



# A Web-Based Study on The Effects of Lockdown on Students of Classes IX-XII of Phuentsholing Thromde

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Also, EMD is thankful to the students, teachers, and the management of Changangkha Middle Secondary School, Thimphu Thromde for participating in pre-testing of the survey tool.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study report informs the Ministry of Education, the schools, the parents, and the public on how lockdown and closure of schools under Phuentsholing Thromde affected the students of classes IX-XII. The Thromde went under lockdown and students remained at home from April 2021 until they were relocated to Phuentshothang HSS under Punakha Dzongkhag in August 2021. This section of the report highlights the key findings on effects of lockdown on students' physical and mental health, social wellbeing, and changes in their

perception on education and schooling. The study looked at generic effects on students' health and wellbeing and therefore, the findings are not based on clinical examination.

The findings of the study are specific to 724 students of classes IX-XII of Phuentsholing Thromde who were later relocated to Punakha Dzongkhag. Hence the findings may not be generalizable to rest of the students in the nation.

## KEY FINDINGS

- I. **Physical health:** This section focused on students' change of daily lifestyles such as, engagement in physical activities, sleep time, body weight, screen time, meal timing, and consumption of junk foods during the lockdown that would have bearings on one's physical health.

Over 80% of students reported increased screen time, 65% reported increased sleep time, 53% reported increased body weight, 76% reported change in their meal timing, and 38% said that their consumption of junk food had increased. 79% of students engaged less than one hour in physical activities. Hence, it is obvious that the lockdown led to changes in the daily lifestyles of students related to their physical health.

II. **Mental health:** This area was intended to find out how often students felt depressed & sad, calm & peaceful, stressed & tired, insecure & worried, and frustrated & angry during the lockdown. The findings informed that 81% of students felt depressed and sad. Over 89% reported that they were stressed & tired, 80% reported to have felt insecure & worried, and 88% reported that they felt frustrated and angry during the lockdowns. On the contrary, 95% said they also felt calm and peaceful. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students experienced variations in their emotional state during the lockdown.

III. **Social wellbeing:** The purpose of this section was to understand how students maintained social connectivity with people outside of their homes. The questions captured information on how safe and secure students felt during the lockdown period. This section also looked at whether they experienced and/or engaged in cyber bullying or harassment during the lockdown because of online engagement.

The data revealed that 73% of students felt happy and pleasant at home. About 80% of students felt secure at home during lockdown. 92% of them

kept in touch with their friends over various social media platforms. 87% of students reported that they had enough people around them to connect with during lockdown. Majority of students expressed that they neither engaged in cyber bullying nor were they bullied by others. However, 3% of the students reported that they were either bullied online by others or engaged in bullying others.

IV. **Education and schooling:** Questions in this section looked at students' general perception about their academic learning and support they received from their parents/guardian during the lockdown.

Over 68% of students reported that they were to some extent satisfied with support they received from their teachers during the lockdown as opposed to over 31% who were not satisfied. Similarly, 90% of students were satisfied with the support rendered by their parents or guardians in terms of helping them continue their studies.

However, 45% of students reported that they felt like giving up their studies due to difficult situations during the lockdown. 42% of them said that their

learning declined during the lockdown, while 28% were not sure whether their learning improved or declined.

Most students (54%) expressed that they would prefer face-to-face teaching followed by 38% who would prefer a blend of face-to-face and online teaching mode.

Overall, the study found that lockdown had affected the students' physical and mental health. Conversely, students could maintain healthy social connections with their friends and family members during the lockdown. The study also revealed that nearly half of the students felt like giving up their studies. Therefore, had the MoE not taken measures like relocation of the students, the ministry would have seen more student dropouts. In continuation, over 72% of students expressed their happiness at their new school.

## BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

COVID-19 was first detected in Bhutan in March 2020 which disrupted the day to day living of people from all walks of life. Government implemented several

measures to prevent the spread of the virus among the general population. Following the modus operandi practiced worldwide, one of the first measures taken up by the government of Bhutan was closing of schools as a precautionary measure to stop the spread of disease. On 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020, schools under high-risk Dzongkhags and Thromdes were closed. On 18<sup>th</sup> March, the government ordered schools across the nation to close<sup>1</sup>. Since then, schools across the nation remained closed throughout the academic year. However, schools with classes IX-XII were allowed to open and face-to-face teaching resumed in September 2020. Although all the schools in the nation opened for the new academic year 2021 in a phased manner, schools along the Southern borders were disrupted time and again with Dzongkhags and Thromdes along these border areas going under frequent lockdowns.

Community transmission of COVID-19 in the Phuentsholing Thromde was detected in April 2021 following which all six schools; 4 public schools & 2 private schools under the Thromde remained closed since 17<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Over 4,600 students of classes Pre-Primary till XII studying in these schools were affected by the closure of schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Education in Emergency (EiE) Report, April 2021

The students continued their lessons online and were unable to participate in the mid-term examinations. The lockdown of Thromde and closure of schools continued into the 2<sup>nd</sup> term after mid-term examinations.

Considering the importance of contact teaching, the Ministry of Education relocated students of classes IX-XII of Phuentshloing Thromde to Phuntshothang HSS under Punakha Dzongkhag towards end of August 2021. However, two private schools; Yonten Kuenjung and Norbu Academy continued to function in containment in their respective locations.

Due to frequent lockdown of the Phuentshloing Thromde, Hon'ble Sherig Lyonpo raised his concern over the wellbeing of the students under the Thromde and directed EMD to conduct a study to understand the effects of lockdown on the students. The study was intended to inform the Ministry of Education and relevant stakeholders to implement appropriate and timely interventions based on the findings.

## PURPOSE

While many countries and organizations have carried out studies on the impact of COVID-19 on schools and students, there is very little information on how students were affected by the

lockdown in Bhutan. This study therefore intends to find out the effects of lockdown on students' physical & mental health, social well-being, and their education & schooling. The findings of the study will guide the ministry, Dzongkhag/Thromde, schools, and parents in providing appropriate intervention in time.

The following were overarching questions of the study:

1. How has the lockdown affected the students'
  - physical health?
  - mental health?
  - social well-being? and
  - education and schooling?
2. What are the expectations of students from the MoE, schools, and parents to help them cope with such situations should the pandemic continue?

## METHODOLOGY & ANALYSIS

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This was a web-based cross-sectional study carried out through a short survey. Cross-sectional studies are usually used to find out the burden of a disease, a trait, or a situation on a defined population. The survey was administered to the students of classes IX-XII of Phuentshloing Thromde who

experienced prolonged lockdown. The survey was conducted electronically through a web-based questionnaire where respondents remained anonymous. This method allowed comparison of different variables at the same time. For Example, the attitude of students towards education and schooling during the lockdown period could be compared in relation to their age, gender, school, etc.

### SURVEY POPULATION & SAMPLING

The study used total population sampling, a type of purposive sampling technique that involves examining the entire population. It is important to note that through this non-probability sampling technique, it is not possible to make statistical generalizations about the sample being studied. However, the total population sampling does make it possible to make analytical generalizations about the population being studied.

The target population for the survey were students of classes IX-XII of three public schools<sup>2</sup> of Phuentsholing Thromde who were relocated to Punakha Dzongkhag. Although students from classes PP-VIII also experienced prolonged lockdown, only these group of students were chosen for study considering the maturity of students, resources, and logistic challenges in administering the survey.

Out of 866 relocated students, 724 (84%) of them participated in the survey as shown in the table below. The remaining 142 could not take part in the survey since some of them were not present at the campus, while others did not have mobile phones at the time of survey.

**Table 1. Details of survey participants**

Class	Total Stds.	Actual No. of stds. who participated in the survey	Percentage of stds. who participated in the survey
IX	279	234	84%
X	306	247	81%
XI	139	124	89%
XII	142	119	84%
<b>Total</b>	<b>866</b>	<b>724</b>	<b>84%</b>

<sup>2</sup> Phuentsholing HSS, Phuentsholing MSS, and Sonamgang MSS



In terms of demographic information, of the 724 survey respondents, 347 (48%) were boys and 377 (52%) were girls. 51% of the respondents were from Phuentsholing HSS, 25% were from Phuentsholing MSS, and 24% were from Sonamgang MSS. In terms of age group, 89% of the respondents were between 15-20 years, 9% below 15 years, and 2% were between 21-25 years.

Looking at the class level, 32.4% of the respondents were from class IX, 34.1% from class X, 17.1% from class XI, and 16.4% from class XII.

Additionally, 84% of the respondents were living with their parents during the lockdown, while 16% of them were living with their guardian like, grandparents, uncle, aunt, brother, sister, etc.

