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Full Length Research Paper

The analysis of picture storybooks aimed at pre-school children in terms of child rights violations

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Books introduce children to social life and provide them with the opportunity to expand their imaginary worlds. Pre-school children are influenced by books more than adults. Children can identify themselves with the heroes in the books and choose to act like them. Therefore, the features of the heroes in children's picture books, what they go through, and the intended message of the story have significant importance in terms of children's development. This study aims to analyze children's picture books aimed at children who are 3-6 years old in terms of child rights violations. Phenomenological pattern, which is among qualitative research methods, was used in the study. The 30 books, which constitute the data set of the study, were chosen firstly by determining the publishers, and secondly through random sampling method. The data of the study were sorted out using descriptive analysis. In order to find the messages that are directly or indirectly conveyed in children's picture books, "the sentences in the books" were analyzed. The analysis of the data is based on the four sub-themes of child rights; namely, "Survival, Protection, Participation, Development" rights. This study found that development rights were violated the most. Then came survival and protection violations. No violation as to participation rights was observed. Finally, suggestions were made about the study.

Key words: Child rights, children's literature, children's books, pre-school, storybooks.

INTRODUCTION

Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states that every person is regarded as child until the age of 18 except for the situation of becoming full age earlier according to the law that might be applied to the child (UNICEF, 2004). This international convention, which was accepted by United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989 as "United Nations Convention regarding Child Rights", was approved by

197 countries. Turkey signed this convention in 1995.

The child is like someone lost in a foreign country where he/she does not know his/her rights as well as the language and the traditions of the country. He/she sometimes prefers to walk alone, but when he/she is faced with challenges, he/she looks for information and advice. That is when he/she needs a careful guide who can answer his/her questions (Korczak, 2011). Children's

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literature, and specifically children's books have an important role as a guide in raising children's awareness. Children can be shaped and influenced easily. It is especially important that the child be protected extensively during the formation of feelings of awareness and self, personality development (Gören, 1998). Therefore, children's books are a vital factor in developing children's self-concept and introducing a new dimension to their lives.

A good children's book guides the child into knowing himself/herself better, changing his behaviours if necessary and developing his personality. It also equips him/her with rich information in getting to know various kinds of people and being informed about other countries and societies (Şirin, 1994; Sever, 2003). Stories and events in the book attract the interest of the age group they aim at, make children excited and have fun (Ari, 2015). Children's books not only give children the opportunity to get to know life and people, but they also produce things that children can use as a guide in recognizing their feelings and thoughts.

Children's literature can be defined as literature that appeals to the interests, needs, and reading preferences of children and captivates children as its major audience. Children's literature may be fictional, poetic, or factual, or a combination of any of these. The format that houses children's literature may be a picture book in which story blends with compelling illustrations or photographs for a visual and verbal adventure through story or factual content (Hancock, 2008, p. 33). Children's literature is an important tool for children in developing social, emotional, linguistic, cognitive and self-care skills as well as knowing their own self. Upon birth, humans bring with themselves a certain potential in terms of physical, emotional and cognitive development. Once fed and brought up in an environment that supports holistic development of child, this potential can be shaped in a way that will lead to positive results. If it does not find a suitable environment and is not fed and developed, emotional complications, cognitive difficulties and lack of skills might be observed even though it grows and is shaped physically (Alpay, 1991). Books invite the reader to think about himself/herself and lead him/her to new pursuits. It encourages the child to take an important step in knowing himself/herself.

The concept of child rights is the benefits protected by law for the children to develop physically, cognitively, socially, and morally in freedom and respect, in a healthy and normal manner (Sayita and Şirin, 2000). Child rights are the total of laws that enable all children to use their rights in the best way and to benefit from them equally, and that help them protect their humane value in the society.

With the acceptance of the Charter of Child Rights in Turkey, one of the aims was to increase the awareness in the field of child rights and to pave the way for conscious

practices regarding children. One of the ways towards reaching this goal is the publication of children's literature. Because children aged between 3 and 6 can internalize the input more easily and more permanently, it is especially important that the elements including 'child rights' be handled delicately.

Regulations have been made in national and international law by making sure that children benefit from basic human rights under the framework of equal opportunities, and great care has been taken to protect children's life, education, health, and to help them have their own rights in every field of life.

In this study, child rights were analyzed under the headings of 'survival', 'protection', 'participation' and 'development' (Karaman, 2010).

Survival rights are the rights regarding meeting children's basic requirements, such as living and having suitable life standards, medical care, food and shelter (Turan, 2011). They emphasize children's right of living and their basic needs to survive. These can include food, shelter, an adequate life standard and access to medical services (Akyüz, 2010). Right of living is regarded as a prerequisite of all rights among human rights (Erbay, 2013).

Protection rights are the rights that protect children against any type of abuse and exploitation (Turan, 2011). It deals with issues such as special protection for refugee children, security for working children, protection and rehabilitation of children faced with any type of abuse or exploitation (Akyüz, 2010). In its simplest definition, it is the expression of children's right of protection and avoiding any harm. It completes children's other rights that they need to survive, develop and grow up (UNICEF, 2021).

Participation rights are the rights that aim to help children gain an active role in the family and in the society (Turan, 2011). One of the important observable concepts in which the value attributed to children is participation (Erbay, 2013a). It is not wrong to say that the biggest challenge in front of participation is the visible or invisible obstacles placed by adults and the organizational structures that are not transparent enough (Karataş and Acar, 2008, p. 38). Participation right accepts that children must be able to play an active role in the society and in the community (Akyüz, 2010).

Development rights were explained in CRC "Education and development are essential rights. This should begin with the right to access to early childhood development services and access to information from various sources with parents responsible for giving guidance. Meanwhile, children with special needs such as children with disabilities must have equal rights to development and education that enable them to realize their potential and meaningfully participate in society. The right to development also includes the opportunity to further specialized skills and physical and mental abilities that

open ways for them to a brighter future and realize their dream” (UNICEF, 2021).

Development rights summarize what children need to reach their full potential, such as education, resting, cultural activities, access to information, freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Akyüz, 2010). Development rights also include children’s education. Therefore, in this study the internal structural and external structural features of children’s books were classified under the heading of development rights.

The following are the internal structural criteria that must be found in a children’s book:

a. Theme: The theme the writer wants to convey and the behaviours he/she aims to develop in children must be explicitly stated. While writers are in an exchange of emotions and thoughts with their readers, their works must not contain politically and ideologically driven parts. They must especially cover the need to commit to democratic principles, love for family, country, nation, nature and animals, sensitivity to good and nice things, respect for heroism, love for and pleasure of life. Including universal values in books is vital in that they broaden children’s worldview. On the other hand, while dealing with these themes, enabling children to see and understand the truth and adjusting the extent to it correctly require the cooperation of writers, painters, educationalists, psychologists and designers (Sever, 1995).

b. Topic: The relationship between the theme and the topic in children’s books must be strong. Topics must increase the feeling of confidence in children and they must be related to children’s life (Demircan, 2006).

c. Heroes: Whatever age group he belongs to, the child identifies himself/herself with one of the heroes in the books he reads and tries to resemble the hero. In this way, the child can learn effectively (Sağlam, 2009).

d. Style: Redundant and banal words must be excluded from children’s books. Clarity, fluency, clearness, familiarity, variety and personalization must be regarded as basic conditions for creating a nice and effective style (Sever, 1995).

e. Plan: Events must be put in a consistent order in children’s books. Events must be narrated avoiding unnecessary details throughout the book (Demircan, 2006).

f. Writing and Punctuation: Children’s books with a literary value must be prepared through a perfectionist perspective in terms of grammar. Great care must be taken to use punctuation in correct places and without leaving room for ambiguity (Sağlam, 2009).

The following are the external structural criteria that must be found in a children’s book:

a. Paper: The paper used in picture books must not be

torn easily and it must be made of cardboard or cloth. The best paper is high-grade paper pulp, which is heavy.

