The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Children's Education: A Study of Minority Secondary Schools in Delhi

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Abstract

The global COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected various sectors, including the economy, healthcare systems, and education. As a result of the outbreak, educational institutions worldwide, including schools, early childhood education centres and universities, were compelled to close. This situation has underscored the challenge of balancing two fundamental rights during a global crisis: the right to public health and education, both enshrined in the Constitution of India. Despite constitutional guarantees, the widespread closure of schools has deprived children nationwide of their right to education. This paper examines the repercussions of school closures and community lockdowns on children's learning, well-being, and protection. Data for this study were collected from a representative sample of students, teachers and principals in secondary minority schools in Delhi. We utilised convenience sampling to select four schools and included students from grades 8 to 12 in the data collection process. One hundred students were randomly selected, with five students from each class. In addition to gathering information from students, we conducted interviews with teachers and school authorities to gather their insights regarding the effect of school closures on student learning, the effects on their teaching methodologies, and the measures implemented to address these challenges.

Keywords: COVID-19, Education, Children, Health, Minority Schools, Lockdown

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions to educational systems worldwide, disproportionately affecting the

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most vulnerable populations. This disruption has exacerbated existing inequalities and intensified the education crisis, particularly for children in less developed nations. According to UNESCO, over 888 million children globally have continued to experience interruptions in their education due to full and partial school closures. School closures have severe implications for children's learning and overall well-being. Schools serve essential functions beyond education, including socialisation, providing nutritious meals, offering psycho-social support, and acting as a form of social protection for economically disadvantaged families. The most vulnerable children, particularly those lacking access to remote learning, face considerable risks of never returning to their education and may be more likely to encounter situations such as child marriage or exploitation through child labor.[1] In India, approximately 250 million children were adversely affected by school closures resulting from early lockdown measures imposed by the government in response to the pandemic. India has recorded the second-longest school closures related to COVID-19 globally, surpassed only by Uganda. A United Nations report indicates that schools remained closed for an estimated 82 weeks, with only intermittent classes available.[2] In the wake of these closures, numerous children from marginalised backgrounds were compelled to abandon their education, with some resorting to employment to assist families facing pandemic-induced fatalities and financial hardships. The extended closure of schools has had profound

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[1]   UNICEF, 10 March 2021, *available at*: https://www.unicef.org/india/press-releases/covid-19-schools-more-168-million-children-globally-have-been-completely-closed (last visited on December 17, 2024).

[2] Zubeda Hamid, S. Poorvaja, "India's prolonged school closure ha set Children back by year academically and taken a toll on their well being emotionally", The Hindu, 19 February 2023*, available at*: https://www.thehindu.com/education/indias-prolonged-school-closure-has-set-children-back-by-years-academically-and-taken-a-toll-on-their-wellbeing-emotionally/article65048342.ece (last visited on December 17, 2024).

consequences, impeding not only academic progress but also children's social development and well-being. Furthermore, it has posed risks to their mental and physical health, as well as their safety. National studies have documented various instances of distress and adverse effects, including significant learning setbacks that have delayed the academic progress of millions of students by months, if not years.

There has been a marked increase in behavioural issues among children, characterised by rising levels of anxiety and depression. This phenomenon can be attributed to the ongoing stress and uncertainty experienced over the past two years. The pandemic has intensified pre-existing conditions, particularly among children who already exhibit behavioural challenges. The isolation mandated by lockdown measures and the potentially stressful circumstances within many households has significantly contributed to this rise. Concerns have also emerged regarding a decline in creativity, an increased dependency on electronic devices, and a corresponding reduction in physical activity, all of which have been exacerbated by the necessity of remaining indoors. The prevalence of smartphone addiction has become a pressing concern, affecting a substantial number of children.

Furthermore, children from less privileged backgrounds have faced limitations in access to digital devices and the internet, which has severely obstructed their ability to engage in educational activities. According to UNICEF, only one in four children has access to a digital device and internet connectivity, further complicating an already challenging situation. Compounding these issues is automatically promoting students to higher grades, which fails to address existing learning gaps adequately. This method only widens disparities as the academic demands of higher grades increase. Consequently, many children are at risk of falling further behind in their academic pursuits and are increasingly likely to discontinue their education.[3]

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[3] Quartz India, *available at:* https://qz.com/india/2055619/indias-schoolchildren-paid-a-heavy-price-for-lockdowns (last visited on December 17, 2024).

