

Children's Worlds National Report

South Africa



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1. Introduction

1.1 Context and population

South Africa is a parliamentary republic governed by the principles of a constitutional democracy. The population is approximately 60.14 million (Statistics in South Africa, 2021). In terms of gender composition, 51.10% (30.75 million) of the country is female, while approximately 28.30% (17.04 million) of the population is younger than 15-years of age, and 9.20% (5.51 million) are 60 years and older. For the population younger than 15-years-old, most live in two of the nine provinces, namely Gauteng (21.80%) and Kwa-Zulu Natal (21.20%). In terms of population group proportions, 80.90% (48.64 million) are 'Black African', 8.80% (5.29 million) are 'Coloured', 2.60% (1.55 million) are Indian/Asian, and 7.80% (4.66 million) are 'White' (Statistics South Africa, 2021). The racial groups 'Black African', 'Coloured', and 'Indian', were employed as racial categories during apartheid to reinforce a segregated society, and refer to those who were oppressed, marginalized, and not afforded the same benefits as 'Whites' in this era. These terms are used here solely for descriptive purposes, and does not imply acknowledgement of these terms by the authors.

The history of children and childhood in South Africa is that of adversity, characterised by social oppression, inequality, poverty, and exposure to various forms of violence, abuse, and neglect. Owing to apartheid, the prohibition of equal access to the law, property, and freedom of movement centrally impacted on families and their capacity for providing a healthy, positive life for their children. The disparate and stratified allocation of resources across the racial classification system enforced during apartheid, had a deleterious effect on the development of children. Following the advent of democracy in 1994, the newly-elected South African government instituted a range of legislations to redress the atrocities that children experienced in the past, and to improve the overall quality of life (QoL) and developmental trajectories of children. The first of these legal commitments is evident in Section 28 of the Bill of Rights (South African Constitution, p. 1255) which details children's basic human rights and advances the notion that "A child's best interest are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child". This was complemented by the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). There is thus an obligation to listen to children and to facilitate

their participation in all matters that concern them within the family, school, public services, institutions, communities, government policies and judicial procedures.

Further legislative advancement is evident in child-specific legislation, including the Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005), the associated Children's Amendment Act (No. 41 of 2007), and the Child Justice Act (2008). Furthermore, through the Social Security Agency Act of 2004 the government has ensured that children are the beneficiaries of social grants to mitigate against vulnerability and poverty. Acceding to these legal contracts has entrenched the rights and needs of children in the development strategies of the government, as well as guaranteeing children's socio-economic rights and protection from abuse, exploitation, and neglect. Co-ordinated by the Office on the Rights of the Child (ORC), the National Programme of Action (NPAC) was put in place to provide "...an holistic framework for the integration of all policies and plans developed by government departments and civil society to promote the well-being of children" (2012, p. 9). With children elevated to the legal status of rights holders, and the government ultimately accountable as the principal duty-bearer, children's well-being and QoL are ostensibly afforded the highest priority within government. Over the past two decades, the South African government has also made significant progress in developing strategies to measure the state and well-being of children. These initiatives highlighted the development and collection of objective indicators, which refer to observable measures that assess a range of pre-determined objective standards of living. However, after 28 years of democracy and despite the legislative advancements, the QoL for South Africa's children remains compromised (Savahl et al., 2015). This to a large extent is reflective of the high levels of social inequality in South Africa, which is regarded as an important indicator of children's well-being. Notwithstanding the fundamental premise of equality in the South African Constitution, inequality remains pervasive. Although this inequality is experienced by the majority of the population, the burdens of these multiple overlapping layers of inequality are often endured by children who necessitate care and supervision from adults for both safety and basic tenets of their well-being (Hall et al., 2012).

Context of COVID-19 in individual country contexts

Children in South Africa experience multiple vulnerabilities and deprivation across all domains of their lives (Savahl et al., 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened existing inequities among children and other vulnerable populations in South Africa. The first case of COVID-19 in South Africa was detected on 05 March 2020. This led to a 'national state of disaster' being declared, and the first national lockdown that was instituted on 26 March 2020. The lockdown enforced closure of trade, educational institutions, recreational activities, and places of worship (Haffejee & Levine, 2020). Part of the 'state of disaster' was a mandated national curfew and the restriction of travel between provinces. These strict measures were implemented to 'flatten the curve' and prepare a constrained healthcare system. Nearly two years later, the country has been through 16 lockdown levels. As of 06 February 2022, 3 623 962 cases of the virus have been detected with 3 840 249 recoveries and 95 835 deaths. In alignment with the first national lockdown, schools closed on 14 March 2020, and re-opened on June 08 2020 for on senior exit levels (grade 7 and 12). Following this, children attended school on a rotational basis for the next two years to reduce classroom capacity to ensure physical distancing and reduce the risk of infection. While better-resourced schools were able to continue online, the majority of children in South Africa living in lower socio-economic status (SES) communities were left further behind, as they did not have necessary technological resources. School closures also resulted in higher levels of food insecurity as school nutrition programmes were no longer accessible. The rotational attendance mandate was finally lifted on 07 February 2022.

1.2 Sampling: Strategy and outcome

We selected schools using stratified random sampling from two provinces in South Africa, namely the: Western Cape and Northern Cape. Schools were stratified according to Education Management District Councils (EMDC's) in each province. The Western Cape includes eight EMDC's, with five in the Northern Cape. As we only collected data in one city in the Northern Cape, namely Kimberley, it only encompasses two of the five EMDC's in the province, namely Frances Baard and Pixley-ka-Sem. Each school in the sampling frame was assigned a number and the

selected schools were identified using a random-number generator. Our final sample comprised 1000 children between the ages of 10-12-years old.

2. Results

2.1 About you: Q1-2, Q5-10

Table 1: Q1. How old are you? M(SD)

Item	M(SD)
How old are you	11.72 (.46)

The mean age for the sample was 11.72 (SD = .46).

Table 2: Q2. Gender: Are you...

