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Unexpectedly Positive Effects of COVID-19 Experience on Children's Functioning

Nieoczekiwane pozytywne skutki doświadczeń związanych z COVID-19 dla funkcjonowania dzieci

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the review is to identify studies describing the unexpected positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's development, mental health, and social and educational functioning. It complements an earlier publication on the negative effects. Although reports of difficulties dominate the literature, some studies point to possible beneficial aspects. Potential benefits include deeper family relationships, especially between children and parents, and more selective but qualitatively better peer relationships. Despite its problems, remote education has been evaluated positively due to the possibility of adapting the pace of learning to individual needs. In the area of health, an increase in preventive awareness and the development of e-medicine and e-therapy have been noted. The literature review was based on the APA PsycArticles, PubMed and Google Scholar databases, using keywords such as: "COVID-19", "child", "adolescent", "mental health", "well-being", "post-traumatic development", "protective factors". The pandemic was an extreme experience which, according to life cycle theory, can have both destructive and developmental effects. Positive effects were particularly evident in families that functioned well and where parents provided emotional support, revealing children's ability to adapt and strengthen bonds.

Keywords: pandemic; development; protective factors; children; adolescents

INTRODUCTION

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a pandemic, which affected the functioning of many families and societies around the world (WHO, 2020). Crises and epidemics pose a real threat, but despite their negative impact on children's development, they can also create a kind of opportunity. In this context, it is worth referring to the life course theory (Elder et al., 2003). According to this theory, human life follows socially defined paths, with transitions and turning points. At successive stages of development, individuals adapt to the conditions in which they live. The pandemic has forced children and young people to change the way they function and reorganise their daily activities. A significant proportion of the changes have been negative, but there have also been some positive changes as a consequence of the pandemic and the crisis it has caused.

Crises open up – in a very narrow sense and with many reservations – a certain opportunity, e.g. to develop new ways of proceeding in the future and to work through difficulties that have arisen in the past, since they were so widely publicised that they cannot be ignored.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted life around the world, not just in individual countries. It posed a real threat, and its negative effects, including on health, have proved to be more long-lasting than could have been expected (Dacka, Sokołowska, 2024). Its consequences for health – not only physical but also mental – as well as for education at all levels, including special education, for work and leisure, and most broadly, for the global economy and education and healthcare systems, are being widely discussed.

Numerous studies conducted during previous difficult events, such as disasters or epidemics, indicate that these situations have both immediate and long-term negative effects on development and daily functioning, especially in children. Children are more susceptible to stress than adults and are therefore more vulnerable to mental health problems (Ghanamah, Eghbaria-Ghanamah, 2024; Ng, Ng, 2022). That is why it is so important to identify risk and protective factors affecting their mental health (Ng, Ng, 2022). The question remains whether it is possible to identify and evaluate the positive aspects of such a difficult life experience as the COVID-19 pandemic, often perceived as a socio-economic crisis and even collective trauma.

The aim of this article is to discuss the basic positive phenomena that may facilitate children's functioning after the pandemic. Selected areas of development in which beneficial changes can be observed and potential opportunities for children's future development will be presented. Even if pandemic conditions are never recreated, it cannot be ruled out that the ways of spending time together, problem-solving strategies, and resolutions and reflections that emerged during

and after the pandemic – for example, regarding the importance of time spent with children – will have long-lasting, positive effects on their development.

RESEARCH REVIEW METHODOLOGY

The aim of this narrative review is to identify, critically analyse and synthesise available empirical research on the unexpected positive consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for children's functioning. Particular attention was paid to the impact of the pandemic on children's physical, mental and social development, their educational functioning and well-being in the context of post-pandemic experiences.

