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# PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS FOR CHILDREN DURING SCHOOL CLOSURE



ULAANBAATAR  
2022



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This study was completed by a team of researchers from the School of Social Science, the National University of Mongolia (NUM) and the Mongolian Institute for Educational Research (MIER), upon request of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) and with the support of UNICEF.

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## ACRONYMS

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <b>DEP</b>    | Department of Education and Psychology       |
| <b>FAD</b>    | Family Assessment Device                     |
| <b>GES</b>    | General Education School                     |
| <b>IRIM</b>   | Independent Research Institute of Mongolia   |
| <b>MIER</b>   | Mongolian Institute for Educational Research |
| <b>MoES</b>   | Ministry of Education and Science            |
| <b>NGO</b>    | Non-governmental organizations               |
| <b>NUM</b>    | National University of Mongolia              |
| <b>SARS</b>   | Severe acute respiratory syndrome            |
| <b>UNICEF</b> | United Nations Children’s Fund               |

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Fear** – a negative emotion arising from feelings of danger

**Frustration** – a reactive emotion that is formed when one's motive or actions are suppressed for internal or external reasons

**Loneliness** – an anxious feeling that results from a lack of social relations, lack of close relations and connections to others

**Adaptation** – a balance between the internal state of an individual and the external environment

**Psychosocial** – correlation between social factors and individual attitude, thoughts and behaviour

**Socio-emotional** – describes relations between family, friends and community and emotions related to these; describes the ability to manage one's emotions

**Stress** – a reaction that results from loss of balance between psychological and physical well-being

**Attachment** – a deep stable connection; bonding between two individuals

**Attachment anxiety** – anxiety related to or caused by a relationship between close people

## SUMMARY

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, Mongolia suspended all schools and kindergartens from 3 February to 31 May 2020 and switched from classroom learning to distance learning. During this period, content for primary and secondary school and kindergarten education was broadcast on TV channels in the form of tele-lessons.

With the suspension of schools and kindergartens and the imposition of a lockdown, children started watching tele-lessons according to set schedules. Being unable to meet their classmates for an extended period or engage in extracurricular, school or community activities, children experienced feelings of loneliness, spent more time looking at screens due to loneliness, developed anxiety and fear, and worried about lagging in their learning. On top of these challenges, stress resulted from trying to adjust to the new mode of tele-education and unfulfilled attachment needs, which led to decreased motivation for learning and caused psychological distress and negative attitudes in children.

The lockdown resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic was a new experience for children, parents and teachers, and required everyone to adapt to this new situation to ensure continuous teaching and learning. Children commonly experienced worries and frustrations caused by disagreements with their families, parents' job loss due to the lockdown and declining household income. Parents worried that they could not help their children with their studies, and teachers were frustrated that they could not have daily in-person interactions with their students, monitor students' learning process and offer help as needed.

As Mongolia – including its education sector – and the rest of the world were monitoring and analysing the COVID-19 situation to make effective and evidence-based decisions, UNICEF and MoES commissioned a 'Study of psychosocial risks for children associated with prolonged school and kindergarten closures'.

The study focuses on the impact of school and kindergarten closures and lockdown on children's mental health and the challenges that children, parents and teachers face. It further aims to determine students' psychosocial readiness for the start of the new academic year and presents recommendations for mitigating potential risks.

NUM researchers, guided by research ethics, conducted the study using advanced research techniques to identify children's psychosocial and socio-emotional issues and risks during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers firmly believe that identifying issues and risks, predicting adverse effects and developing evidence-based recommendations will help build resilience for future adversity and overcome challenges.

The survey data were collected from a randomly selected sample using quantitative research methods, such as psychological tests, and qualitative research methods, such as psychological projective tests, probing questions and interviews. The survey sample covered Bayankhongor and Khentii Provinces and Ulaanbaatar's Bayanzurkh and Songinokhairkhan Districts. The survey was conducted among secondary school students, their parents and teachers. In order to explore the psychosocial situation of preschool children, data were collected using pre-prepared questions from a small number of parents who participated in the study and whose children attended kindergarten (before kindergartens were closed). The results of the survey were based

on class differences between students, between urban and rural students, and explained when statistical analysis revealed differences.

The research was conducted under a tight schedule – the survey was conducted in July and August 2020, and the research findings, conclusions and recommendations had to be presented to MoES, UNICEF, teachers, researchers and education professionals before the start of the academic year in September.

This section presents a summary of the study's main findings. A key finding is that 56.2 per cent of the surveyed children have low adaptability skills, showing symptoms of reactive attachment disorder, such as aggressive behaviour, stress, frustration, blaming others and hypersensitivity. Low adaptability adversely affects children's relationships; emotions – such as loneliness and sadness; behaviour; and ability to communicate, all caused by a reactive attachment disorder.

While exploring the children's socio-emotional state, relationships and emotions, it was found that one in three students experienced problems with family relationships, and one in three experienced problems with their friendships during school closure. In the context of children's psychosocial well-being, changes in their attitudes and behaviours towards school were analysed, and it was found that students prefer in-person classroom learning because they miss their teachers and friends and are tired of tele-lessons.

The positive attitude towards in-person classroom learning is mostly linked to the experience of meeting and studying with their classmates, while the negative attitude towards tele-lessons is linked to its fast pace, lack of personal interaction and lack of opportunity to ask questions. During the lockdown, the children felt isolated from their peers and worried they might lag in school. During school closure and lockdown, the children's lifestyles changed. For example, they stayed up late, woke up late, overate, lacked physical activity and increased their use of electronic media/digital devices.

Stress and anxiety were higher than normal among lower secondary school children, aged 6–13, and they needed support to cope with their fears. Most students feared the COVID-19 pandemic and worried they might fall behind in school. Other common fears included getting infected with COVID-19, getting sick, having to pass exams when schools reopen, feeling shy when returning to school and having to repeat a grade.

Research has shown that children's communication problems and emotional and behavioural issues during lockdown may adversely affect their physical, cognitive, social and personal development if the lockdown lasts for an extended period. Children's low adaptability skills, of which the main indicator is relational problems, lead to emotional and behavioural issues. Moreover, attachment anxiety, which impacts adaptability skills, was evident among the surveyed children. Consequences of low adaptation skills over an extended period include bad behaviour, addiction, giving in to the influence of others, learning delays, loss of motivation for learning, cognitive problems, dropping out of school. The researchers developed recommendations for priority actions that parents, families, teachers, schools, line ministries and relevant agencies should adopt immediately.

In order to reduce children's stress and anxiety about COVID-19, children should be provided with age-appropriate information in family, school and community settings, and actions need to be taken to eliminate the lag in the education curriculum without causing any exam-related stress and anxiety at the beginning of the new academic year.

It is further recommended that schools and educational institutions set up a team of specialists who provide psychological support for secondary school students to prevent negative consequences of school closures. The team of specialists should collaborate with university faculties specialized in the field and with psychological diagnostic and counselling services to organize activities to support and promote strong and positive family relationships between parents and children.

## INTRODUCTION

As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in 2020, lockdowns worldwide severely impacted people's livelihoods, creating new socioeconomic conditions within a short period, and required people to adapt their relationships. In such times, the right positioning and optimal management of educational services play a vital role, especially given that the lockdown led to the closure of educational institutions at all levels, making in-class sessions impossible and necessitating online learning.

On 31 December 2019, a type of pneumonia caused by a new virus was registered in Wuhan, and on 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization officially declared the COVID-19 pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020). On 22 January 2020, the Government of Mongolia and the Ministry of Health of Mongolia started controlling the country's borders due to the registration of a case being transferred across the border. The decision was made to close schools and kindergartens starting from 27 January 2020, and 600,000 students in general education schools (GES) and over 260,000 kindergarten children started watching tele-lessons from home. Further, some 45,000 school and kindergarten teachers had to switch to the quarantine regime and learn to teach online and through tele-lessons.

With the suspension of schools and kindergartens and the imposition of a lockdown, children started watching tele-lessons, following set schedules. Unable to meet their classmates or engage in extracurricular, school or community activities for an extended period left the children feeling lonely. They spent more time looking at screens due to loneliness and developed anxiety over fears that they were not learning enough. Additionally, adjusting to a new mode of tele-education and unfulfilled attachment needs led to stress and decreased motivation for learning, causing psychological distress and negative attitudes in the children.

If a person experiences negative emotions for an extended period, their mental health can be affected and the chances that they feel hostile towards society increase (Brooks, et al., 2020). If estimating the future value of learning in purely financial terms, without considering the conditions that negatively affect children's psychology, the lockdown from February to July 2020 led to a loss of US\$10 trillion (World Bank, 2020). During the peak of the lockdown, 90 per cent of the world's children were quarantined for varying periods (United Nations, 2020), but psychosocial issues and risks that may result from policies and decisions made during this time have not been considered in detail yet (Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on those issues and risks, analyse them, eliminate negative consequences from such risks and prevent any possible future dangers or risks. In the context of schools, an in-depth study of the psychosocial and socio-emotional psychosocial and socio-emotional consequences of lockdown for students, teachers and parents, who are the main stakeholders of educational services, is required to offer psychological assistance where needed.

This study's evidence-based recommendations should serve as a valuable resource to help overcome current challenges and issues and mitigate future risks.

In conclusion, this study was conducted based on sound research ethics and advanced research techniques to identify psychosocial and socio-emotional issues children experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic and make projections about their impact.

## OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Although many studies are being conducted regarding the impact of COVID-19 on adults, children, adolescents and families, studies and evidence are still limited depending on the region and the spread of COVID-19 in a specific country.

Studies conducted during the spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) show that children's and parents' indicators for stress after shock (post-traumatic stress disorder) were four times higher during quarantine than under normal circumstances (Sprang & Silman, 2013). Also, the following psychological impacts are common in other recent quarantine studies. For example:

- Negative psychological symptoms (Mihashi, et al., 2009)
- Abnormal emotions (Yoon, Kim, Ko, & Lee, 2016)
- Increased depression levels (Hawryluck, et al., 2004)
- Increased stress levels (DiGiovanni, Conley, Chiu, & Zaborski, 2004)
- Feeling discouraged, lacking motivation, becoming easily agitated, suffering from insomnia (Lee, Chan, Chau, Kwok, & Kleinman, 2005)
- High levels of post-traumatic stress (Reynolds, et al., 2008)
- Anger, frustration (Marjanovic, Greenglass, & Coffey, 2007)
- Loss of willpower (Maunder, Hunter, & Vincent, 2003)

Studies about children's psychosocial conditions during COVID-19 were conducted in England, Italy and Spain. For example, at the beginning of the quarantine period, according to a study completed in Great Britain, children suffered from boredom and felt lonely because they missed their families and friends. Further, their socio-emotional development was delayed due to quarantine (Fegert, Vitiello, Plener, & Clemens, 2020; Saurabh & Ranjan, 2020; Clerici, Massimino, & Ferrari, 2020).

In Spain, it was noted at the start of the pandemic that children's physical and psychological health were at risk when children were kept under quarantine for four weeks (Grechyna, 2020). Also, the vulnerability of children with special needs or lower socioeconomic status to quarantine-related risks increased (Jæger & Blaabæk, 2020; Andrew, et al., 2020; Bol, 2020; Darlington, et al., 2020).

As for Mongolia, in April 2020, the Open Society Forum and Association of Parents with Differently Abled Children conducted and published research on how quarantine is affecting families with disabled children. A total of 66 out of 85 parents or caretakers of disabled children who participated in the study experienced some form of mental issue during the quarantine. These issues were related to household income and parent or caretaker concern for the well-being of their children. Also, respondents mentioned the following complaints: negative effect on emotional and physical health (16), need for mental health care because of the impact on mental well-being (3), frequent feelings of anger and frustration (7), lack of fresh air and insomnia (2) and loss of daily regime (1) (Open Society Forum, 2020).

The COVID-19 impact assessment revealed that families in provincial centres and soums were sending their children to stay with relatives in the countryside, and children felt depressed and, in some cases, experienced physical abuse. Families reported that their children's behaviour changed for the worse, and children reported feeling bored, missing school, missing friends and experiencing negative discipline strategies from their parents (World Vision International Mongolia, 2020).

According to a study presented by the UNICEF in July 2020, the emotional health of children was very poor, and the mental or psychological care available to them was insufficient. Also, one in 10 parents considered their child problematic because of their emotions, social interactions and behaviour. A gender difference was evident in relation to psychological care, in that psychological support for boys was low. Finally, parents had only limited knowledge about the psychosocial well-being of their children (UNICEF, 2020).

## METHODOLOGY

The following objectives were set in order to determine the psychosocial situation of children in connection with the temporary closure and lockdown of educational institutions:

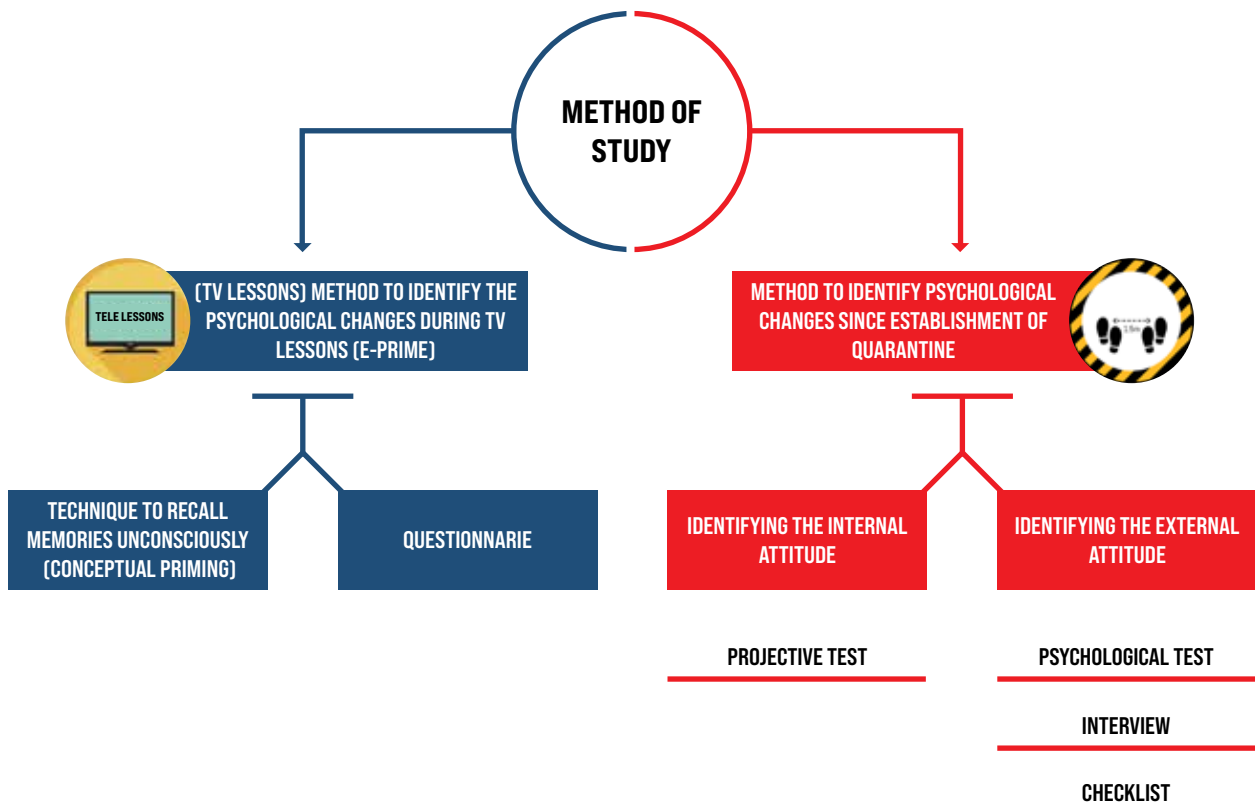
- Identify the psychosocial and socio-emotional risks facing children, parents and teachers and predict their consequences
- Develop recommendations to prevent potential psychological risks for children.

### METHODS OF RESEARCH

The following quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the research::

- (i) Quantitative method: psychological test, checklist
- (ii) Qualitative method: projective test, interview.

**FIGURE 1.** RESEARCH METHODS USED IN THIS STUDY



**TABLE 1.** RESEARCH METHODS (CHILDREN)

| Method                         | Method description  | Indicators    |          |                   |          |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------|----------|-------------------|----------|
|                                |   | Communication | Attitude | Lifestyle, habits | Emotions |
| Checklist                      | A questionnaire aimed at identifying changes in children's emotions, bodies, habits and relationships in connection with school closures  | ✓             |          | ✓                 | ✓        |
| Interview                      | Questions aimed at finding out specifics of children's relationships with their friends and family during school closures, appropriateness of tele-lessons and expectations for the school opening in September                                     | ✓             |          | ✓                 | ✓        |
| Incomplete sentence method     | Projective method, based on L. Sacks and W. Levy's incomplete sentence method, which was designed to determine children's attitudes toward school, teachers and tele-lessons  | ✓             | ✓        |                   | ✓        |
| Reliving the moment method     | A method based on e-prime techniques to recall a certain situation (watching tele-lessons) and identify worries and frustration students experienced in this situation<br>In this study, we used the unconscious memory (conceptual priming) method |               |          |                   | ✓        |
| Rene Jillea's projective test  | A projective test method to assess a child's relationships with family and friends  | ✓             |          |                   |          |
| Family Assessment Device (FAD) | A self-assessment tool for assessing family relationships   | ✓             |          |                   |          |
| Rosenzweig projective test     | A psychological projective test to identify anxiety, stress, frustration and aggression<br>The children's version was used for children aged 6 to 12 years, and the adult version was used for children aged 13 to 18                               |               |          |                   | ✓        |

**TABLE 2.** RESEARCH METHODS (PARENTS)

| Indicators                                   | Checklist | Interview | Questionnaire to evaluate family relations (FAD) |
|--|-----------|-----------|--|
| Communication                                |           | ✓         | ✓  |
| Changes in children's behaviour and emotions | ✓         | ✓         |  |

**TABLE 3.** RESEARCH METHODS (TEACHERS)

| Indicators  | Questionnaire |
|---|---------------|
| Psychosocial issues and risks for students                        | ✓             |
| Students' social skills and communication                         | ✓             |
| Students' family relations  | ✓             |
| Challenges students will face at the beginning of the school year | ✓             |
| Teachers' psychosocial issues related to the quarantine period    | ✓             |

## RELIABILITY OF RESEARCH

To identify the specifics of children’s psychological states when watching tele-lessons, we used the e-prime method, which helps reconstruct the conditions of that time. This technique allows participants to recall the conditions at the time on both conscious and unconscious levels. We used the conceptual priming method in our study.

To analyse students’ relationships with their families or friends, we have used Rene Jillea’s projective test for primary graders and the FAD method for lower and upper secondary graders.