Item	%
Girl	57.50
Boy	40.00
I do not think of myself as a boy or a girl	2.50

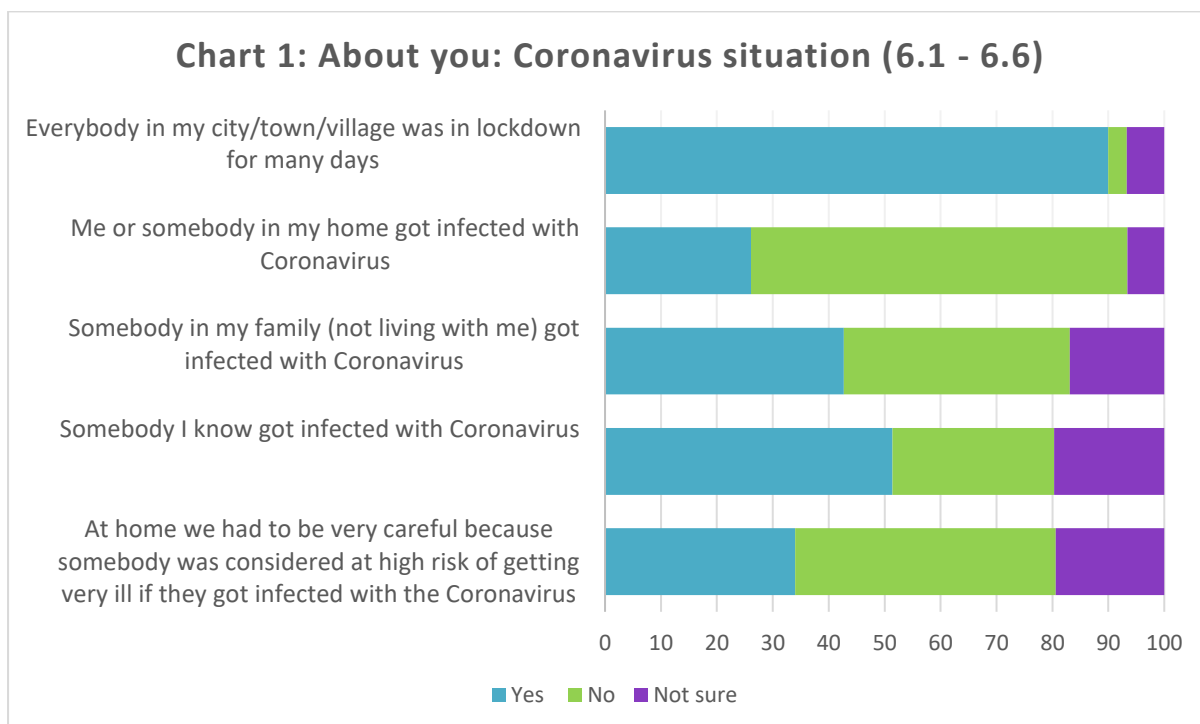
Table 2 presents the gender breakdown. The larger proportion were female (57.50%).

Table 3: Q5. At present, with whom do you live?

Item: At present, with whom do you live? With my family...					
...in our home	...but at a	...but in more	...but in more	Residenti al care	In a family

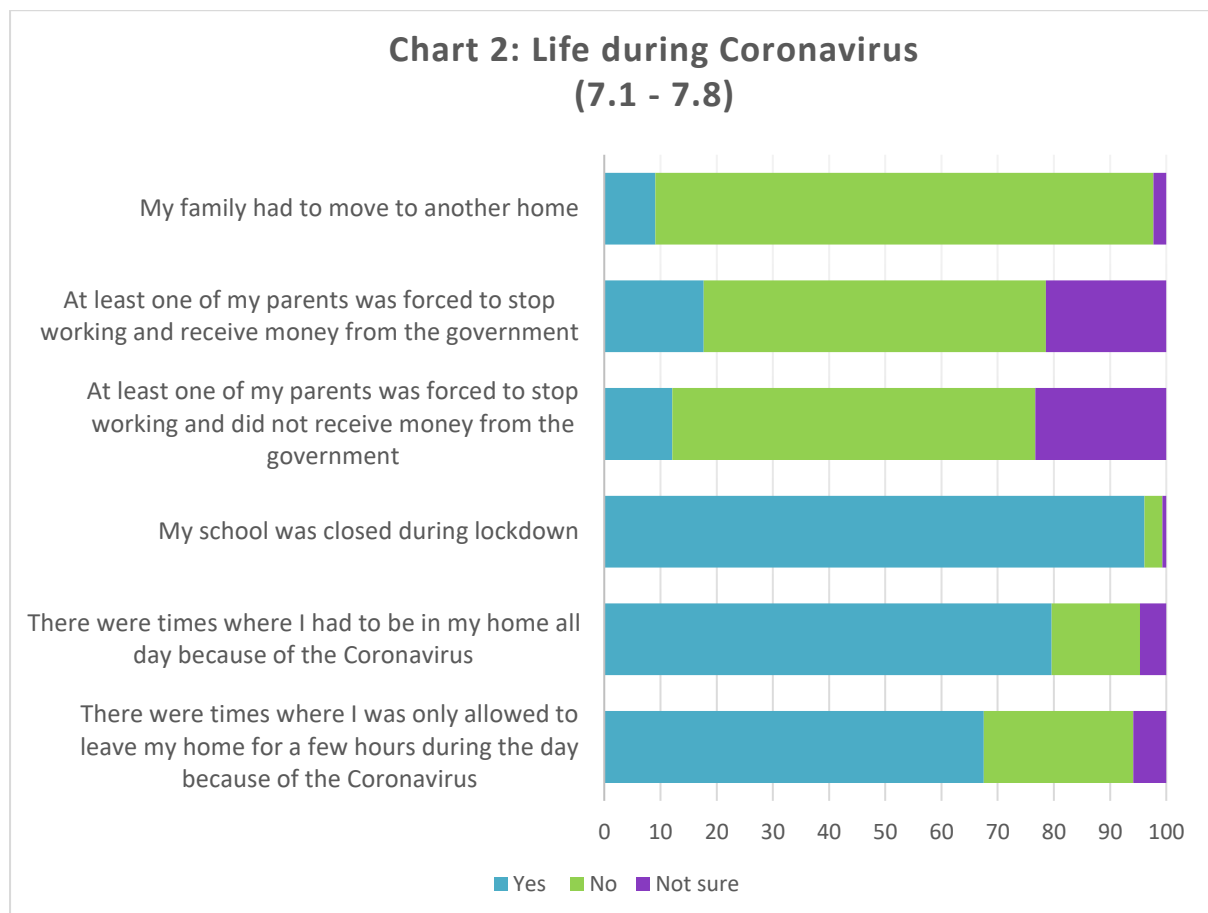
			different place (not at our regular home)	than one home, because my parents live in different homes	than one home, because my family has more than one home		different than mine
At ,present with whom do you live	72.6%	4.4%	14.0%	7.0%	1.0%	1.0%	

