

**Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic
On The Concepts Of Masculinities
A Case Study From The Community
Of Kuri In Islamabad Capital Territory**

Authors:

**Dr. Syed Asad Ali Shah
Syed Ali Salman**



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ACRONYMS

CDA: Capital Development Authority

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

GBV: Gender based Violence

GEM Scale: Gender-Equitable Men Scale

IUIC: Iqra University Islamabad Campus

PIMS: Pakistan institute of Medical Sciences

UN: United Nations

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
ACRONYMS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
TABLE OF FIGURES	iv
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	vi
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Literature Review	3
1.2 About Kuri Community	7
1.3 Hegemonic Masculinities	7
2. METHODOLOGY	9
2.1 Data	9
2.1.1 Qualitative Data	9
2.1.2 Quantitative Data	9
3. RESULTS & ANALYSIS	14
3.1 Economic and Financial Pressures	14
3.2 Family Relations	18
3.2.1 Household Work Pressure	18
3.2.2 Decision Making at Household Level	20
3.2.3 Perception and preference before and during COVID-19 pandemic	22
3.2.4 Roles and Responsibilities at Home	25
3.3 Socialization	32
3.3.1 GEM Scale during COVID-19	33
3.4 Health and Wellbeing	41
4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	49
4.1 Recommendations	52

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Sex-wise Distribution of Respondents	10
Figure 2: Age-wise Distribution.....	10
Figure 3: Cross Tabulation: Age and Sex	11
Figure 4: Cross Tabulation: Marital Status and Sex	11
Figure 5: Level of Education.....	12
Figure 6: Number of Family Members.....	13
Figure 7: Livelihood Occupation	13
Figure 8: Source of Support during COVID-19	14
Figure 9: Ability of the Family to Meet ends with Income before & after COVID-19 Pandemic	15
Figure 10: Cross Tabulation: Sex and Difficulty faced in Meeting the Expenses before COVID-19.....	16
Figure 11: Cross Tabulation: Sex and Difficulty faced in Meeting the Expenses during COVID-19	16
Figure 12: Threat of Losing Job due to COVID-19	17
Figure 13: Frequently Stressed or Depressed due to COVID-19.....	17
Figure 14: Support in HH Work by Men during COVID-19 Pandemic.....	19
Figure 15: Men’s Support in HH Chores during COVID-19 Pandemic in Community of Kuri.....	19
Figure 16: HH Work Pressure on Men before & during COVID-19 Pandemic	20
Figure 17: Decision about Investment/Purchase before & during COVID-19 Pandemic.....	21
Figure 18: Decision about Schooling of Children before & during COVID-19 Pandemic.....	22
Figure 19: Birth Celebration: Men/Boys Preference before & during COVID-19 Pandemic	23
Figure 20: Less free Time due to Earning Activities: Men/Boys Preference before & during COVID-19 Pandemic.....	24
Figure 21: Comparison of Freedom of Going out of Home for Men and Women before & during COVID- 19 Pandemic.....	25
Figure 22: Division of Work before & during COVID-19: Preparing Food.....	26
Figure 23: Division of Work before & during COVID-19: Washing Clothes	27
Figure 24: Division of Work before & during COVID-19: Fetching Water.....	28
Figure 25: Division of Work before & during COVID-19: Shopping for Groceries	28
Figure 26: Division of Work before & during COVID-19: Controlling Budgets.....	29
Figure 27: Division of Work before & during COVID-19: Community Meetings.....	30
Figure 28: Thinking towards Division of Labor before COVID-19 Pandemic	31
Figure 29: Thinking towards Division of Labor during COVID-19 Pandemic.....	31
Figure 30: Final Say on Decision about Wife Going out before & after COVID-19 Pandemic	32
Figure 31: Final Say on Decision about Wife Visiting her Parents before & after COVID-19 Pandemic.....	33
Figure 32: GEM: More rights for Women mean that Men lose out	34
Figure 33: GEM: We have already Achieved Equality between Women and Men	34
Figure 34: GEM: A woman’s most Important role is to take care of the home and cook for the Family...	35
Figure 35: GEM: A Man should have the Final Word about Decisions in the Home.	35
Figure 36: GEM: There are times when a Woman deserves to be beaten.....	36
Figure 37: GEM: To be a Man, you need to be tough.....	37
Figure 38: GEM: Changing diapers, giving baths to Children, and feeding Children are the Mother’s Responsibility, not the Father’s.	37

Figure 39: GEM: A Woman should Tolerate Violence to keep the Family together.....	38
Figure 40: GEM: Boys are responsible for punishing the bad behavior of their Sisters, even if they are younger than their Sisters.....	39
Figure 41: GEM: Women who work outside the home cannot also be good Wives or Mothers.....	39
Figure 42: GEM: The Participation of the Father is important in raising Children	40
Figure 43: GEM: It's important for Men to have Friends to talk about their problems	41
Figure 44: Emotional Health: Feel inferior to other during COVID-19 with regards to their support to family.....	42
Figure 45: Emotional Health: During the last three months did you feel Depression.....	42
Figure 46: Emotional Health: During the last three months did you experience Suicidal Thoughts.....	43
Figure 47: Emotional Health: During the last three months did you experience Indigestion/Stomach Problems	43
Figure 48: HSB: Regular Health Seeking Behavior during COVID-19 Pandemic.....	44
Figure 49: HSB: Reasons for seeking health services last time	44
Figure 50: Emotional Health: Feel Satisfied with my body during COVID-19 Pandemic	45
Figure 51: Emotional Health: My life is of no use for anyone during COVID-19 Pandemic.....	46
Figure 52: Emotional Health: Seek Psychological Counseling/Help when feeling Sad, Disappointed or Frustrated.....	46
Figure 53: Emotional Health: Sources of Psychological Counseling/Help when feeling Sad, Disappointed or Frustrated	47
Figure 54: Emotional Health: Ever sought Emotional Health Services for Treatment of Mental Health Problems	47
Figure 55: Emotional Health: What type of Emotional Health Services were sought	48

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Coronavirus pandemic has sabotaged not only societies but economies at large. The health emergency casted an impact on men's emotional and mental health as well. This research attempts to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the self-image of men, especially in relation to the prevalent cultural masculine concepts, such as bread winning, socialization, decision making at various levels, role as the head of the household etc.

The research employed a mixed method approach to collect data in two phases: quantitative data was collected from 120 individuals (90 males and 30 females) via structured surveys, whereas the qualitative data was collected through three focus group discussions (FGDs) and six in-depth interviews (IDIs) from selected key informants of the Kuri village.

The results show that almost every household in the village faced financial issues due to the COVID-19 driven lockdown. The Kuri community also reported a range of problems related to family relations and socialization during that period.

People spent most of their time at home, resulting in several incidents of domestic violence, as uncovered in the interviews and FGDs conducted for this research. Strict restrictions on social gatherings added further to mental stress.

According to the interviews conducted in this research, half of the community believed that extending more rights to women would result in men losing out, while 60% perceived that men and women have achieved equality in their lives.

On the other hand, 65% of the respondents believed that women's primary role is to manage household chores, and almost 60% of respondents said that men should have the decision-making authority at homes and families.

Although 49% of the respondents disagreed that women sometimes deserve to be beaten, 38% agreed to it. Expectations from women to tolerate the violence was also found to be alarmingly high in the community.

On the bright side, the community acknowledged the role of men in nurturing the children, i.e. the role of the father and the mother towards the kids is equally important. People also agreed that it was essential for men and boys to vent out their problems and worries.

An overwhelming majority of men and boys, i.e., nearly 75%, felt inferior regarding their ability to financially support their families amidst the pandemic. Around 70% of them reported feeling depressed at least sometimes, and an alarming 59% reported having suicidal thoughts at least once during the last three months at the time of data collection.

Around 66% of men and boys sought health services during the Coronavirus crisis, mainly for ailments like seasonal flu and fever. However, the researchers fortunately did not encounter any patient of coronavirus during data collection.

The virus outbreak also affected their self-image, with a significantly high number of men and boys convinced that their lives were of no use for others during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Almost 78% of male respondents reported seeking psychological help, primarily from friends and family members. Only about 17%, however, conveyed pursuing professional services. A deeper investigation further revealed that half of the aforementioned 17% consulted regular medical doctors, while the rest of them approached mental health professionals.

All in all, the research provided a good insight into the domestic lives of the natives of the Kuri community. The current pandemic has not been kind to anyone, including the male population. This study helped us identify those links to better understand the cause and effects between the two. The research study intends to benefit the intervening organizations (NGOs, INGOs) in devising an intervention that could potentially help men cope with the economic burden attributed to the health emergency without adverse behavioural anomalies.

1. INTRODUCTION

R.W. Connell's gender order theory refers to Hegemonic Masculinity as a social pattern in which stereotypically male traits are idealized as the masculine cultural ideal, explaining how and why men maintain dominant social roles over women and other groups considered to be feminine¹. The theory has been used over the years to study men's health, attitudes, and behaviors, including the use of violence.

Hegemonic Masculinity is one of many types of masculinities that exist in societies like Pakistan. The idea of Hegemonic Masculinity is different in every culture and is derived from the cumulative consensus of individuals. It sees contribution from two different, but co-existing components of a society – one comprising of those that benefit from its promotion, and another that faces oppression because of it, including women in particular.

Hegemonic Masculinity is often considered as an ideal expression of manhood in societies. Hence, therefore, countless men attempt to absorb this ideal or replicate it in their male associates. This gives rise to another question: could the masculinity attributed to the structurally subordinate men of the society be considered hegemonic as well? In this regard, Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) explain that there is always a possibility of more than one Hegemonic Masculinities existing within a single society, even in the subordinate groups.

Even though the concept has been used in gender studies since the early 1980s, Hegemonic Masculinity still has the world in its talons despite globalization in recent years. The situation, as such, is not much different in Pakistan either.

During the pandemic there has been a significant increase in cases of violence against women and girls, particularly of domestic violence. As lockdown measures were put in place to contain the spread of the virus, women with violent partners increasingly found themselves isolated from people and resources that could help them. The Secretary General United Nation said that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an untold human suffering and economic devastation around the world.

"We know lockdowns and quarantines are essential to suppressing COVID-19. But they can trap women with abusive partners. Over the past weeks as economic and social pressures and fear have grown, we have seen a horrifying global surge in domestic violence. In some countries, the number of women calling support services has doubled. Meanwhile, healthcare providers and police are overwhelmed and understaffed. Local support groups are paralyzed or short of funds. Some domestic violence shelters are closed; others are full. I urge all

¹ Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & society*, 19(6), 829-859.

governments to make the prevention and redress of violence against women a key part of their national response plans for COVID-19.”

UN Secretary General²

The worldwide human rights organizations unanimously agree that patriarchal norms are an eminent barrier to women empowerment. To that end, for the tangible progress in women’s empowerment to be realized, it is crucial to focus on keeping the toxic masculine attitudes in check.

An Islamabad-based social organization, Rozan, collaborated with the Iqra University to conduct a survey on the Kuri Community that explored how Coronavirus pandemic might contribute to the hegemonic masculinity.

Rozan was officially registered in December 1998 under the Societies Act of 1860 and was awarded the tax-exemption status in 2005. Rozan has been working with Kuri village since 2017 to curb the issues of violence in the community through awareness raising and sensitization activities with men and women.

Located at roughly 15km from central Islamabad, Kuri is a village connected with the economic hub via a well-developed network of roads that makes it fairly convenient for the inhabitants to travel to and from the main city.

The village inhabits over roughly 5,500 people (53.30% women, 46.70% men) and accommodates 700 households. The Kuri Community primarily earns its livelihood through agricultural means, but many of the villagers are daily wagers as well. Other than that, a small proportion also holds government or private sector jobs.

Kuri does not house a health facility of its own, but villagers can easily seek primary to tertiary healthcare at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) or the Capital Development Authority (CDA) Hospital, both of which are located at about a thirty-minute drive. Education up to matriculation is available within the village at two schools; one for boys and another for girls. Moreover, there are five privately run co-education schools where students can get education up to 8th grade. However, for higher education, students are required to travel to the main city.

The survey studied the impact of the pandemic on the self-image of men in the Kuri Community, their relationships in public and private spheres, and also the coping mechanisms that they have deployed amidst the ongoing health crisis.

COVID-19 was first reported in Pakistan on February 26th 2020, with a sharp increase in morbidity seen later in March. Globally, the pandemic pushed governments into imposing national

² The Secretary-General's Statement on Gender-Based Violence and COVID19, New York, 5 April 2020

lockdowns, causing businesses to lay off millions of workers – a catastrophe that is unmatched in history.

Sociologically, culture tends to shift under the influence of foreign encroachment or a momentous event like that of the coronavirus emergency. Rozan’s research, therefore, set out to examine the manifestation of masculinity in the context of the ongoing pandemic.

The survey aimed at exploring if the COVID-19 crisis was affecting communities, how the Pakistani men expressed masculinity; if the economic burden attributed to the health emergency was causing a behavioral change in men.

1.1 Literature Review

The world at the moment is facing an unprecedented threat from COVID-19. The threat is not only to live but also an economic meltdown. The economic impact of COVID-19 is unparalleled to any other in the past as it has challenged the idea of globalization. IMF in its “World Economic Outlook” released in April 2020 described the present crisis worse than the 2008–2009 financial crisis. It is anticipated that the global economy will shrink by -3% in 2020. Even if the COVID-19 pandemic regresses after June 2020, the global economy will still only grow by around 5% in 2021. Many people around the world are not only facing an economic downturn but the virus itself is playing havoc in the lives of people. The situation is a page out of history books and people are struggling to come to terms with the new normal and learning to survive.

The world has faced many natural disasters in the past and people have shown resilience to fight off adversity. Disaster affects boys, girls, women and men differently, as they have different vulnerabilities. These differences are visible on how each section experiences the disaster but also how early can they recover from the unfortunate event. The more vulnerable and marginalized groups in society are usually hit the worst. Neumayer and Pluemper (2007)³ in their study of the gap in life expectancy of men and women during disaster found that disasters discriminate against the women, as they are usually the worst affected. This is not only due to the physical and biological factors but also because of the social roles that men and women have to play.

As the impact of disasters is gender-based, it is necessary to understand the concept of gender. According to UNDP report⁴ on “Gender and Disaster,” gender has a very broad meaning. It determines the expectations and values of a woman or a man under certain circumstances. How

³ Neumayer, E. and Pluemper, T. (2007). The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: The Impact of Catastrophic Events on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy, 1981–2002.

⁴ Gender and Disasters - UNDP. (n.d.). Retrieved November 22, 2020, from <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/crisis%20prevention/disaster/7Disaster%20Risk%20Reduction%20-%20Gender.pdf>

a man or woman reacts in a given situation is predetermined in the society. Kimmel (2000)⁵ explains that the reaction of men and women differ from country to country and culture to culture. Masculinities and femininities are the specific roles that are socially constructed and meaning given to the relationship between men and women. These relationships also cover the interactions among men and women themselves.

Kimmel (2000)⁶ in his book “The gendered Society” is of the view that different cultures have a different outlook about men and women. These differences lead to gender inequalities in society. Gender is not just an innate quality but it is derived from the society itself and the basic institutions of society, starting from family. Masculinities and femininities arise from these fundamental differences.

Franklin (2012)⁷, in his book “The Changing Definition of Masculinity”, when discussing the basic concept of sex, defines gender as an “achieved status”. This status is achieved through social interactions and is based on cultural and psychological elements. According to Franklin (2012), masculinity and femininities are a direct outcome of human experiences and learning. Male and female roles are predefined and everyone tends to behave and feel as is required by the social norms.

Connell (2002)⁸ identifies not one but many masculinities that can exist in a given cultural setting, workplace, neighborhood, peer group etc. In some cultures, soldiers can be portrayed as heroes; whereas in another culture, they can be looked down upon. The meaning of masculinity is different in the working class from the middle class, rich and poor etc. Some form of masculinities may be considered more honorable than others and the dominant masculinity is called the “hegemonic masculinity”. The hegemonic masculinity is not just dominant over other masculinities but also all genders representing the power and imbalance in the sharing of resources.

Lomas (2013)⁹ very rightly points out that masculinity is usually associated with dominance, control, toxicity and someone who craves to damage others. In his work, he tries to find and discuss ways in which men can find more constructive ways to use their masculinity. It is this positive masculinity that needs to be emphasized and studied.

As we have established that men and women react differently to disasters. Women usually take the role of caretakers and men have to ensure the security and availability of resources for

⁵ Kimmel, M. S. (2000). *The gendered society*. Oxford University Press, USA

⁶ Kimmel, M. S. (2000). *The gendered society*. Oxford University Press, USA

⁷ Franklin II, C. W. (2012). *The changing definition of masculinity*. Springer Science & Business Media.

⁸ Connell, R. W. (2002). On hegemonic masculinity and violence: Response to Jefferson and Hall. *Theoretical criminology*, 6(1), 89-99.

⁹ Lomas, T. (2013). Critical positive masculinity. *Masculinities & Social Change*, 2(2), 167-193.

survival. Women usually suffer not only because of health and nutritional issues but also safety issues. As WHO reports that in societies where girls are not valued, a disaster may be fatal for the surviving girls. WHO fact sheet reported an incidence, during floods in Bangladesh, where a father chose to save a son over a daughter.

WHO also reports that the issues, men face are different because of the masculine role that is attributed or expected from them, when a disaster hits. Men's role as protector and provider puts undue pressure on them. In the USA during Hurricane Andrew, many men reported feeling depressed and inadequate. Many Sudanese men died in the refugee camps because they did not know how to cook and could not ask others. UNDP report on Gender and Health reports men asking women to go and get aid as they were too proud to go and ask for aid.

Coming to the present epidemic, men are facing a unique challenge as the COVID-19 is predominantly biased towards men. Ewig (2020)¹⁰ reported in "The Gender Policy Report" that 64% of men have died of COVID-19. She emphasizes to take into account the problem that men are facing specific dangers due to the spread of COVID-19. WHO has reported 58% of men dying of COVID-19 and this is irrespective of the fact that spread of infection is the same for men and women.

Ruxton and Burrell (2020)¹¹, in their work, try to connect masculinity with COVID-19, found that men avoid health facilities and ignore health issues, especially COVID-19 symptoms, because they are required to be tough, resourceful, and self-reliant. This attitude also leads to not wearing masks and following the social distancing SOPs. Palmer and Peterson (2020)¹², in their research, found that many men refuse to wear the mask as it represents femininity, as masculinity means toughness, and this directly leads to the refusal of wearing masks. Ruxton and Burrell (2020)¹³ have reported men's same attitude towards masks and they also found that men were more averse to washing hands.

Ruxton and Burrell (2020)¹⁴ discuss the mental issues rising due to long-term lockdowns and isolation. During this time people need to seek help, which the men are less likely to do as they feel that it will make them look weak. COVID-19 has hit hard on the economy of all countries and the world financial markets are in a recession. Many people are unemployed and the majority of

¹⁰ Ewig, C. (2020, April 01). Gender, Masculinity, and COVID-19. Retrieved November 22, 2020, from <https://genderpolicyreport.umn.edu/gender-masculinity-and-covid-19/>

¹¹ Ruxton, S., & Burrell, S. R. (2020). Masculinities and COVID-19: making the connections. Washington, DC: Promundo-US.

¹² Palmer, C. L., & Peterson, R. D. (2020). Toxic Mask-ularity: The Link between Masculine Toughness and Affective Reactions to Mask Wearing in the COVID-19 Era. *Politics & Gender*, 1-8. doi:10.1017/s1743923x20000422

¹³ Ruxton, S., & Burrell, S. R. (2020). Masculinities and COVID-19: making the connections. Washington, DC: Promundo-US.

¹⁴ Ruxton, S., & Burrell, S. R. (2020). Masculinities and COVID-19: making the connections. Washington, DC: Promundo-US.

them are men. This has added to the stress and anxiety that men are facing and are unable to express. The financial pressure and anxiety from being in a lockdown have led to other problems, including an increase in gender-based violence.