When compiling a literature review for the first article on COVID-19 and its negative effects (Dacka, Sokołowska, 2024), it was noticed that many studies – especially in the discussion sections – mentioned non-obvious positive aspects of the pandemic. These were often not included as keywords, but as phrases such as: "it is surprising, however..." or "it is thought-provoking and gives pause for reflection that not all effects are negative". In addition to the articles already analysed, which inspired further research, a comprehensive review of the literature database was conducted in a narrative manner.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for studies

Inclusion criteria

Empirical studies: both quantitative and qualitative (case studies, interviews, observations) as well as mixed studies on COVID-19. This element was verified by introducing the keywords "Covid-19" and "pandemic" as necessary but not sufficient for full verification of the database resources.

Participants: research in a group of children from birth to 16 years of age. Possible extension of the group to include children up to 18 years of age if data for children up to 16 years of age are separated or can be separated.

Thematic scope: research on the unexpected positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children, taking into account: family relationships, i.e. parents' involvement in spending time with their children, increased sense of security in the home environment, independence, development of creativity, reduction of school stress and anxiety, new forms of support, improvement of adaptability and responsibility). This element was verified by introducing the word "necessary" but not sufficient for full verification of the database records.

Type of publication: scientific publications, peer-reviewed.

Time frame: publications published from January 2020 (the beginning of the global COVID-19 pandemic) to September 2025.

Language: Polish or English.

Exclusion criteria

Type of research: opinions, essays, editorial comments without peer review. Media reports, reports without scientific peer review.

Participants: Studies in which participants are exclusively persons over 16 years of age or adults, unless data on children under 16 years of age have been separated and analysed separately. This element was verified by introducing the keywords "child" and "adolescent" as necessary but not sufficient for full verification of the database.

Thematic scope: Research focusing solely on the negative effects of the pandemic (e.g. anxiety, depression, domestic violence), without any reference to the positive effects of the pandemic. This element was verified by introducing the keywords positive and its Polish equivalent *pozytywne* into the search process – considered necessary, though insufficient for full verification of the database records found.

Type of publication: Unpublished works, such as theses, doctoral dissertations, grant reports (if not published as peer-reviewed articles).

Language: publications published in languages other than Polish or English.

Ultimately, empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative or mixed) published in peer-reviewed scientific journals between January 2020 and September 2025, in Polish or English, were included in the review. Studies concerning children up to 16 years of age or containing distinguishable data for this age group, focusing on the positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's functioning (e.g. family relationships, emotional development, independence) were included.

Study selection

Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria adopted – covering children up to the age of 16, the type of data analysed and the presence of positive effects of the pandemic – a three-stage study selection process was carried out.

In the first stage, as previously indicated, abstracts were checked using the keywords: "COVID" or "pandemic" and "child" or "adolescent". In the second stage, the full texts were analysed for the occurrence of the word "positive". This included contexts such as: education that is positive for child development, positive re-evaluation of views, positive affective experience, and positive qualities in the parent–child relationship.

To ensure that aspects of child well-being, mental health and protective factors in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic were taken into account, four additional keywords were introduced, treated as interchangeable (i.e. constituting a sufficient but not necessary condition): well-being / mental and physical well-being of the child, mental health, PTG / post-traumatic growth, and protective

factors. In the third stage, the previously verified texts on the positive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic experience on children and young people were analysed in terms of the presence of three contexts relevant to child development (after Schaffer and Kipp, 2015):

- the developmental context of the family (Schaffer, Kipp, 2015, chapter 14),
- the developmental context of peers and school (Schaffer, Kipp, 2015, chapter 15).

This involved searching the full texts using the following keywords: family, parents, parenting, mother, father, siblings, relationships, education, peers, friends, colleagues, etc. After collecting data (records) from the PubMed, Google Scholar and APA PsycArticles literature databases, duplicates were removed. Then, a preliminary selection was made based on the titles, abstracts and content of articles and reports, taking into account publications concerning children and young people in the context of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, describing positive aspects of functioning or development.

Data synthesis

The information gathered from the eligible studies was synthesised to identify the positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the functioning of children and adolescents. Based on this analysis, the main categories of factors associated with the positive effects of the pandemic were identified. Factors indicating a potential impact on the positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's functioning can be preliminarily grouped into two main categories: individual (a more detailed description of individual resources can be found in Table 1 in the Summary) and relational (a more detailed description of social resources can be found in Table 1 in the Summary).

