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Email: jehr@um.uob.edu.pk

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"Academic Experiences and Well-being during COVID-19: A Comparative Study between the Students with and without Special Needs"

Qurratulain Rehan: Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, Pakistan

Muhammad Abid Malik: Shandong Vocational University of Foreign Affairs, China

Tooba Khan: Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, Pakistan

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KEY WORDS

ABSTRACT

Students with special needs, well-being, academic status, COVID-19, psychological impact, elementary education

COVID-19 affected not only students' academic experiences but also their emotional, psychological, and mental growth and well-being. Although all the students were affected by it, those with disabilities were more vulnerable due to their special needs. Using the Well-being of Children in Lockdown (WCL) scale with 6 factors and 22 items, this study compared the well-being of the students with and without special needs in Pakistan. Data was collected from 606 elementary-level students belonging to special and regular schools. The findings showed that out of six factors, low scores were reported for two (physical activity, and playful and creative activities), average for three (feelings, addictions, and academic aspects), and high scores were reported for one factor (routine). It appears that both groups were hit harder emotionally and psychologically. When the two groups were compared, there were no statistically significant differences in academic aspects and routine; however, in other factors and overall well-being, there were statistically significant differences with the students with special needs being affected more by the pandemic. The study suggests providing extra support and care for students with special needs to help them overcome different kinds of stresses and vulnerabilities. Such measures will also help move towards a more socially-just and equal society.

Introduction

COVID-19 caused irrevocable fear, anxiety, and damage across the globe (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020; Barai & Dhar, 2021). Its impact touched people's lives regardless of their nationality, educational background, financial status, or gender. It affected almost all fields, areas, and disciplines; however, some like education, traveling and tourism were especially hit hard due to their nature and requirements (Tarkar, 2020; Malik et al., 2022).

During the pandemic, new challenges arose for the teaching-learning process. After the COVID-19-induced shutdown, the students lost access to regular schooling (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). Their learning and growth were affected as they were restricted to homebased learning with little or no outdoor activities (Malik et al., 2023). This not only affected their academic progress but mental, emotional, their psychological status; thus affecting their overall well-being (Goldschmidt, 2020). Students with special needs were even more affected as online education for special children needed even more specialized tools and software (Bakaniene et al., 2022). Special children are also usually more sensitive, making them even more prone to mental, emotional, and psychological issues during the pandemic (Sancho et al., 2022).

Impact of COVID-19 on the Academic Experiences and Well-being of the Students

COVID-19 has affected students' learning across different levels and regions (Tarkar, 2020; Malik et al., 2022). Schools

in developing countries were especially hit hard in the wake of school closures, social isolation, and forced-online education (Malik et al., 2023). Not only did the students suffer academically (Donnelly & Patrinos, 2021; Malik et al., 2023); but social isolation, lockdown, and the fear and anxiety arising from the pandemic left many students in mental, emotional, and psychological trauma (Holmes et al., 2020; Banergee et al., 2021).

Special children may especially be vulnerable in such circumstances as they are worst affected by neglect and isolation (Schiariti, 2020). Whereas the students without special needs may manage their lives with their family members in a normal way; the ones with special needs require specialized treatments and care which are often better provided at specialized schools. In many developing countries, even regular school teachers are ill-equipped and ill-trained to provide the specialized need and care to such students (Amjad et al., 2021). Closure of schools not only affected the academic learning of special students (Narzisi, 2020; Toseeb et al., 2020); but also their mental and psychological status and well-being (Holmes et al., 2020; Banergee et al., 2021). Students, especially those with special needs, also found it hard to break away from a daily routine (Lee, 2020; Adam, 2020). These restrictions can lead to temperamental issues. A monotonous life devoid of daily activities also has adverse effects on the communal and behavioral side of their lives which may aggravate mental health problems (Patel, 2020). Lack of school environment and specialized guidance can also affect their academic, psychological, and mental growth (Lee, 2020). In many cases, the

parents felt helpless to provide specialized guidance and care during COVID-19 as they lacked essential skills and equipment (Dalton et al., 2020).

Impact of COVID-19 on the Academic Experiences and Well-being of the Students in Pakistan

In Pakistan where large population lives in poverty, the effects of COVID-19 were manifold. Many Pakistani students especially those living in rural areas do not have access to the Internet and digital tools which further added to the existing levels of disparities in the country (Malik et al., 2022). On one hand, they suffered academically due to school closure; on the other, lockdown, and lack of social interaction with peers affected mentally, emotionally, them psychologically (Khawar et al., 2021; Supratiwi et al., 2021). Fear of COVID-19, anxiety, lack of authentic knowledge, and financial crisis also added to those woes.