Education is recognised as a fundamental human right under Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Articles 13 and 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, with an obligation for progressive realisation. Various national and international human rights instruments acknowledge the right to education and delineate its specific dimensions. These international legal frameworks apply to India, provided they do not contradict domestic legislation, and domestic laws are often interpreted in alignment with international obligations. In landmark cases such as *Mohini Jain* v. *State of Karnataka*[4] and *Unni Krishna* v. *State of Andhra Pradesh*[5], the Supreme Court of India has affirmed that the right to education is a fundamental right and an intrinsic component of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. The Court upheld this ruling in the case of *J.P. Unnikrishna* v. *State of Andhra Pradesh*[6], asserting that free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of six and fourteen constitutes a fundamental right explicitly outlined in Article 21A of the Indian Constitution. In the case of *State of Tamil Nadu* v. *K. Shyam Sunder*[7], the Supreme Court interpreted Article 21A in conjunction with Articles 14 and 15 of the Indian Constitution. It confirmed that the right to education encompasses the right to quality education, free from discrimination based on social, economic, or cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, the Indian Constitution recognises the rights of linguistic and religious minorities under Article 30(1), allowing these groups to establish and administer their educational institutions. However, due to inadequate funding and regulation by the state, minority educational institutions in India often exhibit significant disparities in quality and resources.

According to the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), numerous children enrolled in minority educational institutions in India are deprived of the advantages available to their

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[4] AIR 1992 SC 666.

[5] AIR 1993 SC 643.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Civil Appeal nos. 6015-6025/2011.

peers. This situation arises primarily from the exemptions that minority institutes receive from state regulations, coupled with insufficient state funding. Such exemptions have produced harmful consequences; for example, certain schools, particularly Christian missionary institutions, have faced allegations of selective admissions practices that favour a specific socio-economic class while excluding underprivileged students. The Commission characterises these environments as 'cocoons populated by elites.' Conversely, Muslim minority educational institutions, which are predominantly underfunded, have been described as 'ghettos of underprivileged students languishing in backwardness'.[8]

The present study seeks to evaluate whether the closure of minority educational institutions due to the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the existing disparities among these entities. Specifically, the research aims to investigate the effects of the transition from traditional classroom settings to digital modes of education on students attending Muslim minority institutes. This examination is framed within the context that these minority institutions primarily serve children from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, operating without considerable government funding or oversight.

2. Objectives

a) To analyse the impact of school closures and lockdowns on children's learning, well-being, and safety.
b) To gather insights from school administrators and educators on how closures affect student learning, teaching methods, and strategies to address these challenges.

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[8] Esha Roy, "Explained: Why NCPCR has recommended minority schools be brought under RTE", *THE Indian EXPRESS,* 19 Febuary, 2023, *available at: https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/minority-schools-ncpcr-rte-7449456/*last visited at 25th April, 2023.

3. Research Methodology

The study was conducted utilising primary data sourced from minority secondary schools in Delhi. The city contains a total of 129 minority schools, among which nine are designated as Muslim minority schools. For the study, four schools were selected based on convenience sampling. The study focused on students in grades 8 to 12, with five students chosen from each grade within each school, culminating in a total of 25 students per school and 100 respondents overall. A structured questionnaire comprising[9] both open-ended and closed-ended questions was employed to assess the perceptions of the students. In addition, to obtain insights from educational staff, five teachers and one principal from each school were also interviewed.

4. Data Interpretation and Analysis
4.1 Respondents' demographic profile

Out of total respondents, 50% are males and 50% are females. From each school, the no. of students, teachers, and principals questioned were 25, 5, and 1, respectively (Table 1 & 2).

