

2021

# REPORT CARD



## LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN TIMES OF A CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC

Milaine Dominici Sanfins,  
Fabiola Ferrer Del Nero Mecca  
and Piotr Henryk Skarzynski



# LEARNING DIFFICULTIES IN TIMES OF A CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC

Milaine Dominici Sanfins, Fabiola Ferrer Del Nero Mecca and Piotr Henryk Skarzynski

The Corona virus pandemic started in China in late 2019. Unfortunately, a rapid spread of the virus has been observed that has reached all countries. In view of the possibility of infection, isolation measures were instituted in order to contain the virus. School institutions needed to make several changes in the teaching methodology and install, as soon as possible, a distance learning system. This new reality brought many changes in family routine, school routine and, especially, in learning.

An online longitudinal survey, carried out in the United Kingdom, since the fifth day of March 2020, with the participation of parents and guardians of children and

adolescents aged between four and 16 years old, identified important impacts of these changes in the behavioral, emotional and attentional spheres. Parents and guardians reported higher levels of emotional and attentional difficulties with increased restrictions on social interaction.

Younger children, aged between four and 10 years old, were the ones that showed the highest prevalence of difficulties during the pandemic in all domains.

Within the common context of the learning process (without pandemic conditions) there is a large number of children and/or adolescents with complaints of learning difficulties. Some researchers report that lack of motivation tends to further hamper this entire process. The lack of motivation can occur due to several factors including, for example:



- the absence of interaction with classmates;
- long classes and few teacher interventions;
- monotonous communication with few teachers' melodic variations;
- problems in student-teacher communication;
- reduced affective bond between student-teacher;
- methodologies that do not involve teachers;
- lack of interest in the subject taught, among others.

**With the pandemic, in addition to the problems described above, others could be added, such as:**

- inappropriate location for the study;
- sound and visual distractions;
- lack of adequate material for remote classes;
- difficulties in the internet signal;
- limited use of printed or graphic material;
- inadequate family dynamics;
- emotional lack of control
- psychological suffering associated with the pandemic, among others.

With the end of restrictions in several countries, the British survey also identified a decrease in emotional and behavioral difficulties in school-age children. However, an important aspect highlighted in the research was that, even with the release of restrictions, children with neurodevelopmental disorders



or with special needs remained with difficulties, especially socio-emotional and attentional. In March 2021, about two-thirds (67.7%) of children with neurodevelopmental disorders or with special needs were classified as at risk for attention problems or socio-emotional changes, while 16.7% of children no associated neurodevelopmental disorders were classified for risk for the same changes.





Substantial and unprecedented barriers are being experienced by this population and many challenges are yet to come, as, possibly, the difficulties were accentuated and could bring even more harm. The federal, state and municipal spheres play an essential role in ensuring and guaranteeing access to the tools necessary for the continuity of the educational process.

Some researchers have verified changes in the integration of multisensory information in individuals with learning difficulties. In competitive listening situations, both auditory and visual stimuli can be processed inappropriately, thus requiring an accentuated cognitive demand and, consequently, excessive effort and demotivation.

The complexity of accessing information led to a greater abyss in the learning process. Another extremely relevant point is that, with the chaos established, the reading process, which is essential for improving the learning process, has become even more neglected.

It is evident that the pandemic has brought a lot of damage to learning processes. Therefore, educators and professionals in the field of education and health should come together to plan and develop strategies that can favor the global development of these children, including cognitive, emotional, linguistic, social and learning skills. In addition, one should think about the use of supplementary tools that

can be established and programmed in partnership with the school, family and study colleagues, aiming at good practices in the learning process and improving the quality of school and family life , emotional and social of these children.

Evidently, there must also be a special support program for children who had

any type of learning difficulty prior to a pandemic context, since the existing damage may have been exacerbated and affected other domains of the learning process. Thus, we must help our children in this return to learning in a broad and global way.

## References consulted:

1) Hayes EA, Tiippana K, Nicol TG, Sams M, Kraus N. Integration of heard and seen speech: a factor in learning disabilities in children. *Neuroscience Letters*, 351; 2003, 46-50.

2) SKripkaute et al (2021). Complete reference: Skripkauskaitė, S.; Shum, A.; Samantha Pearcey, S.; McCall, A. Waite, P.; Creswell, C. Report 11: Changes in children's mental health symptoms from March 2020 to June 2021. Available in <[http://cospaceoxford.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Co-Space-report-11-Changes-in-MH-symptoms\\_FINAL\\_29-07-21\\_updated.pdf](http://cospaceoxford.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Co-Space-report-11-Changes-in-MH-symptoms_FINAL_29-07-21_updated.pdf)> 2021

# Authors

- Postdoctoral Fellowship by World Hearing Center.
- Doctorate by School of Medical Sciences, State University of Campinas (FCM-UNICAMP) and Università degli Studi di Ferrara - Italy - Master by School of Medical, University of São Paulo (FMUSP)
- Speech Pathology and Audiologist by School of Medical, University of São Paulo (FMUSP)
- Audiology Specialist by the Federal Board of Speech Pathology.
- Researcher of World Hearing Center of Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Hearing, Institute of Sensory Organs, IPESQ and Respirare-Ouvire Clinic.
- Founding Partner of Center of Advanced Neuroaudiology and Electrophysiology/ Centro de Eletrofisiologia e Neuroaudiologia Avançada (CENA)



**DR. MILAINE  
DOMINICI SANFINS**

- Post-doctorate by the Department of Physiotherapy, Speech Therapy and Occupational Therapy, Faculty of Medicine, University of São Paulo.
- Doctorate in Special Education at the University of São Paulo.
- Master's in Special Education at the Faculty of Education at the University of São Paulo.
- Master in Sciences in Audiological Diagnosis and Rehabilitation by the Institute of Otorhinolaryngology, UCL University of London; Deaf Studies in Language Communication at City University.
- Degree in Speech Therapy from the University of São Paulo
- Fabiola has experience in the areas of diagnosis and treatment of learning and hearing disorders, working in both the diagnosis and intervention of monolingual and bilingual children (Portuguese/English).



**DR. FABIOLA FERRER  
DEL NERO MECCA**

- ENT, Master and Doctorate by Medical University of Warsaw.
- He finished three specializations: Otorhinolaryngology, Pediatric Otorhinolaryngology and Audiology and Phoniatics.
- He started a specialization in Public Health.
- Honorary Member of ORL Danube Society, and a member of the Roster of Experts on Digital Health of WHO.
- Member of Congress and Meeting Department of European Academy of Otology and Neuro-Otology.
- Vice-President and Institutional Representative of International Society for Telemedicine and e-Health.
- Regional Representative of Europe of International Society of Audiology and Board Secretary of the Society of Otorhinolaryngologists, Phoniatrists and Audiologists.
- Auditor of European Federation of Audiology Societies.
- Scientific work in World Hearing Center of Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Hearing, Institute of Sensory Organs and Medical University of Warsaw.



**DR. PIOTR HENRYK  
SKARZYNSKI**