

# Effects Of Covid-19 Lockdown On School Children From An Urban Slum In Kalaburagi City, Karnataka.

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** School closures carry high social and economic costs for people across communities. Their impact however is particularly severe for the most vulnerable and marginalized boys and girls and their families. The resulting disruptions exacerbate already existing disparities within the education system but also in other aspects of their lives.

Hence a study is proposed to evaluate the effects of Covid-19 lockdown on education of school children between 8-15 years of age and assessment of mental health of these children using the Child behaviour checklist is done. These children were from a urban slum called Rajapur in Kalaburagi city in Karnataka state. Student participants along with their parents (n=150) provided responses to a questionnaire-based survey about their experiences due to school closures during covid-19 lockdown from March 2020 to August -2021.

**Results:** 36.7% of children from the area went to government schools, they had no access to online education and were unaware about the latest syllabus, they have lost one year of precious learning experience. Private school children were about 43.3% they had access to online education and were able to study regularly and were updated with the syllabus. Another finding was the inability to access the online classes due to absence of devices at home among 32 (21.3%) students who were from government high school.

**Conclusion:** Children are an integral part of the community and hence their loss of education during lockdown needs to be compensated soon by re-opening the schools based on Covid scenario in the City. Government schools should also have some online education going on during this period which was missing in this study.

**Keywords**— Lockdown, Schools, Covid-19, children

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged as a global health crisis in late 2019, necessitated unprecedented measures to contain its spread. Among these measures, lockdowns emerged as a critical tool for restricting the transmission of the virus. While these lockdowns were imperative for public health, they had far-reaching and often unintended consequences, particularly on vulnerable populations. One such group profoundly affected by the lockdowns were school children residing in urban slums.

Urban slums are characterized by dense living conditions, inadequate access to basic amenities, and limited economic resources. These environments often present formidable challenges in the best of times, and the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities. This research paper seeks to comprehensively explore the multifaceted effects of the COVID-19 lockdowns on school children from urban slums.

The lockdowns disrupted various aspects of the lives of these children, particularly in the realm of education, mental health, and overall well-being. With schools shut, the educational journey of these children was abruptly interrupted, exposing, and exacerbating inequalities in access to quality education. The digital divide, limited access to technology, and the absence of a conducive learning environment at home further complicated their educational prospects.

Some effects of lockdown are - Interrupted learning, Poor nutrition, Confusion and stress for teachers, Parents unprepared for distance and home schooling, Challenges creating, maintaining, and improving distance learning, Gaps in childcare, High economic costs, Increased pressure on schools and school systems that remain open, Rise in dropout rates, Social isolation, increase exposure to violence and exploitation, Challenges measuring and validating learning, Behavioural changes in children.<sup>1</sup>

School closures carry high social and economic costs for people across communities. Their impact however is particularly severe for the most vulnerable, marginalized children and their families. The resulting disruptions exacerbate already existing disparities within the education system but also in other aspects of their lives. Children are an integral part of the community and hence their well-being during lockdown due to school closure need to be assessed and the problems faced by them must be studied so that we can find proper solutions especially during a once in a lifetime Pandemic like Covid-19. Hence a study is done to see the impact of Lockdown on school children from an urban slum in Kalaburagi city of Karnataka state.

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

1. To study the effects of covid-19 lockdown on education of school children between 8-15 years of age.
2. To assess the mental health status of these children.

## **III. MATERIALS & METHODS**

Study Design : A Community based Cross Sectional Study.  
Type of Sampling : Convenient Sampling  
Study Period : 2 months (July-August 2021)  
Place of Study : URBAN HEALTH TRAINING CENTRE -RAJAPUR, KALABURAGI  
Sample Size : 150  
Sampling Procedure : Data collected from a Questionnaire and Child behaviour checklist.  
Inclusion criteria : All school going children between 8-15 years and their parents.  
Exclusion criteria : Children below the age of 8.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Questionnaire Data were then imported into the Excel program (Office 365) for a clearer graphical representation of them, which facilitated their analysis and interpretation. Duration of study was from 1st JULY 2021 – 31st AUGUST 2021. The basic method used in conducting the study was the survey method, which used a questionnaire as a tool. A self-structured, pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect the general and relevant data. Consent was taken from the parents of the student participants. Ethical clearance is obtained.

The Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL)\* is a caregiver-report measure of the child's perceived competencies and problem behaviours, including internalizing and externalizing behaviours, using a 3-point Likert scale consisting of - no , somewhat true and yes with 0,1,2 score respectively.

Child behaviour checklist was used to assess the mental health status. The scoring scale is analysed using Excel program (Office 365). We have done scoring to understand which factor has the highest impact on children. In each of the factors we try to decipher distinct count of respondents. For eg: respondent might have total score of 4 but he is an individual so countif function considers him as 1 person, which is what we want, distinctive respondents.

## **IV. RESULTS**

The socio-economic data showed 129 students were from upper-lower, 20 were from lower-middle and 1 from the upper middle as per the modified Kuppaswamy classification.

- 36.7% of children from class 3rd to 7th were from government schools had no access to online education and were unaware about the latest syllabus.
- Only 20 % of high school students from government schools had some online classes and were able to cover the syllabus since last six months.
- In comparison private school children 43.3% had access to online education and were able to study regularly and were updated with the syllabus.
- Another finding was the inability to access the online classes due to absence of devices at home among 33 students (22%) from both Private and Government High school.
- The other results included parents being worried about their children education being affected due to school closures around 46 % responded yes to the question and wanted the schools to re-open soon.
- 81% of the Government school children received mid-day meal kits till date which helped the families a lot during Covid crisis.
- 4 % of children dropped out of school due to financial problems at home.

- 25 % of parents of private schools did not pay fees for this term due to financial difficulties at their workplaces.
- 41 % of the children from both Government and Private schools did not receive the textbooks till now.

Factors affecting the children based on the Child behaviour checklist.

- Most of the children around 36 % had attention related problems in comparison to other factors.
- 8% had Oppositional behavior
- Mood changes in 4.67 %
- Anxiety / worry issues in 2.67 %
- Conduct issues were found in 1.33 % of the total student participants.

## V. DISCUSSION

The effects of the COVID-19 lockdown on school children from urban slums have been profound and multifaceted. While lockdowns were essential for controlling the spread of the virus, they had significant consequences on the education, mental health, and overall well-being of these children.

The main difference between school closures examined by previous studies and the current lockdown is that this time schools have managed to maintain some contact with students, mostly through online instruction. However, despite the efforts to support remote learning, many students have not had access to it. Existing data about the digital gap and surveys conducted during the lockdown indicate that teachers have been unable to contact a significant number of students, mainly because of lack of an internet connection or adequate devices to engage in distance learning (Kuhfeld et al. 2020; Van Lancker and Parolin 2020). Even when students have been able to connect, remote learning during school closures seems to have widened the existing attainment gap between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds (Coe et al. 2020).<sup>[5]</sup>

**Disrupted Education:** The disruption of regular schooling was one of the lockdown's most obvious and immediate effects. Children in the slums lacked access to a good education since schools were closed. Many of them lacked the equipment required for distance learning, like laptops and dependable internet connectivity. This educational setback can have a long-term impact on their chances for the future.

**Increased Educational Inequality:** Pre-existing educational disparities were made worse by the lockdown. While children from urban slums were left behind, individuals from more fortunate homes had better access to online programs, tutors, and educational materials. Due to this, the educational gap has become wider and it is now more difficult for kids from underprivileged homes to catch up.

**Mental Health Challenges:** The lockdown and social isolation had a negative impact on many students' mental health. Urban slum surroundings can be congested and stressful, and not being able to attend school or socialize with peers made loneliness, anxiety, and depression symptoms worse. Their capacity to learn and grow may be hampered by this mental health consequence.

**Nutrition and Health:** For many children in urban slums, schools provide a source of daily nutrition through government-sponsored meals. With schools closed, access to nutritious food became a challenge. Malnutrition and health issues could have long-term consequences on their physical and cognitive development.

**Increased Vulnerability:** Lockdowns also made many children in urban slums more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. With parents losing jobs or income due to the economic downturn, some children were forced into child labor or early marriage to support their families. The closure of schools also meant the loss of a protective and supportive environment for these children.

**Digital Divide:** The lockdown highlighted the digital divide in urban areas. While remote learning became the norm, many children from urban slums lacked the necessary technology and internet access. This further disadvantaged them in terms of educational opportunities.

