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# IMPACT OF SCHOOL CLOSURE DUE TO COVID-19 ON DISABLED STUDENT'S WELLBEING IN LAHORE

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### **Abstract**

COVID-19 can have a significant impact on pupils in general. Fiscal and physical health concerns, fast change, and increasing isolation all affect students and everyone. Students with health/disabilities face more risks in a variety of respects than non-disabled students. The present research was conducted to find out Impact of School Closure Due to COVID-19 on Disabled Students' Psychological Wellbeing in Lahore. Quantitative research method was used as a method of inquiry. The target population was the disabled students enrolled in high level special education schools of Lahore. Participants was selected through the simple random sampling method. The available population size for this study is 873, comprising both male and female students. Out of this, 267 students were targeted sample. Data was collected through the adopted questionnaires. Already validated questionnaire of "WELL-BEING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PISA" was used for the survey. The social survey through the questionnaire was used in the examination of the existing study. Quantitative data analysis was done through the SPSS. Linear regression analysis used to test the hypothesis. Questionnaire's reliability was tested by the Cronbach's alpha test that proved data excellence. There was significant and positive relationship between our independent variable "school closure" and dependent variable "well-being.

Keywords: School closure, COVID-19, Disabled students', Psychological Wellbeing in Lahore

### INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus COVID-19 was found for the first time by the World Health Organization in January 2020. The WHO proclaimed COVID-19 to be a global pandemic in March 2020 (Panchal *et al.*, 2021). COVID-19 has the potential to have a significant impact on students in general. Disabled students and students with health difficulties may be at greater risk in various ways than their non-disabled peers. The academic year has been swiftly drawing to a close in most nations, and several governments have implemented different solutions to tackle this challenge. For example, in Pakistan, 1-8 grade disabled students have been promoted automatically. In addition, the Inter-Provincial Education

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Ministers Conference (IPEMC) has taken a unanimous decision to advance secondary and high school pupils based on IBCC recommendations (Shehzadi et al., 2021).

COVID-19 can have a significant impact on pupils in general. Everyone is affected by the financial and physical health issues, rapid change and increasing isolation that students face. For a variety of reasons, students with disabilities or health issues face greater risks than their non-disabled peers. School closures, which can make young people more likely to have mental health problems than older people, may make them more vulnerable to the negative effects of isolation.

This is because lockdowns can make it hard for them to move around and interact with other people. Worldwide, school closures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have impacted roughly 67% of children and young adults. A large majority of Pakistan's population lives in poverty and in modest houses, hence the effect is magnified in Pakistan. There is an even greater loss for children in rural regions who lack access to digital entertainment. In metropolitan regions, where many children attend school, the transmission of the virus is much more prominent.

For these students, knowledge loss is unavoidable, but the psychological burden on these children in isolation is enormous. Anxiety-inducing factors, including the inability to get out of the house for lengthy periods of time or the dread of contracting an infection from a virus, can have long-term negative impacts on children's health and well-being.

Covid-19 is expected to have a long-term influence on disabled students. So, millions of children do not have access to education, a circumstance that is unprecedented in the history of education for our already fragile education system. As a result of this unanticipated development, a new plan for ensuring school continuity must be developed. In addition, the government should encourage and support this effective educational system.

Due to the over-capacity of the public education system, the closure of private schools will create a large void in the education system. It has been observed that C-19 has a stronger psychological impact on children with physical and mental problems than non-disabled students. Children who have visual or auditory impairments may find it difficult to make use of many of today's latest innovations (Patel, 2020). Covid-19 is expected to have a long-term influence on disabled students.

The objective of the study was to find out the impact of school closure on the education of disabled students and to see the level of psychological wellbeing of disabled students. Furthermore, to find out the relationship between impact of school closure and level of psychological well-being. This study evaluated the impact of school closure due to COVID-19 on disabled students psychological wellbeing in Lahore. This study investigated how the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown, quarantine, and social distancing measures have affected students' education.

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The disabled students could not get an education during the pandemic because online classes could not be arranged. Other students facilitate with this opportunity, but disabled students could not get this facility of online education. So that is why disabled students could not participate in any activity.

Tremain (2004) introduced critical disability theory and Ndlovu (2020) used the critical disability theory to examine the impact of Covid-19 on the psychological wellbeing of students with disabilities in South Africa. Despite Covid-19, this study showed that pupils with disabilities were already excluded from studying.

Not only for students with disabilities but students from all backgrounds, it was suggested that implementing universal design concepts for learning into teaching practices and training academic staff on its application could be an effective intervention to facilitate inclusion. A review of theoretical work based on articles from the previous few years in various databases has found the impact of school closure on the education of disabled students and the level of psychological well-being of disabled students.