Table 1: Frequency distribution of Male and Female

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	50	50
Female	50	50
Total	100	100

Table 2: No of Students, Teachers, and Principal from each School

School	No of Students	No of Teachers	No of principals
1	25	5	1
2	25	5	1
3	25	5	1
4	25	5	1
Total	100	20	4

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[9] Gordon, M. and Burgess, M. (2020), The Hidden Impact of COVID-19 on Children's Education and Learning. London, Save the Children International.The researcher has framed the questionnaire on the basis of this cited survey conducted by UNESCO in 2020.

4.2 How many times did you attend classes within a week before the closure of schools due to Covid-19?

The question asked was open-ended, but it was seen that the majority of students, almost 90%, attended six classes a week. The other 10% attended 5 or 4 classes within a week before the closure of schools due to COVID-19.

4.3 How many times did you attend the classes within a week during the school closure period?

During the closure period, the students attended online classes. Out of the total respondents, 52% attended classes four times within a week, 24% attended three times, 12% attended five times, 8% attended six times, and 4% never attended any class.

4.4 What was the duration of class per subject before the closure of schools?

Out of the total, 100% of the respondents had a 45-minute class before the closure period.

4.5 What was the duration of class per subject during the school closure period?

Out of the total respondents, 80% had a class of 30 minutes, and 20% had a class of 20 minutes.

4.6 What was the mode of teaching during the Covid-19?

100% of the respondents have a remote mode of teaching during the Covid-19.

4.7 Frequency of students' access to different educational resources at home for learning.

Out of the total respondents, 80% had no access to a computer, and 10% had access to a computer, but it either worked well most of the time or did not work. 80% of the respondents had access to mobile phones that worked well all the time, and 20% they worked well most of the time. 100% of the respondents had no access to a tablet. 80% of the respondents had internet connections that worked well most of the time, and 20% had connections that either worked well all the time or did not work well. 80% of the respondents have revealed that they always have a place to study, and 20% of students could sometimes find any place to study. The majority of the respondents revealed that they always had a lack of some other

things needed to complete school work. 40% had a lack of things most of the time or sometimes, and 10% never felt a lack of necessary things needed to complete their homework (Table 3).

Table 3: Access to resources

Resources	Yes			No
	Consistently Performed well	**Effective for most part**	**But it was not effective**	
Computer	0	5	5	80
Smartphone	80	20	0	0
Tablet	0	0	0	100
Internet Connection	10	80	10	0
	Never	**Sometimes**	**Most of the time**	**Always**
Place to study	0	20	0	80
Lack of things needed to complete school work	10	20	20	50

4.8 Resources provided to students by the school for remote learning.

Respondents were asked if school authorities provided them with internet access, software programmes and a virtual learning environment, to which the majority responded negatively. 80% of the respondents said that they were provided access to the learning material, and 20% did not receive any material from the school during COVID-19 (Table 4).

Table 4: Resources provided by the school

Resources	Yes	No
Access to lessons and learning material	80	20
Internet Access	0	100
Software or Programmes	0	100
Virtual Learning Environment	0	100

4.9 The frequency with which students reported the effects of the COVID-19 disruption on various elements of their schoolwork.

All respondents reported a decline in their motivation to complete schoolwork, their ability to manage academic assignments, their capacity to schedule the completion of educational tasks, the quality of their submitted work, and their confidence in finishing school assignments during the period of school closures.

4.10 Frequency of the Students reporting on Agreeability/ Disagreement to the following statements.

All respondents disagreed with the statement that they learned as much as they did before the COVID-19 disruption or made more progress in some subjects during that time. Every respondent felt it became hard to use their teachers' feedback to improve their work, and they also struggled to understand how well they were improving.

Table 5: Frequency of students reporting on Agreeability/disagreement

Statements	Agree	Disagree
I learned as much as I did before the COVID-19 disruption.	0	100
I made more progress in some subjects compared to before the COVID-19 disruption.	0	100
I found it harder to use my teachers' feedback to improve my work	100	0
I struggled to understand how well I was improving.	100	0

4.11 Frequency of the students reporting on communication with the teachers during the Covid-19

Out of the total respondents, 100% communicated with the teachers through video conferencing and no other method was used for communication.

