

Children's Worlds National Report

Bangladesh



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1. Introduction

This report presents the results from the Children’s Worlds COVID-19 Special Survey which was conducted in Bangladesh in 2021. The aim of the report is to give a brief descriptive overview of what Bangladeshi children told us about their life during the pandemic in the country in this international comparative survey, which asked similar questions to children from over twenty countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, North America. Results of more in depth analysis of data focusing on particular aspects of children’s life in Bangladesh and comparing the results with those from other participating countries in this international project will be presented separately in future. This report will first describe the context of children’s lives in Bangladesh. It will then briefly explain the survey methodology especially the sampling which will be followed by descriptive results. The report will be concluded by highlighting some key findings and describing further plan for disseminating survey findings.

1.1 Context and population

Bangladesh, a relatively new country in South Asia, has become independent in 1971. Although most of its land is flat, the significant feature of the landscape is the extensive network of large and small rivers that are of primary importance in the socio-economic life of the nation. The country covers an area of 147,570 square kilometers with a huge population of above 167 million making it one of the most densely populated (1077 people per square km) countries in the world. Having almost 28% people below 15 years old and another 20% in 15-24 years, it can be characterized as a youth populated country as nearly half of the country’s population is below 25 years old.

The majority of the people are Muslims (around 89.35%) and the rest are Hindus (9.64%), Buddhists (0.57%), and Christians (0.27%), while other minorities constitute a small portion (0.17%). Although Bengali are the main ethnic group (98%), there are almost 2% ethnic minority people who speak non-Bengali and have their own customs and tradition. Almost 34% people live in urban areas and literacy rate (15 years and above who can read and write) in the country is 61%.

Although agriculture is still the dominant mode of production, the recent development of commercial non-farm agriculture, such as poultry and dairy, and the ready-made garment industry has led to the migration of a large section of the population to large cities and/or overseas for economic and other reasons. Bangladesh is aiming to achieve the status of a middle-income country by 2024 from its least developed status, and its per capita income is \$1,900 and GDP per capita is US \$1,698. However, income inequality at national level has been increasing in the last few decades.

Administratively, the entire country is divided into five layers: *Bibhagh* (division), *Zila* (district), *Upazila* (sub district), *Union*, and *Ward*. At present, there are 7 divisions, 64 districts, 483 *Upazilas*, 4,498 unions, and 40,482 wards.

1.1.1 Family and child policies

In order to reduce population pressure in Bangladesh, family planning remains one of the top priorities in the fourth Health Sector Programme 2017-2021, as a path toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2011, Bangladesh Govt. introduced National Children Policy in which individuals under 18 are defined children and those between 14 and 18 years of age further defined as adolescents. The National Children Policy promises to ensure child rights, alleviate child poverty, and eliminate all forms of child abuse and discrimination and promote participation of the children and accept their views into consideration in overall protection and, in the best interest of the children. According to the Bangladesh constitution, every child has basic rights to have primary education at free of costs. Bangladesh laws prohibit marriage before age 18 for girls and age 21 for boys. However, girl marriage at earlier ages is still prevalent here.

Child labour in Bangladesh is common, with 4.7 million or 12.6% of children aged 5 to 14 in the work force. In 2006, Bangladesh passed a Labour Law setting the minimum legal age for employment as 14. Nevertheless, the enforcement of such laws appears to be challenging in Bangladesh because 93% of child labourers are employed in the informal sector such as small factories and workshops, on the street, in home-based businesses and domestic employment.

1.1.2 Education system

A four-tier education system exists in Bangladesh and it is still dominated by the British education system introduced in colonial period. Usually at age 5, children start primary education for 5 years and then move into secondary school for another 5 years. After secondary education, students enter into college for two years and go to university or approved colleges for their undergraduate and master's degree. Currently, the education system is heterogeneous and complex; many systems of education have been permitted to develop and exist side by side. The formal education has three main streams: Bengali-medium general education, English-medium education and religion-based education.

Bangladesh has made tremendous improvements in increasing the accessibility to education as the net enrolment rate is respectively 97.96% and 67.84% for primary and secondary level. Moreover, slightly over a half of the students at both primary and secondary levels are females, suggesting that Bangladesh has achieved gender parity for educational access in both early stages of education.

1.1.3 Family environment

There has been a dramatic change in family structure as nuclear families are becoming a norm due to a number of factors including urbanization, use of tools in agriculture and development of non-farming sectors. Because of patrilineal system, very low welfare support, and high dependency on families to care elderly, boys generally receive more opportunities than girls do, as they are perceived as future breadwinners for families.

1.1.3 Everyday life

Schoolchildren are mostly busy with their studies. Children in general or religious education start at 10am and finish at 4pm whereas the English medium schools start at 8 or 9am and finish at lunch or afternoon depending on level of study. Children are usually busy with their homework. In addition, they spend most of their 'out of school time' for private tuition, learning Quran recitation, music and drawings. They hardly find extra time for play especially those who are living in towns and cities.

1.1. 4 Unequal childhoods

Childhood inequality in Bangladesh is evident in key aspects of children's life and influenced by a number of factors including gender, location, region, wealth, ethnicity, religion. According to 'End of Childhood Report 2018' by Save the Children, Bangladesh scored 701 out of a possible 1,000 points – representing a 21-point improvement, the biggest increase for any country in South Asia – primarily due to one factor: more Bangladeshi children now remain in school. However, it is still ranked a disappointing 130th out of 175 countries. The ranking was based on an index which was constituted from seven factors: under-5 mortality, school dropout rate, child labour, violence against children, child malnutrition, child marriage, and adolescent pregnancy. According to the report (Save the Children, 2018), more than a third of children under 5 still suffer from stunting, 44% of teenagers are married before they turn 20, and nearly 3.5% of children do not survive their fifth birthday. According to UNESCO data, Bangladesh's dropout rate for school children has gone down by 36% over the past five years. Despite the progress in primary education, many children are still outside the formal school system.

1.1.5 Children rights

Bangladesh signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990. Although Children Act 1974 and National Child Policy 2011 were introduced in Bangladesh to ensure overall protection of the children and their rights, around 70 percent births are not registered yet. Corporal punishment of children appears to be rooted in Bangladesh culture as it is still used to bring discipline in classroom and other aspects of children's lives. Although children's involvement in economic activities has been reducing, a large number of children from agricultural and lower social class backgrounds are directly engaged in income earning activities.

1.2 Context of COVID-19 in Bangladesh

1.2.1 Covid pandemic timeline

The timeline of COVID-19 in Bangladesh can be classified into six phases. In phase one, COVID-19 arrived in Bangladesh from January 2020 to March 2020, followed by the first wave and General Holiday or lockdown from March 2020 to May 2020 in phase two. The third and the fourth phase continued from June 2020 to December 2020 and from December 2020 to March 2021. Under the fifth phase, we had the second wave spanning from March 2021 to May 2021, followed by the third, and the final wave ranging from May 2021 to August 2021 (IEDCR 2020).

