

The everyday life of families in Sweden during Covid-19: Young peoples' responses to pandemic recommendations

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This Swedish project is part of the international consortium I-CO Fact (PI K. Twamley, UCL)

- The countries included in the consortium are: Argentina, Chile, Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, Taiwan, the UK, and the US
- The Swedish data consist of 6 focus group interviews (2 on-line and 4 face to face), and 66 written replies to open questions, with in total 95 youth 15-18 years of age (and in addition, 17 parents and 5 grandparents) that were collected from June 2020 to June 2021, about how Covid-19 has affected everyday life, leisure, social relationships, and education.



Swedish policies under Covid-19

- No lockdown.
- Preschools and schools open.
- Leisure time activities running for children 15 years old and younger, with some adjustments.
- On-line teaching for upper secondary school students (16-19 years of age) part-time or full time in spring 2020 and winter 2020/2021.
- On-line teaching for higher and (most) adult education.
- Keep social distance.
- Work from home if possible.
- Visits to elder care homes forbidden at times.
- If 70 years old or older – please self-isolate.



Young peoples' responses to the pandemic and the recommendations

Disa: What do you think about when I say Covid-19 or Corona.

Girl A: First you got scared and you thought it was going to be over soon, but then it continued for quite some time and it became part of the everyday. (...) We can't bother to care about it anymore, like it's been going on for so long, you sort of can't bother to care about it anymore.

- Risk to lose motivation to sports when no games allowed.
- Learn new skills when more time spent at home, such as computer skills or cooking.
- Less time spent with older relatives such as grandparents.
- Bend the policy on social distancing to spend time with peer for one's mental wellbeing.



Restrictions versus recommendation

Girl B: I think it's somewhat wrong that the state makes the individuals responsible [to act according to the recommendations], when not all individuals act in a responsible manner.

Girl A: I think the rules should have been more strict from the beginning instead of waiting and then when many were infected, then react with more strict recommendations.

Girl B: Because then, when so many are already infected, then it's really hard to control.

Open schools with some ‘restrictions’

Girl B: At the beginning, me and my parents thought it was wrong to keep the schools open, because there is much risk of infection and contamination there, since the pupils, they don't really care because we are young, we are not as

Boy A: careful

Girls B: yes, we are not as careful as our parents. But after a while, we thought that it is much better that the schools stay open because closed schools had affected our studies much more.

Girl A: Yes, I've heard many who experience that it is difficult to concentrate and you don't get as much support from your teacher, and things like that. (FG 1)

- React against contradictory policies: e.g., no festivities for the graduation at year 9 but still at school, sitting in classrooms without masks and hanging out in the corridors as usual.

Policies, risk and educational outcomes

- Some children were kept home from school for longer or shorter periods and thus risk to miss out on a lot.
- Upper secondary school students experience on-line teaching as being comparatively poor, and concerns are expressed for their educational achievements and future prospects.
- Secondary school students appear to appreciate that schools stayed open but react against contradictory policies, e.g., self-isolate at home but spend time with peer much as usual at school and at organised leisure time activities.



Risk assessment and (the need for) close relationships during Covid-19

- Family life and pandemic practices under Covid-19 are formed by *risk* assessments, and are unambiguously related to and dependent on *personal relationships*.
 - Close relationships and (face-to-face) intimacies continues to be imperative for mental wellbeing, and are influential in how recommendations are interpreted and acted upon.
 - Children socializing with friends outside of school is problematic to forbid when preschools, schools and leisure activities are kept open.
 - Educational decisions are made based on the calculated risks of school failure in contrast to the risk of being infected or infecting other family members.





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