



## Children and the Risk Society in Algeria: The COVID-19 Pandemic as a Model

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Received: Jun 10, 2024

Reviewed: Sep 18, 2024

Accepted: Sep 19, 2024

### Abstract

This study aims to describe and analyze the trajectory of children in a society exposed to risks, using the COVID-19 pandemic as an example. Due to concerns over virus transmission, the Algerian government, like many others worldwide, has enforced quarantine and home confinement policies. The aim was to prevent the spread of the virus and reduce the number of victims. As a preventive measure, schools were closed from March 12, 2020. The government also imposed partial or total containment measures depending on the severity of the situation in each region. This situation forced people, including children, to stay at home, even though it was not always safe for them. The lockdown has caused significant changes to children's daily routines. Their education, activities, free time and social relationships have been profoundly affected. These upheavals have had repercussions on their psychological, mental and social well-being.

**Keywords:** Risk society, COVID-19 pandemic, home quarantine, child, family, Algerian society

### Recommended citation:

Naima, Z. (2024). Children and the Risk Society in Algeria: The COVID-19 Pandemic as a Model. *International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 10 (2), 482-502, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21600/ijoks.1531214>

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## **Introduction**

Childhood represents a crucial phase in individual development, profoundly influencing personality, identity, social behavior, thinking, and lifestyle. However, in a rapidly changing world, ensuring a secure childhood remains a challenge. It guarantees the child's essential needs such as nutrition, health care, housing, nurturing, safety, mobility, and education. Yet, living in a secure society is not always guaranteed, especially in high-risk contexts like during the COVID-19 pandemic, deemed an uncontrollable epidemic. While the exact origin of this epidemic, whether natural or due to human intervention, remains debated, the situation has recalled Ulrich Beck's risk concepts and the outcomes of industrial society.

Beck had anticipated the possibility of quarantining entire countries (Beck, 2009), as occurred in 2020 when the pandemic erupted after its emergence in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. On March 20, 2020, the World Health Organization officially declared a global pandemic, prompting numerous governments, including Algeria's, to implement strict precautionary measures. These measures included travel restrictions, closure of schools, universities, sports facilities, and clubs, as well as the enforcement of physical distancing and partial or total quarantines. This situation disrupted the daily routines of children, especially in urban areas and cities.

## **Research Problem**

The COVID-19 pandemic, along with travel restrictions and confinement measures, deeply impacted societies and their infrastructures. These disruptions manifested through economic, social, and even cultural crises, exacerbating interpersonal tensions, particularly within families. Family members faced psychological, social, and sometimes material pressures.

Children, particularly vulnerable due to their delicate nature, were deprived of their usual nurturing environments. Besides the infection risk, it's crucial to highlight the dangerous consequences of quarantine on their mental, psychological, physical health, education, well-being, and social ties. This period also heightened cases of child maltreatment, whether direct, intentional, or unintentional, within households that are supposed to be havens of safety and support.

International organizations and child rights advocates have raised alarms about this concerning reality, especially with reduced contact with usual protection and support systems.

In this context, we pose the following question: What are the risks faced by children following home quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic within Algerian society?

This study aims to analyze the impacts of home quarantine on children, confronting significant changes in their lives and daily routines. It sheds light on the interactions that occurred during this period and the realities experienced by these children, examining the psychological, health, social, and educational effects that ensued.

Regarding the adopted methodology, we favored a descriptive analytical approach, deemed most appropriate for studying contemporary phenomena. This approach involves describing the reality of children during home quarantine and analyzing it based on data obtained from observations, interviews, and both national and international reports.

One of the fundamental theories underpinning this work is symbolic interactionism. This theory examines the nature of individuals' actions in their daily lives, focusing on the interaction processes between the actor and their social and natural environment. It posits that the environment's reality is constructed through the individual's subjective interpretation. Pioneers of this theory, such as George Herbert Mead, view the actor and their relationship to the world as dynamic rather than static. They emphasize that each individual is capable of interpreting their environment and making sense of their social and natural world (Osman, 2008).

During the lockdown, children staying with family members or other residents of the same household experienced friction and interactions within these groups. Children engaged with their immediate environment, thereby shaping their experience during this period.

### **I- Definition of procedural study concepts:**

1. **Society at risk:** This concept refers to a society facing various threats, incidents, events, or a likelihood of dangers. These elements fuel a sense of social insecurity, often resulting from factors beyond human control or developments produced by human activity, as described by Ulrich Beck in his theory of modernity (Beck, 2009).