## AREAS FOR SURVEY

The survey questionnaire was developed based on six sections as provided in the table below

Section	Description
Section I (Personal information)	This section included demographic questions such as, name of school, class, age, gender, and parent's/guardian's occupation.
Section II (Physical health)	This section included key questions related to change of daily lifestyles during the lockdown that would have some bearings on one's physical health.
Section III (Mental health)	Questions in this section were intended to find out how often students felt depressed, sad, calm & peaceful, stressed, insecure, worried, and frustrated during the lockdown.
Section IV (Social wellbeing)	The purpose of this section was to understand how safe and secure students felt during the lockdown. It was also meant to find out whether they experienced or engaged in cyber bullying or harassment during the lockdown because of online engagement.
Section V (Education & schooling)	Questions in this section looked at students' general perception on their academic learning and support they received from their schools and parents/guardian during the lockdown.
Section VI (Support Required)	This section had three open-ended questions. The objectives of the questions were to get students' general views and suggestions as to how the MoE, schools, and parents should act to help children cope with such situations. The responses were also expected to elicit appropriate interventions.

## DATA COLLECTION TOOLS AND ANALYSIS

The web-based survey questionnaire was developed using KoBo Toolbox, a free open-source tool used for field data collection. The survey was administered in person to ensure accuracy and quality of data. The respondents were oriented on the process of taking the survey. A printed QR code was provided to each respondent to access the survey link. Each respondent was allocated a respondent ID number to avoid multiple submission of responses.

The data was analyzed using KoBo Toolbox Excel Data Analyzer version 1.23. Since the study focused on a specific group of students, the analysis is limited to this group only. The visualizations were directly exported in MS Word format. All visualizations generated by the analyzer were exported, customized, and augmented through different options and disaggregated to ensure relevancy and suitability for the report.



*Students taking the survey*

# STUDY FINDINGS

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

1. During the lockdown period, I engaged ..... per day on physical exercises. n=724

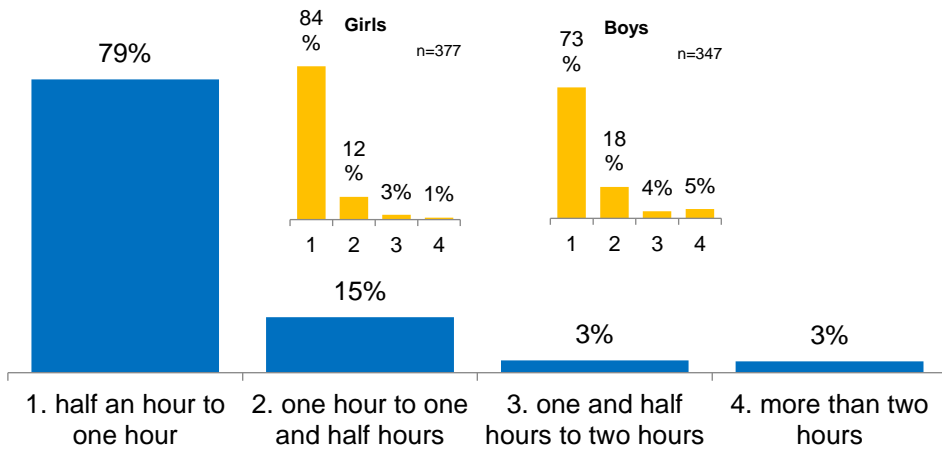


Figure 1

Ideally a teenager is recommended to get one hour or more of moderate to vigorous physical activities in a day to strengthen their muscles and bones<sup>3</sup>. This study reported that 79% of students engaged half an hour to one hour in

the physical activities which is less than what is required. This indicates that students led quite a sedentary life during the lockdown. The study also revealed that boys engaged a little more time in physical activities than the girls.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/children/index.htm>

## 2. During the lockdown period, my sleep time.....

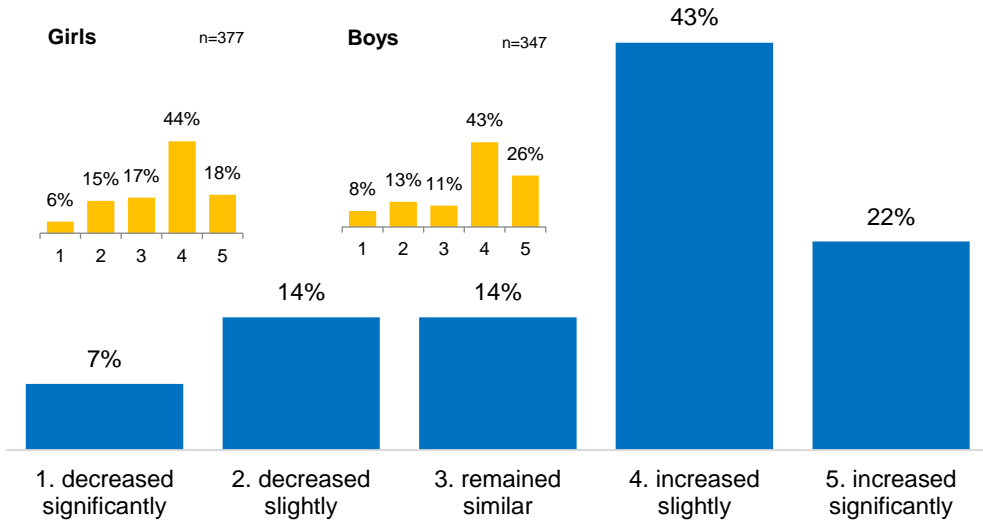


Figure 2

Research suggests that teenagers require between 8 and 10 hours of sleep per day. Not getting enough sleep leads to chronic sleep deprivation that affects the overall health of the children. Sleep deprivation can also affect their mental wellbeing as well as their academic performance. On the contrary, excessive sleep affects children's cognitive functions,

moods, and academic performances in the school.

Through this survey, 65% of students reported that their sleep time increased during the lockdown and 22% said their sleep time increased significantly. Although almost equal percentage of girls and boys reported increased sleep time, the disaggregated data reveals that boys slept more than the girls.

### 3. During the lockdown period, my body weight.....

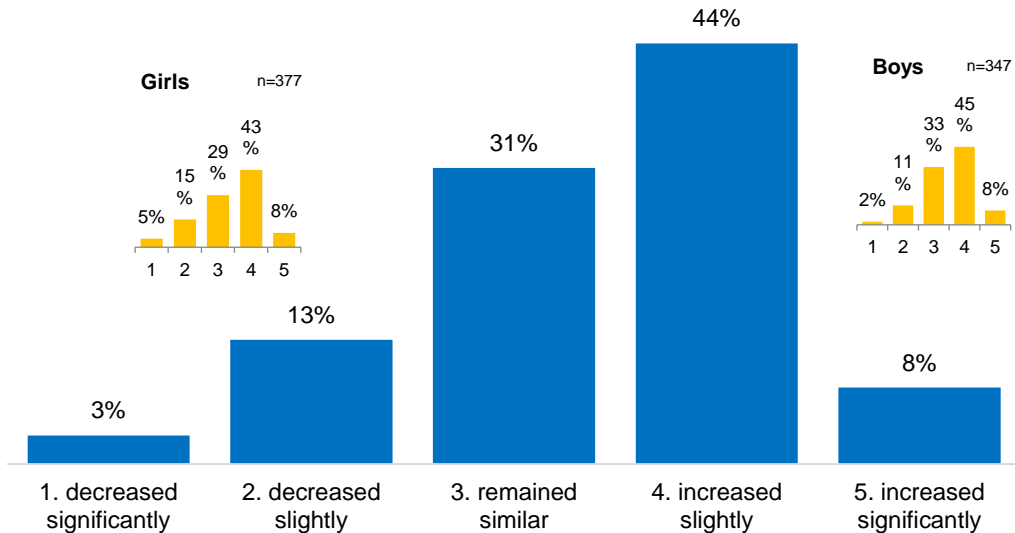


Figure 3

Having engaged less in physical activities during the lockdown, it is assumed that students experienced sedentary lives at home. Sedentary lifestyle refers to excessive sleeping, lying down, prolonged sitting, and watching screen-based entertainments. One of the effects of sedentary lifestyle in students is increased body weight leading to overweight and obesity. Students may also develop stress, anxiety,

depression, and other mental conditions.

This report informed that 52% of students have gained weight during the lockdown period. 8% percent reported significant increase in their weight during the same time. Almost equal percentage, 51% & 53% of girls and boys respectively experienced increased body weight. 16% reported weight loss.

