

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced many aspects of everyday life of all generations and of young people in particular. Even though kindergartens, schools and universities did their utmost to react swiftly to the radically and rapidly shifting situation, the young generation may well have been the one suffering the most from the consequences of the pandemic. This generation is now sometimes called the “Generation Corona”. The term is mainly used by the media as well as in academia, especially in sociology and psychology.

The negative effects of the pandemic hit the young generation in many aspects of daily life, but this issue focuses on two areas in particular: education and mental health. In terms of education, many countries of the world already had their own share of problems well before the coronavirus outbreak. This picture turned even worse once the impacts of the pandemic made themselves felt – when school closings, distance learning and other forms of reduced lessons became the “new normal”. Especially young people in vulnerable circumstances suffered from school closures. For underprivileged families, especially those with a migration background, who live with several siblings in cramped conditions with a poor technical infrastructure and where German is hardly spoken at home, this exceptional distance learning situation caused further problems down the line and increased stress for children and parents alike.

Furthermore, the pandemic had a disastrous impact on the mental health of young people, an oftentimes invisible cost. Due to the lockdowns and contact restrictions, they suffered from low social participation, meaning that they felt increasingly lonely and socially isolated. The restrictions to slow down the spread of the virus were damaging to the maintenance of friendships and other social relationships. Visits to country school homes, sports excursions and language exchanges, which are normally highlights of a school’s life, did not take place (and cannot be made up for). The cancellation of physical exercise hours, normally a part of the school curriculum, led to a deterioration of the physical state of young persons. Studies show that computer games and television consumption increased sharply during homeschooling phases. This affected especially socially weaker children in families in which both parents had to work.

IGJR 2/2021 is a special issue that focuses on a specific development of the COVID-19 pandemic, namely its impact on the young generation. This is done through two republished articles and two book reviews, each of which add their own voice and perspective to this ever-unfolding topic. The regular reader of this journal might wonder why this issue of IGJR has a different structure than usual. It was compiled by two interns of the FRFG, Noah Croitoru and William Clark, who read countless articles on the topic of this issue and who can themselves attest to a strong sense of belonging to the Generation Corona. Thus, two young voices participated in the editors’ decision which articles were republished.

The first article, written by Clara Albrecht, Vera Freundl, Lavinia Kinne and Tanja Stitteneder, discusses how COVID-19 has

caused severe economic, social and health disruptions among young people worldwide. Schoolchildren and students faced learning losses as time spent on school activities dropped by about a half. Likewise, apprentices and young adults in vocational training experienced learning losses due to school closures and reduced in-person training time. With declining enrolment rates in high school and college, the pandemic caused a major and unprecedented disruption in (higher) education. In many OECD countries, youth unemployment increased sharply, especially at the beginning of the pandemic. In addition, the mental health of the younger population deteriorated. The article concludes with a plea to learn from these negative consequences for a large part of the population and to ensure that in the future, no one is left behind in times of crisis.

The second article, authored by Miriam Allam, Moritz Ader and Gamze Igriglu, focuses on how young people have been experiencing the government action against the pandemic and what they propose for the recovery strategy. A sample of 151 youth organisations from 72 countries was surveyed in July-August 2021. The study shows that the predominant concerns of the youth revolve around mental health, education and employment. The article also delves into a number of issues centred around the “disconnect” with democracy amongst today’s youth. A variety of causes and explanations are brought forth as to why this might be so, such as a lack of youth representation and inadequate support for vulnerable groups. The authors conclude with an account of what would be necessary to promote an increase in government trust for OECD survey respondents.

There follow two book reviews. Lutz Finkeldey reviews the German anthology *Generation Corona? Wie Jugendliche durch die Pandemie benachteiligt werden* (engl. translation: *Generation Corona? How young people are disadvantaged by the pandemic*), edited by Dieter Dohmen and Klaus Hurrelmann in 2021. The 15 chapters by a total of 51 authors are centred around the question whether the term “Generation Corona” is adequate.

In Konrad Goldenbaum’s and William Clark’s review of Steven Taylor’s *The Psychology of Pandemics*, a book that was written before the pandemic, it is argued that the unique distance of this book to everyday pandemic politics presents a crisp unpoliticised view on communication and psychology during a pandemic.

This issue concludes with a report on the Berlin Demography Days 2022. The conference is a forum for exchange and debate in population sciences. Under this year’s motto „Youth in Demographic Change“, questions of intergenerational and intragenerational justice were discussed. The contributions painted a consolidated and holistic picture of the effects the COVID-19 pandemic had on young people in Europe and the world.

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