Men experience long-term effects of a traumatic event. As Fordham and Ketteridge (1998)¹⁵ argue, due to disaster, men feel not in control of themselves and of the situation. This feeling is not a normal state for them and they experience loneliness and helplessness. These feelings do not conform to the normal feeling of masculinity.

WHO, in their Advocacy Brief (2020)¹⁶, have reported an increase in domestic violence due to lockdown, especially for women who were already experiencing abuse at the hand of their partner or husband. Women are facing an increase in their workload, with the children and husband being at home for long hours. As women are isolated and far from their support system, there is a possibility of an increase in domestic violence.

Lopez and Bro (2020)¹⁷ also report the increase in domestic violence and call it a “Double Pandemic”. They cite data from countries of the Middle East, North Africa, Latin America and from the high-income countries of Australia, France and the USA, where the calls to police reporting domestic violence have increased. In the Palestinian territories, the United Nations has reported an increase in gender-based violence. They again link violence with rising unemployment, anxiety, stress and non-availability of resources in marginalized communities.

These stresses and anxiety have not only translated to gender-based violence but also the incidence of suicide. During these unprecedented times, governments all over the world have announced relief for the people. As we have discussed above that with lockdown and closure of many businesses, many men and women are unemployed. This financial stress has added to the anxiety of being locked in and alone. Khan, Ratele and Arendse (2020)¹⁸, by analyzing the effects of the uncertain situation, have linked it to the increase in the suicide cases in Pakistan and the world at large. The financial stress due to COVID-19 has resulted in depression. As there is no help available in Pakistan and no support system, it has resulted in increased cases of suicide. Mamun and Ullah (2020)¹⁹ report that suicide has increased since Jan 2020. There were 29

¹⁵ Fordham, M., & Ketteridge, A. M. (1998). "Men must work and women must weep": Examining Gender Stereotypes in Disasters. In *The gendered terrain of disaster: Through women's eyes* (pp. 81-94).

¹⁶ World Health Organization. ((2020. COVID-19 and violence against women: what the health sector/system can do, 7 April 2020. World Health Organization. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/331699>.

¹⁷ Bettinger-Lopez, C., & Bro, A. (2020). 'A Double Pandemic: Domestic Violence in the Age of COVID-19, Council on Foreign Relations.

¹⁸ Khan, A. R., Ratele, K., & Arendse, N. (2020). Men, suicide, and Covid-19: Critical masculinity analyses and interventions. *Postdigital Science and Education*, 2(3), 651-656.

¹⁹ Mamun, M. A., & Ullah, I. (2020). COVID-19 suicides in Pakistan, dying off not COVID-19 fear but poverty?—The forthcoming economic challenges for a developing country. *Brain, behavior, and immunity*.

reported cases of suicide and 16 suicides were a direct result of COVID-19. 12 out of the 16 committed suicide due to financial stress and the four remaining were due to fear of infection. Mamun and Ullah (2020)²⁰ believe that the economic recession is perceived to have significantly affected the mental health of people, especially men.

1.2 About Kuri Community

Kuri Village is located in the suburb of Islamabad Capital Territory of Pakistan. The population of the area is about 5000 individuals with 700 households approximately. It is a rural area, with vast land still used for agriculture but significant number of community men work in private and government offices. Majority of women are housewives but a few are seen involved in economic activities as well. There is no transport system directly accessible to the community and people are required to use their personal vehicles (car or motorbikes) to move out of and move in the community.

There are six mohallahs/vicinitys in Kuri city and it is observed that majority of the population is living in poverty or belongs to middle class. There are 14 major castes and usually people know each other by their caste. Majority of the population is Muslim and belongs to Sunni sect.

There are 7 Schools in total in the community; 5 of them are co-education schools up to 8th grade, while one for boys and one for girls; government schools serve up to 10th grade. Both boys and girls are supposed to travel daily to main areas of Islamabad Capital Territory or adjacent city of Rawalpindi for higher or college-level education. There is no government's health facility available in the community, while private health practitioners do provide services.

1.3 Hegemonic Masculinities

Masculinity and femininity are considered to be socially constructed ideas of gender. These pertain to the way a particular gender is expected to act. Anything that does not conform to the established pattern is frowned upon and is alienated from the society. The gender issue is discussed and is usually focused on women and girls. Now focus is being put on understanding masculinity to address the issue of gender-based violence.

Masculinity and what being a man means is different in different cultures and societies. There are dominant male behaviours that determine the upbringing of boys from the beginning and these dominant or hegemonic masculinities define what is acceptable or unacceptable in society.

²⁰ Mamun, M. A., & Ullah, I. (2020). COVID-19 suicides in Pakistan, dying off not COVID-19 fear but poverty?—The forthcoming economic challenges for a developing country. *Brain, behavior, and immunity*.

Connell & Messerschmidt (2005)²¹ discusses the idea of hegemonic masculinity to analyse the attitudes that lead to gender inequality and the power that men exercise over women or other men. The notion of hegemonic masculinities has been discussed widely but the basis remains the same that it is culturally defined and is not just a personal choice but rather a collective behaviour.

Masculinities are not static but are dynamic with not one but many different spectrums of masculinities in the society. The existence of hegemonic masculinity means that there are other forms of masculinities that are subordinate or less than the dominant one. Gramsci (1971)²², in a discussion of hegemony, defines it as the position that is determined collectively through consensus and built on by those who either benefit from it or who are oppressed by it, essentially the women. It is an idea of manhood that is looked up at by the oppressed in the society and women want to see these ideals in their male relations. Therefore, these ideas exist because women or the oppressed section of the society want, reward and pay attention to them.

The concept of hegemonic masculinities is not only helpful in finding interventions to fight gender-based violence but also help men to seek assistance when required. The idea of hegemonic masculinity results in men not seeking medical care or mental health care in time of need, especially when faced with financial problems or in times of disasters. These concepts form the basis of the pressures that society puts on an individual to be able to carry the load of responsibilities for the family, which in Asian societies means an extended family. These pressures not only result in gender-based violence but also men resorting to suicide.

²¹ Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & society*, 19(6), 829-859.

²² Gramsci, Antonio (1971). Selections from the Prison Notebooks. International Publishers. ISBN 978-0-7178-0397-2.

2. METHODOLOGY

The use of mixed method studies is a well-established approach in social sciences. Therefore, this research study has also adopted the mixed methods approach to collect and analyze the data through purposive sampling technique. The quantitative data has been collected through survey method. Whereas the qualitative data is collected by conducting the focus group discussion sessions and in-depth individual interviews from the key informants in the target area, Kuri village, in Islamabad. The quantitative data has been analyzed with the help of data analysis software SPSS, while the qualitative data has been analyzed manually. The qualitative data has also helped in validating the results that came from the quantitative data that has been collected through the survey.

2.1 Data

This study has mainly relied on quantitative data, however, in order to attain an in-depth knowledge of the issue, the qualitative data has also been collected through FGDs and individual interviews of the key informants of the Kuri community. A detailed questionnaire was developed that contained questions regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the social lives of the Kuri community.

2.1.1 Qualitative Data

Qualitative data was collected through focus group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interviews from the people of Kuri community. Three FGDs were conducted, having 8-10 participants in each session, in Kuri village. Furthermore, six in-depth individual interviews were conducted from the key informants of Kuri community.

The first session of FGD had ten married men, while the second FGD had nine unmarried men and young boys. The third FGD session was conducted with the married and unmarried women of Kuri community.

2.1.2 Quantitative Data

Quantitative data was collected from 120 individuals from the Kuri village in Islamabad. Out of these 120 individuals, there were 90 males, married and unmarried, and 30 females, married and unmarried. All respondents were the residents of Kuri village in Islamabad and were between the ages of 15 and 65 years.

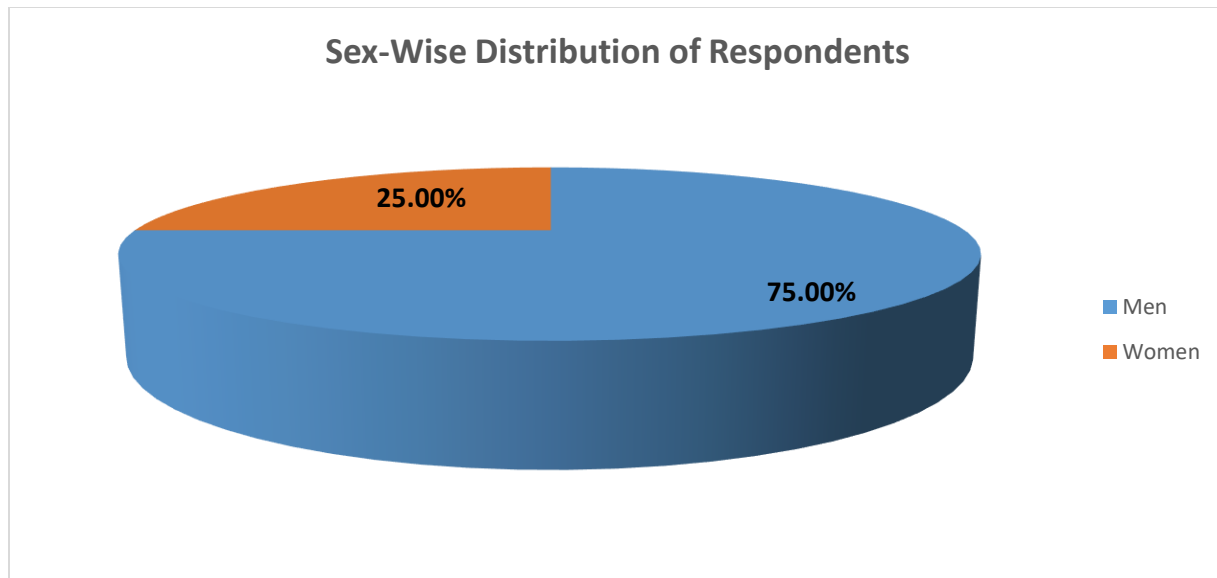


Figure 1: Sex-wise distribution of respondents

Majority of the respondents represented the age group of 15 to 30 years, i.e. 47.9%. Respondents in the age groups of 31-45 years and 46-60 years were 33.1% and 13.2% respectively.

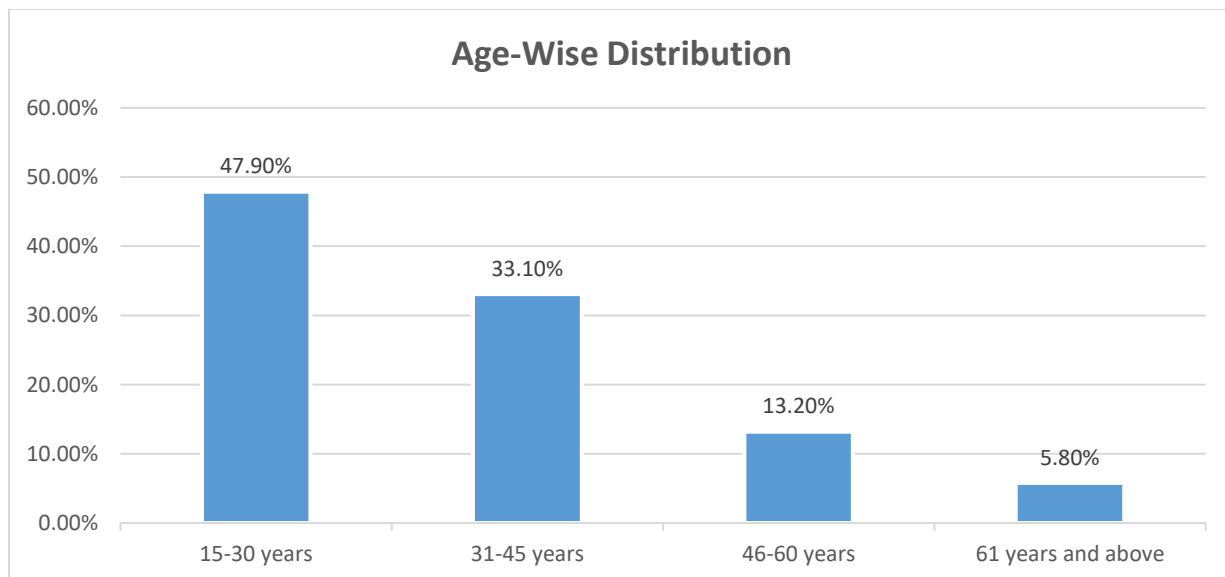


Figure 2: Age-wise distribution

Cross tabulation of variables of Age and Sex tells that out of 75% of respondent men, 36% fall in the age bracket of 15–30 years, 25% men respondents were in the range of 31–45 years, while rest of the 15% were in the group of 46–60 years and above. On the other hand, almost 12% of the women respondents out of 25% of total women respondents were placed in the age group of 15–30 years, 8% women were in the category of 31–45 years of age.

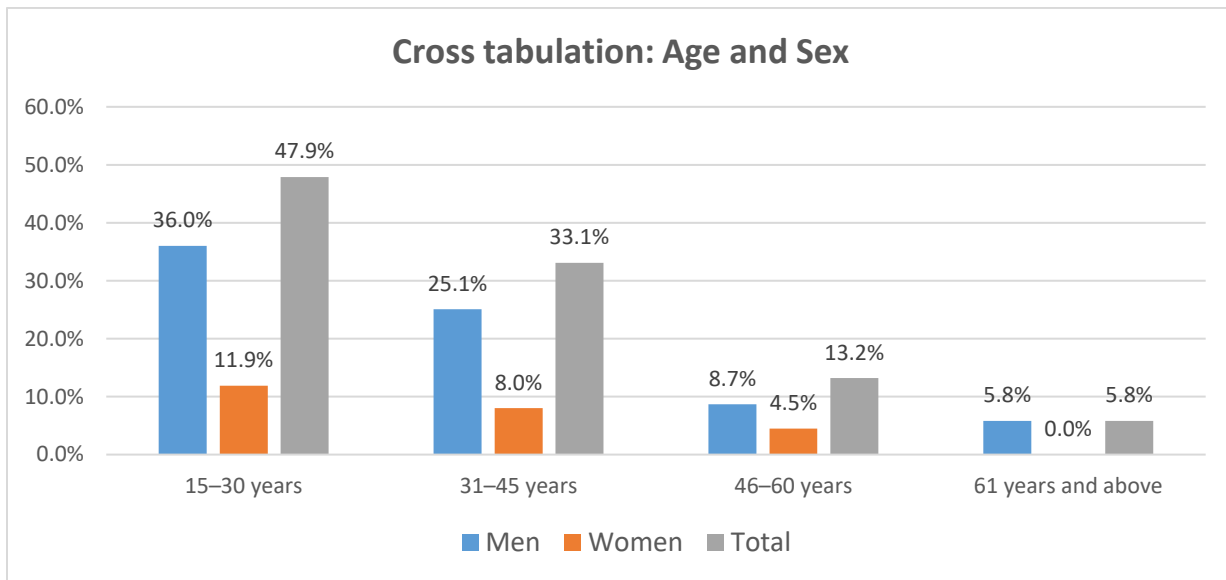


Figure 3: Cross tabulation: Age and Sex

The 67% of respondents were married, while 32.2% of the respondents were unmarried at the time of data collection. Therefore, the comparison of variables of Marital Status and Sex reveals that 46% of the men respondents were married at the time of data collection, while 27% of the men were unmarried. Only less than 1% men were widow at the time of interview. 5% women out of 25% were unmarried, while 20% were married.

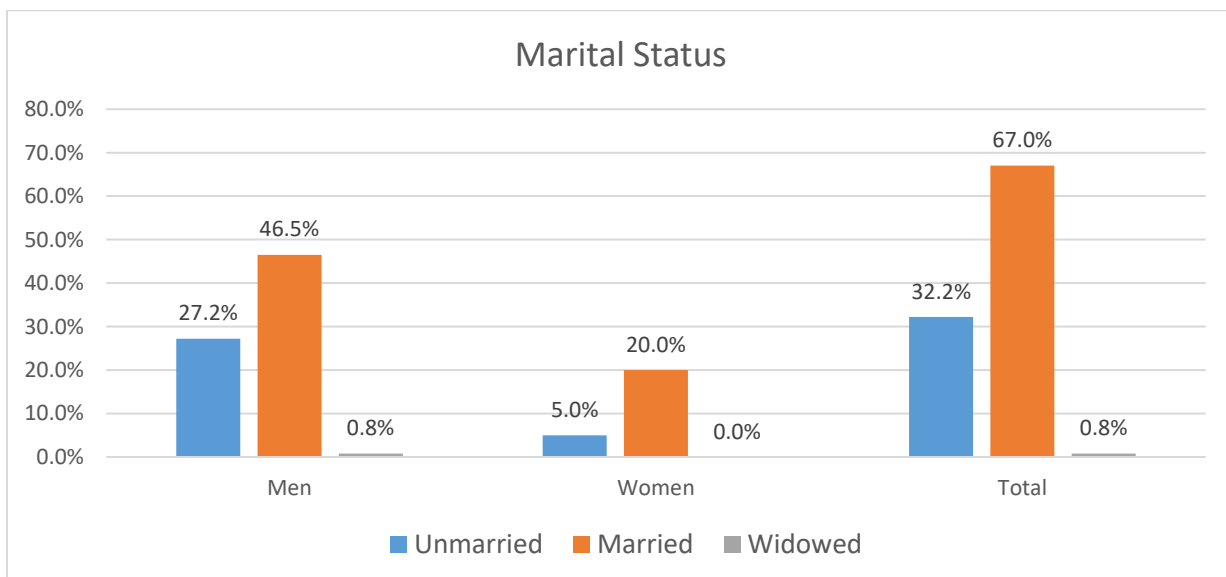


Figure 4: Cross tabulation: Marital Status and Sex

The community shows a low level of literacy; 23% of the respondents never went to any school, almost 21% of the respondents had an education till primary and middle level each, 25% of the

respondents attained an education level up to matriculation, i.e. 10th grade. Only 10% of the respondents were able to study till intermediate (12th grade) or more.

Cross tabulation of education level and sex of the respondents shows that men are more educated than women in the community of Kuri Village, though overall education level of the whole community seems low, as mentioned earlier. Around 18% of the men respondents never went to school, while 4.6% women had no schooling at all as well. Men and women respondents are equally placed in the category of education up to primary and middle, i.e. 16.20% and 4.5% respectively. 15% of men and 9.8% of women had education level of matriculation. Only 9% of the men achieved education of intermediate or above. On the other hand, less than 1% women could be seen in the category of intermediate and graduation each.

