

Ergenlerde ve Yaşlılarda Covid-19 Pandemisinin Psikolojik Etkileri

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The Psychological Effects Of The COVID-19 Pandemic On Adolescents And Elderly

ÖZET

Bu anket çalışmasında genç ve yaşlı nüfusun COVID-19 pandemisi ilk yılında ortaya çıkan kaygı, endişe ve korku açısından ne tür farklılıkların meydana geldiği, belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Her iki grup da bu salgına nasıl tepki verdiği değerlendirildi.

Adolesan grup 14-19 yaş arası 116 kişiden, yaşlı grup 65 yaş üstü 64 kişiden oluşuyordu. Anket toplamda çalışma için kritik olan 17 temel sorudan oluşuyordu.

COVID-19 pandemisinin toplumun farklı kesimleri üzerindeki etkisinin büyüklüğünün ve şeklinin önemli ölçüde farklılaştığını ve yaşlıların ölüm ve hastalıktan ergen nüfusa göre daha fazla korku ve endişe duyduğunu tespit ettik.

Anahtar kelimeler: Pandemi, Covid 19, Adölasan, Yaşlı, Psikolojik etki, Anksiyete

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we attempted to determine what kind of differences occurred between the young population and the elderly population in terms of anxiety, worry and fear that emerged in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. How did both groups respond to this pandemic? The adolescent group had subjects aged between 14-19 consisted of 116 people and the elderly group had subjects over the age of 65 and consisted of 64 people. The questionnaire in total consisted of 17 fundamental questions critical to the study. We concluded that the magnitude and shape of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on different parts of the society differed considerably and found out that the elderly felt more fear and anxiety of death and sickness compared to the adolescents overall.

Keywords: *Pandemic, Covid 19, Adolescent, Elderly, Psychological effect, Anxiety*

Introduction

In 2019, the COVID-19 virus broke out in China and spread across the world. Due to the pandemic, billions around the globe had to change their lifestyles and adapt to the situation. As time passed by, the virus spread more and started to mutate, which made it even more dangerous. People started to isolate themselves in their homes whether by choice or by the law with curfews. In Turkey, since the start of the pandemic precautions were taken and then loosened in the form of curfews multiple times to balance the factors of slowing the spread of the virus and keeping the flow of society alive. However, masses were affected differently from these curfews. While the part of the population aged between the ages of 20-65 were almost always allowed to leave their homes, millions aged between 14-19 and 65+ weren't allowed to leave their homes for multiple months and were allowed to go out on specific hours depending on the age even after the rules of the curfew were alleviated. This research will be focused on the effect of the pandemic on these people whose "normal"s have changed the most during the last one and a half years. The study will compare how age groups between the ages 14-19 and 65+ were differently affected by the pandemic and the lockdown they had to go through. To be able to come to an understanding about the situation, a survey was conducted among people in these age groups. The participants were chosen at random and filled out the questionnaire anonymously in order to protect the details of their personal lives and keep this research ethically correct.

Materials & Method

The questionnaire presented to the participants of this study was prepared under the control of Gökçen Göçke. She is a psychologist who professionalizes in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) cases. Google Forms was used as the

platform to create the questionnaire as it provided easy online accessibility. All the subjects were asked to fill out a form of consent before being handed out the questionnaire to stay in between the lines of the ethic code.

The questionnaire in total consisted of 17 fundamental questions critical to the study. After the questionnaire was completed by all the subjects, the data collected was analyzed thoroughly and multiple bar graphs and pie charts were created with the data in hand in Google Forms. All the data was converted into a percentage form so that it can be easily interpreted.

Participants

All participants completed the consent form for the questionnaire. Subjects were adolescents aged between 14-19 and the elderly over the age of 65 who were isolated during the times of the COVID-19 pandemic. The adolescents group consisted of 116 people and all the ages had relatively balanced participation. However, the elderly group only consisted of 64 people and the data collected from the individuals were mostly concentrated around ages between 65-75 and there were only 10 participants older than the age of 75. To be eligible for the study, the subjects had to be isolated for at least 6 months because of the curfew that was present in Turkey. The subjects were randomized from cohorts who haven't been infected by the virus before.

Procedure

The subjects were administered a questionnaire. Some of the items of the questionnaire were from the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV (SCID) (PTSD). The structured questionnaire was designed so that the subjects could fill it like a survey by themselves. The subjects received the questionnaire link via email. After the subjects

completed the questionnaire, the results were automatically gathered to be analyzed and evaluated. The data collection process took one week. All participants were asked for their consent before they were presented with the questionnaire.