Haider et al., (2020) stated that the levels of stress and psychological consequence of COVID-19 pandemics could be increased, and perhaps people can begin to feel mild to moderate symptoms. Wang & Zhao (2020) examined the influence of COVID-19, likewise identified "more worry" among students at universities. Aqeel *et al.*, (2021) indicated that kids have been worried and depressed and young pupils with COVID-19 exposure are more susceptible to mental health predispositions.

Waqas *et al.*, (2020) stated that 347 university students from Pakistan, studying anxiety predictors, students "appeared afraid of COVID-19, and this fear was linked to disgust, bodily anxiety, bodily alertness, contaminated cognitions, and general distress." Lee & Kim (2020) stated that the coronavirus was escalating. South Korean media boasted of its leading accomplishment in flattening the curve and reducing the grave consequences of the public health crisis. Haider *et al.*, (2020) described the Covid-19 outbreak as a fatal, far-reaching problem. Isolation is a calamity that has hurt adults and children's and students' social and emotional well-being considerably.

Scheer & Laubenstein (2021) presented in this research that COVID-19 caused a school lockdown in Germany in the spring of 2020. The school lockdown had no effect on students with E/BD during or after the event. Nasir & Hameed (2021) stated that due to the rapid spread of COVID-19, online distance learning was a revelation to Pakistan, as it was to most countries. Despite the fact that COVID-19 affects practically everyone, kids with impairments, both physical and mental, are particularly vulnerable. Online learning has also caused emotional stress among these students.

Khawar et al., (2021) stated that stressful events like the COVID-19 pandemic can impair people's emotional and physical health. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in Pakistan, this study looked at the relationship between psychological discomfort and student satisfaction with online education. Ilyas et al., (2021) stated that many people have been affected by coronavirus infections in 2019. Abuse and behavioral and

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psychiatric disorders were more common in children with dysfunctional households during the epidemic.

Imran *et al.*, (2021) explained in this research that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major disruptions in medical student lives. Covid-19's psychological impact on Pakistani medical students is being investigated in this study. Raviv *et al.*, (2021) stated that stressors linked to the COVID-19 pandemic include increased exposure to illness and death, economic, educational, and social consequences of stay-at-home orders, school closures, and remote learning, as well as worsening mental health among caregivers, all of which negatively impact children's mental health. Masonbrink & Hurley (2020) states that the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has forced the closure of around 60 million children's schools. As the consequences of COVID-19 evident, low-income children in need of school-based dietary, physical, and mental health assistance will be disproportionately affected.

Duraku (2021) states that the influence of COVID-19 and school closures on gifted students' well-being and attitudes toward distance learning. This study found that school closures and home seclusion made parents of gifted children feel more stressed than usual, and that family tension increased. However, gifted children's psychological well-being has changed. For these children, COVID-19 has created a range of undesirable sentiments and results such as sleep problem; boredom; loneliness; despair; rage; feelings of powerlessness; grief; apathy; and laziness. Less contact and debate possibilities were seen as inappropriate and ineffective by students who disliked online learning.

Baloch *et al.*, (2021) stated that it's currently one of the most destructive occurrences of the 21st century, in terms of the number of individuals infected and killed by the virus. It was an unusual situation for children's developing brains, with limited social contacts and activities. Shah *et al.*, (2020) stated that the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak began in Wuhan, China, and has already spread globally. This sudden and unexpected social marginalization has badly upset many people worldwide, especially young people. Most schools closed, cancelled classes, and turned to home-based or online learning to encourage and reinforce social distance standards. The psychological impact of the coronavirus pandemic on children and adolescents must be evaluated by scientists and healthcare experts, as many mental diseases begin in childhood.

Zhang *et al.*, (2020) stated that COVID-19 has had a profound effect on students, resulting in a surge in financial and physical health concerns, a rapid move to online learning, and an increase in isolation and loneliness. Students with disabilities/health issues may experience accessibility issues with online learning or communication technologies, and additional hazards such as financial hardship or pre-existing conditions may exacerbate their stress. In addition, students with disabilities or health concerns reported more difficulties with COVID-19 than their peers without disabilities or health issues reported. Education will also be more accessible if educational technology is developed to create a helpful, tranquil, and connecting learning environment.

**E-Publication: Online Open Access** 

Vol: 56 Issue: 09:2023 DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8385027

Goldschmidt (2020) claimed that the epidemic of COVID-19 necessitated the use of technological means. In a situation where children are actively involved alongside an

adult, technology can best be used to promote and sustain their overall well-being on all of these fronts. During this period, it is fairly uncommon for both adults and children to experience a decrease in their overall well-being. Chronic sickness or handicap, problematic thinking habits, trauma, and substance abuse all harm an adult's well-being. People's reliance on technology to learn, live, and keep connected has grown throughout the COVID-19 epidemic. In a period of social isolation and disconnection, technology has become vital to children's well-being, and this column will examine how that well-being might be leveraged and maintained.