#### 4. During the lockdown period, my consumption of junk food.....

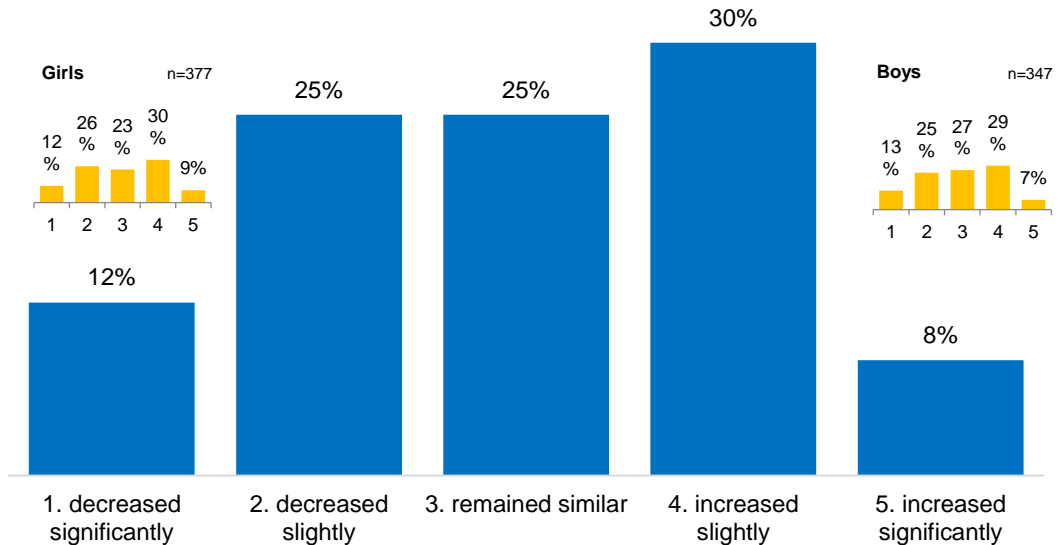


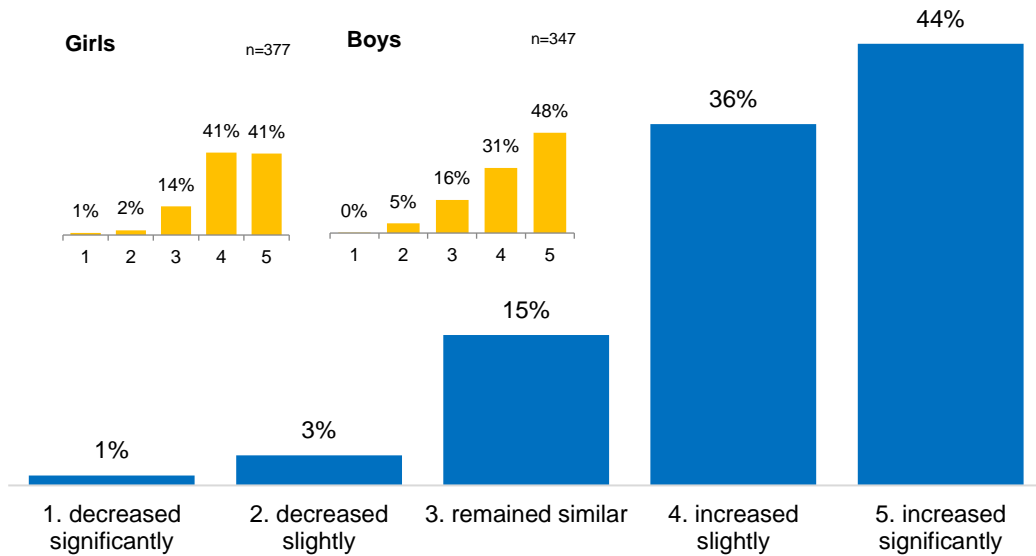
Figure 4

Junk or fast food are those items that provide high amount of calories without the needed vital nutrients. Junk foods are loaded with a high amount of saturated fats and other ingredients which are unhealthy and harmful for our health.

In the survey, 38% of the students reported that their consumption of

junk food increased, while 37% reported decrease in the consumption. However, 12% of them said that the consumption decreased significantly whereas only 8% said the consumption increased significantly. The disaggregated figure shows similar behavior between boys and girls.

**5. During the lockdown period, my screen time.....**



**Figure 5**

Since students were engaged in online learning mode, it was expected that their screen time would have increased. However, to have the benefit of doubt this question was included. Through this survey, 80% of students reported that their screen time had increased. Furthermore, 44% of them said that their screen time

increased significantly. 82% of girls and 79% of boys reported increased screen time.

Although it is difficult to ascertain the clinical effects of screen time on student health through this study, research indicate a wide range of effects due to too much screen time on students’ mental and physical health including eye problems.

## 6. During the lockdown period, my meal timing.....

n=724

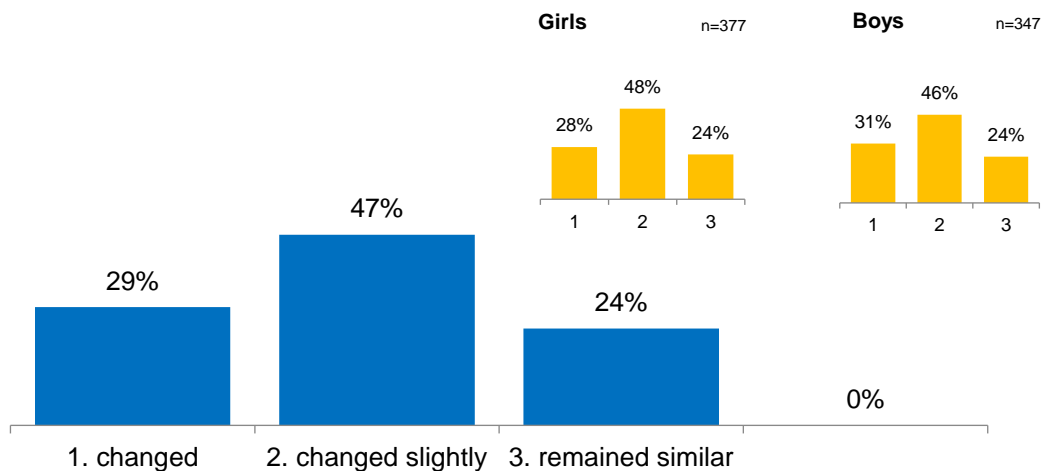


Figure 6

Irregular or poor meal timing could be detrimental to our health. As per Sheela Krishnaswamy, Sep 10, 2019, in Deccan Herald<sup>4</sup>, skipping meals can cause low energy levels, decrease in muscle mass, increase risk of weight gain & diabetes, increase irritability, and decrease ability to think straight. It also causes fluctuation in glucose levels which works against weight management.

76% of girls and 77% of boys reported that their meal timing had changed during the lockdown period. Overall, 76% of respondents said that their meal timing had changed, while 29% of them reported a significant change in their mealtime.

<sup>4</sup> An English language newspaper published from the Indian state of Karnataka.



## MENTAL HEALTH

### 1. How often did you feel depressed and sad during the lockdown?

n=724

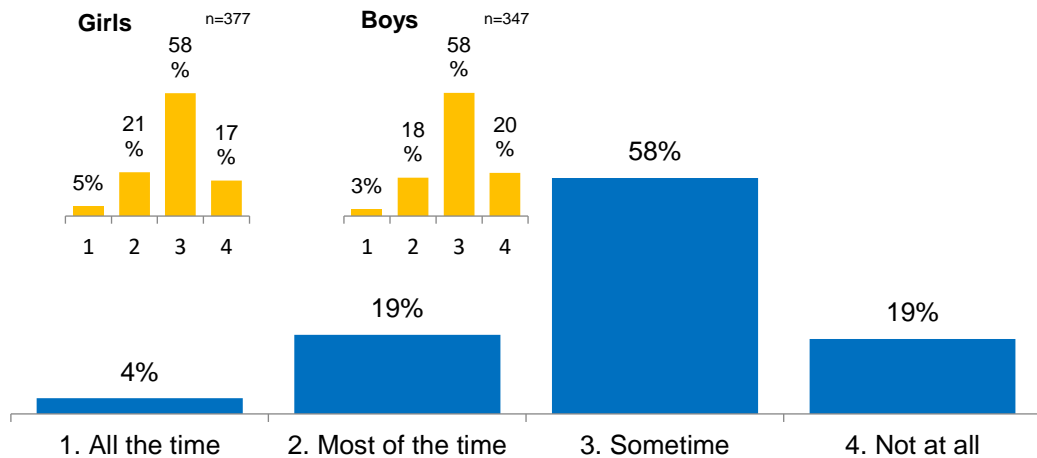


Figure 7

According to Dual Diagnosis.org, a web-based mental health and substance abuse disorder resources, Depression is a type of mental disorder. It has been linked to various other psychological and physical health problems, including learning difficulties. Anxiety and depression harm academic performance and promote underachievement. Students with high stress score lower on IQ and achievement tests. Some people with depression become irritable, irritated, nervous, and unable to

concentrate. Others discover that they have lost interest in hobbies, sports, and learning new skills.

The study revealed that 81% of students during the lockdown felt some kind of depression or sadness out of which 58% of them reported to have felt it sometimes. 19% of them reported to have felt depressed or sad most of the time while only 4% reported to have felt it all the time. A slightly higher percentage of girls reported to have felt depressed and sad compared to the boys.