**Loss of Social Skills:** Children from urban slums often rely on school for social interaction and the development of important life skills. The prolonged closure of schools limited their opportunities to build these skills, potentially affecting their ability to navigate social situations in the future.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Like in most of the countries of the world, in India, schools and students were not prepared for the abrupt shift in learning to online modes. School closures not only exposed the socio-economic educational inequality, but also exacerbated it as it relied heavily on family support and resources available both in the home and at the school. The closure of schools has not only differentially interrupted the learning of students but also restricted their opportunity for overall physical, social and emotional development in a way that could have lasting repercussions. ( IAPSM advisory)

As per UNESCO, over 32 crore children have been affected in India due to school closures. What started as a public health emergency has snowballed into a formidable test for global development as well as development of our future generation.<sup>2</sup>

During Pandemic situation the schools can ensure preparedness by training the staff, vaccination of teachers and limiting school hours to half days initially. Children must also be trained and educated by both parents and teachers to maintain the protocol and avoid spread of the disease.

In conclusion, the COVID-19 lockdowns had significant and far-reaching effects on school children from urban slums. These effects extended beyond just education and impacted their mental health, nutrition, and overall well-being. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that includes improving access to education, mental health support, nutrition, and addressing the underlying socioeconomic disparities in urban slum communities.

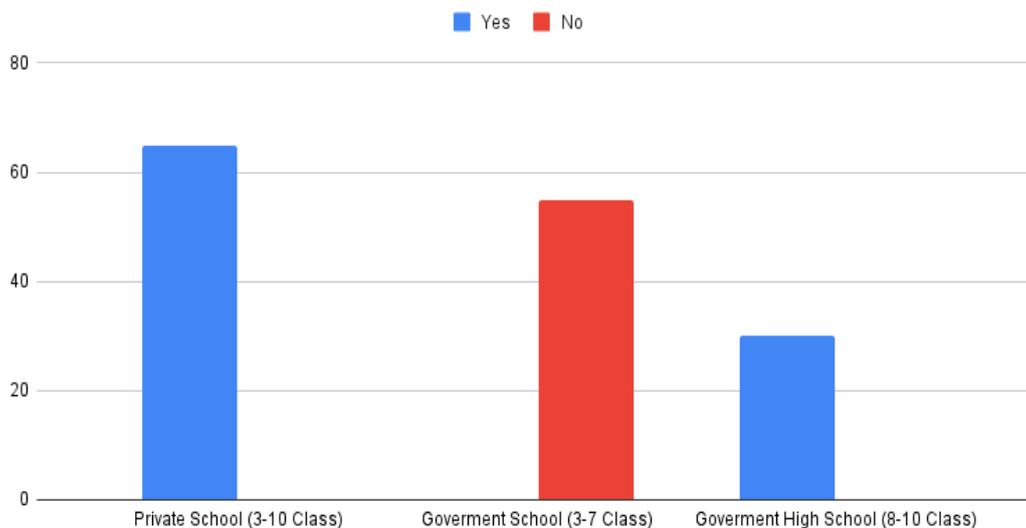
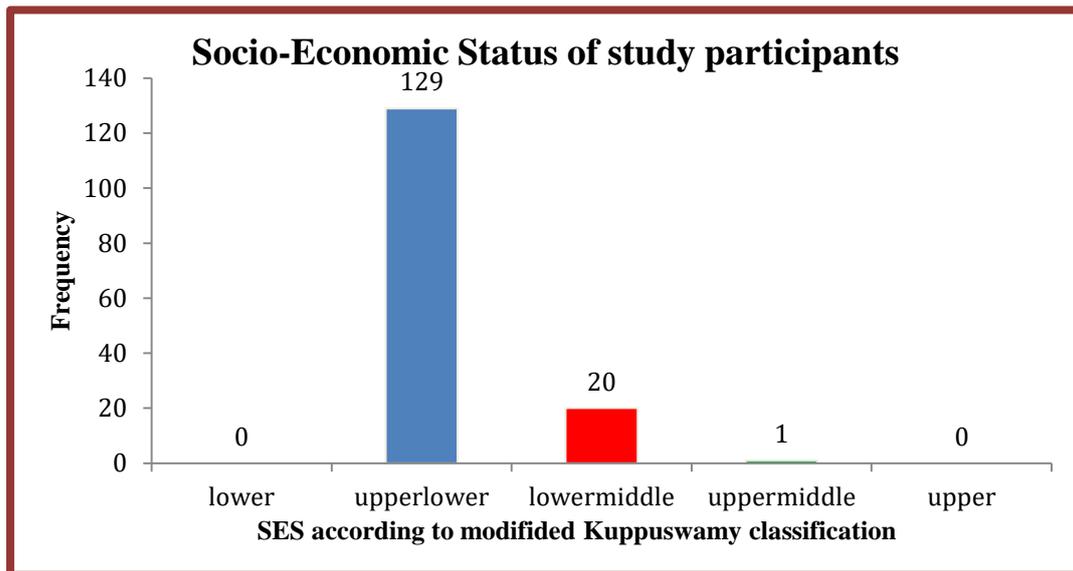


