

# Children of Color: Their Perception of the Coronavirus

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**Abstract** This is a cross-sectional, exploratory study that was conducted to explore how fourteen (14) children perceive the coronavirus. Electronic questionnaires were disseminated to the parents with a letter that conveyed specific instructions for administering the questionnaire to their child or children. The age range for the children were from 5 years-old to 9 years-old consisting of nine (9) boys and five (5) girls participating. All fourteen (14) subjects were middle-class children of color. The children answered ten (10) questions related to the coronavirus. Parents were instructed to ask their child each question and then for the parents to write each response to each question. Ten (10) questions were asked of the children. All fourteen (14) children knew why they were not allowed in school and the children articulated that the reason was because of the coronavirus. From the responses gleaned of the fourteen (14) children, it is clear their parents and families have developed resilience in their children. The children have indicated that they are very aware of the enduring nature coronavirus poses in the nation. They were aware of what their responsibilities, and they have adapted the knowledge they have been given to stop the disease.

**Keywords:** *coronavirus, COVID-19, social distancing, pandemic, quarantine*

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## 1. Introduction

Coronavirus, named COVID-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO) is a new variant of the Coronavirus family. This virus began in the Wuhan province in China in late 2019 and it is believed that it was derived from eating bats or snakes or the mixing of various blood from wild animals. The virus attacks the lungs of persons, causing grave breathing problems for those it attacks. Its effects are more severe on individuals with underlying medical conditions such as cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure or other problems of the lungs. The United States Center for Disease Control (CDC) [1] believes that those over sixty may be in particular danger and have therefore issued pertinent warnings. In affecting the lungs, the symptoms include severe coughing, high temperatures and shortness of breath.

CDC recommends that simple hygiene measures as washing one's hands often with soap and water, hand sanitizers and consistent social distancing of at least 6 feet, may help to slow the COVID-19 from spreading among populations. There's no specific cure COVID-19 has been developed and current treatment aims at relieving the symptoms until the body is able to recover. It's not known exactly how COVID-19 spreads from person to person, but similar viruses can spread in cough droplets per the CDC 2020.

Individual Governors have shut down some states and other cities have been shut down as well. The Governors and Mayors across the United States have ordered that only essential employees are allowed to be out in the cities

and that residents may only go out for food or medicines. Residents are allowed to take a walk or exercise in their neighborhoods and no social gatherings are allowed. Most businesses have been closed except grocery stores and pharmacies. Since schools are closed and children are being home schooled, the researcher wanted to investigate to see how the five to nine-year-olds were perceiving this new normal. As a result, questionnaires were electronically given to random parents of fourteen (14) children.

Children of Color who ranged in ages from five (5) years-old to nine (9) years-old were administered a questionnaire by their parents. This questionnaire consists of ten (10) questions related to the coronavirus. The children were randomly selected. All of the children were of middle-class backgrounds who attended different schools, with all of the children attending public schools with the exception of one (1) child attending a private school.

The survey consisted of all of the children living in Washington, DC metropolitan area, except for one child living on the west coast in the United States.

The three objectives for this research project include,  
1) Analyzing how children perceive the COVID-19  
2) Identifying how children verbalize COVID-19  
3) Exploring the effects of the COVID-19 on children's daily lives.

## 2. Materials and Method

This is a cross-sectional, exploratory study that was conducted to explore how fourteen (14) children perceive

the coronavirus. Electronic questionnaires were disseminated to the parents with a letter with specific instructions for administering the questionnaire to their child. The age range for the children were from 5 years-old to 9 years-old. Nine (9) boys and five (5) girls participated as subjects in the study and all fourteen (14) were middle-class children of color.

The parents were instructed as follows,

- to not assist the child in formulating any response
- to Only ask the child the question and to write their response down
- to understand that there are no right or wrong answers, so they are to write down exactly what the child says
- to ask questions separately If parents have more than one child, without the other sibling being present

The children answered ten (10) questions related to the coronavirus. Parents asked their child each question and wrote their responses. The parents were further instructed to email the questionnaires to the researcher within approximately seven (7) to ten (10) days of their receipt. Below is the questionnaire that was administered to the children.