Results

The questions prepared asked the subjects about how strongly and frequently -on a scale of 1 to 5- they thought about certain situations in addition

to asking for any changes in the daily lives of the subjects since the start of the pandemic.

The first questions asked whether the subjects have felt fear of getting infected and becoming sick due to the virus. As seen from the pie charts below (adolescents on the left, elderly on the right), the adolescents had in general felt less fear -compared to the elderly- as %53.5 voted in the 2-4 range. The elderly were more concerned as %53.1 of the subjects voted in the 4-5 range.

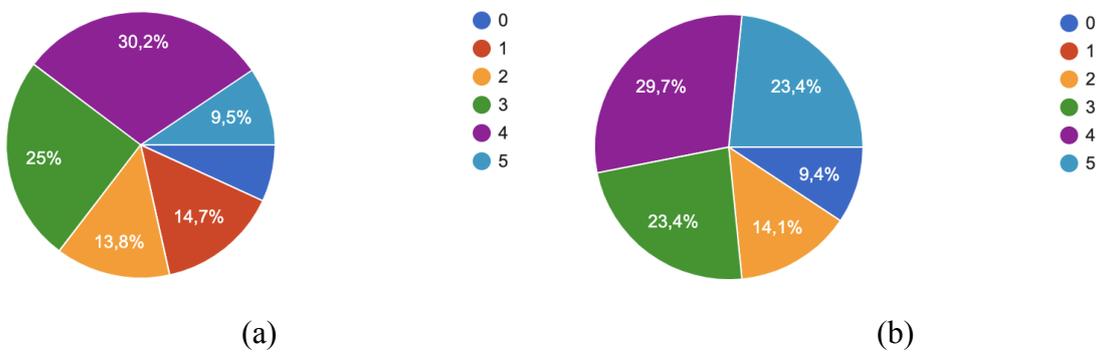


Figure 1: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly

The second question asked whether the subjects have felt the fear of death because of the virus. 66.4% of the adolescents had no or very little fear of dying while %54.7 of the elderly voted in the 3-5 range, clearly showing that they were more concerned compared to the adolescent group.

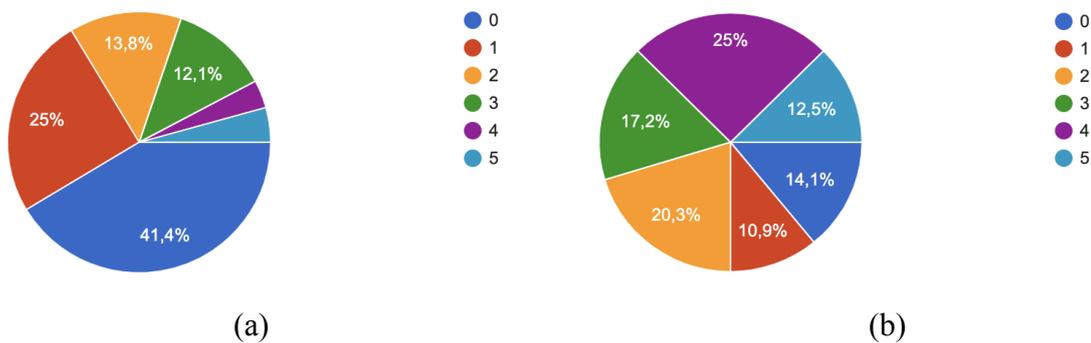


Figure 2: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly

The third question asked whether the subjects hesitated to leave isolation. As seen from the pie charts, the two groups didn't differ critically but the adolescent group was more tempted to loosen their cautions.