Factors associated with the positive effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's functioning can be divided into several areas:

- physical activity and daily habits – includes engaging in physical activity, involving children in household chores, and participating in relaxing and stress-relieving activities in direct group contact rather than remotely (e.g. board games; Grzelak et al., 2021, pp. 26–27; Haleemunnissa et al., 2021, p. 6). This emphasises the importance of the physical dimension of life (paragraph 2);
- the ability to reflect on and make sense of experienced events – the ability to interpret the pandemic as an opportunity to reflect on one's own life and draw conclusions, including appreciating the importance of physical well-being (health education) and mental well-being (mental health promotion, therapy) (Castiglioni et al., 2023, p. 16; Du et al., 2021; Krijnen et al., 2023; Prieto-Ursúa, Jódar, 2020). Care for physical well-being (health

education, paragraph 4) and mental well-being (mental health promotion, therapy, paragraph 5);

- health awareness and valuation – includes concern for maintaining physical health, avoiding illness and re-evaluating the importance of health in everyday life (Grzelak et al., 2021, pp. 119–121). Appreciating health in a pandemic situation and building a healthy lifestyle (Izdebski et al., 2023) (paragraph 2);
- family relationships – positive quality of bonds with parents, the opportunity to share experiences both during and after the pandemic (Grzelak et al., 2021, p. 41; Ng, Ng, 2022, p. 10), parents recognised as an important source of support (Kleszczewska et al., 2024, p. 194; Krijnen et al., 2023; Prieto-Ursúa, Jódar, 2020; Weder et al., 2022). This reflects the importance of social support in the family dimension (paragraph 3);
- peer relationships – includes direct interactions with peers, support provided, and positive relational experiences/positively acknowledge that they had more time with friends (Grzelak et al., 2021, p. 31; Kleszczewska et al., 2024, p. 194, questionnaire item: My friends really make an effort to help me; Weder et al., 2022), i.e. appreciating the social aspect of life, in its non-family dimension, in partner/horizontal relationships (paragraph 3);
- adult support in educational and care relationships – includes available informational and emotional resources that strengthen the child's sense of security (Grzelak et al., 2021, p. 26) (paragraph 3);
- neighbourly relations – the quality of neighbourly contacts and functioning in small local or therapeutic communities that build a sense of belonging (Kochman, 2020);
- family and peer group climate – family cohesion, positive family environment, cohesion and positive atmosphere in the peer group, school environment (Ng, Ng, 2022; Weder et al., 2022; Zoellner et al., 2025) (paragraph 3).

THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, CONTACT WITH NATURE AND HEALTH – THE FIRST POSITIVE EFFECT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A positive effect of the pandemic – treated as a kind of social experiment involving the whole world – was the opportunity to appreciate the importance of physical activity and daily contact with nature (Gambin, Zawadzki, 2021, p. 44, 161, 216; Rojewska, 2022), as well as increased awareness of health issues and the importance of personal hygiene (Izdebski et al., 2023, p. 102; Namdar Areshtanab et al., 2022). Reports indicate that contact with nature improves mood, has a relaxing effect and allows for respite, not only in the context of a pandemic.

It is worth noting that initially, no positive aspects of the pandemic were emphasised, apart from social mobilisation and the heartening dedication of, for example, medical services. Over time, however, many positives were recognised, such as the acquisition of reliable and widespread knowledge about the need for hygiene (hand washing, disinfection rules, masks, etc.) and the need for vaccination. Similarly, remote education and remote work (e.g. for paediatricians, therapists or teachers supporting children) proved feasible in situations where it was necessary to work and/or study from home (working-from-home environment/ WFH, as cited in Zhang et al., 2022). A number of beneficial solutions, including legal ones, have remained in place in childcare for longer, even to the present day.

In turn, undesirable habits acquired during the pandemic can be modified, and any neglect corrected through education and psychoeducation. In this context, particular importance is attached to contact with nature and interactions with other people in the post-pandemic period.