A lightly glazed paper prevents print, especially colours from looking bright and decent. Glossy paper tires the eye as it reflects light (Tuncer, 1997; cited in Kocabaş, 1999).

b. Letters: As a variable that affects the quality of the page layout, the letters used in children’s books must have suitable sizes for ages and be easily readable. Letters with font sizes 24, 22, 20 must be used in the books prepared for pre-school children, whereas the sizes of the letters must get smaller as children get older in primary school period. The size, colour and thickness of the letters chosen in books must create a desire and easiness for watching and reading (Sever, 2007).

c. Size: It is considered normal for children’s books to be rectangular or square, and 16x23 cm big according to children’s level. Books must also be carried easily (Demircan, 2006).

d. Writing and Punctuation: Books must be perfect in terms of writing, punctuation and syntax (Kocabaş, 1999).

e. Information: The book must contain information on other publications of the publisher and the résumé of the writer. The book must also have ‘contents’, ‘glossary’, and ‘guide’ sections (Demircan, 2006).

f. Pictures: The pictures in the book must be suitable for the topic and provide unity and integrity. Pictures must be explanatory, interpretative, amusing, funny and cute depending on the topic. They must sometimes make the reader laugh and think at the same time. The basic feature the pictures must have is their ‘aesthetic value’. Pictures must contribute to the development of children’s aesthetic feelings. On condition that aesthetic concern is prioritized, the pictures in the books aimed at children who recently started pre-school and reading are expected to be colourful (Sever, 1995).

g. Page layout: Large gaps from top to bottom and left to right must be provided on the margins. The number of pages must be determined according to children’s level. The gaps among pages must be more than one (Demircan, 2006).

h. Outer Cover and Volume: No matter for which age group they are prepared, children’s books with a literary value must be attractive in terms of appearance because they attract children’s attention firstly thanks to their appearance. That is why children’s books must have an interesting cover, a cover layout that makes the book and reading attractive, and a title and a picture related to the topic (Sağlam, 2009).

Children’s picture books containing these criteria enter children’s imaginary world and help children create authentic products. Having children meet reality without limiting their imagination is a necessary feature of a quality book. In a book with distinctive and authentic

qualities, the information must be transparent. Books must also include messages implying that child rights are respected. These features, which must exist in books, are among children's most basic rights. Adopting the principle of "the best interest of the child" and considering the function of leaving a permanent effect on children, people working on children's literature must make publications and advance in this field. A work without quality cannot be said to be written considering the best interest of the child. Therefore, including these features in books is one of the most basic rights of the child. A child reading the books that adopt child rights as a principle will be more aware of his own rights.

The aim of this study is to analyze picture storybooks published in Turkey and aimed at pre-school children in terms of child rights violations. In accordance with this general aim, answers to the following sub-aims were searched:

1. Are "Survival" rights violated in picture storybooks?
2. Are "Protection" rights violated in picture storybooks?
3. Are "Participation" rights violated in picture storybooks?
4. Are "Development" rights violated in picture storybooks?

METHODS

Model of the study

Phenomenological pattern, which is among qualitative research methods, was used in this study. Creswell (2013, p. 76) stated that the "phenomenological study describes common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon". Phenomenology is an approach used to explore and examine perceptions that individuals assign to their experiences (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenology focuses on phenomena which we are aware of but which we do not have detailed knowledge about. We come across phenomena in different shapes such as events, experiences, perceptions, trends, concepts, and situations (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). In this study, the researchers wanted to explore the children's rights violations in picture storybooks, which made phenomenology an appropriate method because it captured the violations of rights of children's books.

Data set of the study

The data set of the study comprises children's picture books published for children aged between 3 and 6 years old in Turkey. Random sampling method was used in this study. In this sampling method, each unit in the universe has an equal and independent chance of being chosen as a sample (Büyüköztürk et al., 2009). When choosing the websites, 30 pre-school teachers were asked this question: "Which online book sales websites do you shop from the most?" Websites are listed from highest to lowest. The three highest ranking online booksellers were included in the research. As the second step, the key word "pre-school children's picture books" was written on three websites that sell books online and have a wide range of books. Then, the results were saved. In the

third step, names of the 20 publishers that appeared as a result of the online search were put in a bag and the number was narrowed to 10 thanks to a draw. After that, three books from each publisher were determined through another draw. As a result of all these procedures, a total of 30 books were analyzed. The list of these books and publishers were given in Table 1.

Collection of data

The data of this study were collected through "document analysis" technique. Document analysis comprises the analysis of written materials containing information about the phenomenon or phenomena aimed to be studied (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).

In this study, the data were collected according to the sub-themes of child rights; namely, "survival, protection, participation and development". The contents of the sub-themes were stated below (UNICEF, 2021):

a. Survival Rights: Since the first moment children are born, they have the right to life. They have the right to a registered name and nationality. They have the right to be cared for and protected by their parents and not be separated from their families. The government needs to safeguard these rights and provide basic services for children to survive and thrive. This includes quality healthcare, age-appropriate nutrition, clean drinking water and a safe place to live as well as access to future opportunities for development. Children's living and having suitable life standards, living with their family, not suffering from discrimination, having a name, being registered, medical care, food and shelter.

b. Protection Rights: Children's being protected from physical, emotional and sexual abuse, preventing child labor, protection of children under armed conflict, protection of children in judiciary system, protection of children who need special care. Once children are born and survive, they have the right to be protected from all forms of harm including domestic violence. They must be protected from physical violence and psychological intimidation may they be within and outside their families. The right to protection also includes being protected from child labour, tasks that are dangerous or impede their education. Likewise, children must be protected from harmful substances and drugs. Another important aspect is protection from trafficking, smuggling, kidnapping, sexual abuse and all forms of exploitation against children. The government also has the duty to ensure that child victims are rehabilitated and reintegrated into society with dignity.

In terms of the justice process, every child not only has the right to fair treatment but also unique attention to children's needs meaning every legal procedure needs to take into account the best interest of children.

For children separated from their families, they have the right to be protected and cared for with respect to their ethnic background, language, religion, and culture. In wartime, every child must be protected from war or joining the fighting. When children are refugees, they must have special assistance and protection.

c. Participation Rights: Children's expressing their ideas, their right to participate in the topics related to them, setting up an association, getting together in peace. Children are members of society. They may be small in size but they fully have the right to freely express their thoughts, views and opinions, and participate in society particularly in the areas affecting them. Their voices must be seriously taken into account in line with their age and maturity.

Every child and youth has unfathomable potentials. While the government has to facilitate and support the participation of children and youth, everyone also needs to take action to support children and youth to participate and exercise their agency as they are also the main driving force in bringing about positive change to society.

d. Development Rights: Education, games, resting, spending free

Table 1. Data set.

Book number	Publisher	Book title
K1		How Should We Behave in School?
K2	Mandolin publishing	How Should We Behave on the Phone?
K3		How Should We Behave in Public?
K4		When Kiraz is Cross with Everybody
K5	Kök publishing	Which Voice is Mine?
K6		Ali and Ayşe are at the Vet
K7		The Ball
K8	Uçanbalık publishing	Sleep Monster
K9		Pengu-Red Car
K10		Cute Hedgehog is Learning Subtraction
K11	Morpa publishing	My Teacher is Like Cotton
K12		Mr. Sharp and Mrs. Knock
K13		T-shirt Factory
K14	Eğiten Kitap publishing	Clever Rabbit and Mother Magpie
K15		Let's Play
K16		Stormy Night
K17	İşBankası Kültür publishing	My Friend The Baker
K18		Mobile Repair-shop
K19		Little Travellers
K20	Remzi Bookstore	Seasons
K21		Toy City
K22		I Want My Tooth
K23	Tudem Publishing	Rita and Nameless are at the Picnic
K24		Rita and Nameless are at School
K25		Summer and The Sun
K26	Beyaz Pusula publishing	Spring and The Butterfly
K27		Kids Love Games
K28		Magic Mirrors
K29	Ya-Pa publishing	Everybody Has a Job
K30		The Fish with Orange Scale

time positively, getting information, religion, conscience, freedom of thought. A child today is an adult of tomorrow. Education and development are essential rights. This should begin with the right to access to early childhood development services and access to information from various sources with parents responsible for giving guidance. Meanwhile, children with special needs such as children with disabilities must have equal rights to development and education that enable them to realize their potential and meaningfully participate in society. The right to development also includes the opportunity to further specialized skills and physical and mental abilities that open ways for them to a brighter future and realize their dream.

Considering the rights, whose contents have been stated above, the researchers determined violations of rights in the text.

All the stories in the storybooks in the list were examined. A word, a sentence or a paragraph can be chosen as the unit of analysis. In this study, sentence was chosen as the unit of analysis while analyzing stories and the frequency of occurrence of the designated subcategories in each sentence was determined. At this stage, the sentences with words matching the subcategories or

explaining designated subcategories or sentences directly conveying the meaning were taken into consideration. The weight of each aspect was valued as a point. The values of subcategories in the books are indicated in the tables as frequency.