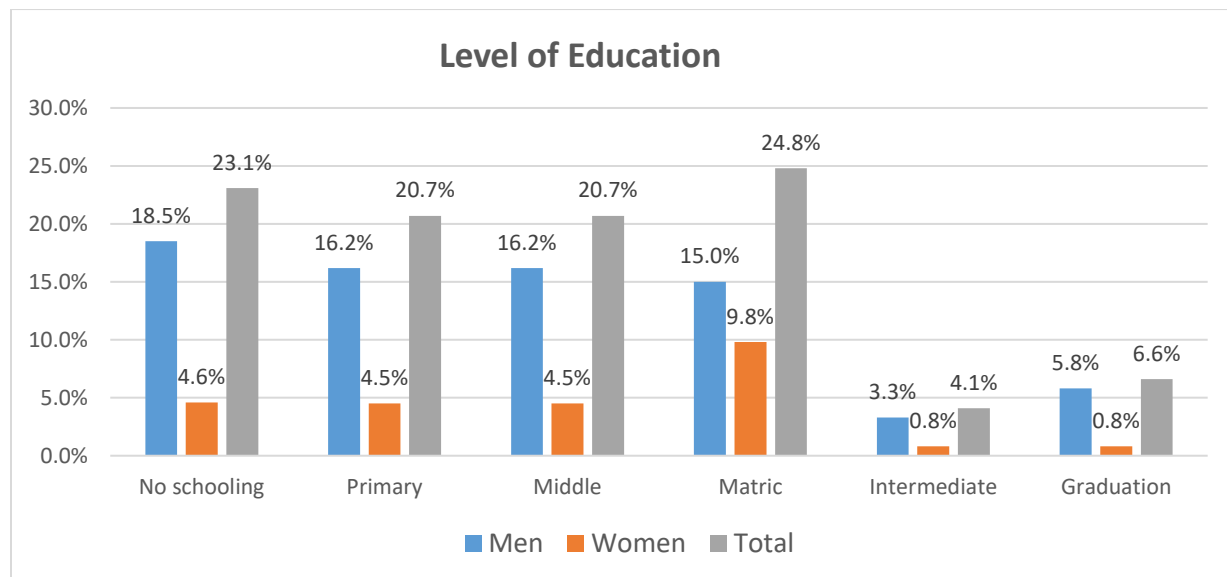


Figure 5: Level of Education

The community of Kuri is generally composed of large number of family members. 33.4% of the families have five members living in a household. Whereas over 50% families have six to nine members in their families. Approximately 15% of the respondents reported 10 or more family members in their households.

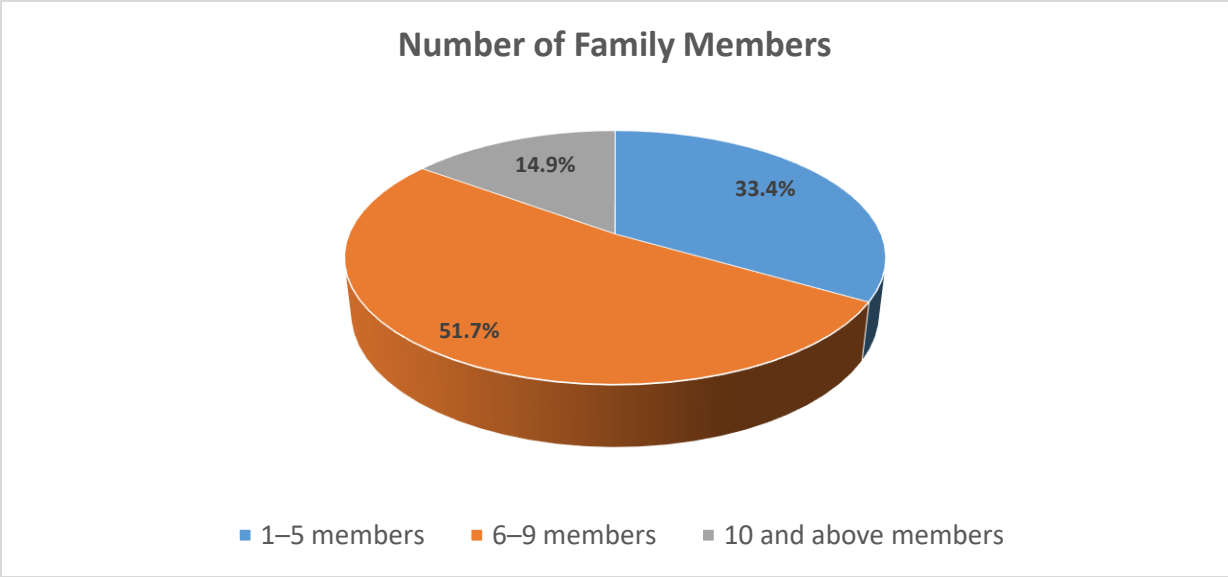


Figure 6: Number of Family Members

Community of Kuri is diverse in terms of occupation and livelihood. Almost 11% of the men are linked with the field of agriculture. Approximately similar percentage of respondents earn their livelihood through private jobs. 26% of the respondents perform as daily wagers in the community of Kuri Village. 34% of the respondents were self-employed, while almost 16% of the respondents were unemployed at the time of data collection.

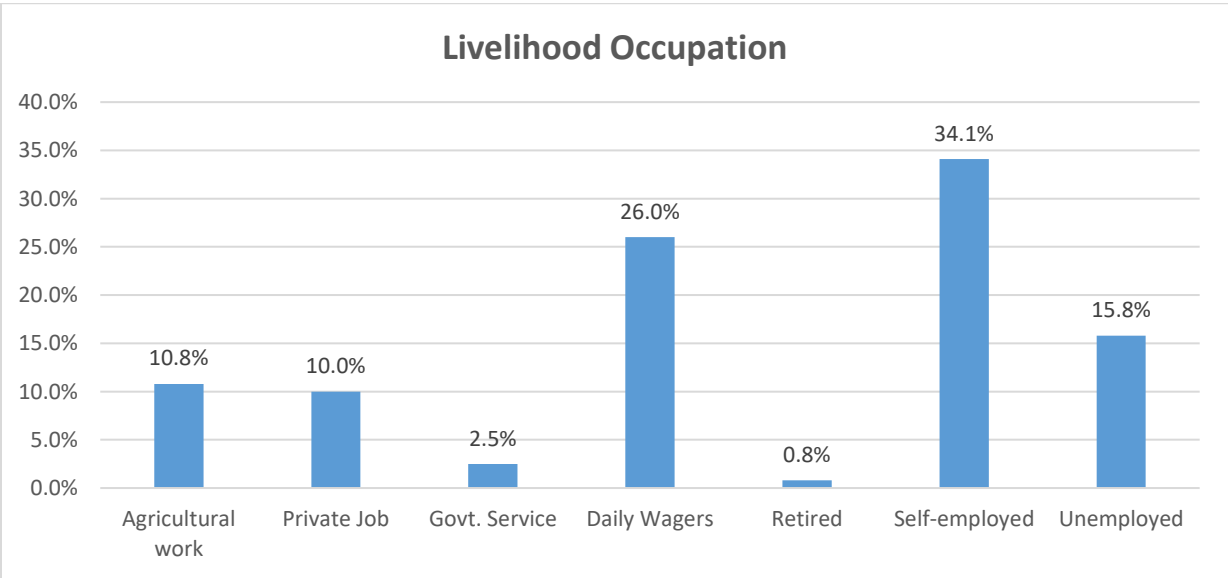


Figure 7: Livelihood Occupation

3. RESULTS & ANALYSIS

This section contains the results and analysis of the study. After a careful analysis of the collected data, four major themes have emerged from the data: 1) Economic and Financial Pressure, 2) Family Relations, 3) Socialization, and 4) Health and Wellbeing. Although there are many other factors that impacted the social lives of Kuri residents, however, these four themes have played a key role in reshaping their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results show that their entire personal and social lives have changed after the emergence of COVID-19.

3.1 Economic and Financial Pressures

Overall, community faced economic and financial pressures due to COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown situation across Islamabad Capital Territory, as community comprises of daily wagers in big number and lost their source of income.

“Inflation has always been the biggest problem for a common person in Pakistan and we were facing this problem in the recent past as well; and now COVID is here to take the last piece of meal from our mouths.”

FGD Married Man, Kuri

Respondents were asked if they received any financial or other kind of support from any source and 85% of the respondents denied receiving any support from any source. Meanwhile, only 8.3% of the respondents received support from Government, while 1.7% respondents received support from institutions like NGOs. About 5% of the respondents were supported by individuals.

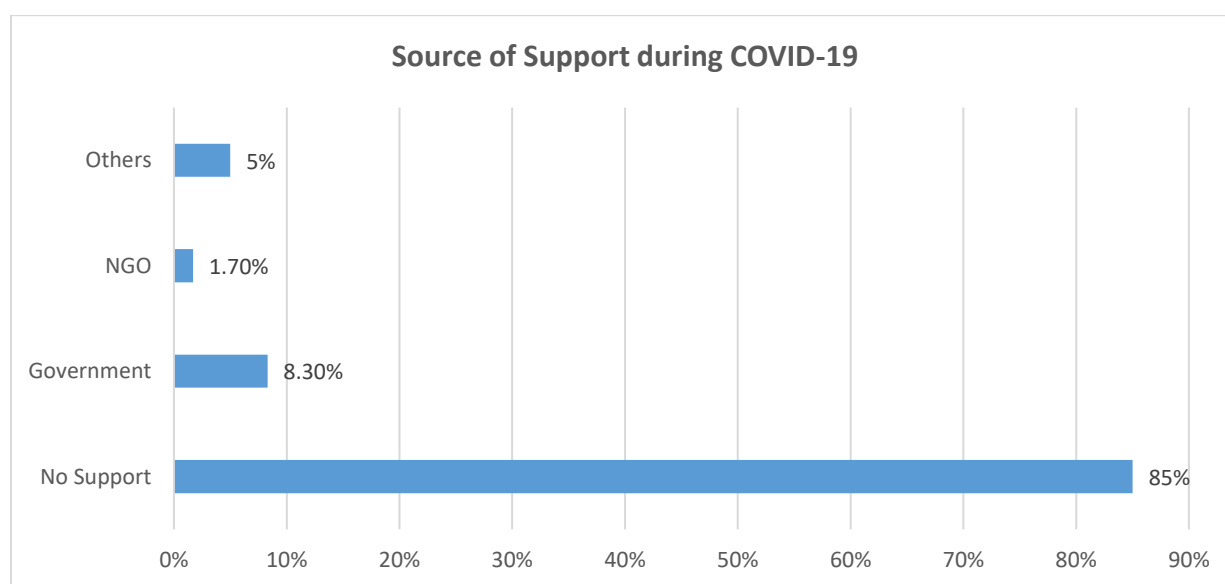


Figure 8: Source of support during COVID-19

“We didn’t get any help from anywhere. We awaited aid. Some people did get help; however, we couldn’t ask for the sake of embarrassment.”

FGD Married Man, Kuri

On the other hand, when the participants were asked about managing their household expenses before and during COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown situation, the following tables depict that most of the respondents managed their household expenses with little and some difficulty before COVID-19, i.e. 20.6% and 34.8% respectively. The data shows that the respondents experienced great difficulty for managing their household expenses during COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. It is significant to note that over 80% respondents reported economic and financial difficulties during COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown.

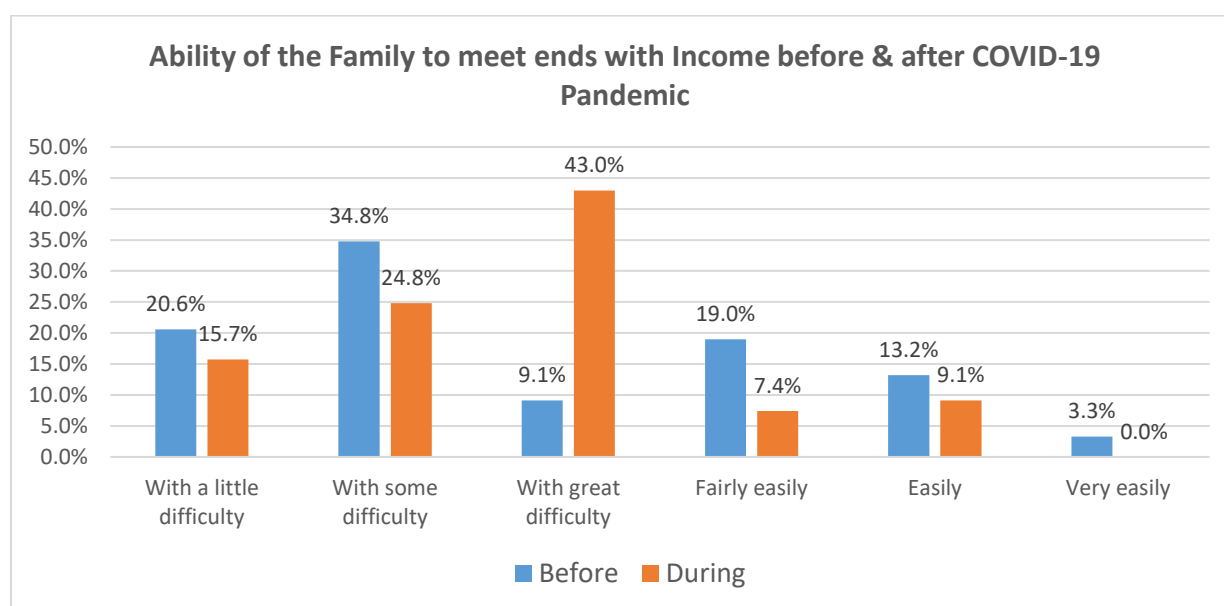


Figure 9: Ability of the Family to Meet ends with Income before & after COVID-19 Pandemic

“Look, it’s not that we were running businesses before. We are mostly daily wagers here. One person earns and provides for tens. We were hardly making both ends meet. However, by God’s grace, we were still leading an honourable life. COVID further worsened the situation. Our savings lasted us hardly for a few weeks before hardship came knocking at our doors.”

FGD Married Man, Kuri

Cross tabulation of the variables of sex and ability of meeting the ends before and during the COVID-19 pandemic describes the responses in the below tables. 20%, 30% and 12% men shared that they faced difficult in meeting the needs of their family with a little difficulty, with some difficulty and with great difficulty, respectively, before pandemic of COVID-19. On the other hand, 75% of the women respondents were of the view that they faced difficulties in managing their expenses before pandemic of COVID-19.

The number of men who experienced little difficulties regarding expenses during COVID-19 increased to 17%, moreover 30% faced some difficulties while a very significant percentage of men, i.e. 43%, faced great difficulties to manage their expenses during COVID-19.

On the other hand, percentage of women who faced difficulties during COVID-19 pandemic also increased; 40% shared that they faced some level of difficulties during COVID-19, while 25% of the females thought that it was greatly difficult for them to manage expenses during the pandemic.

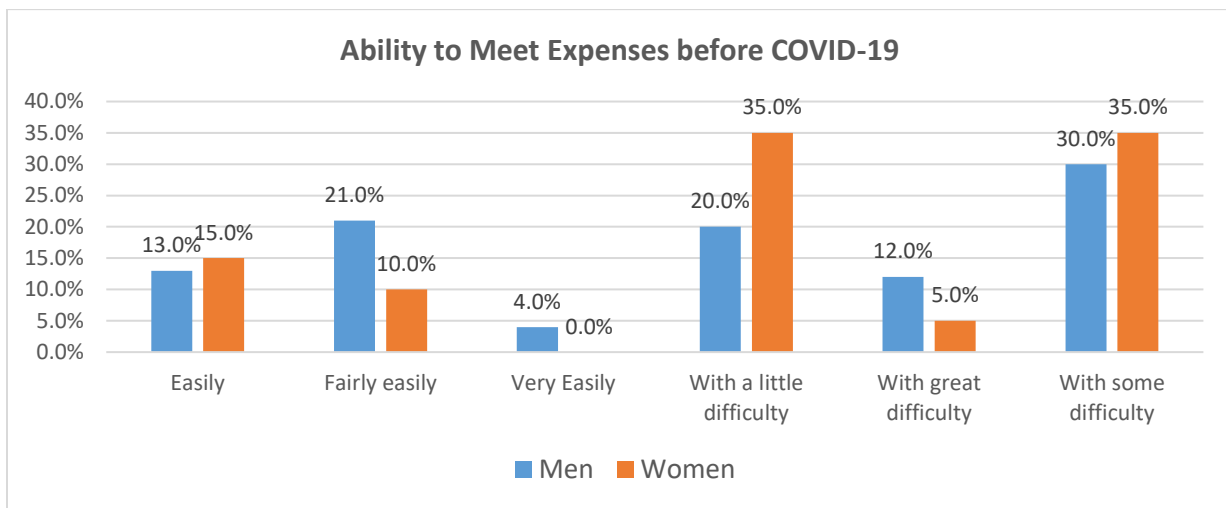


Figure 10: Cross Tabulation: Sex and Difficulty faced in Meeting the Expenses before COVID-19

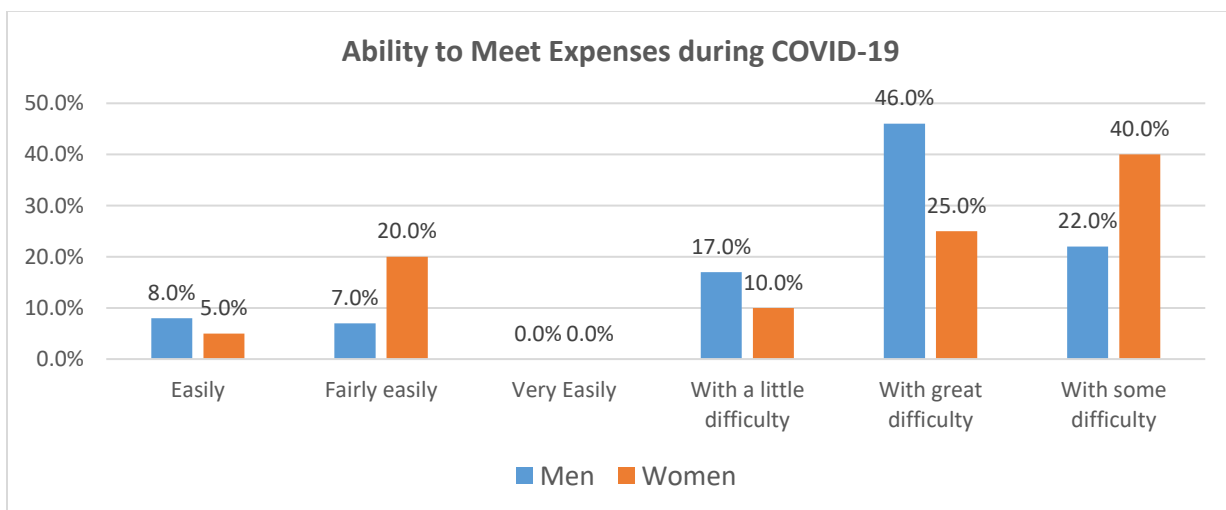


Figure 11: Cross Tabulation: Sex and Difficulty faced in Meeting the Expenses during COVID-19

Over 57% of the respondents faced threat of losing their jobs during COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. This can be linked with stress experienced by the male respondents in the study. Fifty-five percent of the respondents reported feelings of stress due to coronavirus pandemic.