2. **Pandemic:** A pandemic is characterized by the widespread or global spread of an infectious disease that is difficult to contain. It causes significant disruptions across multiple spheres: public health, economy, social relations, cultural aspects, education, and even political and individual psychology and social structure.
3. **Coronavirus:** Coronaviruses, members of the Coronaviridae family, are large, single-stranded RNA viruses. They have a lipid envelope studded with club-shaped spike proteins. They infect various animals, including humans, and are responsible for diseases such as MERS, SARS, and COVID-19. These viruses can cause various illnesses in animals, while in humans, they are responsible for a third of common colds and occasionally severe respiratory infections (Merriam-Webster, 2021).
4. **COVID-19 Pandemic:** The COVID-19 pandemic corresponds to the global spread of a highly contagious disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, a coronavirus. This disease, named COVID-19 (Mayo Clinic, 2021), is characterized by respiratory symptoms that can range from mild to severe forms (Al-Malkawi, 2020). The first cases were detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.
5. **Home quarantine:** This measure, defined by Rothstein, involves restricting the movement of asymptomatic individuals potentially exposed to an infectious disease (Rothstein, 2015) during its transmission period. It aims to prevent disease spread by preventing these individuals from leaving their homes.

**Child:** A child is a growing human being who is entirely dependent on parents or adults for care, nutrition, safety, and socialization needs. This stage of human life, called childhood, is a crucial period during which the individual learns and prepares for physical, mental, psychological, social, moral, and spiritual maturity (Mu'awad, 2012).

According to Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined as every human being under the age of eighteen years, unless under the law applicable to the child (UNICEF, 1957), majority is attained earlier. The age of majority varies according to local laws and customs in each country.

**Family:** The family constitutes the primary framework for the individual, providing the foundations for nurturing, healthy development, security, and affection. It also plays a crucial role

as a mediator between the individual and the community, integrating the child's experiences and knowledge into society as a whole, including human relationships, objects, and situations. The home remains an essential refuge to which the child turns eagerly (Amir, 2003).

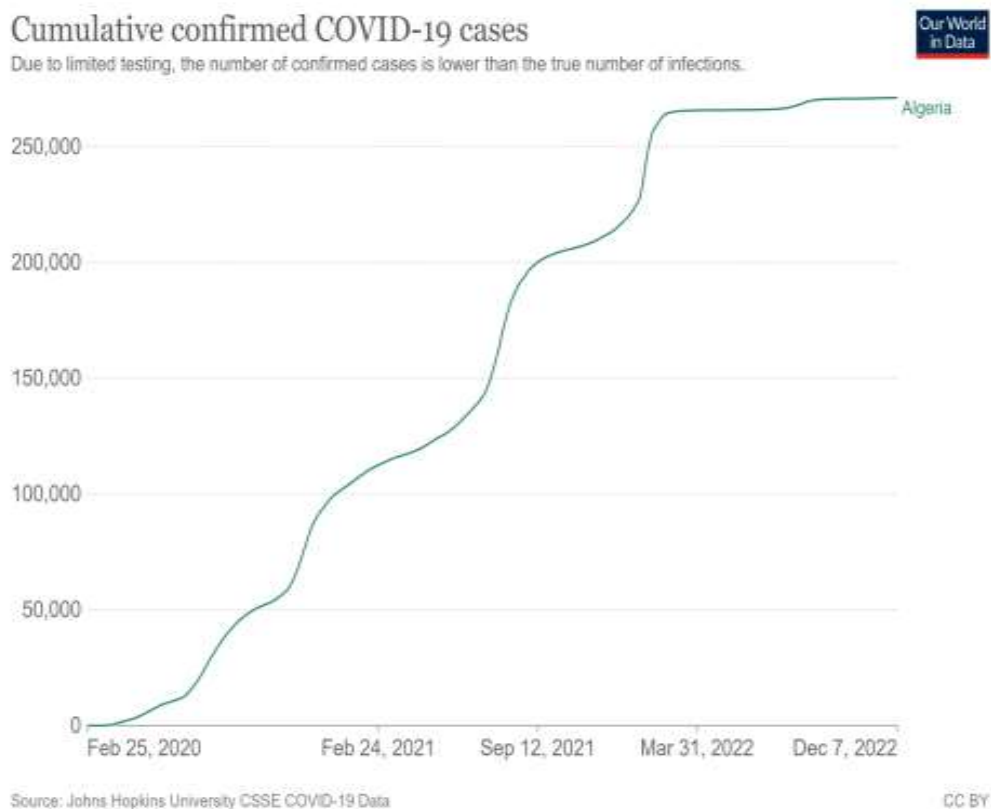
In Algerian society, the family is primarily divided into two types: • Nuclear family: composed of the father, mother, and children. • Extended family: in addition to the nuclear family (father, mother, children), it includes grandparents, uncles, and aunts.