Analysis of the data

The data of this study were sorted out through "descriptive analysis" method. Descriptive analysis is a type of qualitative data analysis that includes summarizing and evaluating –according to previously determined themes– of the data acquired through various data collection methods. The aim in this approach is to provide the reader with the acquired data in an organized and interpreted manner. In descriptive analysis, main and sub-themes are determined beforehand and direct references are made to reflect the opinions (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). The books chosen in this study were analyzed under four sub-themes in accordance with the Convention on Child Rights, as "survival", "protection", "participation" and "development".

Table 2. Violation of survival rights.

Book number	Expression in the book	Meaning of the expression	F
K29	Even the frog	Belittling	1
K22	Royal family	Discrimination	1
K24	I will name you jelly	Threat	1
K23	Or you will stay in the car	Threat	1
K24	The nameless dog	Humiliating, ignoring	1

Table 3. Violation of protection rights.

Book number	Expression in the book	Meaning of the expression	F
K7	People do very wrong things.	Imposition of negative bias	1
K22	Royal family	Discrimination	1
K20	Watching TV, connecting to the internet.	Negative free time activities	1
K22	You can find other works of the writer at	Commercial directing	1

In descriptive analysis, under the framework of the sub-themes, child rights violations in each book were stated along with their frequencies. Also, direct references were taken from sample statements. The data were coded by two researchers independently and simultaneously. Inter coder agreement of 93% was achieved in this study according to the reliability formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) in calculating inter-coder agreement. Therefore, the study can be said to be reliable.

FINDINGS

Violation of survival rights

Direct references about the violation of survival rights are given below (Table 2):

- In the sentence (K29) "Even the frog can be a lifeguard", it is observed that the "even the frog" is belittled. Therefore, there is *violation of survival rights*.
- In the sentence (K22) "Some of his friends had fewer teeth. But of course, THEY were not from the ROYAL family", royal family is glorified with the words "THEY" and "ROYAL" being written in big font size. The birthrights of children are described as characteristics that belong only to those from the royal family. In this case, it emphasizes the need for children to be members of the royal family. With the effort to show the royal family as perfect, there occurs discrimination between the royal family and the public; therefore, *survival rights* are violated as the Article 2 of the Convention on Child Rights is ignored.
- The fact that the sentence (K24) "I will name you jelly" includes threat contradicts with the principle of "the best interest of the child". Thus, *survival rights* are violated.
- The fact that the sentence (K23) "Are you sure

e. you will behave? Or you will stay in the car" includes threat contradicts with the principle of "the best interest of the child". Hence, *survival rights* are violated.

f. In the sentence (K24) "The first day of school is tiring. Even for a nameless dog", lacks the right of having a name, which is the Article 7 of the Convention on Child Rights. Therefore, *survival rights* are violated.

Violation of protection rights

Direct references about the violation of protection rights are given below (Table 3):

- In the sentence (K7) "He said, you never know; people do very strange, very wrong things", *protection rights* are violated as negative bias is imposed about people. *The story tells about the adventures of a ball. But every time, the child is given a sense of fear instead of curiosity and entrepreneurship.*
- The fact that the sentence (K22) "His little brother had NO teeth although he IS from the Royal family" includes discrimination will cause the children to be negatively influenced by this book. Thus, *protection rights* are violated.
- The fact that the sentence (K20) "Duru watched TV more comfortably. She connected to the internet more" imposes the idea of spending time using technology will influence children negatively. Depicting Duru with various screen watching situations for many
- times may indicate negative effects on children's holistic development. For example, Kuss and Griffiths (2011) showed that that social networking site usage is negatively correlated with social participation and academic achievement. Hence, *protection rights* are violated.

Table 4. Violation of development rights.

Book number	Expression in the Book	Meaning of the expression	F
K23	Nameless? But it can't be him: He is chasing butterflies	Incomprehensibility	1
K5	There was a farm where all his animals lived in peace	Incomprehensibility	1
K2	Işıl does not shout to his brother when they look for him. He goes up to him	Ambiguity	1
K2	The first international phone call made with underwater cable was made from London to Paris in 1891	The fact that the information is not suitable for the age/life of the child	1
K3	When the waiter brought her hamburger	Lack of object	1
K29	There was a very nice forest in Mount Kaf, the mountain of tales.	Contrariety to language	1
K1	When I got back home and I rested a little	Misuse of the conjunction "and"	1
K23	Or you will stay in the car. By the way, who opened the potato chips, who stole the sausage?	Disconnection between sentences	1
K20	His mom said, "Stop"	Disconnection in the story due to constant repetition of the sentence	1
K24	Nameless, you had no right to do this	Threat	1

e. The sentences (K22) "The writer and illustrator of many successful children's and adolescents' books He lives with his wife and children in Scotland. You can find other works of the writer inpublishing" are thought to use the ending of the story for a commercial purpose. Participation rights definition according to CRC, children should be protected from all forms of exploitation, At the end of the story, the author's recommendation of his/her book to the child can be interpreted as a commercial concern. This violates the *protection rights* of children psychologically.

Violation of participation rights

In the books examined, no violation related to participation rights was detected according to the definitions of the CRC.

Violation of development rights

Direct references about the violation of protection rights are given below (Table 4):

- The incomprehensibility in the sentence (K23) "Nameless? But it can't be him. He is chasing butterflies", shows that the principle of "the best interest of the child" is ignored.
- The sentence (K5) "There was a farm where all his animals lived in peace" includes incomprehensibility. This contradicts with the internal structural language criterion and it ignores the principle of "the best interest of the child".
- In the sentence (K2) "Işıl does not shout to his brother when they look for him. He goes up to him, the words

"when they look for him" causes ambiguity. The fact that internal structural language criterion is not met shows that the principle of "the best interest of the child" is ignored.

d. The sentence (K2) "The first international phone call made with underwater cable was made from London to Paris in 1891" is found at the end of the book, in the part called "trivial information". This part does not contain information suitable for the age of the child; therefore, internal structural theme criterion is ignored, leading to the violation of development rights.

e. Adverb inadequacy in the sentence (K29) "There was a very nice forest in Mount Kaf, the mountain of tales" contradicts with the principle of "the best interest of the child" as it is against the language criteria.

f. Lack of object in the sentence (K3) "When the waiter brings her hamburger, Seda says 'Thank you' to him" causes the violation of internal structural language criterion.

g. Unnecessary use of conjunction in the sentence (K1) "When I got back home and I rested a little" violates the principle of "the best interest of the child" and shows that internal structural language criterion is ignored.

h. In the sentence (K23) "Are you sure you will behave? Or you will stay in the car. By the way, who opened the potato chips, who stole the sausage?", the disconnection among the sentences indicates that internal structural language criterion is ignored. Therefore, the principle of "the best interest of the child", which is one of the development rights, is violated.

i. Constant use of the sentence (K20) "His mom said, 'Stop' causes disconnection in the story; thus, internal structural language criterion lacks quality.

j. The sentence (K24) "Nameless, you had no right to do this" includes threat. Also, in the book coded K24, the fact that the dog named Nameless is confined in a bag

without his consent shows that the principle of “respect for the child’s opinions” is ignored. Both including a threat and ignoring the principle of “respect for the child’s opinions” mean that the “theme”, which is one of the internal structural elements, is not given importance.