## 2. How often did you feel calm & peaceful during the lockdown?

n=724

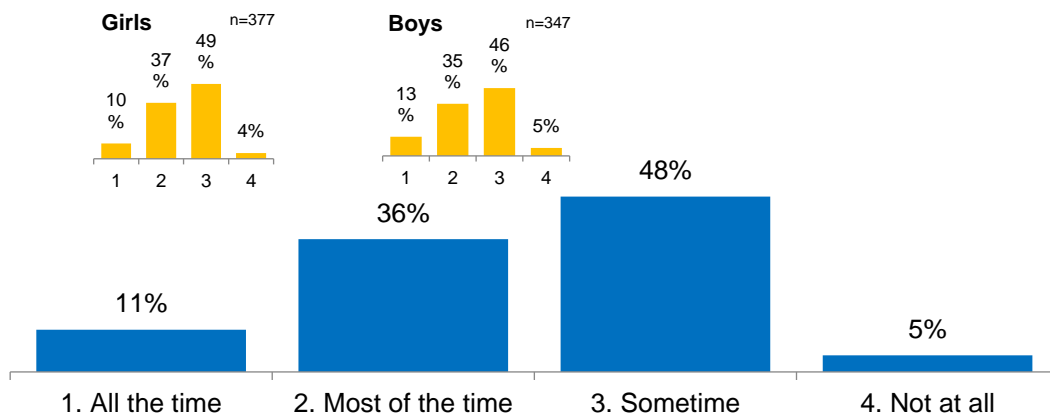
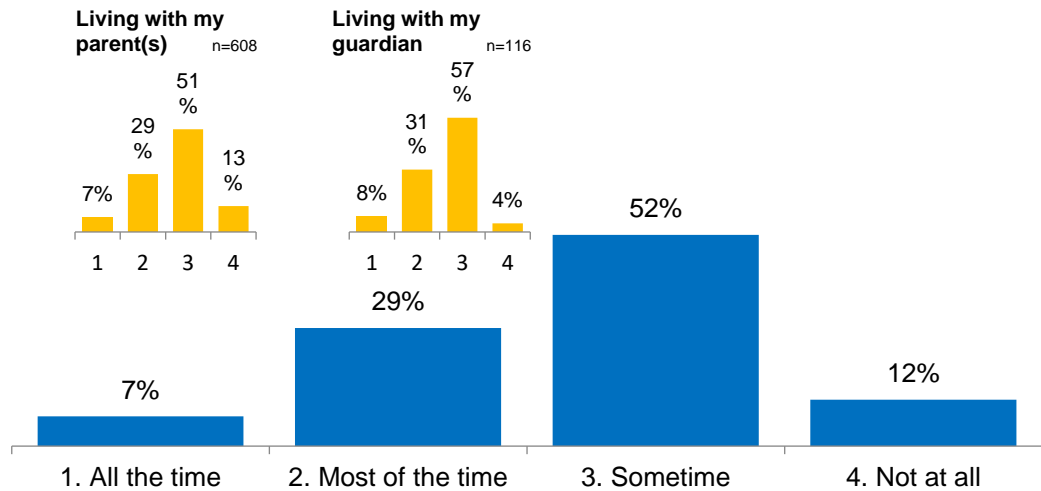


Figure 8

Elizabeth Paradiso, a teacher in New York, found that those students who can find inner calm are more focused learners, more empathetic community members and are better equipped to face challenges and negotiate conflicts. It is therefore, important that schools and homes create conducive environment for children to experience calm and peaceful minds.

When asked, “How often did you feel calm and peaceful during lockdown?”, 95% of the students reported that they felt calm and peaceful of which 48%, 36% and 11% felt it sometimes, most of the time and all the time respectively. Only 5% said that they did not feel calm and peaceful during the lockdown. Both boys and girls gave similar responses.

**3. How often did you feel stressed and tired during the lockdown?** n=724



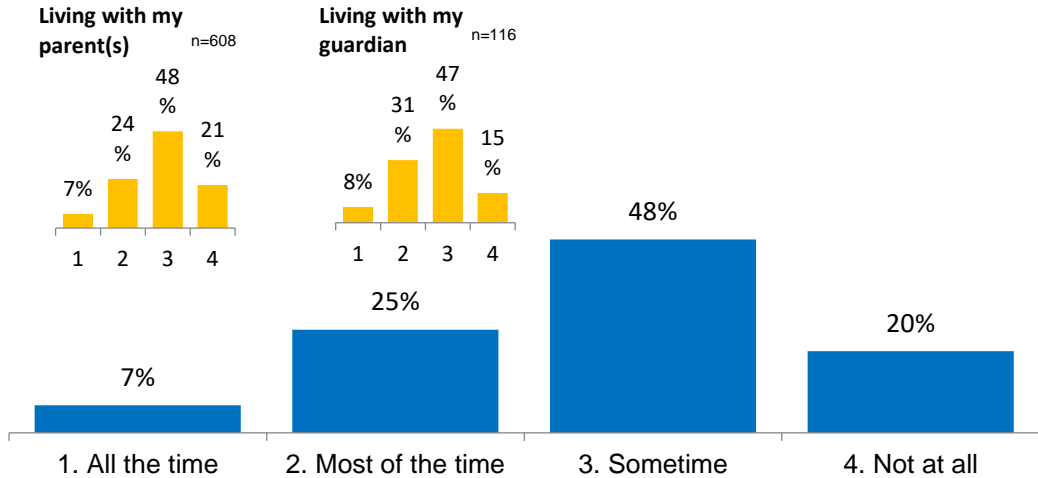
**Figure 9**

It was reported that 88% of students felt stressed and tired during the lockdown. However, only 7% of them said that they felt stressed and tired all the time. While 29% of the students felt it most of the time, 52% of them said

that they were stressed out only sometimes. The report revealed that higher percentage of students who lived with guardians felt stressed and tired compared to those who lived with their parents.

**4. How often did you feel insecure and worried during the lockdown?**

n=724



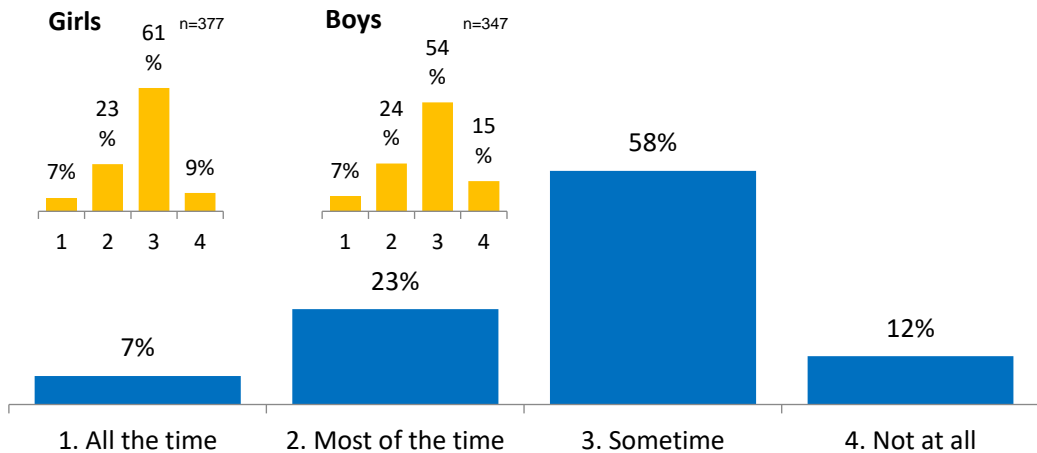
**Figure 10**

The above figure shows that 80% of students felt insecure and worried during the lockdown. 48% of them said that they felt insecure only sometimes, 25% reported to have felt most of the time, while 7% felt it

all the time. The disaggregated data revealed that a slightly higher percentage of students who stayed with guardians experienced such feelings compared to those who stayed with their parents.

**5. How often did you feel frustrated and angry during the lockdown?**

n=724



**Figure 11**

88% of students reported that they felt frustrated and angry during the lockdown. However, 58% of them reported that they felt frustrated and angry only sometime. 23% said that

they were frustrated and angry most of the time, only 7% reported to have felt frustrated and angry all the time.