APPRECIATION OF THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY LIFE – THE SECOND POSITIVE EFFECT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC EXPERIENCE

It is not surprising that the positive effects of negative pandemic experiences are less often emphasised, even if we treat them as serious trauma. In addition to descriptions of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and other serious psychological problems, the literature also points to the phenomenon of PTG (post-traumatic growth) (Castiglioni et al., 2023; Izdebski et al., 2023; Lewis et al., 2022; Prati, Mancini, 2021, p. 208; Prieto-Ursúa, Jódar, 2020). Referring to the concept of post-traumatic growth, in which growth is a positive transformation and development of possibilities (Tedeschi, Calhoun, 2004), we can conclude that it is possible to appreciate even a very difficult experience (called a "traumatic stressor", as cited in Menculini et al., 2021) as one that makes us realise how precious life is and how much we need to respect it (Menculini et al., 2021; Namdar Areshtanab et al., 2022). As a result of trauma, positive developmental consequences may also arise (Kállay, 2007; Ogińska-Bulik, 2013; Seery et al., 2010; Taku et al., 2021).

The importance of intensive social mobilisation and support, felt and accepted by children even in small groups, was emphasised, as it enabled them to feel like an important part of the community. At the same time, the stress associated with the COVID-19 pandemic was extremely strong and the threat was deadly. However, these experiences helped prepare children for future serious health threats and develop preventive measures, such as the use of masks and disinfectants. Such pro-health and pro-social attitudes can be an important part of children's education and raising their social and health awareness.

Despite the deprivation of needs during the pandemic, it turned out that there was a real opportunity to see the work of parents and to leave some of that work at home now. The time spent with parents (even described as "ordinary magic", Dvorsky et al., 2021, title taken from Masten's term) and media entertainment helped to reduce anxiety in the youngest children (Krijnen et al., 2023; Ng, Ng, 2022). It also turned out that every meeting and every training session could take place outside the workplace. Suddenly, people on maternity and paternity leave were part of the professional community without being physically present with others. This was surprising compared to previous experiences. Adverse events can, of course, also work in favour of the social system, allowing for the reorganisation of various areas of life and facilitating changes in the nature of activities.

During the pandemic, positive changes were observed in parent–child relationships, i.e. stronger relationships, greater empathy, and respect in mutual interactions (Johnson, 2020; Woźniak-Prus et al., 2024). Family members evaluated their relationships with each other positively. They supported each other and built positive contacts/evaluated domestic relationships positively with regard to being together, being supportive and positive communication (Öngören, 2021; Weder et al., 2022) – not always, but these positive phenomena also occurred (Tykarski, 2022). This was mainly thanks to fun activities together, cooking and eating, and conversations that also evoked positive emotions (Woźniak-Prus et al., 2024, p. 445). During the period of isolation, parents strengthened or rebuilt their relationships with their children. The pandemic also provided an opportunity to spend time with the family, and when used positively, this time contributed to children acquiring greater empathy and cognitive skills and learning the value of human life (Gupta, Jawanda, 2020), which had the potential to build greater resilience (Dvorsky et al., 2021).

Such effective functioning of families during the pandemic, especially when children were staying at home, contributed to their positive adaptation to new living and functioning conditions (Chu et al., 2021; McArthur et al., 2023). Creating positive parent–child relationships is an important part of positive childhood experiences, affecting the well-being of children and their parents (Bate et al., 2021; Daines et al., 2021; Dvorsky et al., 2021; Russell et al., 2020). Parents engaged in effective regulation of their own emotions. In this way, they were effective in meeting their children's needs and engaging in playful and pleasurable activities with them, as well as providing various forms of support (Spinelli et al., 2021). The sense of security felt by children when they were with their parents encouraged them to express their emotions and fears. The youngest children received time and attention from their parents, which were invaluable during the pandemic and helped to build a sense of security. Preschool children showed greater attachment to their parents during the pandemic (Ghanamah, Eghbaria-Ghanamah,

2024). Research indicates that positive parent–child relationships had an impact on the mild course of pandemic stress in children (Eisenberg et al., 2019, 2024). Research by Bate and colleagues (2021) showed that children's emotional and behavioural health was moderated by positive parent-child relationships during the COVID-19 lockdown. The COVID-19 pandemic also provided an opportunity for many parents to spend time with their children, seeking out and engaging in various leisure activities. The pandemic became an opportunity to undertake new play activities and reorganise existing ways of spending time with the youngest members of the family.