Also, the violations as to the internal structural and external structural features of the books studied under the heading of development rights (quality picture story books) can be found below:

- a. Out of the 30 books studied, 14 of them do not have page numbers. As the external structural criterion of the book is inadequate, there is violation of development rights.
- b. Out of the 30 books studied, 3 of them state the age range in a small part on the corner of the back cover. No age range was observed in the remaining 27 books. Since the cover and binding criterion, which is one of the external structural criteria of the book, is inadequate, there is violation of development rights.
- c. The 30 books studied were found to be suitable as children’s picture books aimed at 3-6-year-olds in terms of typeface. However, when the books were analyzed considering the criteria of the font size, it was observed that the big font size in 2 books limited the pictures. Because *letters*, which is one of the external structural criteria, is ignored, we can say that there is violation of development rights.
- d. Out of the 30 books studied, 3 of them are hardbound, 3 of them are thread bound, and the remaining 24 are wire bound. Since the cover and binding criterion, which is one of the external structural criteria of the book, is inadequate, there is violation of development rights.
- e. Out of the 30 books studied, 5 of them have pictures not related to the text. Out of these 30 books, 6 of them have the text bigger than a quarter of the page; thus, the text stands out more than the pictures. As the page layout (picture-text relationship) in the books is inadequate, violation of development right was observed based on the external structural criterion.
- f. “Taking into consideration the expected aesthetic features of children’s picture storybooks aimed at 3-6-year-olds, out of the 30 books studied, 15 of them were observed to have violation of development rights since the quality of the pictures and the paper is not up to the standards based on the external structural criterion of pre-school children’s picture books.
- g. There are questions about the text in each page. However, these questions, given in the book coded K9, cause disconnection in the text. This situation contradicts with the principle of “the best interest of the child; therefore, *language*, which is one of the internal structural criteria, proves to be inadequate.
- h. Because words are unnecessarily emphasized in the book coded K22, language factor was observed to be

inadequate depending on internal structural criteria, which leads to violation of development rights.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to equip children with the understanding of child rights, children’s picture books must have suitable qualities for children. A book with suitable qualities can help children grasp child rights better. In this study, 30 children’s picture books aimed at the period of 3-6 years were analyzed in terms of child rights violations.

In this study, books were evaluated based on the principle of “the best interest of the child” and in terms of survival, protection, participation and development rights. Also, the internal structural and external structural features of the books were analyzed and these features were discussed under the heading of development rights.

In this study, it was observed that four books (13%) had indirect expressions of threat, belittling and discrimination, which violate children’s survival rights. According to Sever (2003) and Kavcar et al. (2004), one of the most important functions of children’s books is to make children create personal values about humanity and life. These books, through their characters and stories, must be able to offer children some experience areas about people, nature and life.

In Büyükalan and Harmankaya (2019)’s studies on child rights, 75 published children’s picture books that received various national and international awards between 1963 and 2018 were analyzed. It was observed that the most included rights in the pictures and texts were survival rights, followed by development rights, participation rights and protection rights, respectively. It was seen that participation rights were the third most common type and they appeared more in the texts than in the pictures. With all the books analyzed, development rights were observed more in the pictures (59%) of the award-winning children’s picture books than in their texts (41%). In his research, where he analyzed 100 Basic Works, consisting of stories, Karaman (2010) found that development and survival rights appeared more than participation and protection rights.

Four books in this study were observed to include imposition of negative bias, discrimination, commercial directing, and recommending negative free time activities. Hence, children’s protection rights are violated.

These violations carry the risk of children’s internalizing the messages that negatively affect them psychologically. For example, in the sentence (K20) “Duru watched TV more comfortably. She connected to the internet more”, it is attention grabbing that the understanding of free time fun activities is associated with spending more time using technology, even recommending it indirectly. A quality book must not impose any negative ideas on children, either directly or indirectly.

In his research, where he analyzed tales, Turan (2011) found that children's protection rights were the most negatively used type. However, in this study, it was observed that violation of development rights was more. While Turan (2011) included in his research the tales in the book "A Tale for Each Day", this study analyzed the most preferred books. The content of each book reflects the features of its period. The fact that tales were written in the previous centuries whereas new books focus more on contemporary times might lead to differences in the findings. According to Yildiz et al. (2018), children make sense of life better with the content chosen from current topics in children's books.

In Sarı (2019)'s study, the fact that negative examples were observed in the 200 books analyzed prevents children's right to be protected from any kind of violence. The element of violence appears in 13 books. The rights violations identified in this study are similar to the findings of Sarı's (2019) research.

No violation of participation rights was observed in the children's picture books analyzed. However, the books had no positive expressions about participation rights. Yet, "children's books" is a good tool to teach children the awareness of participation rights. Children are good observers. They adapt everything they see, watch, and listen to their lives. That is why a quality children's book must enable children to internalize their own participation rights. Through participation, children gain life skills, build self-confidence and be a part of the society. In addition, with participation rights made available to all children, it is possible to create feelings of belonging, justice and sensitivity for children coming from different roots (Lansdown et al., 2014). Participation rights require not only changing the way adults listen to children, but also a thorough reconsideration of how adults perceive children (Todres and Higinbotham, 2016).

In the study where Pembegül (2019) researched child rights expressions included in "The Curious Child" and "Science Child", which are popular science journals published by TÜBİTAK (Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey), found that the journals included, from most to least, participation rights, development rights, survival rights, and protection rights, respectively. The most common rights found in these journals proved to be children's rights related to accessing information that would support their development, rights of playing, having fun, resting and doing enjoyable activities, and rights including their expression of ideas in a written, oral, or art form, or in another way they could choose on their own. Therefore, it can be concluded that children following these two journals meet these rights most.

In his study, Gündoğdu (2018) analyzed 275 children's picture books whose heroes are children. He analyzed activities not compatible with 'participation' and determined which qualities of participation were violated.

As a result, he found that the situations where activities incompatible with participation in open-air activities were; adults making decisions on behalf of children by interfering in where and what they will play, making children work without their consent in things like gardening in order to complete the tasks, and ignoring the outdoor activities children want to do, such as riding a bike. A variety of situations incompatible with participation were observed under the concept of basic requirements consisting of categories such as sleep, food, personal care/cleaning activities and health. Adults decided on the time children went to bed without considering children's opinions and by ignoring their wishes. In addition, in almost all the activities about food, children were not included in the lunch/dinner preparation process or were informed of the day's menu; thus, they became the object of the process, not the subject. It was concluded that these behaviours by adults resulted from the fact that they thought they made the best decisions for children.

In this study, it was found that development rights were violated the most. Violations such as incomprehensibility, disconnection in the story, grammar mistakes were observed.

According to the external structural criteria we determined, children's picture books aimed at 3-6-year-olds that were analyzed in this study were not found to be suitable in terms of child rights.

Out of the 30 books studied, 27 of them (90%) did not state any age range. For this reason, the researchers came across books that did not aim at 3-6-year-old children in the data set. These books were not analyzed. In the article 17 of the Convention on Child Rights, the importance that must be given to children's books is stated as follows: "Contracting countries accept the importance of mass communication and enable children to acquire information and documents from various national and international resources aimed to develop children's social, spiritual and moral welfare along with physical and mental health". According to this article, children struggle to access books suitable for aiming at their actual development level as no age range was stated. This result might indicate that children are limited by their environment according to article 17 of the Convention on Child Rights.

A children's book written in accordance with children's development rights is considered to have achieved the internal structural and external structural criteria. Out of the 30 books in the data set, 5 of them (16.6%) were not considered suitable for external structural criteria, and 14 of them (46,6%) did not achieve internal structural criteria. If we associate these criteria with development rights, the fact that 19 books (63%) out of 30 books could not achieve the criteria can be thought to be a serious problem.

Starting from pre-school period, children's books are the first tools that introduce children to the aesthetic

language of colour and illustration as well as making them see the beauty of their mother tongue. Quality children's books are visual and written tools where children witness the interpretation of events, phenomena and situations from the artist's perspective (Sever, 2013). In the books analyzed, elements that can make it difficult for children to understand the text were observed, such as incomprehensibility, disconnection among sentences and unnecessary emphasis, which are not compatible with the features of a quality book.

In their work, Türkyılmaz and Kuş (2014) analyzed the 100 Basic Works (the books recommended by The Ministry of Education) in terms of child rights. They found that the books did not give child rights as much importance as they should, and that they were written without considering the reality of children. The reason for this might stem from the fact that child rights were not legalized at the time the 100 basic works were written.

As a result, upon the analysis of the books in terms of child rights, it was observed that there were very few books suitable for the age level of children. The principle of "the best interest of the child" is stated in Article 3 of the Convention on Child Rights as follows: "In all the children-related activities organized by state or private social institutions, courts, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the benefit of children is the basic idea". Although the principle of "the best interest of the child" is a strong base in the Convention on Child Rights, it was determined that the books analyzed were not prepared according to this principle, and thus, ignore Article 3 of the convention.

In the research by Kurt (2013), it was concluded that although there were some improvements in terms of child rights recognition and usability, and children being considered a value, these improvements were not enough. Kurt also emphasized the importance of the recognition of child rights by both adults and children. Article 42 of UN's Convention on Child Rights also mentions the necessity for the child rights to be learned by both adults and children through suitable and effective means.