4.12 Frequency with which students communicated with their teachers during the disruption period?

Out of the total respondents, 80% of the students communicated with their teachers sometimes, and 20% communicated rarely.

Table 6: Students frequency of Communication with teachers

Duration	Frequency	Duration	Frequency
Often	0	Rarely	20
Sometimes	80	Never	0

4.13 Mode of receiving materials or information for the lessons during the COVID-19 disruption period.

Out of the total respondents, 90% received material or information for the lessons through email or other online methods, e.g., WhatsApp, etc., and 10% received it through a school-based online platform.

Table 7: Mode of receiving material/information

Mode of Receiving material/information	Frequency
Delivery (through post, school staff or community member)	0
Collection directly from school	0
Through a school based online platform	10
Email or other online methods (WhatsApp etc.)	90

4.14 The frequency at which students receive materials and information through various modes of communication.

Out of the total respondents, 90% sometimes received material/information through various forms of communication, and 10% rarely received any information.

Table 8: Frequency with which students received material/ information

Duration	Frequency	Duration	Frequency
Often	0	Rarely	10
Sometimes	90	Never	0

4.15 The frequency of students who have received various forms of feedback on their academic work from teachers.

Of the total respondents, 100% reported not receiving written feedback on their schoolwork from teachers, such as scores or grades. Additionally, 90% indicated they had not received verbal feedback, while only 10% received spoken feedback for some assignments.

Table 9: Feedback on schoolwork from teachers

Statements	Never	For some of my schoolwork	For most of my School work	For all or almost all of my schoolwork
Spoken	90	10	0	0
Written	100	0	0	0
Scores/ Grades	100	0	0	0
Recorded	100	0	0	0

4.16 Frequency with which students received help from anyone with the schoolwork at home.

Out of the total respondents, 95% sometimes received any help from anyone with their schoolwork at home, and 5% rarely sometimes received any help from anyone.

Table 10: Frequency of Home Schoolwork Assistance

Duration	Frequency	Duration	Frequency
Often	0	Rarely	5
Sometimes	95	Never	0

4.17 Frequency of the students showing their agreeability/ disagreeability with the following statements.

Among the total respondents, there is unanimous disagreement with the assertions that their teacher was accessible when assistance was required, that the teacher effectively communicated how to initiate contact, that the feedback provided by the teacher was comprehensible, and that the teachers made a concerted effort to maintain communication with them.

Table 11: Agreeability/disagreeability to statements

Statements	Agree	Disagree
My teachers were available when I required their assistance		100
My teachers clearly articulated the optimal methods for contacting them		100
My teachers provided feedback that was easily understandable		100
My teachers made a concerted effort to maintain communication with me		100

4.18 Frequency of the students showing their agreeability/ disagreeability with the following statements.

Out of the total respondents, 100% had a positive relationship with their teachers. 90% reported that their teacher exhibited disinterest in their learning, and 10% agreed with the statement that their teacher showed interest in their learning. 70% had a disagreement with the statement that their teachers encouraged them to learn, and only 30% agreed with this statement. 100% of the respondents reported that their teacher did not tailor their schoolwork to meet their specific needs.

Table 12: Agreeability/disagreeability to statements

Statements	Agree	Disagree
My teachers manifested interest in my learning	10	90
I had a good rapport with my teachers	100	0
My teachers persuaded me to learn	30	70
My teachers adapted my schoolwork to meet my individual needs	0	100

4.19 The frequency with which students responded to the following statements concerning learning at home during COVID-19 disruption.

Out of the total respondents, 100% reported feeling safer at home than they did at school during the COVID-19 disruption. 90% were unhappy to be at home during the school closure period, and 10% were sometimes happy that they were at home. 50% of the respondents reported that they sometimes take care of their siblings at home, while 50% denied this statement.