Parental involvement was crucial for children to function effectively during the pandemic. During the pandemic, parents tried to engage their children in routine activities, showed creativity in developing activities, and were involved in stimulating their children's development. These activities were important in helping children cope with anxiety and meet their emotional needs (Garcia de Avila et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2021). Research has shown that maintaining routines and involving children in household chores contributed to reducing anxiety and the risk of developing depression (Kang et al., 2020; Yeasmin et al., 2020). Research conducted by Cost and colleagues (2022) showed that 31.5% of children coped better during the pandemic. Children aged 2–5 years showed fewer problems than older children. The reason for this was greater acceptance of changes in daily routine than in older children.

The family is an important source of support for a child's development, which is why it has been identified as the primary context for development (Schaffer, Kipp, 2015). This is particularly true in situations where daily routines are disrupted or social interactions are limited (Dhoore et al., 2024). Research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that positive, supportive relationships between parents and children in a pandemic situation reduced emotional problems and symptoms of depression in the youngest children (Cooper et al., 2021; O'Sullivan et al., 2021).

Teenagers treated the pandemic as a kind of challenge, as indicated by Italian research on teenagers who saw positive emotions in the pandemic, such as "discovering oneself", "sharing life at a distance" and "rediscovering one's family" (Fioretti, et al., 2020). Research conducted by Waters et al. (2021) on a group of 404 students aged 13–18 showed that after schools reopened during the pandemic, despite high levels of stress, students also demonstrated better skills in coping with uncertainty and controlling their daily activities.

The relationships between teenagers and their parents changed during the pandemic. Approximately 12% of older students noticed an improvement in their relationships with their parents and guardians (Pyżalski, 2020). One-third of parents and teenagers noticed that they were undertaking various activities together (Pyżalski, 2020).

APPRECIATION OF THE VALUE OF EDUCATION, INCLUDING HEALTH EDUCATION – THE THIRD POSITIVE EFFECT OF THE COVID-19 EXPERIENCE

Numerous studies to date indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected children's development and learning. These changes were observed in cognitive and social functioning. Kartushina and colleagues (2022) observed an increase in vocabulary in infants experiencing the pandemic. Finegold et al. (2023) reported that children exposed to the pandemic had higher problem-solving and fine motor skills at 24 months of age (lower social and personal skills were observed), greater vocabulary, visual memory and cognitive performance at 54 months of age. For older children who are in school, most of these changes were described as negative, in the sense that they signalled educational deficits that would be difficult to overcome (Alasino et al., 2023; Carlana et al., 2023; Dee, 2024; Goldhaber et al., 2023; Jakubowski et al., 2025). However, there are reports that the solutions developed in relation to e-education have remained in place for longer and are definitely positive, e.g. individualisation of learning, the possibility of testing knowledge and acquiring it not only in the classroom, and the use of new remote teaching tools (Omieczyńska, Przybyłowska, 2022; Weder et al., 2022; Wyrwa, Wyrwa, 2022; Zhao, Watterston, 2021). The emphasis was placed primarily on the fact that schools and classrooms are not the only places where learning can take place, and that various methods of remote teaching and knowledge acquisition need to be skilfully integrated into school life, in a sense "reinventing" it (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

APPRECIATION OF THE VALUE OF THERAPY AND SUPPORT – THE FOURTH POSITIVE EFFECT OF THE COVID-19 EXPERIENCE

Alongside the negative effects, there have been positive effects, which are surprising to some and insufficiently important to others, in that, for example, solutions to difficult problems may remain as standard procedures in a crisis. Thus, the pandemic – and let us emphasise that this is an unexpected added value – has allowed, for example, the creation of a wide network of e-diagnosis and e-therapy and the introduction of technologically advanced solutions as an obvious and helpful way of contacting specialists, teachers and people supporting children. Adverse events can, of course, also work in favour of the social system, allowing for the reorganisation of various areas of life and facilitating changes in the nature of activities. One of these areas is solutions concerning the nature of work, legal and medical solutions (e.g. how to qualify for treatment, how to issue prescriptions).