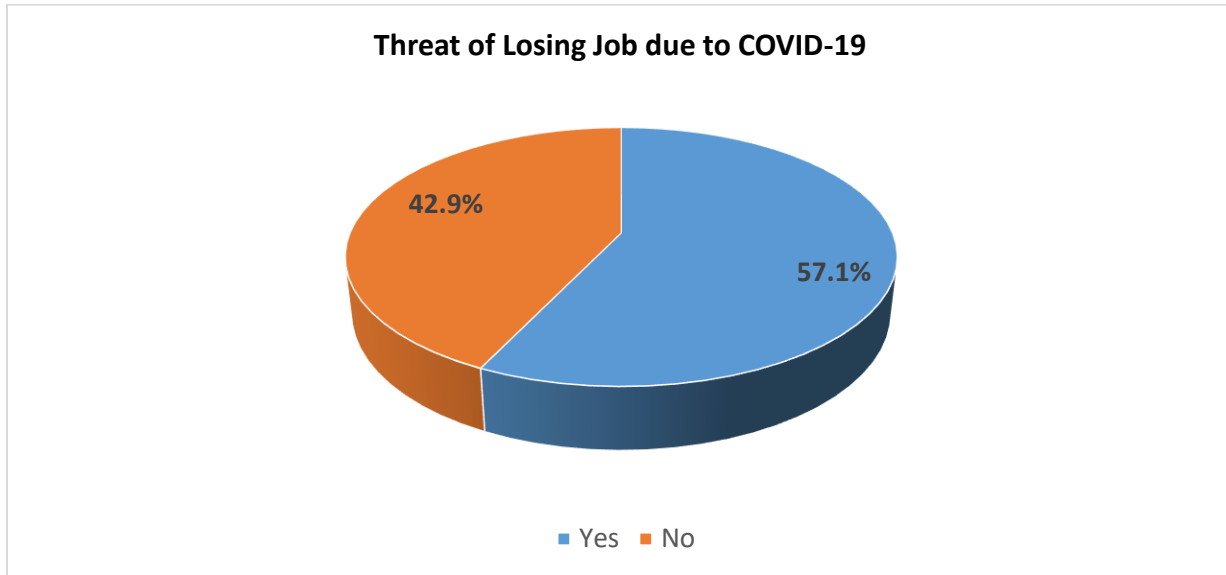


Figure 12: Threat of Losing Job due to COVID-19

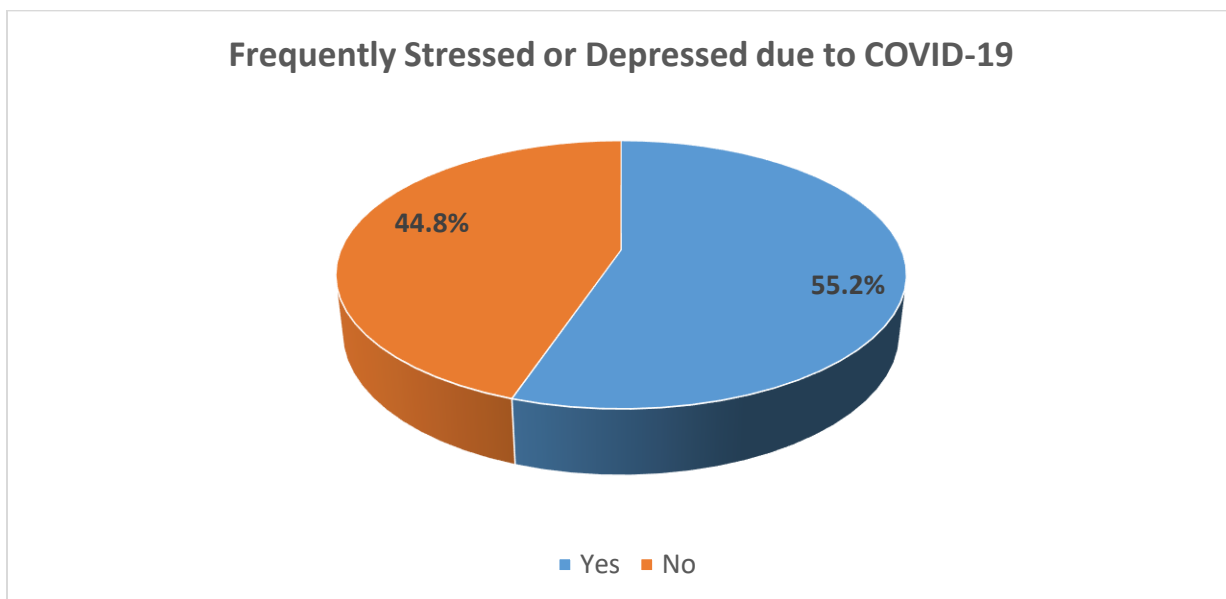


Figure 13: Frequently Stressed or Depressed due to COVID-19

"It was a very difficult time - the kind that was unmatched in history. Not even our ancestors must have had faced such a catastrophe in their time. It felt as if the

stress would drive me insane. Only God knows what I went through to put food in the bellies of my children.”

FGD Married Man, Kuri

“In the beginning, we also felt very scared. We didn’t go out either. As time passed, we got bored, but everything was closed. Even after all that, if we wanted to go out, we were restricted by our families. All grounds were closed, so we couldn’t even go out to play.”

FGD Unmarried Man, Kuri

3.2 Family Relations

As the daily routine of men and women was affected severely during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, it affected family relations as well. Following tables and charts explain how pandemic of COVID-19 has impacted family relations in the community of Kuri.

FGDs and IDIs shed light on the routine of men during COVID-19 Pandemic and lockdown. Most of the respondents shared that due to lock down, their routine was disturbed badly. Offices and workplaces of the senior men in the community were closed; furthermore, the schools and colleges of young boys were also shut down amid coronavirus pandemics. Their mobility was restricted to their local community only, during the initial times of lockdown. They further shared that because of the fear of catching coronavirus, usually the gathering places for men in the community were also abandoned. So, most of the time, men used to spend their time at home.

“What to do when everything is closed outside, we used to sit at home all the time.”

FGD Married Man, Kuri

3.2.1 Household Work Pressure

With reference to change in roles during COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, men were asked about extending support in household chores. Almost 48% of the men claimed to extend their support to family members and women for completing household chores during COVID-19 pandemic.

Support in HH Work by Men during COVID-19 Pandemic

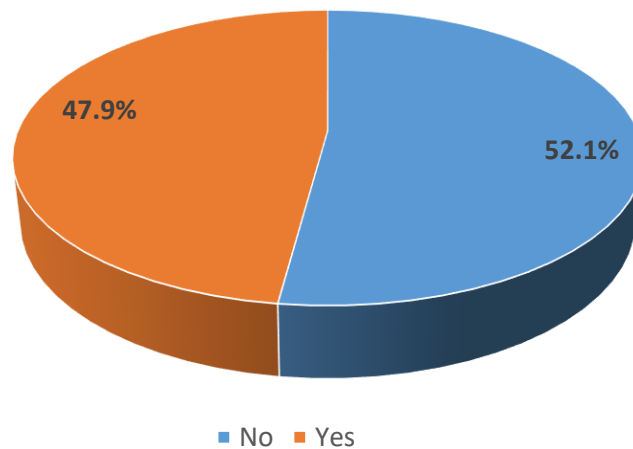


Figure 14: Support in HH Work by Men during COVID-19 Pandemic

“As we couldn’t go out, obviously we did some chores at home.”

FGD Unmarried Man, Kuri

When respondents were inquired in details about support to women in specific tasks during COVID-19 pandemic, in almost every task, over 50% of the respondents replied in negative, except the task of buying groceries for home which is already considered a man’s job in the community of Kuri. 51% and 15% of the males respectively shopped groceries often and very often for their homes during the lockdown.

Men’s Support in HH Chores during COVID-19 Pandemic in Community of Kuri

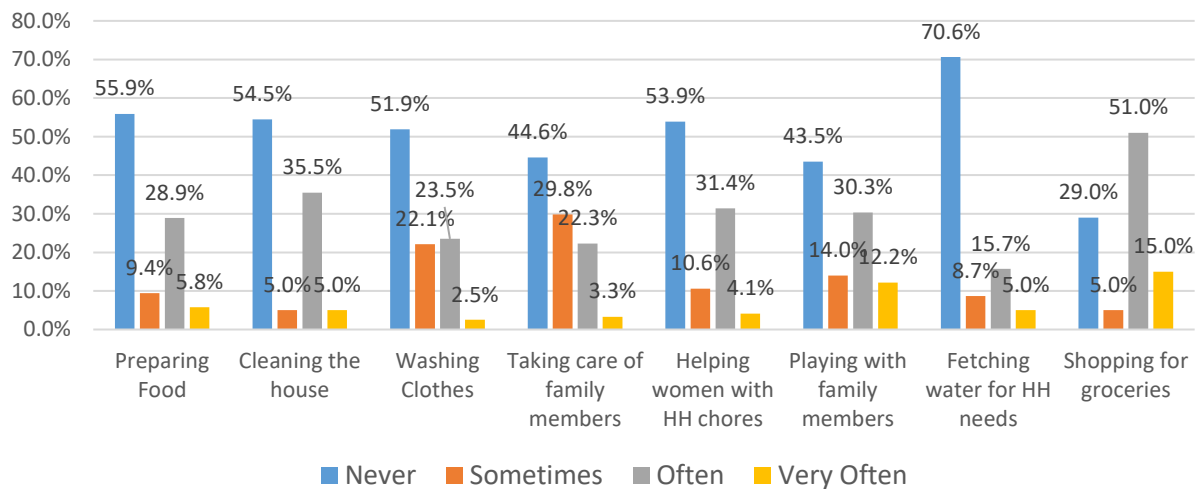


Figure 15: Men’s Support in HH Chores during COVID-19 Pandemic in Community of Kuri

“They [men] rarely ever moved for any work. When at home, they were always lazing around. They used to do work that demanded them to go out, or sometimes they did work at home out of embarrassment.”

FGD Woman, Kuri

Men participating in the study reported an increase in the household work pressure on them amid the coronavirus pandemic in the community of Kuri, Islamabad. Before the start of pandemic and lockdown situation in Islamabad Capital Territory, around 18% of the men agreed that they faced household work pressure and over 70% men felt free of any household chore’s burden. During coronavirus pandemic and lockdown, while most of the men were forced to stay at home, they reported participating in household chores at an almost double percentage than before lockdown situation, i.e. approximately 38% (combined strongly agree and agree response). It is a significant change in behaviors in a short time of only three months.

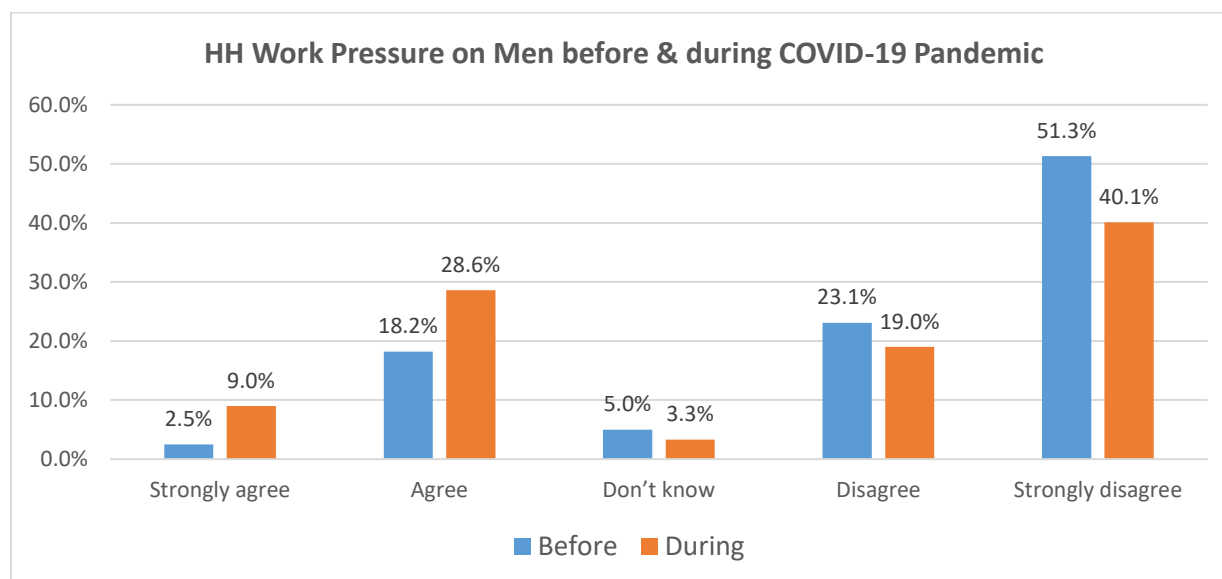


Figure 16: HH Work Pressure on Men before & during COVID-19 Pandemic

“It is against the nature of man to sit idle, moreover we belong to the working class. As we couldn't go out; therefore, we did chores at home. The burden of household chores increased, and for many, it was particularly too much.”

FGD Married Man, Kuri

3.2.2 Decision Making at Household Level

Decision making in household matters is one of the important aspects of status regarding gender roles in family life. Respondents were asked about the decision-making process in various matters before and during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown to find out the impact of pandemic and lockdown on practices in this regard.

38% of the respondents claimed that decisions for any large investment or purchase were made by fathers/men in their homes, as well as over 53% of any such investments and purchases were made through a common decision by mother and father. One cannot see much difference in this trend during lockdown and COVID-19 pandemic situation. Decisions made by the father alone are seen to be slightly dropping during corona pandemic and lockdown situation, while percentage for combined decision by both mother and father has merely increased too.

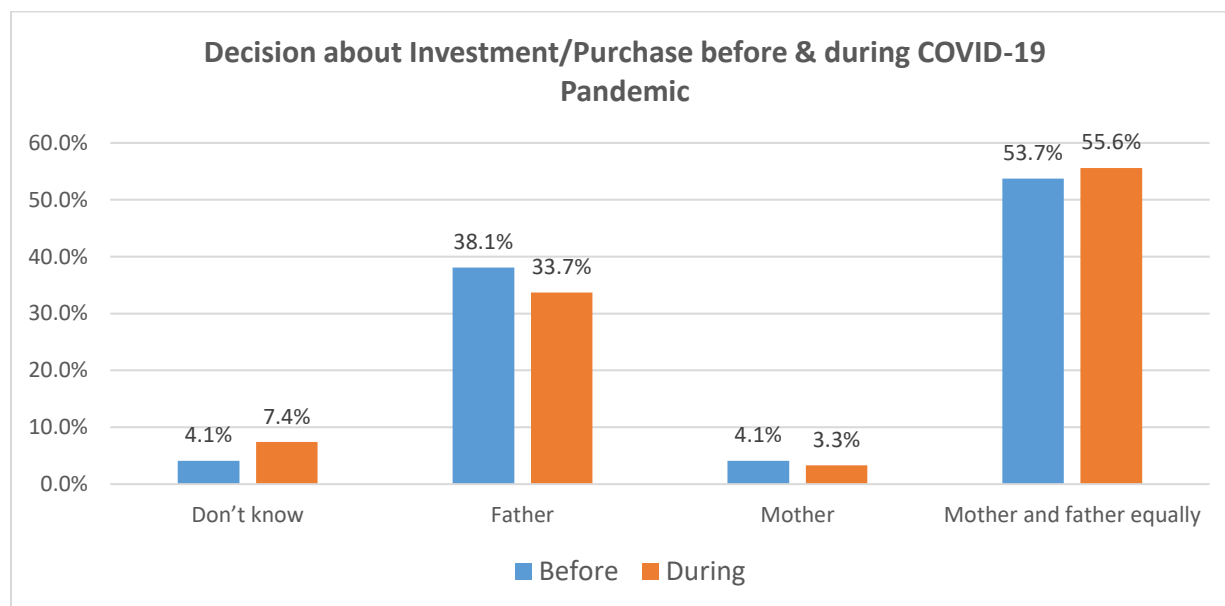


Figure 17: Decision about Investment/Purchase before & during COVID-19 Pandemic

“Sir, my husband did use to discuss things with me before, but during COVID, he used to discuss things more in detail. As we had no money, we had to spend it more carefully and thoughtfully.”

FGD Woman, Kuri

Decision making regarding the education of children before COVID-19 pandemic and during the lockdown was inquired from respondents. Men can easily be seen in the decision-making process in both times, i.e. before and during lockdown due to pandemic of COVID-19, either individually or in a combined decision about children’s education. Before COVID-19 pandemic, almost 37% men took the decisions about the education of their children but a highly significant number of 50.8% combined decision making by both father and mother of children could also be seen regarding their education. During the lockdown situation, almost no change is observable in fathers’/men’s decision making regarding children’s education but the combined decision making by both mothers and fathers has increased by 3%. Although it cannot be said with certainty but pandemic and lockdown seem to have some impact on decision-making process regarding children’s education at household level in the community of Kuri.

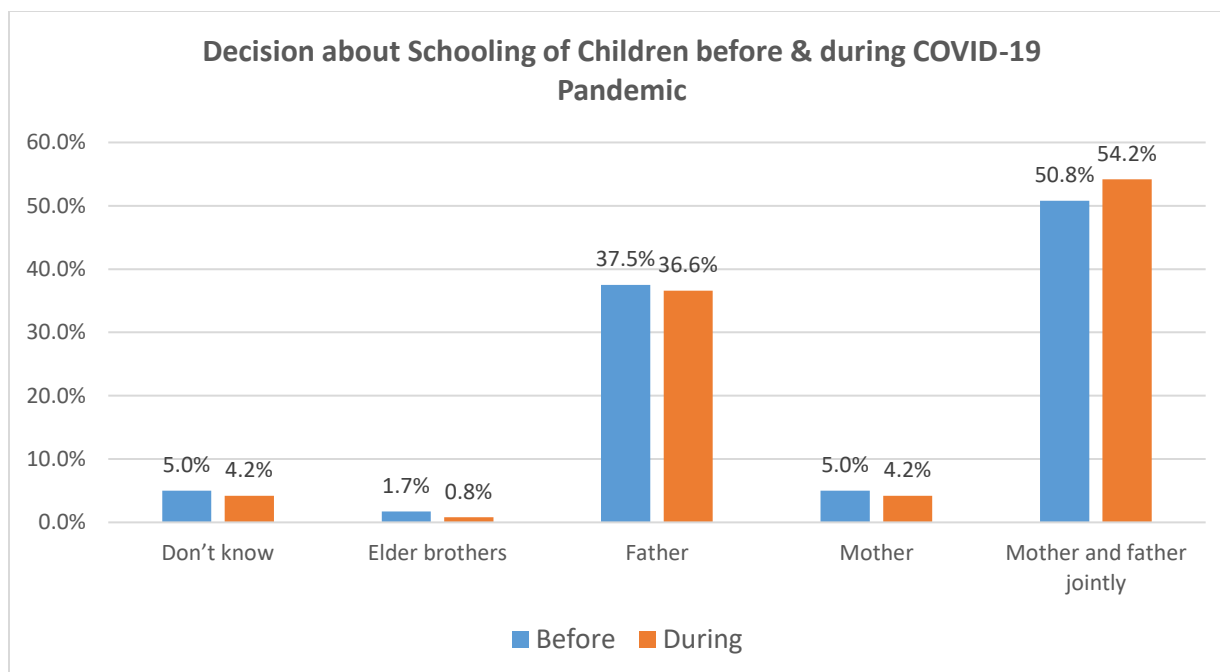


Figure 18: Decision about Schooling of Children before & during COVID-19 Pandemic

3.2.3 Perception and preference before and during COVID-19 pandemic

Respondents were requested to share their perception on various aspects regarding male/female preference before and during COVID-19 pandemic. The areas explored were:

- Birth celebration
- Nutrition
- Household work pressure
- Earning pressure
- Mobility

Respondents in the community of Kuri strongly agreed with percentages of 22.5 and 39.1 respectively on preferring birth celebration of boys in comparison to girls. 20% of the respondents disagree with the statement, while 14.2% respondents strongly disagree with the statement of celebrating boys' birth more than girls' before COVID-19.

Not much change in the agreement and disagreement with the perception on celebration of boy's birth in comparison to girl's birth is seen. Almost 60% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that community members in Kuri celebrated boy's birth more than girl's birth during COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. On the other hand, 35% of the respondents jointly disagreed and strongly disagreed with the idea of celebrating boy's birth more than girl's birth during pandemic of COVID-19. The pandemic does not seem to be affecting the attitudes in this regard.