The reliability of the research methods is as follows:

- Checklist:  $\alpha = 0.684\text{--}0.878$
- Questionnaire for evaluating family relations (FAD):  $\alpha = 0.748$
- E-prime method (recreating conditions at a specific time): the students who participated in the study found on average 5.6 pictures from eight correlated images and correctly wrote 55.8 letters out of 58 letters. From here, we can conclude that 70.7 per cent of primary graders and 94.6 per cent of lower and upper secondary graders were able to remember the conditions at the time. The primary school students had watched a tele-lesson and then they chose the pictures that were related to the tele-lesson from a set of pictures which included related and nonrelated to the tele-lesson. The lower and upper secondary graders had watched a tele-lesson and then completed sentences which were related and nonrelated to the tele-lesson.

## STUDY SAMPLE

The study sample was based on a random selection and was organized by capital city, city centre and remote districts, apartments and ger districts, provinces, provincial centres and outskirts, and *soums*. For example, the provinces Bayankhongor and Khentii were selected as rural representatives and the districts Bayanzurkh and Songinokhairkhan as capital city representatives. Because a children’s psychological study requires much time and human resources, we selected non-probability sampling.

To collect information from one child and parent using the above methodology, we spent on average 45 mins and, in some special cases, up to 120 mins.

**TABLE 4.** SURVEY SAMPLE

|   | Sample planning | Real participation of sample |
|---|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Primary, lower and upper secondary graders of GES | 270             | 325                          |
| GES teachers                                      | 82              | 81                           |
| Parents   |                 | 136*                         |

*\* Parents who gave information about their preschool children were counted in this sample.*

Primary, lower secondary and upper secondary graders (325), their parents (136) and teachers (81) participated in this study. Also, we collected information about the psychosocial issues of preschool-aged children from parents (43) who participated in the study.

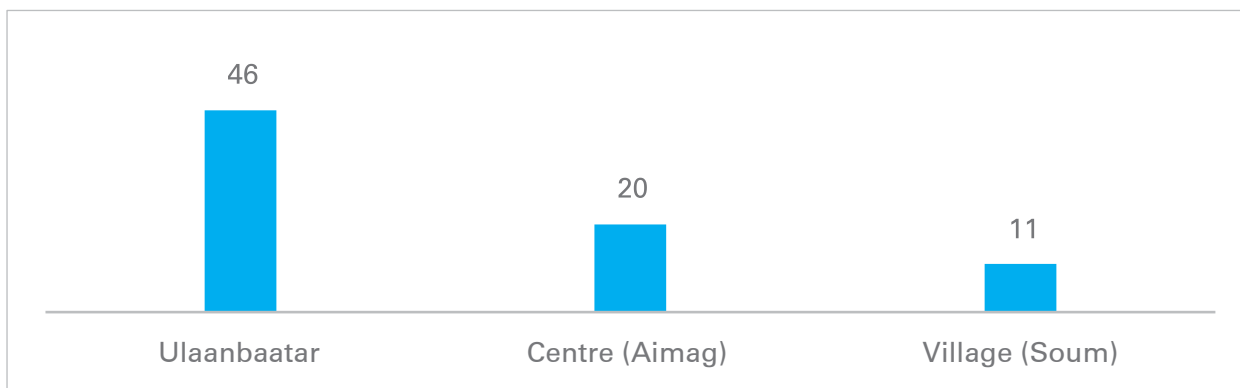
**TABLE 5.** STUDY SAMPLE COMPOSITION

| Location     | Primary               |                       |                       | Lower secondary       |                       |                       | Upper secondary        |                        | Parents | Preschool (parents who provided) info about their children |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------|--|
|              | 1 <sup>th</sup> grade | 3 <sup>th</sup> grade | 5 <sup>th</sup> grade | 6 <sup>th</sup> grade | 8 <sup>th</sup> grade | 9 <sup>th</sup> grade | 10 <sup>th</sup> grade | 11 <sup>th</sup> grade |         |  |
| Ulaanbaatar  | 22                    | 25                    | 28                    | 24                    | 16                    | 18                    | 26                     | 27                     | 76      | 25   |
| Bayankhongor | 9                     | 7                     | 11                    | 9                     | 5                     | 9                     | 11                     | 8                      | 30      | 9  |
| Khentii      | 6                     | 10                    | 9                     | 8                     | 9                     | 8                     | 8                      | 12                     | 30      | 9  |

**TABLE 6.** STUDENTS (BY GENDER, REGION, GRADE)

| Gender    | Location   | Grade (age groups) |
|-----------|------------|--------------------|
| Male      | Urban area | 57.8%              |
|           |            | 39.1%              |
| Female    | Rural area | 42.2%              |
|           |            | 28.3%              |
| Total 325 |            |                    |

Out of 81 teachers who participated in the survey, eight were male and 73 female.

**FIGURE 2.** TEACHERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY (BY SCHOOL LOCATION)

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite the study's purpose, methods and time invested, no conclusions were drawn regarding children with disabilities, children from households below the poverty level and children belonging to ethnic minorities.

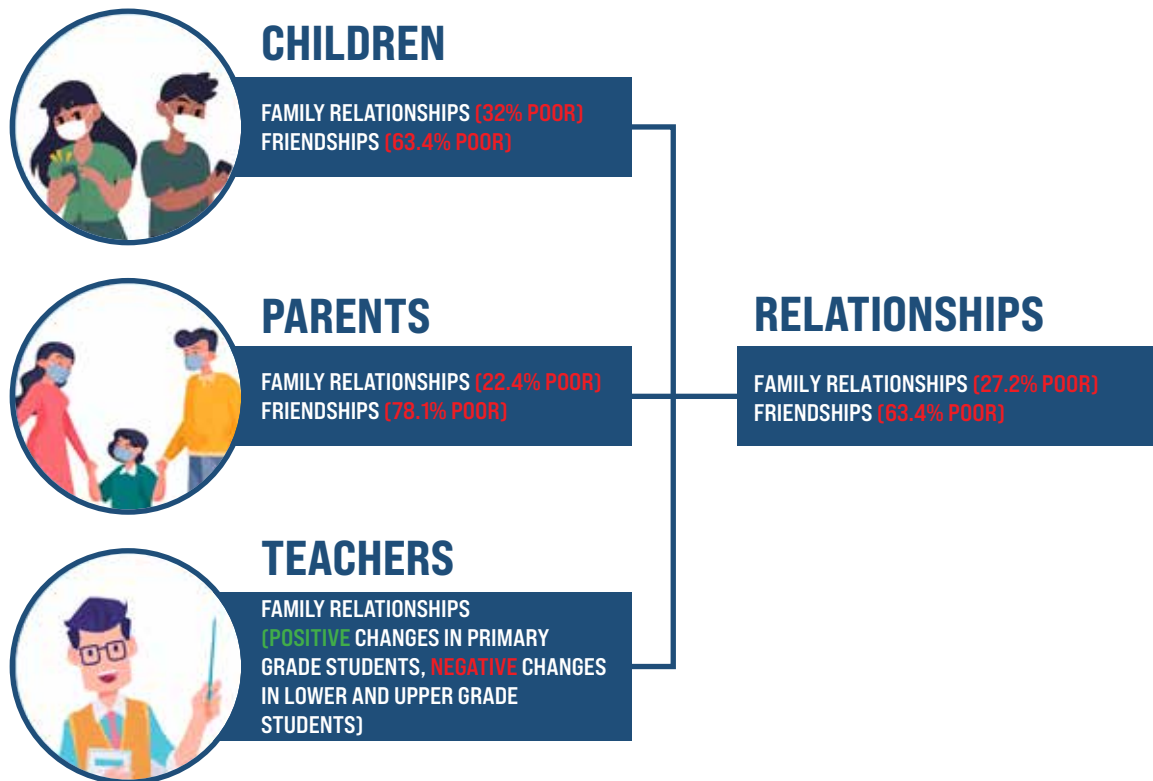
During our data-collection period (July 2020), the COVID-19 lockdown stopped being a major shock. Therefore, the psychosocial conditions might differ from the beginning of the lockdown. If this study had been completed at the beginning of the worldwide pandemic in March and April 2020, the results might have been different.

## STUDY FINDINGS

### RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS DURING LOCKDOWN

Figure 3 shows how children, parents and teachers viewed students' relationships with their families and friends during lockdown.

**FIGURE 3.** SELF-ASSESSMENT OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS' RELATIONSHIPS DURING LOCKDOWN (AS REPORTED BY CHILDREN, PARENTS, TEACHERS)



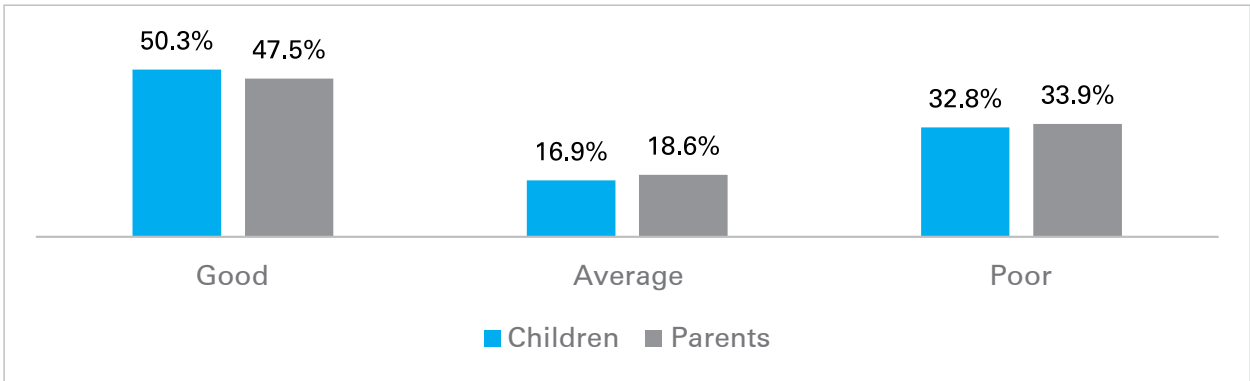
Based on Figure 3, students' relationships with their families and friends were rated as 'poor'.

**TABLE 7.** SELF-ASSESSMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS BY PRIMARY GRADE STUDENTS

|                            | Good  | Normal | Negative |
|----------------------------|-------|--------|----------|
| Relationship with mother   | 10.1% | 50.4%  | 39.5%    |
| Relationship with father   | 2.5%  | 73.1%  | 24.4%    |
| Relationship with siblings | 30.8% | 46.7%  | 22.5%    |

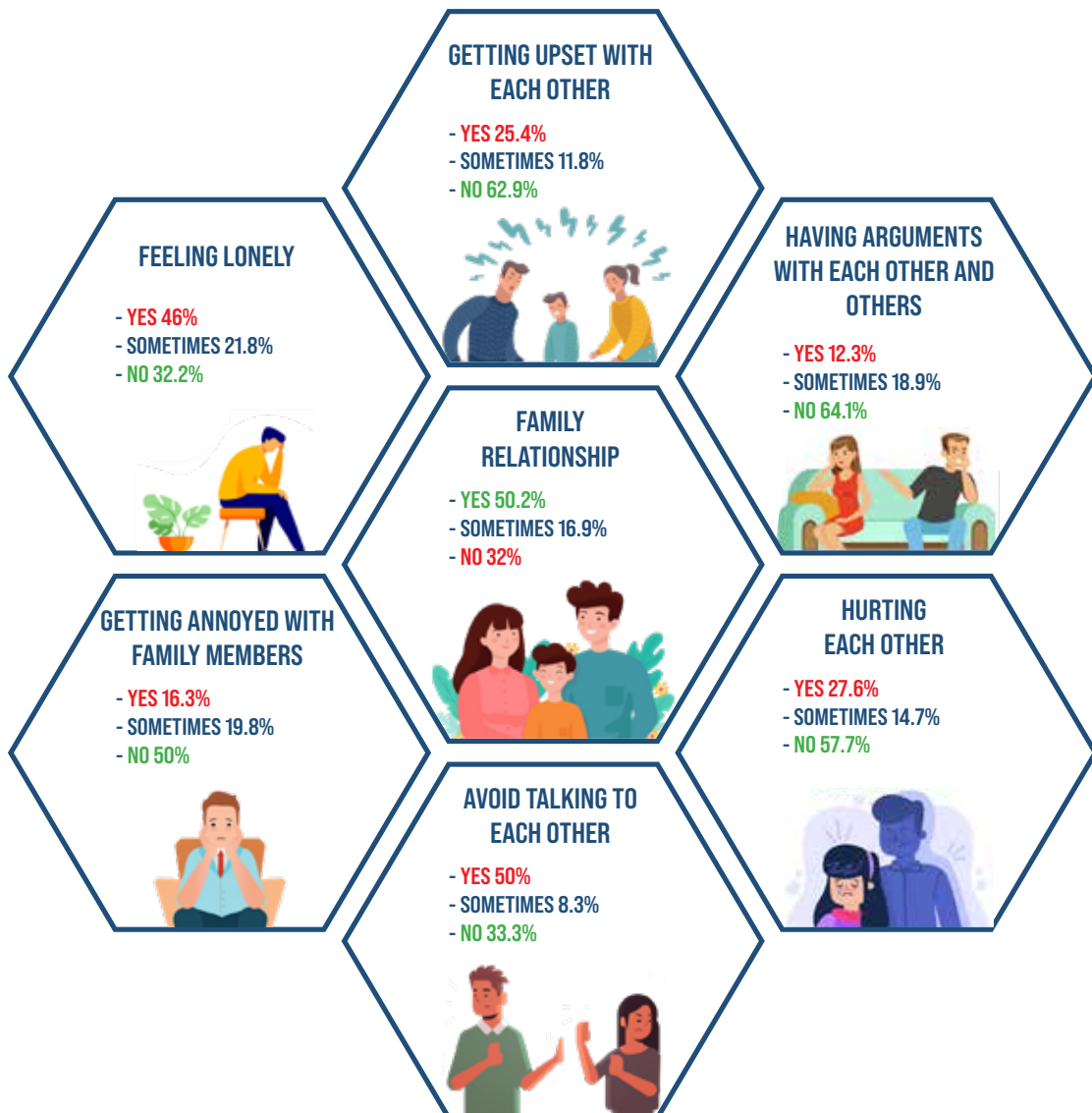
According to 28.8 per cent of primary grade students, most family disputes during school closures and lockdown were related to school or lessons, and 21.7 per cent said they felt lonely during this time.

**FIGURE 4.** SELF-ASSESSMENT OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS (BY LOWER SECONDARY AND UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS, AS INDICATED BY CHILDREN AND PARENTS)



In total, 50.3 per cent of lower and upper secondary school students and 47.5 per cent of parents rated their family relationships as good. However, 32.8 per cent of lower and upper secondary school students and 33.9 per cent of parents rated their family relationships as poor.

**FIGURE 5.** MANIFESTATIONS OF NEGATIVE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS (BY PREVALENCE)



The surveyed families reported the following negative behaviours:

- Getting upset, showing a bad attitude
- Having arguments with each other
- Hurting one another’s feelings
- Not communicating with each other
- Getting tired of one’s family members
- Feeling lonely.

When asked whether family relationships had undergone any changes during lockdown when schools and kindergartens were closed, 60 per cent of parents said that there were no changes, and 40 per cent said there were changes. For example, some parents said the family ties had become stronger, whereas others said they experienced more conflicts and complained that they were not able to give enough attention to their children.

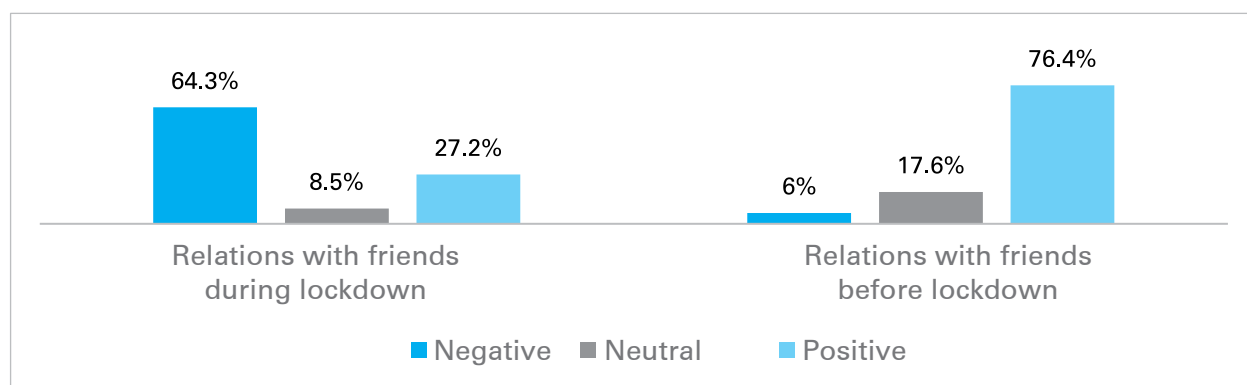
The same data broken down by area, city and rural, revealed that 68 per cent of participating parents from Ulaanbaatar and 37 per cent of parents from rural areas said that children staying at home during lockdown helped family members get close to each other. A breakdown of the data by family members showed that fathers and grandfathers became closer to their children. Also, a close study of the correlation between the number of household members and their relationships revealed that the larger the number of household members, the more conflicts arose.

**TABLE 8.** CORRELATION BETWEEN FAMILY CONFLICT AND HOUSEHOLD SIZE DURING LOCKDOWN

|  | Household size |   |    |   |    |    |
|--|----------------|---|----|---|----|----|
|  | 2              | 3 | 4  | 5 | 6  | 7  |
| Percentage of households having relationship conflicts | 0              | 0 | 10 | 6 | 14 | 11 |

**Relationships between friends during lockdown<sup>1</sup>**

**FIGURE 6.** FRIENDSHIPS OF LOWER AND UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS (BEFORE AND DURING LOCKDOWN)



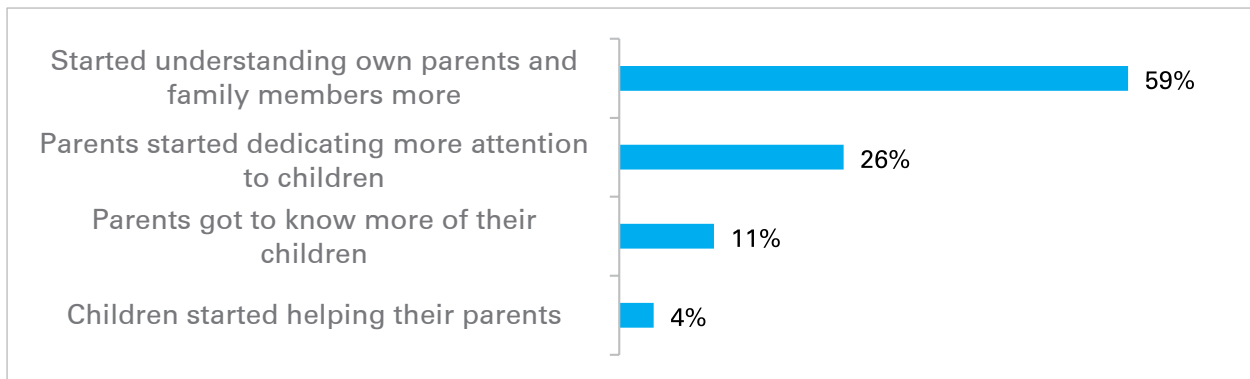
According to 76.4 per cent of lower and upper secondary school students, their friendships were as positive during lockdown as before, while 64.3 per cent rated their friendships as negative or drifting apart during lockdown.