There are therefore certain positive aspects that build community spirit and resilience to stress – as a result of the strategies developed, this will remain with us. In many articles, COVID-19 is the cut-off date and the issue considered most

important. The changes described concern the improvement of e-(psycho)education, e-help, e-diagnosis, e-help, i.e. telehealth and telemedicine interventions (Andrade et al., 2021; Tukur et al., 2024 – emphasising the need for remote assessment of the child population – p. 1684). Overall, this has been positively verified during the lockdown in the COVID-19 pandemic (Kaplan, 2020) and the resulting extraordinary accelerated technological development (Amunts et al., 2024; Kocyigit et al., 2024). It is emphasised that technology facilitated survival during COVID-19, especially during lockdown, by providing, for example, an opportunity to maintain social contacts (Prati, Mancini, 2021, p. 206).

It would be very consistent to enrich the picture of difficulties with factors that strengthen individual resilience (Panzeri et al. 2021) and the real opportunity to build a technologically enriched and useful support system specifically for children (e-prescriptions, e-education, e-therapy). It is very comforting to note that exposure to prolonged stress can ultimately build resilience, but it is most difficult for the youngest and oldest members of society (Panzeri et al., 2021, p. 16). Of course, we must note that technological improvements do not compensate for children's negative experiences, but they do help them to overcome them to some extent. Secondly, social mobilisation has a similarly positive function.

The question remains open as to how successful the development of e-therapy (and previously e-diagnosis) models has been in dealing with stressful events (Kluzowicz, Kluzowicz, 2021).

SUMMARY

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, some people, including children and adolescents, have shown increased resilience (Dymecka, 2021; Namdar Areshtanab et al., 2022) and achieved positive effects in their psychophysical functioning. An important question remains whether isolation and restrictions on activities outside the home contributed to the unexpected involvement of parents in the care and education of their children. The importance of the role of parental care and education has been surprising, indicating the possibility of strengthening family bonds in crisis situations.

At the same time, there was an increased awareness of the importance of physical activity, relaxation, walks and contact with nature, which were particularly appreciated during this period and constituted an important protective factor for physical and mental health. In addition, the pandemic highlighted the role of health and pro-social education, pointing to the importance of shaping pro-health attitudes and social solidarity.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are lasting, among other things because of its global reach and significant impact on social life. This period is sometimes referred to as the "era of COVID-19" (cf. Wood et al., 2024) and is

perceived as a unifying community experience, as everyone was in a similar situation (Prati, Mancini, 2021, p. 206).

These observations may indicate the potential for positive transformation of education and psychological support systems, including the adaptation of new forms of therapy and e-diagnosis, which remain useful even after the immediate threat of the pandemic has passed. A summary of the most important positive effects of the pandemic is presented in Table 1, covering both individual and social aspects, emphasising the importance of strengthening mental resilience, family relationships and crisis coping skills.

Table 1. Factors identified in different periods of a child's life that contribute to positive effects of the COVID-19 experience