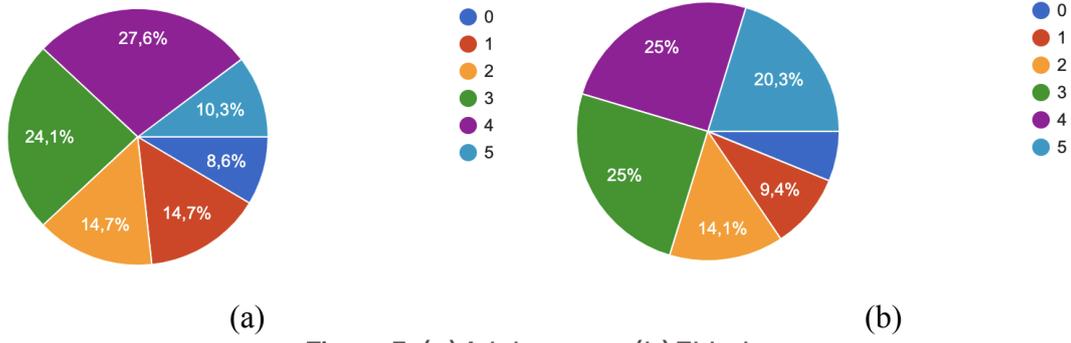


Figure 3: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly

The fourth question asked whether the subjects hesitated to gather with people who didn't live in isolation with them such as friends and other family members. As clearly seen, the elderly were much more concerned about both catching and spreading the virus since 84.4% of the subjects voted in the 3-5 range. On the other hand, the adolescents were definitely more open to the idea since their votes tended to shift more to the 2-4 range.

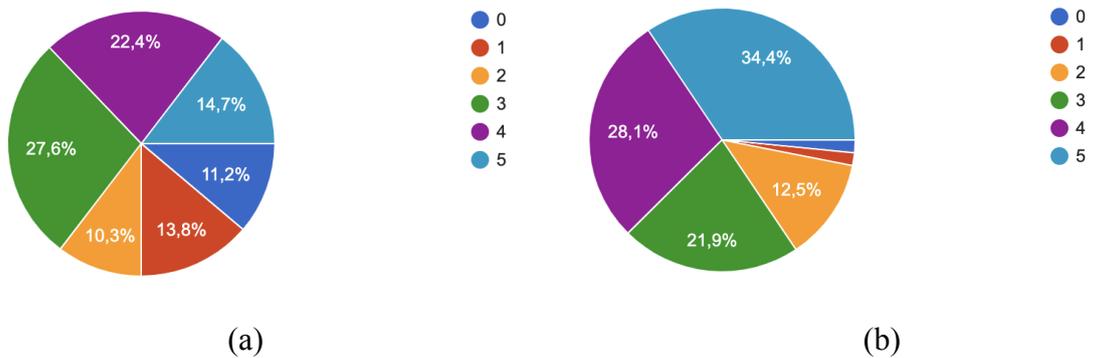


Figure 4: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly

The fifth question asked whether the subjects hesitated to go to the hospitals and other medical institutions. While most of the elderly group opted to not go, the adolescents found that it wasn't more of a choice.

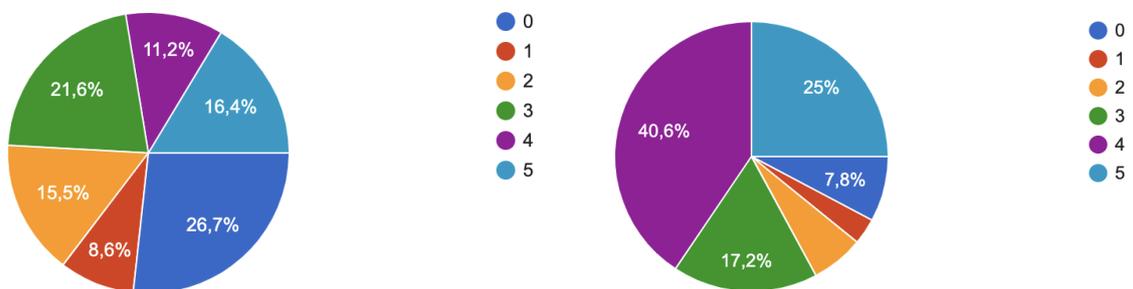


Figure 5: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly

The sixth question asked the subjects whether they felt that their academic lives or career was in danger. Clearly, the adolescents were much more concerned about the situation as most of the elderly had already retired or were at the latest stages of their career.