The second aspect: The adverse impacts of home quarantine on children: While home confinement is crucial for ensuring health safety and preventing infection spread among children, it poses a threat to their physical, mental, psychological health, and social interactions. The relaxation of confinement measures has exposed some children, especially those living in urban areas, to various risks and vulnerabilities. Among the conditions and dangers observed during this period are:

Children's exposure to the risk of viral infection: Our observations have revealed that some families disregarded preventive measures against COVID-19, as evidenced by several cases studied. For example, in an interview with a 43-year-old father: "During the lockdown, I often went out... I met acquaintances and visited my parents." Similarly, another 48-year-old father initially expressed skepticism about the severity of the virus: "I didn't believe there was a dangerous virus... I thought it was a media invention... I led a normal life and didn't follow any health procedures." A mother interviewed, with two children, noted that despite confirmed COVID-19 cases in her husband's workplace circle, he adopted negligent practices towards their children, welcoming them without precautions and without sterilizing clothes and purchases before bringing them home.

These examples illustrate a widespread trend in Algerian society where many individuals minimized or ignored the seriousness of contracting or transmitting COVID-19, including within their own families and towards their children. This attitude has contributed to the virus's spread within households, as evidenced by the continued increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases:

**Figure 01:** Represents the evolution of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Algeria.



Source : <sup>2</sup>Our World in Data

The increase in the number of infected individuals can be attributed to various factors. These include lack of awareness and ignorance among medical personnel, or their unfamiliarity with the severity and rapid spread of the virus. This has led to a lack of preventive measures and a disregard for precautionary actions, often despite home quarantine procedures being enforced solely under legal and coercive measures. Furthermore, based on my observations, some families did not strictly adhere to isolation protocols when a member was diagnosed with COVID-19. For instance, Mrs. L, aged 35, stated: "I fell ill with COVID, but I couldn't isolate myself from my children or keep them at a distance, because that's what God decided...". This behavior can be explained by the central role mothers play in caring for their children, which prevents strict adherence to isolation despite extensive media awareness. Such attitudes are a key reason for the rise in cases.

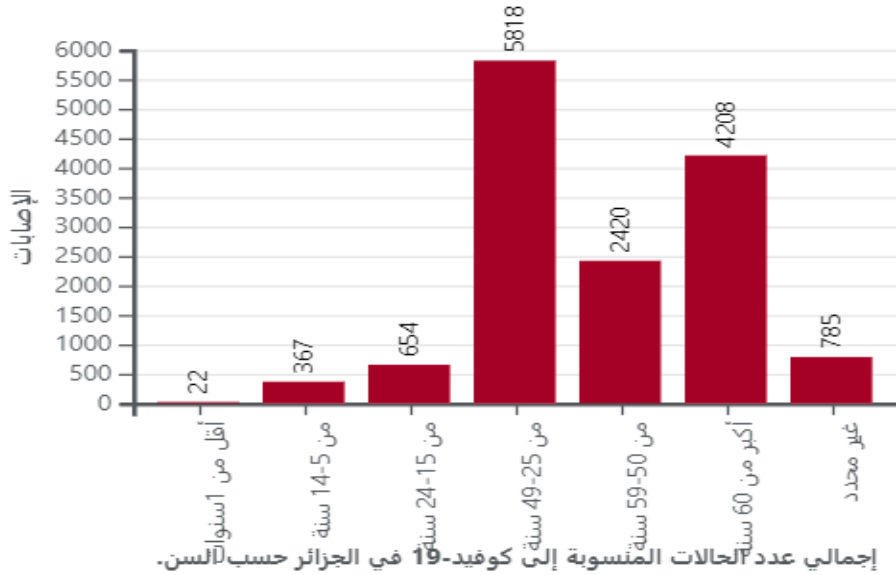
<sup>2</sup>Our World in Data. (n.d.). Coronavirus Data Explorer. Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <https://ourworldindata.org/explorers/coronavirus-data-explorer>

It is also evident that preventive measures are not supported by therapeutic approaches, partly because some families in our contemporary society exhibit health illiteracy or a culture of health unawareness, preferring curative medicine over prevention. Preventive health remains a vague concept for many in our society, influenced by cultural contexts such as belief in fate. For those who believe that everything is predestined, adherence to COVID-19 preventive measures is seen as futile, as they believe they will be infected or die according to God's will, with preventive measures making no difference.