Most children (72.60%) lived with their family in their home, while 14% lived in more than one home as their parents lived apart. Only 7% lived in more than one home, with small proportions of children living in residential care (1%) and in a family different than their own (1%).



We asked children about the COVID-19 situation in their community and home. Most children (90%) indicated that people in their city were in lockdown for many days, while 6.70% were 'not sure', and 3.30% said 'no'. When asked whether they or someone in their home contracted COVID-19, 67.30% reported that they did not, whereas 26.10% indicated 'yes', and 6.60% were 'not sure'. Fifty-one percent indicated that they knew someone that contracted COVID-19, 28.90% indicated they did not know someone that got infected, while 19.70% were 'not sure' (Chart 1).

We also asked children whether there was someone in their home who was considered to be high risk if they got ill from the virus. Forty-six percent indicated 'no', 34% said 'yes', while 19.40% were 'not sure'.



We asked children six questions about how the pandemic affected their mobility. The first was about whether children had to move to another home. The majority of children did not have to move home during the pandemic (88.60%), 9.10% had to

move to a different home, and 2.30% were 'not sure'. When asked whether a parent had to stop working and receive a government grant, 17.70% indicated 'yes', 60.90% said 'no', and 21.40% were 'not sure'. On the other hand, when asked whether a parent was forced to stop working and did not receive money from the government, 12.10% said 'yes', 64.60% said 'no', and 23.30% were 'not sure'.

The majority of participants (96.10%) reported that their school was closed during the lockdown, while 3.20% indicated 'no', and small proportion of 0.70 were 'not sure'. We also found that 76.90% of children indicated that they had to be inside their home the entire day owing to the pandemic, while 15.70% said 'no', and 4.70% were 'not sure' (see Chart 2).

Table 4: Children's feelings of safety and fear during COVID-19 (%) (8.1 – 8.4)

Item	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
I feel safe at home	3.30	8.30	6.40	14.70	67.30
I feel safe at school	18.40	22.10	19.10	15.30	25.10
I feel safe when I walk around in the area I live in	36.30	19.40	13.60	11.60	19.10
I feel safe with my friends	21.30	19.90	14.40	14.20	30.20
I feel alone	45.20	18.30	14.10	7.40	15.0
I feel protected from the Coronavirus	37.90	14.50	13.10	11.60	22.90
I feel bored	26.20	17.10	15.10	10.0	31.60
I miss my friends	13.80	12.80	9.50	15.80	48.0
I miss my relatives	13.40	7.50	9.50	14.30	55.30
I have problems with siblings	48.3	13.10	9.80	9.50	19.30

Children were asked several questions about their feelings of safety during the pandemic. The first three questions focused on their feelings of safety at home,

school, and in their neighbourhood. A large percentage (67.30) indicated that they 'totally agreed' that they feel safe at home, while 8.30% 'agreed a little bit', and 3.30% 'did not agree'. Interestingly, children's responses about feeling safe at school were more varied – only 25.10% of children 'totally agreed', 15.30% 'agreed a lot', 19.10% were 'not sure'. More than 40% selected the combined option of 'I do not agree' and 'agree a little bit'. This demonstrates that most children did not feel safe at school. Similarly, 55.70% indicated that they 'did not feel safe' walking around in the area they live in (representing the combination of 'I do not agree' and 'I agree a little') (Table 4).

We also asked children whether they feel safe with their friends. Most participants (30.20%) 'totally agreed' that they feel safe with friends, while 21.30% 'did not agree'. If the latter is combined with the response option 'agree a little bit' (19.90%), a large proportion of 41.20% of children did not feel safe with their friends. When asked whether they feel alone, 45.20% of children indicated that they 'do not agree' and 18.30% 'agreed a little bit'. Combining the two agreement options 'agree a lot' and 'totally agree' yields a percentage score of 22.40%.

Considering whether children 'feel protected from the Coronavirus', 37.90% indicated that they 'do not agree' and 14.50% 'agreed a little bit'. In total, this means that 52.40% (combining 'do not agree' and 'agree a little bit') did not feel protected from the Coronavirus. However, 34.50% agreed that they feel protected from the Coronavirus (combining response options: 'agree a lot' = 11.60%; and 'totally agree' = 22.90%). When asked whether they 'feel bored', 31.60% 'totally agreed' and 10% 'agreed a lot', while 26.20% 'did not agree', and 15.10% 'agreed somewhat'. We also asked children if they miss their friends and found that almost half of the sample (48%) 'totally agreed' that they miss their friends, while 15.80% 'agreed a lot', and a combined 26.60% 'did not agree' and 'agreed a little bit'.

We also asked children whether they miss their relatives and found that 55.30% 'totally agreed', representing a higher percentage than 'missing their friends'. Similarly, 14.30% 'agreed a lot'. A combined 20.90% 'did not agree' and 'agreed a little bit'. Finally, when asked whether they 'have problems with siblings', 48.30% 'did not agree', 13.10% 'agreed a little bit' and 9.80% 'agreed somewhat'. A combined

28.80% 'agreed a lot' and 'totally agreed'. This means that close to half of all children in our sample did not have problems with siblings (see Table 4).