Table 13: learning at home during Covid-19 disruption

Statements	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
I felt safer at home than I felt at school	0	0	0	100
Were happy to be at home	90	10	0	0
Had to take care of siblings	50	50	0	0

4.20 Frequency of the students reporting on their agreeability/disagreeability with the following statements.

Out of the total respondents, 100% agreed with the statements that they felt lonelier than usual and became upset over issues that typically would not have bothered them during the school closure period. 95% did not exercise more than usual during COVID-19, and only 5% agreed with it. 100% reported that they were unable to do their regular activities outside of school. Half the respondents reported feeling fit during Covid-19, and half of them denied it.

Table 14: Agreeability/disagreeability to statements

Statements	Agree	Disagree
I exercised (including walking) more than I normally do	5	95
I managed to engage in more of my regular activities outside of school	0	100
I felt lonelier than usual	100	0
I became upset about things that usually wouldn't have affected me	100	0
Felt fit and healthy.	50	50

4.21 Frequency of the students reporting on their agreeability with the following statements.

Out of the total students, 90% felt angry more often than usual during the disruption period, and 10% disagreed. 100% reported that they used electronic devices a lot more than before Covid-19. 100% were more concerned than usual about their family and friends becoming ill. 60% of the respondents did not want to reach out to their friends, whereas 40% felt like contacting them.

Table 15: Agreeability/disagreeability to statements

Statements	Agree	Disagree
I experienced anger more frequently than usual.	90	10
I did not feel like reaching out to my friends	60	40
I used electronic devices much more than I did prior to COVID-19	100	0
I did not sleep as well as I did prior to the COVID-19	10	90
I was more concerned than usual about my friends and family falling ill	100	0

4.22 Frequency of the students reporting on their agreeability/ disagreeability to statements with the following statements.

All the respondents agreed that they experienced anxiety regarding the changes in their schooling and were worried about how disruptions impacted their learning, and felt dazzled by what was happening in the world and their local area as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.23 Frequency of the students reporting on their agreeability with the following statements.

Out of the total respondents, 90% missed the usual contact with their classmates, and 10% had the usual contact with their classmates. 100% felt no support from the school or non-teaching staff. 90% of the respondents had no teachers with whom they felt comfortable asking for help, and 10% had one or more teachers they felt comfortable approaching for help.

Table 16: Agreeability/disagreeability to statements

Statements	Agree	Disagree
Missed the regular interactions with my classmates.	90	10
I had one or more teachers I felt comfortable approaching for help	10	90
I felt supported by school	0	100
I was unable to receive regular level of assistance from non-teaching staff	100	0

4.24 Frequency of the students reporting on their agreeability with the following statements

Out of the total respondents, 100% were worried about catching COVID-19 and found it difficult to concentrate in that situation. 90% of the students found their classmates supportive of each other, and 10% disagreed with it.

Table 17: Agreeability/disagreeability to statements

Statements	Agree	Disagree
I was concerned about contracting COVID-19	100	0
My classmates supported one another	90	10
I found it tough to concentrate	100	0

4.25 Frequency of the students reporting on their agreeability to the statements about resuming their class work after the COVID-19 disruption.

Out of the total respondents, 100% agreed with the statements that their motivation to learn has increased; there is better progress at learning and a better attitude towards a modified face-to-face learning environment after resuming their class work after COVID-19 disruption.

4.26 Frequency of the students reporting on their agreeability to statements about resuming their class work after the COVID-19 disruption.

90% of the total respondents were more committed to learning when school reopened than at any other time, and 10% still felt unmotivated. 100% were eager to catch up with friends after resuming class work. 80% reported that teachers appeared more caring towards them than they did before the COVID-19 disruption, and 20% disagreed. 90% felt safe at school, and 10% felt unsafe.

Table 18: Agreeability/disagreeability to statements

Statements	Agree	Disagree
I was more inspired to learn when school reopened than I had at any other time	90	10
I was happy to reconnect with my friends	100	0
My teachers seemed more concerned towards me than they had been previously	80	20
I felt secure at school	90	10

4.27 Frequency of the students reporting on their agreeability to following statements about resuming their class work after the COVID-19 disruption.

All the respondents found it difficult to handle the COVID-19 routines at school (e.g., wearing a mask, keeping distance from others), 90% found it hard to focus during class, and 10% were able to concentrate. 95% of the respondents reported that they needed to complete a greater no of assessments than usual, and 5% disagreed with the statement. 90% are not worried about catching COVID-19 at school.