Students with disabilities endured the stress of COVID-19 both physically and mentally. Their sufferings were greater than the ones without special needs (Bakaniene et al.. 2022). Their deprivations and sufferings were also magnified by the fact that the modern technologies and devices commonly used in Pakistan are usually not compatible with the needs of such students. They need highly specialized devices and trained personnel for online education which are either not commonly available or are quite expensive. Consequently, it became a strenuous challenge for them to learn through online mode of education during the pandemic. Also, some of them (such as the Autistic ones) need vibrant social surroundings and environment which was prevented by the pandemic (Patel, 2020).

There have been quite a lot of studies about the educational, social, and psychological issues faced by Pakistani schools students (Khawar et al., 2021; Supratiwi et al., 2021; Malik et al., 2023), and some about students with special needs (Nasir & Hameed, 2021). However, not a single study has been found by the which authors in the educational experiences and well-being of students with special needs are compared with the ones without special needs in Pakistan. As a result, this study was designed and carried out.

Research Objectives

The study has the following research objectives.

- To investigate the well-being of students without special needs in Pakistan.
- To investigate the well-being of students with special needs in Pakistan.
- To compare the well-being of students with special needs with the well-being of the students without special needs in Pakistan. It is important to note that well-being over here is used in broader context which also includes academic aspects.

Methodology Research Design and Statistical Tests

For this study, a quantitative research method was used. To investigate the situation of the well-being of the students with and without special needs during COVID-19, descriptive statistics

were used; and to compare the well-being of the two groups, a t-test was employed.

Instrument

To investigate the objectives of the study, the Well-being of Children in Lockdown (WCL) scale was used. It was developed by Sancho et al. (2022). The study uses the original scale, however, one item was added to the last factor (Playful and creative activities).

The scale consists of 22 items and 6 factors: academic aspects (3 items), routine (4 items), physical activity (2 items), emotions (5 items), addictions (4 items), and playful and creative activities (4 items). Those items were tested on a four-point Likert-type scale.

To check the reliability of the scale, the Cronbach Alpha test was carried out. The results of the test are given in Table 1.

Table 1. *Reliability (Internal Consistency) of the Scale*

S.	Factor	Number	Cronbach	
No.		of Items	Alpha Value	
1	academic aspects	3	.872	
2	Routine	4	.783	
3	Physical activity	2	.696	
4	Emotions	5	.627	
5	Addictions (4 items)	4	.646	
6	Playful and creative activities	4	.847	
7	Total	22	.804	

All the factors and overall scale were found to have adequate internal consistency (values >.60).

Population, Sample, and Data Collection

The population of the study consisted of elementary-level private school students in Lahore, Pakistan. Data about the students without special needs were collected from regular schools; and from the students with special needs from special schools.

Questionnaires were given to the teachers and they were requested to get them filled out by the students' families. 606 questionnaires were filled out and returned by the two groups. (550 for the students without special needs, 90.76%; and 56 for the ones with special needs, 9.25%).

The study follows the four criteria of ethical considerations in research: anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and non-maleficence.

Research Findings

The findings of the study are divided into three parts: the well-being of the students without special needs (descriptive statistics), the well-being of the students with special needs (descriptive statistics), and a comparison between the two groups (t-test).

The Well-being of the Students without Special Needs

Table 2 presents the findings about the well-being of the students without special needs.