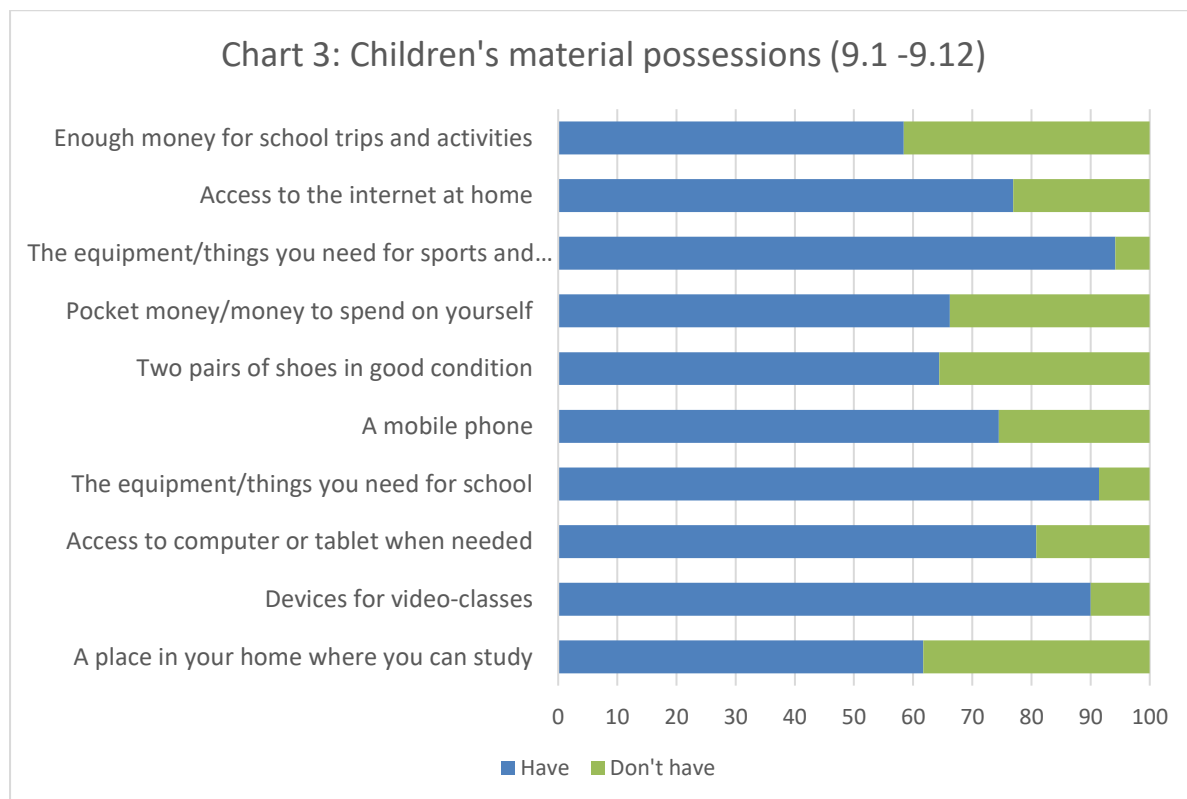


Chart 3 demonstrates the questions we asked children about their material possessions. We asked children whether they felt they have enough money for school trips and activities. We found that 58.40% reported that they 'have', while 41.6% of children reported that they 'don't have'. Importantly, in the context of COVID-19, we also found that 76.90% of children 'have' internet access at home and 23.10% of children do not. The majority of children, 94.20%, indicated that they have the 'equipment of things they need for 'sports and hobbies', while 5.20% 'don't have' this equipment. When asked whether they have 'pocket money', 66.20% reported that they 'have' and 33.80% reported that they 'don't have'. Similarly, 64.40% of children reported that they 'have' 'two pairs of shoes in good condition' while 35.60% of children reported that they 'don't have'. Around three-quarter of children (73.50%) indicated that they have a 'mobile phone' and 26.50% 'don't have' one. Most children, 91.40%, also have the 'equipment/things' they need for school, with a

smaller proportion of 8.60% of children who ‘don’t have’. Further, 80.80% of children ‘have’ ‘access to a computer or tablet’ whereas 19.20% of children ‘don’t have’ access; and 90% of children ‘have’ ‘devices for video-classes, while 10% ‘don’t have’. Finally, we asked children whether they have a place in their home where they can study and 61.70% reported that they ‘have’ and 38.30% ‘don’t have’.

Table 5: Enough food to eat each day (Q10)

Item	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
During the lockdown did you have enough food to eat each day	.60	11.90	12.20	75.30

We asked children whether they had enough food to eat every day during the lockdown. At 75.30%, the majority indicated that they ‘always’ had enough food, 12.20% ‘often’ had enough food, 11.90% (n = 119) only ‘sometimes’, and .60% (n = 6) ‘never’. While there were smaller proportions of children indicating they ‘sometimes’ and ‘never’ have enough food each day – this equated to 125 children not having enough food to eat each day during the lockdown.

