellbeing was published by the UN H6+ working group².

The aim of this abstract, within a wider study of safe school re-opening, is to explore the framework's utility for exploring adolescent well-being during this period.

Regarding young people with chronic disorders, we had a critical period last year during the lockdown because they had no good access to health care. And we have noticed an increase in eating disorders, obesity, an increase in addiction to video games, for some of them substance use... a subset of young people with chronic disorders for those reason, have probably been less compliant with their treatment. But it's difficult to come up with figures. (Health professional, Switzerland, EN18)

At least from my perspective, it [remote learning] works at times...And then I have the impression that when we settle down in time, there is weariness, a kind of anger on the part of the students too...I think by the third week, they've had enough, and you can feel them getting tired. And when they came back to school in person, at the beginning of the year, we felt that they were happy to come back to see their friends, to live a teenager's life in class. (Health professional, France, FR10)

In the first confinement, we had already listed which students needed educational support. And we saw which kids were lagging, who had more difficulties, and we gave them more hours of support than the others. And it worked. We had 100% success at the end of the school year... We have also had a practice, for a few years now, of providing 1st year co-adjutant teaching. So, the 1st year classes always have the head teacher and a supporting teacher who is there for 8 to 10 hours with the teacher. This has also made a difference. (Teacher, Portugal, PT40)

Data relating to Domains 1 (mental and physical health, 2 (connectedness) and 4 (learning, education, employability)

References:

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2. Ross DA, Hinton R, Melles-Brewer M, Engel D, Zeck W, Fagan L, Herat J, Phaladi G, Imbago-Jácome D, Anyona P, Sanchez A. Adolescent well-being: a definition and conceptual framework. *Journal of Adolescent Health.* 2020 Oct 1;67(4):472-6.

Methods

- Semi-structured online qualitative interviews were conducted with health and education professionals who had volunteered at the end of an online survey exploring their experience of the re-opening of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The discussion guide included the following topics: (i) effect of the pandemic on schools, pupils and teachers; (ii) reorganisation of schools (iii) experience of implementing infection control measures in schools; (iv) intersectoral working; (v) important resources for keeping schools open.
- Directed content analysis of the resulting dataset was used to seek out information from health and education professionals regarding the 5 well-being domains below².



Figure 1 – Domains of the UN H6+ Framework for Adolescent Well-being²

Results

- Sixty-two interviews were included in the analysis (22 health and 40 education professionals from 28 countries).
- Participant perspectives were found related to all five well-being domains, but mainly Domain 1 (good health and nutrition), Domain 3 (safety and a supportive environment) and Domain 4 (learning, competence, education, skills and employability).
- Reflections of 2-connectedness and 5-agency were present, if not plentiful

Conclusion and Policy Implications

- It was possible to map data from these global interviews to each domain of the UN H6+ Framework.
- There were multiple impacts on adolescent well-being reflected in this analysis.
- For the future, national and local Ministries and Authorities must act to prevent school closures wherever possible, to avoid long-term impact for our youth.



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