

# NDC Sarajevo

## Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis on the Everyday Lives of Students, Teachers and Coordination Board Members We Collaborate with

### Pilot-Survey

#### Introduction

Since we are working in extraordinary circumstances, and intending to better understand the situation on the ground, to properly respond to these challenges and to adjust our activities to the period after the crisis, the NDC Sarajevo has conducted a brief pilot survey on the influence of the pandemic on the living in isolation amongst the secondary school students, and their teachers (hereinafter: the Respondents) we collaborate with in our work.

The Respondents were asked, through a Viber group, an open-ended question about how the current pandemic situation influenced their lives and perspectives, and to write down their views on it in an open form.

Having collected their responses, we analysed them using the software tool Atlas.ti and following are the results of this analysis.

#### Analysis Results

The analysis of the general tone of the responses shows the following:

<b>Tone</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Total</b>
Positive	25%	43%	36%
Negative	50%	14%	27%
Unspecified	25%	43%	36%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### *Positive Aspects*

As shown in the survey, a more pronounced positive tone can be identified among 36% of the Respondents, or better to say a positive adaptation to the new situation.

The tactics of positive approach include constant preoccupation with various activities at and around the home, bonding with family members, working on themselves, i.e. self-training and finding new hobbies, acquiring new skills, learning foreign languages etc. Certainly, these tactics include taking the time off (resting), as well as hanging out with a narrow circle of friends in a responsible way, to avoid jeopardising anyone's safety and health.

New communication technologies, despite being emphasized that they cannot replace the richness of live contacts, do contribute to a certain extent to the reduction of the isolation effects.

#### *Negative Aspects*

In the total evaluation of attitudes towards the current situation, fewer Respondents expressed a negative opinion, 27% of them. Prevalent among these are students with 50%, and only 14%

of them are teachers. This ratio is almost self-explanatory because it was expected that the young people, students-teenagers in particular, would find it more difficult to endure isolation and limited social contact.

In any case, the most adverse aspect of isolation is the lack of social contact of any kind: familial, professional, friendly. It is interesting to note that both students and teachers miss school as a place of real encounter and they do not view the on-line classes as something that could replace that, even to some extent.

Other aspects of this situation, stemming directly from isolation, include the inability to act by "old ways", or by "norm", being thrown in monotonous relations with the same people all the time (immediate family, which results in conflict situations), restriction of freedom itself - "state of capture" - as described by one Respondent, as well as general blockage of life. And no matter how much one is preoccupied with some activity, there remains a certain feeling of "emptiness". When combined with future uncertainties, this type of situation creates both physical and psychological hardship. The Respondents do not miss to mention there is also a sensation of common grievance for the people who got sick or who passed away due to the consequences of COVID-19 infection.

Overall, the Respondents do not believe that replacing the physical contact with the virtual one would have long-term positive effects, which is in direct correlation with the expressed lack of social contacts and activities stemming from these contacts.

### *Prospects*

The analysis of the Respondents' answers shows that the sense of uncertainty determines their attitude towards the end of the crisis and the subsequent prospects. It brings along both physical and mental predicaments.

There is an opinion that this situation has provoked the best as well as the worst characters in all of us. Yet, pragmatically, or almost self-explanatory in a psychological sense, by trying to maximise positive aspects of the crisis, the Respondents refrain from speaking about potentially negative aspects.

Although there is a timid expectation that everything will go back to normal, the positive effects of the crisis are dominant in the list of the responses. This indicates that the Respondents have gone through a quite deep adjustment process. Therefore it is hard to expect "normalisation" of the situation, i.e. returning to the state that existed before the pandemic and the safety measures imposed by it.

Positive aspects of familial bonds getting stronger, which were well shaken due to the nature of the economic and political situation, are dominant in the list of responses. Another important positive aspect is abundance of free time available to the people to work on themselves and to learn new skills, which have the potential to change the way of life of individuals once the crisis has ended.

It seems that precisely this kind of quite pragmatic attitude towards the crisis and the subsequent prospects steers 36% of the Respondents to be unspecified, neither positive nor negative when assessing the situation.

In this sense, when we add to the above the Respondents with positive tone (36% also), we can say that the majority of the Respondents (73%) displays a proactive attitude towards the future, whether by having a clear vision how to proceed further on or by still assessing the

situation and thereby possible reactions and actions. Taken as a whole, this type of attitude can be characterised as very positive.

## Extracted Quotes of the Respondents

The following responses have been extracted from the survey:

„In quarantine, every day is monotonous, the same as any other day. In the beginning, it was warmly welcomed to have some time free from school, but now after two months, it is getting difficult to cope with. We miss our old habits, hanging out, meetings, seminars, meeting new people, making friends, even the school. No matter how much we try to do something at home to make the day, there is still a gaping hole. We truly believe this will end soon and that our lives will go back to normal.“

„ I have gotten closer to my family, to the people I love.“

„I have already come into conflict with my family for 13 times. We are together all the time, we feel captured, we are not free to move around and hang out.“

„As if our lives have been stopped, we lack air, we miss hanging out, working with our peers, we miss real life, people, human contact, school, unlimited space for hanging out.“

„This adaptation period is very demanding ... as someone who likes the wind in my hair, driving wheels, communication, all of this is being narrowed down during this time and we are focused on the people who are the most important to us, our children, relatives and true friends. This crisis has a silver lining though. I have returned to my greatest love – culinary art. Corona crisis will prompt every one of us to show what we are like, our goodness or evil, our love or hate.“

„I have enrolled in the online courses of the English language, programming and web design, so the time passes by quickly.“

„Many masks have fallen during this Corona time, so now we know at least how we stand. The Corona has shown us that anything can be done when you have to, but we miss the most our immediate family and hanging out with friends. We miss hugging our family members and relatives. Also, we discover our new and hidden talents.“

„We are not having a hard time during this period, as strange as it may sound to someone. We enjoy even more being together, we play with our little daughter, we play board games, we talk, we love each other more than ever... We do miss many people, we miss hugging them, but at least we have the technology to ease communication in this period... We are never bored, it is only sad that so many people have been sick and died... What is coming, that is, the time yet to come in future, nobody knows about that. That's why we wish to all of you to enjoy the company of your family and relatives and to take care.“

„I work on hedge trimming, hoeing fruit trees, digging up gardens, reading and correcting pupils' homework. There isn't a part of my body that isn't aching. “

„It has a negative influence on me, for sure. I miss my work, visiting family and friends... walking... Yes I can work, but online classes are not the same as a living word. I miss the hubbub of students and all that stress connected with the work. I miss family gatherings and I am worried about their health. I am not saying I can't go for a walk, but I avoid

doing that to show that I am a responsible citizen. To endure all of this, one must have a lot of physical and mental strength. I wish you all luck in the ongoing work and may we find the way to make it through the end of all this as winners.“

„As far as I am concerned, the only change for me is that I lack physical contact with other people. Luckily, I live up the country so I don't feel all this isolation, and I've got a circle of people that I move around. It is time for agricultural works, so we are preoccupied with that. And when it gets boring, there is Plivsko lake where we go to have a cup of coffee wearing masks and keeping distance. All in all, I am not complaining. Moreover, the hairdressers will open the next week, so who could ask for more.“

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