When asked about their children’s friendships, 11.8 per cent of parents said that they do not know. During lockdown, students from the city met their friends less frequently than their peers in rural areas.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Friendships’ mean classmates and close friends of students.

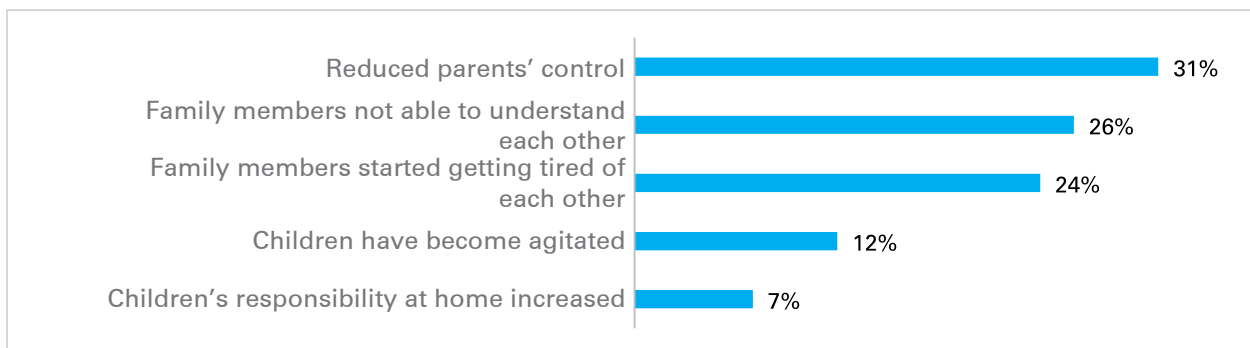
### Teacher evaluations of students' relationships during lockdown

**FIGURE 7.** POSITIVE CHANGES IN FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS (AS REPORTED BY TEACHERS)



According to 59 per cent of teachers, students became more understanding towards their parents and other family members and grew closer to their families during lockdown. Moreover, 26 per cent said that parents spent more time with their children, helping them with their studies and generally caring for and paying more attention to their children. For 11 per cent of teachers, parents learned more about their children – their personalities, dreams and aspirations – through closer and more personal interactions with their children, such as watching age-appropriate movies with them. Finally, 4 per cent of teachers observed that upper-grade students worked to help their parents, which was a positive change.

**FIGURE 8.** NEGATIVE IMPACTS IN FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS (AS REPORTED BY TEACHERS)



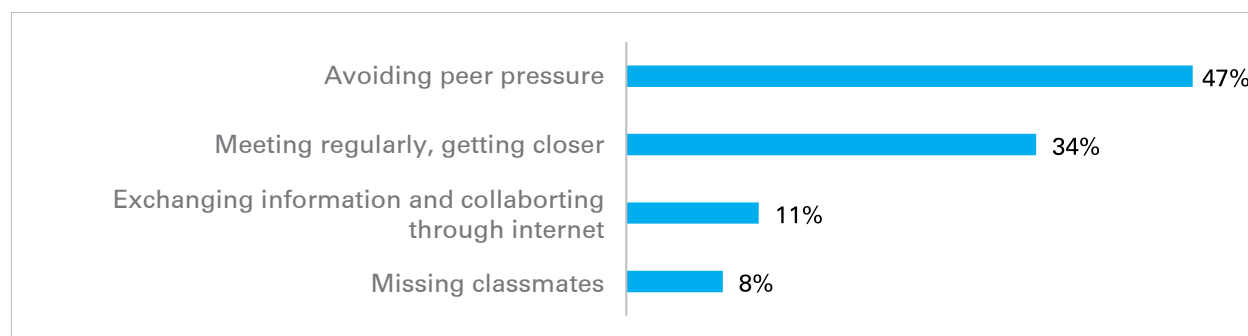
According to 31 per cent of teachers, the lockdown had negative impacts on family relationships, and 26 per cent said that there were increased misunderstandings among family members. Misunderstandings and conflicts arose for different reasons; for example, when working parents could not spend enough time with their primary grade children or when parents nagged their children to do their homework. Conflict also arose when parents increased their children's responsibilities by assigning them to take care of their younger siblings and do household chores or sent them to the countryside to help with livestock production. Teachers also observed that when children became frustrated with negative family relationships, they tended to wander outside or spend more time on electronic devices.

*Parents do not let their children do schoolwork on time. And when the time comes for final grades, they contact us. And at these times, they start pressing their children, which creates conflicts. Pupils who were doing well at school during in-class lessons found their workload increased at home because they started looking after their younger siblings and doing housework. Parents also started complaining that their children were going out too much and asked us to help stop them.*

From teacher's interview

Social networking became the primary means of communication during the lockdown and, as teachers observed, it had both positive and negative impacts.

**FIGURE 9.** POSITIVE CHANGES IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH FRIENDS AND PEERS (AS REPORTED BY TEACHERS)



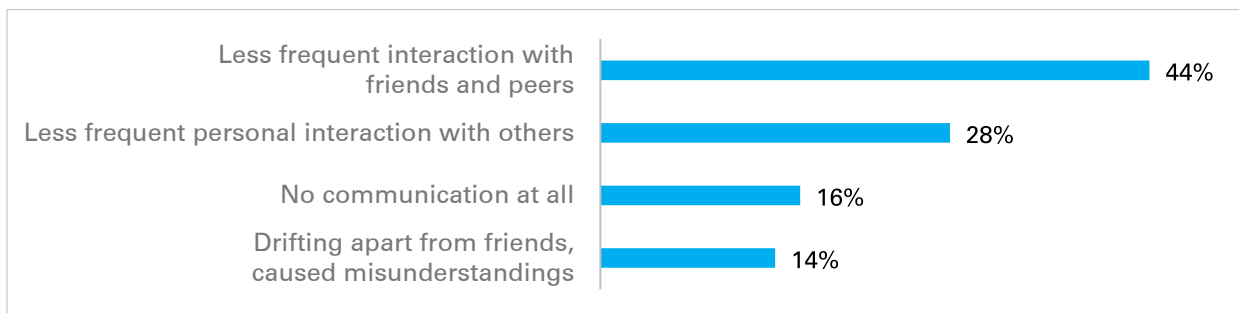
Based on Figure 9, we see that 47 per cent of teachers considered it a positive change that students missed their classmates and teachers, and 34 per cent said that students used the Internet properly by exchanging information and using it to work together. According to 11 per cent of teachers, the lockdown allowed students living close together to meet regularly and close friends to get even closer, but those children who were previously subject to peer pressure avoided such pressure during the lockdown, according to 8 per cent of teachers.

*Not going to school provided an opportunity for children who were bullied in class and subject to peer pressure to avoid such pressure.*

From teacher's interview

*When we post the lessons to the class group, they send their homework back. Here pupils are able to compare homework with each other, which helps them be an example to each other. Children who did not like each other now miss each other and have started getting closer to each other. We see that there is less peer pressure and chances for giving in to bad influence.*

From teacher's interview

**FIGURE 10.** NEGATIVE CHANGES IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH FRIENDS AND PEERS (AS REPORTED BY TEACHERS)

According to 42 per cent of teachers, there was a negative impact on students' relationships with friends and peers because they used the Internet too much and, for example, accessed a closed chat group where they wrote insulting comments and hurt each other. Also, 28 per cent of teachers considered the increase in social media relationships between children instead of 'living' or face-to-face relationships a negative change. Some students did not communicate with each other at all, as 16 per cent of teachers reported, and the lockdown led to a distancing of relationships and misunderstandings between friends, according to 14 per cent of teachers. The teacher interviews revealed that in situations of family conflict, teenage students usually sought comfort from their friends rather than family members, which became impossible to do during the lockdown.

### ISSUES RELATED TO CHILDREN'S EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS DURING THE LOCKDOWN

During the study, children and parents revealed the emotional issues that children experienced during the lockdown. These are explained below in more detail.

**FIGURE 11.** CHILDREN'S EMOTIONS DURING THE LOCKDOWN (AS REPORTED BY CHILDREN AND PARENTS)

| CHILDREN                  | PARENTS                                     |
|---------------------------|---|
| Worry, anxiety 69.5%      | Negative impact on preschool children 25.6% |
| Loneliness 67.8%          | Children feeling stressed, angry 17.7%      |
| Fear 67.2%                | Children feeling sad 15.3%                  |
| Sadness, boredom 62.9%    | Children feeling lonely 10%                 |
| Stress, frustration 53.3% |   |

#### Fear

Of the first graders, 60.6 per cent said they were afraid of COVID-19. The higher the grade, the fewer children were afraid of this disease. However, lower secondary school students were more afraid of poor learning outcomes than upper secondary students.

**TABLE 9.** THE MAIN ISSUES CHILDREN FEARED (BY PRIMARY, LOWER AND UPPER SECONDARY GRADES)

|                                |            | Primary | Lower secondary | Upper secondary |
|--------------------------------|------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Fear of COVID-19               | Not at all | 10.9%   | 21.3%           | 15.2%           |
|                                | Low        | 12%     | 19.4%           | 31.5%           |
|                                | Average    | 26.1%   | 25.9%           | 26.1%           |
|                                | A lot      | 51.1%   | 33.3%           | 27.2%           |
| Fear of poor learning outcomes | Not at all | 12.7%   | 5.6%            | 15.2%           |
|                                | Low        | 27.5%   | 15.7%           | 13%             |
|                                | Average    | 26.5%   | 24.1%           | 21.7%           |
|                                | A lot      | 33.3%   | 54.6%           | 50%             |

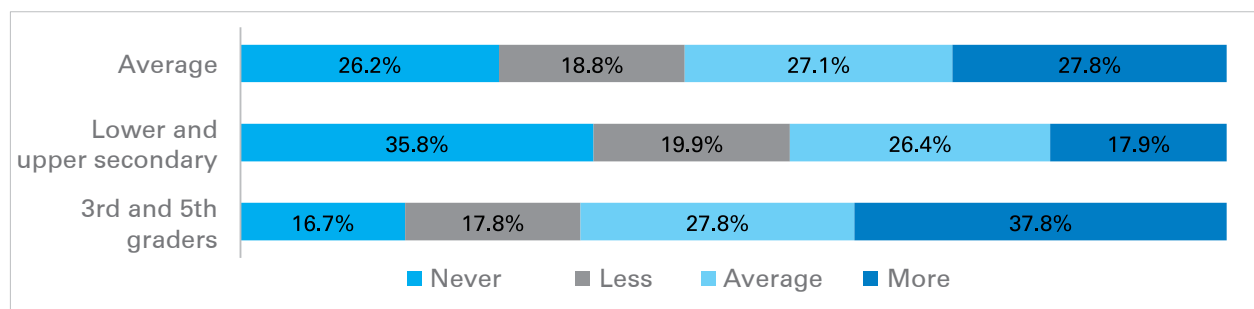
An analysis of the anxiety levels over grades getting lower reveals a 7.5 per cent difference (94.3 and 86.8 per cent, respectively) between rural and urban lower secondary and upper secondary school students.

The test to identify internal attitudes showed that 56.5 per cent of lower and upper secondary graders mainly feared the spread of COVID-19 (36 per cent), falling behind the curriculum (20.5 per cent), delayed in-class learning due to quarantine and extended tele-lessons (19 per cent) and lesson overload (1 per cent). Compared to lower secondary school students (46 per cent), upper secondary school students were more worried and afraid (54 per cent). For instance, students about to enter Grade 12 (to graduate) in September 2020 were concerned about general entry exams to colleges and universities.

**Worries and concerns**

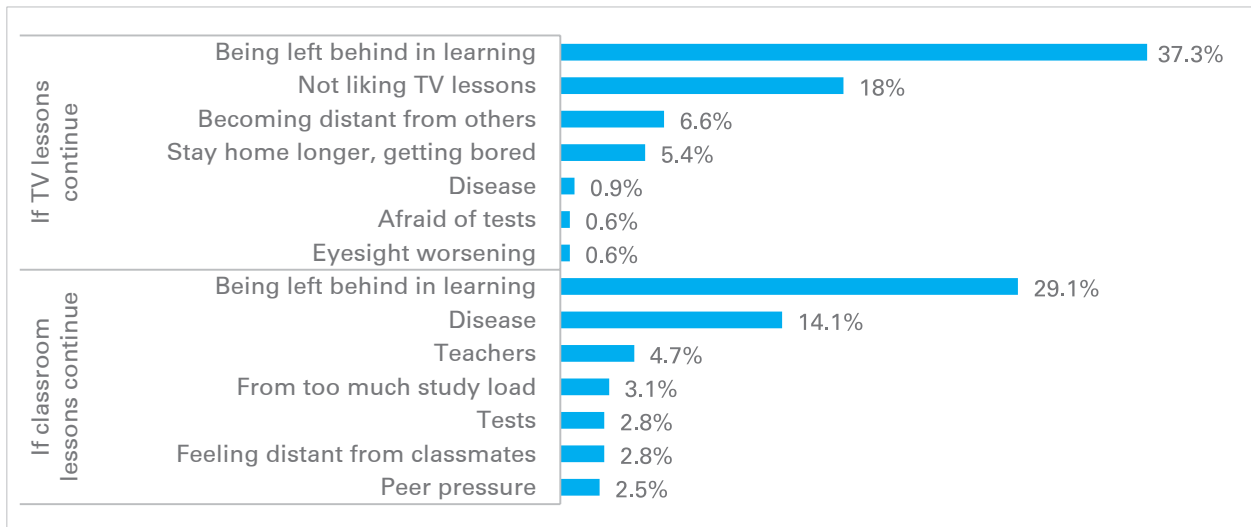
Of the first graders, 68.8 per cent were greatly concerned that they could not go to school. In comparison, lower secondary and upper secondary school students’ concerns about not going to school were twice as low.

**FIGURE 12.** CONCERN ABOUT SCHOOL CLOSURE



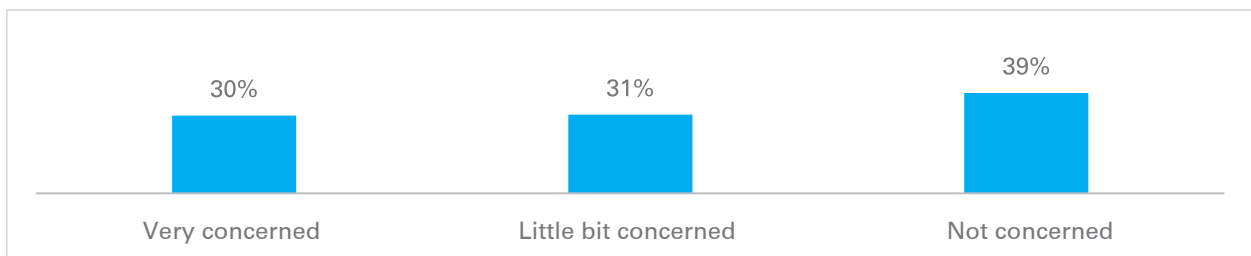
Regarding school closure, 37.2 per cent of students were not worried about it provided school started in September 2020, and 30.4 per cent said they were not worried about television lessons continuing. Students were concerned about various issues, depending on whether lessons continued in the classrooms or by television (see Figure 13).

**FIGURE 13.** PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS OF SCHOOL CHILDREN FOR THE START OF THE NEW ACADEMIC YEAR (TELE-LESSONS AND CLASSROOM LEARNING)



If in-class learning resumed, students were most afraid of falling behind in their learning and contracting COVID-19. However, if tele-lessons continued, students were most afraid of falling behind with their lessons and not liking tele-lessons because they are hard to understand (see *Figure 13*).

**FIGURE 14.** CHILDREN'S WORRY ABOUT THEIR FAMILY FINANCES

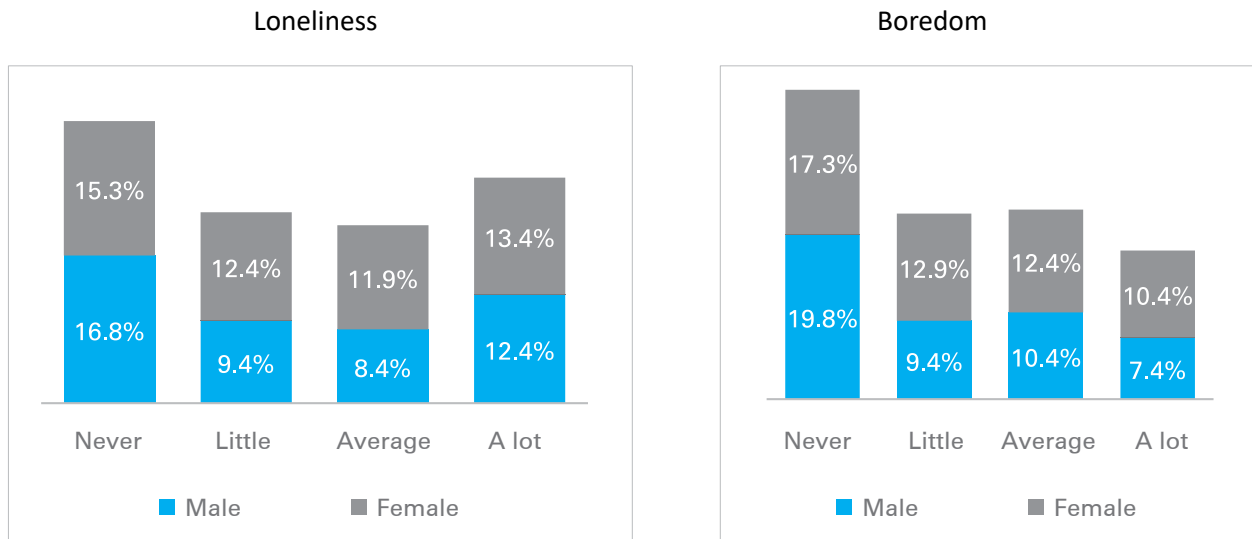


Children's concerns about their family finances seemed to increase the higher the student's school grade. For instance, 49.5 per cent of primary graders, 57 per cent of lower secondary graders and 72.8 per cent of upper secondary graders were concerned about the financial well-being of their families.

### Loneliness and boredom

Loneliness and boredom were common among lower and upper secondary graders. Some 25.8 per cent of students said they felt very lonely during the temporary school closures, and around 18 per cent experienced boredom. During the lockdown, 25 per cent of lower and upper secondary graders felt lonely, and 20 per cent were often bored. There was no significant difference in levels of loneliness and boredom between genders.