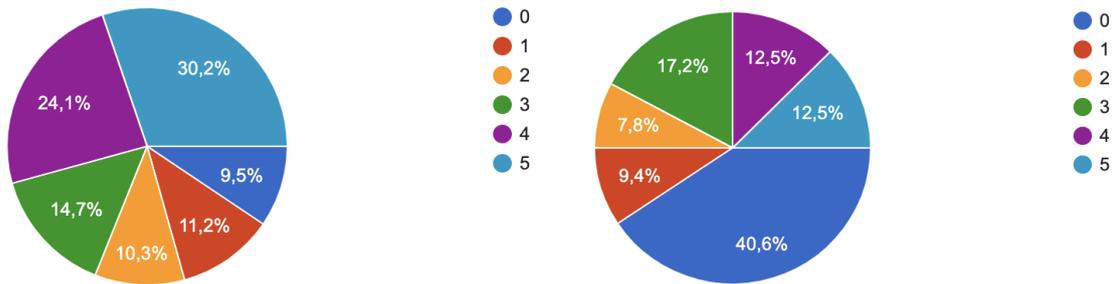


Figure 6: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly

The seventh question asked the subjects whether they felt fear of being locked up in quarantine. Even though the answers of the groups were all balanced in themselves, the elderly were more scared of the thought.

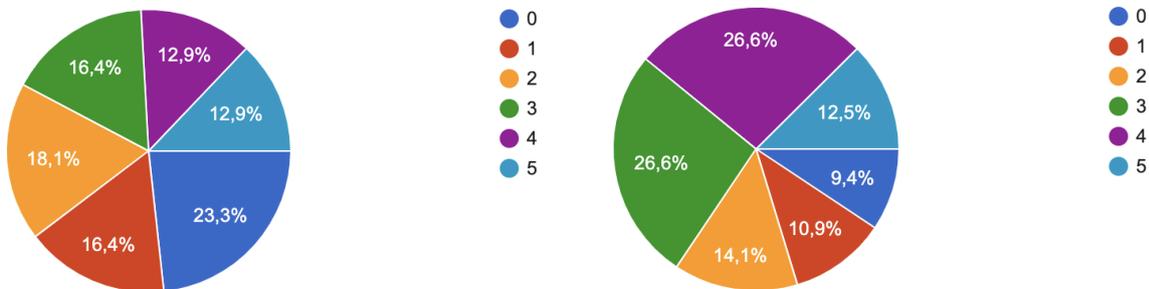


Figure 7: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly

The eighth question asked the subjects whether they feared being separated from their relatives. 82.9% of the elderly voted in the 3-5 range, clearly showing the magnitude of their concern, while the adolescents' answers were more balanced throughout.

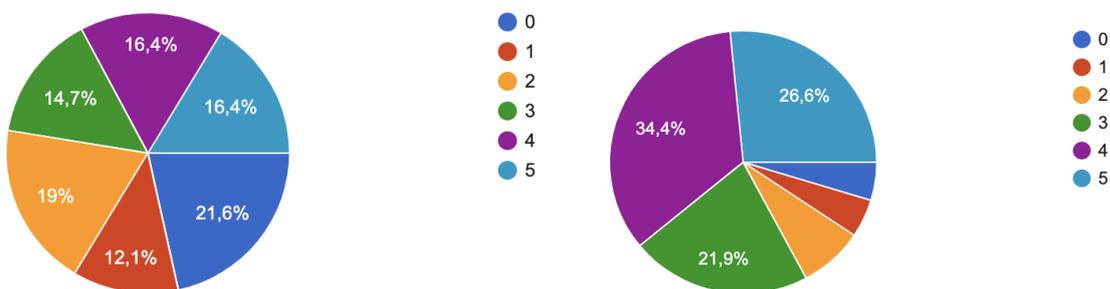


Figure 8: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly

The ninth question asked the subjects whether they felt the fear of losing someone they loved due to the virus. As seen in the charts, both groups felt immense fear of losing their loved ones. However, the elderly had a slight edge on feeling more concerned.