In this regard, sociologist and linguist researcher Iman Kassie Musa believes that some people's lack of concern for preventive measures against the coronavirus stems from their strong belief that whatever happens to them is predetermined. This belief acts as a shield against feelings of guilt if they contract the infection or transmit it to others(Musa, 2020).

Additionally, economic and social contexts, such as income loss and poverty, divert individuals' attention from preventive measures to mere survival. This reality is often expressed during quarantine periods as "dying from pandemic or famine!". Despite awareness efforts and recent advances in preventive medicine, other factors contribute to procrastination and ignorance among some people regarding COVID-19 protective measures(Shahla, Shahla Hanania, & Harbali, 1955).

Fortunately, in Algeria, the percentage of infected children has been relatively low compared to adults, as shown in Figure 02: Number of COVID-19 cases in Algeria by age, 2020.

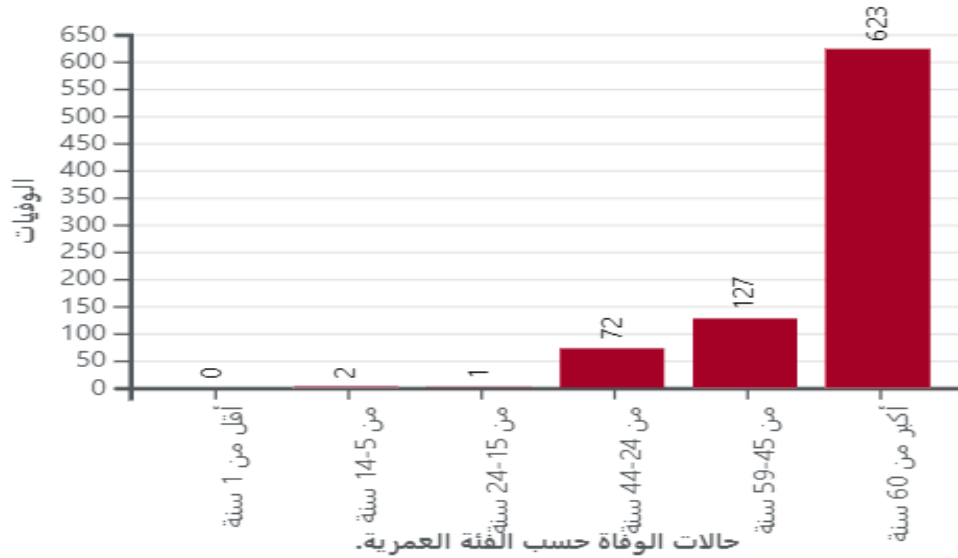


Source : Wikipedia 2020

According to recent study findings, children are less likely to show positive results on polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests aimed at detecting viral genetic material, even in the presence of viral infection (NASA, 2021). This finding suggests that children are less prone to developing severe complications leading to death (Mayo Clinic, 2021). Additionally, alongside measures such as home quarantine and travel restrictions, this age group stands out as having recorded the fewest deaths according to official statistical data.

Figure 03: Represents deaths by age in Algeria in 2020.





Source : Wikipedia 2020

Frequent observation of the absence of severe symptoms in infected children could explain the low detection of the disease among this population globally. Many children, although they may carry the virus, remain asymptomatic, showing no clinical signs beyond what is considered a potential carrier. However, this reality does not negate the risk of infection and complications in children, particularly if their immune system is compromised or if they have chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma, obesity, congenital heart defects, genetic disorders, or neurological disorders (Mayo Clinic, 2021). The first death of a child, which occurred in Algeria on April 6, 2020, involved a 9-year-old girl from the wilaya of Ouargla (Nessma TV), followed by other cases across the country.