## SOCIAL WELLBEING

### 1. I felt pleasant and happy at home during the lockdown.

n=724

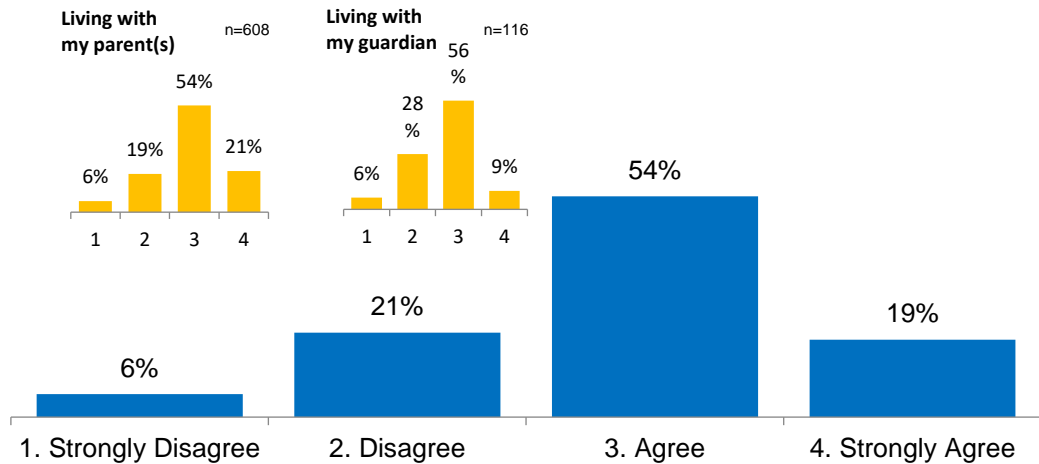


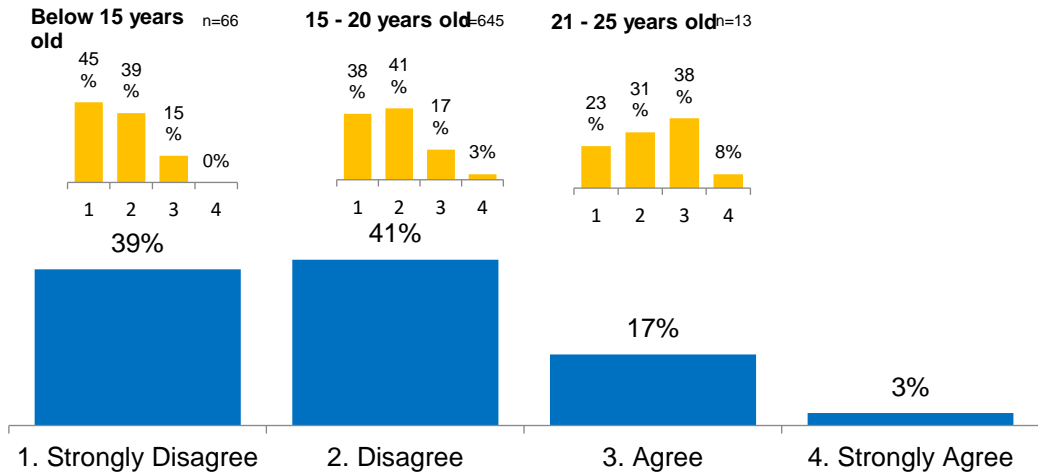
Figure 12

In the figure above, 73% of students agreed that they felt pleasant and happy at home during the lockdown of which 19% strongly agreed. 27% of the students said

that they did not feel pleasant and happy at home. The disaggregated data showed higher percentage of students living with their guardian did not feel pleasant and happy at home during the lockdown.

**2. I felt insecure at home during the lockdown.**

n=724



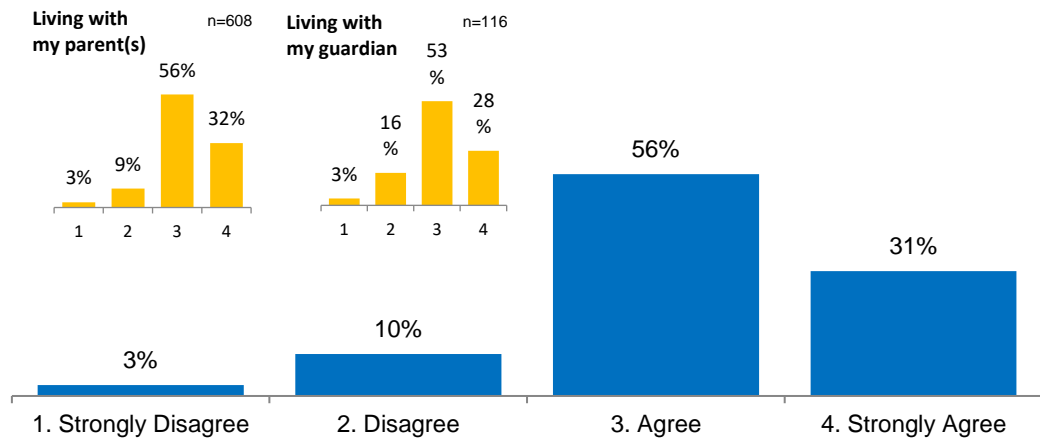
**Figure 13**

The study revealed that 80% of students felt secure at home during the lockdown. The remaining 20% reported that they did not feel secure at home.

From the disaggregated data, it can be concluded that students of lower age group felt secure at home compared to those in older age group.

**3. There were enough people with whom I felt strongly connected during the lockdown.**

n=724



**Figure 14**

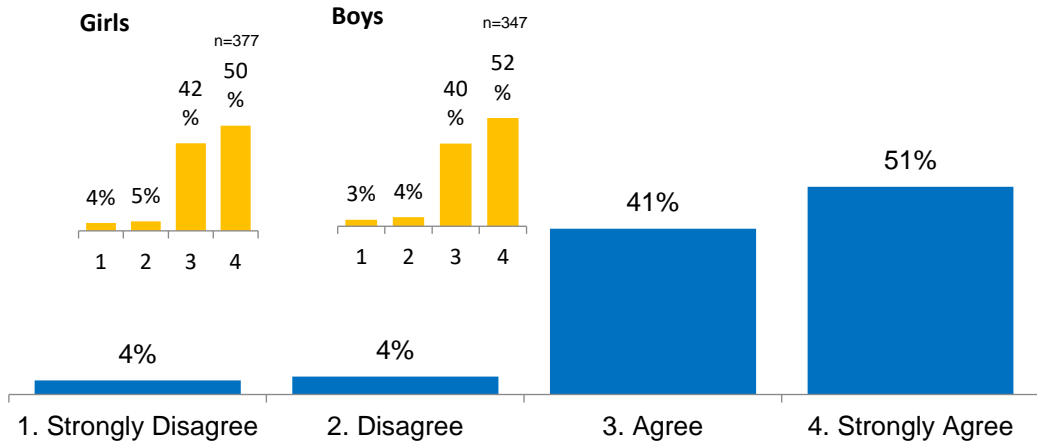
During the lockdown, as students stayed at home, they were physically cut off from their friends and teachers. In such times, students need to have reliable people with whom they can connect and receive support. In absence of reliable people to connect with, they could feel socially disconnected, lonely, worried, etc.

Through the survey, only 13% of the students reported that they did not have enough reliable people to connect with during the lockdown. 87% said that they had people to connect with. The disaggregated data showed that 19% of students living with their guardian and 12% living with their parents felt that they did not have enough people to connect with during the lockdown.



**4. I kept in touch with friends through social media (FB, WeChat, Telegram, etc.) during the lockdown.**

n=724



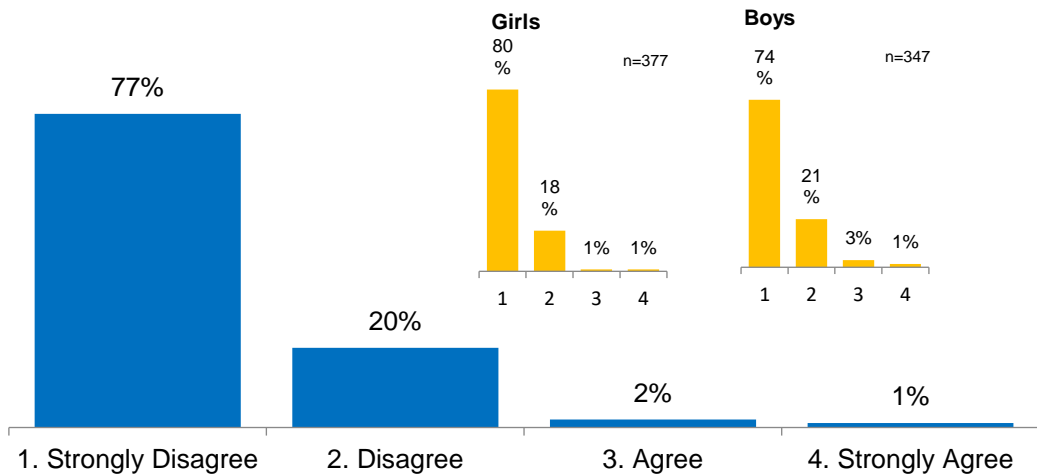
**Figure 15**

The study revealed that despite students being physically separated from their friends during the lockdown, they managed to keep in touch with their friends. 92% of the

students kept in touch with their friends using various social media platforms. However, 8% of the students reported that they could not keep in touch with their friends.