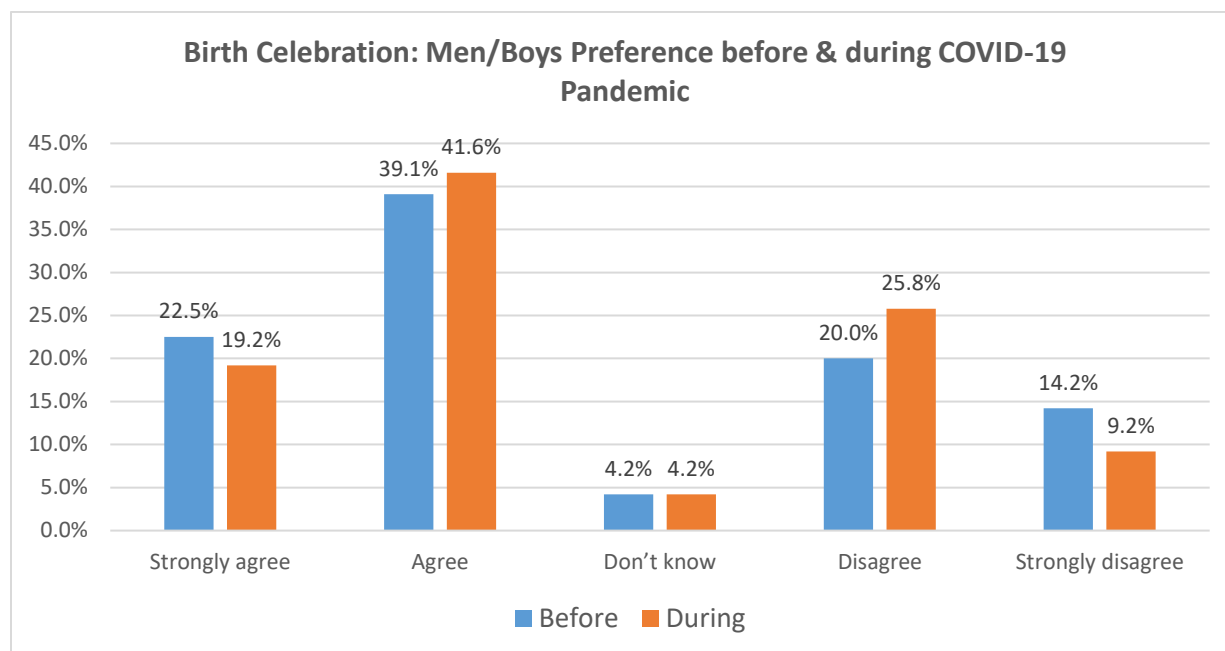


Figure 19: Birth Celebration: Men/Boys Preference before & during COVID-19 Pandemic

“It is the custom of our times to celebrate the birth of a son more. Therefore, whether we are going through a pandemic or not, a mother who gives birth to a son enjoys a high status in the household.”

FGD Woman, Kuri

“Sons carry forth the ancestry. Furthermore, during a pandemic, when everyone is susceptible to death, the birth of a son is a cause of great joy. However, times are changing now and people immensely celebrate the birth of a daughter. Although people know that daughters are to be married off, they are someone else’s asset. One day they have to leave their parents’ house to be married off.”

FGD Married Man, Kuri

Bread winning is predominantly considered the role of men and boys in general in the society, and due to this responsibility, men and boys involved in livelihood activities find less free time for themselves. The aforementioned consideration is seen prevalent in the community of Kuri for men and boys as well. 20% of the respondents strongly agreed that men and boys involved in earning got less free time than girls and women at home before COVID-19 pandemic, while 40% of the respondents agreed to the statement. Whereas 5% of the respondents did not have any opinion on this or did not know. Around 34% of the respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.

When inquired about the same with reference to less free time due to earning activities during COVID-19 pandemic, a slight drop in strong agreement with the statement is seen, i.e. 18.5% men

strongly agreed and 30.5% of the respondents agreed with the statement, in comparison to 40.3% respondents agreeing before COVID-19. In contrast, 39.3% and 8.4% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed of having less free time for men during COVID-19 pandemic due to earning activities.

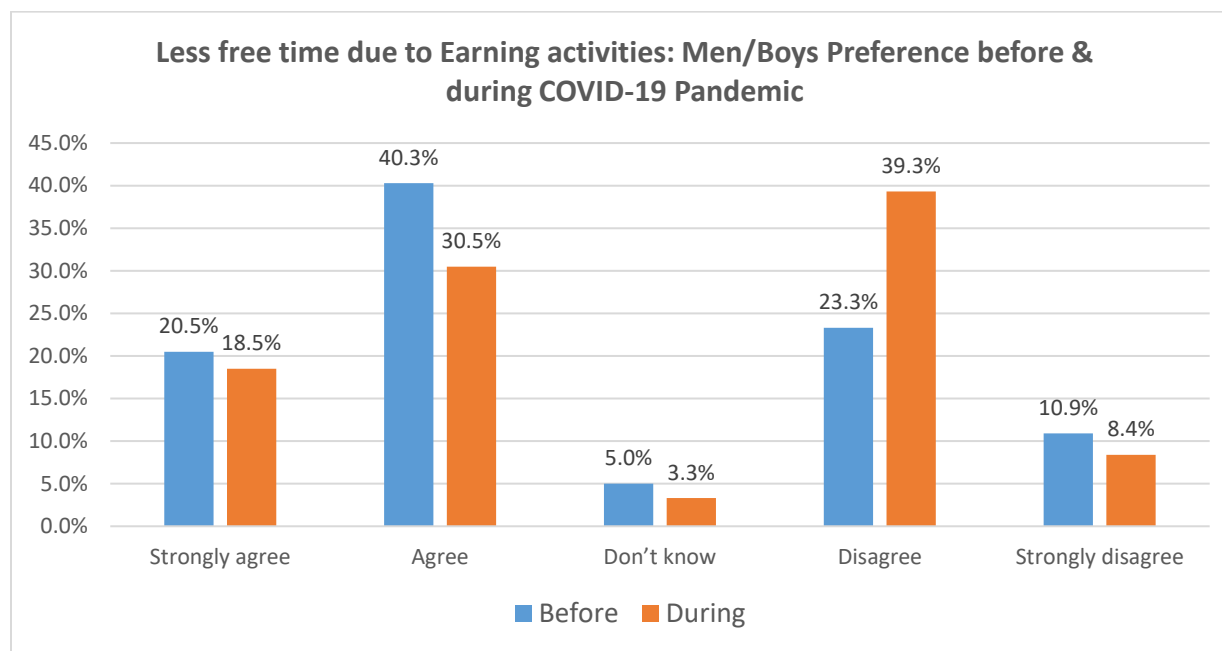


Figure 20: Less free Time due to Earning Activities: Men/Boys Preference before & during COVID-19 Pandemic

Respondents were asked to compare the freedom for men and women to go out of home in daily routine. 35% and 28% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that men had more freedom than women to go out of home before COVID-19 pandemic. Significant percentage of respondents, i.e. 24.2% and 7.5%, disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement as well.

Respondents were also asked to compare the freedom of mobility for men and women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Around 8% drop is seen, i.e. 27.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that men have more freedom than women to go out of home during COVID-19 but almost 12% increase is observed where 41% respondents agreed that men had more independence than women on going out of home during COVID-19.

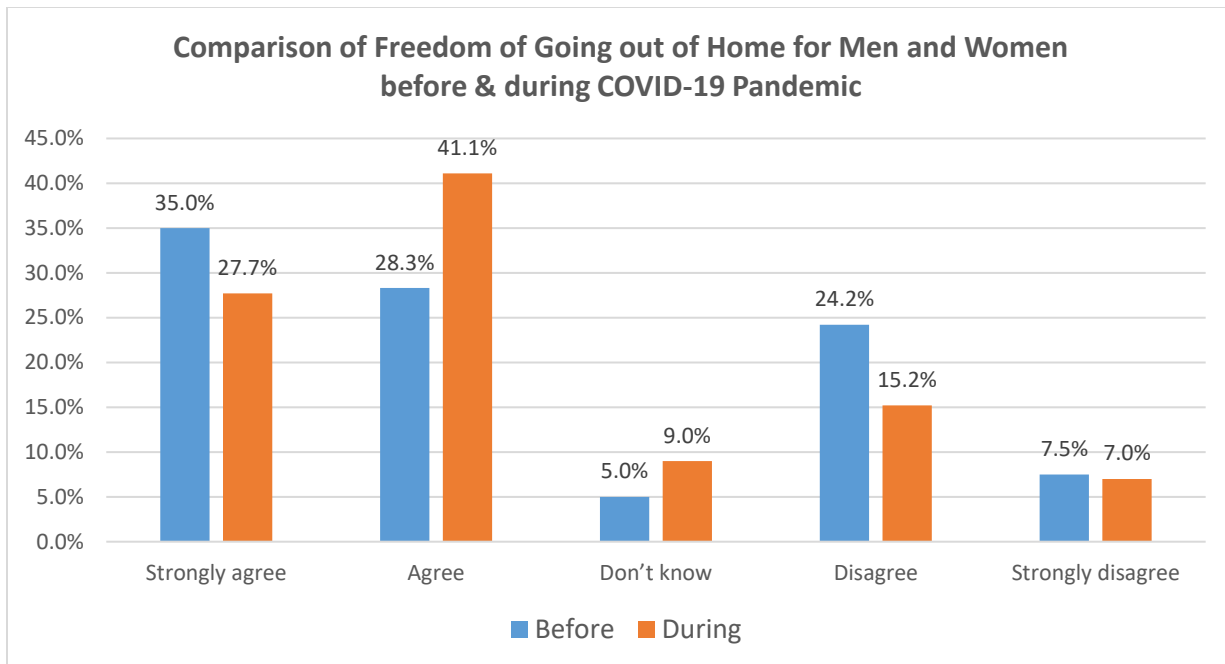


Figure 21: Comparison of Freedom of Going out of Home for Men and Women before & during COVID-19 Pandemic.

“Men have to handle outdoor chores, whether there is any corona or not. We seldom go out. Moreover, people also didn’t go out in corona due to fear. Even when the men of our house had to go out, we were afraid that something may happen to them. However, it was a compulsion, as we couldn’t make do otherwise.”

FGD Woman, Kuri

3.2.4 Roles and Responsibilities at Home

The study investigated the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown situation on the roles and responsibilities of community members, especially men, in the community of Kuri. It was observed that due to lockdown, men were supposed to stay more at home than their routine before lockdown. More time at home developed new expectations from both genders and affected their roles and responsibilities more or less in various areas of daily life.

Respondents were asked about the division of labor in terms of preparing food at home. According to the 21.6% of the respondents, men were responsible for preparing food at home and 65% of the women used to prepare the food before COVID-19 situation, while 5% of the respondents believed that both men and women jointly prepare the food at their homes.

Situation of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown did not bring much change in the practices of men and women in the community of Kuri with reference to preparing food. During COVID-19 pandemic with an increase of almost 1% only, 22.8% of the respondents said that men prepared

food at home; while with an increase of 3%, respondents reported that women cooked food at home. The percentage of men and women jointly preparing the food remains the same during the situation of COVID-19 pandemic, i.e. 5%.

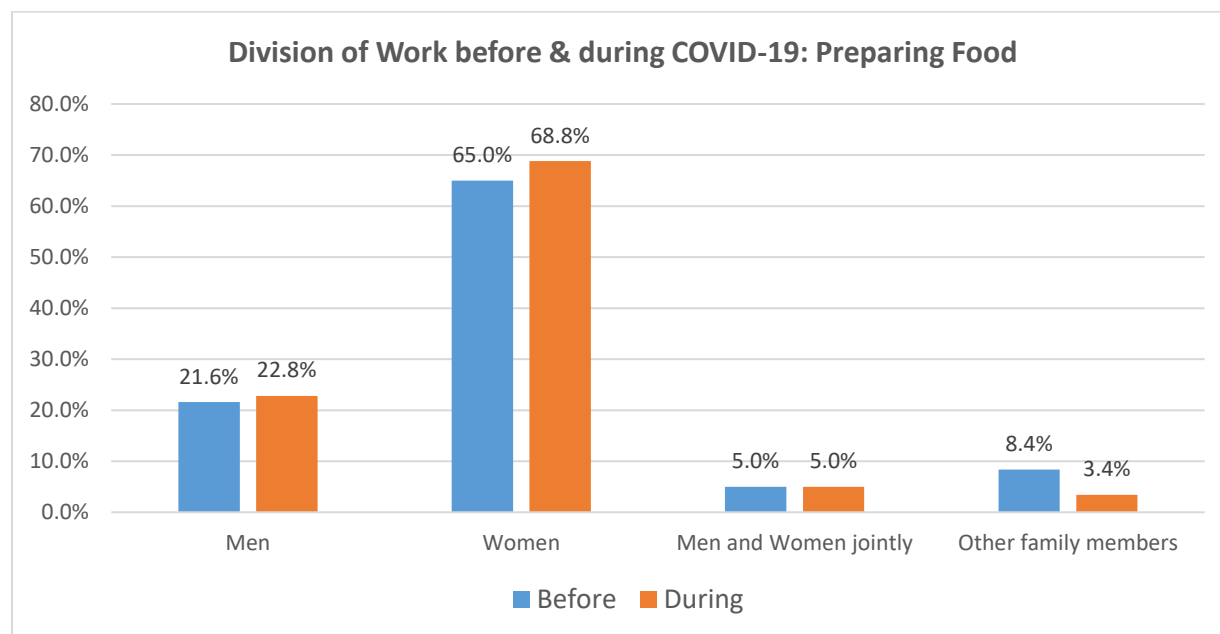


Figure 22: Division of Work before & during COVID-19: Preparing Food

“I think the burden of chores increased on us, the female members. [The men who stayed at home all day had demands.] Sometimes they wanted tea. Sometimes they wanted warm water.”

FGD Woman, Kuri

23% of the respondents reported that men used to wash clothes at their homes, while 68% respondent said that women used to wash the clothes before the pandemic. 5% of the respondents described that men and women washed clothes together at homes before COVID-19.

It seemed that the burden of washing clothes increased on women as 72.5% respondents believed that women have been responsible to do the task during COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. Despite more men staying at home, they seemed less involved in the chore, as only 21.7% respondents reported men washing the clothes during COVID-19 pandemic.

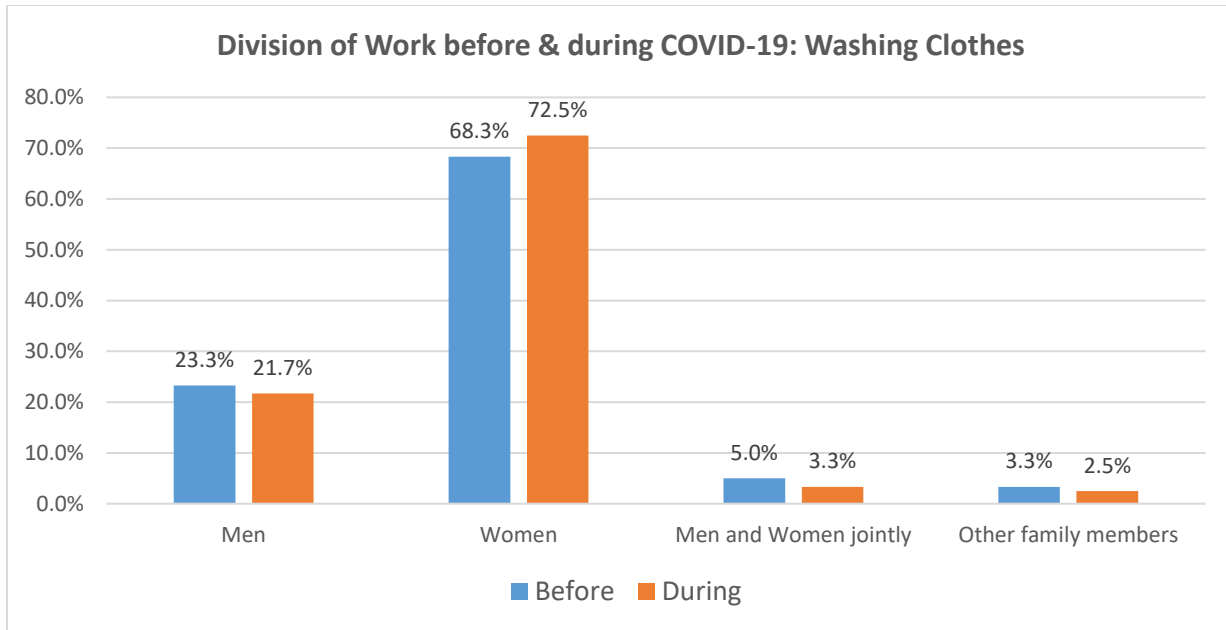


Figure 23: Division of Work before & during COVID-19: Washing Clothes

Kuri community, being a rural area, is not facilitated with provision of the useable water to the houses in most of the cases. Water is fetched from outside of homes. The task is mainly the responsibility of women before and during the COVID-19 situation, but the COVID-19 health emergency impacted the behavior pattern regarding this assignment.

Before COVID-19 pandemic, 70% of the respondents believed that women used to fetch water for household needs, while 21.7% respondents shared that men fetched water for their households. Around 5.8% of the respondents expressed that the task is jointly done by men and women.

Men appeared to take more responsibility of fetching water during COVID-19 than before as the study observes 4% increase in respondents saying that men fetched water, while the data also shows a drop in respondents reporting that women fetched water during COVID-19 pandemic. In this case, 64% respondents stated women bringing water during COVID-19 pandemic, in comparison to 70% respondents reporting the same before COVID-19 pandemic.

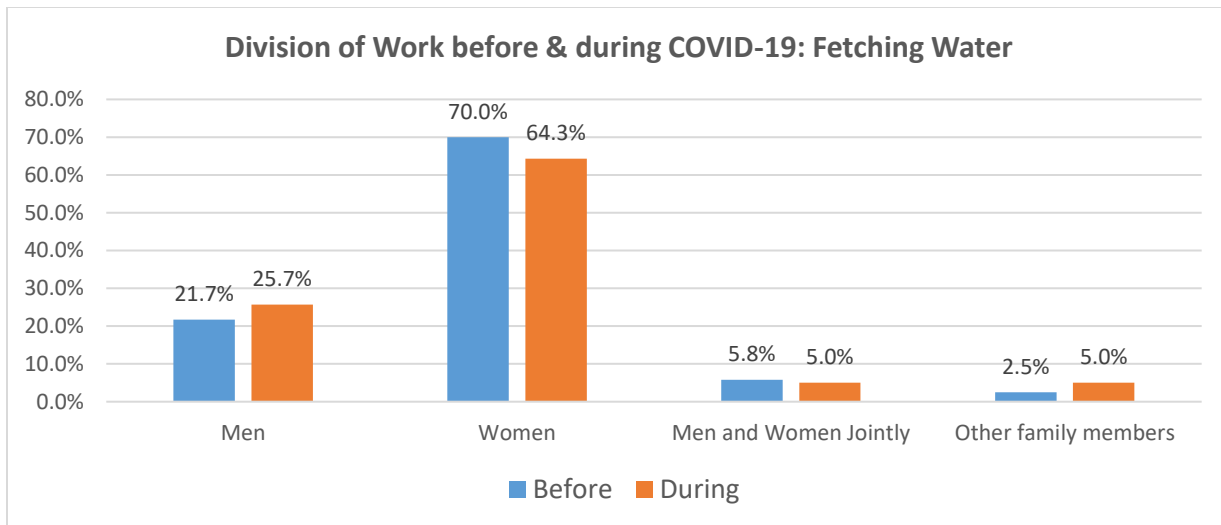


Figure 24: Division of Work before & during COVID-19: Fetching Water

Normally public domain activities are linked with men so an overwhelming majority of men could be seen shopping groceries for households before and during COVID-19 pandemic. Almost 71% men shopped daily-use items before COVID-19 emergency. Only almost 12% women were involved in purchasing groceries before COVID-19 issues, while almost 16% respondent said that men and women jointly shopped for groceries before COVID-19.

During COVID-19 pandemic, men's routine did not seem to be changing to a much an extent. 71.7% respondents responded that men shop groceries for their household during COVID-19 pandemic, but women's contribution fell about 5% in this regard. Percentage of respondents saying that men and women shopped together did not change to any significant level during COVID-19 pandemic.