Additionally, prolonged confinement indoors and reduced sunlight exposure can lead to vitamin D deficiency in children. This vitamin plays a crucial role in enhancing immunity against diseases and infections, as well as in preventing psychological disorders such as depression. Nutritionist Ellen Anderson Heinz notes that insufficient levels of vitamin D are frequently observed in individuals with clinical depression, and conversely, depression can lead to social isolation that reduces the synthesis of this vitamin (Nazi, 2022).

The intensive media coverage of the viral threat associated with COVID-19 has profoundly affected children's mental health, exposing them to significant risks. The term "Corona," now integrated into children's vocabulary, stems from widespread media coverage by national and

international media, as well as social media and online platforms. This media amplification, driven by both educational and sensationalist goals, has heightened public uncertainty about the virus's effects, despite sometimes contradictory study findings.

This intense propagation has sparked widespread panic, particularly noticeable among children aware of global and national epidemiological developments. They have been particularly sensitive to the escalating infections and deaths reported through television or the Internet, channels that often favor dramatic presentation to capture public attention.

Testimonies collected reveal the impactful media influence. A 31-year-old mother reports that her eight-year-old son exclaims "Corona" with every sneeze. Similarly, a 16-year-old teenager expresses fear over the situation in Italy, closely following infection and death statistics. A 17-year-old girl shares the terror she felt upon learning of the lockdown in her hometown of Blida, considered an endemic zone.

This media saturation regarding the pandemic's evolution has exacerbated concerns about children's future, amplifying their confusion and anxiety in this unprecedented situation.

The increase in "media role dimensions, communication, and dissemination, through satellites, live broadcasting, and the increase in the number of satellite stations in a way that has not been seen before, and the prevalence of the Internet and its connection to the world in information arteries that were previously unavailable, which have exposed the public of all countries to the impact of various means(Al-Rifa'i, 2011) " has made some families aware of the situation and improved communication with the child, adjusting the explanation according to their absorption level, thereby reducing psychological stress, but it has also increased confusion and anxiety for the child. Most cases examined showed that during the home quarantine period following local and global epidemic developments through the media in full view of the child, they commented on it or showed anxiety and fear in front of him.

The danger of receding into a confined space and its impact on the child: Imposing home quarantine and movement restrictions has led all family members to retreat into the house for a long period of time according to each state's quarantine procedures. This has caused overcrowding in the living space, especially for families in cramped accommodations.

Considering the child's biological nature, where they need more space to release their potential energy, the presence of more than two people in a narrow and closed space leads to interactions and potential conflicts over space ownership, depending on the needs and ages of each individual.

Given the dominance of the strong over the weak and the child's vulnerability within the household, some parents have reported using physical punishment to control the child's movements or demands. Official reports have also revealed cases of violence against children. Conversely, in some families, particularly with adolescents, the child intimidates the rest of the family and becomes a source of nuisance and anxiety.

Adolescents are also highly sensitive and seek the privacy they lost during the home quarantine period with all family members present in the house. For instance, a study conducted in Al-Aqsa State in Morocco linked the negative impact of intra-family relationships due to home quarantine and the number of rooms in the house, noting significant pressure on large families with few rooms, highlighting problematic housing policies that create cramped apartments with no play space for children and green areas, causing substantial harm to individuals, especially children and adolescents (A group of authors, 2020).

### **The Danger of Restricting a Child's Freedom and Movement**

Movement and non-excessive physical activity are of great importance for the child's development and psychological well-being. Play is a vital necessity for children and a sign of health. It develops the human body's organic, mental, and psychological functions (Bukhti, 2017). It is a way to rid the body of excess vitality. Just as a steam engine sometimes needs to release its increasing steam, an individual needs to release their surplus energy through play, and since this vitality is more fluid in the young, they enjoy playing more than adults (Shahla, Shahla Hanania, & Harbali, 1955).

Play can also be a way to revive this vitality if it diminishes (Ibid).

However, during the home quarantine period, some families have restricted the child's movement inside the house due to discomfort or the house's small size. At a time when the child could not find another outlet to expend their motor energy, this resulted in low physical activity,

complaints, boredom, anxiety, and psychological tension, or the child turning to the Internet and television for relief.

Regarding adolescents, the situation is more complex because they viewed the duration of staying at home as being in prison. "Defendant No. 25, 15 years old" ... "Although I was entertained by the smartphone, I still got bored. You feel like you're imprisoned... and you feel your body breaking down. You just want to get out of the house and run aimlessly...."