	Existing personal resources	Existing social resources and good living conditions
Early childhood	• balanced temperament and calm response to parental interventions/ parent–child emotion regulation strategies (Krijnen et al., 2023) • regular physical activity and games supporting motor development/ the virtual world which may lead to addiction in the worst scenario. The positive effects of using gadgets in some can lead to improved motor skills & cognitive skills aiding in keeping them occupied (a respite for parents), gamified learning, building competitive skills, and entertainment (Haleemunnissa et al., 2021)	• attention to a healthy daily routine (Ng, Ng, 2022) • emotional support from immediate family (emotional availability of parents, their mental health and communication style with children, creating positive parenting, as cited in Johnson et al., 2020; Krijnen et al., 2023; Ng, Ng, 2022; Woźniak-Prus et al., 2024) • effectively alleviating fears and, more broadly, providing a sense of security (Ng, Ng, 2022)
Middle childhood	• play and physical activity that brings pleasure recreational activities and other normative activities (Cost et al., 2022; Haleemunnissa et al., 2021) • the presence of positive emotions and the ability to regulate emotions in response to positive parental actions that encourage coping with emotions (self-calming)/help their children cope with the pandemic, by actively encouraging children to talk about their experiences and feelings (i.e. active parent–child emotion regulation) (Krijnen et al., 2023)	• rewarding effort and expressing satisfaction in the nursery and at home with the child/parents' ability to enjoy and appreciate the relationship with the child (Cost et al., 2022; Finegold et al., 2023; Spinelli et al., 2021; Woźniak-Prus et al., 2024) • support from adults, including conversations to reduce anxiety, encouraging both physical activity and play, engaging the child in recreational and physical activities, simple meditations; teaching them minor chores to feel more empowered / leaving no room for helplessness or boredom (Haleemunnissa et al., 2021; Krijnen et al., 2023; Ng, Ng, 2022)

Middle childhood		• support from peers/peer group, preschool friendships (Johnson et al., 2020)
Late childhood	• attachment to parents (Bate et al., 2021) • a good educational path (including emotional education and health education), enabling the use of various technologically advanced tools, including those enabling remote education/positive effects on online learning of a variety of reflection tools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020) • emotion regulation with positive affect / self-regulation and positive affect (Krijnen et al., 2023) • not giving up in the face of adversity / resourcefulness and understanding complex phenomena and reinterpreting them / children's perceived comprehension can be a positive aspect during the pandemic; positively reframed emotional; reinforcing positive beliefs; (Garcia de Avila et al., 2020; Krijnen et al., 2023; Menculini et al., 2021; Prieto-Ursúa, Jódar, 2020) • positive and adequate self-image / positive self-concept (Zoellner et al., 2025) • universalisation, i.e. a sense of similarity of experiences • cognitive and physical activity undertaken on one's own initiative / independently, including reading books and developing interests / positive effect of book reading remained significant (Kartushin et al., 2022)	• positive qualities in the parent–child relationship / positive parenting / positive and supportive parenting practices, the opportunity to share personal experiences with them, discuss difficulties with them and obtain their support / supportive, responsive parenting and a positive parent–child relationship / parents recommended, constantly, discussing with the children about the current circumstances clearly and in a direct way, to reduce undesirable reactions and to support the children to understand information obtained by the media, positive family climate (Bate et al., 2021, Chu et al., 2021; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Eisenberg et al., 2019; 2024; Gambin, Zawadzki, 2022; Ghanamah, Eghbaria-Ghanamah, 2024; Ng, Ng, 2022; Öngören, 2021; Panzeri et al., 2021; Russell et al., 2020; Spinelli et al., 2021; Weder et al., 2022; Woźniak-Prus et al., 2024; Zoellner et al., 2025) • establishing and maintaining satisfying peer relationships / presence of positive peer relationships / peer connectedness and strengthening the natural social support network (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Eisenberg et al., 2024; Ng, Ng, 2022; Weder et al., 2022) • warm and friendly relationships with teachers (Chu et al., 2021; Gambin, Zawadzki, 2021; Ng, Ng, 2022) • school community (positive school climate / school connectedness / for many children, the school environment provides an escape and better conditions for development, Haleemunnissa et al., 2021; Ng, Ng, 2022) • community and active community engagement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020)

