

Cohort comparisons of the consequences of COVID on psychological wellbeing in early life

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Background and significance

- Cohort as a concept
 - A cohort is a group of individuals born at approximately the same time.
 - Each cohort will come of age to a specific set of historical social factors.
 - "The members of any cohort are entitled to participate in only one slice of life - their unique location in the stream of history." (Ryder 1985, p11)
 - Studying cohorts is important in both studying development processes (e.g., so that reactions to historical events are not generalised as universal developmental milestones) and studying change and stability in society.

Background and significance (cont'd)

- Cohort and the pandemic
 - The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns impacted individuals of all age groups and cross-sections of society.
 - However, individuals at different stages of the lifecourse might be impacted in different ways, and this would have a subsequent mental health impact.
 - For example, Na et al. (2020) found that younger adults' mental health were most impacted by lockdowns when compared with other adult age groups, with Pierce et al. (2020), reporting similar findings.
 - In this study, we are analysing the difference in pandemic impacts on mental health between the two cohorts in GUI.

Background and significance (cont'd)

- Systemic changes and impact by cohort
 - Vocational adjustment
 - Schools had/were supposed to have a plan for homeschooling (Children -)
 - Stakes are higher at third level (YA +)
 - Workplaces were unregulated and typically shuttered (YA +)
 - Family
 - Children situated in families (Children -)
 - Children more dependent (Children +)
 - Young adults were more variable (YA +)
 - Social networks
 - Children's peer relations are geographically constrained (Children -)
 - Young adults are more variable and less constrained by space (YA +)

Background and significance (cont'd)

- Systemic changes and impact by cohort (cont'd)
 - Organizational activities
 - Central to the organization of children's lives (Children +)
 - More diverse, idiosyncratic, and fee-based (YA +)
- Agency
 - Children less agentic (Children + & -)
 - YA have had more time for coping skills (YA -)
- Stressors
 - COVID
 - Children have less control (Children +)
 - Financial
 - Children more likely to be buffered (Children -)
 - YA more responsible and directly impacted (YA +)

Cohort difference in symptomatology

Cohort-background factor contingencies

Cohort differences in symptomatology by residence and PCG mental health

Cohort-Pandemic exposure contingencies

Cohort differences in symptomatology by negative home learning environment and Covid stress

Cohort differences in symptomatology by social isolation and negative life changes

Cohort differences in symptomatology by missed opportunities and limited healthcare

Cohort differences in symptomatology by financial difficulties

Discussion and conclusions

- In a general, there was no meaningful cohort difference in the increases in depressive symptomatology during the pandemic
- However, older youth were more susceptible to a wide range of pandemic exposures with negative consequences for psychological well-being
 - Includes social isolation, negative home learning environment, missed opportunities, negative life changes, and financial difficulties.
- COVID stress, on the other hand, impacted the younger cohort more than the older cohort.
- Suggests a unique connection between agency and social structure during the pandemic period

Sources

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Appendix: Cohort Variables

Variables	Infant Cohort ('08)	Child Cohort ('98)
Negative learning environment	I attended live school lessons with my teacher on the internet	My college/institution provides/provided live online lectures/classes
	I could contact my teacher for help if I needed it	I receive/received feedback on my work
Covid stressors	I don't think my classmates take Covid-19 seriously	I don't think my friends take Covid-19 seriously
	I had Covid-19 or symptoms of Covid-19	I have or had Covid-19
	Someone in my family or another close contact had Covid-19 or was waiting for test results	A family member or close friend has or had Covid-19
	Parent Survey: Are there any members of the household who are at increased risk of severe Covid-19 disease due to age or a pre-existing condition?	
Social Isolation	See your friends face-to-face	See your friends face-to-face
	Talk to your friends online or by phone	Talk to your friends online or by phone
	Spend time with your family	Spend time with your family
Negative lifestyle changes	Take part in sports or physical exercise	Take part in sports or physical exercise
	Take part in organised cultural activities	Take part in organised cultural activities
	Spend time on screen-based activities (TV/videos, computer games, online)	Spend time on informal screen-based activities
	Spend time outdoors	Spend time outdoors
	I have the chance to learn new skills	I developed new interests or skills
Junks	Eat junk food or sweets	Eat junk food or sweets
Missed Opportunities	I missed a family holiday	I planned to emigrate or take time out to travel abroad but didn't

Appendix: Cohort Variables

Social support	I have an adult I can talk to when I'm worried	If you needed to talk about your problems and private feelings, how much would the people around you be willing to listen?
Medical access	Parent survey: My 12/13 year old didn't have access to necessary medical care	I didn't have access to medical care I needed
	Parent survey: My 12/13 year old didn't have access to necessary support for emotional or behavioural problems	I didn't have access to necessary support for emotional or mental health problems
	Concerning your monthly or weekly income, with which degrees of ease or difficulty are you able to make ends meet?	Concerning your total monthly or weekly income, with which degree of ease or difficulty are you able to make ends meet?
Financial impact	Parent survey: Was your employment situation or way of working affected by covid – loss of employment	Was your employment situation or way of working affected by covid – loss of employment
	Parent survey: Was your partners' s employment situation or way of working affected by covid – loss of employment	
	Parent survey: Did your household receive any of the following during the Covid-19 pandemic? • Pandemic unemployment payment	Did you receive any of the following since the start of Covid-19 pandemic? • Pandemic unemployment payment
	Parent survey: Did your household receive any of the following during the Covid-19 pandemic? Other regular social welfare payment	Did you receive any of the following since the start of Covid-19 pandemic? Other regular social welfare payment
Covid-19 information	Which of the following do you find useful for information about Covid-19? Parent(s)/Guardians, college/work, friends, social media, watching or reading the news	Which of the following do you find useful for information about Covid-19? Parent(s)/Guardians, college/work, friends, social media, watching or reading the news