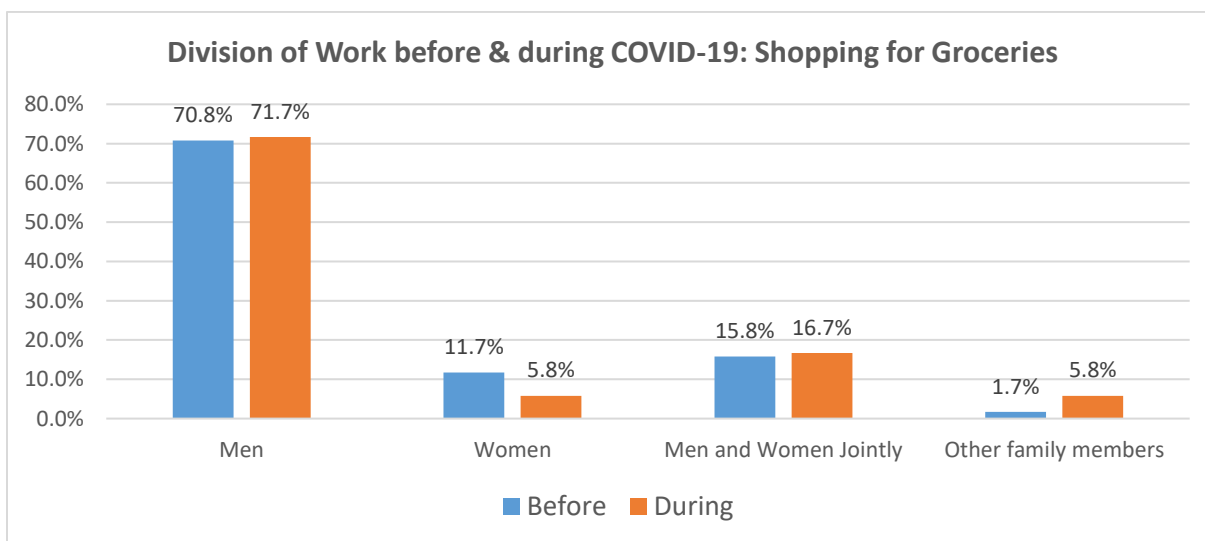


Figure 25: Division of Work before & during COVID-19: Shopping for Groceries

Men being the bread winner usually seem involved in managing budgets of the households. The usual observation fits into the community setting of Kuri village as well. Over 64% of the respondents shared that men controlled the budgets of households before COVID-19. About 11% respondents said that women were in control of the households' budgets, while 19% of the respondents said that men and women together controlled the budgets before COVID-19 pandemic.

The number of men controlling the budget dropped slightly during COVID-19 pandemic as 60% of the respondents shared that men controlled the budget during lockdown and COVID-19 pandemic. A significant shift in percentage is seen in joint management of the budget of the households by men and women during COVID-19 pandemic. With an increase of 11%, 30% respondents opinioned that men and women jointly managed the budget.

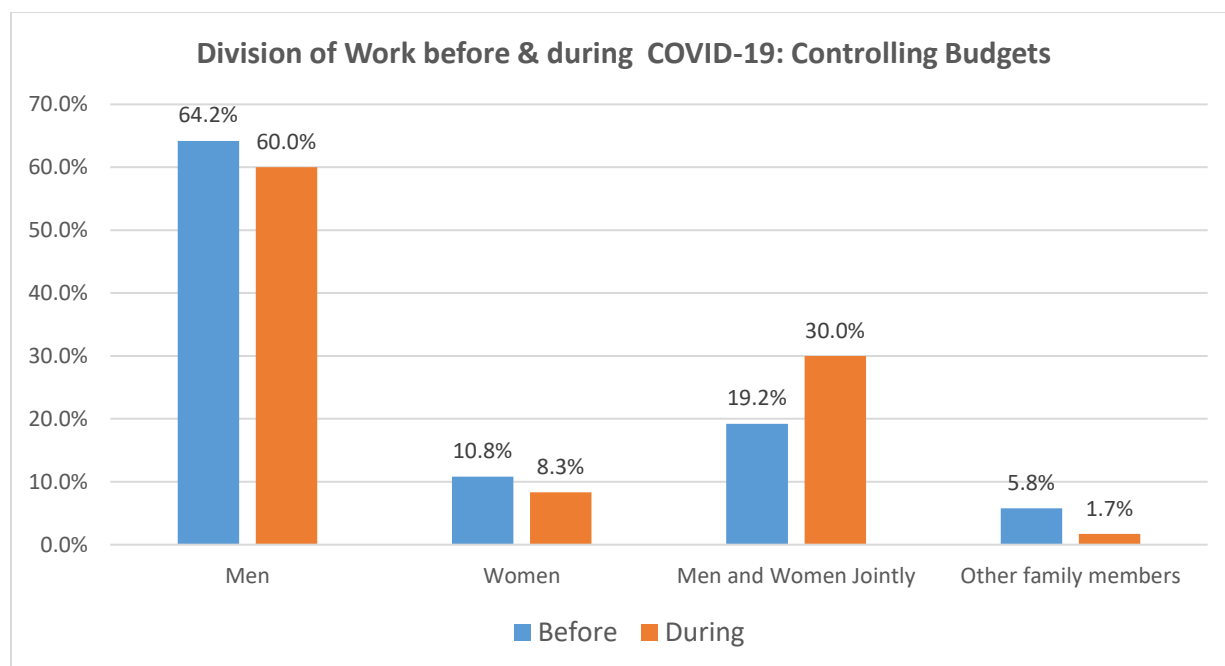


Figure 26: Division of Work before & during COVID-19: Controlling Budgets.

Managing community relations is one of the important roles while living in a particular community, and both men and women are expected to maintain them in specific ways. Community meetings, among many others, are one of the ways of interacting with community members and sometimes play a vital role in decision making at community level.

Men, before the COVID-19 and lockdown situation, were seen attending these community meetings as per the responses of 51% respondents. Approximately 30% of the respondents shared that other family members, including senior men and women, used to attend these community meetings as well before COVID-19 pandemic.

As men stayed at home during lockdown, imposed due to outbreak of coronavirus pandemic, there is a significant increase in men’s participation, i.e. 68%, in the community meeting. Participation of women in community meeting during pandemic of COVID-19 dropped to 9.5%.

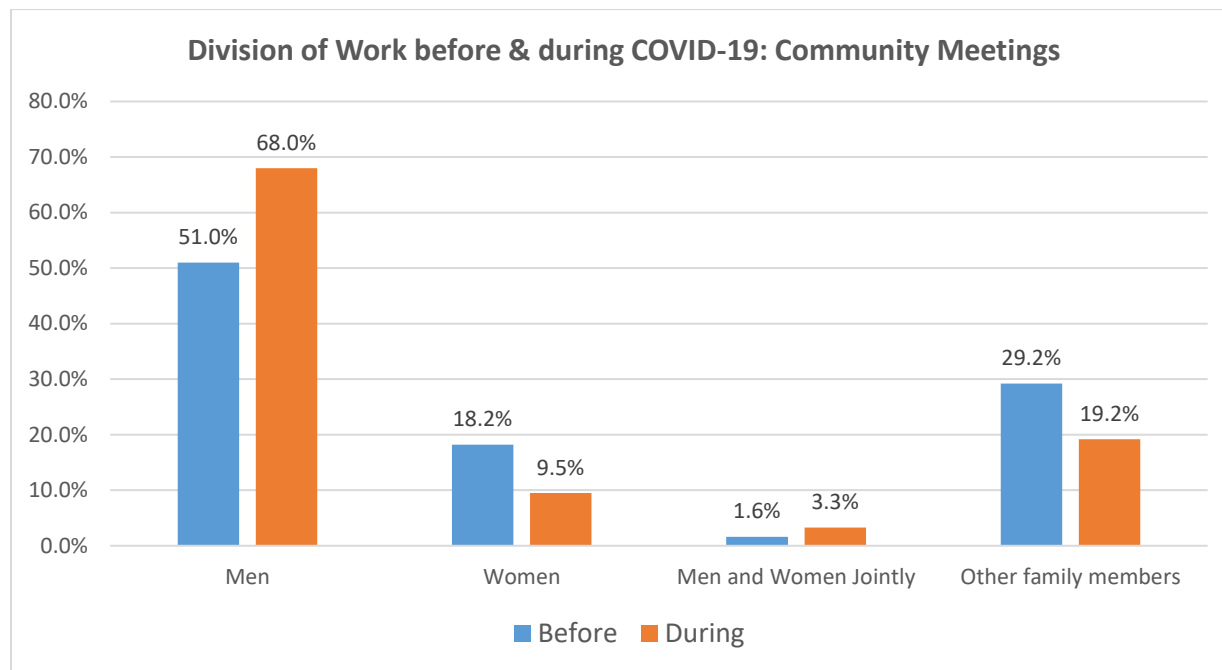


Figure 27: Division of Work before & during COVID-19: Community Meetings

“There were many meetings held during the pandemic and most of them were attended by the male members. They had no work so they used to pass time by meeting and greeting people. Moreover, these women don’t know what to do anyway.”

FGD Married Man, Kuri

A cross tabulation of “thinking about the division of household work before COVID-19 pandemic” with sex of the respondents was made to reveal the following results: 47% of the total respondents believed that women did a lot more at household level than men. Almost 46% of the total male respondents shared that women do a lot more than men at household level before COVID-19 pandemic, while only 1.7% woman had the same opinion. Out of the 24% respondents who believed that women do a little more household work than men, 14% were males while 10% were females.

Same variables were cross tabulated during COVID-19 pandemic. Majority of the respondents believed that women were more burdened during the days of COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. Here, 26% of the total respondents had the opinion that women do a little more than men to perform household chores, comprising of 9% of men and 17% of women. On the other hand,

almost 54% of the respondents believed that women did a lot more during COVID-19 pandemic. These 53.90% of the respondents composed of 52.20% men and only 1.7% of women.

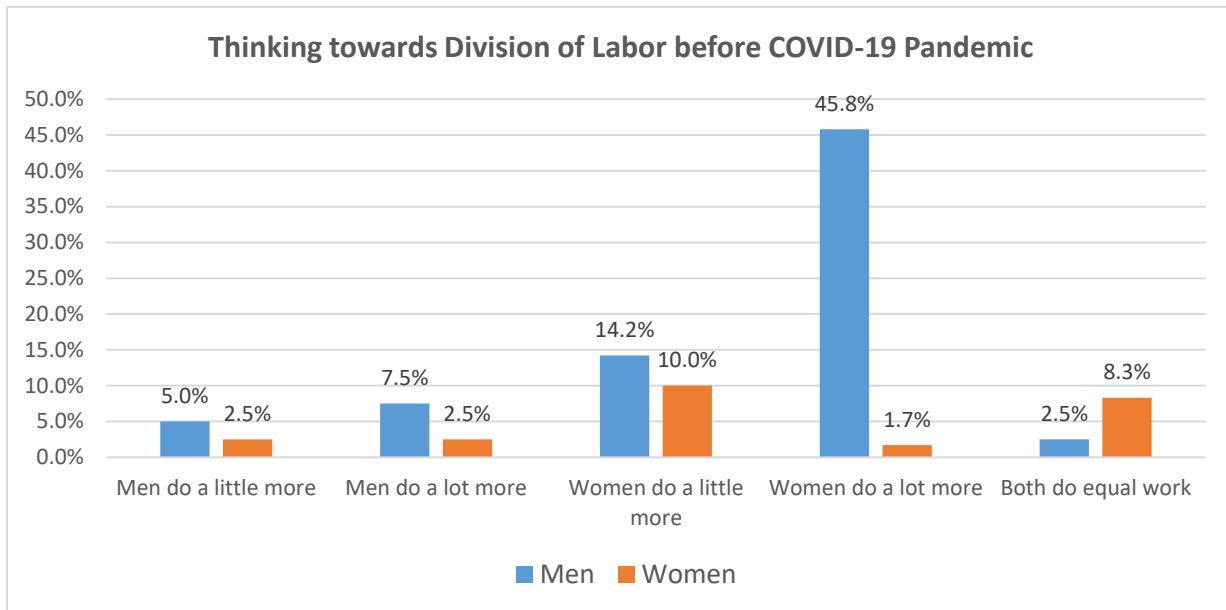


Figure 28: Thinking towards Division of Labor before COVID-19 Pandemic

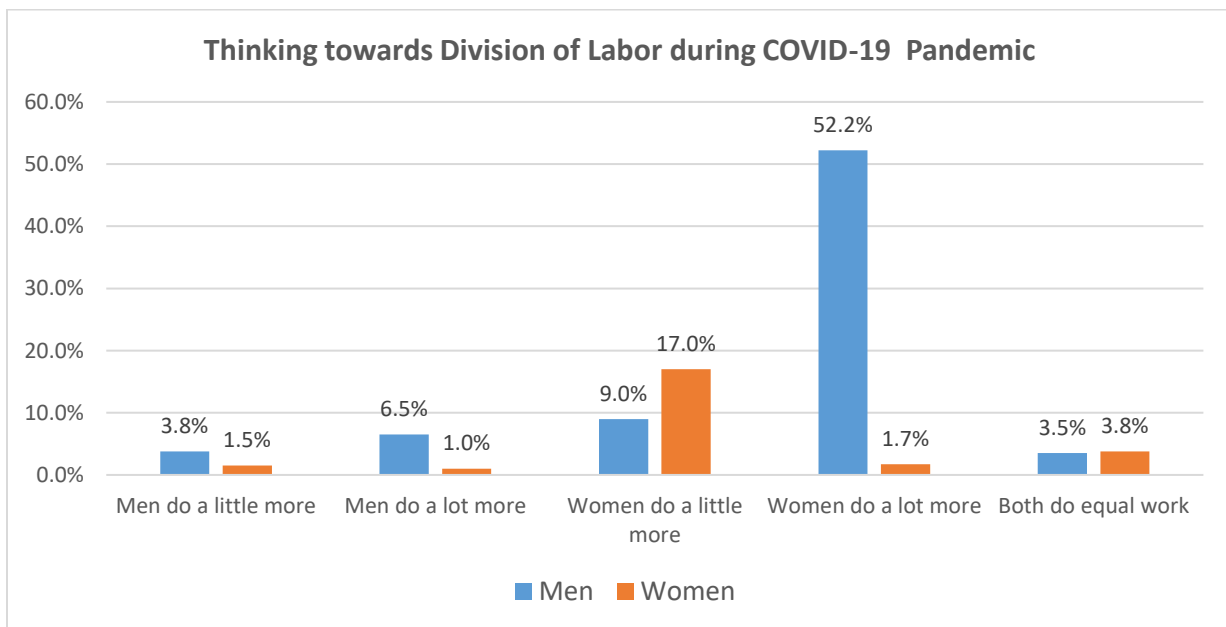


Figure 29: Thinking towards Division of Labor during COVID-19 Pandemic

3.3 Socialization

It was discussed earlier that the situation of lockdown, due to pandemic of corona, has caused changes in the earlier normal routine of the men and women in the community of Kuri. Men in general stayed longer than normal at home during daytimes as their livelihood and other economic activities were stopped due to lockdown. On the other hand, women became more burdened with household chores due to the excessive work with more family members at home.

Men seem to control the mobility of women in the community of Kuri in the situation of lockdown and pandemic of coronavirus, in comparison to the situation before it. Before the lockdown and men spending more time home, 53% of the married men used to decide about their wives going out for any need or in any situation. The percentage of these married men regulating the movement of their wives increased by 10% during lockdown, i.e. 63%. Percentage of senior family members controlling the mobility of daughter-in-law has also augmented slightly, i.e. by 2% approximately, which shows increase of control over women's lives.

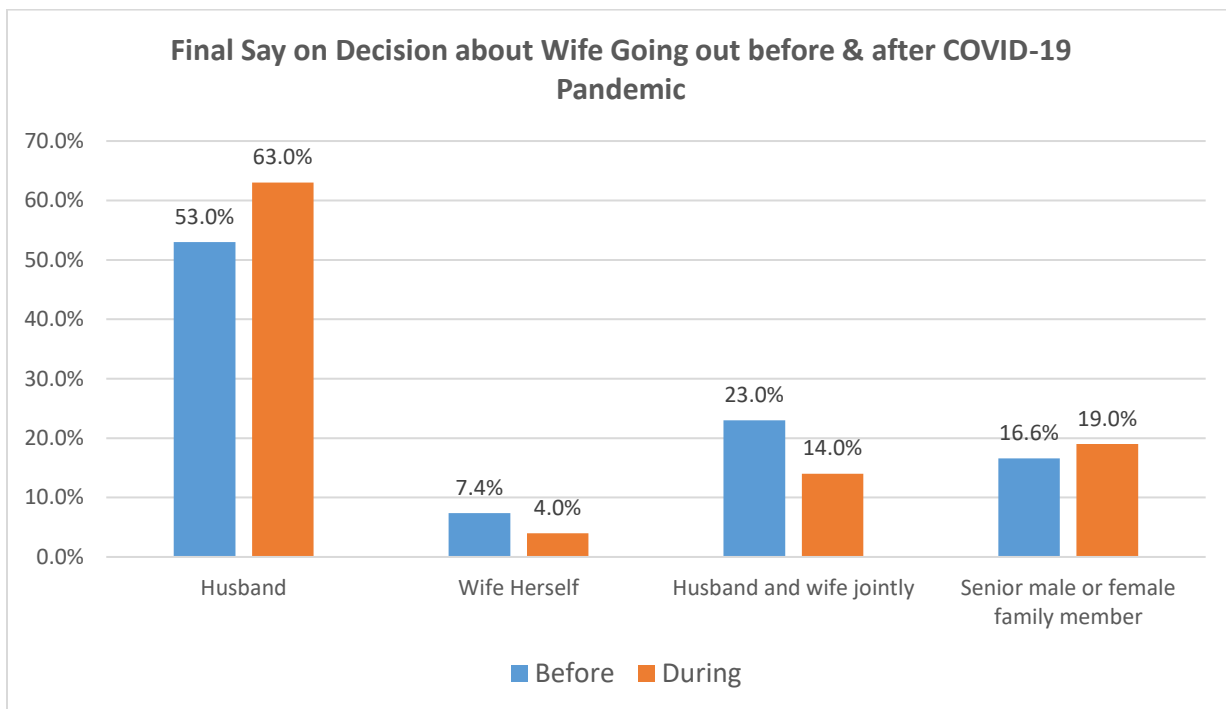


Figure 30: Final Say on Decision about Wife Going out before & after COVID-19 Pandemic

In the same context, respondents were queried about decision making authority at household level on married women's visit to their parents' home. In which, 54% of the respondents said that husband has the final say on wife's visit to her parents' home, while 28.4% respondents said that both husbands and wives jointly decide about her visit to parents' home, whereas 10%

respondents said that women decide themselves about their visit to parents' home. No significant change is observed in this practice during COVID-19 pandemic.

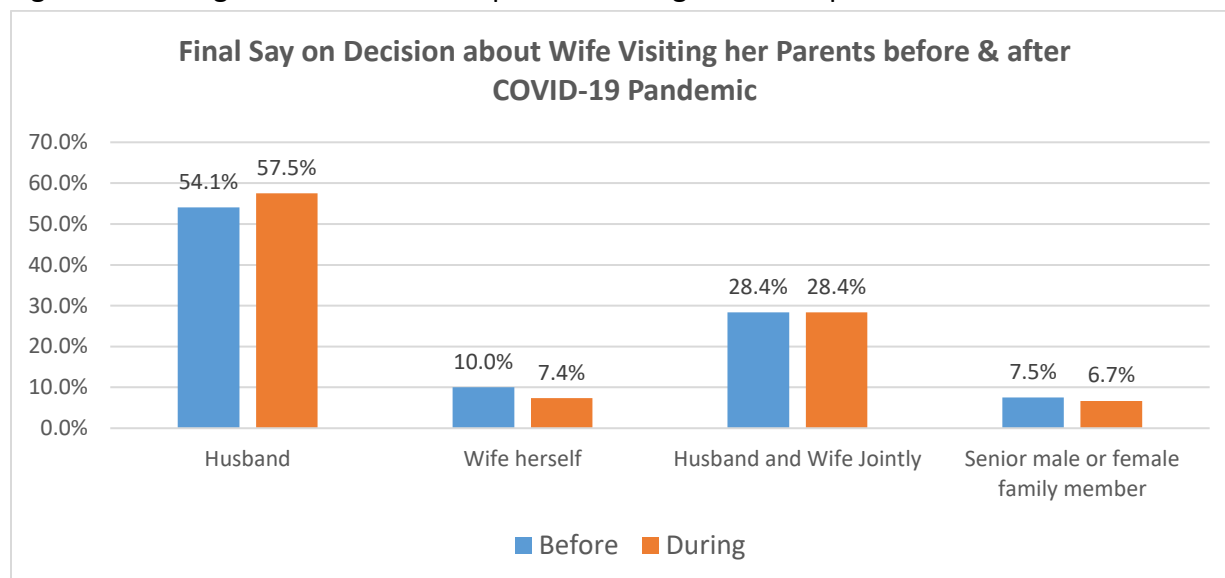


Figure 31: Final Say on Decision about Wife Visiting her Parents before & after COVID-19 Pandemic

“In reality, we have no objection that our wives visit their parents. It is their right. But it’s obligatory for a wife to inform husband when she has to go. Corona further made it difficult to leave the house. That’s why we did not allow them to go out during the pandemic, as they might catch the virus and further contaminate the household.”