Table 2.The Well-being of the Students without Special Needs

	Factors	Not at all	A little	Somew hat	A lot
Acad	lemic Aspects				
1	Your child has been sent materials, assignments, and homework by your school	0 (0 %)	74 (13.5 %)	302 (54.9 %)	174 (31.6%)
2	Your child spends enough time on his/her schoolwork during the day.	62 (11.3 %)	310 (56.4 %)	59 (10.7%)	119 (21.6%)
3	Your child works on school projects with your family throughout the day	11 (2.0 %)	261 (47.5%)	194 (35.3%)	84 (15.3%)
Rou	tine				
4	Your child has an agreed routine and tries to stick to it	0 (0 %)	122 (22.2%)	372 (67.6%)	56 (10.2 %)
5	Your child usually has breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the same time each day.	0 (0 %)	104 (18.9 %)	372 (67.6 %)	74 (13.5%)
6	Your child has healthy sleeping habits.	0 (0 %)	122 (22.2%)	345 (62.7 %)	83 (15.1 %)
7	Your child is eating a well- balanced diet. Physical Activity	0 (0 %)	139 (25.3 %)	178 (32.4 %)	233 (42.4 %)
8	Your child gets enough physical exercise during the day	72 (13.1 %)	197 (35.8 %)	195 (35.5 %)	86 (15.6%)
9	Your child moves his/her body enough.	0 (0 %)	389 (70.7 %)	122 (22.2 %)	39 (7.1%)
Emo	otions				
10	Your child cries more than usual.	0 (0 %)	108 (19.6 %)	320 (58.2 %)	122 (22.2 %)
11	Your child feels more nervous than usual	0 (0 %)	122 (22.2 %)	162 (29.5 %)	266 (48.4 %)
12	You get angry more than usual. Your child feels sadder than	0 (0 %)	154 (28.0 %) 105	218 (39.6%) 206	178 (32.4 %) 239
14	usual Your child is happy.	(0 %) 11	(19.1 %) 111	(37.5 %) 194	(43.5 %) 234
	***	(2.0 %)	(20.2 %)	(35.3 %)	(42.5 %)
	ctions			***	240
15	Your child is eating more than usual during the lockdown	0 (0 %)	92 (16.7 %)	209 (38.0 %)	249 (45.3 %)
16	Your child is eating more treats	0	98	194	258
	(e.g., cookies, chocolate, and chips) during the lockdown	(0 %)	(17.8 %)	(35.3 %)	(46.9 %)
17	Your child is over-using new technology.	0 (0 %)	122 (22.2 %)	252 (45.8 %)	176 (32.0 %)
18	Your child is watching too many TV programs, cartoons, or movies	0 (0 %)	72 (13.1 %)	356 (64.7 %)	122 (22.2 %)
Play	ful and Creative Activities				
19	Your child is taking part in creative activities (e.g., theater, music, and art)	226 (41.1 %)	119 (21.6 %)	194 (35.3 %)	11 (2.0 %)
20	Your child plays different games throughout the day	122 (22.2 %)	91 (16.5 %)	159 (28.9 %)	178 (32.4 %)
21	Your child is using more creative ways to perform things.	56 (10.2 %)	122 (22.2 %)	242 (44.0 %)	130 (23.6 %)
22	Your child plays with your family throughout the day	0 (0 %)	97 (17.6 %)	331 (60.2 %)	122 (22.2 %)

The first item in academic aspects asked if the schools sent the students assignments and other materials. Most of the parents responded with somewhat (54.9%) and a lot (31.6%). When inquired whether the student spent enough time on the work, 10.7% responded with somewhat and 21.6% with a lot. Another 56.4% said that the students spent a little time. While

talking about the third item, only 50.6% of the participants reported that the students spent some or a lot of time on it. Most of the parents were not satisfied with the amount of time that their children were spending on schoolwork.

The participants scored satisfactorily on most of the items belonging to the second factor (routine). Parents reported that their children continued with the routine and tried to stick to it (somewhat, 67.6%; a lot, 10.2 %), took breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the same time each day (somewhat, 67.6%; a lot, 13.5%), maintained healthy sleeping habits (somewhat, 62.7 %; a lot, 15.1%); and ate well-balanced diet (somewhat, 32.4%; a lot, 42.4%). It feels that their routine was reasonably intact even during the pandemic.

While talking about physical activity, it was mostly reported that the did students not have adequate involvement in physical activities (a little, 35.8%; somewhat, 35.5%) while overwhelming majority believed that the students did not move their bodies enough (a little, 70.7%). It shows that the physical activities and movements of the students were curtailed during the pandemic.

Students seemed to be the most affected emotionally during the pandemic as reported by the parents. In all the items, more than 70% of the parents reported somewhat or a lot. It felt that more than academics, the pandemic affected the students emotionally. Almost half of the parents reported that their children were a lot more nervous during the pandemic (a lot, 48.4%).

When asked about addictions in the form of overeating, overusing technology, or excessive screen time; the parents reported that there was a great increase during the pandemic (eating more than usual, somewhat, 38%, a lot, 45.3%; eating more treats, somewhat, 35.5%, a lot, 46.9%; overusing technology, somewhat, 45.8%, a lot, 32%; excessive screen time, somewhat, 64.7%, a lot, 22.2%). It indicates that as the students had to stay inside the house most of the time, and were away from social activities and interactions, they became more addicted to eating and spending more time with digital and electronic devices.

