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Magalassi Scholarship Essay

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact on the mental well-being of all age groups. By reviewing a variety of factors, such as, but not limited to isolation, masking, fear, negative media, different communication methods, and other ways of daily work, such as the digital push, we can further evaluate and predict the long-term effects. Comparing the case-by-case scenarios for four separate age groups (older adults, young/middle-age adults, teenagers, and children) can help determine the impact of COVID-19.

The effects of coronavirus monitored in post-pandemic life on older adults are wide in variety and reasoned by multiple different variables. The most pushing effects are loneliness, depression, early mortality, and mobility. A study done by Dr. Anne C Krendl and Dr. Brea L Perry reviewed depression rates in older adults with multiple variables including social engagement prior to the pandemic and digital communications during the pandemic and the two study groups were older adults well-connected to their social networks and less connected with their social networks. The study found that older adults' mental health was negatively affected by the pandemic by a spike in depression. It found that the strength of their relationships within their social circles (family and friends) directly related to the relationship between depression and loneliness, whereas they initially thought that social engagement was the direct factor. Older adults who were well-connected to their social network before the pandemic experienced more loneliness, but less depression; furthermore, older adults who were less connected with their social networks experienced less loneliness, but more depression. This depression affected early mortality, as visited in the same study, and mobility. A positive influence noted in the study was digital communication. I can remember my interactions with my gram during quarantine. She lives only fifteen minutes away and I had never gone so long without seeing her. It was such a blessing to be able to call and talk to her. It reduced the rate of depression in both study groups, "Indeed, social media use has been implicated in offsetting loneliness for some during the COVID-19

pandemic” (cross-reference, see Galea et al., 2020). This contradicts the pre-pandemic social stigma that social media had a negative impact on mental-well being. In conclusion, the most pressing impact on older adults in post-pandemic life is depression due to isolation.

Reviewing post-pandemic effects on adults (combining young and middle age), we see a lot of issues lying in recession-based stigmas, suicide rates, stress, and depression. Depression due to the loss of life and loneliness was high in March-May, but began recovering by July (Robinson et al., 2021). People with mental illness were not heavily affected by the pandemic and didn't suffer a huge change in mental illness symptoms. People without mental illness were affected more heavily. According to an article in *Molecular Psychiatry*, the pending recession may cause an increase in suicide rates (Bastiampillai, 2020). By comparing suicide rates in adults before the pandemic and suicide rates after the pandemic, we can see how COVID-19 may have affected them. Tandon (2021) states that for the most part, suicide rates before and after the pandemic are stable. There was a slight increase near the beginning, which may have been due to the negative media shouting in our faces that suicide rates were going to increase rapidly, but for the most part, adults have stayed resilient through their depression.

Teens may have been the most affected age group throughout the pandemic. Age groups discussed prior in this essay experienced a change in their day-to-day life and things are returning back to normal, whereas teens missed out completely on life-milestones, such as high school graduation. By reviewing changes in mental illness symptoms, suicide rates, and graduation rates, we can further understand how COVID-19 has affected the mental well-being and work-ethic of the future generations. Manzar (2021) compiles an analysis of report-based suicides from February-June 2020. It was concluded that 29 of 37 suicides were related to one of three main stressors: depression, loneliness, and psychological distress due to distance learning, academic distress, or TikTok addiction-related psychological distress. The highschool dropout rate has been increasing for years and could be labeled an epidemic by itself (McFarland, 2020). Another effect

that the pandemic has on current teens is lack of employment after highschool do to economic shutdowns (Messacar et al., 2021).

Young children may be a little oblivious to the once-in-a-lifetime event that they are going through, but the effects on their developing minds and bodies may be the most serious. Distance learning may have slowed the learning curve, whereas seven year olds are still in a kindergarten state of mind and kindergarteners are still in a preschool state of mind. I work in a daycare for elementary age children and it was obvious that a large learning and maturity gap was present in the kids who had been in preschool during quarantine. The isolation that the young generation faces may be detrimental to their immune system. Every past generation was around snot and coughing of other children when they were in elementary school, exposing their immune systems to a variety of bacteria and viruses. This young generation has not been exposed and their immune systems may prove weaker in the future.

When you put things into perspective, we have no clue how post-pandemic life is going to affect all age groups. Frankly, it isn't even post-pandemic life yet. There are new COVID-19 cases every day. What we can do is prepare for the next thing. One solution I can confidently pull out of my essay due to my research is that it is good to have close relationships with your social network. Loneliness and stress were the biggest reasons for depression and depression was the biggest reason for suicide and worsened mental well-being.

When I think back to the initial coronavirus outbreak in spring of 2020 only one bit of advice comes to mind when referring to what lessons were learned: God knows. I can recall being in a church small-group zoom call and this group of girls marveling at how God planned this and knew it was coming and knows what will come. We can have confidence that he has purpose in his plans. In a situation like this, when no one in the entire population knows what to do or what will happen, we can lean back on God because he already has it planned.

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