

## Examining the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic Context on Phonological Awareness among Preschool Children

Marisa G. Filipe<sup>1</sup>, Sónia Frota<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Lisbon (UL)

marisafilipe.rt@gmail.com; sonia.frota@mail.telepac.pt

Although it could be expected that the COVID-19 pandemic context negatively impacts preschool children's abilities associated with later reading skills, to our knowledge there is no research on the topic. Our study focused on the COVID-19 pandemic impact on phonological awareness, a skill that reliably predicts later reading abilities (see Melby-Lervåg, Lyster, & Hulme, 2012 for a meta-analysis). Seventy-nine typically developing European Portuguese children participated in this study (41 girls; mean age = 64.5 months, SD = 3.47). Children were enrolled in their last year of preschool, which was dramatically affected by COVID-19. Between November and December 2021, participants completed a syllable segmentation task, and results indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic context led to significant decreases in phonemic awareness of preschool children in comparison with pre-pandemic normative data,  $t(166)=15.092$ ;  $p<0.001$ ; Cohen's  $d = 2.3$ . Between January and March 2023, the same group of children is again completing the syllable segmentation task to explore the impact of the pandemic effect across time. These findings extend the literature about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the learning progress of young children.

### References

Melby-Lervåg, M., Lyster, S. A., & Hulme, C. (2012). Phonological skills and their role in learning to read: a meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 138(2), 322–352. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026744>