Table 19: Resumption of classwork after COVID-19

Statements	Agree	Disagree
I concerned about catching COVID-19 at school.	10	90
I found it challenging to adjust to the COVID-19 routines at school (e.g. wearing a mask, keeping distance to others).	100	0
I found difficulty focusing during class time.	90	10
Had to complete more assessments than usual	95	5

4.28 Frequency of the students reporting on their agreeability to following statements about resuming their class work after the COVID-19 disruption

Out of the total respondents, 100% disagreed with the statement that their teachers reviewed the work they completed during the COVID-19 disruption. 100% reported that they had to rush through a lot of new schoolwork. 90% agreed that their class was more inattentive than before the COVID-19 disruption. 80% of the respondents reported that no additional tutoring was available to compensate for the school work, and 20% agreed that tuition was available.

Table 20: Agreeability/disagreeability to statements

Statements	Agree	Disagree
My teachers reviewed the work we completed during the COVID-19 disruption.	0	100
We rushed through a lot of new schoolwork	100	0
My class was less disciplined than it was before the COVID-19 disruption.	90	10
Additional tutoring was available to catch up on schoolwork.	20	80

5. Major Findings

5.1 The results of the study based on the data collected from students are as follows:

a) Before schools closed, most respondents attended classes six days a week. Due to COVID-19, they switched to remote learning, attending classes three or four days a week.

b) Class durations were reduced from 45 minutes to 30 or 20 minutes after the closure.
c) Most respondents lacked computers and tablets, relying on smartphones, which weren't always reliable. Many had to share phones with siblings and often lacked the necessary resources for completing schoolwork at home.
d) The school did not provide internet access or required software for online learning, though most received lessons and materials.
e) Many respondents felt less motivated and struggled to keep up with schoolwork and manage their assignments during the closure.
f) The learning process was hindered by COVID-19, with little to no subject progress, and respondents found it challenging to use any teacher feedback to improve their work.
g) Communication with teachers sometimes occurs via video conferencing during disruptions.
h) Materials were occasionally shared through email or apps like WhatsApp, with no other methods used.
i) Respondents did not receive any feedback or grades on their work from teachers.
j) Support with schoolwork at home was available occasionally but inconsistent.
k) Most respondents felt their teachers showed little interest in their learning during remote teaching.
l) While they felt safer at home during COVID-19, students were unhappy as their education suffered, and they often had to care for siblings or handle household chores.
m) Many could not engage in usual activities outside school and felt lonelier and more upset during school closures.
n) Respondents experienced increased anger and reluctance to contact friends, spending most of their time on electronic devices and worrying about loved ones' health.
o) Students felt anxious about changes in schooling, overwhelmed by the pandemic's impact, and missed their classmates.

p) There was little support from teachers or staff, leading to worries about catching COVID-19 and difficulties concentrating.

q) After returning to face-to-face learning, many felt motivated and reported better attitudes and progress. They also found teachers more caring.

r) However, managing COVID-19 protocols at school, like mask-wearing and social distancing, hindered concentration.

s) Teachers rushed through new material without reviewing previous work from remote learning, leading to an excessive number of assessments and no extra support for catching up.

5.2 The findings of the data collected from teachers and school principals are as follows:

a) Many teachers reported spending more time adapting and planning lessons compared to before the disruption while managing to cover the curriculum content.

b) A decline in student learning and engagement was noted during the disruption.

c) Principals indicated that delivering remote teaching was limited by insufficient student access to digital devices and teachers' lack of technical skills in remote pedagogy.

d) Teachers increased communication with parents, primarily online or over the phone.

e) Feedback provided to students decreased in schools where students continued to complete their work during the disruption.

f) Teachers had to adapt assessments used before the disruption, facing challenges in assessing students with special needs and practical work.

g) Many schools shifted from summative to formative assessments, focusing on informal feedback and reducing reporting requirements.

h) The majority of teachers found it difficult to support lower-achieving and vulnerable students.