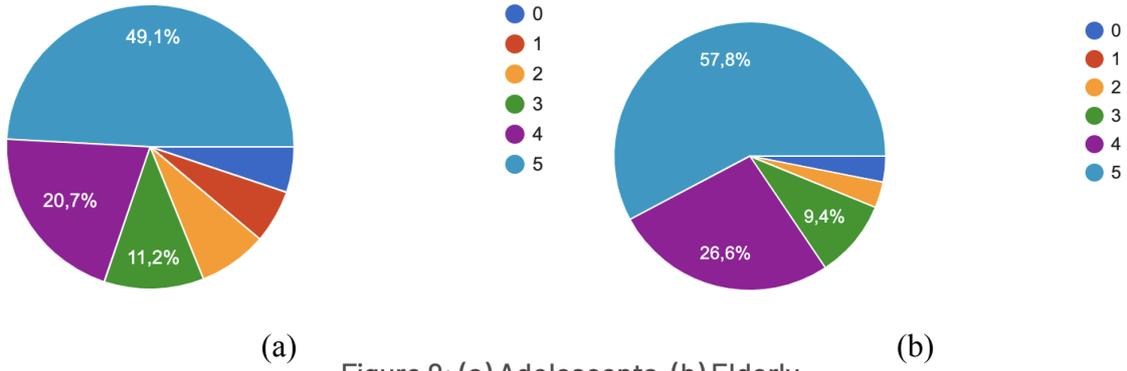


Figure 9: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly

The tenth question asked the subjects whether they felt desperate during the times of COVID-19. While the elderly group had relatively balanced answers, the adolescents' answers tended to shift more to the maximums.

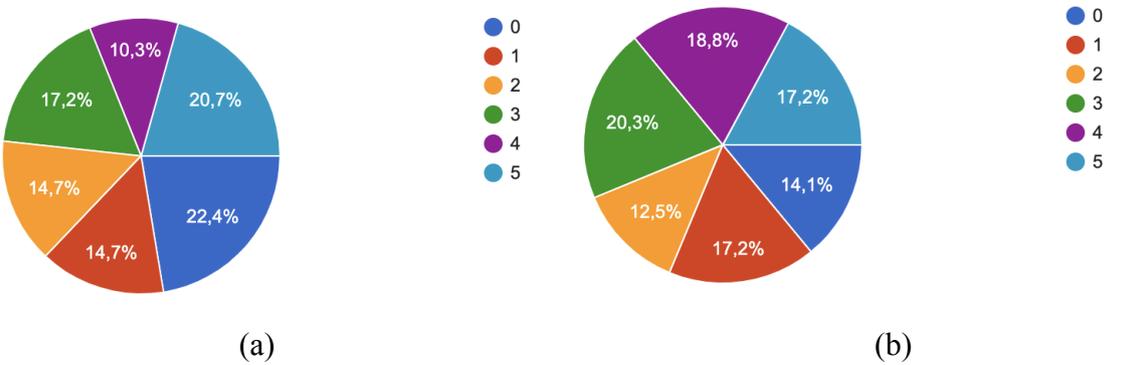


Figure 10: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly

During the following questions, the patients were asked how their feelings for the first ten questions affected them. The following question asked the subjects how often they think about the thoughts present in the first ten questions. As seen from the charts, both groups voted mostly in the 3-4 range which shows that even though the thoughts aren't on critical levels they occupy the subjects' minds quite frequently.

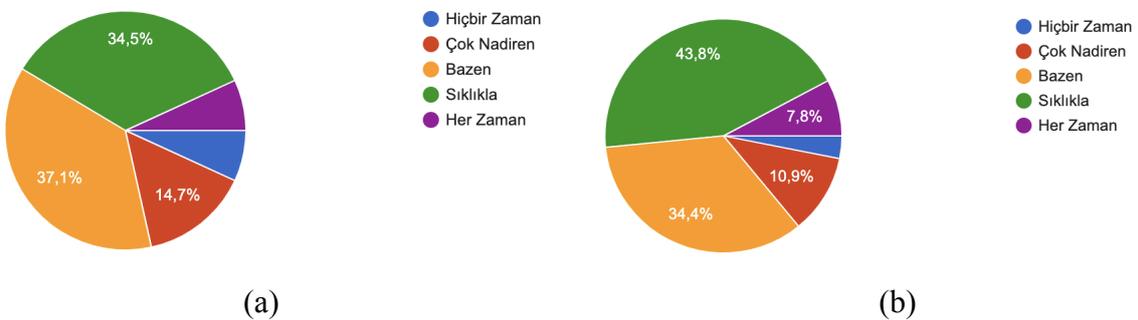
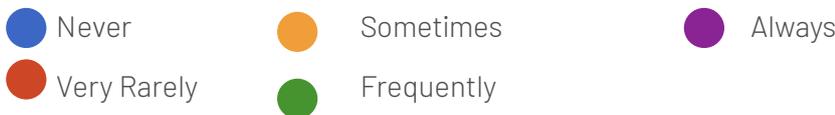


Figure 11: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly



The next question asked whether these thoughts had any effect on the appetite of the subjects. The results show that even though the majority in both groups weren't affected, the adolescents had slightly more impact on their diets.