FGD Married Man, Kuri

3.3.1 GEM Scale during COVID-19

Respondents were asked about their perception on gender equality measure (GEM) to see the connection of COVID-19 with gender-related ideas or values found in the community of Kuri village.

Forty-eight percent of the respondents from the community of Kuri village thought that if more rights would be extended to women, men are likely to lose their spaces in the society. On the other hand, a significant number of 38% respondents perceived otherwise and disagreed with the statement and believed that women having more rights will not affect the position of men in the society.

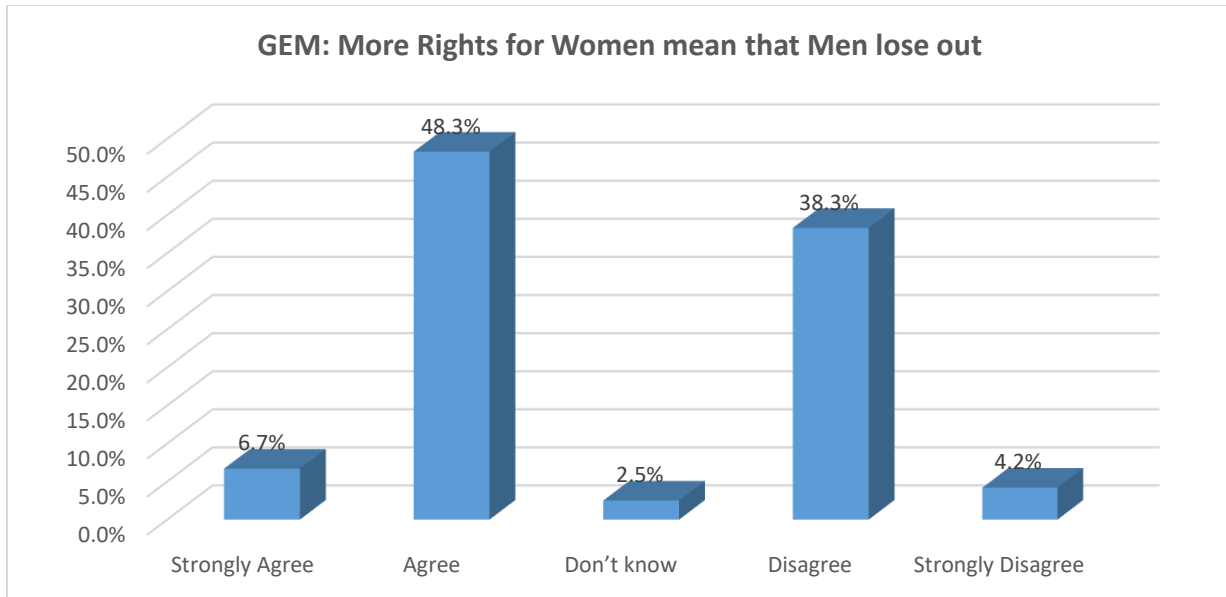


Figure 32: GEM: More rights for Women mean that Men lose out

“It is a man’s responsibility to earn money. Now, if they start awarding jobs to women in the name of rights, men would be finished. Unemployment is already at its peak. Consequently, men have no choice but to commit suicide.”

FGD Married Man, Kuri

The statement of the GEM scale was to measure the perception of respondents in the community of Kuri if they consider men and women to have achieved equality in their lives. About 58% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed with the statement, while 40% of the respondents thought that the statement was not true.

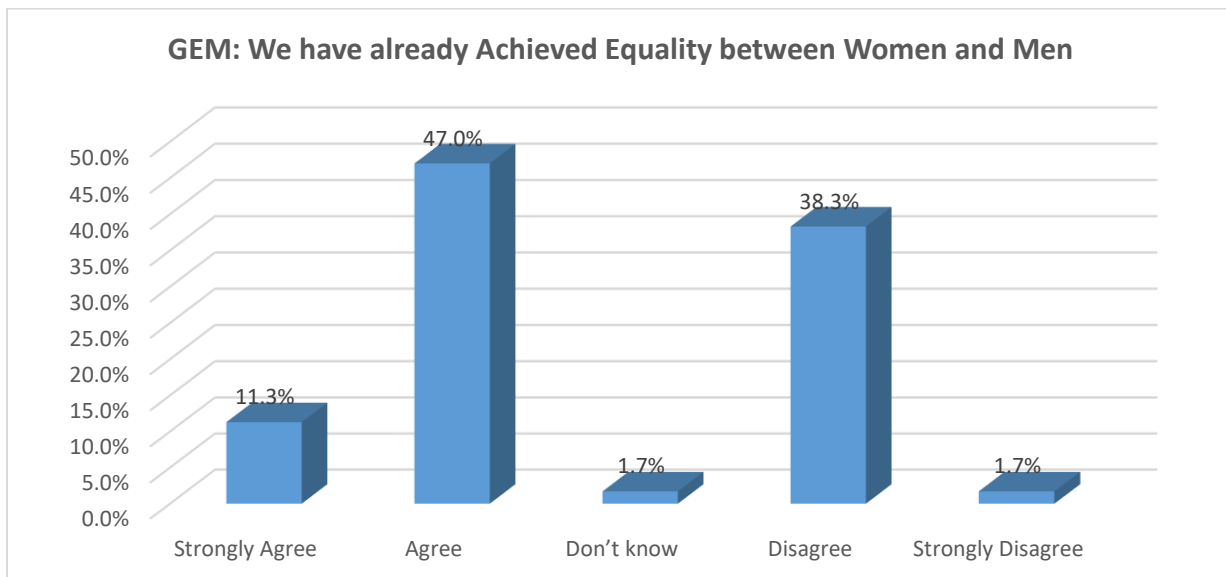


Figure 33: GEM: We have already Achieved Equality between Women and Men

Majority of the respondents were found in line with the idea that women’s most important role is to manage home chores and cook for the family, as 65% of the respondents agreed and almost 11% strongly agreed to the statement. Only a few 20% of the respondents in the community of Kuri disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement.

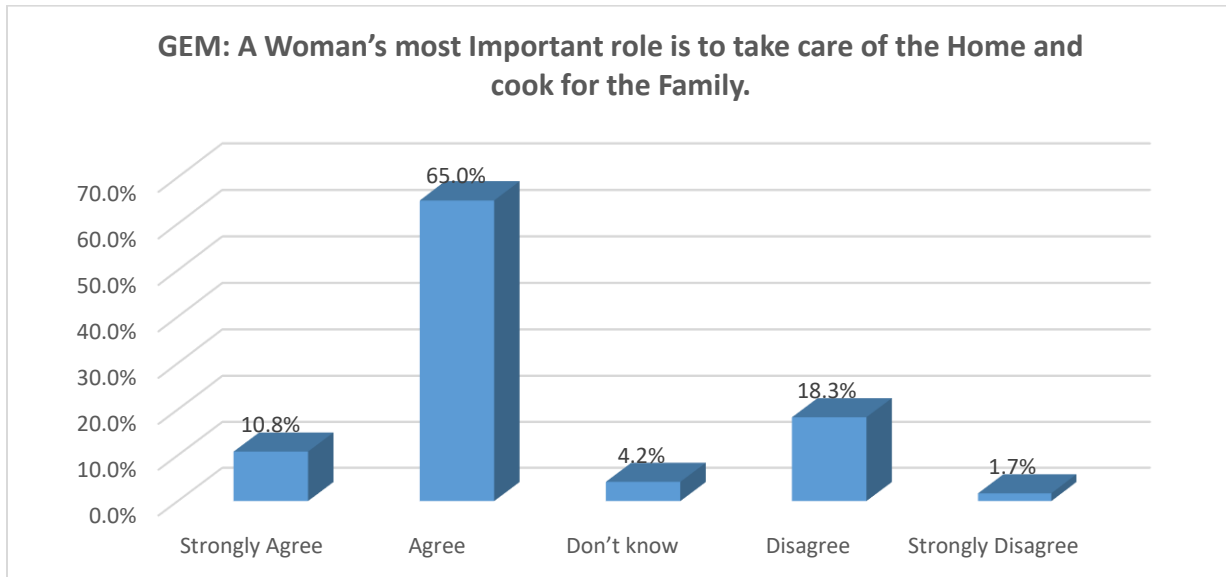


Figure 34: GEM: A woman’s most Important role is to take care of the home and cook for the Family.

To find out the perception of Kuri community about the decision-making process at home almost 46% of the respondents agreed that a man should have the final say at home and decide the matters in family, followed by 16.6% of the respondents who strongly agreed with the GEM scale statement. Approximately 34% of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

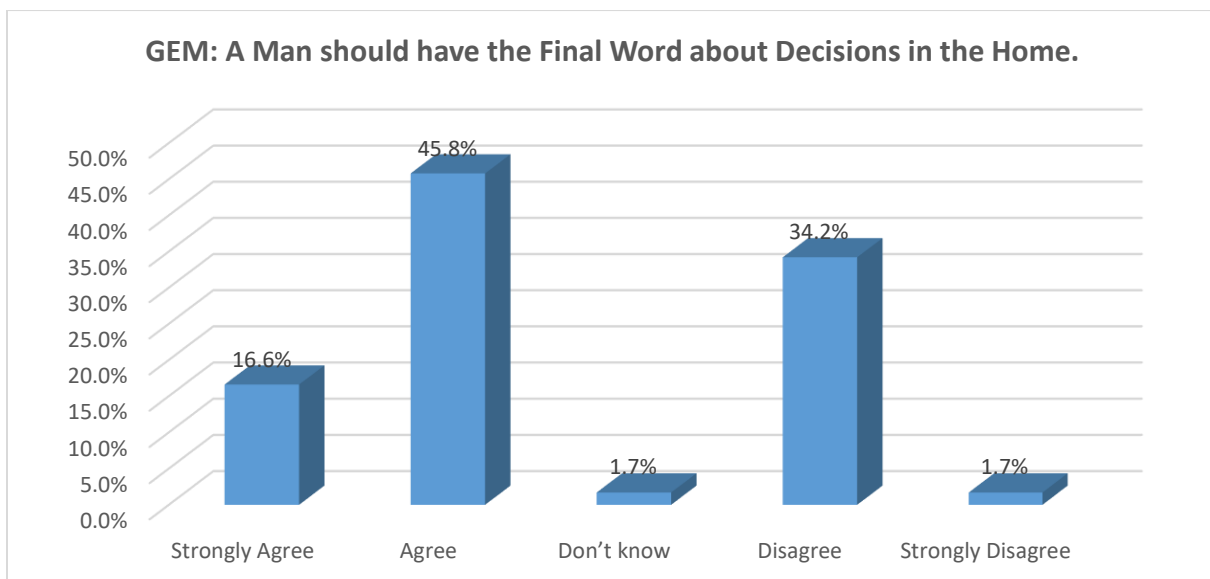


Figure 35: GEM: A Man should have the Final Word about Decisions in the Home.

“Religion has also designated men as the caretaker of the family. Therefore, men should have the authority to take all important decisions related to family matters.”

FGD Unmarried Man, Kuri

With reference to violence against women, respondents from the Kuri community were given the statement which explored if the women deserve to be beaten sometimes. Almost half of the respondents disagreed with the statement and 8.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the phrase. Still a significant number of respondents, i.e. 32%, believed that women need to be beaten at times, followed by 5.7% of the respondents who strongly agreed with the statement.

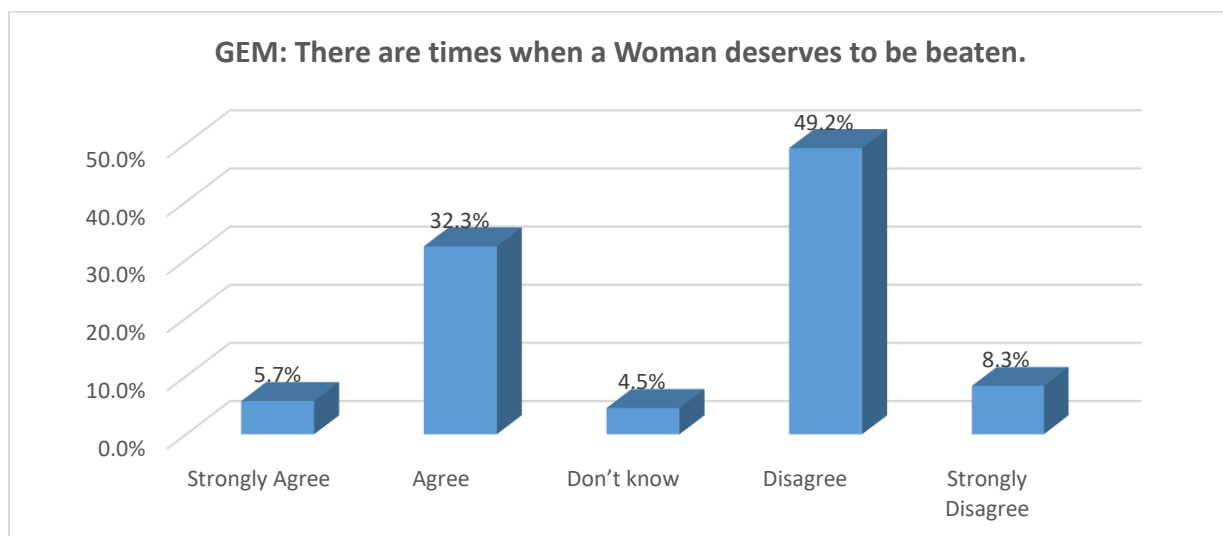


Figure 36: GEM: There are times when a Woman deserves to be beaten.

“Sometimes women do not understand without being reprimanded harshly, so men are compelled to do it.”

FGD Unmarried Man, Kuri

“I think things should be discussed affectionately; this method will have lasting effects. There should be no violence.”

FGD Married Man, Kuri

As per the general idea in the society, in order to be accepted as a man, one has to perform rough and tough. The stereotype seems quite prevalent in the Kuri community where 53.7% of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 7.5% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Around 35% of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement.

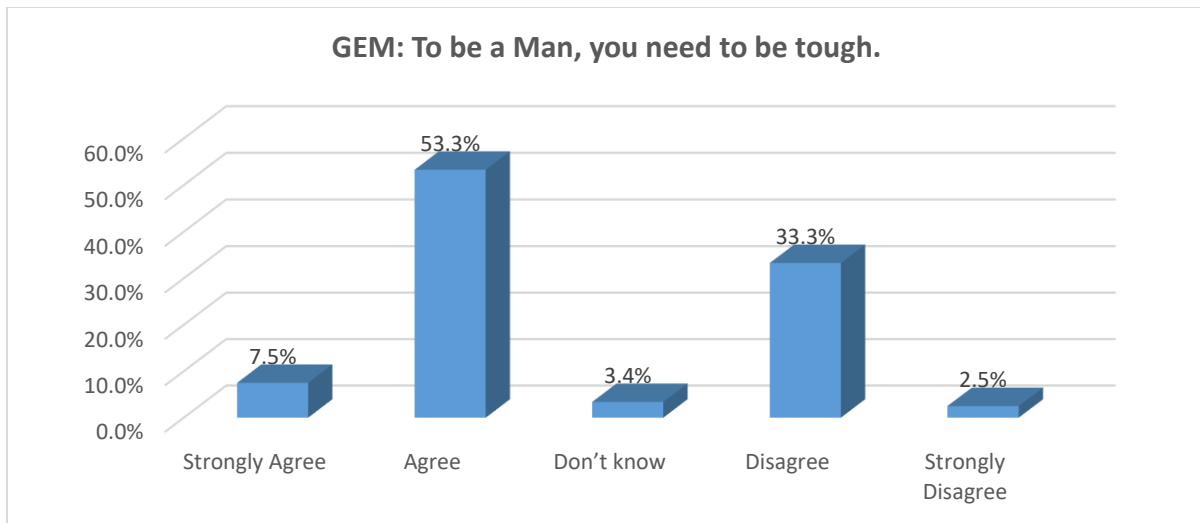


Figure 37: GEM: To be a Man, you need to be tough.

The respondents from the community seem almost equally divided on taking care of children. In this regard, 42.5% of the respondents agreed to the statement that it is only a mother’s job to take care of children in terms of changing their diapers, bathing and feeding them; while 47.5% of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

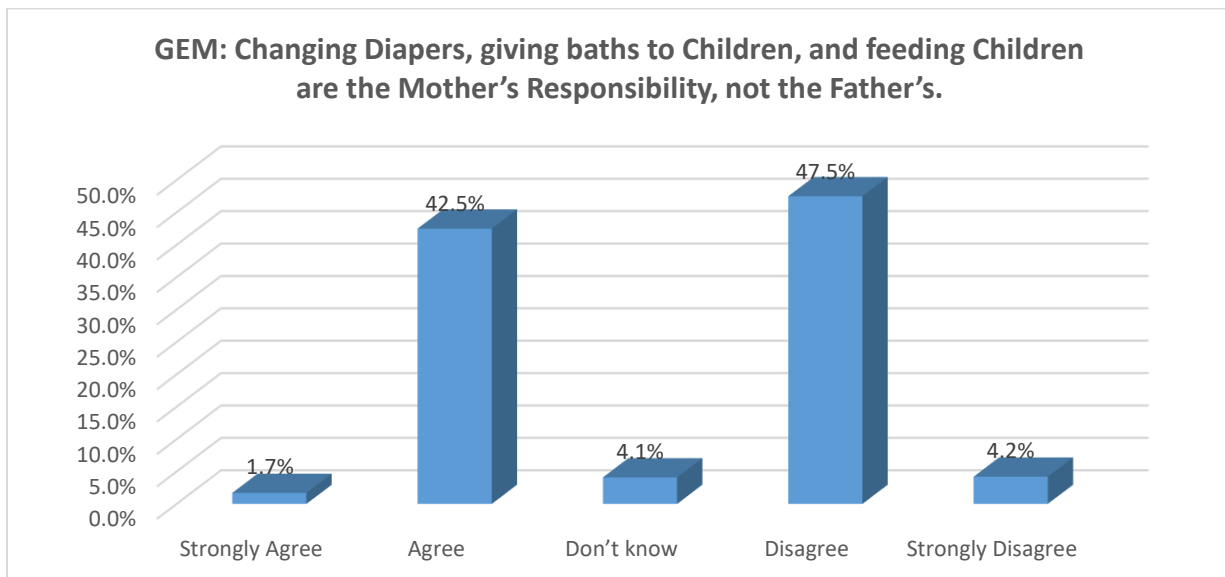


Figure 38: GEM: Changing diapers, giving baths to Children, and feeding Children are the Mother’s Responsibility, not the Father’s.