During the quarantine period, an adolescent is exposed to a lack of physical activity and movement, which affects their psychological state and increases their tension. According to clinical psychology specialist Kahar Sabrina, they invest in friends and peers and connect through social relationships in sports clubs or schools, or in residential areas. Therefore, home quarantine procedures restrict their freedom and lifestyle, cutting off their communication networks with others. It can be said that home quarantine has disrupted daily activities, social ties, and relationships, worsening adolescents' psychological and life problems and increasing family and household issues (Sabriina, 2020). This is especially true if there is no culture of communication and compatibility within the family.

**5. Disruption of Eating Habits and Bedtimes:** During the home quarantine period, the kitchen became the favorite destination for children, as reported by many respondents who noted the extended time children spent there. One respondent, researcher number 29, a mother of four children aged 6 to 17, stated, "They spent a lot of time in the kitchen... They eat and in no time you hear - Mom, I'm hungry..." The appetite of children and even adults increased during the home quarantine, leading to observations that children showed a lack of concern for other activities and felt bored, making eating a way to feel pleasure.

As disrupted meal times were linked to irregular sleep patterns, all statements indicated that sleep schedules became irregular during quarantine, particularly for schoolchildren. They woke up late, sometimes around lunchtime, and went to bed late, often past midnight, prompting them to eat another meal or resort to snacks and entertainment. Studies have shown that the later a person goes to bed, the hungrier they get. Insomnia, depression, psychological stress, and constant anxiety can also stimulate a person's appetite (Yasin, 2019), potentially leading to weight gain and affecting a child's mental and physical health. Irregular sleep schedules severely impact a

child's development and overall health. "The human growth hormone, secreted by the pituitary gland in the brain during deep sleep at night, is affected by many factors such as stress, good nutrition, physical activity, and sleep(Hasan, 2023)." Many children missed these activities during the home quarantine, especially those from poor families who could not provide the necessary meals due to economic crises and income loss from lockdown policies. This can hinder brain development and the formation of networks that facilitate thinking, learning, and behavior formation. Sleep, nutrition, and physical activity induce physical growth and promote mental health and skill acquisition(Suni, & Vyas, 2024).

### **5- Risk of Domestic Violence Against Children During Home Quarantine**

Violence in all its forms was considered one of the most significant dangers that children were exposed to during quarantine. Before discussing the abuse that children experienced, we must first define the meaning of violence. Omar Al-Tair describes it as "a pattern of behavior that results from a state of frustration, accompanied by signs of tension, and involves a deliberate intention to cause physical or moral harm to a living organism or a substitute for a living organism(Al-Tayir, 1997)." The aggressor may not always be in a state of frustration and tension but may rather derive pleasure and satisfaction from abusing others for psychological, cultural, social, and ideological reasons.

As for the meaning of violence against children, UNICEF defines it in accordance with Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person entrusted with the care of the child(UNICEF. 1959)."

Violence against children can result even from the closest people, creating a social phenomenon such as domestic violence against children. This includes any crude behavior from one or more family members that causes material, physical, or moral harm to the child, whether intentional or not, or through illegal or legal means depending on the nature of each society and its evolving changes. Children are exposed to domestic violence both inside and outside the home.

Domestic violence against children refers to violence inflicted by people who share the same household with the child, often a family member, as children typically live with them. This violence is not necessarily perpetrated by parents or legal guardians but can extend to siblings, relatives, and other residents of the same household.

Despite the difficulty in determining the percentage of domestic violence incidents against children in Algerian society due to the lack of precise official statistics and the confidentiality of family matters, or the child's inability to report due to young age or fear, 6293 victims were recorded in 2020, including 4395 children, marking a 4% increase from 2019 (Algerian Press Service, 2021). The phenomenon of violence against children worsened with the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly contributed to its exacerbation. Confinement in a closed space for an indefinite period can also exert pressure on an individual's mental and psychological health, leading to anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, addiction disorders, and sleep disorders, which are among the main reasons for the increase in domestic violence, particularly against children (Mengin, Allé, Rolling, J., et al. 2020).