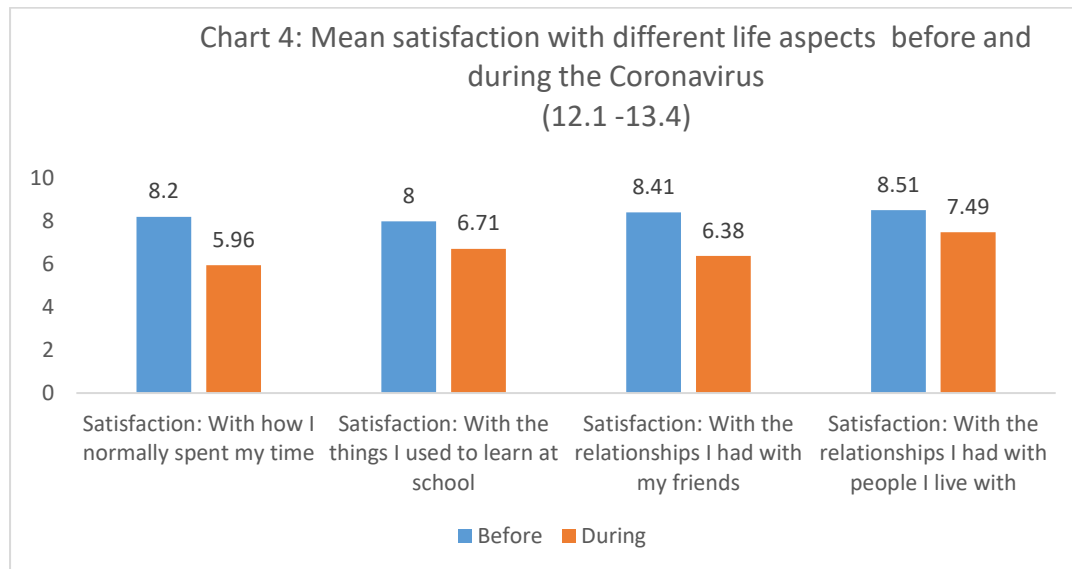
2.2 Your life during the Coronavirus: Q11-14

Table 6: Information about the Coronavirus (Q11)

Item	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
I have enough information about the Coronavirus	13.80	17.60	21.80	19.40	27.40
We speak together about the Coronavirus in my home	10.50	16.30	16.40	20.40	36.40

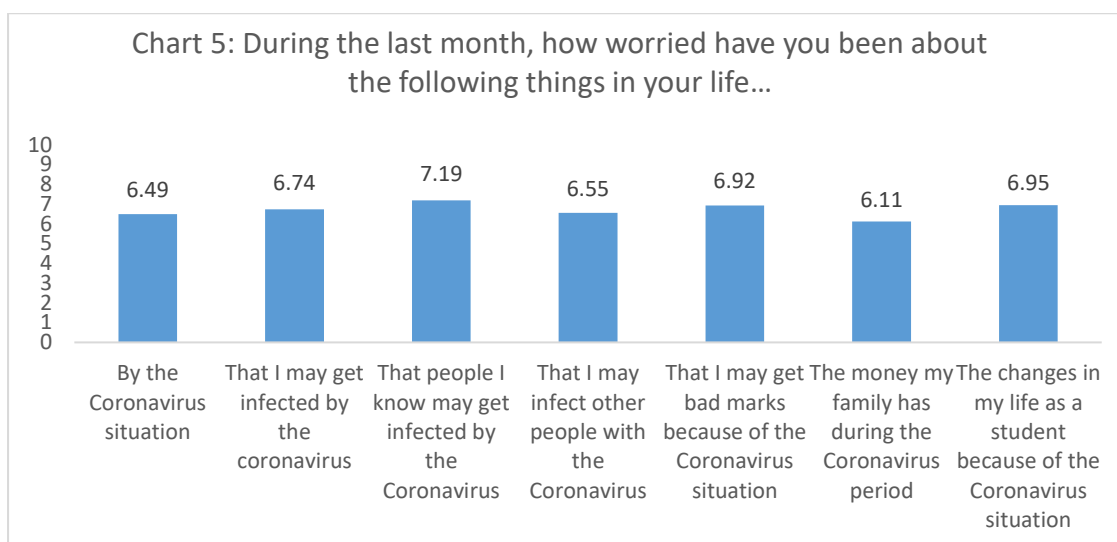
We asked children whether they ‘have enough information about the Coronavirus’. We found that 27.4% ‘totally agreed’, 19.40% ‘agreed a lot’, 21.80% ‘agreed

somewhat', with the combined options of 'I do not agree' and 'agree a little bit' yielding 31.40%. We also found that most children (36.40%) 'totally agreed' that they 'speak together about the Coronavirus' in their home, while 20.40% 'agreed a lot', 16.40% 'agreed somewhat' (Table 6).



***Note:** Response options ranged from '0 = Not at all satisfied' to '10 = Completely satisfied'

We were also interested in children’s satisfaction with different aspects of their life *before* and *during* the pandemic (Chart 4). We found that the average mean scores for children’s satisfaction with ‘how they normally spent’ their time, the things they used to learn at school, the relationships they had with their friends, and the relationships they had with the people they live with were all substantially higher *before* the pandemic than *during*.



***Note:** Response options ranged from '0 = Not at all worried' to '10 = Extremely worried'.

Children reported on how worried they were with different things in their life during the past month (Chart 5). On average, all the scores were above the mid-point. The highest mean score was obtained for the item being worried 'That people I know may get infected with the Coronavirus' (7.19). The second highest mean score was for being worried about 'The changes in my life as a student because of the Coronavirus situation' (6.95). Children also reported being worried 'That I may get bad marks because of the Coronavirus situation' (6.92), 'That I may get infected by the Coronavirus' (6.74), 'That I may infect other people with the Coronavirus' (6.55), and 'By the Coronavirus situation' (6.49). The lowest mean score of 6.11 was for the item 'The money my family has during the Coronavirus'.

2.3 School and relationships: Q16-19, Q22-23

Table 7: Learning during the Coronavirus (Q16.1 – 16.6)

During the Coronavirus, when schools were closed, how did you learn at home:		
Item:	Yes (%)	No (%)
Online classes with teachers	28.70	71.30
Learning by searching the internet	50.90	49.10

Learning with parents or people that are looking after you	63.90	36.10
Other ways	21.40	78.60
I did not study at home	11.90	88.10

We asked children about how they were able to learn during the pandemic (Table 7). We found that 63.90% reported that they were able to learn with their parents or people looking after them', while 36.10% reported that they were unable to. Further, just over half of the sample (50.90%) was able to learn 'by searching the internet' and just under half (49.10%) did not. Demonstrating the lack of access to online education during the pandemic, 71.30% did not have 'online classes with teachers', and only 28.70% did. Additionally, only 21.40% used 'other ways' to learn at home during the pandemic, but more than three quarters of the sample (78.60%) did not. We also found that 11.90% did not study at home when their school was closed, which means that 119 children did not do any schoolwork while schools were closed during the first two years of the pandemic (2020 and 2021). However, we found that 88.10% were able to study at home while schools were closed.