Comparison Photo from the urban slum where children are seen playing outside during the day as opposed to the photo where they must be in schools and studying at that time.

**CBCL-Question** was asked about the play time duration the parents complained that the children now play more than the average time in comparison to before (**43.7%**)

**Table 1.** Socio demographic findings

SL. NO	CHARACTERISTICS	TYPES	FREQUENCY (n)	PERCENTAGE (%)
1	TYPE OF HOUSE	KACCHA	38	25.33
		PUCCA	112	74.66
2	TYPE OF FAMILY	NUCLEAR	98	65.33
		JOINT	52	34.66
3	SCHOOLING	PRIMARY	44	29.33
		MIDDLE	76	50.66
		HIGH	30	20.0
4	TYPE OF SCHOOL	GOVERNMENT	85	56.66
		PRIVATE	65	43.33
TOTAL			150	100.0

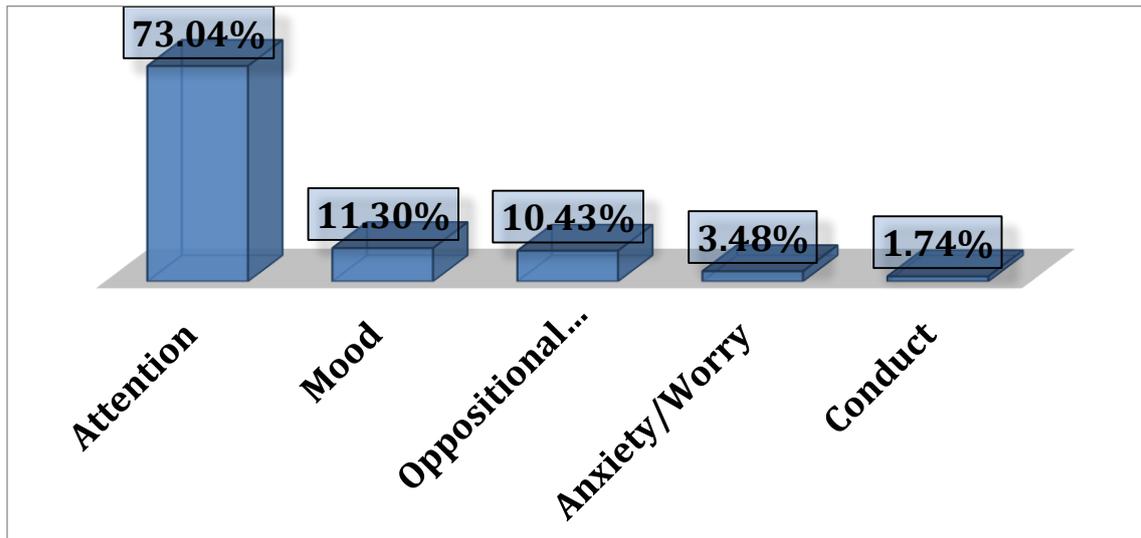


**Fig 1. Distribution of online education among student participants.**

1. Private school students with access to online education – 65 ( 43.3 %)
2. Government school students with no access to online education - 55 (36.7 %)
3. Government high school students with some access to online education - 30 (20 %)