The literature on COVID-19 and its far-reaching impact can be broadly classified into three types. The first types deal with the transmission, its reasons, and severity through the general holiday or government intervention through lockdown (Goswami et al., 2020; Goswami et al., 2021). The second type of study deals with its impact on inequality, stock market contagion, and other effects (Goswami & Labiba, 2021; Uddin et al., 2022). The third type deals with the geo-economics, social and political aspects of the pandemic (Barai & Dhar, 2021)

The first positive coronavirus case was identified in Bangladesh on 8 March 2020. The average number of positive cases in the same month of the same year was two, whereas this figure sharply climbed to 253 in the next month. This trend continued, and the number of positive cases increased rapidly. From the beginning to the mid of May 2020, only three percent of positive patients were below ten years old, while the percentage of children aged between 11 and 20 with corona positive results was eight (Islam et al. 2020). Other statistics show that the percentage of children with positive cases increased from 13 to 55 between April 2020 and November 2020 (Komol, 2021). Almost seven in ten affected people were males. On average, the death rate per day was four. The percentage of children's deaths due to this virus was two. Gender-based death statistics also show the same trend (Islam et al., 2020).

COVID-19 outbreak in general and general holidays or lockdown, in particular, harmed the lives of children, the most vulnerable and physically challenged. This includes loss of family income, disruption of their access to healthcare services, education, and overall physical (free from physical violence and punishments) and mental (social interaction with friends, relatives, and well-wishers, free from fear, anxiety, and worry) wellbeing (Hussain and Al Mamun, 2020; Islam et al. 2020; Save the Children, n.d).

1.2.2 Nature of Lockdown

The nature of lockdown in Bangladesh was minimal and it was limited to social distancing, wearing of masks, and closure of educational institutions and other offices but only on a limited scale. The

readymade garments industry went through lockdown only for a limited time which paved the way for earning foreign exchanges through export. Other than educational institutions, the lockdown was softer, which helped Bangladesh to fight against recession and move towards recovery within the shortest possible time. Due to digital inequality Bangladeshi children from lower-income brackets and attached to the public schooling system were severely affected during school closure because the education was not made-up properly through online teaching as it was done in English medium schools where students come from a relatively affluent part of the society.

1.2.3 Economy during the pandemic

Like other developing countries, Bangladesh's economy has been significantly affected by the corona pandemic. Many garment factories, mills, poultry industries, markets, and shopping malls were closed following the social distance policy. The amounts of remittance, the core of Bangladesh's economy, have also been decreasing due to this catastrophe (Islam et al. 2020). Eighty-one of 121 children in a study reported in their telephone interviews that their family income stopped due to the corona pandemic. Sixty-four percent of the same group also mentioned a severe food crisis in their household during the corona period (Save the Children, n.d). About 72% of respondents experienced a decreased household income due to reduced informal work and unpaid leave in another study interviewing 2529 people (iMMAP, 2022).

1.2.4 Education

The access by children to educational facilities has seriously been affected by the COVID-19 crisis. The government of Bangladesh declared the closure of educational institutions on 16 March 2020 (Save the Children, n.d.) and opened primary, secondary, and higher secondary educational institutions on 21 September 2021, almost one and a half year later (iMMAP, 2022). During the crisis period, children's learning at home was not functioning. In a survey on telephone interviews of 121 Bangladeshi children, it was found that only 12% of children going to educational institutions before the crisis continued their studies at home in full swing, while 23% and 65% of the same pupil reported that they did not study at all and studied a little respectively. Neither family members nor the educational institute authority provided support to continue their studies during this period (Save the Children, n.d). 30%, 18%, and 15% of the respondents of another survey of 2529 adults were worried about the gap in their children's learning capacity and skills, their ability to afford increasing educational expenses, and rising costs for online learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic respectively (iMMAP, 2022).

Some private schools tried to engage their students with online-based digital activities, which were unsuccessful due to their nature. However, online teaching was, to some extent, effective because, with the help of this device, students could somehow maintain continuity in their education. However, the question remains how far it was effective without face-to-face interaction between teachers and students. But the online teaching is severely criticized for its failure to interact with students effectively compared to face-to-face sessions, which are perceived to be more interactive and effective. The severity of the effect is the most disastrous for children because they always learn through games, sports, interaction, and physical activities in groups.

1.2.5 Digital Disparity

The laboratory-based education was seriously affected because it is challenging to conduct wet-lab activities from a remote control. That's why the negative effect of online teaching and learning is more severe in science education. The vaccination for children was taking a long time to finalize compared to the older and adult population, putting children at a disadvantageous position in the same family. But this problem has been wiped out gradually in most countries. COVID-19 was a test case for inequality in developing and lower-income countries. But it helped them to create the most demand-driven internet infrastructure. Due to the lack of access to digital registration by the low-income population, they were not fully covered. For instance, household heads are vaccinated, but their house-help is not vaccinated (Goswami & Labiba, 2021). But this situation is now changing due to the introduction of walk-in vaccination for unregistered people in Bangladesh.

1.2.6 Psychosocial wellbeing

How children spend their time during the lockdown condition is an indicator of their psychosocial wellbeing. In Bangladesh, 66% of 121 children interviewed were helping their parents in the household, whereas the figure for watching television and looking after elders/children, and the sick was 60% and 40%, respectively. Children were also psychologically traumatized during the lockdown period as a result of the corona pandemic. Eighty-three of 121 children interviewed reported that they were worried about parents' loss of income and livelihood, scared of infection and death, deprived of outdoor playing opportunities, and sad about something, especially physical violence, during this crisis period (Save the Children, n.d).

2. Sampling: Strategy and outcome

For this study, data were collected data from 1,370 children aged 10-12 years using two modes: face-to-face interview and online survey. In both cases, convenient sampling was used. Bangladesh has 64 districts (administrative units). Interview data were gathered mainly by concentrating on three

districts which were also included in previous wave (Wave 3) of Children’s Worlds survey in Bangladesh. We purposively selected these three districts for easy access to schools as the Co-Is in Bangladesh live in these three regions and they have easy access to schools in their own regions. Co-I from each region used their own professional networks and other links to find children in the three age groups. They have also contacted local school teachers for their supports in getting access to children. Although convenient sampling was used, attention was paid to get a balanced representation of children by gender and rural-urban location (village, sub-urban, and city).

Originally, the plan was to gather data through face-to-face interviews only. However, when fieldwork was about to start, the Second Wave of COVID hit Bangladesh and the country went under lockdown for a considerable period. It was not clear when restrictions would be lifted. As there was huge uncertainty on face-to-face data collection because of lockdown, it was decided to start data collection using online method during lockdown (2nd wave). However, almost two weeks after launching online survey, lockdown restriction was gradually lifted although schools were still closed. For face-to-face interview, the survey team approached children mostly in their home. There were a few cases where children were interviewed in school setting when they came to collect homework from school on pre-defined dates by schools.

For online data collection, the Co-Is used their professional network (teaching) to find children of the selected age groups. Although there were some children who participated from other regions in the country, majority of the children who took part in online version of the survey came from large city (mainly Dhaka—the capital city). The total number of children completed online survey was 310 (22.6% of total sample in Bangladesh).

Table 1: Distribution of sample by region and mode of data collection

Region	Data collection mode		Total
	Interviews	Online	
Barishal district (Southern part of Bangladesh)	350	0	350
Rajshahi district (North-West of Bangladesh)	360	0	360
Moulvibazar district (North-East of Bangladesh)	350	0	350
Dhaka city (and a few other regions)	0	310	310
Total	1060	310	1370

Active consent was sought from both children and their parents/guardians before data collection started. Obtaining consent from parents living in rural area was not that difficult Parents living in urban areas were reluctant in some cases as they were less familiar to the researchers. Some parents

in urban areas did not permit their children to participate in this survey. However, the percentage of this case is small.

3. Results

3.1 Participants' age and gender

Table 2 presents age and gender distribution of the children who took part in the survey. It is observed that equal number of boys and girls participated in the survey. Although the survey aimed to gather equal number of children from the three age groups, ten years old children (who usually study in class five—the final year in primary school) were slightly less than the other two age groups: 11 years old who usually study in class six—the first year in high school and 12 years who usually study in class seven (second year) in high school.