In Sarı's (2019) research, no items on rights were reflected in 92 books of the 200 books analyzed. The fact that there are no items on rights in the books might be because there is no entity representing children. In addition, the fact that books include scientific and conceptual information is another reason why there is no concept of child rights. Both positive and negative examples were observed in 108 books. Sarı determined 135 storybooks that emphasized development rights. In this part, findings are discussed under the categories of development (135), survival (68), protection (26), and participation (13), respectively.

In another study, 64 best-selling books from best-selling publishers in Turkey in 2019 were analyzed in terms of child rights. It was found that children's picture books included expressions about children's participation

and survival rights more, whereas they included expressions about development and protection rights less (Bağçeli et al., 2020).

Todres and Higinbotham (2016) state that adults fall behind in appreciating the value of children's participation even in forums specifically designed to discuss and evaluate child rights. For the violations of rights to be reduced, primarily writers must have a high level of awareness and knowledge about child rights.

Referring to Eğribel (2011, p. 332)'s emphasis, as child rights and child matter is a matter of civilization and future, the solution must be put forth at this level. "Child right is a matter of world civilization and future. What must be put forth is the identification and rehabilitation of the daily, given problems, the solution to the problems on a quantitative basis, and their numerical follow-up, as well as a culture of child rights and an educative, permanent, effective organization that will have influence on the current problems beyond measurement and create a qualitative leap".

Suggestions

Based on the findings of the research, the following suggestions can be made:

- Literature review shows that books aimed at pre-school period were not analyzed in terms of other rights present in the Convention on Child Rights. Therefore, an analysis of violation of other rights in children's books might offer researchers and children's literature writers deep insights into the topic.
- No study was observed in the literature on the analysis of books aimed at 6-18-year-olds in terms of child rights. From this perspective, it can be said that carrying out an analysis of the books aimed at 6-18-year-olds might pave the way for valuable conclusions.
- Based on the results of the research, no positive or negative expressions about participation rights were found in the books analyzed. It can be suggested that the writers and the illustrators of children's picture books prepare the books considering participation rights.
- When preparing children's picture books, experts in the field (who have knowledge about both pedagogy and the laws) must be involved in the process.
- It was observed that out of the 30 books in the data set of the research, 27 of them did not state any age range on either front or the back cover. Trainings on internal structural and external structural criteria must be organized for people working on children's books and leaflets about the subject must be prepared for reference.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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Full Length Research Paper

Well-being and academic workload: Perceptions of Science and technology students

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University students need to find a balance between their physical, mental, social, and emotional state to do well in their academics. Student's well-being should be one of the top priorities for any academic institute. The present study employed a sequential mixed methods approach to provide insights into students' perceptions of well-being and academic workload. An online survey (n = 385) was conducted in the first phase, followed by collection of qualitative data through course assignments (n = 119) in the second phase for in-depth information. The findings showed that the students are not satisfied with college life, particularly in terms of academic workload as well as basic facilities and services. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that students have issues coping with negative emotions, which is likely to impact their overall well-being and health. Therefore, it is crucial that the colleges implement strategic interventions to address these issues.

Keywords: College student, well-being, academic workload, social life, basic services, personality.

INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing interest over the last few decades in trying to understand the well-being of university students and their academic performance (Agolla and Ongori, 2009; Ansari and Stock, 2010; Balikis and Duru, 2017; Bordbar et al., 2011; Borgonovi and Pál, 2016; Dahlin et al., 2010; Gerrard et al., 2017; Kember and Leung, 2006; Leontopoulou and Triliva, 2012). The published research suggests that student well-being is affected by dissatisfaction with the learning environment, high academic workload, insufficient feedback, inadequate resources, low motivation, poor academic performance, and overcrowded lecture halls amongst others. The nature of the university setting with semester-long

learning and evaluation create an environment where students are faced with ongoing challenges, meeting deadlines, and maintaining high performance (Flinchbaugh et al., 2012) leading to academic stress (Angolla and Ongori, 2009; Abdulgani et al., 2011). Although the state of being well is subjective, researches have shown that this has been positively correlated to the mental health and behavioural issues of the university students (Baik et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2021; Leontopoulou and Triliva, 2012; Schuelka et al., 2021) and also that it negatively impacts their academic performance (Ansari and Stock, 2010).

Subjective well-being refers to the overall quality of

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ones' experience and functioning in terms of three interactive dimensions: psychological (one's subjective experience), physical (bodily health), and social (relational experience) (Grant et al., 2007). According to the PISA 2015 Report, (Borgonovi and Pál, 2016). Student well-being is the result of interactions among four distinct but closely related domains: psychological, social, cognitive, and physical. Each dimension can be considered both as an outcome and as an enabling condition concerning the other dimensions, and ultimately with students' overall quality of life (Borgonovi and Pál, 2016). The student well-being in this study refers to being satisfied with both the social and academic aspects of the college life.

The College of Science and Technology (CST) offers degree programmes in engineering (civil, electrical, communication, information technology and architecture) with a vision to achieve excellence in the field of science and technology, enriched with Bhutan's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) values (RUB, 2018). At CST, students remain academically engaged (lectures/tutorials/ practical) for more than 12 h a day and the college apparently seems to lack state-of-the-art facilities. Such practices could lead to a negative impact on student well-being and ultimately hamper their performance. Bhutanese college students experience mental health issues such as depression, stress, suicidal ideation, suicide attempt, drugs, and unsafe sex (Sherab et al., 2017; Sherab et al., 2019; Schuelka et al., 2021). This is an indication amongst others that generally there appears to be a lack of well-being among the university students in Bhutan. Recent research has claimed that there is not much support or resources for the mental health and well-being needs of the university students (Schuelka et al., 2021). However, it is currently unknown if the well-being needs of the CST students are being met and how this might impact on their college life.

Existing literature indicates that, in particular, technical students in 'technical' faculties/colleges tend to face a higher level of stress due to the complex nature of the discipline (Gerrard et al., 2017). Kember and Leung (2006) further argue that "while some amount of stress is desirable as a sign of study commitment, high distress level during studies is related to poor academic performance and declining empathy" (p.186). As a result, there could be an increasing trend in the student dropout rate, and an increase in anxiety and stress levels. For instance, the exam cell officer at CST has noted that, "we usually have more dropouts in the Autumn semester which has a combination of more difficult modules where the failure rate is higher (T. Denkar Personal Communication, October 30, 2021). Additionally, the exam result coordinator mentioned that approximately 5 to 6 students drop out every year (P. Dema, Personal Communication, October 30, 2021).

On the other hand, research suggests that students high in well-being demonstrate superior decision-making

skills, better interpersonal behaviours, and receive higher overall performance ratings than those low in well-being (Wright and Cropanzano, 2004). This is an indication that the university student well-being matters. Students may suffer due to exhaustion and lack of interest. Anecdotal evidence suggests that such issues are common in Bhutanese colleges, particularly in technical colleges. Stress is a parameter that is often ignored in academic institutes in Bhutan. Hence, the 'Happiness and Well-being' centres are being established at all college campuses to address the issue of student well-being (Schuelka et al., 2021) through various interventions. Interventions and necessary supports that enhance the students' abilities to handle stress can lead to improved functioning and an improvement in overall well-being that often leads to higher goal attainment by individuals (Bewick et al., 2010; Ryan and Deci, 2000).

There are issues in identifying measures of importance in this area. For example, The actual workload is a concept that is difficult to measure with any precision (Kember, 2006; Kember and Lueng, 2006). It could be defined as the scheduled class contact hours and the time required for understanding the course content and completing assignments (Kember 2006; Kember and Lueng, 2006; Kember et al., 2006). In this study, academic workload means the number of face-to-face teaching contact hours, assignments and projects, and independent study hours per week for a semester. Existing literature suggest that the student perceptions of heavy workload influenced students towards surface approaches to learning (Lizzio et al., 2002). At CST, a student has to fulfill an average of 60 credit hours per semester which is equivalent to five modules (12 credits each). A student has to dedicate 8 hour per module in a week including lecture, tutorial, practical, and independent study. In a typical week, a student will have 40 hour for their studies. Until the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching-learning in the Bhutanese context was mostly face-to-face. It is more likely that due to busy schedule in the college, stress is more prevalent among students. Such practices imply that the class hours add more to perceptions of overload than independent learning hours. Time spent on independent study decreases as contact hours increases and the data proved to have a negative exponential curve (Loeng, 2020; Kember, 2006). These results infer that decreasing class contact hours and increasing independent study hours improve learning outcomes. To enable adults to focus on self-directed learning that entails individuals taking initiative and responsibility for their own learning, teachers must be facilitators of learning not transmitters (Loeng, 2020, para.12). In addition, the way of teaching and the standard scheduled contact hours need to be addressed together in a curriculum design. The impact of academic workload on student well-being at CST is a grey area that has never been studied. Therefore, this research was designed to empirically find out if there is any link

Table 1. Demographic (N=385).

