Tracking children's mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic

Talk by Dr Edwin Dalmaijer

PRE-PANDEMIC

Resilience in Education and Development: Longitudinal Findings

Sample:

School group
- N=600 children in school
- 7-9 years old

Lab group
- N=100 children tested in brain scanners
- 7-9 years old
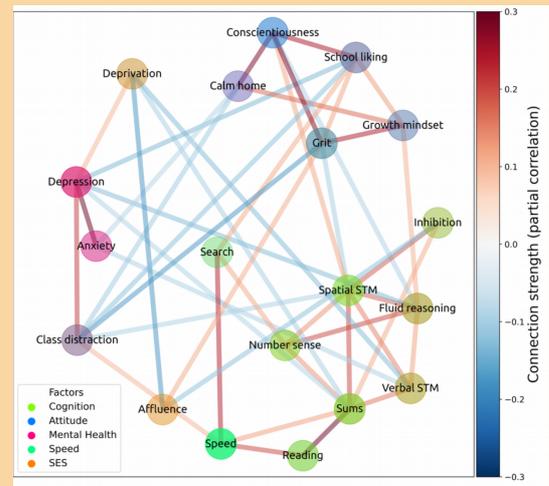
DURING LOCKDOWN

Sample: reinviting previously tested participants during lockdown

- N=114 from school group (age: 10.5 years)
- N=54 from lab group (age: 9.4 years)

FINDINGS

Questionnaires: Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

1 **Good news:** stable emotional problems
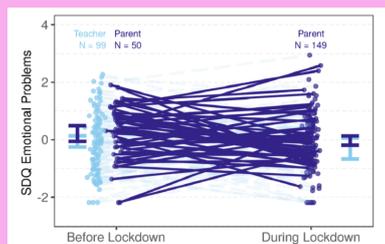
2 **Good news:** no changes in anxiety
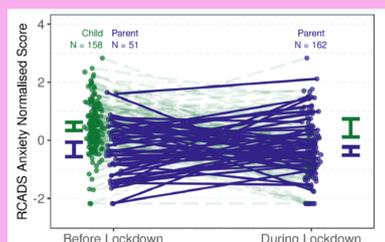
3 **Bad news:** increase in depression
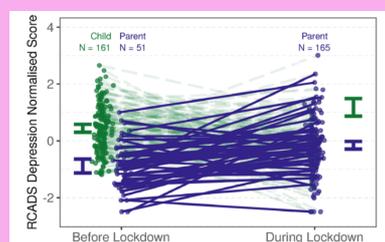
Important things to keep in mind:

We used symptom questionnaires
- Not the same as depression diagnosis
- Parent-rated questions; expect some bias

Increses were only found in one area
- Emotional problems and axiety were stable

Child wellbeing is but one piece of the puzzle
- For children to be happy and to flourish is important
- For teachers to be safe and healthy is important too!
- Our findings need to be weighted up against all-important testing, modelling, and other epidemiological work

SUMMARY

Children increased on depression symptoms
- Parents rated increases in their child's wanting to move, tiredness, sadness, and their feeling nothing is fun

Children were stable on emotional problems and anxiety
- This is good news!

Pre-existing condition might be important!
- In adults, those with existing mental health problems often fare worse under lockdown and related measures
- Socio-economic status impacts development; we found no impact here, but our sample was a little biased to high SES