Table 2: Distribution of children in the survey by their gender and age (%)

	10 year-old	11 year-old	12 year-old	Total ¹
Girl	174 (54.0)	231 (51.0)	275 (48.0)	680 (50.0)
Boy	151 (46.0)	218 (49.0)	304 (52.0)	673 (50.0)
Total	325 (100)¹	449 (100)²	579 (100)³	1353 (100)

¹ Missing cases = 17.

3.2 The people children live with

To understand the context of children's life, the survey asked about the people who children live with during the pandemic. Almost 88% of them were found to live with their family in their own home (Table 3). Among the rest, around 11% reported to live with their family but at a different place (not at their regular home). Almost 1% of the children reported to live with a family different than their own.

Table 3. Type of people children live with (%)

Type	Number of children (%)
With my family, in our home	1187 (87.7)
With my family, but at a different place (not at our regular home)	147 (10.9)
With my family, but in more than one home, because my parents live in different homes	3 (0.2)
With my family, but in more than one home, because my family has more than one home	6 (0.4)
In a family different than mine	10 (0.7)
Total	1353 (100.0)¹

¹ Missing cases = 17

3.3 Children's situation during the Coronavirus pandemic

In response to the questions that describe children's situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, more than eight out of ten children reported their area (city/town/village) to be under lockdown for many days (Table 4). Almost nine out of ten children acknowledged that they could not attend school for many days due to COVID pandemic. Around two-third children reported that they had to stay at home for many days during the pandemic. Almost one-third of the children reported that they had to be extra careful because they had someone at their home who was at high risk of getting very ill if they got infected with COVID-19. In terms of the spread of the disease, almost four out of ten children reported that they knew someone in their neighborhood or in friend's circle who got infected with COVID-19. Just over one in ten children reported that they themselves or somebody in their home had COVID infection.

Table 4. Children's responses to questions describing their situation during the pandemic (%)

Situation during the pandemic	Yes	No	Not sure
Everybody in my city/town/village was in lockdown for many days (N = 1353) ¹	84.0	11.6	4.4
Me or somebody in my home got infected with Coronavirus (N = 1353) ¹	12.5	84.7	2.8
Somebody in my family (not living with me) got infected with Coronavirus (N = 1353) ¹	12.5	82.6	4.9
Somebody I know got infected with Coronavirus (e.g.: from my neighborhood or in a friend's family) (N = 1353) ¹	39.2	50.5	10.3

At home we had to be very careful because somebody was considered at high risk of getting very ill if they got infected with the Coronavirus (N = 1353) ¹	33.0	62.7	4.3
I had to stay at home for many days (N = 1353) ¹	66.5	32.2	1.3
I could not attend school for many days (N = 1353) ¹	91.6	7.9	0.5

Results in Table 5 suggest that almost all children (96%) reported their school to be closed during lockdown. Over two-third children (68.5%) reported they stayed in their home all day because of the Coronavirus. Slightly less than one in five children (17.4%) indicated that at least one of their parents was forced to stop working and did not receive money from the government. Almost half of the children (51.5%) reported that there were times when they were only allowed to leave their home for a few hours during the day because of the Coronavirus. Only a small number of children (4.1%) reported that their family had to move to another home during the pandemic.

Table 5. Children’s responses to questions describing their situation during the pandemic (%)

Statements describing pandemic situation to the children	Yes	No	Not sure
My family had to move to another home	4.1	93.6	2.3
At least one of my parents was forced/had to stop working and receive money from the government	6.0	89.7	4.3
At least one of my parents was forced to stop working and did not receive money from the government	17.4	72.0	10.6
My school was closed during lockdown	96.1	3.8	0.1
There were times where I had to be in my home all day (including the garden, yard or balcony, if you have) because of the Coronavirus	68.5	29.6	1.8
There were times where I was only allowed to leave my home for a few hours during the day because of the Coronavirus	51.5	45.3	3.2

3.4 Feeling safe

In response to the question on their feelings on safety during the pandemic, around eight out of ten children reported to feel safe at home (Table 6). However, when asked their feelings on the same aspect regarding school, more than half of them did not seem to feel safe at school. Result shows that around one-fifth (21.1%) of the children did not feel safe when they walk around in the area they live. Similarly, around one-third (30.2%) of the children did not feel safe with the friends. Moreover, around one-third (30.3%) of the children did not agree when they were asked if they feel alone. However, over one-fourth (27.1%) of the children totally agreed with the statement that they felt

protected from corona virus. Around one-third (33.0%) of the children totally agreed when they were asked if they feel bored and around-half (43.2 %) of the children said they miss their friends. However, over one-third of the children (36.7) did not agree that they had problems with siblings during pandemic.

Table 6: Children’s degree of agreement with items linked safety during COVID-19 pandemic (%)

Item	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
I feel safe at home	4.4	5.1	10.4	17.9	62.2
I feel safe at school	37.5	16.4	18.6	13.2	14.3
I feel safe when I walk around in the area I live in	21.1	17.9	24.2	16.6	20.1
I feel safe with my friends	30.2	18.3	19.3	16.0	16.2
I feel alone	24.8	14.9	13.3	16.8	30.3
I feel protected from the Coronavirus	27.4	12.3	17.0	16.2	27.1
I feel bored	20.9	15.9	14.5	15.7	33.0
I miss my friends	13.9	9.4	13.4	20.1	43.2
I have problems with siblings	36.7	21.3	17.0	11.0	14.0

3.5 Children’s access to material resources during the pandemic

In response to the question on their access to material resources over two-thirds (89.9%) of the children said that they have access to good clothes. Similarly, over two-thirds (83.4%) of the children had two pair of shoes (83.4%) in well condition. Moreover, over two-thirds (86.7%) of the children had things they need for school. Around half of the children (50.1%) reported that they have their own room, a place in their home to study (53.8%) and mobile phone (50.4 %). However, when asked if they have computer or tablets, only one fourth (26.8%) of the children replied in the positive. The result presented in Table 7 further suggests that around two-third (69.4%) of the children have things/equipment needed for sports or hobbies although around half of the children (43.5%) have money to spend by themselves.

Table 7: Children’s access to material items

Material items	% reported to have each item at their home
Own room	50.1
Clothes in good condition	89.9
Enough money for school trips and activities	64.4
Access to the internet at home	39.2
The equipment/things you need for sports and hobbies	69.4
Pocket money / money to spend on yourself	43.5
Two pairs of shoes in good condition	83.4
A mobile phone	50.4
The equipment/things you need for school	86.7
Access to computer or a tablet when needed	26.8
A place in your home where you can study	53.8

3.6 Knowledge and information about the Coronavirus

Result in the table 8 suggest that around one-fourth (25.2%) of the children totally agreed with the statement that they had enough information about corona virus while only one-tenth (10%) of the children did not have enough information. It also shows that over one-third (36.7%) of the children had talked within the family about corona pandemic. Over one-fourth (26.8%) of the children totally agreed that their opinion has been taken seriously in the home and around half (44.6%) of the children totally agreed that they received a lot of information from their family members or caregivers while over one-fourth (26.9%) of the children did not disagree that they have received information from other children.

Around one-third (34.7%) of the children totally agreed that they have received information from their teachers. At the same time, over one-third (39.2%) of the children totally disagreed that they have received information from social media. Over half (50.9%) of the children totally agreed that they have received information from news. However, around one-third (30.1%) of the children did not disagree that a lot of news about corona virus is unreliable.