**5. I bullied or harassed others on social media during the lockdown.**

n=724



**Figure 16**

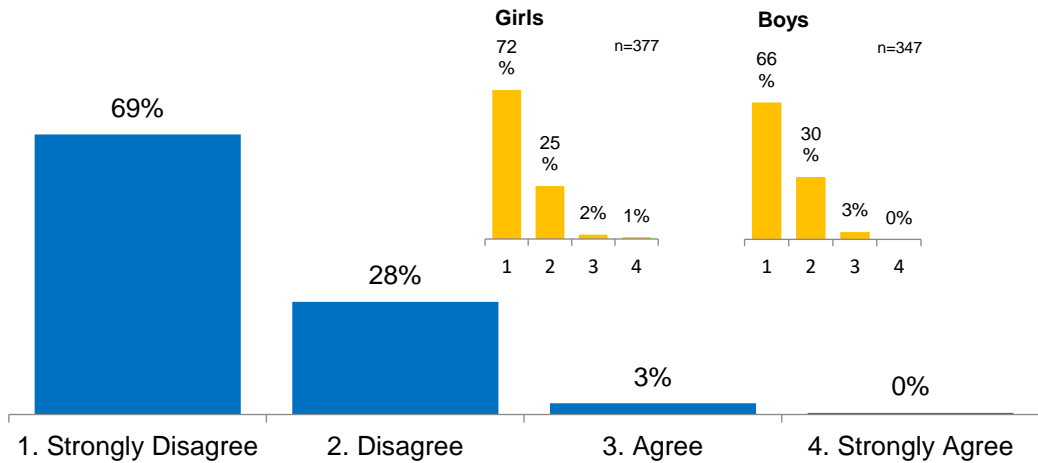
Increased and unstructured time spent online could expose children to potentially harmful and violent content as well as greater risk of cyberbullying<sup>5</sup>. This study, however, revealed that only 3% of students

engaged in online bullying during the lockdown. The disaggregated data showed that slightly higher percentage of boys engaged in online bullying compared to girls although the overall engagement is negligible.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/bhutan/press-releases/children-increased-online-risk-during-covid-19-pandemic>

**6. I was bullied or harassed by other people on social media during the lockdown.**

n=724



**Figure 17**

Since there were not many who engaged in online bullying, there were also not many who got bullied or harassed during the lockdown. 97% of students reported that they

were not bullied or harassed by others online. However, 3% of them reported that they were bullied or harassed.

**1. How satisfied were you with the support (in terms of studies) you received from teachers during the Lockdown?**

n=724

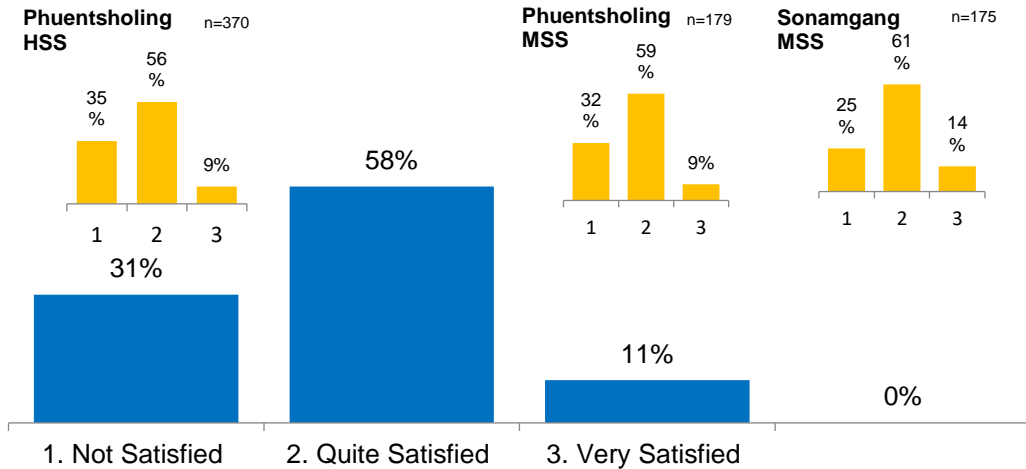


Figure 18

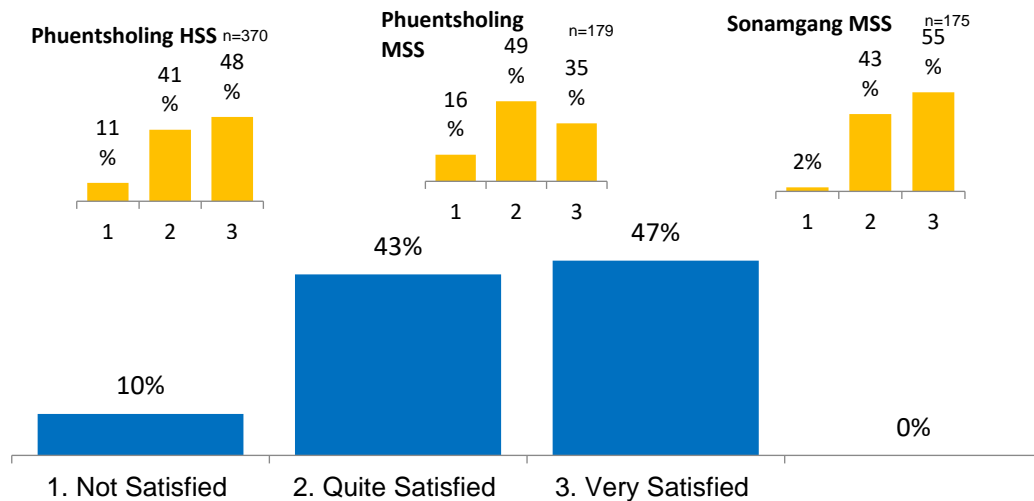
To provide uninterrupted education to students during the lockdown, teachers provided support to the students through various online medium. 69% of students reported that they were satisfied with the support they received from their

teachers. However, 31% expressed their dissatisfaction.

Higher percentage of students from Sonamgang MSS expressed their satisfaction compared to Phuentsholing MSS and Phuentsholing HSS.

**2. How satisfied were you with the support (in terms of studies) you received from your parents/guardian during the lockdown?**

n=724



**Figure 19**

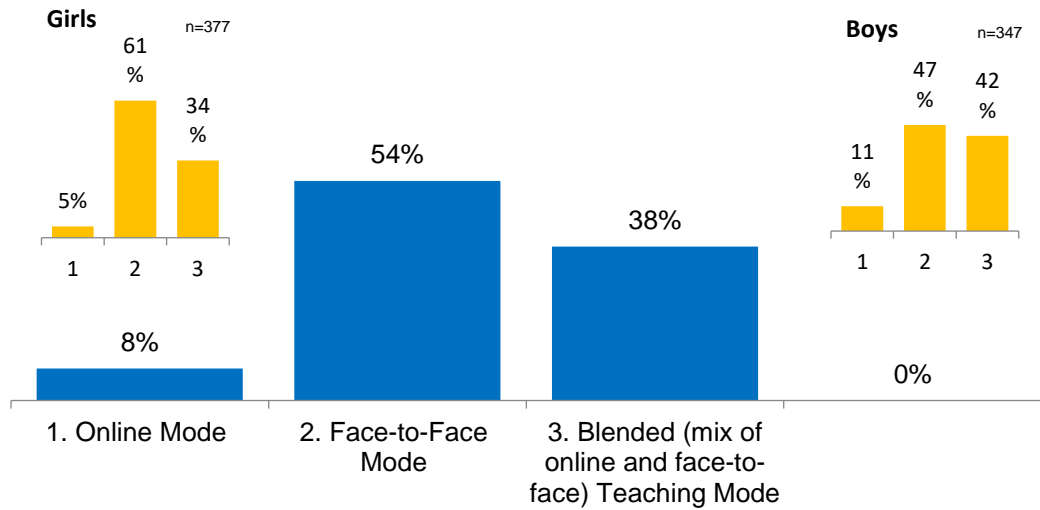
Like teachers, parents and guardians were equally responsible in providing support to their children in studies during the lockdown. On the scale of not satisfied, quite satisfied, and very satisfied; 90% of students reported that they were

satisfied with their parents' support of which 47% rated "very satisfied".

Higher percentage of students from Sonamgang MSS expressed their satisfaction with their parents' support followed by Phuentsholing HSS and Phuentsholing MSS.