The last factor was about playful creative activities. Again, responses showed that the students were mostly somewhat or a lot engaged in playful and creative activities (play different games, somewhat, 28.9%, a lot, 32.4%; using more creative ways, somewhat, 44%, a lot, 23.6%; play with the family, somewhat, 60.2%, a lot, 22.2%); however, for taking part in creative activities item, most of the responses were on the lower side (not at all, 41.1%, a little, 21.6%). It suggests that their creativity and attention were more directed toward games and playful activities.

The Well-being of the Students with Special Needs

Table 3 presents the findings about the well-being of the students with special needs.

Table 3.

The Well-being of the Students with Special Needs

Spe	cial Needs	T 3.7		10.	1
	Factors	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	A lot
Acad	lemic Aspects		1		
		T = 12 == 1	1 -	1	1
1	Your child has been sent materials,	2 (3.5%)	5 (8.9%)	35 (62.5%)	14 (25%)
	assignments, and		(3.2.70)	()	
	homework by your				
2	school	7	25	14	10
2	Your child spends enough time on	7 (12.5%)	25 (44.6%)	14 (25%)	10 (17.8%)
	his/her schoolwork	(12.570)	(11.070)	(2370)	(17.070)
	during the day.				
3	Your child works on	3	20	26	7
	school projects with	(5.3%)	(35.7%)	(46.4%)	(12.5%)
	your family throughout the day				
Rout					
,	T ** 1 ** 1 **	Ι.,	1 21	20	1
4	Your child has an agreed routine and	(1.78%)	(37.5%)	29 (51.7%)	(12.5%)
	tries to stick to it	(21,0,0)	(0.10,0)	(0.111,10)	(-=,
5	Your child usually has	0	20	30	6
	breakfast, lunch, and	(0%)	(35.7%)	(53.5%)	(10.7%)
	dinner at the same				
6	Your child has healthy	0	18	24	14
-	sleeping habits.	(0%)	(32.1%)	(42.8%)	(25%)
7	Your child is eating a	0	11	25	20
DI .	well-balanced diet.	(0%)	(19.6%)	(44.6%)	(35.7%)
Phys	ical Activity				
8	Your child gets	5	32	15	4
	enough physical	(12.5%)	(57.1%)	(26.7%)	(7.14%)
	exercise during the day				
9	Your child moves	2	38	14	2
	his/her body enough.	(3.5%)	(67.8%)	(25%)	(3.5%)
Emot	tions				
10	Your child cries more	2	18	24	12
	than usual.	(3.5%)	(32.1%)	(42.8%)	(21.4%)
11	Your child feels more	0	17	20	19
12	nervous than usual You get angry more	(0%)	(30.3%)	(35.7%)	(33.9%)
12	than usual.	(3.5%)	(17.8%)	(33.9%)	(44.6%)
13	Your child feels	1	9	28	18
	sadder than usual	(1.7%)	(16.0%)	(50%)	(32.1%)
14	Your child is happy.	3	7	30	16
	117	(5.3%)	(12.5%)	(53.5%)	(28.5%)
Addi	ctions				
15	Your child is eating	2	8	32	14
13	more than usual	(3.5%)	(14.2%)	(57.1%)	(25.%)
	during lockdown				
16	Your child is eating	1 (1.7%)	7 (12.5%)	29 (51.7%)	19 (33.9%)
	more treats (e.g., cookies, chocolate,	(1.7/0)	(12.2/0)	(31.170)	(33.7/0)
	and chips) during				
17	lockdown	0	17	25	14
17	Your child is over- using new technology.	0 (0%)	17 (30.3%)	25 (44.6%)	14 (25%)
18	Your child is watching	2	18	26	10
	too many TV	(3.5%)	(32.1%)	(46.4%)	(17.8%)
	programs, cartoons, or movies				
Playf	ful and Creative Activities	5			
19			7	29	2
19	Your child is taking part in creative	18 (32.1%)	(12.5)	(51.8%)	(3.5%)
	activities (e.g., theater,				
20	music, and art)	40	40	10	10
20	Your child plays different games	18 (32.1%)	18 (32.1%)	10 (17.8%)	10 (17.8%)
	throughout the day	(==:1/0)	(==:1,0)	()	(//
21	Your child is using	6	18	24	8
	more creative ways to	(10.7%)	(32.1%)	(42.8%)	(14.2%)
22	Perform things. Your child plays with	3 (5.3%)	24	17	12
	your family	5 (5.5/0)	(42.8%)	(30.3%)	(21.4%)
	throughout the day				
_					

While investigating about academic aspects, it was found that the schools had been sending somewhat or a lot of assignments, school work, and other materials (somewhat 62.5%, a lot 25%). Upon inquiring whether the student spent enough time on the work, 44.6% reported a little, and 25% responded with somewhat. While talking about the third item, 58.9% times it was reported that the students spent some or a lot of time on it. Most of the parents of the students with special needs were satisfied with the school support, however, the responses revealed that they thought that the students should have spent more time on their studies.