Table 8: Learning at home during the Coronavirus (Q17)

Item	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
During the Coronavirus, when schools were closed, I managed to continue with learning from home	12.90	9.70	18.60	17.0	39.20

We asked children whether they were able to continue learning from home while schools were closed during the pandemic. Children's responses were nuanced as 59.20% agreed that they were able to continue their learning at home (combined response options: 'agree a lot' and 'totally agree') and 18.60% only 'agreed

somewhat'. The combined option of 'I do not agree' and 'agree a little bit' means that 22.60% of children did not learn at home (Table 8).

Table 9: Access to the internet during the Coronavirus (18.1 – 18.7)

During the coronavirus...(%)				
Item	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
How often did you have access to the Internet?	13.10	28.10	20.50	37.30
How often did it happen that you could not access the internet for an entire day?	32.30	36.10	16.10	10.10
How often did you have problems with the Internet connection while having a class over web?	61.0	21.0	6.80	7.60
How often did you miss your teacher's advice	12.80	23.70	18.50	44.70
How often did you miss your classmates	8.80	20.10	19.60	50.60
How often did you wish that you could go back to school	15.40	27.0	19.70	37.60
How often did your parent or a sister/brother help you with schoolwork	11.50	25.70	21.10	39.20

Children's access to the internet during the pandemic was an important aspect of children's lives (see Table 9). We found that 37.30% reported that they 'always' 'have access to the internet', 20.50% have access 'often', while only 28.10% have access 'sometimes', and 13.10% 'never' have access. This means that 61.70% of children did not have consistent access to the internet during the pandemic. When asked how often they could not access the internet for an entire day, 10.10% (n =

101) indicated 'always', 16.10% selected 'often', and 36.10% selected 'sometimes'. We found that 61% 'never' had problems with their internet connection while having an online class; this included children who did not have online classes during the lockdown. Additionally, 21% had problems 'sometimes', while 6.80% had problems 'often' and 7.60% 'always' had problems connecting to the internet during an online class.

We asked children how much they missed their teachers' advice during the pandemic. Just under half of the sample (44.70%) reported that they 'always' missed their teachers' advice, while 18.50% missed it 'often', 23.70% missed it 'sometimes', and 12.80% 'never' missed their teachers' advice. Moreover, just over half of the sample missed their 'classmates' during the lockdown (50.80%), while 8.80% 'never' missed their classmates. When asked how often they wished they could go back to school, 37.60% indicated 'always', 27% indicated 'sometimes', and 15.40% 'never' did. Interestingly, 39.20% indicated that they 'always' have a parent/sibling that helps them with schoolwork, 21.10% have help 'often', 25.70% have help 'sometimes', and 11.50% 'never' have help with schoolwork. This means that 115 children did not have assistance with schoolwork from parents or siblings during the Coronavirus lockdown.

Table 10: Learning during the Coronavirus (Q19.1 – 19.8)

How do you keep in touch with your friends during the Coronavirus lockdown...		
Item:	Yes (%)	No (%)
Calls	49.20	50.80
Video calls	57.70	42.30
WhatsApp audios	53.30	46.70
WhatsApp messages	60.70	39.30
Social media	47.90	52.1
Meeting each other in person	40.30	59.70
Not at all	8.80	91.20
Other ways	8.40	91.60

Table 10 shows how children were able to keep in touch with their friends during the lockdowns. We found that most children kept in touch with their friends using 'WhatsApp messages' (60.70%), followed by 'video calls' (57.70%), 'WhatsApp audios' (53.30%) 'telephone calls' (49.20%) and 'social media' (47.90%). Only 40.30% met 'in person', and 8.80% did not meet at all.

Table 11: Social support during the Coronavirus (Q22.1 – 22.3)

During the Coronavirus...					
Item	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree
I felt well-supported by some of my friends	16.50	17.10	21.30	17.80	27.0
I felt well-supported by some of my teachers	19.80	15.40	19.90	20.80	22.60
I felt well-supported by some people I live with	5.60	6.20	10.80	15.10	62.30

Social support during the pandemic was an important aspect of children's lives. We asked children whether they felt well-supported by *some* of their friends, teachers, and people they lived with. Most children felt well-supported by people they lived with, representing higher levels of agreement. We found less variability across the agreement options for the support from some friends and teachers (Table 11).

Table 12: Social relationships during the Coronavirus (Q23.1 – 23.3)

During the Coronavirus..					
Item	I do not agree	Agree a little bit	Agree somewhat	Agree a lot	Totally agree

I became closer to some members of my family	13.60	12.10	16.40	17.80	40.10
My relationships with my friends was affected during the Coronavirus	24.0	16.30	18.10	18.0	23.60
I made new friends with other children online during the Coronavirus	33.40	11.80	10.30	13.0	31.50

We examined children’s social relationships with family and friends during the pandemic (Table 12). We found high levels of agreement (combined options of ‘totally agree and ‘agree a lot’) for children who agreed that they became closer to some members of their family (58.20%). Further, 25.70% did not agree, and did not get closer to some members of their family (combined response options: ‘I do not agree’ = 13.60%; and ‘Agree a little bit’ = 12.10). We asked whether children’s relationships with their friends were affected during the pandemic and found that most children agreed, with 23.60% indicating that they ‘totally agree’ and 18% ‘agreeing a lot’ (combined total of 41.60% that agree), 18.10% of children that ‘agree somewhat’, and 40.30% that ‘do not agree’. Finally, we asked children if they ‘made new friends with other children online during the Coronavirus’. We found that 43.50% ‘totally agreed’, 10.30% ‘agreed somewhat’, and 45.20% did not agree (combined response options: ‘I do not agree = 33.40%; and ‘agree a little bit = 11.80%).