# **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to find the Impact of School Closure due to COVID-19 on Disabled Students Psychological Well Being in Lahore. This was quantitative study. The source of data collection was primary, and the research was exploratory. Numerical data and graphs were used in small size. The disabled students enrolled in high level special education schools of Lahore were targeted population. Participants was selected through the simple random sampling method. The student's lists were collected from the statistic officer (SO) of the special education department.

Table 1: Detail of total population of students in disabled schools

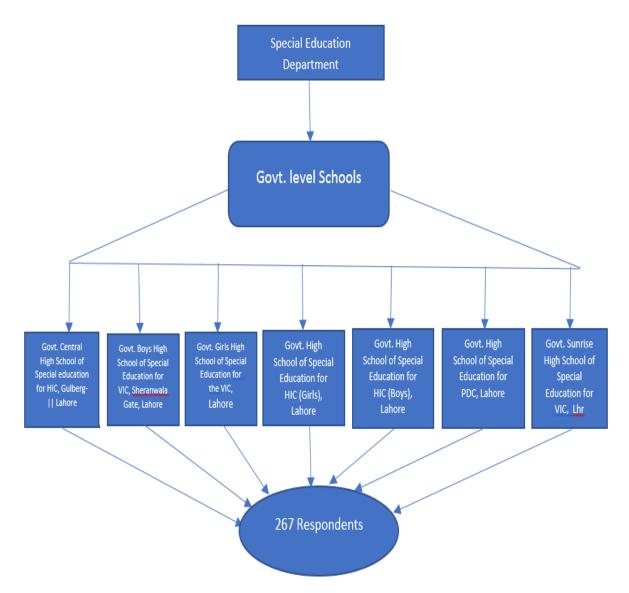
Disabled School Name	Male Students	Female Students	Grand Total
Govt. Central High School of Special education for HIC, Gulberg-   Lahore	55	147	202
Govt. Boys High School of Special Education for VIC, Sheranwala Gate, Lahore	52	0	52
Govt. Girls High School of Special Education for the VIC, Lahore	0	83	83
Govt. High School of Special Education for HIC (Girls), Lahore	12	181	193
Govt. High School of Special Education for HIC (Boys), Lahore	234	0	234
Govt. High School of Special Education for PDC, Lahore	33	11	44
Govt. Sunrise High School of Special Education for VIC, Lhr	65	0	65
Total	451	422	873

The available population size for this study is 873, comprising both male and female students. Out of this, 267 students were targeted sample. According to Rao Soft calculator 5% margin of error and 95% confidence interval.

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The social survey was used in the examination of the existing study. Survey through the questionnaire was conduct to find the Impact of School Closure due to COVID-19 on Disabled Students Psychological Well Being in Lahore Already validated questionnaire of "WELL-BEING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PISA" was used for the survey. Data was collected by using the "Ryff's psychological wellbeing Scales (PWB)". In addition, data was gathered from government-level special education high schools in Lahore. It was very hard to collect data from selected schools of disabled students. At the time of data analysis, regression method was used to determine the impact of school closure due to COVID-19 on disabled students psychological wellbeing in Lahore because regression analysis was shown the impact of school closure due the Covid-19 on student's psychological wellbeing. The SPSS (Statistical packages for social analysis) software was used for the regression analysis.

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# **RESULTS**

The table <sup>r</sup> shows that there were 267 valid participants that participated in this research. The above table shows the frequency and percentage (%) of the age of different students from 14 to 17. Twenty-four (9.0%) participants age is fourteen, ninety-five (35.6%) participants age is fifteen as well as one hundred thirty-eight (51.7%) participants age is sixteen and ten (3.7%) participants age are seventeen.

**Statistics** Valid Gender **Education** Disability Age 267 267 267 267 9<sup>th</sup> Frequency **14** 24 **Female** 157 91 HIC 117 10<sup>th</sup> **15** 95 Male 110 176 VIC 150 **16** | 138 **17** | 10 9<sup>th</sup> 34.1% HIC 43.8% **14** 9.0% Female 58.8% Percentage 10<sup>th</sup> 15 35.6% Male 41.2% 65.9% VIC 56.2% **16** 51.7% 3.7% 17

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics** 

The gender in the table <sup>۲</sup> shows that one hundred fifty-seven (58.8%) participants are female and one hundred ten (41.2%) participants are male. The education shows that ninety-one (34.1%) participants from level 9<sup>th</sup> and one hundred seventy-six (65.9%) participants from level 10<sup>th</sup>. One hundred seventeen (43.8%) participants disability is HIC and one hundred fifty (56.2%) participants disability is VIC.