**FIGURE 15.** LONELINESS AND BOREDOM OF LOWER AND UPPER SECONDARY GRADERS (BY GENDER)

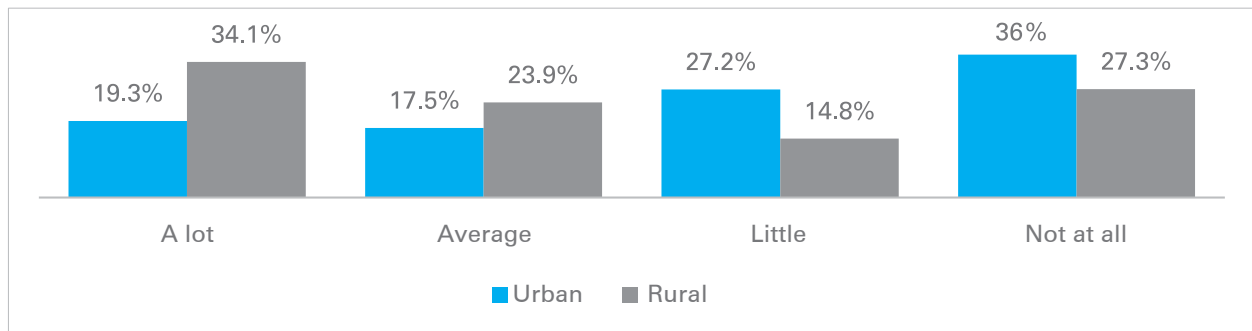


During the interviews, the children reported two main reasons for feeling lonely and bored:

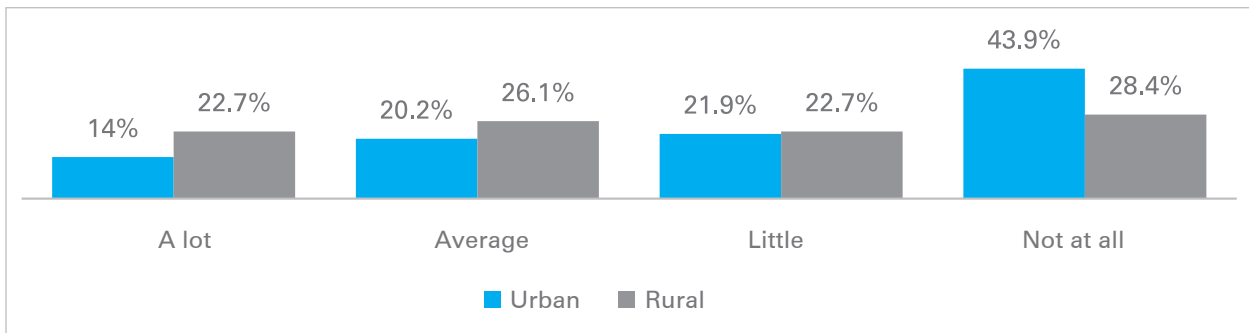
- Not being able to enrol in school and extracurricular activities (clubs)
- Not meeting friends and classmates and talking to them.

The levels of loneliness differed between rural and urban secondary school students. Only 19.3 per cent of urban students, compared with 34.1 per cent of rural students, felt very lonely; while 36 per cent of urban students and 27.3 per cent of rural students never felt lonely. This might be because rural students, compared with their urban peers, have limited access to the Internet (they use mobile phone data because they do not have Internet access at home). Further, children from herder families had left their dormitories and returned to their families to help raise livestock and therefore had fewer chances to connect with their friends.

**FIGURE 16.** COMPARISON OF STUDENTS’ LONELINESS (BY URBAN AND RURAL AREAS)



In the survey, 22.7 per cent of all rural students and 14 per cent of urban students said they often experienced boredom (see Figure 17).

**FIGURE 17.** COMPARISON OF BOREDOM EXPERIENCED BY CHILDREN (BY URBAN AND RURAL AREAS)

### Adaptation, attachment anxiety, stress and frustration

As far as adaptation skills are concerned, 56.2 per cent of all students were deemed to have poor adaptation skills, and 43.8 per cent rated high (see Figure 18). If a person's adaptation skills are poor, they are more likely to experience conflicts with the people surrounding them.

**FIGURE 18.** STUDENTS' ADAPTATION SKILLS

The survey revealed that 54.5 per cent of children felt stressed. Attachment anxiety was found among 60 per cent of all children who participated in the survey. Table 10 shows how the above results compare with standard indicators<sup>2</sup>:

**TABLE 10.** REACTIONS DUE TO STRESS AND FRUSTRATION COMPARED TO STANDARD INDICATORS (IN PERCENTAGES)

|          |   |               | Age group |      |       |       |             |
|----------|---|---------------|-----------|------|-------|-------|-------------|
|          |   |               | 6-7       | 8-9  | 10-11 | 12-13 | 14 and over |
| Category | Blaming others  | Standard norm | 46.3      | 43.3 | 39.2  | 33.3  | 46-52       |
|          |   | Result        | 69.7      | 61   | 65.2  | 66.7  | 51.4        |
|          | Not blaming others or self, tendency to avoid responsibility, reproach or obstacles | Standard norm | 31.3      | 32.9 | 35.8  | 40.4  | 23-26       |
|          |   | Result        | 21.2      | 24.4 | 23.9  | 25.9  | 44.6        |
|          | Weak, vulnerable, hypersensitive, blaming others and ego defence                    | Standard norm | 39.6      | 42.1 | 41.7  | 42.3  | 35-39       |
|          |   | Result        | 48.5      | 61   | 69.6  | 61.1  | 34.5        |

A statistical analysis of the above results revealed a gender difference ( $p < .05$ ) (see Table 11). In other words, girls seemed more focused on obstacles, and boys seemed focused on ego defence and finding solutions.

<sup>2</sup> Standard indicators are the optimal value at that age. The Rosenzweig method that we have used in the study shows standard indicators for every age.

**TABLE 11.** COMPARISON OF REACTIONS DUE TO STRESS AND FRUSTRATION (BY GENDER)

|                                 | Boys  | Girls |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Obstacle dominance <sup>3</sup> | 42.3% | 57.7% |
| Ego defence                     | 53%   | 49.7% |
| Need persistence                | 56.6% | 43.4% |

Based on the survey results, there is no difference between genders regarding ego defence. During the lockdown, symptoms of stress occurred in 53 per cent of primary graders and 48.7 per cent of other students.

**TABLE 12.** SYMPTOMS OF STRESS IN CHILDREN (BY GRADES AND GENDER)

|                             | Primary |        | Lower secondary |        | Upper secondary |        |
|-----------------------------|---------|--------|-----------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
|                             | Male    | Female | Male            | Female | Male            | Female |
| Is easily agitated          | 63.4%   | 48.9%  | 56.1%           | 75.4%  | 61.2%           | 62.8%  |
| Feels quickly tired         | 48.8%   | 27.7%  | 51.2%           | 50.8%  | 51%             | 53.5%  |
| Experiences stomach aches   | 24.4%   | 27.7%  | 41.5%           | 24.6%  | 30.6%           | 37.2%  |
| Has no desire to do lessons | 46.3%   | 52.6%  | 78%             | 61.5%  | 61.2%           | 69.8%  |

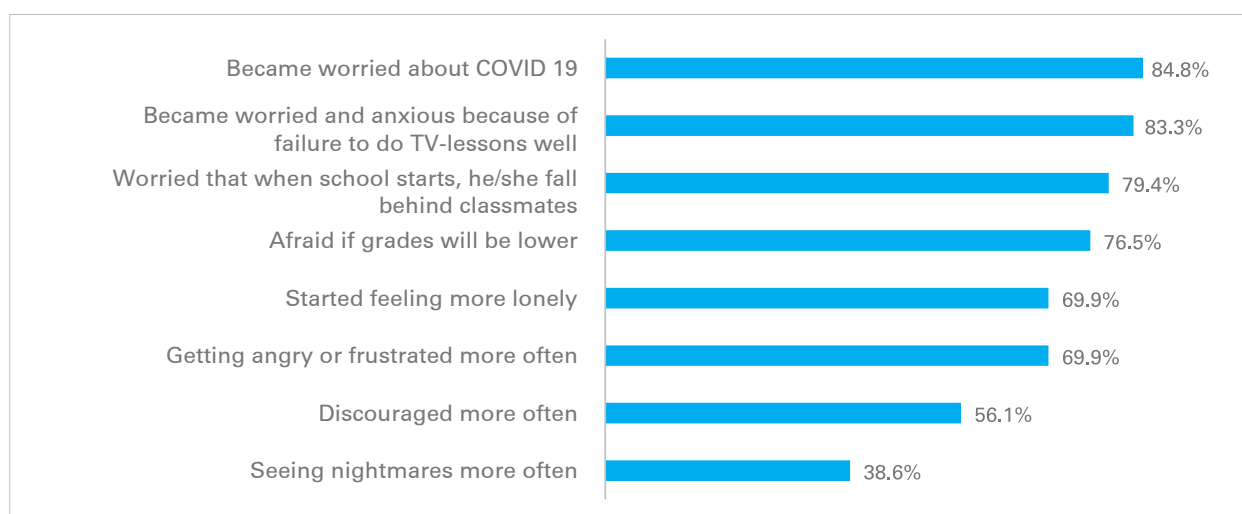
A comparison of genders shows that 63.4 per cent of male primary graders and 48.9 per cent of female primary graders became easily upset because they could not go to school. Further, 48.8 per cent of male students and 27.7 per cent of female students tired more quickly during the lockdown. Based on these figures, we can conclude that stress levels vary for male and female students.

An analysis of the frustration and worry levels of lower and upper secondary graders by rural and city areas showed that the indicators for rural students were higher, and symptoms of stress occurred more often. In other words, 58.8 per cent of city students and 73.9 per cent of rural students became easily agitated or angered during the lockdown. Further, 54.9 per cent of city students and 76.1 per cent of rural students felt worried.

### Parent evaluation of children's emotions and relationships

Parents ranked changes in their children's emotions, behaviour and physical well-being as significant. They also noted that children's concerns about COVID-19 and anxiety about not doing tele-lessons well were widespread.

<sup>3</sup> Obstacle-dominant reactions focus on obstacles causing frustration. Ego-defensive reactions focus on blaming others and avoiding reproach. Need-persistent reactions seek creative solutions to a conflict.

**FIGURE 19.** PARENT EVALUATION OF CHILDREN'S EMOTIONS DURING LOCKDOWN

Some 25.2 per cent of parents thought that closing schools for an extended period had a negative impact on children's emotions, development and relationships. However, 9.6 per cent could not tell whether any changes had occurred. In summary, parents observed the following emotions in their children during quarantine:

- Sadness
- Boredom
- Loneliness
- Frustration
- Instability.

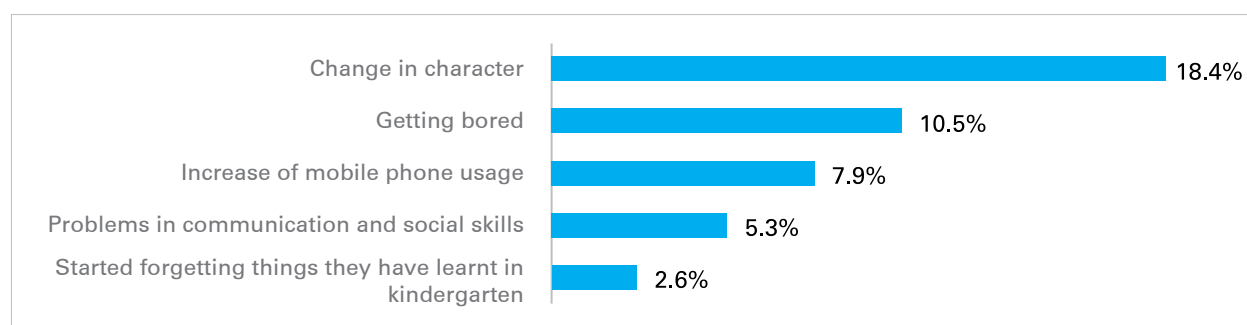
Parents also noted that their children communicated more with the family and complained about wanting to go to school.

According to parents' evaluation, children's emotional state during the lockdown differed between rural and city areas. For instance, among rural children, sadness and boredom ranked highest (37 per cent), but for city children, frustration ranked highest (26.2 per cent).

**TABLE 13.** COMPARISON OF CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL STATE BY CITY AND RURAL AREAS (AS REPORTED BY PARENTS)

|   | City area | Rural area |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Felt sad and bored                                | 16.6%     | 37%        |
| Felt lonely                                       | 7.1%      | 2.2%       |
| Felt angry, frustrated                            | 26.2%     | 15.2%      |
| Communicated more with family members             | 4.8%      | 4.3%       |
| Was unstable                                      | 6%        | 0%         |
| Started complaining about wanting to go to school | 10.7%     | 8.7%       |

In the survey, 31.6 per cent of participating parents had preschool-aged children. Of these parents, 25.6 per cent thought that their children's behaviour and emotions changed during the lockdown.

**FIGURE 20.** PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL STATE DURING THE LOCKDOWN (AS REPORTED BY PARENTS)

Although we only surveyed a small number of parents and children, lockdown had a negative impact on preschool children, including changes in character, feelings of boredom, unfriendliness and increased Internet usage time.

### Issues related to children's behaviour during lockdown (school closure)

During the lockdown, 44.4 per cent of primary grade students, 13.2 per cent of lower secondary school students and 17.4 per cent of upper secondary school students reported reduced physical activity, while 6.7 per cent of primary grade students, 14.2 per cent of lower secondary school students and 16.3 per cent of upper secondary school students reported weight gain. Gender differences in weight gain were observed among primary grade students. For example, 81 per cent of male and 93.8 per cent of female primary grade students gained weight during the lockdown.

In addition, 38.7 per cent of lower secondary school students and 44.6 per cent of upper secondary school students reported changes in their sleep patterns, and one in every three children had disrupted sleep patterns.

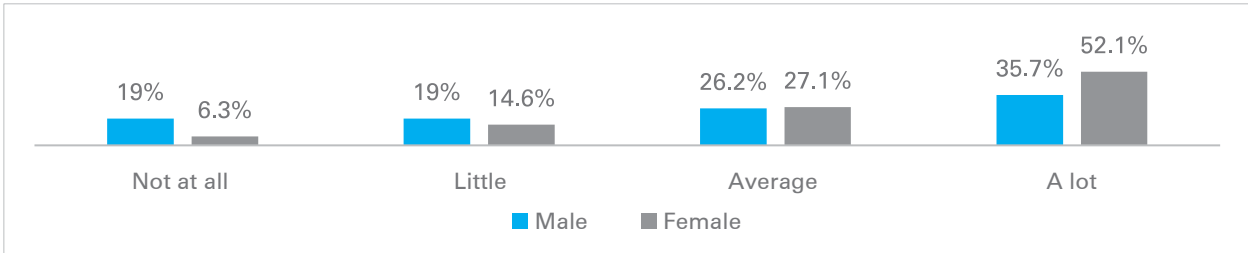
**TABLE 14.** DIFFICULTIES WITH STAYING HOME FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD AND DOING LESSONS (AS REPORTED BY CHILDREN)

|                                   |            | Primary | Lower secondary | Upper secondary |
|-----------------------------------|------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Lack of physical activity         | Not at all | 12.2%   | 46.2%           | 38%             |
|                                   | Little     | 16.7%   | 20.8%           | 18.5%           |
|                                   | Average    | 26.7%   | 19.8%           | 26.1%           |
|                                   | A lot      | 44.4%   | 13.2%           | 17.4%           |
| Weight gain since school closure  | Not at all | 40 %    | 28.3%           | 51.1%           |
|                                   | Little     | 40 %    | 33%             | 15.2%           |
|                                   | Average    | 13.3%   | 24.5%           | 17.4%           |
|                                   | A lot      | 6.7%    | 14.2%           | 16.3%           |
| Changes in sleep patterns         | Not at all | 37.8%   | 18.9%           | 5.4%            |
|                                   | Little     | 18.9%   | 15.1%           | 23.9%           |
|                                   | Average    | 22.2%   | 27.4%           | 26.1%           |
|                                   | A lot      | 21.1%   | 38.7%           | 44.6%           |
| Difficulties with time management | Not at all | 37.8%   | 20.8%           | 13%             |
|                                   | Little     | 21.1%   | 27.4%           | 18.5%           |
|                                   | Average    | 22.2%   | 20.8%           | 34.8%           |
|                                   | A lot      | 18.9%   | 31.1%           | 33.7%           |

Primary graders in rural areas did not consider themselves as suffering from lack of physical activity, but 53.8 per cent of lower secondary students and 62 per cent of upper secondary school students considered themselves as lacking in physical activity.

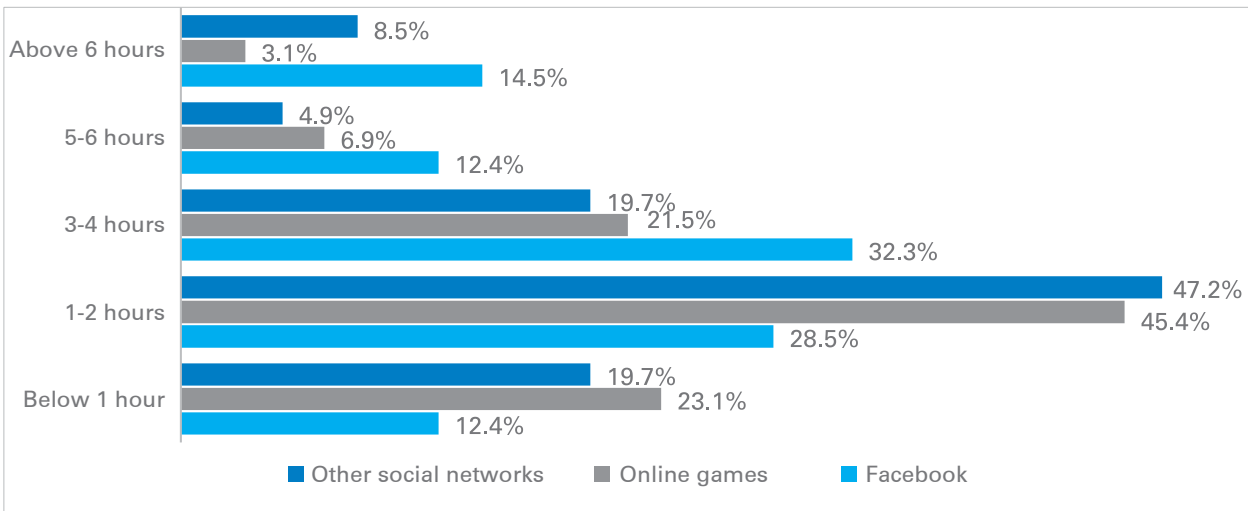
During the lockdown, 84.2 per cent of lower and upper secondary school students from city areas and 92 per cent of rural students experienced changes in their sleeping patterns.

**FIGURE 21.** COMPARISON OF LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (BY GENDER)



When clarifying whether mobile phone usage had increased among first graders, 72.7 per cent admitted playing more games on mobile phones and watching more videos than before the lockdown. Across all other grades, 66.7 per cent had increased their Facebook usage, 50 per cent played more online games (*Mobilelegend, PUB G, Force Horizon*) and 60.6 per cent increased their use of other social media (e.g. Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter).