Several notifications have been received by the National Authority for Child Protection, revealing an increase in child abuse cases during the quarantine period (Qahar, S. Ibid). Among the manifestations of violence against children are:

**5-1-1. Adopting a cruel punishment method against the child:** Home quarantine has resulted in the child spending a long time with family members inside the house. Due to the child's dynamic and curious nature, or because of the guardian's mood, the child is subjected to physical punishment to enforce obedience or silence. This can happen to stop the child from moving or demanding things or services, especially when they are beyond the child's capacity. As Miller sees through the theory of reward and punishment power, this is one of the manifestations of an individual's influence on others. It often depends on their ability to reward them for being right or to punish them for their mistakes. Rewards encourage loving responses and improve desired behavior, while punishment stops the punitive response (Bokosh & Jallul, 2021).

Especially since corporal punishment is common even in developed societies. "Physical violence is often accompanied by psychological violence. Insults, isolation, rejection, threats, emotional indifference, and humiliation are all forms of violence that can decisively affect a child's

psychological development and well-being, especially when they come from a respected figure such as a parent(Bradai'a, 2016)."

**5-1-2- Child Abuse:** The punishment of a child by one or more family members can be violent following a mistake they made. However, some families professionalize child abuse without any justified reason, often due to psychological backgrounds such as venting the repressions of family members on the child, whether it is the parents, siblings, or other relatives living in the same house. Cultural factors also play a role, such as education methods that involve beating or abuse. Research subject No. 20, a 15-year-old, has lived in her maternal grandfather's house with her mother since her parents' divorce when she was a child. "My aunts always picked on me, insulted me, and dressed me down for no reason. I feel like I have no place in this house... When we were all stuck at home, I couldn't find any escape to forget what I was going through...".

Home quarantine has led to the abuser and the victim being confined in the same place for a long time under continuous violence without social control. This is what UNICEF has warned against(UNICEF. 2020).

### **5-1-3: Strained Family Relationships and Their Impact on the Child**

Home quarantine and travel restrictions have led to tensions in relationships among family members due to economic, psychological, or social reasons. In many families, the conflict between family members is visible to the child, exposing them to severe psychological stress, which can lead to catastrophic outcomes. Parents or family members often vent their accusations and anger on the child.

Furthermore, being in the same space, especially with a lack of communication and dialogue between family members, leads to conflicts within the household and exacerbates the phenomenon of violence against women. This is closely linked to violence against children, as domestic violence within the home doubles the risk of children being exposed to violence(Bradai'a, S. Ibid.).

### **5-1-4: Lack of Family Communication with the Child**

Many families experience problems in communicating with the child due to multiple factors, varying with each family. According to a study by Zouali Latifa and Yassine Amina, there is a prevalent general problem in Algerian families: "the fragility of values supporting healthy and modern socialization, especially in light of current changes and the demands of globalization and openness to the outside world, particularly concerning the values of dialogue, respect for laws, following democratic methods in dealing with others, and avoiding violence." This is likely due to the conflicts between traditional methods on which parents were raised and the aspirations for modernization, resulting in contradictions in educational attitudes even within the same family. This explains the difficulty parents feel in understanding their children's needs, widening the gap between them (Zarwali & Yasin, 2014). During the home quarantine period, despite the physical presence of parents or family members, children were found to be isolated, bored, and exposed to psychological illnesses such as depression or anxiety.

#### **5-1-5- The Weakness or Absence of Family Income and Its Impact on the Child and Their Needs**

Many families have experienced loss or fluctuation of income sources during periods of home quarantine and movement restrictions, directly affecting family members, especially the child, due to the necessity of meeting their needs, particularly basic needs such as food, medicine, and clothing. Respondent No. 11, a taxi driver, said, "By God, I have not found money to feed my children... Allah is predominant...". The family's financial income became scarce due to the imposed restrictions, exposing the child to malnutrition, which is likely to deteriorate their health as they become an easy target for viruses and other diseases. Besides the problem of providing food, the family could not meet other needs of the child such as medical care, resorting to herbal medicine, and failing to provide schoolchildren with the technological means for remote education. Poverty is also one of the most significant factors burdening relationships among family members. In times when there are essential needs that cannot be ignored or delayed, the breadwinner feels powerless in the face of demands, often translating this frustration into violence to maintain a semblance of authority or dignity within the household. The child is the primary victim of this violence.



