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Editorial: The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on children and adolescents with disabilities: education, development, and well-being of culturally and linguistically diverse families

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Editorial on the Research Topic

[The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on children and adolescents with disabilities: education, development, and well-being of culturally and linguistically diverse families](#)

In a series of four studies, researchers delved into the multifaceted impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), children and young people with special educational needs (SEN), and families of children with neurodevelopmental conditions (NDCs). According to the National Institutes of Health, NDCs are types of disorder that influence how the brain functions and alters neurological development, causing difficulties in social, cognitive, and emotional function. The most common NDC is autism spectrum disorder (ASD). These studies, conducted by [Salinas et al.](#), [Sankoh et al.](#), [Kouroupa et al.](#), and [Di Poi et al.](#), collectively shed light on the disruptions in services, challenges in remote learning, learning experiences, and heightened anxiety within these communities.

[Salinas et al.](#) focused on the IDD community in California, examining the influence of COVID-19 on services. Before lockdowns, racial/ethnic groups showed no significant differences in services. However, during the pandemic, respondents identifying as White reported a significantly higher mean number of services compared to people of color. Across all groups, age and diagnosis consistently predicted service access, receipt, and perceived support. This underscores the need for targeted interventions to address disparities in service provision among diverse populations within the IDD community.

[Sankoh et al.](#) investigated parental experiences in using technology for remote learning for children and young people with SEN during the pandemic. The study highlighted the unprecedented burden placed on parents, particularly for children and young people with SEN, as schools transitioned to remote learning. Poor communication between parents and teachers, unmet desires for parental involvement in remote learning planning, and a failure to meet Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) during remote learning were identified

challenges. The study emphasized the inadequacy of remote learning for special-needs students without appropriate educational assistance, emphasizing the need for improved communication channels and tailored support systems.

Kouroupa et al. explored the experiences of families with children with neurodevelopmental conditions in the UK during home schooling. The study revealed that learning primarily occurred through school-provided worksheets in both home and hybrid learning settings. While families had access to the internet and devices, they lacked crucial resources such as special equipment, software, printers, and, notably, desks or tables for 11% of families. Additionally, satisfaction with school support was low in both home and hybrid learning settings, contrasting with higher satisfaction among families with children attending school daily. This highlights the importance of addressing resource gaps and improving support structures for families of children with neurodevelopmental conditions during remote learning.

In a global survey conducted by Di Poi et al., the focus shifted to the increased anxiety within families of individuals with neurodevelopmental conditions during the early months of the pandemic. The study, involving over 10,000 families across 78 countries, revealed that parents reported heightened anxiety at the onset of the pandemic. Concerns related to the loss of institutional support and financial problems were major stressors for parents, while children's anxiety was primarily related to the fear of becoming bored. Notably, there was a bidirectional effect between overall parental anxiety and reported anxiety in individuals with NDCs, indicating emotional convergence among family members. The study also uncovered transdiagnostic findings that suggest potential avenues for future research on the psychological impact of the pandemic on individuals with IDD.

Collectively, these studies underscore the intricate challenges faced by individuals with IDD, children and young people with SEN, and families of children with neurodevelopmental conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Disparities in service access, inadequacies in remote learning, resource gaps, and heightened

anxiety emerged as prominent themes. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive and tailored approach that considers the diverse needs of these communities, emphasizing the importance of targeted support, effective communication, and resource provision to ensure the wellbeing and educational success of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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