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The consequences of mandatory wearing of masks during developmental age.

The mask has become a symbol of the change in social habits since the Italian Government decided to impose its use in March 2020 with the law decree of ‘Cura Italia’ (Care Italy).

Without entering the debate of the effectiveness, efficiency, health issues due to the possible side effects of this accessory, it should be emphasized that nothing has been said about the psychological impact of the mask, especially for children.

To start with some with some preliminary considerations: the mask covers a large part of the face, preventing the recognition, interpretation and imitation of facial expressions. According to the most eminent scholars of the branch of psychology known as "body language", facial expression is one of the most important aspects of human communication.^{8,9,10,11} (Ekman, P. 1970, Friesen, Ekman, P. & Friesen, W. V., 1971. W. V., & Tomkins, S. S Ekman, P., 1972. Ekman P. 1972). The face is not only responsible for sharing thoughts and ideas, but above all for emotions.

This mimicry is innate and universal, but its understanding must be "trained" with interpersonal interactions¹⁶ (Mariska Kret, 2015)

Brain imaging Investigations have shown that the perception of facial expressions in adults is processed by a circuit consisting of three cortical areas: the fusiform gyrus (FG) 13 (Ishai A, 2010), the occipital face area (OFA) and the superior temporal sulcus (STS); moreover, this circuit is connected with the amygdala (the emotional brain) and the orbitofrontal cortex (the cognitive region) 14 (Jiang Y, Shannon RW, Vizueta N, Bernat EM, Patrick CJ, He S. 2008). However, this does not apply to children. During childhood these areas only appear "sketchy", whereas these connections are more or less non-existent at birth and evolve with the growth and being in society.

The Wearing of "bridles"(mask) during exchanges with other children during school time, not only causes a sort of emotional illiteracy 3 (Capps L, Yirmiya N, Sigman M et al, 1992), but also causes an irreversible reduction in the volume of the areas mentioned .

Therefore the consequences, are dramatic: most of all, because this condition follows what is found in those suffering from autism spectrum disorders 11, 15 (Harms MB, Martin A, Wallace GL, 2010; Loth E, Garrido L, Ahmad et al, 2018)): in essence, the use of the mask causes a "functional autism" 2, 4, 12, 17 (Baron-Cohen S; Herba C, Phillips M, 2004; Celani G, Battacchi MW, Ardiacono, 1999; Pelphley KA, Sasson NJ, Reznick et al. 2002).

The face not only communicates emotions or intentions, but predominately

identity. Because it is so be able to distinguish a face and its features that there is a specific area in the human brain which is there exclusively for this task (on important point is that; if we look at a car or a mobile phone, it is not activated).

This area is called the FFA (facial fusiform area) 14 (Kanwisher N, Yovel G) Since it is an area of the brain which evolves during the age of development. If during this phase of development the face is covered by a mask for most of the time (the hours spent at school with class friends and teachers), the risk is that it atrophies with the consequence that the child or boy will no longer be able to distinguish one face from another, or to create an image of himself, to be able to recognize the traits that distinguish the gender: in practice, the young person will grow up asexual, without identity and without the ability to understand who he is dealing with.

The habit of wearing the mask will therefore induce 5 (Dalrymple KA, Corrow S, Yonas A et al. 2012), a usually congenital perceptual deficit known as prosopagnosia 19, 20 (Pizzamiglio MR, M De Luca M, Di Vita A et al., 2017, De Luca, M., Pizzamiglio, MR, Di Vita, A., Palermo et al., 2019) These "disabilities" caused by the prolonged use of a mask during the age of development inevitably results in the child being unable to develop the basic values of social life, such as empathy, sincerity, altruism, solidarity, trust, fidelity, love, etc. that is, the fragments that together constitute the spirit of aggregation and the formation of bonds: from friendship, to the group, to the first "blow" and to the most important nucleus on which human society is based: the family. Children denied identity and the ability to express and understand emotions, in turn will be unable to create, their own family and this will cause an unraveling of the entire social fabric.

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