Most of the items in the second factor (routine) were scored in a little and somewhat category (continued with an agreed routine and tried to stick to it, a little, 37.5%, somewhat, 51.7%; took breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the same time each day, a little 35.7%, somewhat 53.5%; healthy sleeping habits, a little 32.1%, somewhat 42.8%). However, when it came to eating a well-balanced diet, somewhat (44.6%) and a lot (35.7%) were the highest reported ones. It shows that students with special needs would eat a well-balanced diet during the pandemic, however, when it came to other routine activities, they were not very much intact.

While talking about physical activity, it was mostly reported that the students with special needs did not get involved in a lot of physical activities at home (not at all, 12.5%; a little, 57.1%). An overwhelming majority also reported that those students did not move their bodies enough (not at all 3.5%; a little, 87.8%). It shows that during the pandemic,

the students with special needs were mostly physically inactive at home. It is highly concerning because they need physical exercise and constant physical movements more than others.

Just like students without special needs, students with special needs also be the affected seemed to most emotionally during the pandemic reported by the parents with overwhelming majority of them reporting somewhat or a lot (cries more, somewhat, 42.8%, a lot, 21.4%; more nervous, somewhat, 35.7%, a lot, 33.9%; get angry, somewhat, 33.9%, a lot, 44.6%; is sadder, somewhat, 50%, a lot, 32.1%; is happy, somewhat, 53.5%, a lot, 28.5%). It is worth noting that the parents reported that the students with special needs were both happier and sadder during the pandemic. It may suggest mood swings and extreme emotions; further indicating that the lockdown, social distancing, and fears had been affecting those special students mentally, emotionally, and psychologically.

When asked about addictions in the form of overeating, overusing technology, or excessive screen time; the parents reported that there was a significant increase during the pandemic (eating more than usual, somewhat, 57.1%, a lot, 25%; eating more treats, somewhat, 51.7%, a lot, 33.9%; overusing technology, somewhat, 44.6%, a lot, 25%; excessive screen time, somewhat, 46.4%, a lot, 17.8%). It suggests that like the students without special needs, students with special needs also became more addicted to eating, and spent more time with digital and electronic devices as they also had to stay inside due to the lockdown.

When it came to playful and creative activities; even with the students with special needs, the responses mostly showed somewhat or around it (involved in creative activities, somewhat, 51.8%; play with the family, a little, 42.8%, somewhat, 30.3%; more creative ways to perform things, somewhat, 42.8%, a lot, 14.2%); however, when it came to playing different games, most of the responses were on the lower side (not at all, 32.1%; a little, 32.1%). It suggests that the students with special needs were showing creativity in different areas; however, they were sticking to a few games. It may have something to do with their disabilities which may have prevented them from participating in other games.

Comparison between the Students without Special Needs and the Students with Special Needs

Finally, the study compared the well-being of the two groups (students without special needs, and the students with special needs). Table 3 shows the results of the statistical analysis.

Table 3.Comparison between the Students without Special Needs and the Students with Special Needs

Factors	Special					
ractors	Needs	Number	Mean	S. D.	t	P
Feelings	Yes	56	15.23	1.888	2.044	0.045
recinigs	No	550	15.76	1.194	2.044	
· · ·	Yes	56	9.77	2.123		
Playful and Creative Activities					2.736	0.008
	No	550	10.55	0.994		
	Yes	56	8.23	1.501		0.942
Academic Aspects	No	550	8.25	1.120	0.073	
Addictions	Yes	56	11.95	1.367	4.233	0.000
Addictions	No	550	12.77	1.494	4.233	
Routine	Yes	56	11.52	1.572	1.878	0.065
Routile	No	550	11.93	1.280	1.070	
	Yes	56	4.61	0.820		0.042
Physical Activity	No	550	4.90	1.045	2.036	
OII W-II b-:	Yes	56	61.30	4.125	5.042	0.000
Overall Well-being	No	550	64.15	2.843		

Table 3 shows that there were statistically significant differences between the students with and without special needs in feelings (t = 2.004, p = 0.045). playful and creative activities (t = 2.736, p = 0.008), addictions (t = 4.233, p = 0.000), and physical activity (t = 2.036, p =0.042). Statistically significant differences were also found in overall well-being; however, no significant differences were found in academic aspects and routine. It suggests that in terms of academic aspects and routine, the behavior and status of the groups were not significantly different; but in feelings, playful and creative activities, addictions, and physical activity; they reported to have behaved significantly differently.