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	250	39.5
	Female	135	60.5
Year of study	1st year	187	48.6
	2nd Year	61	15.8
	3rd Year	64	16.6
	4th Year	54	14.0
	5th Year	19	4.9
Programme of study	Civil Engineering	125	32.5
	Architecture	94	24.4
	Electrical	15	3.9
	Information Technology	45	11.7
	Electronics and communications	51	13.2
	Instrumentation	24	6.2
Student status	Geology	31	8.1
	Pre-service	378	98.2
College tuition fee support	In-service	7	1.8
	Self-funding	90	23.4
	Government	288	74.8
	Others	7	1.8

between academic workload and well-being of CST students. Thus, the following research question was formulated: What is the CST students' perception of their academic workload and well-being?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a sequential mixed-methods approach (Cohen et al., 2011; Cooksey and MacDonald, 2019; Creswell and Plano, 2011; Ivankova et al., 2006) to capture the overall student perceptions of their well-being and academic workload. In the first phase, an online survey (n = 385) to understand the students' general perceptions on academic workload was carried out followed by a collection of qualitative data (n = 119) through course assignments in the second phase (the initial idea of face-to-face interview was not possible due to the Covid 19 restrictions). This assignment in the Academic Skills Module taught by the Principal Researcher was designed to generate detailed information about the issues identified in the survey results.

The online survey was designed and developed based on five prominent themes adapted from the 'Conceptual Model of Quality of College Life' (Sirgy et al., 2007) which includes- demographic information; social aspects of college life (27items); students' satisfaction level with college facilities and basic services (24items); and academic aspects of the college (44items). These themes were measured using a five-point scale (1=Very Dissatisfied; 2=Dissatisfied; 3= Somewhat Satisfied; 4= Satisfied and 5= Very Satisfied) for each item. It was designed to identify physical, social, and psychological well-being and understand the on-campus learning environment. The last set of questions contained several

single-item measures of well-being (13items), negative coping style (3items) and personality (10 items) and support system (3items). Each of these items were measured by a ten-point scale beginning with 'disagree strongly (1) to 'agree strongly' (10) the different aspects of a student's college life and their feelings about student well-being adapted from Williams et al. (2017) Students Well-being Questionnaire.

The online survey was completed by 385 students from a total of 1030 students in the college (response rate = 37.4%). Qualitative data in the form of student course assignment was collected from 119 students. The assignment question was titled: "*Academic workloads have detrimental effects on well-being and academic performance of students. To what extent, do you agree or disagree with this statement.*" Each student had to submit the response within 700–800-word limit.

Descriptive analysis was carried out for the survey data using SPSS and student academic essays were thematically analysed (Cooksey and McDonald, 2019). The assignment responses were used to identify patterns and to investigate the relationship between the students' general perceptions on academic workload and their well-being. Qualitative data were coded for the emergent themes with keywords/phrases and grouped into concepts. Prior ethics permission was obtained from the College authority and the informants were provided an information sheet. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms are used in the report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics

A total of 385 students representing all study programmes responded to this survey (Table 1).

Table 2. Social aspects of college life.

S/N	Theme	N	Mean	SD
1	Satisfaction with Housing (12items)	385	3.25	0.81
2	Satisfaction with Sports (7items)	384	3.25	0.88
3	Satisfaction with Recreational activities (5items)	383	3.08	0.92
4	Satisfaction with Spiritual programme (3items)	383	3.35	0.94

Table 3. College facilities and basic services.

S/N	Theme	N	Mean	SD
1	Satisfaction with Library (11items)	385	3.54	0.83
2	Satisfaction with On-campus facilities (10items)	385	3.38	0.92
3	Satisfaction with Tutor support (4items)	384	3.16	1.04

Presentation of themes

The findings are presented in terms of the following pre-identified themes from the survey instrument measuring various aspect of college life: *social aspects of college life, college facilities and basic services, academic aspects of the college, student well-being, negative coping style, personality, and support system*. The thesis statements of 119 assignments demonstrated that 90% of the students agreed that academic workloads do impact their well-being and academic performance while only 10% disagreed. The assignment was assessed for a total of 30 marks. The essays were broadly put into two categories - high (21.42 - 28 marks) and low (13-18 marks). There were a total of 45 students ranging from the least and the highest. Most of the points were extracted from the thesis, claims/arguments, topic sentences, examples, and conclusion for thematic analysis. Some of the emerging themes are presented along with the quantitative themes were - *Time management and deadlines, mental and physical health, academic achievement and dishonesty, workload and dropout rate*.

Social aspects of college life

The overall mean for this category is 3.23 (SD = 0.76) which is just above average (somewhat satisfied) with most students having a similar perception indicated by lower standard deviations (Table 2). This is an indication that these students are not satisfied with the college housing (room quality, location and convenience, water supply, electricity, cooling system, furniture, toilets, washing area, and Wi-Fi); sports (infrastructure, equipment, competitions, sports for all); recreational activities (concerts, cultural programmes, social gatherings, intramural sports, and other co-curricular activities); and spiritual programmes (spiritual life, worship, and ritual conduct (*choeshy layrim*)).

College facilities and basic services

The overall mean for this theme is 3.36 (SD = 0.83). The mean scores indicate that the tutor support (financial, sports, club activities, and counselling) was minimal as compared to the services provided by the library (staff, reference section, reserve desk, books, Wi-Fi, online databases, print journals, newspapers, and periodicals) and on-campus facilities such as cafeteria, shops, infirmary, ATM, Wi-Fi, bookstore, computer labs, workshops for practical, club activities, and counselling (Table 3). The slightly higher standard deviations also suggest that the students have differences in their perceptions when it comes to tutor support.

Academic aspects of the college

Faculty, teaching-learning methods, course content, student workload, and classrooms are important elements to enhance students' academic performance. The overall mean for this category is 3.43 (SD = 0.77). Student workload (M = 2.83; SD = 1.01) and academic performance (M = 3.42; SD = 0.91) scored the least (Table 4). This is an indication that students are not satisfied with the assignments, class schedule, personal study time, time demand for each module, and the impact of on-going tests. However, the scores for other academic aspects are also not encouraging as all sub-themes such as satisfaction with faculty, teaching methods, course content, classroom, and academic performance scored below satisfactory level.

Qualitative data from student assignments revealed several academic related issues such as time management, assignment deadlines, academic achievement and dishonesty, workload, and dropout rate. It is evident that many students find it difficult to manage their time as they have to submit many assignments at around the same time. More than six students found it

Table 4. Academic aspects of the college.

S/N	Theme	N	Mean	SD
1	Satisfaction with Faculty (17items)	384	3.58	0.91
2	Satisfaction with Teaching methods (11items)	385	3.55	0.85
3	Satisfaction with Course content (3items)	385	3.70	0.90
4	Satisfaction with a Student workload (7items)	385	2.83	1.01
5	Satisfaction with Classroom (7items)	385	3.51	0.87
6	Satisfaction with Academic performance (5items)	385	3.42	0.91

illogical that the amount of time required for the students to study and the number of academic tasks does not intersect, which puts them under pressure, and they even become self-suspicious of their abilities. One student commented, "when numerous tasks are assigned and all the deadlines are on the same day, it becomes difficult for us to complete on time. As a result, it causes a feeling of nervousness or anxiousness and stress". Many students tend to work beyond their physical limits to meet assignment deadlines, study for examinations, and manage other works, which weakens their concentration levels and perform poorly in academics. Discussing the heavy academic workload and how it impacts their leisure time, a student argued: "heavy academic workload has negative impact, as it put students under constant pressure, limits our leisure time which leads to the deterioration of health. With much time spent on workload, we do not find enough leisure time, which is necessary since it helps us to relax".