**FIGURE 22.** INTERNET USE OF ALL GRADES (EXCEPT FIRST GRADERS)



The survey revealed that children mostly watch videos (on Facebook, YouTube, TikTok) when they are online. When parents clarified whether their children’s emotions, behaviour and body had changed during lockdown, the top answers were that their children spent a long time on their screens and could not focus their attention. Table 15 below shows the changes that parents observed in their children.

**TABLE 15.** PHYSICAL AND BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES DURING LOCKDOWN (AS REPORTED BY PARENTS)

|                    |  |       |
|--------------------|--|-------|
| <b>Physical</b>    | 1. Lack of activity  | 64.4% |
|                    | 2. Tiredness   | 61.1% |
|                    | 3. Weight gain   | 59.8% |
|                    | 4. Headaches   | 42 %  |
|                    | 5. Digestive problems (diarrhoea, constipation, stomachache, reduced appetite) | 37.9% |
| <b>Behavioural</b> | 1. Increased exposure to screens (mobile phones, computer, TV )                | 82.6% |
|                    | 2. Difficulty with focused attention   | 80.3% |
|                    | 3. Changed sleep regime (going to bed late, getting up late)                   | 75.8% |
|                    | 4. Lack of motivation to do lessons  | 74.2% |
|                    | 5. Aggressive behaviour (seeking conflict and arguing with family members)     | 64.4% |
|                    | 6. Demanding behaviour (asking parents for different things)                   | 58.3% |

Regarding their children's Internet use, 45 per cent of parents said it had increased. They related this to using Facebook (51.3 per cent) and spending time playing online games (40.3 per cent).

**TABLE 16.** CHANGES IN INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE DURING LOCKDOWN (AS REPORTED BY PARENTS)

|  | <b>Facebook use<br/>(13.8% do not use Facebook)</b> | <b>Online games<br/>(25.7% do not play)</b> | <b>Other</b> |                  |       |
|--|---|---|--------------|------------------|-------|
| Constant use   | 19.5%   | Has not increased                           | 12.6%        | Increased        | 43.9% |
| Has not increased  | 18.7%   | Plays constantly                            | 11.9%        | Not increased    | 38.3% |
| Increased by about 1 hour  | 9.8%  | Plays 1–2 hours                             | 11 %         | Unsure           | 10.3% |
| Increased by 2–3 hours   | 9.8%  | Plays more than 5 hours                     | 5.5%         | Watches TV a lot | 7.5%  |
| Increased by 4–5 hours   | 4.9%  | Plays around 2–3 hrs                        | 4.6%         |                  |       |
| Increased by more than 6 hours                                       | 4.9%  | Plays 3–4 hrs                               | 4.6%         |                  |       |
| Do not know Facebook well  | 4.1 %   | Plays sometimes                             | 2.8%         |                  |       |
| Increased because of trying to find information relating to homework | 2.4%  |   |              |                  |       |
| Decreased use  | 0.8%  |   |              |                  |       |

Parents indicated that their children's daily Internet usage had increased by more than six hours (4.9 per cent), their children were playing online games constantly or at least daily (11.9 per cent) and children played online games for three to four hours per day (4.6 per cent).

**TABLE 17.** COMPARISON OF CHILDREN'S INTERNET USE IN LOCKDOWN, BY CITY AND RURAL AREA (AS REPORTED BY PARENTS)

|              |   | Urban | Rural |
|--------------|---|-------|-------|
| Facebook use | Has not increased                           | 18.1% | 20%   |
|              | Do not use                                  | 15.7% | 10%   |
|              | Started using constantly                    | 21.7% | 15%   |
|              | Increased by about 1 hour                   | 9.6%  | 10%   |
|              | Increased by 2–3 hours                      | 8.4%  | 12.5% |
|              | Increased by 4–5 hours                      | 4.8%  | 5%    |
|              | Increased for more than 6 hours             | 6%    | 2.5%  |
|              | Increased for the purpose of doing homework | 2.4%  | 2.5%  |
|              | Decreased                                   | 1.2%  | 0%    |
|              | Do not know well                            | 4.8%  | 2.5%  |
| Online games | Has not increased                           | 21.6% | 2.9%  |
|              | Do not play                                 | 20.3% | 37.1% |
|              | Plays constantly                            | 17.6% | 0%    |
|              | Plays sometimes                             | 0%    | 8.6%  |
|              | Plays around 1–2 hours                      | 12.2% | 8.6%  |
|              | Plays 2–3 hours                             | 5.4%  | 2.9%  |
|              | Plays 3–4 hours                             | 4.1%  | 5.7%  |
|              | Plays for more than 5 hours                 | 8.1%  | 0%    |

According to parents, use of electronic devices varies between urban and rural children. For example, 21.7 per cent of children in urban areas used Facebook regularly, compared to 15 per cent in rural areas. Some 20.3 per cent of urban children and 37.1 per cent of rural children reported that they did not play electronic games. The students' use of Facebook for the purposes of learning and doing homework during school closures and lockdown increased in both urban areas (by 2.4 per cent) and rural areas (by 2.5 per cent).

When asked whether children were able to manage study, homework and resting times well, parents responded that:

- Their children managed well (46.7 per cent)
- They did not manage their time well (45.2 per cent)
- Sometimes they did not manage their time well (8.1 per cent).

Also, when asked how they managed their time, parents said they made a schedule (17.4 per cent) or used self-discipline (16.5 per cent).

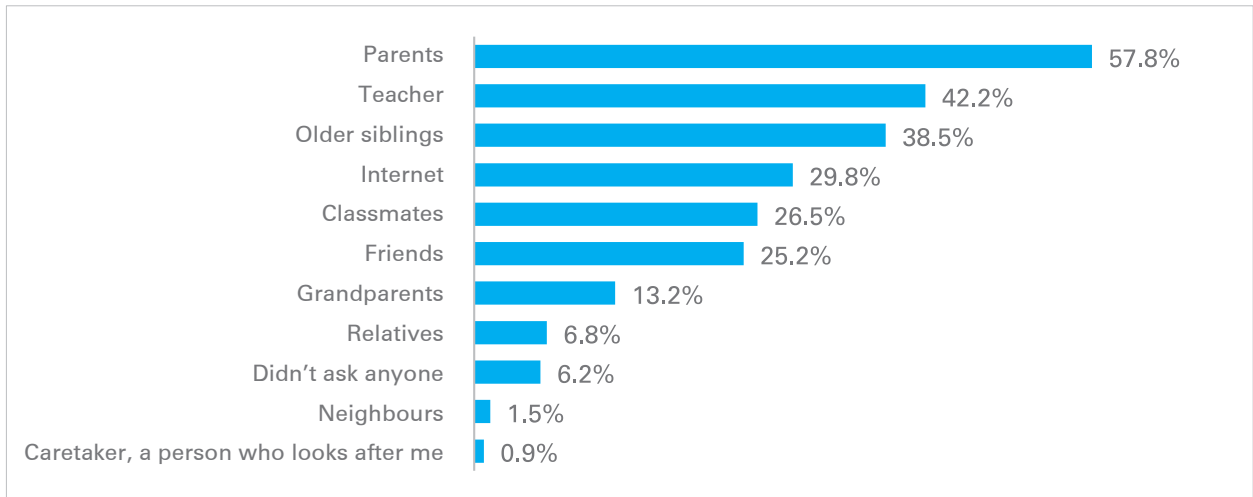
**TABLE 18.** CHILDREN'S TIME MANAGEMENT, BY URBAN AND RURAL AREAS (AS REPORTED BY PARENTS)

|                                | Urban | Rural |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Did not manage their time well | 47.1% | 42%   |
| Did manage their time well     | 44.7% | 50%   |
| Sometimes did not manage well  | 8.2%  | 8%    |
| Made a schedule                | 18.8% | 13.9% |
| Used self- discipline          | 14.1% | 22.2% |

**The specifics of children’s mental and emotional state during tele-lessons**

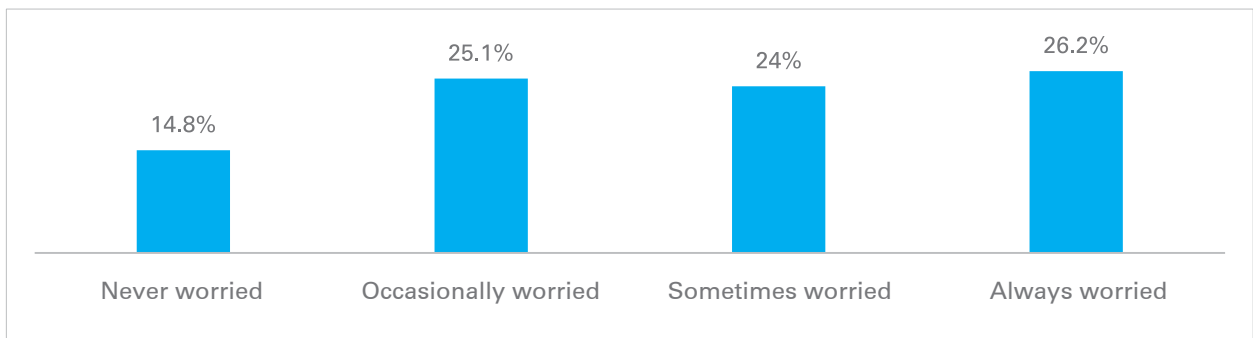
E-prime methods and techniques were used to help children recall the situation between February and May 2020, when schools were closed and they had to watch tele-lessons. During the test to recall the situation at the time, 70.7 per cent of primary grade students and 94.6 per cent of lower and upper secondary school students were able to recall the situation.

**FIGURE 23.** PEOPLE WHO HELPED STUDENTS WHEN DOING TELE-LESSONS



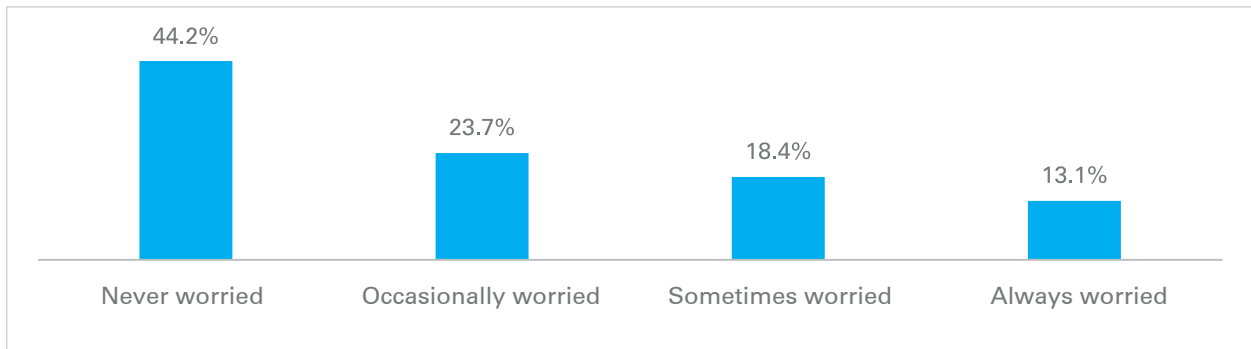
When students encountered any difficulties with the tele-lessons during lockdown, they received help from parents (57.8 per cent), teachers (42.2 per cent) and older siblings (38.5 per cent). However, 6.2 per cent of all students did not receive help from anyone. As many as 50 per cent of students did not ask anyone if something from the tele-lesson was unclear.

**FIGURE 24.** STUDENTS’ LEVEL OF CONCERN ABOUT FALLING BEHIND WHILE WATCHING TELE-LESSONS (AS REPORTED BY CHILDREN)



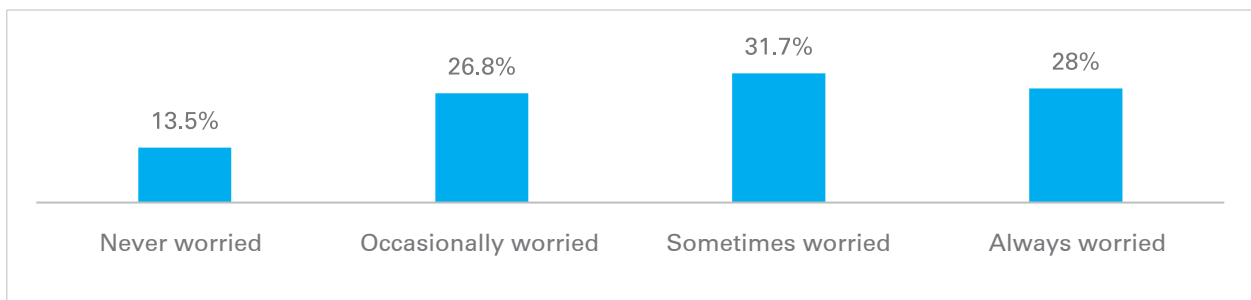
Some 50.2 per cent of students said that they worried a lot or often. Also, 59.7 per cent of rural students and 43.5 per cent of city students were afraid of falling behind others. Primary grade students’ fear of falling behind was higher than that of lower and upper secondary school students.

**FIGURE 25.** CONCERNS RELATED TO THE INTERNET WHILE STUDENTS WERE WATCHING TELE-LESSONS (AS REPORTED BY CHILDREN)



In total, 53.5 per cent of upper secondary school students, 32.5 per cent of lower secondary school students and 14 per cent of primary school students were afraid the Internet would disconnect during tele-lessons.

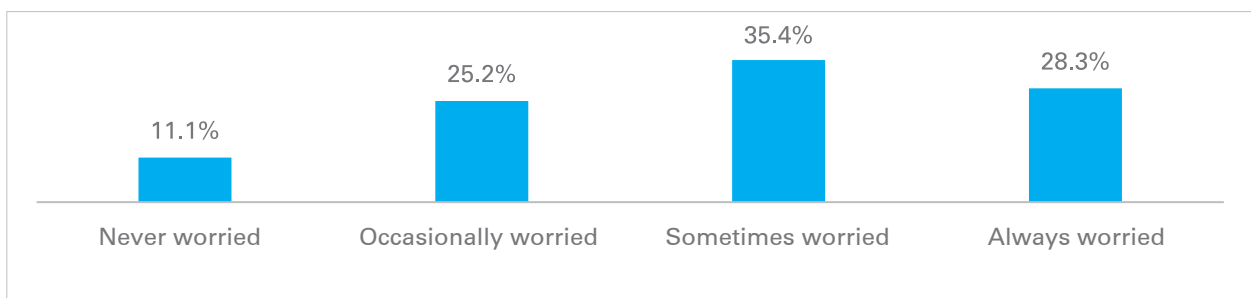
**FIGURE 26.** CONCERNS RELATING TO NOT UNDERSTANDING TELE-LESSONS AND RECEIVING BAD GRADES (AS REPORTED BY CHILDREN)



Of the children surveyed, 28 per cent said they were always worried about not understanding tele-lessons or receiving bad grades, 31.7 per cent occasionally worried, 26.8 per cent sometimes worried and 13.5 per cent never worried. According to statistical analysis, lower (41.1 per cent) and upper (46.7 per cent) secondary students were more concerned about receiving bad grades than primary students (12.2 per cent) ( $p < .05$ ).

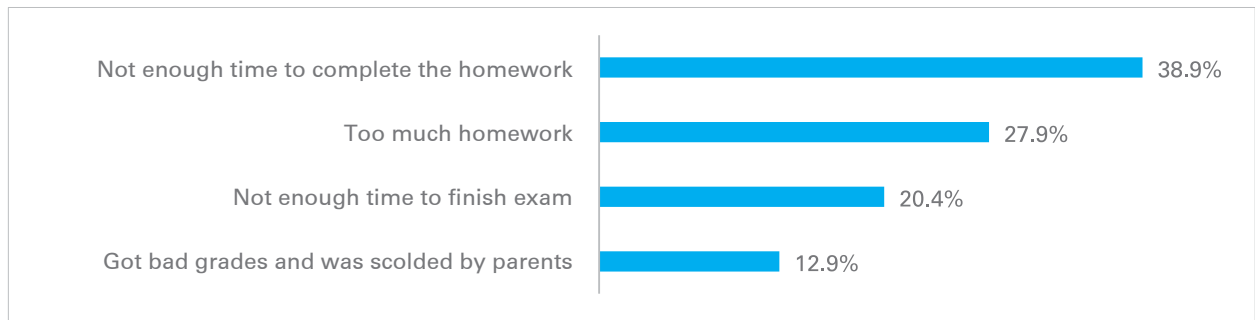
However, there was no notable difference between urban and rural students.

**FIGURE 27.** STUDENTS' NERVOUSNESS REGARDING DEADLINES FOR TELE-LESSON ASSIGNMENTS (AS REPORTED BY CHILDREN)



Based on Figure 27 above, over 50 per cent of students were constantly or sometimes nervous about deadlines for tele-lesson assignments, and only 10 per cent of children were not nervous at all.

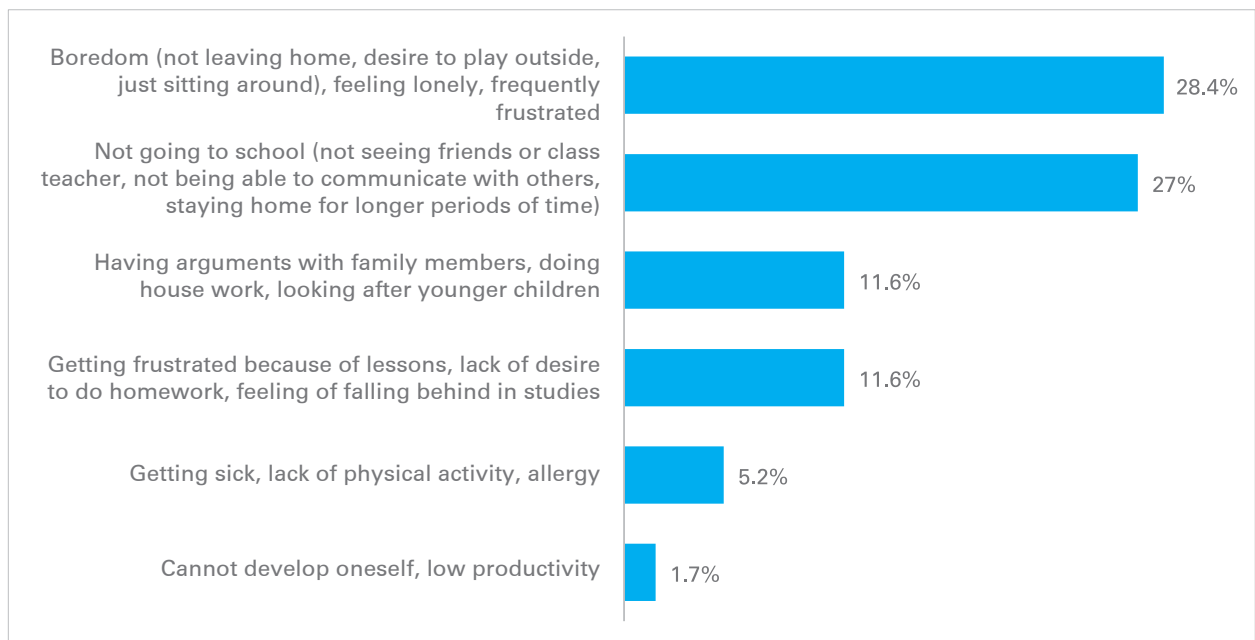
**FIGURE 28.** REASONS FOR STUDENTS’ FRUSTRATION WITH TELE-LESSONS (AS REPORTED BY CHILDREN)



Over 65 per cent of students felt frustrated because they were given too much homework during tele-lessons and not enough time to complete the homework.