Table 8: Children’s knowledge and information about the Coronavirus (% agreed)

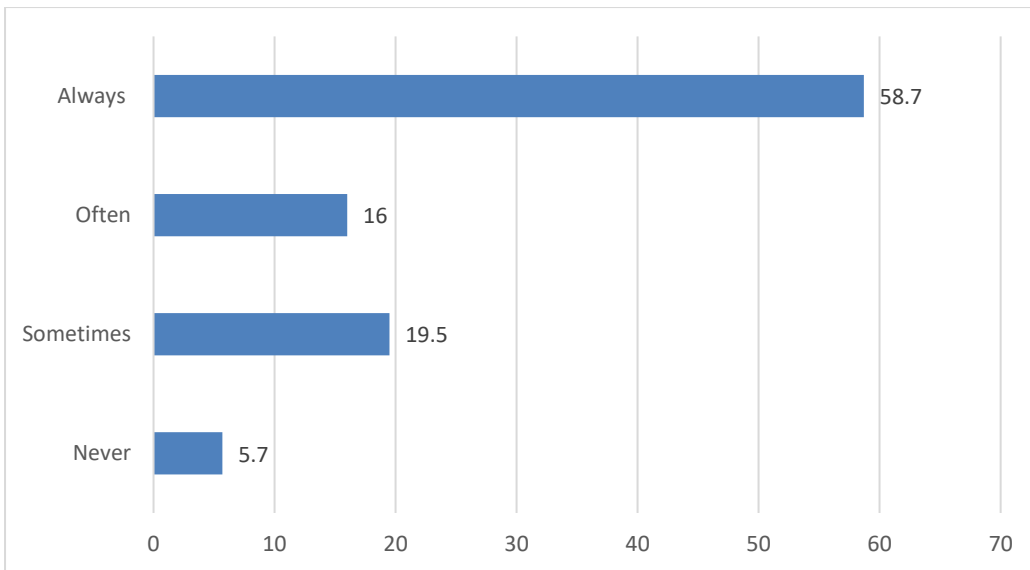
Item	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
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I have enough information about the Coronavirus	10.0	16.0	26.5	22.4	25.2
We speak together about the Coronavirus in my home	9.9	13.1	20.6	19.7	36.7
My opinions about the Coronavirus are taken seriously in my home	16.6	18.6	20.3	17.7	26.8
I received a lot of information about the Coronavirus from my family members or caregivers	5.4	12.1	14.8	23.1	44.6
I received a lot of information about the Coronavirus from other children	26.9	23.8	20.3	14.6	14.4
I received a lot of information about Coronavirus from teachers	16.4	12.9	15.8	20.1	34.7
I received a lot of information about Coronavirus through social media (Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, etc.)	39.2	11.7	11.2	14.8	23.1
I received a lot of information about the Coronavirus through the news	7.5	8.7	12.7	20.2	50.9
I think that a lot of the news about the Coronavirus are unreliable	30.1	22.2	22.8	8.4	16.6

3.7 Food security at home during the pandemic

To assess food security at home during the pandemic, children were asked to report how often they had enough food to eat at home. Figure 1 reveals that almost one in five children reported their families to have enough food only '**Sometimes**'. Also, six percent children reported that they '**never**' had enough food to eat at home (Figure 1). When these two response categories are merged, it shows that almost one quarter children reported their families to have food insecurity during the pandemic.

Figure 1: Children's response (%) to the question on having enough food to eat each day



3.9 Children’s life: Before versus during pandemic

To assess impact of the pandemic on children’s life, the survey asked children to report their level of satisfaction on time spending, learning at school, relationship with friends, and the people who they live with using a rating scale ranging from 0 to 10. Table 9 presents mean score and standard deviation of satisfaction score scale children reported on these four key aspects of their lived before and during pandemic. It is very clear from the table children’s level of satisfaction in all these four areas reduced during the pandemic. In this regard, the worst affected aspect was found to be their level of satisfaction with learning that had the highest level of reduction (3.2 scale points) in satisfaction compared to the other three areas of their lives.

Table 9. Satisfaction with different domains of life: Before vs during the pandemic

Item	Satisfaction level before pandemic	Satisfaction level during pandemic
Life domains	Mean (Standard deviation)	Mean (Standard deviation)
With how I normally spend my time	7.8 (3.1)	5.5 (3.6)
With the things I learn at school	8.0 (2.9)	4.8 (3.7)
With the relationships I have with my friends	7.6 (3.1)	5.3 (3.5)
With the relationships I have with people I live with	8.5 (2.6)	7.4 (3.0)

3.10 Covid-19 infection fear and other worries among children

The survey asked children to express their degree of worry about the Coronavirus by answering a set of seven questions using a rating scale where 0 indicates ‘not worry at all’ and 10 indicates ‘very much worried’. Table 10 presents the descriptive results in two ways: mean and percentage of children who reported the highest level of worry (by selecting ‘very much worried’ as their response’). Children were found to have worry that can be described above ‘average’ (mid-point score of 5 in 0-10 scale) for all seven items. However, children’s level of worry in getting bad school marks was found to be the highest (mean score = 7.9), followed jointly by worry of the changes in student life and worry by the Coronavirus situation (both with the mean score of 7.2). Roughly similar picture can be obtained from the results on the percentage of children in the study who reported the highest scale point (very much worried) as their response to these three aspects.

Table 10: Children’s degree of worry for the Coronavirus

Material items	Mean, 0-10 scale (Standard deviation)	% reported ‘very much worried’ (scored 10)
By the Coronavirus situation	7.2 (3.2)	39.8
That I may get infected by the Coronavirus	6.8 (3.5)	34.9
That people I know may get infected by the Coronavirus	6.7 (3.4)	32.6
That I may infect other people with the Coronavirus	6.3 (3.6)	31.2
That I may get bad school marks because of the Coronavirus situation	7.9 (3.1)	51.9
The money my family has during the Coronavirus period	6.1 (3.8)	31.6
The changes in my life as a student because of the Coronavirus situation	7.2 (3.3)	41.2

3.11 Mode of study when school was closed during Covid pandemic

To understand how children studied when their school was closed during the pandemic, the survey included a question on their mode of study for that period. As Table 11 presents, in majority of the cases (77.5%), the children reported to learn with parents or people what were looking after them. Almost in 4 out of ten cases, the children were also found to study using online classes with their teachers. A small number of cases (3.5%) were also observed where children did not study at home.

Table 11: Children’s access to material items

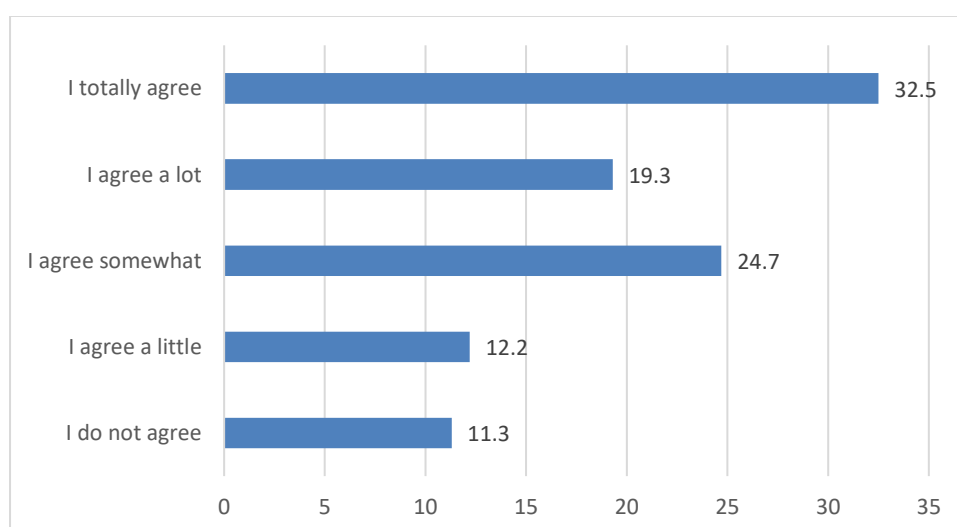
Mode of study *	% of reported cases (N =
Online classes with teachers	42.6
Learning by searching the Internet	21.6
Learning with parents or people that are looking after you	77.5
Other ways (please explain)	9.0
I did not study at home	3.5

* Multiple responses (N = 1353).