Early adolescence	• flexibility in thinking and acting, adaptive skills (e.g. adaptability, communication, and social skills) and creativity/cognitive creativity, emotional creativity (Du et al., 2021, McArthur et al., 2023) • learning to take a holistic view of one's health situation/health-promoting habits (Izdebski et al., 2023) • making a cognitive assessment of one's situation and actively seeking benefits from it / positively reevaluating one's views / children's perceived comprehension can be a positive aspect during the pandemic; positive reinterpretation and positive reframing of the negative experience / keeping a positive approach, effective communication strategies and understanding the problem statement, will help in dealing with the mental health issues faced by the world in this hour of crisis / appraise situations positively (i.e. perceiving them as more manageable) / positive reappraisal; positive reinterpretation (Castiglioni et al., 2023; Garcia de Avila et al., 2020; Izdebski et al. al., 2023; Menculini et al., 2021; Prieto-Ursúa, Jódar, 2020) • monitoring one's own health and maintaining a healthy lifestyle (Izdebski et al., 2023) • understanding the limited possibilities of influencing religious/spiritual events and reflections to perceive meaning in life, spirituality, and religiosity (Prieto-Ursúa, Jódar, 2020) • life satisfaction and engaging in positive and entertaining experiences with others, as well as the ability to use support (including positive reflection and gratitude) (Chu et al., 2021; Grzelak et al., 2021)	• group experience, including peer group cohesion, a sense of group attraction, and support from friends and peers (Dhoore et al., 2024; Fioretti et al., 2020) • family cohesion and support from family, perceived close relationships with parents (youth maintaining closer relationships with parents) – positive, responsive parenting can play important protective roles in the development of children's stress-related symptoms (Dhoore et al., 2024; Fioretti et al., 2020; Gambin, Zawadzki, 2021; Garcia de Avila et al., 2020; Grzelak et al., 2021; Kleszczewska et al., 2024; McArthur et al., 2023; Öngören, 2021; Russell et al., 2020; Woźniak-Prus et al., 2024; Zoellner et al., 2025) • positive education and support from schools, including teachers, are more strongly positively associated with children's life satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic than before; school-wide wellness supports (Dhoore et al., 2024; Du et al., 2021; Dvorsky et al., 2021; Fioretti et al., 2020; Gambin, Zawadzki, 2021; Garcia de Avila et al., 2020; Waters et al., 2021; Zoellner et al., 2025) • active engagement in community life and received social support; young people need support to develop healthy coping mechanisms as they begin to process the potentially adverse effects of COVID-19 (Kleszczewska et al., 2024; O'Sullivan et al., 2021)

Source: Authors' own study.

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ABSTRAKT

Celem przeglądu jest identyfikacja badań opisujących nieoczekiwane pozytywne skutki pandemii COVID-19 dla rozwoju, zdrowia psychicznego oraz funkcjonowania społecznego i edukacyjnego dzieci. Stanowi on uzupełnienie wcześniejszej publikacji poświęconej negatywnym skutkom. Choć w literaturze dominują doniesienia o trudnościach, niektóre badania wskazują na możliwe aspekty korzystne. Wśród potencjalnych korzyści wymienia się pogłębienie relacji rodzinnych, zwłaszcza między dziećmi a rodzicami, oraz bardziej selektywne, lecz jakościowo lepsze relacje rówieśnicze. Zdalna edukacja, mimo problemów, bywała oceniana pozytywnie ze względu na możliwość dostosowania tempa nauki do indywidualnych potrzeb. W obszarze zdrowotnym zauważono wzrost świadomości profilaktycznej oraz rozwój e-medycyny i e-terapii. Przegląd literatury oparto na bazach APA PsycArticles, PubMed i Google Scholar, z wykorzystaniem m.in. słów kluczowych: „COVID-19", „dziecko", „adolescent", „zdrowie psychiczne", *mental health*, *well-being*, „rozwój pourazowy", „czynniki ochronne". Pandemia była doświadczeniem granicznym, które – zgodnie z teorią cyklu życia – może mieć zarówno destrukcyjny, jak i rozwojowy wpływ. Pozytywne efekty pojawiały się zwłaszcza przy dobrym funkcjonowaniu rodziny i wsparciu emocjonalnym rodziców, ujawniając zdolność dzieci do adaptacji i wzmacniania więzi.

Słowa kluczowe: pandemia; rozwój; czynniki ochronne; dzieci; młodzież