For 14.6 per cent of students, it was not difficult to stay home for an extended time, but 28.4 per cent found it difficult because they could not go out and play outside. Further, sitting around without doing anything made them feel frustrated. For 3.4 per cent of students who found staying at home difficult, it was also difficult not to have lessons in the classroom, 5.32 per cent found it difficult not seeing their teacher and 23.1 per cent said it was difficult not having lessons with classmates and playing with them. Students commented that they missed their teachers and classmates.

**FIGURE 29.** CHALLENGES FACED BY CHILDREN WHEN STAYING HOME FOR LONGER PERIODS (AS REPORTED BY CHILDREN)



Many first graders (boys: 66.7 per cent; girls: 77.1 per cent) said it was not nice to stay home for a long time. For other grades, there was no difference between genders. However, 83 per cent of urban primary graders and 56.8 per cent of rural primary graders said it was not nice to stay home for long periods.

When asked to clarify whether it was difficult to manage time for doing lessons and resting, 46 per cent replied that they were able to manage. The 36.9 per cent of students who said it was difficult to manage time took measures to resolve the situation (see Table 19).

**TABLE 19.** METHODS CHILDREN USED TO MANAGE TIME FOR LESSONS AND RESTING

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Made a schedule for doing lessons, housework and resting, taking breaks   | 62.8% |
| Completed assignments before they were due  | 17.4% |
| Did assignments late at night (quiet atmosphere at night)   | 9.3%  |
| Received help from others (received help from father or mother, consulted with them, took turns in doing lessons with siblings) | 8.1%  |
| Shortened resting times   | 2.3%  |

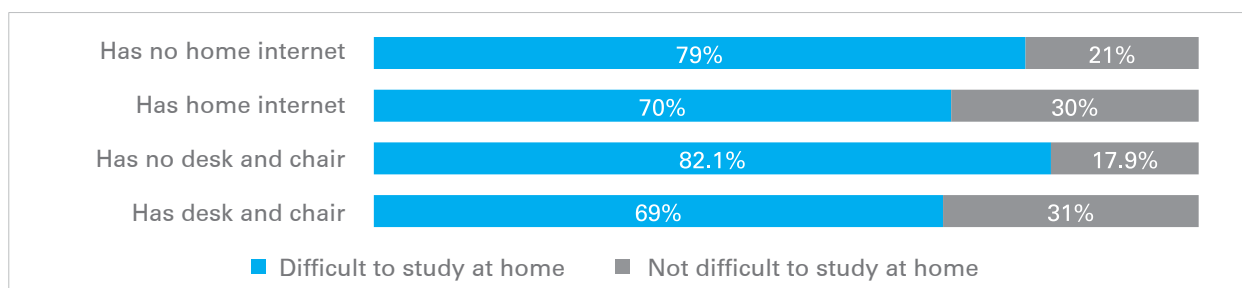
Good time management for completing lessons and assignments and allocating rest time was a problem for primary graders (46.7 per cent), lower secondary graders (49.5 per cent) and upper secondary graders (66.3 per cent). In comparing upper and lower secondary graders' inability to manage their time for doing lessons and resting, boys made up 89.1 per cent and the girls 76.4 per cent. Primary graders showed no significant differences between genders regarding time management.

Regarding study at home, 39.4 per cent of first graders, 24.4 per cent of third and fifth graders and 17.3 per cent of lower and upper secondary students said that it was not difficult to study at home. In fact, 12.4 per cent of students said that it was peaceful to study from home (quieter and easier to concentrate compared to the noisy classrooms) and that it provided them with flexible hours (allowing them to rest after doing lessons). Overall, 72.9 per cent of children said it was difficult to study from home.

**TABLE 20.** DIFFICULTIES STUDYING FROM HOME (AS REPORTED BY CHILDREN)

|            | Primary | Lower secondary | Upper secondary |
|------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Not at all | 24.4%   | 15.1%           | 18.5%           |
| Little     | 24.4%   | 20.8%           | 18.5%           |
| Average    | 18.9%   | 25.5%           | 22.8%           |
| A lot      | 32.2%   | 38.7%           | 40.2%           |

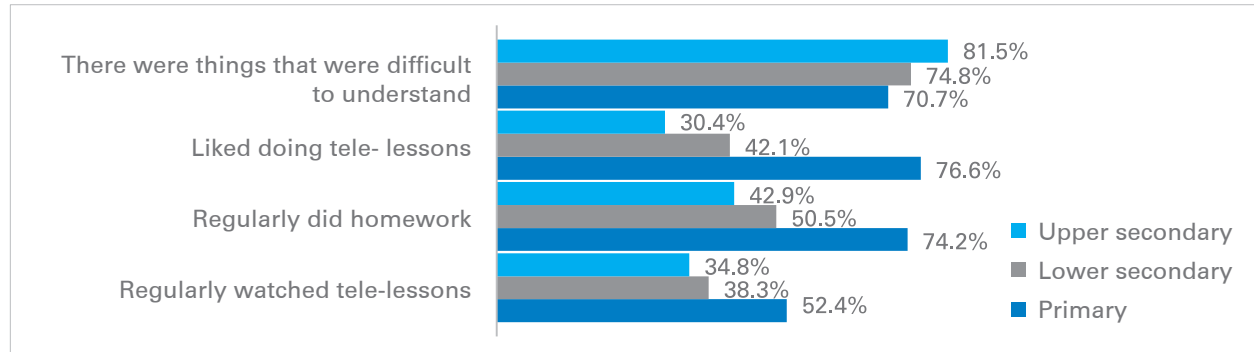
An analysis by area showed that 47.4 per cent of city first graders and 78.6 per cent of rural first graders found it difficult to study at home. It is possible that the availability of desks, chairs and Internet at home, or lack thereof, contributed to difficulties in studying at home, as some children reported. As Figure 30 shows, there was a 9 per cent difference between students who found it difficult to study from home but had access to home Internet compared to those students who did not have access.

**FIGURE 30.** FACTORS IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT AFFECT STUDYING AT HOME

### Challenges regarding tele-lessons

When asked about tele-lessons, 76.6 per cent of primary graders, 42.1 per cent of lower secondary graders and 30.4 per cent of upper secondary graders said that they liked doing tele-lessons (see Figure 31).

**FIGURE 31.** EVALUATION OF DOING TELE-LESSONS (AS REPORTED BY CHILDREN)



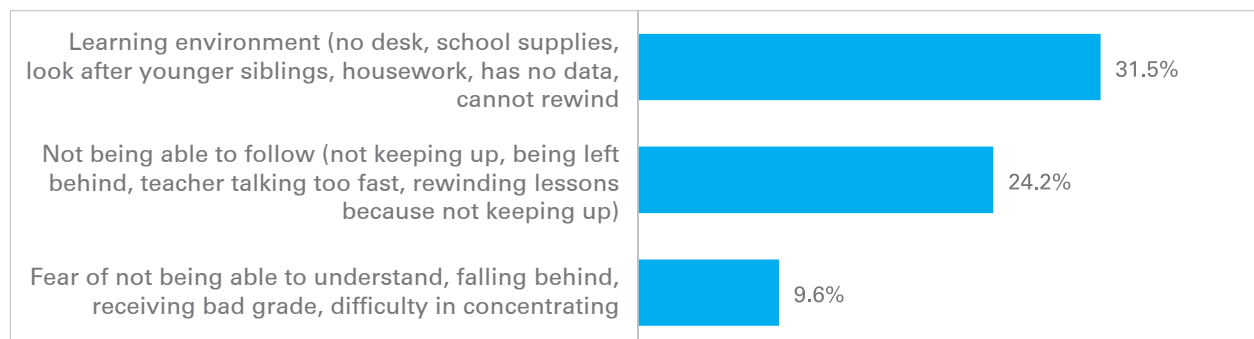
For 69.7 per cent of first graders, it was difficult to do tele-lessons. The most common challenges regarding tele-lessons included:

- Tele-lessons’ duration too short
- Not enough time to take notes
- Difficult to understand what teachers say
- Too much homework.

One in every three first graders said they could not understand what the teacher was saying during tele-lessons. According to the students, other challenges included parents putting too much pressure on them, students not paying enough attention during tele-lessons, and teachers repeating lessons that the students have learned already.

The most common challenges students other than first graders faced during tele-lessons were grouped into three clusters (see Figure 32).

**FIGURE 32.** COMMON CHALLENGES FACED DURING TELE-LESSONS (AS REPORTED BY CHILDREN OTHER THAN FIRST GRADERS)



Other challenge clusters included:

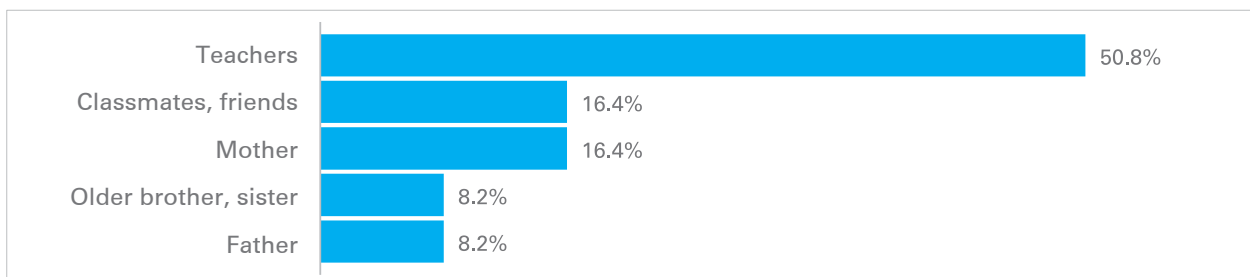
- Having no one to explain the teaching content and missing face-to-face relationships (7.6 per cent)
- Experiencing tiredness, lack of interest and boredom (3.5 per cent)

- Not watching tele-lessons, lacking time, living rurally and forgetting lesson times (2.2 per cent)
- Adjusting to teachers' different teaching styles (1.9 per cent),
- Finding lesson content too overwhelming, not complete or repetitive (1.9 per cent)
- Not seeing TV images clearly (1.6 per cent),
- Being afraid of eye problems and losing sight (1.3 per cent),
- Finding the lesson schedule not suitable (1.3 per cent)
- Overlapping tele-lessons and class teachers' assignments (1 per cent).

In summary, students most commonly:

- Were unable to understand lessons ('it's impossible to ask teachers', 'lack of teacher's control') and received only limited help (33.7 per cent)
- Lacked a favourable learning environment (disruptions, noisiness, younger siblings being loud, difficulty of doing homework with older siblings rather than classmates, having to do housework, lack of school supplies, no desk or chair) (19.9 per cent)
- Were unable to contact others ('was not possible to contact friends and have face-to-face interactions') (18 per cent)
- Felt bored, uninterested in doing schoolwork alone or felt lazy (11.4 per cent)
- Disliked how short the lessons were, did not like tele-lessons or disliked the different teaching styles (4.2 per cent)
- Feared that watching lessons through the tv would impact their eyesight (0.3 per cent)
- Needed help from teachers (50.8 per cent).

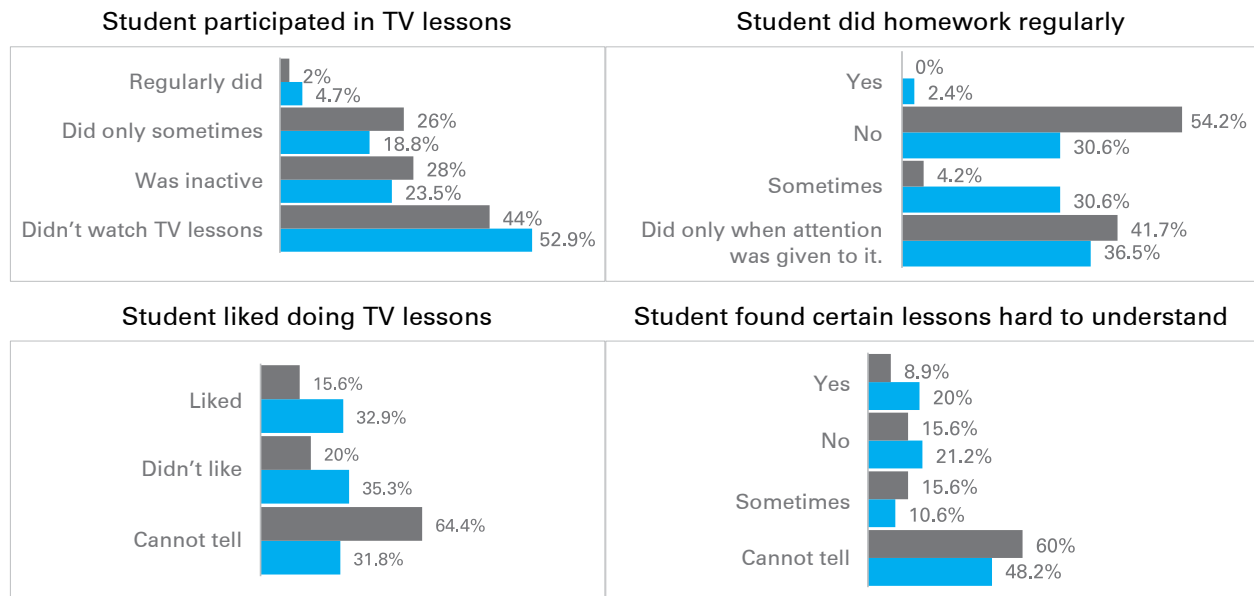
**FIGURE 33.** PEOPLE FROM WHOM STUDENTS WANTED TO RECEIVE HELP (AS REPORTED BY CHILDREN)



### Parent evaluation of how their children did tele-lessons

Although 50 per cent of parents said that their children regularly watched tele-lessons, there were some differences between urban and rural areas. For example, 64.4 per cent of rural parents, but only 31.8 per cent of urban parents, said their children liked tele-lessons. A third of parents said their children disliked watching tele-lessons, and another third did not know.

**FIGURE 34.** PARENTS EVALUATION OF THEIR CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION IN TELE-LESSONS



**Quotes from parent interviews about the challenges of tele-lessons**

*If a family with two or more preschool and school-age children had one TV set, only one of them could watch a tele-lesson if the tele-lessons’ schedules coincided.*

*For families with more than three children, it is very likely that only primary grade children would watch tele-lessons. Pre-schoolers, middle and high school students are not able to watch tele-lessons daily. It is mainly because primary school teachers checked the lessons and homework every day.*

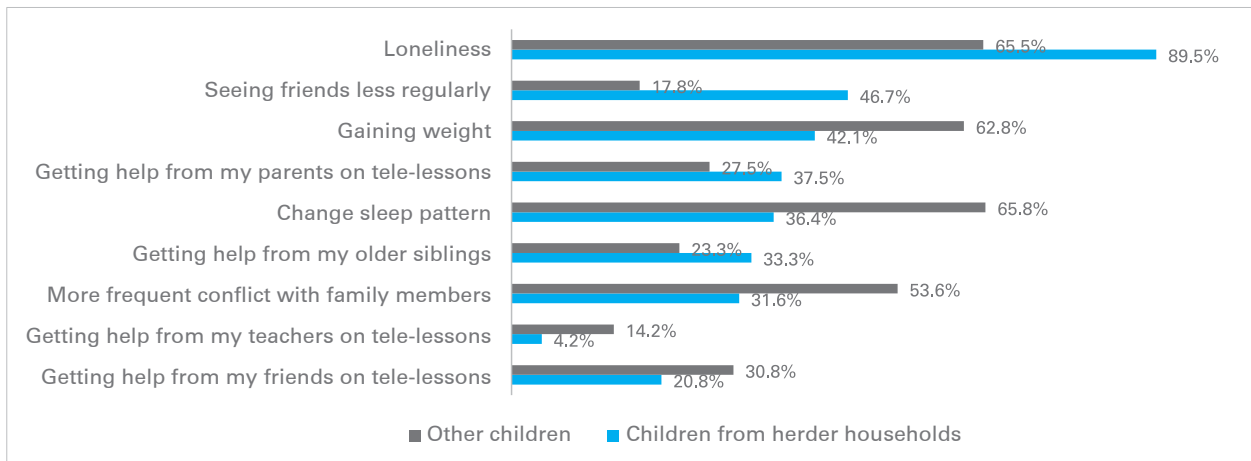
*The children of herder families were not able to watch tele-lessons on a regular basis because tele-lessons coincided with the busiest hours for herder families to tend their herds.*

**CHILDREN IN HERDER HOUSEHOLDS DURING LOCKDOWN**

The following conditions were observed among children from herder households during lockdown based on the survey findings:

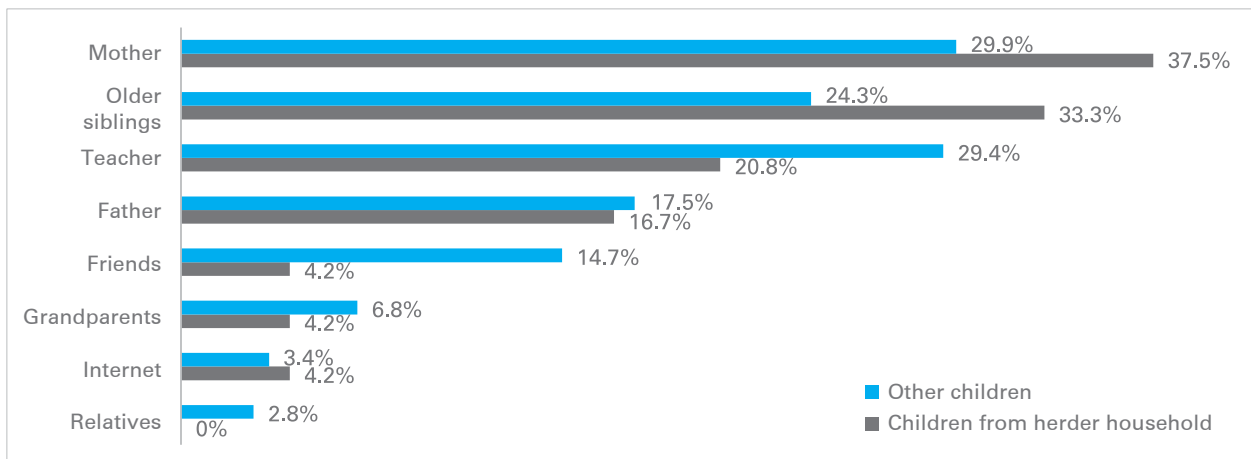
- 89.5 per cent felt lonely (compared with 65.5 per cent of children from non-herder households)
- 46.7 per cent met their friends less (compared with 17.8 per cent)
- 42.1 per cent gained weight (compared with 62.8 per cent)
- 31.6 per cent started arguing with family members more often than before (compared with 53.6 per cent)
- 36.4 per cent experienced a change in sleep patterns (compared with 65.8 per cent)
- 37.5 per cent received help with tele-lessons from their mothers and 33.3 per cent from older siblings (approximately 10 per cent more than children from non-herder households). Only 20.8 per cent received help from teachers and 4.2 per cent from friends while doing tele-lessons (approximately 10 per cent less than children from non-herder households).