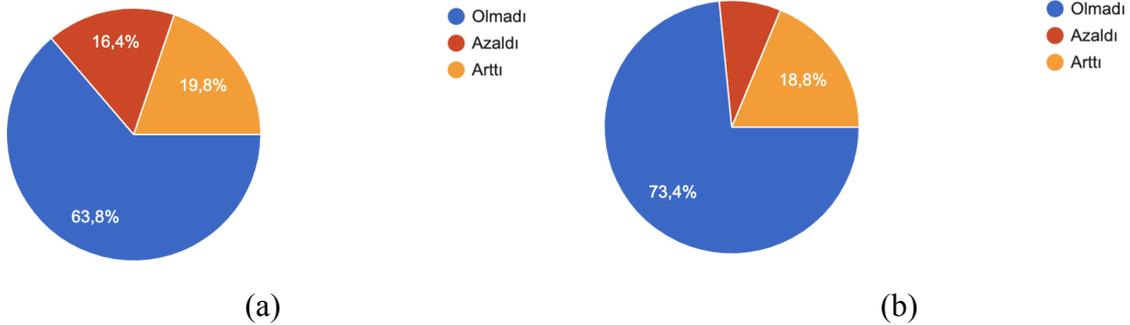
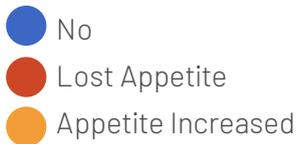


Figure 12: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly



The following question asked the subjects whether their sleep schedules were affected due to the negative thoughts. The results show that the sleep schedules of the subjects were affected more than their appetites. But still, more than half of the subjects in both groups reported that their sleeping schedules were unaffected.

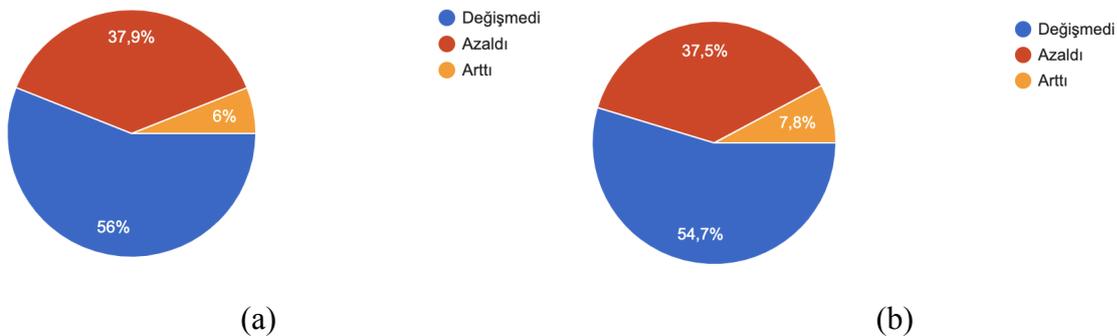
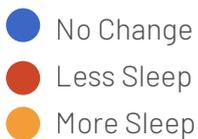


Figure 13: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly



The next question asked the subjects whether the thoughts have affected how much they tended to their personal care. The results were similar to the last questions where most in both groups reported that they were unaffected while the next largest portion reported that the magnitude of the action has decreased. However, the adolescents seem to be less affected than the elderly in this area by %9.6.

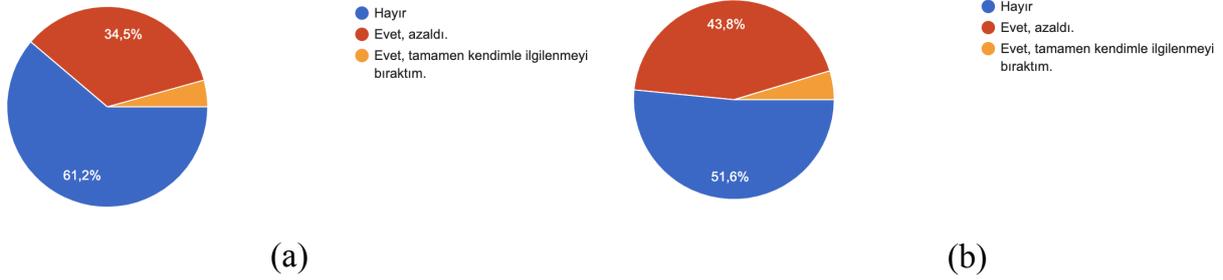


Figure 14: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly

- Not Affected
- Lessened
- Completely Abandoned

The next question has asked the subjects about the emotional changes they have noticed in themselves. The subjects were given the option to choose multiple options. The results show that while the elderly were mostly not affected or started to feel worried more frequently, the adolescent group reported feeling all the emotions presented even though a large portion (37.9%) still noted that they weren't affected. The majority of the adolescent group has reported that they felt anger more frequently compared to anxiety, becoming more introverted, and crying. The results of the adolescents are presented on the top bar chart where the elderly are at the bottom.