3.12 Managing learning from home during the pandemic

The survey provided a statement asking children to report their degree of agreement with the following: *During the Coronavirus, when schools were closed, I managed to continue with my learning from home.* Figure 2 presents results on a five-point response scale: totally agree, agree a lot, agree somewhat, agree a little, and do not agree. Whilst one-third of the children totally agreed with this statement, almost one in ten did not agree and further 12% only agreed a little bit with this. Therefore, the pandemic appeared to have negative impact on children’s ability to learn for home.

Figure 2: Children’s response (%) to the statement on managing own learning from home during the pandemic



3.13 Digital access and missing classmates and school

It appears from results in Table 12 that almost four out of ten children reported never having internet access and a further one-quarter reported to have internet access only sometimes. Therefore, overall, access to this digital technology during pandemic was very limited to many children. Almost three-quarter of the children reported to miss their classmates during the pandemic. The desire for getting back to school was very high among the children and it was reflected in almost 80% of the children's responses. In terms of getting support from family (parent/sister/brother) during the pandemic, over one-third of the children reported never having any help or only received help 'sometimes' during the pandemic.

Table 12. Children's responses to issues around accessing internet, friends, support with schoolwork, (%)

Item	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
How often did you have access to the Internet?	40.9	24.4	17.6	17.1
How often did it happen that you could not access the Internet for an entire day?	26.1	36.1	13.2	24.6
How often did you have problems with the Internet connection while having a class over web?	21.7	33.7	14.9	29.7
How often did you miss your classmates?	5.0	19.4	29.2	46.3
How often did you wish that you could go back to school?	4.2	15.1	28.4	52.3
How often did your parent or a sister/brother help you with schoolwork?	7.8	28.9	30.5	35.8

3.14 Communication with friends during the pandemic

The survey asked a series of questions to assess how children kept contact with their friends during the pandemic. As presented in Table 13, phone calls appeared to be the most prominent among all modes children reported in the survey. Just below one-third of the cases, the children reported this mode of communication followed by in-person meeting (26.7% cases). Although not used that

frequently, video calls (Hangout, Skype etc.), WhatsApp audios, WhatsApp messages, social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok etc.) were also found as children’s mode of contact (around 8% cases) with friends. A small number of cases (6.7%), children did not seem to have any contact with their friends during the pandemic.

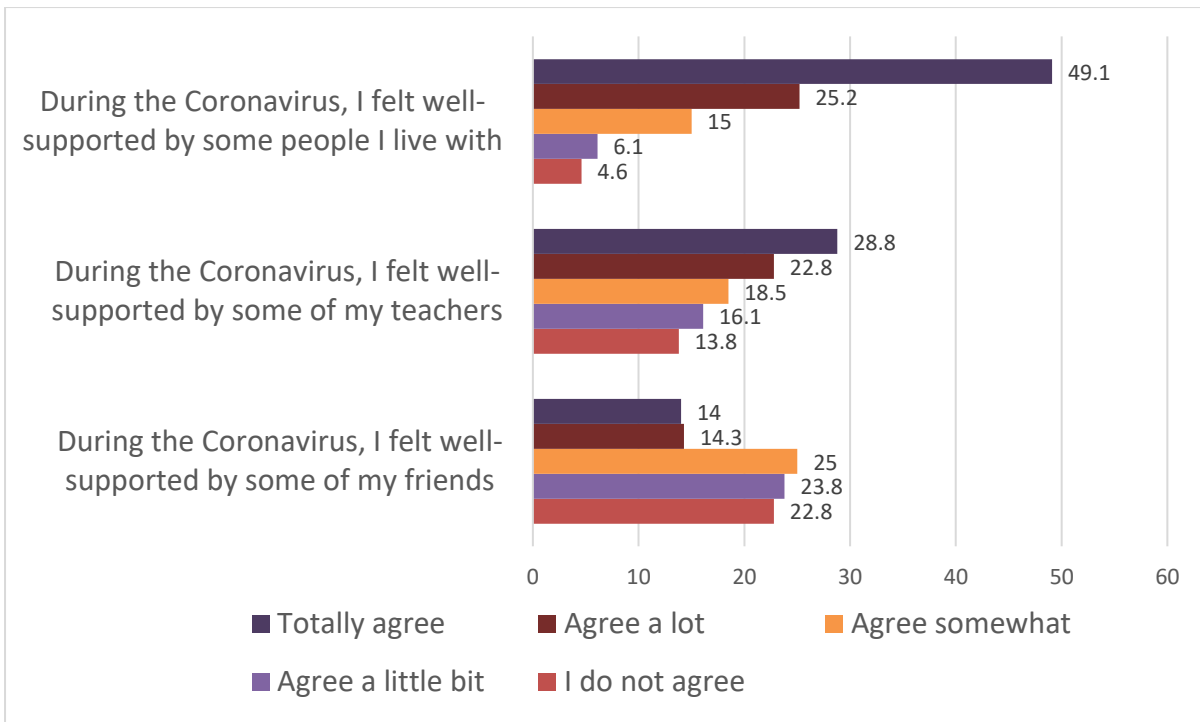
Table 13: Mode of children’s communication with friends during COVID pandemic

Mode of communication *	% of reported cases
Calls	30.9
Video calls (Hangout, Skype...)	9.9
WhatsApp audios	8.8
WhatsApp messages	8.5
Social media (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok or any other)	7.9
Meeting each other in person	26.7
Not at all	6.7
Other ways	0.6

* Multiple responses (N = 1353).

3.15 Social network support for children during the pandemic

Figure 3: Children’s response (%) to the statement on managing own learning from home during the pandemic



To understand the nature and degree of support that children received from their social network, the survey asked questions on level of support from three key social networks: family/carer , teachers, and friends. In this regard, over 7 out of 10 children felt well-supported by family/carer they lived with. However, children felt less support from teachers (almost 30% agree little bit/do not agree) and friends (almost 46% agree little bit/do not agree).

3.16 Children’s relationships with significant others during COVID-19 pandemic

In terms of their relationships with family during the pandemic, more than half of the children (around 58%) reported to become closer to some members of their family (Table 14). However, in terms of their relationships with friends, just under half of the children (47%) said that their relationship with friends was affected during the pandemic. Over six out ten children did not make new friends during that period.