**FIGURE 35.** CHANGES EXPERIENCED BY CHILDREN FROM HERDER HOUSEHOLDS DURING LOCKDOWN



While 73.3 per cent of primary grade children in herder households liked doing tele-lessons, only 46.4 per cent of other children liked doing tele-lessons. Also, children in herder households received help from their families, friends and other sources while doing tele-lessons (see Figure 36).

**FIGURE 36.** WHO/WHAT HELPED CHILDREN IN HERDER HOUSEHOLDS WITH TELE-LESSONS



**CHALLENGES FACED BY PARENTS AND TEACHERS DURING LOCKDOWN**

**Household income:** According to 57.8 per cent of surveyed parents, the lockdown affected their household income and financial well-being. The other 42.2 per cent of parents said lockdown had no impact on their finances. Figure 37 shows that increased household spending, reduced wages, income reduction and job loss were the four reasons impacting household income.

**FIGURE 37.** REASONS FOR CHANGE IN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

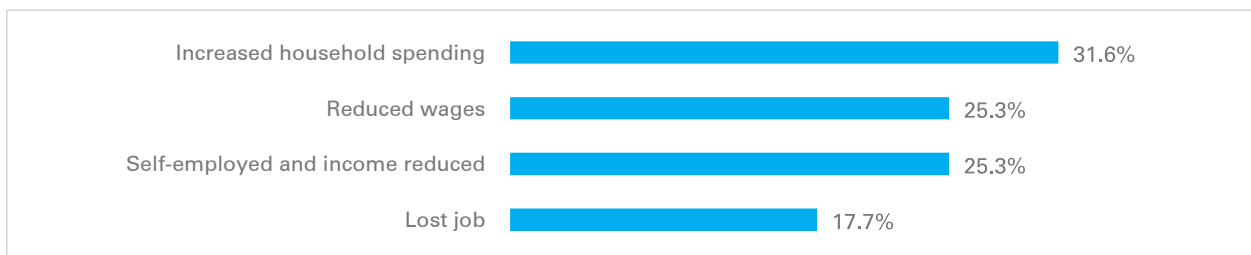
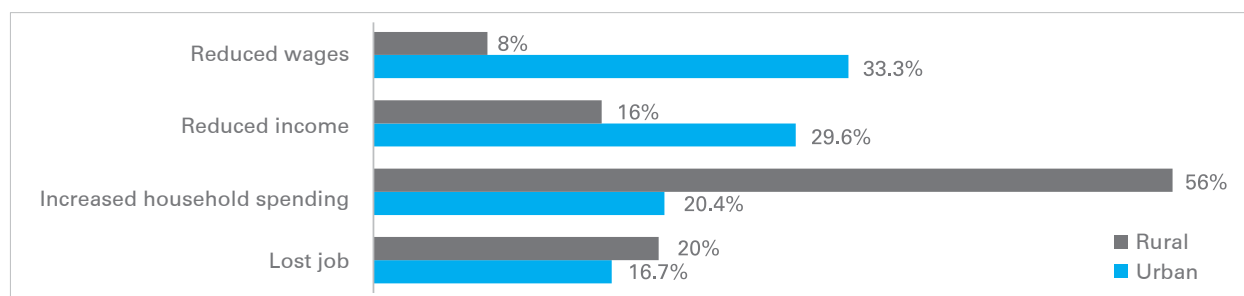


Figure 38 shows how changes in household income affected urban and rural areas differently.

**FIGURE 38.** COMPARISON OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME CHANGE

**Tele-lessons:** Parents also faced challenges regarding the tele-lessons. Table 21 shows what challenges parents most commonly faced during tele-lessons.

**TABLE 21.** CHALLENGES FACED BY PARENTS DURING TELE-LESSONS (AS REPORTED BY PARENTS)

| Challenge   | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Tele-lesson was fast and difficult to understand        | 33.8%      |
| Did not know whom to ask about unclear things           | 16.9%      |
| Could not pay attention to tele-lessons because of work | 10.3%      |
| There were many things hard to understand, difficult    | 5.9%       |
| Watched almost no tele-lessons because of being busy    | 5.9%       |
| Children were lazy and did not want to obey             | 4.4%       |
| Children's focus on the lesson worsened                 | 1.5%       |

An analysis by area (*see Table 22*) shows that 90 per cent of parents from rural areas and 72 per cent of parents from urban areas said they faced challenges or difficulties during tele-lessons.

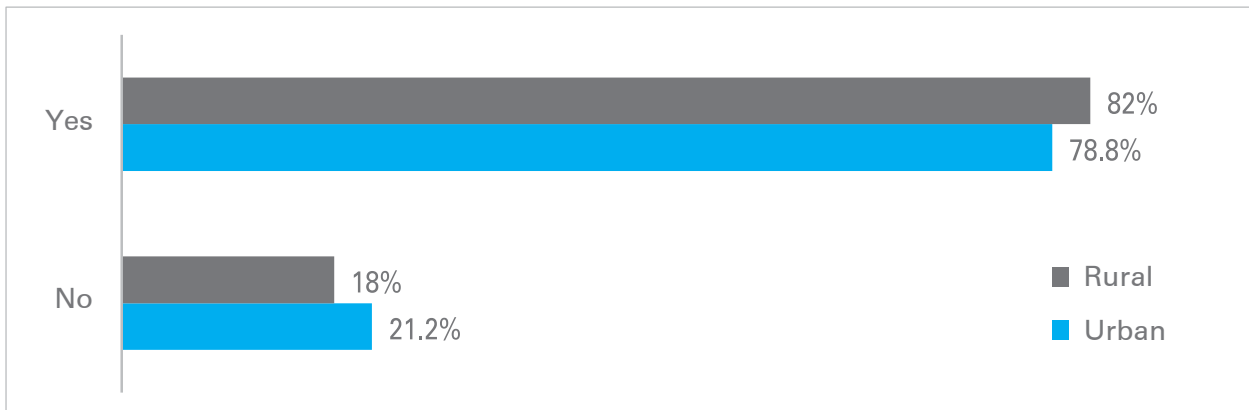
**TABLE 22.** CHALLENGES OR DIFFICULTIES FACED DURING TELE-LESSONS, BY URBAN AND RURAL AREAS (AS REPORTED BY PARENTS)

|   | Urban | Rural |
|---|-------|-------|
| Tele-lessons were fast, unclear                             | 29.4% | 42%   |
| Many things were unclear, difficult to understand           | 17.6% | 16%   |
| Could not pay attention to tele-lessons because had to work | 5.9%  | 18%   |
| Did not know who to ask about things that were not clear    | 4.7%  | 8%    |
| Watched almost no tele-lesson because of busyness           | 5.9%  | 4%    |
| Children were lazy and disobedient                          | 5.9%  | 2%    |
| Children's attention or focus worsened                      | 2.4%  | 0%    |

Even when they faced challenges during tele-lessons, 46.3 per cent of parents said that they did not receive any help, but 28.7 per cent received help from teachers, 19.9 per cent received help from their own family and the remaining 3 per cent received help from relatives or their children's classmates. When asked who they wanted to receive help from, 46.3 per cent responded that they wanted to receive help from the teacher.

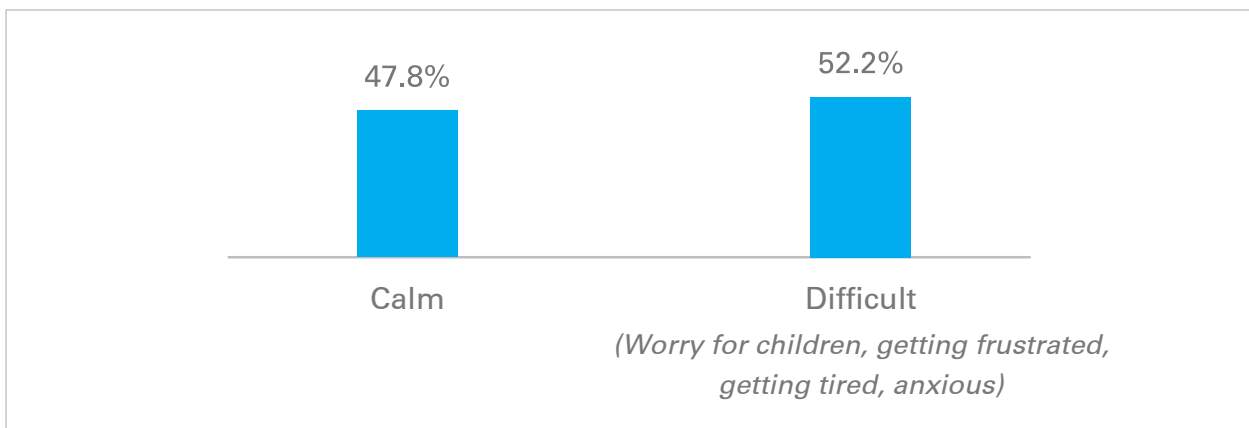
**Time spent with children:** Most parents (69.9–80 per cent) reported that they had devoted increasing time to their children. Some parents (2–9.4 per cent) did not know if they had spent more time with their children, and some thought they had not (18–21.2 per cent).

**FIGURE 39.** TIME THAT PARENTS DEVOTED TO THEIR CHILDREN INCREASED, BY RURAL AND URBAN AREA (AS REPORTED BY PARENTS)



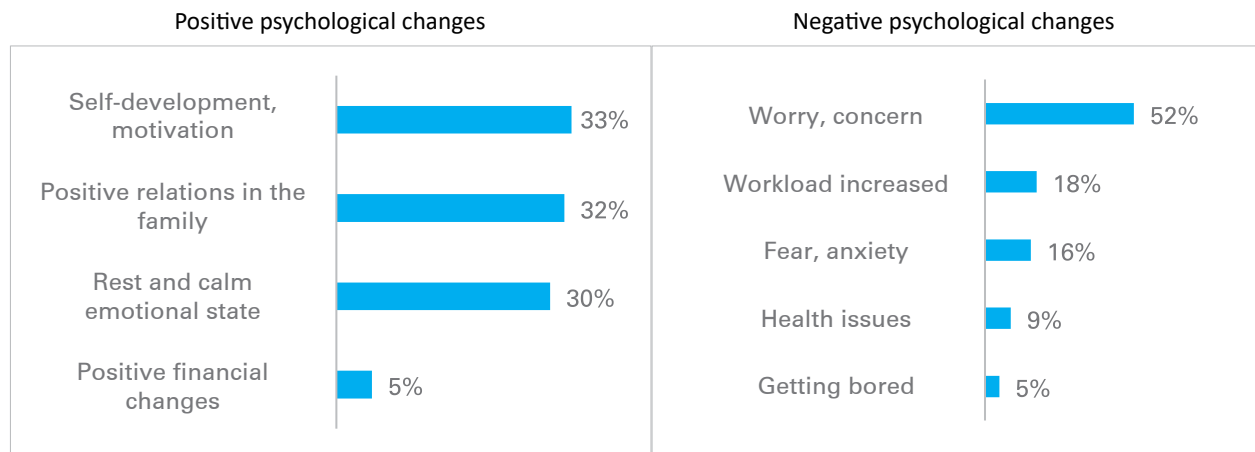
**Parents' emotional state:** When schools closed and children stayed home, 47.8 per cent of parents stayed calm, but 52.2 per cent found this new situation difficult. Parents listed worry for their children, getting frustrated with them, getting tired and being anxious as difficult.

**FIGURE 40.** PARENTS' EMOTIONAL STATE DURING LOCKDOWN (AS REPORTED BY PARENTS)



### Challenges faced by teachers during lockdown

**Emotional state of teachers:** The lockdown brought some positive changes for teachers. For example, some teachers improved their Internet skills and learned new things during lockdown (33 per cent); devoted more time to their families and children and spent more time at home (32 per cent) and found time to rest (30 per cent).

**FIGURE 41.** POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CHANGES IN TEACHERS' EMOTIONS (AS REPORTED BY TEACHERS)

However, teachers also reported negative changes. For example, 52 per cent of teachers worried over students' active participation in lessons and whether they understood the lesson content. Tele-lessons increased teachers' workload, and they spent much time preparing lessons and checking students' homework, resulting in stress and frustration for 18 per cent of teachers. Further, 16 per cent of teachers felt fear and anxiety over concerns that their students would fall behind in their learning and would not actively participate in lessons. At the beginning of lockdown, teachers were anxious that they would lose their jobs if lessons were taught online. The heavy workload caused 9 per cent of teachers to experience health issues such as headaches, tiredness and eyestrain, whereas 5 per cent of teachers felt bored and lonely because they could not have a social life and could not see their colleagues and students.

Concerns and worries were more predominant among teachers for first grade and graduating classes. For instance:

- Teachers were concerned about poor participation because not all students were watching the tele-lessons;
- Teachers worried about students' understanding of the lesson content due to the lack of face-to-face interaction. Also, they were unable to review and correct the students' mistakes.
- Teachers were concerned about vulnerable children, for whom the school was the safest environment (due to risks of domestic violence and other forms of abuse).

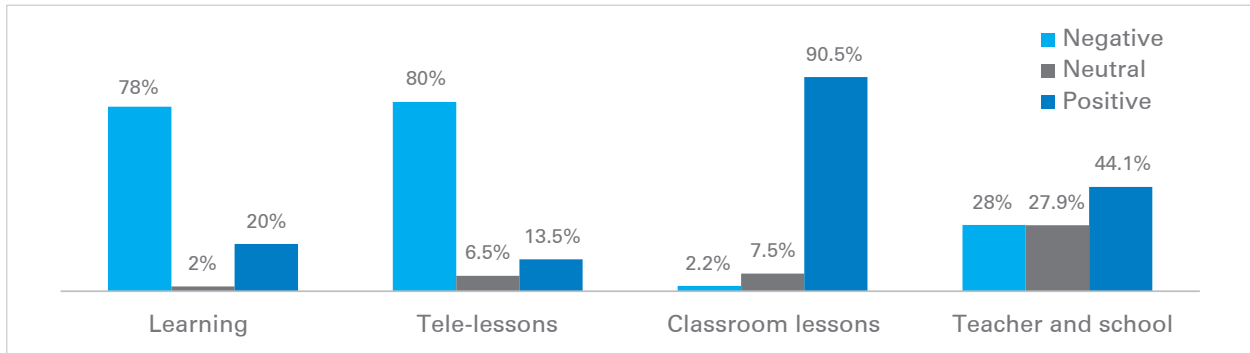
*I'm really worried about my pupils. I have many children from vulnerable groups; I'm fearing for their well-being. They cannot watch tele-lessons. The most important thing is whether they are safe.*

From teacher's interview

### Difficulties children may encounter when school starts in September

**Student expectations for the new school year:** Most students (91.4 per cent) said they were looking forward to having lessons at school. First graders in particular (100 per cent of male and 85.7 per cent of female students) were looking forward to going to school.

**FIGURE 42.** ATTITUDE OF LOWER AND UPPER SECONDARY STUDENTS TOWARDS SCHOOL, TEACHERS AND LESSONS (AS REPORTED BY THE CHILDREN)



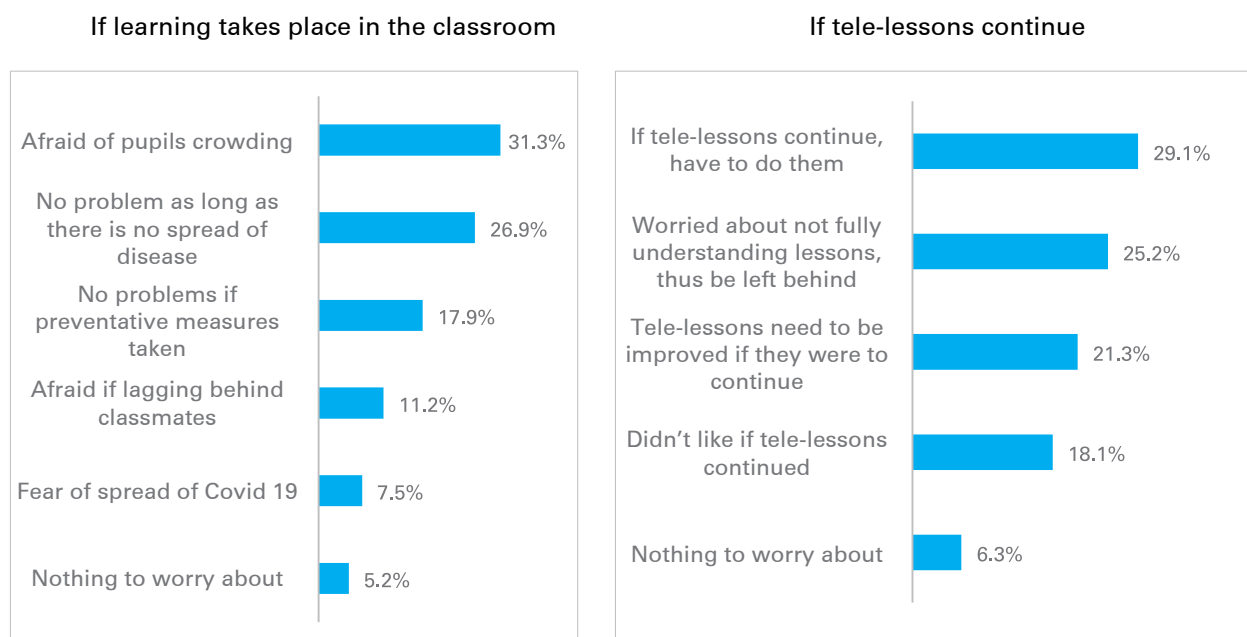
Many students disliked tele-lessons (80 per cent) but had positive expectations of in-person classroom lessons and wanted to study in their classes at school (90.5 per cent).

However, 78 per cent of students had a negative view of their learning or were concerned about lagging, a concern that results from having to adjust suddenly to a new way of learning, having to become more independent and do lessons independently. Also, tele-lessons were taught in a different style than students were used to and did not meet students' specific needs. For instance, students could not interact directly with their teacher, receive instructions or clarify something they did not understand. Some students started to dislike the tele-lessons because they did not fully understand them and could not get any help from their classmates due to a lack of interaction. As a consequence, some students gave up on studying. Although not common, a small percentage of students lost their confidence and feared going into the next grade.

Finally, 44.1 per cent of students had a positive attitude towards school and teachers. Rural students were more positive than urban students, which could result from the smaller teacher-to-student ratio in rural areas, giving teachers more opportunities to work with children individually.