2.4 How do you feel about life: Q24-28

Table 13: Children Worlds Subjective Well-Being Scale (Q24.1 – 24.5)

Item	Total
I enjoy my life	8.06
My life is going well	7.76
I have a good life	7.96
The things that happen in my life are excellent	7.10

We asked children five questions that assessed context-free cognitive life satisfaction representing the *Children's Worlds Subjective Well-Being Scale*. The highest mean score for the scale was for the item 'I enjoy my life' (8.06), followed closely by 'I am happy with my life' (8.05), 'I have a good life' (7.76), and the lowest mean score (7.10) for the item 'The things that happen in my life are excellent' (Table 13).

Table 14: Children Worlds Psychological Well-Being Scale (24.6 – 24.11)

Item	Total
I like being the way I am	8.51
I am good at managing my daily	7.48
People are generally friendly towards me	7.25
I have enough choice about how I spend my time	7.70
I feel that I am learning a lot at the moment	7.88
I feel positive about my future	8.31

We asked children six questions about their psychological well-being (PWB), which formed part of the *Children's Worlds Psychological Well-Being Scale* (Table 14). The item with the highest mean score was for 'I like being the way I am' (8.51). 'I feel positive about my future' had the second highest mean score of 8.31. These were the only two mean scores above 8. The item 'I feel that I am learning a lot at the moment' had a mean score of 7.88, followed by 'I have enough choice about how I spend my time' (7.70), and 7.48 for 'I am good at managing my daily responsibilities'. The lowest mean score was for the item 'People are generally friendly towards me' (7.25).

Table 15: Positive and negative affect 25.1 – 25.6)

Last two weeks:

Item	Total
How often feeling happy	7.93
How often feeling sad	4.21
How often feeling calm	6.89
How often feeling stressed	4.74
How often feeling full of energy	7.65
How often feeling bored	4.78

Note: Response options ranged from '0 = Not at all' to '10 = Extremely'

We were interested in children's affect (emotions) and asked them three questions about positive affect (PA) (feeling happy, calm, and full of energy) and negative affect (NA) (feeling sad, stressed, and bored) over the last two weeks (Table 15). For the PA items, the highest mean score was for the item 'feeling happy', followed by 'feeling full of energy' (7.65), and 'feeling calm' (6.89). For the NA items, the highest mean score was for the item 'feeling bored' (4.78), followed by 'feeling stressed' (4.74), and 'feeling sad' (4.21).

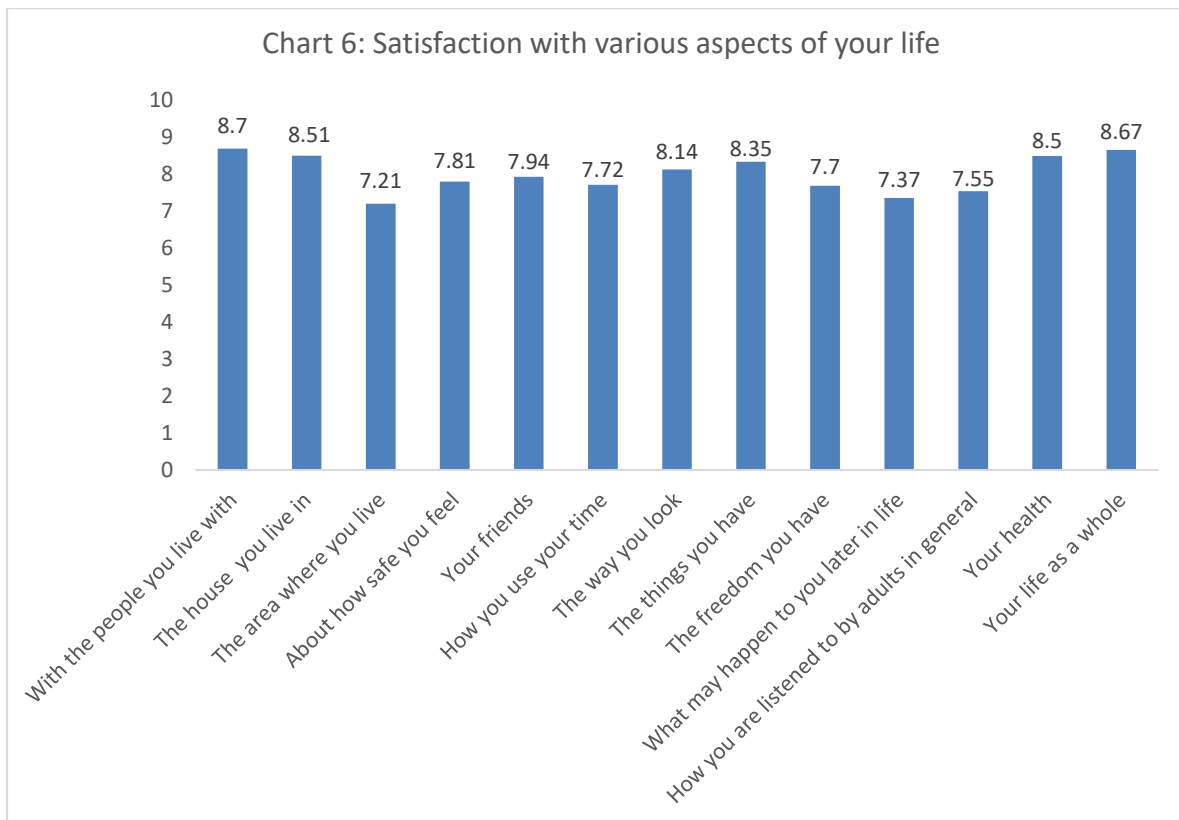
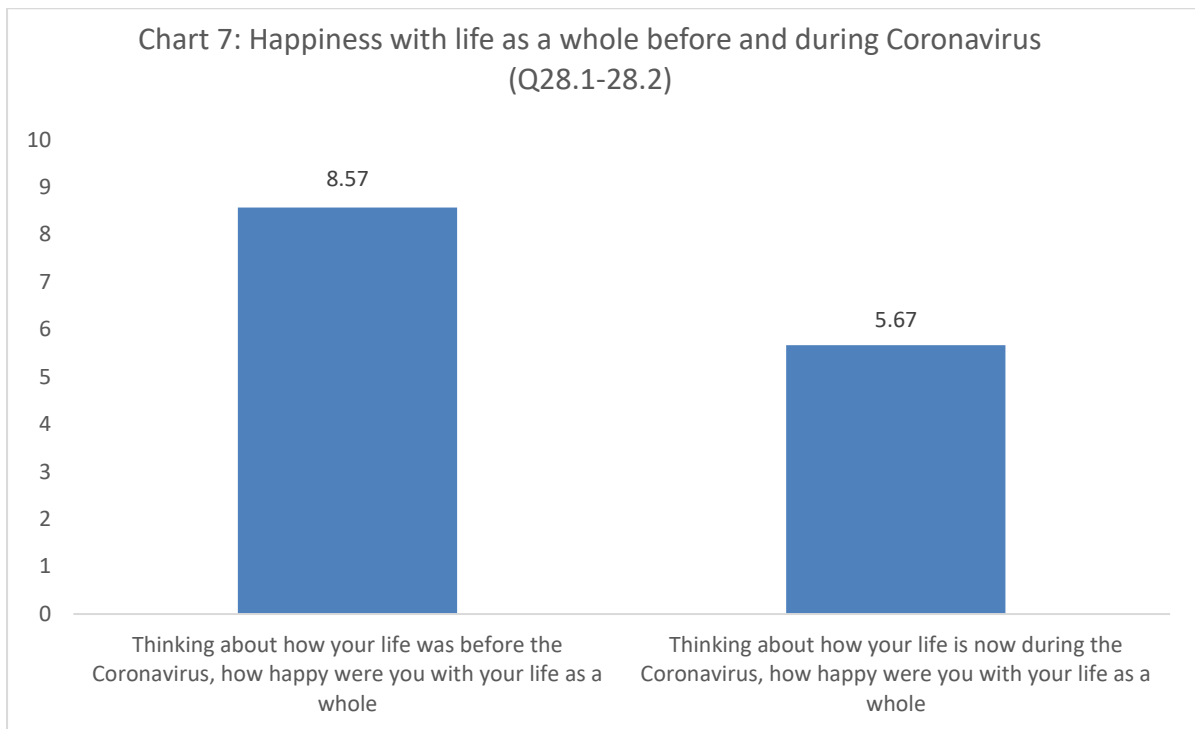