i) Most schools offered parents support on various topics related to implementing learning activities.

j) Many teachers reported concerns about catching COVID-19, experiencing fatigue, disrupted sleep patterns, and feelings of isolation while working from home.

k) Most teachers felt unable to cope with changes in teaching methods, leading to slower student learning and decreased focus in the classroom.

l) After returning, teachers and principals assessed student progress during and after the COVID-19 disruption.

m) Teacher workloads increased in places where teaching continued as educators adapted to new arrangements and methods.

n) A significant majority felt supported by school leadership and colleagues, finding the offered support mechanisms sufficient.

o) More than half of teachers focused on essential curriculum components, often teaching modified versions of practical subjects.

p) Teachers faced challenges in providing differentiated instruction due to time constraints, suggesting a narrowing of the curriculum during remote learning.

q) Many reported changes in the type and frequency of assessments, with over 70% indicating that assessing students with special needs and practical work became more difficult during the disruption.

Summary and Discussion

The pandemic forced many schools worldwide to close, disrupting traditional face-to-face teaching. In response, schools adapted remote learning, which had not been a part of their daily routine before COVID-19. Teachers faced challenges as they adjusted their teaching methods, often requiring more time for lesson preparation and communication with parents and peers. Surveys showed that students reported a significant decrease in class duration during the school closures. Access to information and communication technology (ICT) resources became crucial, but over half of the students lacked the necessary tools to complete their assignments.

School authorities acknowledged that limited access to digital devices and a lack of technical skills for remote teaching hindered effective instruction. Students shared concerns about their learning outcomes during remote learning. Many felt their motivation to complete homework declined, and they struggled to use teacher feedback to improve their work. Despite the transition to online learning, there were no significant improvements in academic performance, especially in subjects requiring practical learning. Communication became more challenging, with most students engaging with teachers through video conferencing only occasionally. There was a notable correlation between the length of school closures and the frequency of student-teacher communication, often affected by ICT resource availability and the difficulties in maintaining consistent interaction over time.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the closure of many schools, forcing them to create alternative ways to share materials and information with students. Most students reported that they occasionally or rarely received updates via online platforms like WhatsApp and did not use other communication methods. Transitioning to remote learning presented challenges for teachers, particularly in providing feedback on students' work. Many students indicated they received little to no feedback during this time, which impacted their productivity, confidence, and the overall quality of their schoolwork. Without direct supervision from teachers, students often turned to family members for support, but most reported receiving help infrequently due to parents being busy or lacking the necessary education. Although many students maintained positive relationships with their teachers, they felt there was a lack of interest and encouragement from teachers during the disruption. They faced numerous challenges in organising their routines at home, leading to feelings of anxiety and unhappiness with remote learning despite feeling safe at home. Students also reported decreased physical activity and general feelings of loneliness, with many becoming easily upset or angry. A significant portion felt hesitant to reach out to friends due to concerns about

illness, which affected their concentration on studies. Upon returning to school, most students expressed increased motivation to learn and looked forward to reconnecting with friends. They noted that classmates seemed friendlier and teachers appeared more caring. However, adapting to new COVID-19 protocols, such as mask-wearing and social distancing, proved challenging, affecting their concentration in class. Teachers had also not reviewed prior material and rushed through new coursework, leaving students without additional support.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The research paper provides an overview of the effects of COVID-19-related school closures on student learning, health, and well-being in minority schools. It investigates the impact on learning progress, collecting data from school leaders, teachers, and students, all of whom reported that learning was inhibited during the disruption. Many teachers noted that their students' progress did not meet expected levels, with disadvantaged students suffering even more. Nearly 20–30% of students did not return after schools resumed due to familial issues like job loss. The shift to online teaching faced challenges, including a lack of access to digital devices and the internet, as well as teachers' inexperience with remote pedagogy. These factors contributed to a national learning crisis requiring significant public policy reforms. The Government of India has included technology integration in its National Education Policy 2020, emphasising investment in education and teacher training. However, public health priorities have created an education deficit, particularly impacting lower socio-economic children. India must prioritise policy reform and increased investment in education to prevent students from falling behind.