## **6- The Danger of Excessive Use of Technological Means (Television, Computer, Mobile Phone, Internet)**

Many people, including children, engaged in excessive use of technological means such as television, computer, and mobile phone, especially those connected to the Internet, during home quarantine. Despite the positive aspects of these technologies, such as entertainment, leisure, education, information, and facilitating communication, their excessive use, coupled with a lack of family control, can lead to serious consequences. According to Mahmoud Ali Ahmed Al-Sayed, these include physical health damage such as disrupted sleep, irregular meal times, eye strain, lethargy, obesity, and body sagging, leading to heart and brain diseases. There are also psychological harms such as addiction and depression, particularly when the Internet is cut off, leading to isolation. In terms of familial and social harm, individuals live in a virtual world, isolated from other family members, affecting family and social relationships and communication. Additionally, there is a lack of interest in academics and academic success. The most dangerous aspect is the child accessing destructive sites or communicating with strangers, making them an easy prey (Al-Sayyid, 2009).

Educational challenges for children: "According to an October 2020 report from UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank, students in low- and lower-middle-income countries have lost nearly four months of education since the beginning of the pandemic, compared to six weeks in high-income countries (UNICEF, 2020)." The spread of the COVID-19 virus led to the indefinite closure of schools to prevent the spread of this epidemic. Students were forced to discontinue in-person education, becoming hostages to the cultural, economic, and social contexts of their families. Additionally, contradictory decisions regarding the continuation of education and examinations disrupted students and their families, exposing them to significant psychological pressure. According to observations and statements, some students did not engage adequately with remote learning. Research No. 03 cites a mother of six, three of whom are primary and secondary school students: "They did not understand the lessons even with the teacher present; they will understand remotely or through YouTube. This could be because the culture of home-based distance learning via the internet is new to them. Some students struggled to keep up with all subjects, became bored, were lazy, and did not interact with the lesson according to some interviews.

There was a lack of equal educational opportunities due to distance learning. Virtually all countries utilized distance learning in their educational responses, through online education platforms, television and radio broadcasts, and homeschooling programs. Algeria, for instance, attempted to salvage the academic year and ensure continued student education by resorting to distance learning via television screens and the internet (YouTube). This created a problem of educational inequality among students who have access to these devices and those who do not, or among families with more than one student at home who cannot provide them for everyone. According to research permit No. 22, a father of four, with two children enrolled, stated, "My husband is unemployed with no fixed income... During the quarantine period, we completely lost our financial income, our livelihood was from God... When they announced that students were studying remotely, I felt that my children had lost their school year."

The decision to use technology and the internet to ensure the continuity of student education caused distress and fear among parents and students without access to distance learning for their academic future during the home quarantine period. Educational equality does not simply mean providing free education to all members of the population regardless of their family's conditions. It also means ensuring that when educational opportunities are freely available to all individuals, those individuals are equal even considering their social and economic conditions. These conditions vary widely economically, socially, and culturally, and they should not lead to the loss of educational opportunities (Al-Shuruti, 1999).

In addition to not providing psychological counseling to children and their parents during the period of home quarantine, this situation has also made it difficult for them to cope with remote education. Many parents have struggled with overseeing their children's remote learning processes from home for several reasons, including limited access to technological means such as computers and the novelty of this form of education for them.

### **9-The issue of childcare arises when the primary caregiver is absent**

Pandemic restrictions have resulted in family separations where children are separated from their primary caregivers, such as mothers who are required to work at workplaces like healthcare facilities, or fathers who are away for professional reasons or traveling abroad and unable to return home. More critically, the death of one or both parents or the primary caregiver leaves

children without adequate supervision and lacking in psychological, moral, and material support. This situation renders them vulnerable to the pain of loss, difficulties, and dangers, including exposure to abuse and violence.

## Conclusion

The home quarantine measures implemented to safeguard public and private physical health have had adverse effects, particularly on children under 18 years old due to their nature, needs, and inability to manage these challenges without adult intervention.

The consequences of COVID-19, especially home quarantine, which confined entire families indoors for extended periods, led to heightened interactions among family members and with children, who also engaged with their surroundings, media, and technological devices. This altered reality threatened or impacted all aspects of their health, psychological well-being, social interactions, relationships, education, and leisure activities. For many families, childhood lost its usual sense; during the home confinement period, children were hostage to the prevailing circumstances, the people around them, and the limited opportunities available for adaptation or relaxation.

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic serves as a stark reminder of living in a risk society, where occasional challenges such as epidemic outbreaks must be addressed with strategies and mechanisms aimed at protecting individuals, including children. As a vulnerable group unable to fully care for themselves or protect their own needs—psychological, emotional, health-related, cultural, and educational—it is imperative for society to establish a culture of caregiving specifically tailored to children during crises.

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