Table 3: Reliability Test

Reliability Result Analysis					
Variables	Cronbach Alpha	Items			
School Closure	.816	7			
Well, Being	.722	20			

The composite Reliabilities for all variables exceeded the cutoff value of 0.70, which demonstrate that each Construct are Acceptable Psychometric Properties. As research role the reliability Cronbach alpha value .7 is favorable for further regression analysis.

# **EVALUATION OF THE STRUCTURAL MODEL**

We examined path coefficients ( $\beta$ ) and coefficient of determination (R square) to evaluate the model.

Table 4: Coefficient of determination (R square)

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.418a	.175	.171	.28414		

a. Predictors: (Constant), School Closure

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Table 5: Coefficients (β)

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients Stan		Standardized Coefficients	4	C:~
wodei	В	Std. Error	Beta	τ	Sig.
(Constant)	1.959	.088		22.157	.000
School Closure	.197	.026	.418	7.486	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Well, Being

### DISCUSSION

The table 2 shows that there were 267 valid participants that participated in this research. The study first evaluated the reflective measurement models for reliability and validity of the sample (Table 3). Second, the structural models of the hypothesized paths were examined through regression analysis (Table 3 & 5). Table 3 & 5 represent the regression result of relationship of independent variable school closure and dependent variable Well Being. In Table 3 R square value of .175 shows that 17.5% change in independent variable school closure of Dependent variable Well-being.

In Table 5  $\beta$  value .418 and significant value .000 indicate that there is significant and positive relationship between our independent variable "school closure" and dependent variable "well-being. As the P (sig) value is less than .05 hence we can reject the null hypothesis and with 95% confidence we can support our alternative hypothesis which shows that there is an association between impact of school closure and disabled students' psychological wellbeing.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

It was a small-scale study because only disabled students were targeted to collect the data. The data was collected from the Govt. schools in Lahore. Data was collected only from high level schools. Limited time duration and limited financial budget was the other factors to limit the research area. Due to the Covid-19, access to the students was limited. This research will also be conducted in private schools in the future and comparison can be draw. School closure have a negative impact on children's behavior and cognitive habits. Parents need to keep a watchful eye on their children in any situation like Covid-19. For parents, caretakers, and teachers should serve as a basic primary intervention to treat the most commonly reported symptoms among children to assure their adaptive functioning and coping abilities. Children's fears and queries must be first understood by those who are there to assist them. Parents should to set a timetable for their children in order to alleviate their children's anxieties resulting from uncertainty. Teachers can show their students how to be good people. The coping mechanisms that teachers employ on a daily basis to deal with stressful events will serve as an example for the students. Keep students interested in class by providing a chat feature and a discussion forum. Parents should observe their children's behavior and pay attention to any shifts in their attitude. If a child is having difficulty learning or concentrating, continue to provide more support or slow down the pace.

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# CONCLUSION

Students' mental health is adversely affected by COVID-19. Teachers, school social workers, and school psychologists should keep an eye on children and adolescents' psychosocial situations during the pandemic. In addition, efforts should be made to strengthen the connection between students and professors, especially when they are separated by great distances. There is a good chance that children's mental health may be disregarded and disproportionately harmed in the event of a natural disaster. During COVID-19, telehealth services, scientific communities, parents, and instructors can help alleviate some of the difficulties that children endure. Pandemics such as C-19 can motivate us to adopt cutting-edge communication and e-learning technologies (Dhawan, 2020). We need to be more creative and adaptable in order to find long-term answers to the challenges posed by natural disasters in a country like Pakistan, which is still striving to make ends meet.

There are many students live in places with poor internet connectivity, they have limited or no access to the online learning system. Because of their low or no-income upbringing, they are also at a disadvantage academically. There is a risk that it will increase socioeconomic inequalities. The world was unprepared for the pandemic's unexpected appearance. It could take up to two months for the sickness to become life-threatening in Pakistan. However, despite the fact that education institutions were the first to be shut down, the transition to online learning proved to be a difficult one due to lack of preparedness. Children with physical and mental problems are more likely to struggle academically than their peers. The absence of online tools and parents' inability to teach their children using effective pedagogies has left them feeling hopeless and alone. Parents worry that their children, who are already behind schedule, may suffer even more as a consequence of their stress. However, it is unquestionably the duty of the government to ensure that children with special needs receive the same level of attention and consideration as children without disabilities.

Aside from their typical academics, this epidemic has taught pupils that they must have certain specific abilities like survival, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Young individuals with mental health concerns might benefit greatly from the stability and predictability that school routines provide. Prior to using any e-learning platform, management should weigh the benefits and drawbacks of each option carefully. In addition, it's critical to know what you're trying to accomplish and why. The long-term mental health impacts of epidemics on children and adolescents are unknown. Psychological effects on patients and healthcare professionals have been studied, but little is known about how SARS affects the general public. Globally, COVID-19 is more prevalent than SARS and other diseases.

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