**Questions 1-10-Please write down the time this questionnaire took to administer.**

1. Do you know why you are not in school?
2. Do you miss going to school? What do you miss or why don't you miss school?
3. What has been the best part of being home?
4. What has been the most annoying part of being home?
5. Is there anything that bothers you about the change in your everyday schedule?
6. Will you be glad when this is over?
7. What will be the first thing you do when this pandemic is over?
8. Do you know what any of these words mean?
  - Quarantine
  - Social distancing
  - COVID-19
  - Coronavirus.
9. Is there anything you can do to prevent the coronavirus?
10. Any Comments you would like to make.

### 3. Results

The tables below are examples of how the fourteen (14) children responded to the questions that were asked.

1. Do you know why you are not in school?

**Table 1.**

Children	Responses
7%	People are sick.
93%	Coronavirus

All fourteen (14) boys (9) and girls (5) knew why they were not in school. One child responded that people are sick. The children used the term "coronavirus".

2. Do you miss going to school? What do you miss at school or why don't you miss school?

**Table 2.**

Children	Responses
7%	No
79%	Yes
14%	Kind of

Eleven (11) children missed going school. One (1) child did not miss school and two (2) children were unsure as to whether they miss school or not.

3. What has been the best part of being home?

**Table 3.**

Children	Responses
29 %	Video Games
7.1%	Learning
7.1%	Trying to Sleep
7.1%	Play with Sister
7.1%	A lot of T.V.
7.1%	Playing Soccer
7.1%	Being with Parents
7.1%	Making a Tent and Watching Movies
7.1%	Lots of Fun
7.1%	Math
7.1%	It's really comfortable

The children had various responds to the best part of being at home. Four (4) of the children really enjoy their video games at home.

4. What has been the most annoying part of being home?

**Table 4.**

Children	Responses
7%	Getting in Trouble
7%	Nothing Annoying about Being at Home
36%	Arguing with sister or brother
7%	Reading to Grandma (Face Time)
7%	Long Walks with Dog even though it's fun
7%	Having to do More Stuff than Normal
15%	School Work
7%	Staying 6 feet away from people
7%	I don't know

Five (5) children were annoyed with their siblings at home. Two (2) children were Annoyed with having to complete school work at home. The remaining seven (7) children responded with different kinds of annoyances at home.

5. Is there anything that bothers you about the change in your everyday schedule?

**Table 5.**

Children	Responses
37%	No
7%	Teacher at home doesn't Listen to Me, when I tell there is no Social Studies on Tuesdays.
28%	Not Seeing Friends/no play dates
7%	Go to school one day and then Home One Day
7%	Pile Homework on Us and Expect Us to Do It
7%	Waking Up So Late
7%	Have to take a Walk without my Scooter

The changed school schedule impacted the children in various ways. While Five (5) of the children were not bothered with the change, four (4) children really missed their friends. The remaining five (5) children's feelings regarding their school varied as noted in the chart.

6. Will you be glad when this is over?

**Table 6.**

Children	Responses
14%	Kind of/A Little Bit
65%	(Yes), ( Yes, Yes, Yes), (Yes, Yes, I will)
7%	I Don't Know
7%	No
7%	Not Really

Nine (9) children expressed happiness when this is over while the remaining five (5) children had mixed responses.

7. What will be the first thing you do when this pandemic is over?

**Table 7.**

Children	Responses
7%	Hug Everybody
7%	Stand up and Say Hip, Hip, Hooray
14%	Go to School
7%	Play with My New Toys
7%	Pick Back Up on Sports like Soccer & Basketball
7%	Celebrate by having Dessert and Playing Video Games
23%	Playdate and See my Friends
7%	Go to Uncle's House and do something Fun with my Family
7%	Not Sure
7%	Do More Math
7%	I will celebrate and dance

There were different types of expressions to celebrate the ending of this pandemic. Two (2) children expressed happiness to go back to school and three (3) children expressed happiness to see their friends. The remaining nine (9) children responses varied as noted in the chart.