Table 14: Children’s degree of agreement (%) with items linked to significant others in their life during COVID-19 pandemic

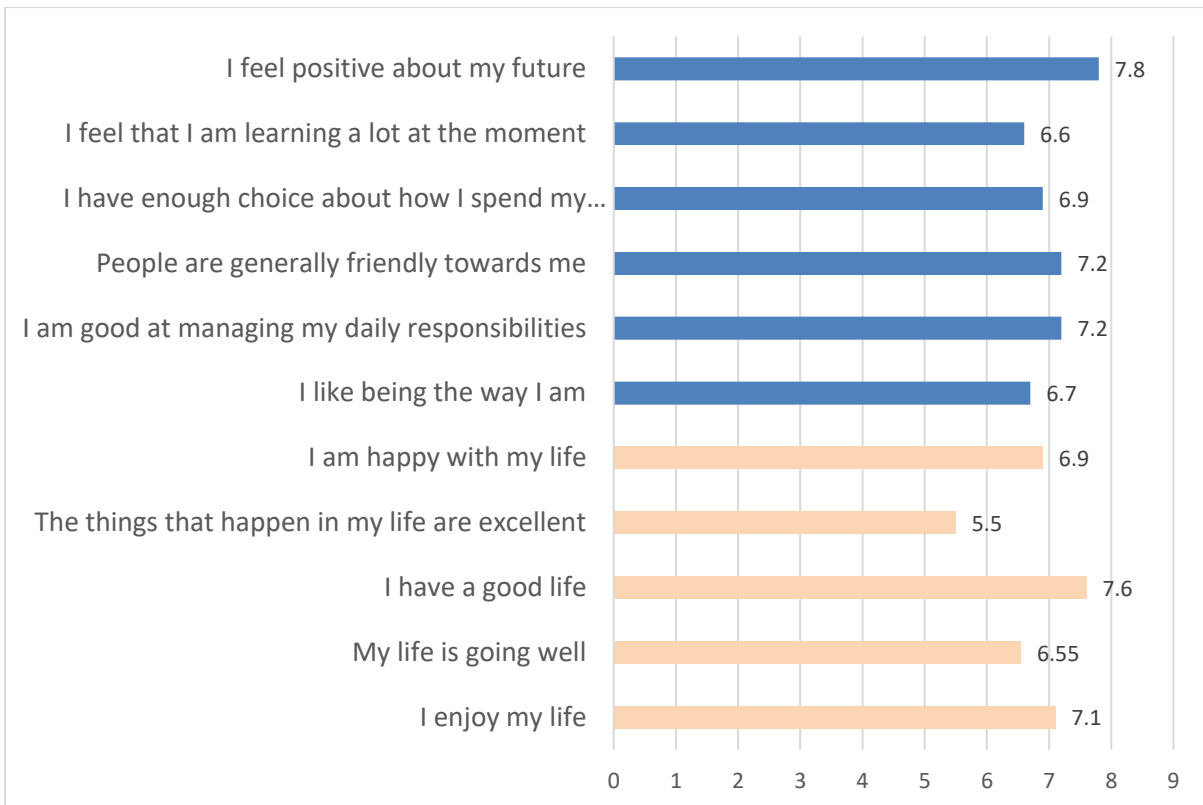
Items	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
During the coronavirus, I became closer to some members of my family	13.1	12.9	15.9	24.3	33.9

My relationships with my friends was affected during the Coronavirus	17.4	14.3	20.8	20.6	27.0
I made new friends with other children online during the Coronavirus	62.2	9.8	9.9	7.9	10.1

3.17 Children’s evaluation about their life

To measure children’s overall wellbeing, the survey included a series of statements asking children to assess them using a rating scale ranging from 0 to 10. Figure 4 presents the list of statements which are broadly measuring two concepts: subjective satisfaction in life (first six items with blue colored bars) and psychological wellbeing (last five items with purple colored bars). Assessed by mean score which is well above the mid values (5) of the scale received for each of the first six items, overall, the children appeared to have very high level of psychological wellbeing. The last set of five items in Figure 4, shows children’s response to subjective satisfaction in life. Apart from their response to the item ‘things that happens in my life are excellent’, the rest had very high mean score indicating overall a very high-level subjective satisfaction in life.

Figure 4: Children’s response (%) to the statement on managing own learning from home during the pandemic



3.18 Positive affect and negative affect

The survey also captured children’s feelings and emotions during past two weeks of data collection period by asking two sets of phrases linked to positive affect (happy, calm, and full of energy) and negative affect (sad, stressed, and bored). Positive affect refers to the propensity to experience positive emotions and interact with others positively, even though the challenges of life. Negative affect, on the other hand, involves experiencing the world in a more negative way. While these two states are on opposite ends of the spectrum, both states affect children’s lives and how they live. Table 15 presents children’s responses to these emotional aspects. Children rated each item in a scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 10 (extremely). The mean scores of 6.2 for ‘happy’ emotion, 5.9 for ‘calm’, and 6.3 for ‘full of energy’ fall in the mid-range of scale indicating a moderate positive emotion among the children during COVID period. On the other hand, mean scores of 4.2 for ‘sad’, 3.6 for ‘stressed’ and 4.8 for ‘bored’ appear to fall below the mid-point of the scale suggesting lower negative emotion among them during the COVID pandemic.

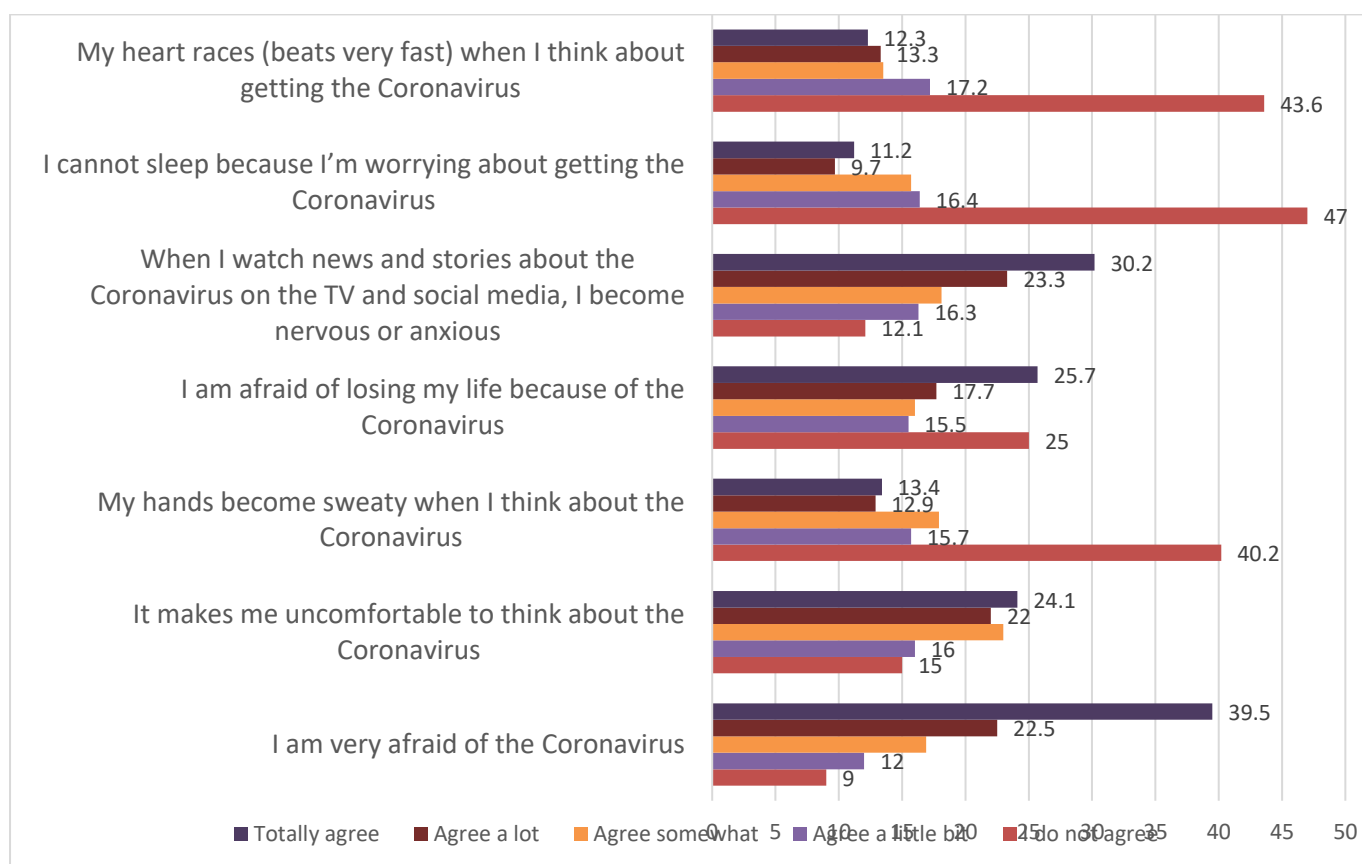
Table 15: Children’s responses to items linked to positive and negative emotions