Furthermore, many students shared that the academic workload restricts their ability to participate in other co-curricular activities. They are apparently left with limited free time to talk to their friends and family, nor do they have enough time to explore subjects of interest. The 1st year students faced difficulties assimilating a vast amount of academic material in a short period, and they were required to develop effective study techniques and habits to cope with the volume of materials assigned to them. One student wished that "if a student had 100% energy and resources such as time and willpower to work on a single assignment at a time, the quality of that assignment would be excellent." However, a few students shared that the reality at CST is that students have to complete a written assignment, make a presentation, and simultaneously prepare for the test, which forces them to divide their energy and resources and submit poor quality work. Another student is of the view that when they have to meet the academic demands at the cost of their leisure time, it impacts on time for developing interpersonal skills and maintaining social relationships. In the long run, some students may develop health problems and, their academic performance gradually decreases. One of the students stated that, "excessive hours of engagement in the [academic] work can lead to exhaustion which will

lead to deterioration of the physical and mental health." According to some of these students, the heavy academic workload also contributes to poor performance as they have to complete and submit the assignments in haste, without acquiring proper knowledge of the topic.

One of the disadvantages of the heavy workload that became evident in this study is academic dishonesty. One student said that "due to a busy schedule, we are in hurry to complete the assignments and copy-paste from other sources for the sake of submitting the task." Similarly, another student reveals, "the academic workload is a root cause of plagiarism." Another student supports, "when students experience a heavy workload with less time for completion, they copy works of others" or let others do it for them. Two students indicated that when they have many tasks, they prefer doing nothing, or sometimes they do it for the sake of doing and will have little to takeaway.

Thus, some students view the academic tasks as something that must be completed on designated dates rather than as a means to learn. Furthermore, one student articulated an important societal issue of how Bhutanese parents pressurise their children when it comes to academic performance and even how society judge students according to their examination marks. Now that Bhutan is experiencing high internet use, a few students raised the issue of how they become dependent on the internet for their assignments without much learning.

According to some students, mental and physical health issues caused by the heavy workload have led to an increase in the dropout rates in the College. Another student was of the view that "workload is the main factor that affects students' mental health and academic achievement. This is mainly because most of the students consider academic workload as burdensome making them tensed and some even had to drop out of the university." Heavy workload often leads students to question their decision to pursue higher education when they could do small side hustles and have time to learn other skills. A few students also raised a concern that great numbers of their peers have lost their life to unmanageable academic workloads and when they fail to live to the expectations of family, teachers, and

institutions. Moreover, many students shared that they lose interest to learn, procrastinate, adopt bad learning approaches, and some even withdraw. One student argues, "When students easily doubt their ability at a young age and decide to drop out, it not only affects their life but is a great loss to the nation."

Student well-being

There were thirteen sets of questions related to their self-esteem, depression, their relation to self and others, their perspective to their future, and attitude in their community. A composite mean of 6.2 and SD 1.35 supports that most of the students have perceptions that their overall well-being is above average. However, there are opportunities to improve self-esteem, look forward and enjoy things that they do, get along well with friends, experience positive feelings, be optimistic, feel confident about one's ability, avoid being laid-back about one's work, show interest in new ideas, and avoid negative feelings. It is apparent from the qualitative findings that heavy workload can affect the mental and physical well-being of students. According to one student, "we have to struggle without enough sleep, which leads to loss of weight, exhaustion, stomach problems, headaches, and fatigue. Students who are doing more work do not mean that they are learning more." Many students do seem to understand that lack of sleep, anxiety, and depression affects their self-esteem and self-confidence, and weakens immune system, impacting the overall well-being. There is also evidence to show that students experience stress, nervousness and anxiousness, depression, and low self-esteem.

Many students were also of the view that prolonged and severe stress may be psychologically damaging in that it may hinder a person's ability to engage in effective behaviour. Fear and anxiety of failure due to consistent workload make students skip regular meals. Such practices could be detrimental to students' overall health. The impact of heavy workload has been well summarised by one of the students. Students run to make it to class on time. Since classes are scheduled one after another, there is little or no time to eat withstanding the work and assignments one has, and one becomes overwhelmed, nervous, depressed, and unmotivated, which can lead to sleep deprivation and behavioural changes. It would also push a student to see academics as a negative part of his/her life.

A number of students believed that the excess academic work may help them achieve successful grades in the short term, but it is pertinent to realise that they may struggle with health issues, and their academic performance could be affected in the long term.

One student commented, "I do agree that we tend to get much more works in college than we were in high school." When students graduate high school and enrol

in colleges, the whole system of teaching-learning is different. Students may not be ready for such a huge change. Another student argued, "the workload imposed upon the students can reduce their productivity. When the workload is too large, the task starts becoming difficult, which leads to stress and loss of concentration." Such concerns are genuine and stakeholders need to understand that more is not always better. Many students are aware that, "stress is the causative agent for all sorts of diseases." There is also evidence that when students are not able to cope with their workload, they resort to alcohol and drugs to relieve their mind and body, which can be associated with changes in their attitudes toward life and studies. According to some students, mental health has become a serious issue as there is an increase in suicide incidents among youths in Bhutan. Not being able to cope with these problems, they tend to seek relief by abusing drugs and alcohol, while some even have suicidal ideation. The presence of stress amongst the college students became evident when one student reported, "during the general briefing of the college, councillors greeted and welcomed us to the college as *College of Severe Tension*."

In addition, some students noted that mental and physical health issues caused by the heavy workload have led to an increase in the dropout rates in the college. Another student is of the view that "workload is the main factor that affects students' mental health and academic achievement. This is mainly because most of the students consider academic workload as burdensome making them tensed and some even had to drop out of the university." Heavy workload often leads students to question their decision to pursue higher education when they could do small side hustles and have time to learn other skills. A few students also raised a concern that great numbers of students have lost their life to unmanageable academic workloads and when they fail to live to the expectations of family, teachers, and institutions. Moreover, many students shared that they lose interest to learn, procrastinate, adopt bad learning approaches, and some even withdraw. One student argues, "When students easily doubt their ability at a young age and decide to drop out, it not only affects their life but is a great loss to the nation."

Negative coping style

Most students do not seem to cope well during stressful situations (Table 5). They may blame themselves, look forward to a miracle to happen, or try to avoid the situation, hoping that the situation will disappear by itself, or all of these. Such findings suggest that college students need to learn positive coping strategies during stressful situations by not avoiding the situation, seeking support, socialising, and doing something worthwhile.

Table 5. Negative coping style.

Theme	N	M	SD
14. Blame self- When I find myself in stressful situations, I blame myself (such as, I criticize or lecture myself, I realise I brought the problem on myself).	385	6.50	2.38
15. Wishful thinking- When I find myself in stressful situations, I wish for things to improve (such as, I hope a miracle will happen, I wish I could change things about myself or circumstances, I daydream about a better situation).	385	7.63	2.16
16. Avoidance- When I find myself in stressful situations, I try to avoid the problem (such as, I keep things to myself, I go on as if nothing has happened, I try to make myself feel better by eating/drinking/smoking).	385	6.29	2.51

Table 6. Personality (happy, anxious, and stress).

Item	N	M	SD
24. On a scale of one to ten, how happy would you say you are in general?	385	6.64	1.87
25. On a scale of one to ten, how anxious would you say you are in general? (such as, feeling tense or 'wound up', unable to relax, feelings of worry or panic)	385	6.44	2.13
26. Overall, how stressful is your life?	385	6.71	2.17

Personality

Personality related topics included their attitude to learning, openness, sympathy, optimism, relaxation, reliability, creativity, and satisfaction in life. Without many variations among the participants, the average mean is 6.43 with SD 1.16. This is an indication that CST students on average have reliable personalities and are satisfied with their life. However, students could still improve their personality by being more optimistic, sympathetic, reliable, not being jealous, open to new ideas, contended with life, and being sociable.

Personality- happy, anxious, and stress

Personality traits such as how happy and stressful were measured by three items (Table 6). The mean scores for being happy, anxious, and stressful were on a higher side indicating that the students were happy, did not feel anxious, and stressed. However, the findings also indicate that the college could do more to make the students happier and avoid tension and stress.