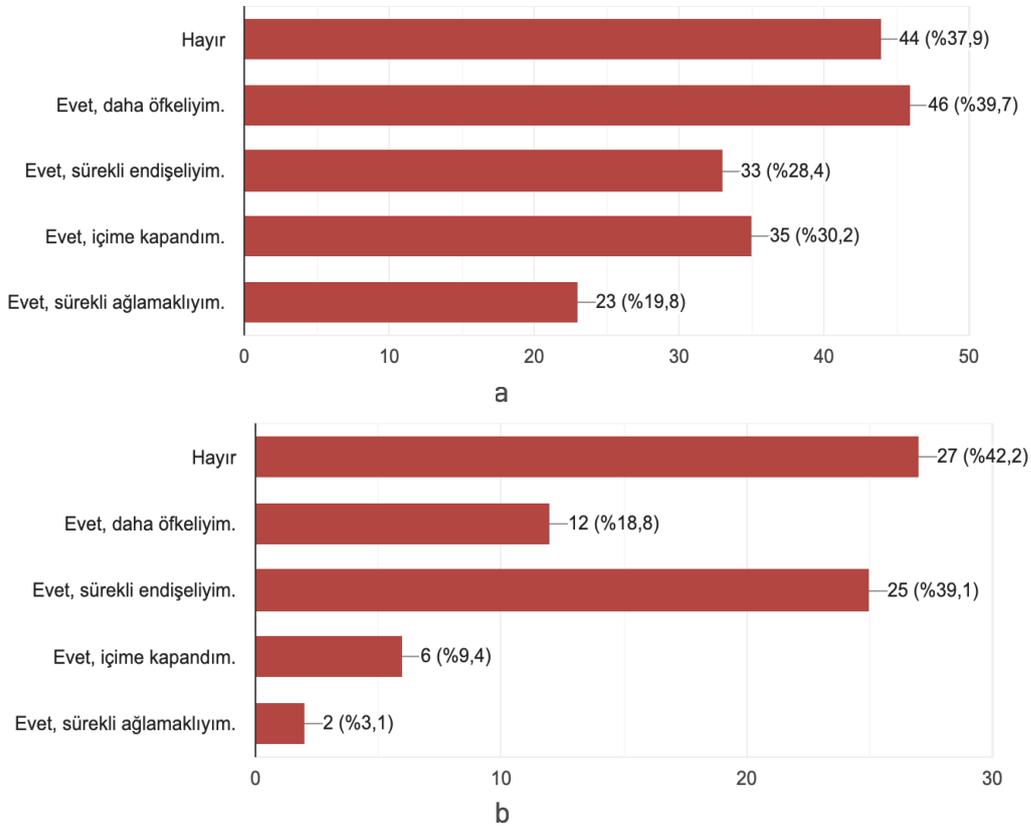


Figure 15: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly

Hayır: Not Affected

Evet, daha öfkeliyim: I feel more angry

Evet, sürekli endişeliyim: I'm worried all the time

Evet, içime kapandım: I've become more introverted

Evet, sürekli ağlamaklıyım: I cry frequently

The following question asked whether the subjects felt how much assistance they needed to get rid of these thoughts. Both groups reported similarly that they could handle the situation by themselves or simply by seeking assistance from family members. However, more elderly -in percentage- than adolescents reported that they either need professional help or that they can't possibly get rid of the negative thoughts.