8. Do you know what any of these words mean?

- quarantine
- social distancing
- COVID-19
- coronavirus
- pandemic

**Table 8.**

Word Meanings	Quarantine	social distancing	COVID-19	Coronavirus	Pandemic
*Children's Responses	2	11	6	10	3

\* These children actually had the concept of the meaning some of the terms.

Ten (10) children knew the meaning of coronavirus, six (6) children knew COVID-19, and eleven (11) children were aware of the meaning of social distancing.

9. Is there anything you can do to prevent the coronavirus?

**Table 9.**

Children	Responses
7%	Wash your Hands every Time You come Inside
7%	Use Clorox and Spread It All Around but Not on You and Not on your Body
7%	I could Just Dust Off with my Magic
7%	Stay Home
7%	Washing Hands and Social Distancing
7%	I don't Know -Staying Away from People
7%	No Close Contact
7%	Staying Away from People and Social Distancing
7%	Make a Medicine
14%	Wash your Hands for 20 seconds
7%	Stay Away from People even if you really want to be near them, Social Distancing
7%	Wash your Hands and Spray Down when you come from somewhere and Cover your Mouth when you Cough and Sneeze
7%	Stay inside, wash hands

Each child's response to prevention was different. Although many of the children's response included washing hands. The children added another preventive measure such as spray down, social distancing, or to stay inside the home.

10. Any Comments you would like to make.

**Table 10.**

Children	Comments
1	I really like these questions
1	Hate coronavirus
1	Aarggghh.....Coronavirus
11	No, Nope

Eleven (11) children had no further comments. Three of the children had their own thoughts that have been expressed in the chart.

## 4. Discussion

All fourteen (14) children knew why they were not in school. The children articulated that the reason was the coronavirus. One child responded people are sick. Children overall missed going to school. Two children were not sure and one child said "No" they did miss going to school. It would be interesting to inquire more on why

the child does not miss school. All of the children enjoyed different aspects of being at home.

Children's annoyance at home varied. Typically, the children who had siblings expressed their annoyance at them and they liked to tease them or argue with them. The children's home schedule was no bother to five (5) of the children, however four (4) of the children really missed their friends. Nine (9) children expressed that they really would be happy when this is over. Only one (1) child said "No" they would not be glad, the other four (4) children had mixed feelings. Only one (1) child was not sure. When ask what they would do when this is over, each child a unique response. These are shown in [Table 7](#).

The five (5) terms that the children were given, social distancing and the coronavirus were defined by eleven (11) and ten (10) children, respectively. Prevention for coronavirus were answered in a variety of ways by all fourteen (14) children. One child would like to use magic to dust it off.

The tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) question related to other comments that may be added. Eleven (11) children had no comments while Three children made Comments with one of the three comments being "I liked the questions".

## 5. Conclusion

There are protective factors that can foster resilience in children [2]. These include having caring and supportive relationships, positive and high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation [3,4]. From the responses of the fourteen (14) children who participated in this project, their parents and families have developed resilience in their children. The children have indicated that they are very aware of the crisis being endured in the nation. They are aware of what their responsibilities are as children, and they have adapted to the knowledge that they have been given to stop the coronavirus disease.

According to Marotz [5] competent parenting is, beyond a doubt, the most important and critical factor in helping children manage adversity and avoid its

potentially damaging consequences. The parents indicated that administering this questionnaire was fun and that were generally surprised with their children's responses. Competent parenting is a part of these parents' daily practices and the resilience of these children is only apparent because of the reflection of parental practices.

## Acknowledgements & Disclosures

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## Statement of Competing Interests

There are no competing interests.

## List of Abbreviations

CDC-Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
WHO-World Health Organization  
COVID-19-Coronavirus

## References

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