Discussion and Conclusion

The objectives of this study were to investigate the well-being of the students with and without special needs during COVID-19, and to compare the two groups. Data was gathered using the Wellbeing of Children in Lockdown (WCL) scale developed by Sancho et al. (2022) as it contains all the relevant factors (addictions, routine, feelings, physical activities, academic aspects, and playful and creative activities).

Many parents believed that the schools had been sending the students assignments and work quite regularly; however, they were not very satisfied with the amount of time that the students were spending on their schoolwork. It was the same for both groups. Many studies pointed out that students' academic experiences and learning suffered during Coivd-19 (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020;

Malik et al., 2023). One of the reasons was that they were not spending enough time on their studies during COVID-19 (Gao et al., 2021). Even students themselves were worried as they did not attend schools regularly (Kleinberg et al., 2020). Several studies have hinted that the discontinuation of regular schooling and education process may have lasting effects, especially on vulnerable segments of the societies (Armitage & Nellums 2020; Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020).

Regarding routine, the majority reported that the students complied with standard routine and somewhat maintained it during the pandemic. Their eating and sleeping habits were not disturbed in a significant way. It was the same for both groups. It is understandable as the parents and other caregivers play a significant role in maintaining a balanced and healthy routine for the children during lockdown (Goldschmidt, 2020; Navas et al., 2020). It is a positive sign as maintaining a balanced and healthy routine is one of the key strategies for assuring the well-being of the students (Koome et al., 2012). For physical activity, a decline was reported for both groups. Lippi et al.(2020) also reported a significant decline in outdoor and physical activities during the pandemic. However, parents of students with special needs reported a higher decline in their children's physical exercise and efforts to remain active.

The findings about feelings were quite worrisome as a majority of the parents from both groups reported that their children were more anxious, depressed, and sad during the lockdown. Many studies also reported the emotional, mental, and psychological effects of

COVID-19 (Jiao et al., 2020; Jiloha, 2020; Leung et al., 2020; Qin et al. 2020). Emotionally and psychologically, students with special needs appeared to be hit even harder. Studies show that children with special needs require more attention and care as they are usually more sensitive (Ehmke, 2023). Schiariti (2020) also found that the students with special needs were hit harder emotionally and psychologically during the pandemic.

Addictions were also found in eating routines, screen time, and the use of modern gadgets. It is quite logical as they had to stay inside all the time so naturally they were more addicted to them. European and American researchers have also found that COVID-19-induced lockdown may lead to overeating, and deviating from healthy eating routines and dietary habits (Muscogiuri et al., 2020; Rundle et al., 2020). Longer screen time and overuse of technology have also been reported to lead to not only decreased academic learning (Ray, 2023) but also various health issues (Malik & Azmat, When it came to creativity, 2022). students with special needs did better. These findings confirm the previous study indicating that more than three-quarters of people with intellectual and developmental adapted well during the disabilities lockdown (Navas et al., 2020). Overall, low scores were reported for physical activity and playful and creative activities; the average for feelings, addictions, and academic aspects; and high for routine.

When the two groups were compared based on the WCL scale, it was found that in academic aspects and routine, there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups. In

other factors and overall, there were significant differences. In overall well-being, students with special needs scored lower than the other group. The same was the case in feelings, playful and creative actions, and physical activity. Previous studies have also indicated that children with special needs are more at risk during the pandemic (Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2021; Nusser, 2021; Phoenix, 2020; Schiariti, 2020) as they require more attention and care during COVID-19 (Goldschmidt, 2020).

COVID-19 affected children and students across the globe. It affected them academically. emotionally, physically, socially, and psychologically. Children and students from all age groups, regions, races, and colors were affected by it; however, the ones with special needs were more prone to such pandemics and social isolation. The study found the same. It is suggested that vulnerable groups and special children should be given extra care and attention by not only the families and the schools; but also by the community and the state so that their well-being is ensured. It will lead to a more dynamic, equal, socially-just, and inclusive society.

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