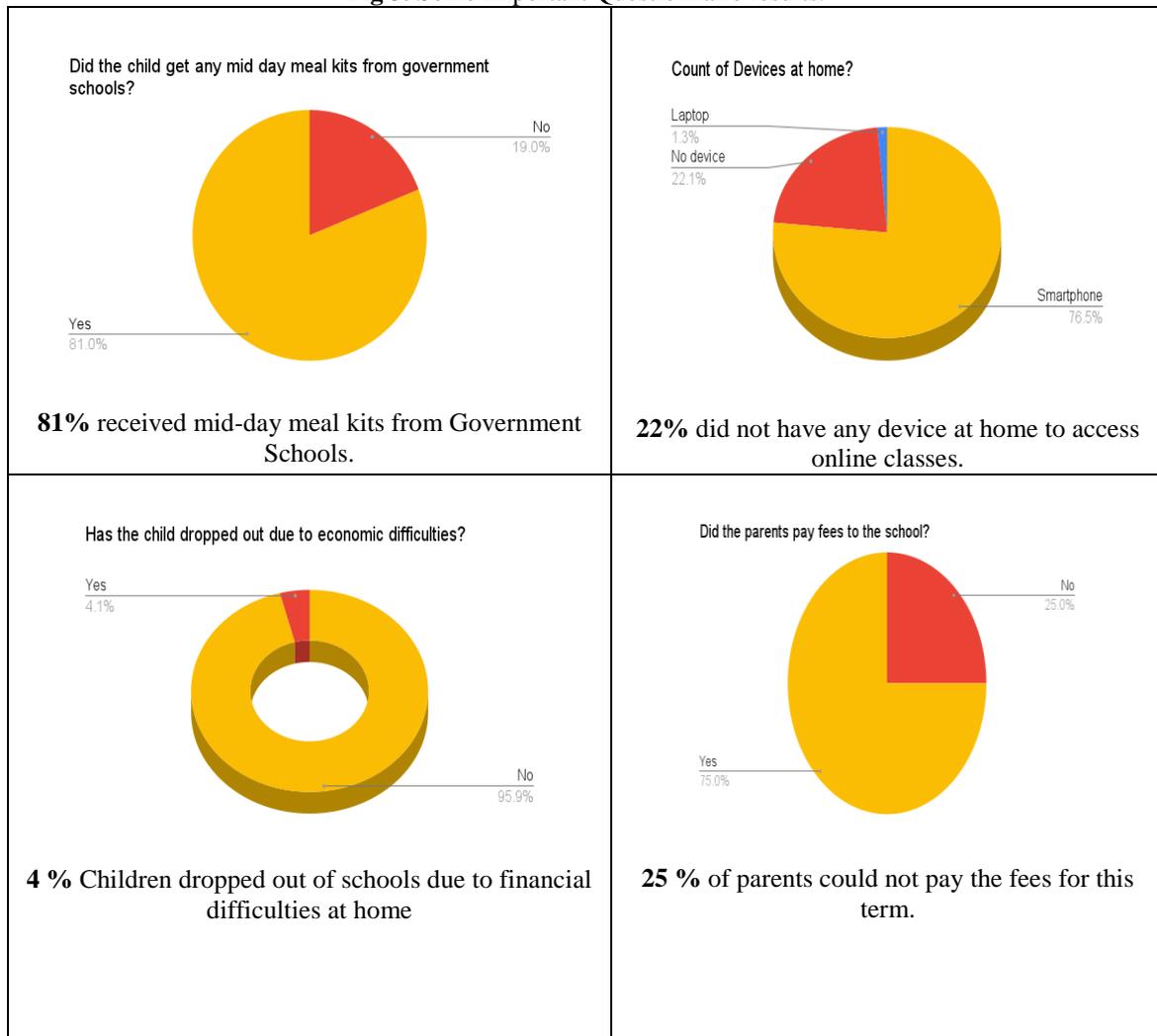
**Table 2. Child behaviour Checklist results**

CBCL - Factors	No: of Children Affected	Children affected in %
Attention	54	36.00%
Mood	7	4.67%
Oppositional Behavior	12	8.00%
Anxiety/Worry	4	2.67%
Conduct	2	1.33%



**Fig 2. Final Results** :  $79/150 = 0.526$  ( 52.6%) of the total respondents are impacted by one or the other factor during COVID-19 lockdown.

**Fig 3. Some Important Questionnaire results.**



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