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COVID-19 Pandemic: No Effect on the Children of Trinidad and Tobago

After receiving confirmation from the Minister of Health Terrance Deyalsingh on March 12, 2020 of the first case of the Covid-19 Coronavirus visiting the shores of Trinidad and Tobago, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago the Honourable Dr. Keith Rowley announced on March 13, 2020 the closure of all schools, universities, and places of learning as a measure to effectively reduce exposure of the Covid-19 amongst citizens.

The nation's children 'relished' in a lengthy vacation from physical learning from March 2020 with the hope of returning to learning institutions for the new academic year commencing in September 2020, as announced by the Ministry of Education. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic 'categorically' had a mind of its own, and continued 'revelry' throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

As such, Trinidad and Tobago commenced the school term in September 2020 with an online learning platform. Minister of Education Dr. Nyan Gadsby Dolly acknowledged in a report on 'Caricom Today, September 2, 2020', "there may be difficulties due to the new method of learning," but went further to state... "once disciplined, ...can adapt and adjust... to this home-based learning".

At present, the children of Trinidad and Tobago continue to 'appreciate' on-line learning. Students who have access to technology such as desktop computers, lap tops, tablets, and even smartphones, are able to join the available platforms such as google meet, google classroom or zoom. Therefore, freely visiting websites, and social media platforms in an effort to support their learning. Gone are the days of visiting the public libraries, purchasing newspapers or magazines, purchasing 'bristol boards' or saving that 'cornflakes box' and 'toilet paper roll' to complete research and projects to present to teachers and classmates. In light of this, are measures being initiated for our children to enjoy physical activity?

While the citizens thankfully reign joys of freedom: 'Reopening of the Retail Sector in Trinidad and Tobago on August 16 2021', 'Businesses fully reopen from Oc-

tober 11, 2021', then the 'Official lifting of the Covid-19 related State of Emergency on November 17, 2021', citizens 'vaccinated and unvaccinated' delight in the freedom of movement and pleasures of leisure. However, the nation's children continue to cry inwardly, hoping maybe they can also experience an extent of freedom whilst still being prisoners in their homes since March 2020, and measures are being taken to heed this call.

Are there serious investigations or research being undertaken to evaluate our nation's children 'Physical Health', 'Psychiatric/Mental or Emotional Well-being', and 'Lifestyle' in this 'New Normal' which has fast become the norm in many sectors of the society? Are parents with children experiencing 'Autism', and 'ADHD' being reached out by those sectors with a view to aid in treating and managing children who require same? Are the authorities aware of those children who are under little supervision, who play the role of mothers and fathers to their siblings, due to parents now working at least two jobs to pay bills, to provide food or shelter for their families? Have the many children's organizations, whether it be Governmental or Non-Governmental reached out to children who 'dropped' out of the Education system due to circumstances not under their control?

On April 15 2020, the United Nation issued a "Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on children" which highlighted "three main channels through which children are affected by this crisis: infection with the virus itself; the immediate socioeconomic impacts of measures to stop transmission of the virus and end the pandemic; and the potential longer-term effects of delayed implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals". In light of this, this writer's hope is that through the many sectors of Trinidad and Tobago namely: 'Trinidad and Tobago Associate of Psychologists', 'Children's Authority', 'National Family Services', and even the 'Ministry of Social Development and Family Services' measures can be placed with a view to treating with the children of Trinidad and Tobago as mentioned above.

Additionally, whilst I commend the Children's Authority's plea for the public of Trinidad and Tobago to refrain from circulating the video of the murder of Prison Officer Nigel Jones who was shot and killed in the presence of his daughter. The Minister of Social Development Donna Cox extending counselling services to the daughter of the murdered Officer Mr. Jones. However, this writer would also like to urge this organization and other government agencies to extend this counselling to the many children who felt pain for this child and the family and colleagues of Prisons Officers that would have been scarred after witnessing same.

This writer enquires, are we really numb to the fact that every gruesome act being circulated on the Internet and social media, are in the grasp of our children, and how have these acts affected the nation's children mental capacity/health? To this end, keep in mind that this Covid-19 Pandemic is in many ways affecting the children of Trinidad and Tobago.

Talia Keita
(student, CCLCS)