Feeling during the last two weeks.	Mean, 0-10 scale (Standard deviation)	% reported 'extremely' (scored 10)
Happy	6.2 (3.4)	22.2
Sad	4.2 (3.3)	7.8
Calm	5.9 (3.1)	18.0
Stressed	3.6 (3.3)	6.4
Full of energy	6.3 (3.2)	23.3
Bored	4.8 (3.5)	14.0

3.19 Coronavirus worries among children

To understand children's degree of worry about the Coronavirus, the survey provided seven statements listed in Figure 5 and asked children to say how much they agree with them in a five-point Likert scale: I do not agree, agree a little bit, agree somewhat, agree a lot, and totally agree.

Figure 5: Children's response (%) to statements measuring their worry about the Coronavirus

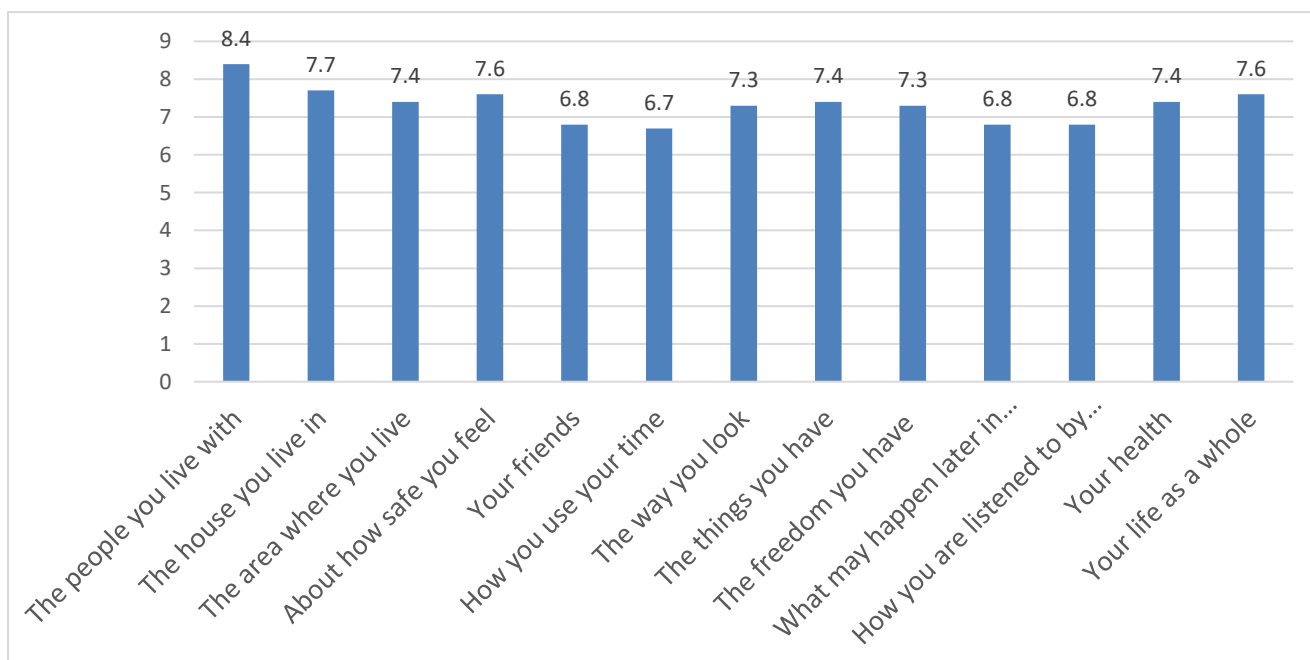


Children’s worries are prominent and reflected clearly in their responses to the following four statements: ‘I am very afraid of the Coronavirus’ (almost 6 out of 10 agreeing totally or agreeing a lot), ‘When I watch news and stories about the Coronavirus on the TV and social media, I become nervous or anxious’ (over 5 out of 10 agreeing totally or agreeing a lot), ‘I am afraid of losing my life because of the Coronavirus’ (almost four out of ten agreeing totally or agreeing a lot), ‘It makes me uncomfortable to think about the Coronavirus’ (over four out of ten agreeing totally or agreeing a lot).

3.20 How children feel about life

In addition to asking children to evaluate their life as a whole, the survey asked questions about twelve specific aspects of their life—their satisfaction with (1) people they live with, (2) house they live in, (3) area they live, (4) feeling safe, (5) their friends, (6) time use, (7) appearance, (8) things they have or material possession, (9) freedom, (10) future, (11) how adults listen to them, and (12) their health. Children were asked to rate their happiness in each aspect of their life using an eleven-point scale: 0 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (totally satisfied).

Figure 6: Children’s level of satisfaction (mean score) in different aspects of their lives



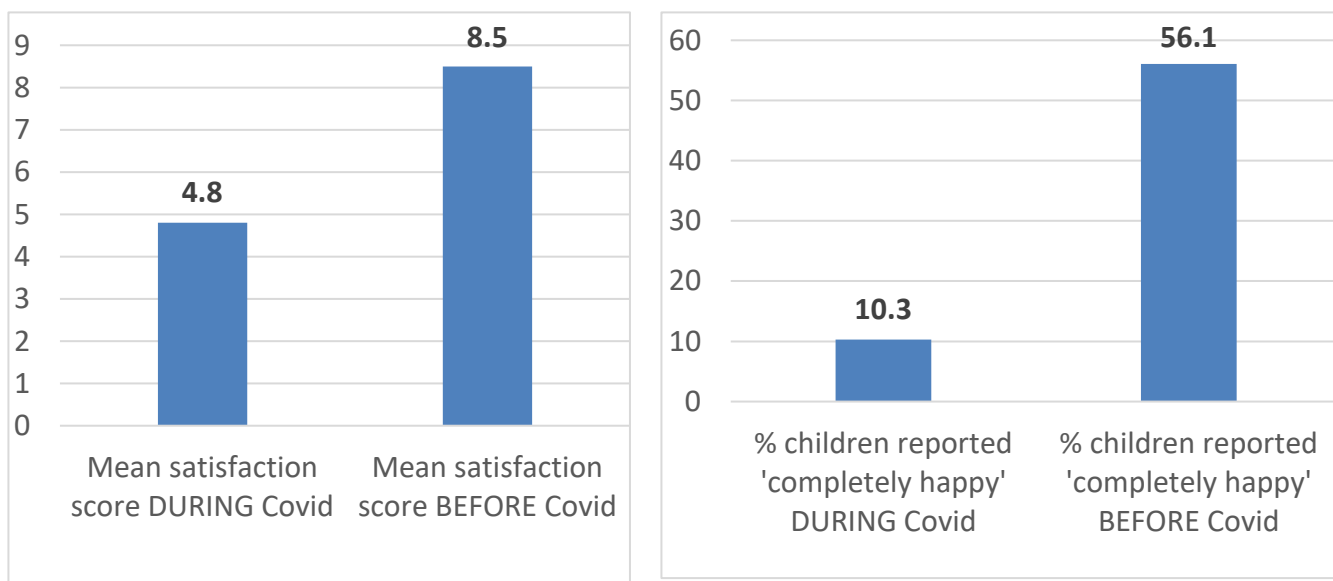
The mean scores in Figure 6 suggest that children had highest satisfaction (mean = 8.4) with the people they lived with followed by house they live in (mean = 7.7), how safe they feel (mean = 7.6),