**3. After the pandemic, I would prefer to continue studying through.....**

n=724



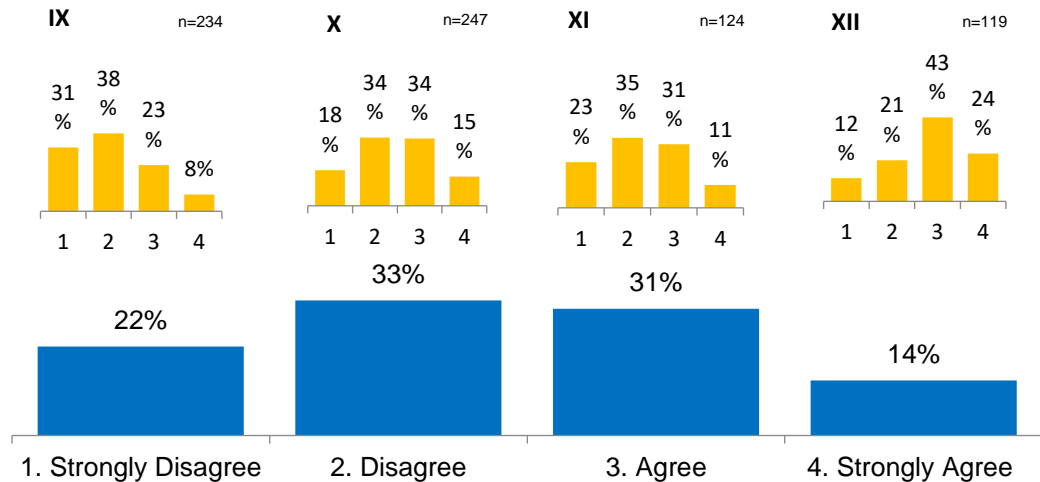
**Figure 20**

COVID-19 pandemic provided opportunities for teachers and students to use different ways of teaching and learning. The study found that after the pandemic, 54% and 38% of students would prefer face-to-face and blended mode of teaching respectively. 8% of

students, however, expressed that they would prefer only online teaching mode. While a greater number of girls prefer face-to-face mode of teaching, more boys expressed their preference for online mode.

**4. I felt like giving up my studies because of the frequent lockdowns.**

n=724



**Figure 21**

The study revealed that 45% of students felt like giving up studies because of frequent lockdowns. While the study did not look at why students felt like giving up their studies, it may be attributed to factors such as, poor and expensive internet connectivity, inadequate ICT skills and

knowledge, etc. faced during the lockdown<sup>6</sup>.

The data also pointed out that more students from classes X and XII felt like giving up their studies compared to students of classes IX and XI.

<sup>6</sup> Education in Emergency (EiE) Report, April 2021.

5. How do you perceive your academic learning during the lockdown?

n=724

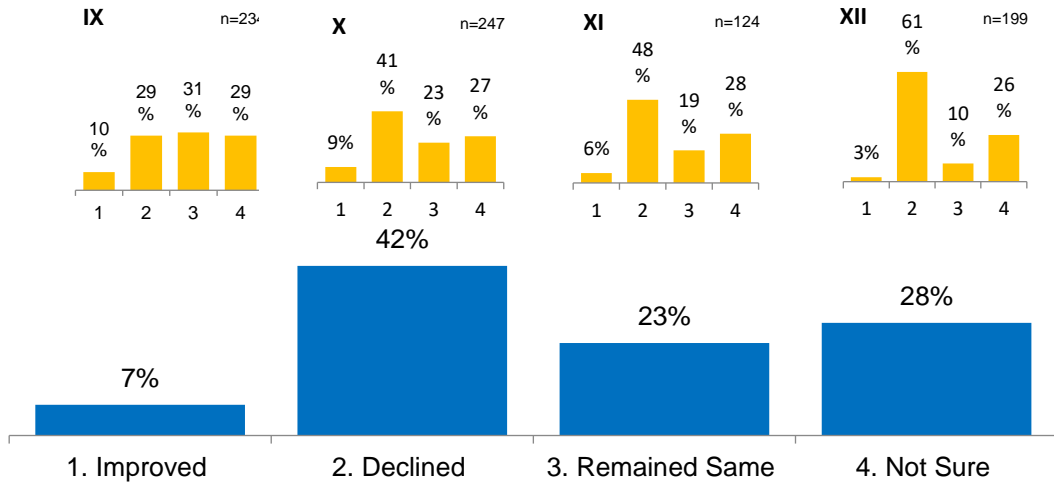


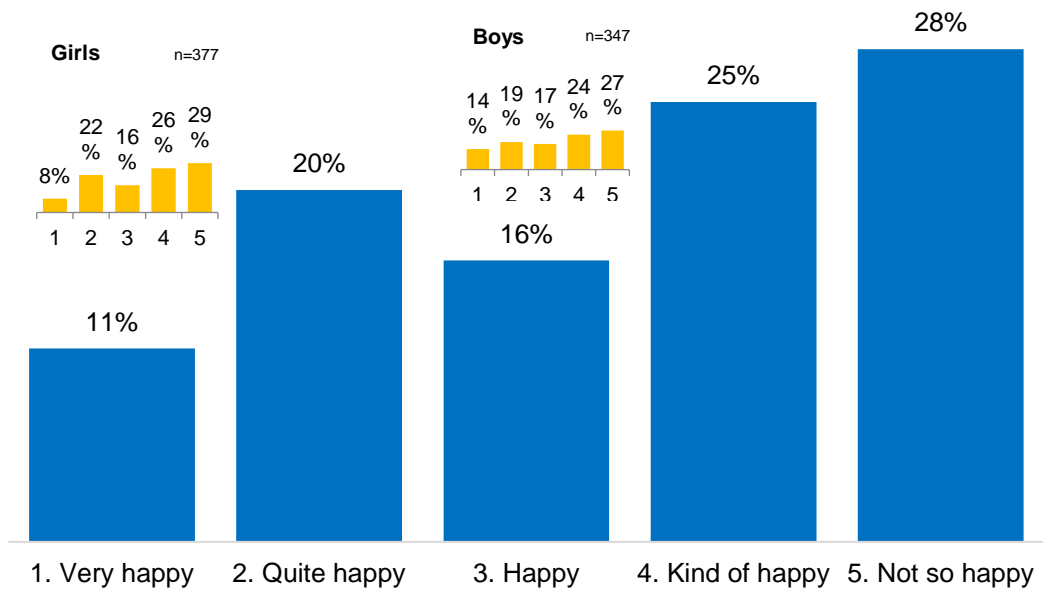
Figure 22

42% of the students reported that their learning declined during the lockdown. While 23% said that their learning remained the same, 28% were not sure if their learning improved or declined. Only 7%

reported that their learning improved. Students from higher classes perceived that their learning declined compared to the students of lower classes.



**Finally, how happy are you in your new school (Phuntshothang HSS)?**



**Figure 23**

Finally, when students were asked how happy they were in their new school, 72% of them reported to be happy. The remaining 28% expressed that

they were not so happy. In general, slightly more boys seemed to be happier than the girls.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Should similar lockdowns happen in future, parents/schools must:

### 1. Physical health

- i. ensure that their children are engaged adequately in physical activities at home/school
- ii. monitor screentime, sleep time, and body weight of children to maintain their physical health
- iii. ensure that children take their meals on time.

### 2. Mental health

- i. not pressurize children with too much assignments and household chores
- ii. spend quality time with children to support them academically and emotionally
- iii. create peaceful and conducive atmosphere at home to support learning for children
- iv. try to understand children's personal problems, how they are coping with their studies, and provide support if required.
- v. create awareness on counselling services and make it easily accessible to the children.

### 3. Social wellbeing

- i. make children aware of online bullying and harassment and provide scheduled timing for online engagement.

### 4. Education and schooling

- i. implement online teaching-learning mode from time to time even when the schools are not closed to acquaint children with online teaching mode
- ii. provide hands on training to children on use of technology in learning
- iii. provide customized support to children to make their online learning more effective and enriching.
- iv. use different strategies to make online teaching-learning more exciting and fun
- v. make counselling services accessible to children to support them with their academic challenge.

## STUDENT FEEDBACK & OPINION

### To the Ministry of Education

1. Relocating schools to low-risk area was a good idea.
2. Allow students to choose schools with established boarding facilities.
3. Let students choose to study as boarders or day-scholars.
4. Arrange schools in Phuentsholing to continue in containment with boarding facility.
5. Encourage students to continue their studies in schools in their hometown.
6. Relocate only those students appearing board examinations.
7. Educate parents on how to support their children during the lockdown.
8. Blended teaching should continue.
9. Should provide online materials (data, smart phones, voucher, etc.).
10. MoE should monitor students and provide facilities.

“There's no other way the government can do way more than what they have done this year but if I share my opinion, if government could have provided us with free wifi service, one laptop each to students who are studying online, if they could have provided us the necessary equipment that are needed instead of spending money on constructing new buildings in a new place where we are struggling to adjust around. And the only source through which we could study more effectively is taken away from us, our phones. We are really very struggling without our phone.”

*Deki (name changed)*

“If the pandemic continues over the next few years, I think the ministry of education should try to decrease the syllabus as much as possible and keep only the necessary knowledge we would need in life since the total concepts we have to study are too much of burden in a situation like this. And the ministry should put up more of childcare programs so that there are no victims of depression.”

*Karma (name changed)*

“I think there is no choice but to transfer the students to another Dzongkhag to study, but I would really love if our schools re-open. If we continue to study in this way, I don't think I can do well in my academic. If our previous schools reopen than I think if we could have less students in hostel which would be much more conformable for us to study. This year, because of too many students in the hostel, it is giving me a headache and suffocation. The present school lack resources.”