Chart 6 presents children’s satisfaction with various aspects of their life. The highest mean scores were for the items satisfaction ‘with the people you live with’ (8.70) and ‘your life as a whole’ (8.67); while the lowest mean scores was for the item ‘the area where you live’ (7.21). We also found that ‘your health’ (8.50), the house you live in (8.51), ‘the things you have’ (8.35), and ‘the way you look’ were above 8. The items with mean scores less than 8, were ‘your friends’, ‘about your safe I feel’ (7.82), ‘the things you have’, ‘how you use your time’ (7.72) ‘how you are listened to by adults in general (7.55), and ‘what may happen to you later in life’ (7.37).



Finally, we asked children about how happy they were with their life as a whole *before* and *during* the Coronavirus. We found a significant decrease in children’s mean happiness from 8.57 before the pandemic, to 5.67 during the pandemic. This indicates that children’s happiness with their whole life decreased owing to various challenges experienced during the pandemic (Chart 7).

3. Conclusions

This report presents the initial findings from the South Africa Children’s Worlds COVID-19 Supplement Study, conducted in 2021. While navigating data collection was challenging during the pandemic, we managed to collect data with 1000 children between the ages of 10-12-years-old from two provinces in the country. In this section, we provide an overview of the key findings that emerged from the study.

In South Africa, children’s daily lives were profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most children indicated that they were worried that people they knew may get infected with the Coronavirus. They were least concerned about the money that their family had during the pandemic. A reasonably high proportion (26.10%) of

children indicated that someone in their home contracted COVID-19, while half of the sample knew someone that contracted the virus. Regarding living arrangements, during the pandemic, most did not have to move home but 9.10%, which equates to 91 children in our sample that were forced to move homes owing to the pandemic. Given the economic impact of the pandemic, many parents lost their jobs; 17% of these parents obtained a government grant, while 12.10% did not. Concerningly, 125 children indicated not having enough food to eat each day during the pandemic.

Children's learning and educational development were substantially disrupted given the national lockdowns and school closures. Access to technological devices and the availability of a stable internet connection were the main determining factors. However, we found that most children managed to continue with their learning from home. Our results further demonstrate differences in the percentages of children that felt supported in their learning needs by their family and teachers during this period. Overall, as it relates to children's schooling and learning, we found that children's satisfaction with learning decreased from *before* to *during* COVID-19.

Children's relationships with friends and family were critical. We found consensus that children's relationships with friends and family were affected during the pandemic. For satisfaction with friends, we found a significant decrease in the mean scores from *before* to *during* the pandemic. With some variability, children reported feeling well-supported by their friends; however, there were higher levels of agreement as it relates to support from their family.

We also examined children's safety in three contexts (home, school, and neighbourhood). The results demonstrated that children's feelings of safety were further compromised during the pandemic. Given the low baseline, as demonstrated by low scores on personal safety prior to the pandemic, these results are concerning and remain an area that requires urgent attention.

Children reported significantly lower levels of overall well-being and happiness *during* the pandemic than *before* the pandemic. Interestingly, we found that during COVID-19, the distribution of the SWB scores reflected much more variance and a less extreme optimistic bias. This suggests that the overall personal and social

circumstances related to the pandemic had a critical impact on the functioning of children's SWB. Factors of positive affect (happy, calm and full of energy) displayed lower scores, and factors of negative affect (sad, stressed and bored) displayed higher scores *during* the pandemic than *before*.

These initial findings provide key insights into children's experiences of life during the pandemic in two provinces in South Africa. It is worth noting that the experiences of the pandemic were varied and largely influenced by SES and parental resources. Further research is required to explore the outcomes and relations between variables across macro-factors (e.g. SES) and micro-factors (e.g. gender).

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