area they live in (mean = 7.4), things they have (mean = 7.4), health (mean = 7.4). Areas in which they appeared to be less satisfied were the way they use their time (lowest mean score of 6.7), friends (mean score = 6.8), future prospect (mean = 6.8), and how adults listened to them (mean = 6.8). What this simple analysis shows is that although these children are overall happy with their life as a whole (mean score of 7.6 well above the mid-point of the scale), there are certain areas in their lives where they are less happy, and they require support in these areas.

3.21 Children’s evaluation about their overall life BEFORE and DURING Covid pandemic

To understand the impact of the pandemic on children’s wellbeing, the survey included two subjective measures in which children were asked to evaluate how happy they were with their life as a whole in two occasions: before the pandemic and during the pandemic. Figure 7 presents the results in two ways. Left-hand side graph shows mean score on life satisfaction scale (0-10) before Covid and during Covid. When comparing the mean score, it is evident that children’s happiness reduced significantly (almost 43% reduction) during the pandemic. The right-hand side of the graph shows children’s responses to the same question but results are presented by considering the percentage of children who reported to be ‘completely happy’ in these two occasions. This part of the graph also shows the negative impact of the Covid on children’s happiness. During the pandemic, the percentage of children who reported to be ‘completely happy’ is reduced significantly (almost 81%).

Figure 7: Children’s level of satisfaction before and during Covid-19 pandemic



4. Conclusions

The key aim of this report was to describe the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on children's lives in Bangladesh by presenting descriptive results on the way children assessed different aspects of their life for the first time in Children's Worlds Special Covid-19 International Survey.

During the pandemic, almost 88% of the children were reported to live with their family in their own home. In this regard, around 11% reported to live with their family but at a different place (not at their regular home). In describing their situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, more than eight out of ten children reported their area (city/town/village) to be under lockdown for many days. Almost nine out of ten children acknowledged that they could not attend school for many days due to COVID pandemic. Around two-third children reported that they had to stay at home for many days during the pandemic. In terms of the spread of the disease, almost four out of ten children reported that they knew someone in their neighborhood or in friend's circle who got infected with COVID-19. Just over one in ten children reported that they themselves or somebody in their home had COVID infection.

Almost all children (96%) reported their school to be closed during lockdown. Almost one quarter children reported their families to have food insecurity during the pandemic. In response to the question on their access to material resources only one fourth (26.8%) of the children replied to have computer or tablets for study purpose. The study revealed that almost four out of ten children reported never having internet access and a further one-quarter reported to have internet access only sometimes. Therefore, overall, access to this digital technology during pandemic was very limited to many children. Almost three-quarter of the children reported to miss their classmates during the pandemic. The desire for getting back to school was very high among the children and it was reflected in almost 80% of the children's responses. In terms of getting support from family (parent/sister/brother) during the pandemic, over one-third of the children reported never having any help or only received help 'sometimes' during the pandemic.

To assess impact of the pandemic on children's life, the survey asked children to report their level of satisfaction on time spending, learning at school, relationship with friends, and the people who they live with using a rating scale ranging from 0 to 10. Results showed very clearly that children's level of satisfaction in all these four areas reduced during the pandemic. In this regard, the worst affected aspect was found to be their level of satisfaction with learning that had the highest level of reduction (3.2 scale points) in satisfaction compared to the other three areas of their lives.

Overall, children's level of worry regarding the impact of the pandemic was found to be very high. Children's level of worry in getting bad school marks was found to be the highest (mean score = 7.9),

followed jointly by worry of the changes in student life and worry by the Coronavirus situation (both with the mean score of 7.2).

In addition to asking children to evaluate their life as a whole, the survey asked questions about twelve specific aspects of their life—their satisfaction with (1) people they live with, (2) house they live in, (3) area they live, (4) feeling safe, (5) their friends, (6) time use, (7) appearance, (8) things they have or material possession, (9) freedom, (10) future, (11) how adults listen to them, and (12) their health. Although these children were found to be overall happy with their life as a whole (mean score of 7.6 well above the mid-point of the scale), they appeared to be less satisfied with time use, (lowest mean score of 6.7), friends (mean score = 6.8), future prospect (mean = 6.8), and how adults listened to them (mean = 6.8).

To understand the impact of the pandemic on children's wellbeing, the survey included two subjective measures in which children were asked to evaluate how happy they were with their life as a whole in two occasions: before the pandemic and during the pandemic. When comparing the mean score, it was evident that children's happiness reduced significantly (almost 43% reduction) during the pandemic. In terms of the percentage of children who reported to be 'completely happy' in these two occasions, results revealed the negative impact of the Covid on children's happiness. There was an alarming 81% reduction in the percentage of children who reported to be 'completely happy' during the pandemic.

These results, although very descriptive, tell us children's overall life during the pandemic in Bangladesh. This picture comes from their own assessment and evaluation of life. Although more in-depth analysis is required in the next phase, it gives some early indication of severity of the impact of the pandemic on children's lives and areas which require more attention to improve children's wellbeing in post pandemic era. More importantly, as this project uses a child centric approach, it puts children in its center for developing and designing the research for which the results obtained are aligned closely to inform policies guided by children's rights perspectives.

Moreover, the results from this survey in Bangladesh can be linked with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals to which Bangladesh is committed to achieve its target. This is because, as UNICEF (2017) pointed out, the SDGs can only deliver on the promise of equity if policy makers know which children and families are thriving and which are being left behind. These results can help formulating evidence-based policies for improving the situation of children in relation to the SDGs in Bangladesh.

As mentioned in the outset, the report is purposively kept brief, and analyses presented are very descriptive. We have identified a number of areas to develop this work further. **Firstly**, in the next

phase, we will look into children's response on overall subjective satisfaction question(s) and mental wellbeing more closely to develop a clear understanding on factors which are closely linked to these two aspects during the pandemic in Bangladesh. **Secondly**, further analysis will be carried out on data linked to specific aspect(s) of children's life in Bangladesh (e.g., satisfaction on local area, satisfaction with life as a student) and identify factors such as gender, rural-urban living, family structure which influence children's satisfaction on those aspects of life during pandemic. **Thirdly**, because of its comparative nature, this project would allow to conduct further analysis of data to identify similarities and differences on the impact of the pandemic on children's wellbeing between Bangladesh and twenty other countries which gathered similar data from children in this survey.

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