*Sonam (name changed)*

## To the present school (Phuentshothang HSS, Punakha)

1. Allow at least a little amount of junk food.
2. Hostel rules are strict and stressful. Need to relax the rules.
3. Teachers should treat boys and girls equally. For e.g., girls are not allowed to occupy areas like academic block during leisure time.
4. Organize recreational activities like, games, sports, cultural, and athletics.
5. Allow students to keep their phones.
6. School should have professional cooks.
7. School should create a system to get feedback from students for improvement.
8. Teachers should communicate mindfully with students especially when they (teachers) are disappointed.
9. It is difficult for students to adjust in a boarding since many of them are in boarding school for the first time.
10. Many students find it difficult to adjust in boarding school since it's their first experience. So, school should try their best to keep students happy whether it's for studies or other activities.

“Schools should not put too much pressure on students because we never know what every student is going through. Some teachers are very harsh and in a situation like this, everyone is not mentally stable. They keep reminding us to be thankful. Yes, we are thankful, but it feels like more of a prison since the rules are very strict. They differentiate between genders; our juniors will grow with such thoughts in their mind. It wasn't our choice to go to boarding school so school should give much more freedom.”

*Gaki (name changed)*

“The school should make a group on telegram and ask students join the group from each class and get feedback from their friends and then discuss it in the group without teachers. Create another group with the teachers so that they can relay the problems and clear things for both the students and teachers.”

*Dorji (name changed)*

## To schools in general

1. Schools should make sure that teachers give enough time for students to complete their assignments.
2. Schools should make sure that students are doing their work with originality.
3. Teachers should not give too much assignments

(Some teachers give a truck load of brain cracking homework with videos of hours long and expect us to finish the assignments in 2 hours).

4. Schools should help students practice how to study online using technology.
5. Teachers could use various ways to teach online instead of sending only power point presentations.
6. Schools should conduct meeting with parents and

ask for study reports of their children to find out how truly are they studying.

7. If the pandemic continues, school should use mixture of online and contact teaching following COVID-19 protocols strictly.
8. Schools should give financial and emotional support to some students as they may feel like dropping out due to fear of failing and not qualifying for college (if they are in class XII).

“Perform more online practical works, more education related videos and make student send voice records, videos, and written homework to make sure students are doing their work with originality. Conduct surprise tests to see if students are revising. Send research-based projects and assignments. Ask parents for the students’ study reports to see how true they are studying. Conduct meetings with parents.”

*Tenzin (name changed)*

## To parents

Parents should:

- i. spend quality time with their children.
- ii. support their children emotionally and physically.
- iii. cooperate with the teachers to help students learn.
- iv. not fight, drink, and argue as it affects the children mentally.
- v. not put on all the household responsibilities to their children.
- vi. maintain peace and good atmosphere at home for proper learning.
- vii. not pressurize their children to study during lockdown.

“Support them mentally and physically because when a child does something that they don't understand alone, they feel anxiety and pressure. From my experience I had gone through domestic problems. My parents were always arguing. So, I confronted them, and they stopped. But there are many children who are not confident and can't talk to their parents. So, they choose the wrong route of harming themselves.”

*Sangay (name changed)*

## LIMITATIONS

Although the study targeted to survey the entire students of secondary classes who experienced prolonged lockdown, a total of 164 out of 888 students<sup>7</sup> could not take part in the survey due to various reasons. In addition, the study could not cover students of classes PP-VIII as they were still at Phuentsholing. This group of students could not participate in the

survey due to COVID-19 protocols and challenges in taking the survey online.

The survey was administered almost six weeks after opening of the school at the new location in Punakha. Therefore, the assumption would be that some students would have forgotten their lockdown experiences over time.

## ANNEXURE

### 1. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Section I (Personal Information)

1. What is your school's name?
2. What class are you in?
3. What is your age?
4. What is your gender?
  - Male
  - Female
  - Others
5. During the lockdown period, I was living with.....
  - my parent(s)
  - my guardian (grandparents; uncle; aunt; brother; sister; friend)
6. What is your parent's/guardian's occupation?
  - Civil servant
  - Private employee
  - Corporate employee
  - Armed force personnel
  - Business person

#### Section II (Physical Health)

1. During the lockdown period, I engaged ..... per day on physical exercises.
  - half an hour **to** one hour
  - one hour **to** one and half hours
  - one and half hours **to** two hours
  - more than two hours
2. During the lockdown period, my sleep time.....
  - decreased significantly

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<sup>7</sup> Kuensel, Saturday, July 31 2021

- decreased slightly
  - remained similar
  - increased slightly
  - increased significantly
3. During the lockdown period, my body weight.....
    - decreased significantly
    - decreased slightly
    - remained similar
    - increased slightly
    - increased significantly
  4. During the lockdown period, my consumption of junk food.....
    - decreased significantly
    - decreased slightly
    - remained similar
    - increased slightly
    - increased significantly
  5. During the lockdown period, my screen time.....
    - decreased significantly
    - decreased slightly
    - remained similar
    - increased slightly
    - increased significantly
  6. During the lockdown period, my meal timing.....
    - changed significantly
    - changed slightly
    - remained similar

### Section III (Mental Health)

1. How often did you feel depressed and sad during the lockdown?
  - All the time
  - Most of the time
  - Sometime
  - Not at all
2. How often did you feel calm & peaceful during the lockdown?
  - All the time
  - Most of the time
  - Sometime
  - Not at all
3. How often did you feel stressed and tired during the lockdown?
  - All the time
  - Most of the time
  - Sometime
  - Not at all
4. How often did you feel insecure and worried during the lockdown?
  - All the time

- Most of the time
  - Sometime
  - Not at all
5. How often did you feel frustrated and angry during the lockdown?
- All the time
  - Most of the time
  - Sometime
  - Not at all

#### **Section IV (Social Well-being)**

1. I felt pleasant and happy at home during the lockdown.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
2. I felt insecure at home during the lockdown.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
3. There were enough people with whom I felt strongly connected during the lockdown.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
4. I kept in touch with friends through social media (FB, WeChat, Telegram, etc.) during the lockdown.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
5. I bullied or harassed others on social media during the lockdown.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
6. I was bullied or harassed by other people on social media during the lockdown.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree

#### **Section V (Education & Schooling)**

1. How satisfied were you with the support (in terms of studies) you received from teachers during the Lockdown?
  - Not Satisfied
  - Quite Satisfied
  - Very Satisfied



2. How satisfied were you with the support (in terms of studies) you received from your parents/guardian during the lockdown?
  - Not Satisfied
  - Quite Satisfied
  - Very Satisfied
3. After the pandemic, I would prefer to continue studying through.....
  - Online Mode
  - Face-to-Face Mode
  - Blended (mix of online and face-to-face) Teaching Mode
4. I felt like giving up my studies because of the frequent lockdowns.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
5. How do you perceive your academic learning during the lockdown?
  - Improved
  - Declined
  - Remained Same
  - Not Sure

**Section VI (Support Required)**

1. If the pandemic continues over the next few years, what should the **Ministry of Education** do to help students cope with such situations?
2. If the pandemic continues over the next few years, what should the **schools** do to help students cope with such situations?
3. If the pandemic continues over the next few years, what should the **parents** do to help students cope with such situations?

Finally, how happy are you in your new school (Phuentshothang HSS)?

- Very happy
- Happy
- Quite happy
- Kind of happy
- Not so happy

.....End.....

## 2. LETTER TO DASHO DZONGDAG, PUNAKHA



དཔལ་ལྷན་འབྲུག་གཞུང་། ཤེས་རིག་ལྷན་ཁག།

Royal Government of Bhutan  
Ministry of Education  
Department of School Education  
EDUCATION MONITORING DIVISION



--Rethinking Education--

Ref. No. MoE/EMD(12)/2021/603

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Dasho Dzongda  
Dzongkhag Administration  
Punakha

### Support for Data Collection

Respected Dasho,

The heightened risk of COVID-19 spread along the Southern borders of the nation led to frequent lockdown of these areas leading to prolonged closure of schools. Over 4,600 students from classes Pre-Primary till XII studying in these schools were affected by the closure of schools.

As the schools closed down and students remained under lockdown for over four months, it is assumed that these students were badly affected by the continued lockdown. To understand the effects of the lockdown on these students, Education Monitoring Division (EMD) under Department of School Education is carrying out a study on the students of classes IX to XII of the Phuentsholing Thromde who are now relocated to Punakha.

The study will be led by two principal investigators, Thinley Dorji and Karma Kuenphen (EMOs) who will visit the school on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2021 to collect the data for the study. Therefore, the Division requests Dasho to kindly direct the Dzongkhag Education sector and the school authorities for necessary support to the officials.

Thanking you for your continued support.

Yours Sincerely

(Karma Galay)  
Director General  
Department of School Education, MoE

Copy to:

1. Chief DEO, Dzongkhag Administration, Punakha for necessary support
2. Principal, Phuntshothang HSS, Punakha for necessary support
3. Chief Finance Officer, MoE for kind information

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