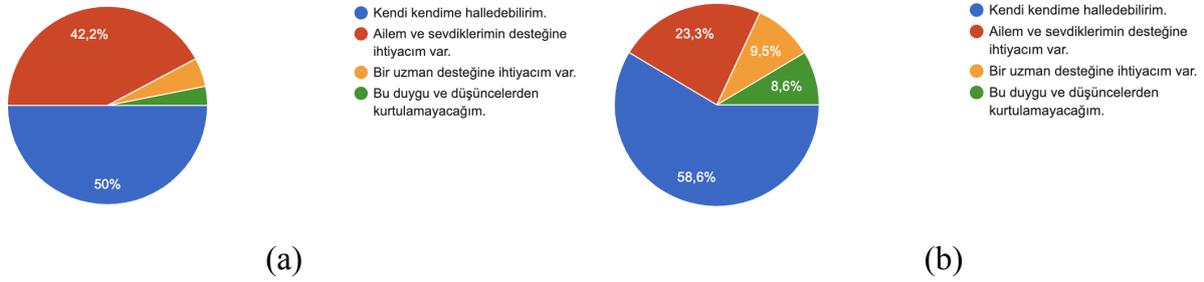


Figure 16: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly

- I can manage by myself
- I need support from my family and close ones
- I need professional help
- I can't possibly get rid of these thoughts

The last question asked the subjects whether their dreams were affected by the presence of the virus and the outcomes. The majority in both groups -more than %65- have reported that they were unaffected while the number of people affected and the strength of the effect mostly followed an inverse relationship.

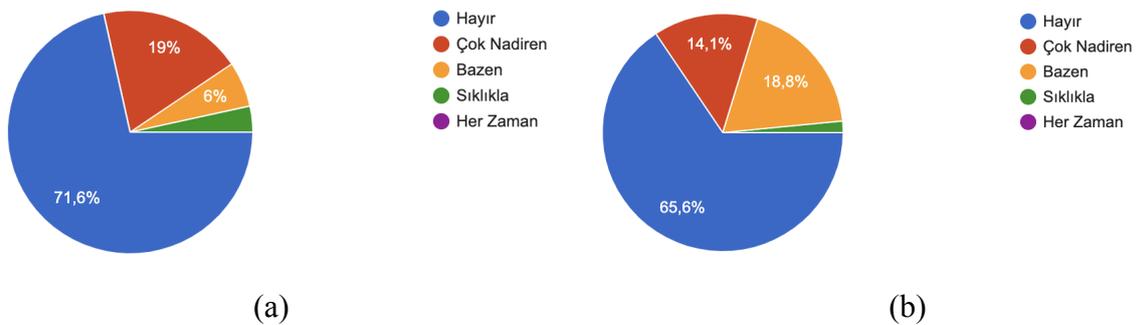


Figure 17: (a) Adolescents, (b) Elderly

- Never
- Very Rarely
- Sometimes
- Frequently
- Always

Discussion

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic is having a strong impact among certain groups who were locked down and went through a very stressful period (1). The risk of getting infected by COVID-19 through personal contact forced people to lock-down which causes feelings of loneliness and psychological distress.

To our knowledge this is the first study of post traumatic effects of a long period of lock down during the COVID-19 pandemic which compares two poles of the age groups in a community who were exposed to the same stress factors.

According to the questionnaire results, we have found that the young group felt less fear of getting sick and death than the elderly group. During the study, COVID-19 isoforms were not seen yet. Since the wild type COVID-19 was attacking elderly population, elderly subjects were more prone to being affected than the young group (2).

In the adolescent group, the temptation to leave isolation and gather with close ones and friends was higher than the elderly group. In addition, the elderly group even avoided going to the hospital much more which shows that the stress and fear of getting sick is more present in the elderly group compared to the adolescents. Contrary to our findings, previous studies have found a lower reactivity to stress in older adults (3), which may be related to mental strength development (4).

Both groups showed significantly higher levels of desperate feelings with a minimal difference. Staying at home for a long time did not show much effect on the groups' appetite, sleeping time and dreams.

According to the results, while the adolescent group felt more anger, the elderly subjects reported that they felt anxious. It was seen that anxiety among the elderly subjects due to the COVID-19 pandemic is actually related to uncertainty of the situation. Being locked down without having any logical cause in the last period of their lives for an uncertain time could be unacceptable for the elderly group. On the other hand, because the ending time of the pandemic can't be estimated, the younger subjects might be feeling angry since the situation probably affects their future education and career plans (5). It should be noted that the social distancing between friends and even among family members also results in worsened mental situations (6).

In conclusion, the virus COVID-19 entering our lives in an unexpected way has affected everybody living on planet Earth. This study has investigated the magnitude and shape of this effect on different parts of

the society and found out that the elderly felt more fear and anxiety of death and sickness compared to the adolescents overall. However, since this study was conducted before the latest mutations of the virus spreading which affect the younglings more, and the vaccination processes; a study conducted as of August 2021 might yield different results from this one.

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