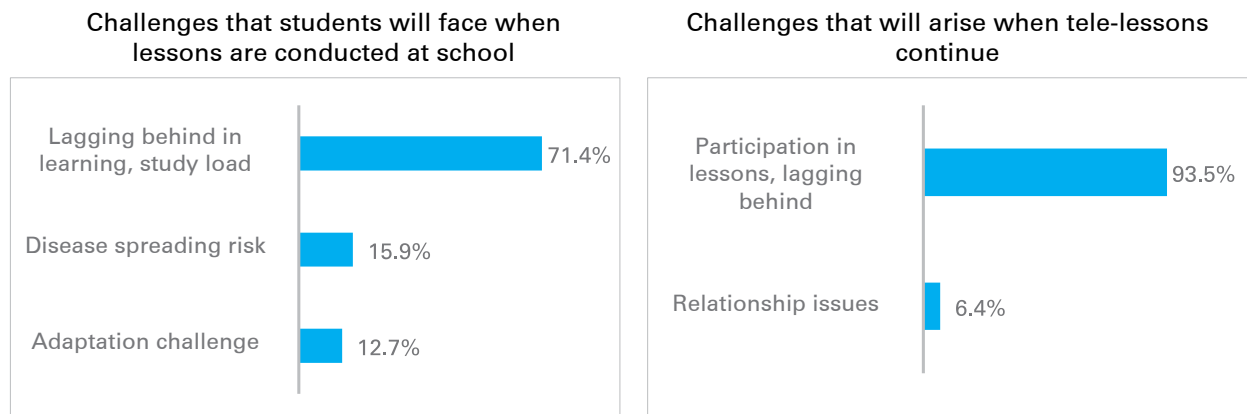
**Parent expectations for the new school year:** How parents evaluated the possible challenges or obstacles that may arise if lessons resume at school (in-class learning) is shown in Figure 43.

**FIGURE 43.** PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR



**Teacher expectations for the new school year:** When teachers were asked what kind of challenges students might face when school starts in September, the majority mentioned lagging in learning and difficulties adapting (see Figure 44).

**FIGURE 44.** CHALLENGES THAT TEACHERS FORESEE FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR



In the survey, 71 per cent of teachers said that the most pressing challenge when school starts would be students lagging in learning. Because participation in tele-lessons and understanding of lesson content were poor, teachers prepared themselves to review lessons from the previous grade before moving on to new content, taking into consideration that each student's level of knowledge is different. Specifically, teachers planned to spend 4–5 weeks reviewing lessons to eliminate any lag in learning and only then start on new curriculum lessons.

Another challenge students would face in the new school year, according to 16 per cent of all teachers, is adaptation, which is not unusual because some adaptation is usually needed after the summer break. However, because students had had no in-class interaction for over seven months, teachers thought they might have problems concentrating and get tired easily, participate less, change in character and have relational conflicts. According to the teachers, the class teachers and social workers were best placed to help solve these issues.

Finally, 13 per cent of all teachers were concerned that when school starts in September, the virus might spread, which would be another challenge students might have to face. Lack of classroom availability and overcrowding of students might also create risks, which could be overcome with good hygiene and preventive measures, as the teachers said.

*Misunderstanding! I took pregnancy leave, and when I came back the next year pupils felt like totally different people...*

From teacher's interview

If tele-lessons were to continue, 94 per cent of teachers identified lack of active participation and lagging in learning as the biggest challenges facing the students. Some teachers (6 per cent) feared that if students continued to learn from home, they would be limited in their social interactions, which would result in relational problems.

When asked about reasons students' participation in tele-lessons was poor, teachers identified the following:

- Not every student has a suitable learning environment to watch tele-lessons
- Lack of a smartphone or data makes it impossible to send completed assignments
- The lesson duration is very short and lessons cannot be rewound
- Going to the countryside to help one's family
- Looking after younger siblings
- Parental care and control are poor
- Interest in doing tele-lessons decreased due to difficulties in understanding the lesson content
- No face-to-face interaction, meaning students cannot ask about things that they do not understand, cannot receive instruction and have nobody to help them
- Low interest in learning
- Getting bored from tele-lessons.

Teachers saw the reasons mentioned above as the main causes for poor participation in tele-lessons, which led to students falling behind with their learning and the lesson content.

## CONCLUSION

This overview of the survey and interview findings has shown how school closures and lockdown during COVID-19 impacted the psychology of students at GES and in kindergarten, their parents and their teachers. In this conclusion, we identify the key challenges for each group.

### CHILDREN

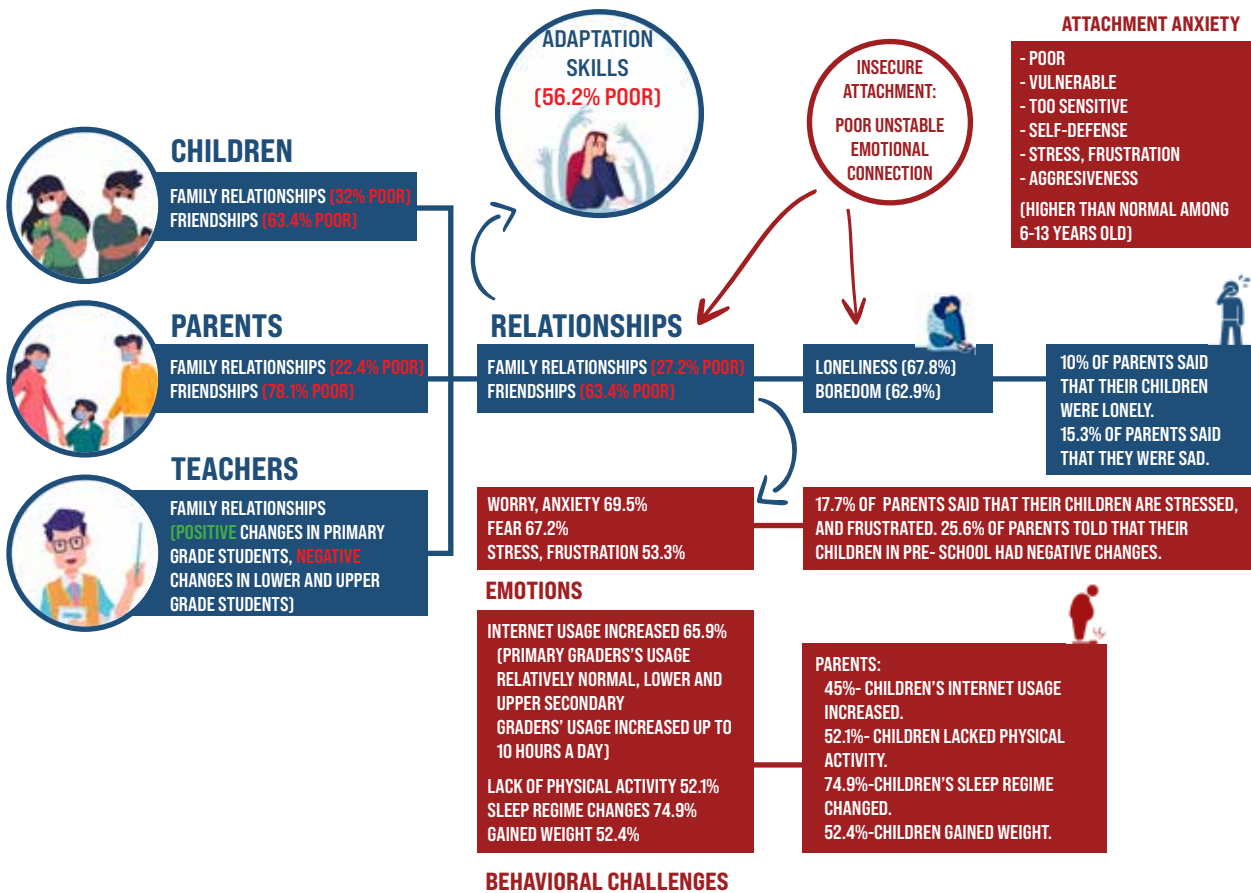
Attachment anxiety has led to low adaptation skills in 56.2 per cent of the students. Other socio-emotional and psychosocial issues may have also contributed to students' low adaptation skills.

From a socio-emotional perspective, an analysis of students' relationships and emotions revealed that one in every three students experienced poor family relationships during lockdown, and one in three students had poor relationships with friends. This negatively impacted students' emotions and caused loneliness, boredom and frustration. Stress and frustration among students aged 6–13 were higher than normal, and the majority of students were afraid of COVID-19 and falling behind in learning. Therefore, support is needed to reduce these fears. Further concerns among all students included having to take tests at the beginning of the school year, becoming unsociable and having to repeat a school year.

From a psychosocial perspective, an analysis of students' attitudes towards school and behavioural changes revealed that GES students like classroom learning, missed teachers and friends and grew tired of tele-lessons. The reason for students' positive attitudes towards classroom learning was mainly centred around having lessons together with classmates. In contrast, negative attitudes towards tele-lessons had to do with the shortness of the lessons, not being able to ask about things that were hard to understand, and the lack of face-to-face interaction. Also, students thought they had become distant from their friends during lockdown and were falling behind in their learning. During lockdown, the children's daily regime changed; for instance, they went to bed late, got up late, overate, lacked physical activity and increased their Internet use.

Relational, emotional and behavioural changes occurred in every second pre-schooler because they became more free-willed, stubborn and aggressive during lockdown. Mobile phone use increased among pre-schoolers, and unsociable behaviour was observed. Children said that they wanted to go to kindergarten. Also, they had forgotten things that they had learned in kindergarten before lockdown.

FIGURE 45. CONSOLIDATED MAP OF THE STUDY FINDINGS



The findings map above shows that if issues related to students' relationships, emotions and behaviour during lockdown continue for longer periods, they may impact the children's physical development, cognitive skills, social skills and personal development.

Students' poor adaptation, of which the main indicator is relational problems, is followed by emotional and behavioural issues. Also, attachment anxiety is evident, which impacts adaptation skills. If these continue for a long time, children risk adopting bad behaviour, succumbing to addiction, giving in to others' influence, falling behind in learning, losing motivation to learn, having cognitive problems and dropping out of school.

## PARENTS

For more than half of the surveyed parents, going into lockdown and having children at home caused emotional instability and difficulties, including (i) worrying about their children's lessons; (ii) problems with family, parent and child relationships, decreased household income, job loss and upset over increased expenditure; (iii) getting tired of staying home with children for a long time; (iv) fear of COVID-19 and anxiety about possible future risks. Lockdown had some positive aspects, such as parents got to spend more time with their children because they were constantly at home, parents and children got to know and understand each other better. However, there were also negative impacts, such as conflicts in families and difficulties in family relations, which had a particularly strong impact on lower and upper secondary school students. The survey findings revealed different results regarding how parents and children evaluated children's psychological changes during lockdown, showing that parents do not understand their children's psychological issues well.

## TEACHERS

Although there were many advantages for teachers during lockdown, such as time for self-development, more time to spend with their own families and emotional calm, more than half of the teachers worried about their students' participation in tele-lessons and understanding of the lesson content. Besides these concerns, the majority of teachers believed that students would face the most challenges when school starts in September because they may be lagging in their learning and feel worry, fear, frustration, thus needing strong adaptation skills.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### PRIORITY ISSUES

- In order to decrease fear of tests among students, teachers must explain at the beginning of the new school year that the reason for these tests is to identify students' knowledge levels.
- In order to decrease children's fear of COVID-19, age-appropriate information must be provided to meet different psychological needs in different forms and types (video, flyers, cartoons).
- In order to eliminate students' avoidance of tele-lessons and increase their motivation to learn, the methods used to deliver tele-lessons must be adapted and improved to reach every student, using new technology and scientific solutions as suitable.
- The selection of tele-lesson teachers must be improved and lesson preparation based on previous experience. For example, one subject should be taught per one grade by the same teacher.
- Students should have the option to access tele-lessons again in all possible forms (television, FM radio, Facebook, booklets) to reach students and their parents through multiple repetitions.
- Improved collaboration between the school social worker, doctor and class teachers should be supported. Opportunities to collaborate with psychological departments of colleges or universities and NGOs that provide psychological counselling and diagnostics should be provided.
- If possible, a group for providing psychological help to students should be established at school. The group may consist of the school social worker, doctor, training manager, student and teacher representatives.

### FUTURE STEPS

For the following psychological issues which were identified as a result of this study, it would be helpful to have a professional team to provide psychological help on a regular basis. The psychological support team at school should consist of the school doctor, a social worker, a teacher, a student representative and a professional psychologist. If such school psychological support teams cannot be formed in rural areas, there could be a 'mobile or multi-school' professional psychologist. The psychological support team may collaborate with college or university professional departments or organizations that provide psychological counselling or diagnostics.

The school psychological support team's work could include the following duties:

- Increase student's adaptation skills
- Create emotional stability
- Regulate emotions
- Increase motivation and desire for learning
- Increase stress-coping abilities
- Resolve relationship problems

- Help students to see issues in a realistic manner and teach them to acknowledge their own faults.

The psychological team's function and line of activities could include:

- Psychological basic diagnostics
- Counselling
- Training to support psychological well-being
- Surveys to identify students' psychological issues or concerns
- Dissemination of knowledge and information about psychological well-being.

If schools are closed again, stakeholders need to consider the following:

- Provide online or phone counselling to students, parents and teachers
- Communicate regularly between teachers and students
- Assist parental care for children's mental health.

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## ANNEX

### Recommendations for providing psychological support to children during lockdown

#### Recommendations for children

To protect one's health and decrease worry:

- Remember that precautions against COVID-19 are effective; follow them well
- Tell your parents and teachers about your fears, frustrations and worries
- Do your homework on time, without procrastinating.

To be successful in studies:

- Identify whether you are behind in your learning; if you cannot do this independently, ask for a teacher's help
- Talk with a teacher about improving your studies, obtain advice and make plans how to catch up
- If anything is unclear, ask your classmates and teachers for help; share your difficulties with someone to receive help
- Make a daily schedule together with your parents, including when to do homework and when to do housework; follow the schedule
- Know the list of online resources where tv lessons can be watched again
- Remember that success in learning will require time and effort; acquire a habit of writing down what you have learned every day.

To improve adaptation:

- Overcome any issues that may arise and remember that it will require time
- Talk with parents and friends about your thoughts and feelings
- Observe the facial expressions of the person you are talking to
- Participate in teamwork, class and community activities; initiate playing together
- Read short stories and narratives of that interest you; share what you read with others.

#### Recommendations for parents

To decrease concerns regarding your children's studies:

- Write down and prioritize the reasons why you are worried about your child's study
- To address your concerns, make agreements with your child regarding lessons or make a plan; for example, agree on a time to study and do household chores
- Contact your child's teacher to clarify your child's knowledge levels; seek information about what lessons they need to improve on
- Share with the teacher your concerns about your child's behavioural change; learn to solve problems collaboratively
- Receive advice from professional teachers
- Receive help from a professional psychologist if you and your child have psychological issues.

To decrease issues or conflicts in the family or child-parent relationship:

- Write down relationship issues and obstacles
- Talk about such challenges with your family and children
- To eliminate reasons for conflict, clarify what needs to be done from the parents' side and what needs to be done from the child's side; agree on it
- Make a schedule for housework
- When frustrated with children or other family members, try talking to them in a calm manner at least two or three times
- When family members get angry at each other and frustrated, ask them to tell you about it quietly; if they do not tell you about the conflict, hold them somehow accountable
- Stop nagging your children; only make requirements at a certain time of the day
- Give children the opportunity to play or do something they like.

To decrease children's fear of tests:

- Talk calmly about the previous year's learning with your child
- Talk with your child about improving their learning, catching up on things they are behind on and make a plan
- Encourage even small successes of your children
- Explain COVID-19 to your child and tell them about good hygiene practices; be an example.

To improve children's adaptation skills:

- Smile when interacting with your child; make them feel that you like them and they are not in your way
- Instead of giving jobs that your child needs to do alone, give them jobs to do with others; this will give them the opportunity to communicate with others
- Create an environment where your child can play, talk and do lessons with a friend
- Create an environment where children can read interesting short stories or narratives
- Support independent decision-making
- Encourage your child
- Talk with your child about their future, goals and plans; plan together
- Every evening, try talking with your child about what happened during the day, talk about what they did wrong and what they did right

### **Recommendations for teachers**

To improve students' adaptation skills:

- In order to decrease students' fears of the test or examination, you must explain again that the purpose of the test is to identify their knowledge levels at the start of the school year
- Smile when interacting with your students; make them feel that people like them and that they are not a burden
- Instead of giving assignments to do alone, give them team assignments; create opportunities and organize activities that will require communication with others
- Give assignments to read stories or novels of interest; thus students will get to know many characters that exist within society
- Engage in activities that will require students to be brave, make decisions, bear responsibilities and engage in teamwork

- Encourage your students
- Explain the COVID-19 situation; talk with the whole class about how to overcome these difficult times; make collaborative decisions.

To decrease students' fears and worries:

- Remind them that preventive measures against COVID-19 are very effective; explain that individual precautions are important; be an example yourself
- Communicate calmly and patiently with your students
- Listen carefully to students' fears and worries and offer solutions (review lessons little by little and work together as a team).

To decrease students' frustration:

- Give them time to understand their negative emotions
- Teach parents and caretakers to dedicate enough time to their children
- Stay calm during the continuation of lessons
- Do physical exercises during breaks
- Remind the students to turn off their mobile phones and television one hour before going to bed; remind them to sleep for at least 8–11 hours per day
- Help students plan study time at the most suitable times and in suitable conditions
- Have them make a list of 1–5 minute stress-releasing exercises (taking deep breaths, walking outside, washing dishes).

To help students with loneliness:

- Take note of children who lack parents' attention, are likely to be discriminated against by others, are not self-confident, have low self-esteem, and are physically different from other children
- Talk personally with a student if needed
- Organize activities that will boost class unity and encourage friendships
- Offer active physical exercises that will boost physical development; be an example yourself.

## TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT TEAM

### Main functions:

- Provide psychological education
- Recommend psychological prevention and precautions
- Conduct psychological diagnostics and evaluation
- Conduct developmental and corrective exercises
- Offer advice and recommendations.

### Time the support team is working at school:

2–4 hours, no less than one visit per 14 days.

The support team must make a plan for the given school and target group.

### MODEL PLAN

| No | Type of activity  | Time | Execution | Description |
|----|---|------|-----------|-------------|
| 1. | Organizational activity to get to know the school specifics and activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– To get to know school's organization, the specifics, internal procedures, activities planned for students</li> <li>– To make a plan that suits the specific needs of a given school</li> </ul> |      |           |             |
| 2. | Provision of psychological education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Conduct lectures and trainings</li> <li>– Print out reading material</li> <li>– Organize meetings and discussions</li> </ul>  |      |           |             |
| 3. | Diagnostics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Choose diagnostic tools that suit students' needs and make diagnostics</li> </ul>  |      |           |             |
| 4. | Developmental correction – individual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Organize activities or exercises that suit students' issues and challenges</li> </ul>  |      |           |             |
| 5. | Developmental correction – group work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Organize activity exercises that suit the need of a given group</li> </ul>   |      |           |             |
| 6. | Counselling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Individual and group counselling on practical psychological issues (relationships, management)</li> </ul>  |      |           |             |