Support system

Support during stressful time is a basic need for students and with a mean of 7.43 and SD 1.85, most of the students had at least a person who supports them during their difficult times.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is the first of its kind to attempt to understand the CST students' perceptions of well-being and workload. As shown by the existing literature, dissatisfaction with the learning environment, heavy workload, and insufficient feedback are associated with problems for student well-being (Dahlin et al., 2010; Schuelka et al., 2021). Similarly, the findings of this study provide insights into the existing practices at CST. Like many, if not most, educational environment around the world, the College could consider strategic interventions and revamp some of the practices to address the mental health needs of students.

First, findings from this study demonstrate that the students were not satisfied as they could be with their college social life. This is an indication that the College might explore ways of improving the quality of on-campus housing (room quality, maintenance, water in the dorms, cooling system, furniture, toilets, washing area, and Wi-Fi); sports infrastructure, and 'sports for all, recreational activities (cultural programmes, concerts, social gatherings, sports, and co-curricular activities); and spiritual programmes at the earliest as the college student's social well-being is of utmost importance. As indicated by the existing literature poor infrastructure is likely to negatively impact the academic performance of the students (Walker, 2009). However, it is beyond the scope of this study to ascertain the relationship between social well-being and the academic performance of the students. This may be of interest to future researchers.

Second, findings indicate that there are issues related to college facilities and basic services. There appears to be some concern around tutor support in terms of finance, sports, club activities, and counselling. This may be because of low teacher-student interaction in the class or outside the classroom. Without positive student-teacher interaction, it is unlikely that teachers understand the problems students face. Students also raised some issues with the library (staff, availability of books and references, Wi-Fi, availability of periodicals and non-periodicals) and other on-campus facilities (cafeteria, shop/s, infirmary, ATM, bookstore, labs, and workshops). The course demands students to spend about three quarters of their day in theoretical and practical work, leaving limited off hours to discuss or raise and explore their doubts and concerns. While conducting this study, most students attended offline classes from Monday to Saturday without a break in between for both teachers and students to compensate for the teaching-learning hours lost during the COVID-19 pandemics. This may be one of the valid reasons for students to find classes overwhelming and stressful as significantly noticed from the respondents' experiences. Sometimes, minor or elective module tutors would also let major subject tutors conduct their classes during off-hours to complete the syllabus. Lessons were taught in two modes of delivery as; tutorial and lecture classes. Despite having access to WiFi, Library references, or books; students still preferred to have more counselling programmes, sports, and club activities as their recreational activities after their class hours. The college has two volleyball courts, one football field, one basketball court, two badminton courts, and three table tennis boards in the hostels. These playing areas are mostly occupied by the male staff and/or male students. This situation appears to have possible remedy with students and staff engaging in exploring options together.

Third, the finding reveals that many students were not happy with their *workload* in terms of a number of assignments, time for personal study, class schedule, time demand for each module, and the ongoing tests. The majority of the students agreed that academic workload has a detrimental effect on student well-being and academic performance. As many respondents resorted to plagiarising from apparently credible source without comprehending the topic assigned. Findings indicate that due to excessive hours of engagement in academic works, there are mental and physical health issues such as exhaustion, stress, depression, suicidal thoughts, dropouts, and lack of social life. This corroborates with earlier findings of Gerrard et al. (2017) that technical students are stressed with academic workload. The heavy workload and stress also lead to reduced productivity (Kember and Leung, 2006) as students are not able to concentrate on a particular task. Lizzio et al. (2002) found that student perceptions of heavy workload lead to a superficial approach to learning.

This raises concerns that heavy workloads lead to academic dishonesty in completing the tasks which has further implications.

The student perceptions of other academic aspects of the college such as satisfaction with faculty (overall quality, teaching quality, subject knowledge, commitment, empathy, role model, feedback, caring, patience); teaching methods (individual differences, student-centred methods, technology, teaching-learning materials); course content (relevancy to the job market); classroom (furniture, location, lighting, class size, cooling system, Wi-Fi); and academic performance were somewhat more positive, although there seems to be plenty of opportunities for improvement. It was indicated that most students had difficulty in adjusting to the timing and meeting of their requirements to prepare for the tests or assignments efficiently. It is likely that when the tutors have more than three modules to teach, this could apparently lead to a lack of preparedness and ineffective delivery of their lessons; more lecture and less activity-based teaching classes. When it comes to classroom strength, as compared to other programmes, the Civil Engineering Department has more students and classes are mostly conducted in the lecture theatre comprising more than 70-80 students. Such practice could lead to an ineffective learning environment. Through general observation most minor modules such as science, mathematics, and humanities are also taught in large in large groups. The hard-core technical modules are taught in small groups or sections as per the academic calendar. Although there is no research carried out, it is evident that students taught in large groups perform at below average levels. "One of the merits of small class teaching reform is that teachers can better handle individual differences in the classroom" (Pow & Wong, 2017, p.74) This issue requires consideration for better overall outcomes.

Fourth, as per the findings, apart from teaching-learning; students might be inclined to ignore or devalue their self-esteem, depression, their relation to self and others, prospective to their future, and attitude in their community that might lead to poor academic performance. However, it was found that student perception on overall well-being is above average but could benefit from an increased emphasis on ways to improve students' self-esteem, supporting them while carrying out any events, and motivating them to be optimistic and confident about the future, and appreciating for the kind of work they do and new ideas. For instance, some work was done to trace the employment rate of graduate students of CST. While the college programmes are based on current market job requirements, internal research has indicated that employment outcomes vary greatly. The study indicated that 98% of students from Information and Technology (IT) Department were employed; comparatively, more than Departments of Electronics and Communication

Engineering (ECE) with 75%, Electrical Engineering (EE) with 79%, and Architecture and Civil Department with 81% (T. Lhendup, personal communication, March 18, 2021). This invites the educators to question, examine and investigate why other departments could not be at par.

Fifth, findings from the current study indicated that many undergraduate students were experiencing difficulties in coping with negative emotions during stressful situations. Therefore, it is crucial students be assisted to develop robust coping mechanisms rather than blaming themselves, waiting for a miracle to happen, or avoiding the situation and hoping that it will disappear by itself. Students need to feel encouraged and supported to acquire positive coping strategies to help confront stressful situations, seek support and counselling, engage in positive socializing, and keep engaged in activities, be more reliable, optimistic, open minded, content and sociable. The findings on the personality trait of students reveal that they need to be specifically more reliable, optimistic, open-minded, and sociable with contented ideas.

Sixth, it is apparent that colleges such as CST can develop a better learning environment for those students who experience stressful situations by adapting formative assessments with less reliance on summative assessments. To address some of the current practices at CST, students sit for two-term tests, several assignments, and internal semester examination; in addition, lab/practical work, report writing, and case studies. Therefore, when students have too much on their plates, they may prepare and write/respond exams or tests on a surface level. To minimise their take-home tasks as and when their module tutor demands; a few heads of the departments have maintained assignment deadline schedules to do away with clashes and align with students' assignments timings. Due to this, most students also submit their assignments without proper layout or meaningful paper development/write-up just before deadlines and submit like the draft especially for language papers. In the context of academic procrastination and academic performance, Balkis and Duru (2017), noted that the students who procrastinate would have poor academic performance and are more likely to complete assignments after submission deadlines and prepare for examination at the last minute. As a result, the essence and quality is compromised and students below average or less. Stevens (2018) recommends that it is important to provide meaningful learning opportunities; instructors need strategies for balancing educators' workloads at the same time. There are five strategies for creating assignments and activities that promote learning without overwhelming instructional workload such as: anticipating student questions when writing assignments, creating reusable formative assessments, scaffolding assignments, creating choices for summative assessments and encouraging student

collaboration. These strategies practice the constructivist approach where learning is considered as an active practice in which learners construct their knowledge. Designing strategic interventions, for instance, student well-being interventions such as stress management techniques, has been found effective with university students (Flinchbaugh, et al., 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Conclusion

The current study examined the college students' perceptions of academic workload and well-being. Evidence from the study raises concerns that a lack of attention to student well-being and health can lead to both short-term and long-term impacts that can be life-threatening. It is timely that all RUB colleges now have established 'Happiness and Well-being Centre' where students are provided with support services. In addition, it is important for the College to seriously consider some of the issues identified such as campus facilities, academic workload, student assignments, faculty, and social life. These are critical elements of a university student that must be provided utmost attention; otherwise, the consequences would be fatal. It is apparent that some of these issues may not even appear during the college days but much later in their life, which would be too late to address by then.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest.

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