“A child belongs as much to the father, as it does to the mother. A father also has a right on a child, just like a mother does. Similarly, both have equal responsibilities as well. So, it shouldn't be out of question for men to do chores related to their kids. Boys in the new generation do chores side by side with the women. Previously, men used to shy away from doing house chores.”

FGD Married Man, Kuri

Participants of the study were also asked about their perception on women’s patience in response to violence against them. Majority of the respondents agreed that women should tolerate violence against them with 43.8% and 4.2% strongly agreeing with the statement. On the other hand, 42% disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement. Whereas 7.5% of the respondents shared no opinion on this statement.

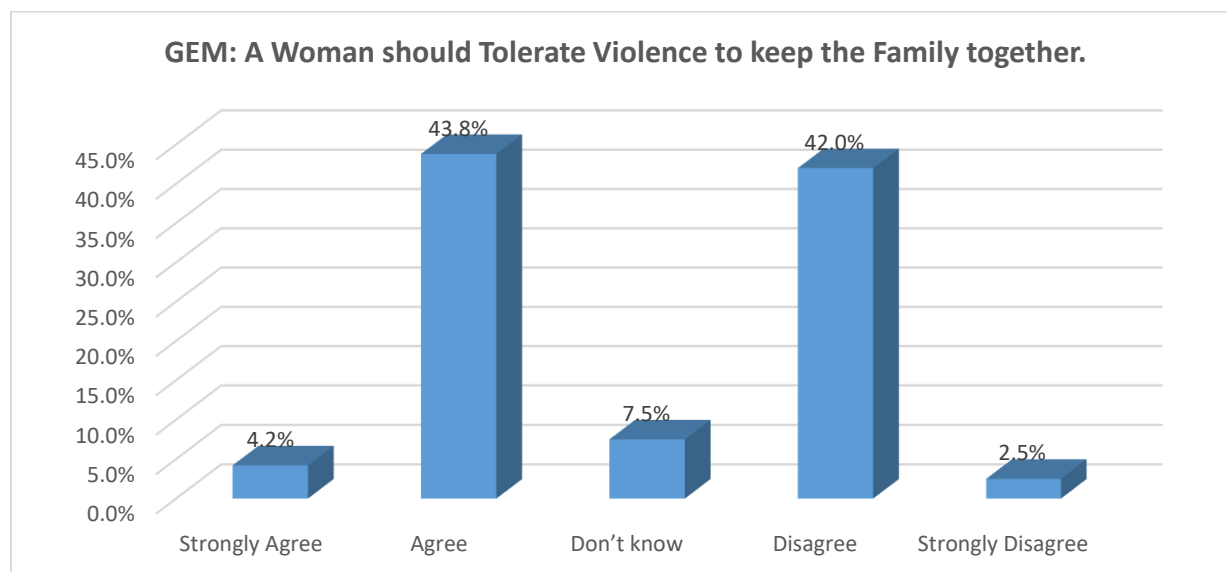


Figure 39: GEM: A Woman should Tolerate Violence to keep the Family together.

“First of all, the truth is that violence should not be an option in any case. No one likes getting beaten up. But men get angry easily, so if women control themselves in these situations, this act can save the family from crumbling down.”

FGD Woman, Kuri

The respondents also shared their opinion on the expected role of men and boys to correct the wrong behaviors of women in their family, even if they are younger than the women. A big majority of respondents, i.e. 60.8%, disagreed with the statement, while 4.2% strongly disagreed with it. Almost 30% of respondents agreed with the statement, including both responses which are agree and strongly agree. 5% of the respondents did not share their opinion on it.

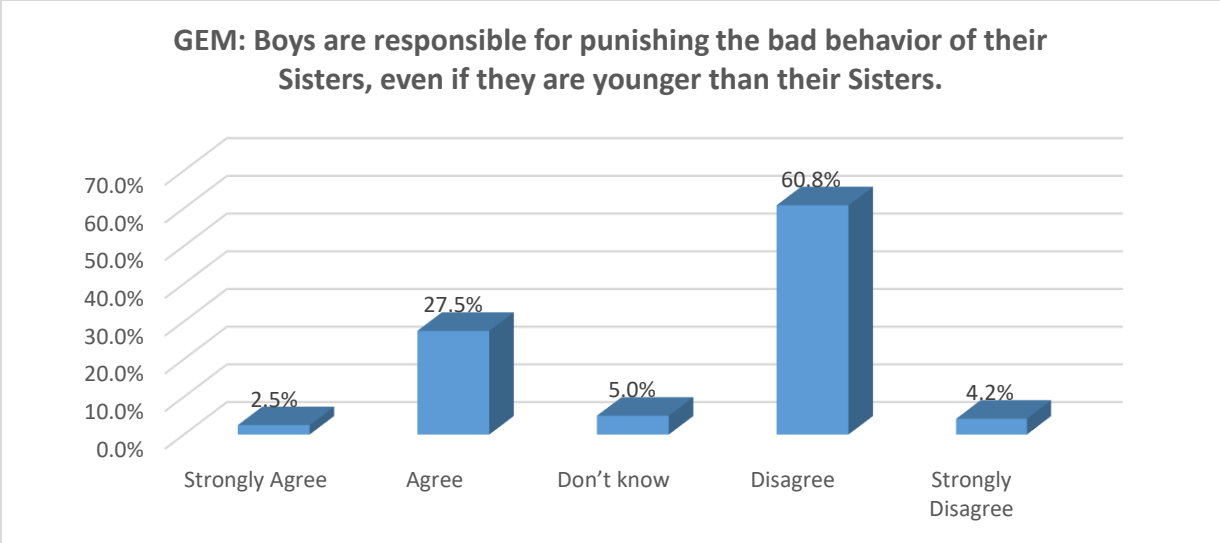


Figure 40: GEM: Boys are responsible for punishing the bad behavior of their Sisters, even if they are younger than their Sisters.

With regards to their opinions about the abilities of working women to manage home and family as a wife or mother. 40.9% of the respondents agreed to the idea, while 5.8% of them strongly agreed with this statement. Respondents disagreeing with the statement comprised of 38.3%, and 6.7% respondents strongly disagreed with it. About 8% of the respondents had no opinion on it.

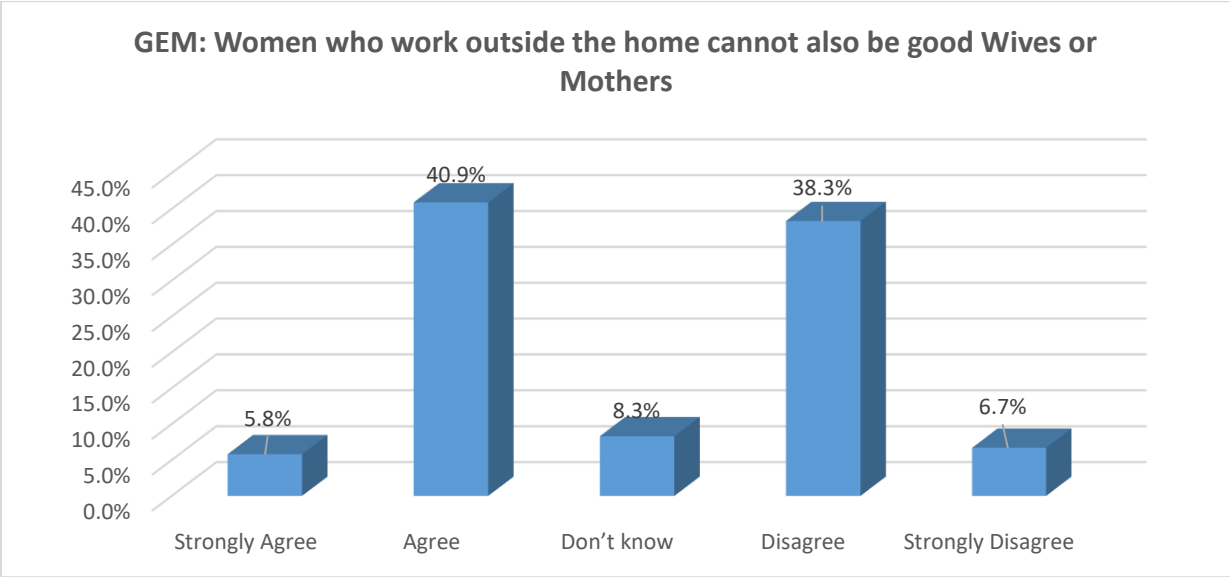


Figure 41: GEM: Women who work outside the home cannot also be good Wives or Mothers

“Nature created women to do chores. Now the question arises, if a woman stays out of her house all day, how would she carry out her duties towards her home?”
FGD Unmarried Man, Kuri

Respondents were requested to express their opinion regarding men’s part in nurturing the children. An overwhelming majority of respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the expression that the father’s role is important in raising children. The percentage of respondents agreeing with the statement remained 75%, while 7.5 strongly agreed with it. 15% of the respondents expressed their disagreement with the idea.

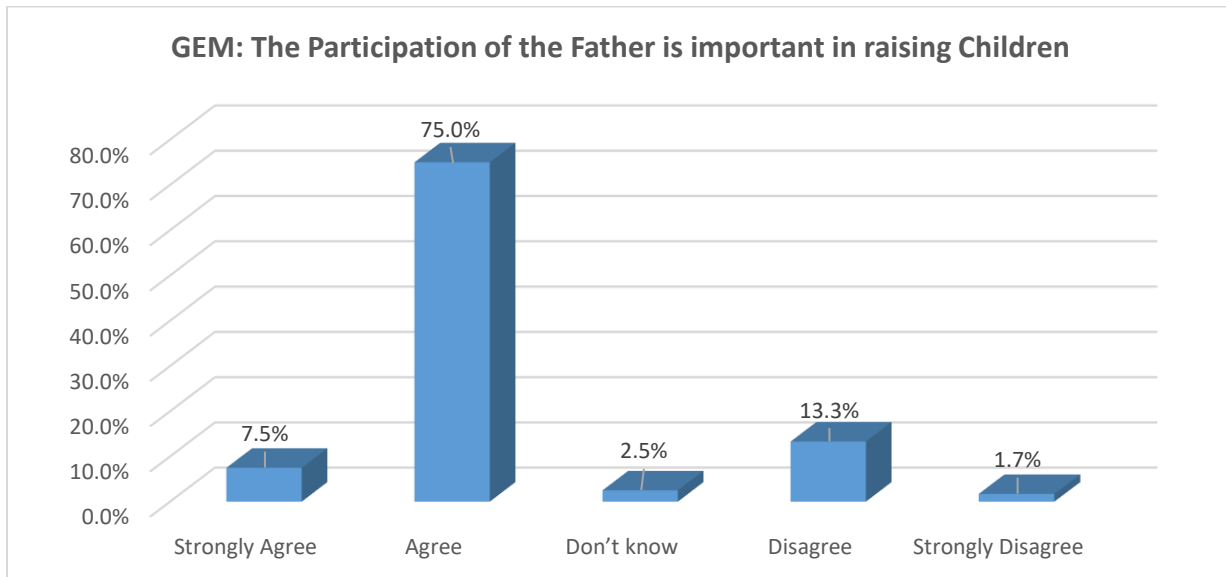


Figure 42: GEM: The Participation of the Father is important in raising Children

The respondents were presented with the idea that men are usually not expected to share their emotions and problems with others, else they are considered weak. Majority of the respondents, i.e. 56.7%, agreed that men should have friends with whom they should be able to speak to and share their problems, and 5.8% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. Almost 31% of the respondents voted against the statement and disagreed with the idea that it is not necessary for men to have friends for sharing their problems.

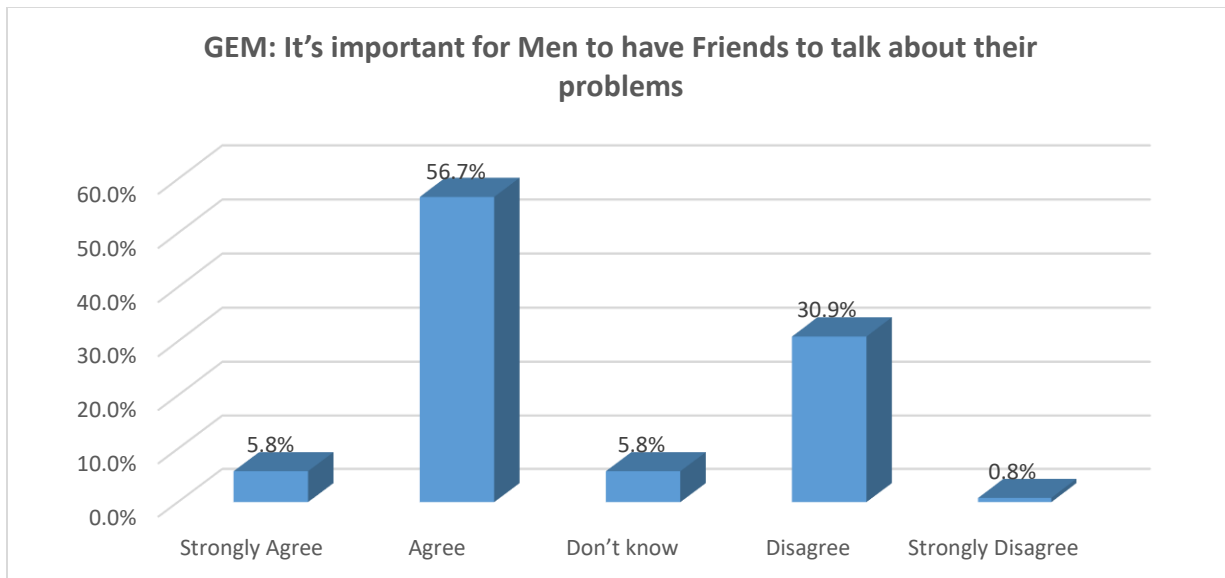


Figure 43: GEM: It's important for Men to have Friends to talk about their problems

"If we share our pain with other family members, they also get worried. That's why it is better to discuss these things with friends outside of the family dynamics. Men also need a dear and near friend to share their pain."

FGD Married Man, Kuri

3.4 Health and Wellbeing

The time of COVID-19 and lockdown has been stressful in many aspects. Staying at home for an unknown period of time, limited or no source of income, illness in general and specifically coronavirus, fear of catching the disease, fear of losing the loved ones, professional and personal relationships problems, mental and physical stresses etc. are just some of the problems everyone is facing. This situation has impacted the health and wellbeing of men as well. In the following preliminary finding, health and wellbeing are being discussed.

Men were asked about feelings of inferiority to others during the times of COVID-19 pandemic. More than 52% of the respondents completely agreed that they felt inferior to others during the times of pandemic of COVID-19 pandemic in terms of supporting to their families, while 24.9% respondents partly agreed to the statement.

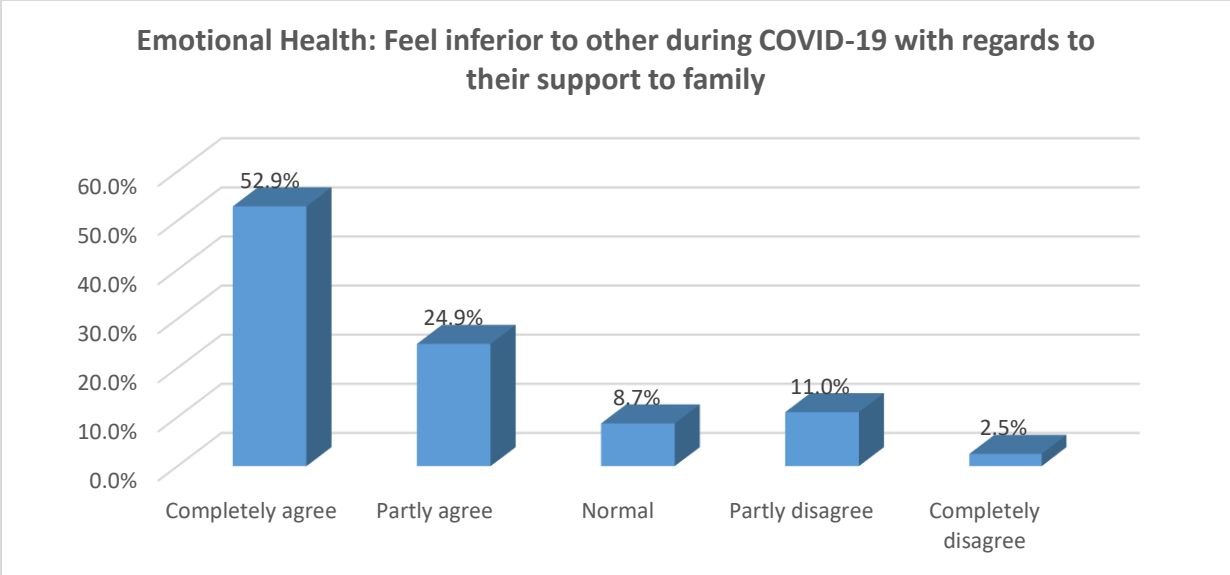


Figure 44: Emotional Health: Feel inferior to other during COVID-19 with regards to their support to family

When respondents were asked about their emotional state of mind in terms of feeling depressed due to the situation of coronavirus pandemic, 70% of the respondents shared that they felt depressed due to the situation and condition caused by the pandemic. Specifically, 34.6% of the respondents felt depressed sometimes during the past three months, 24% often got the feeling of depression and 11.6% respondents were more frequently depressed in the past three months.

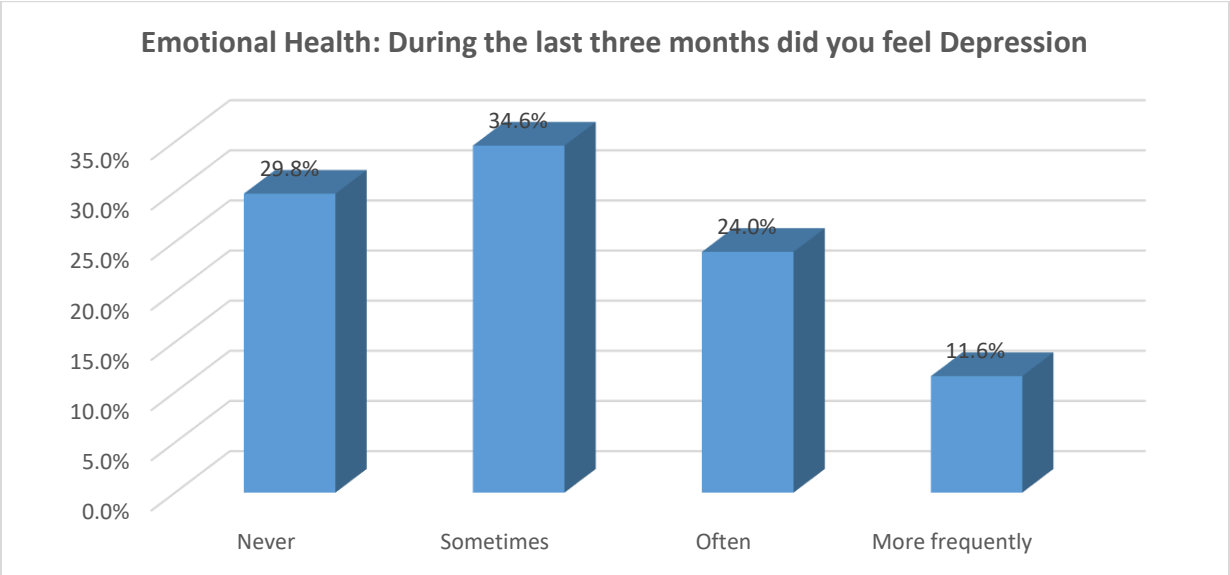


Figure 45: Emotional Health: During the last three months did you feel Depression

Over 41% of the respondents never experienced any suicidal thoughts during the last three months. On the other hand, almost 59% of the respondents got suicidal thoughts amid

coronavirus pandemic and lockdown. This percentage is quite alarming with reference to emotional health of the community of Kuri.

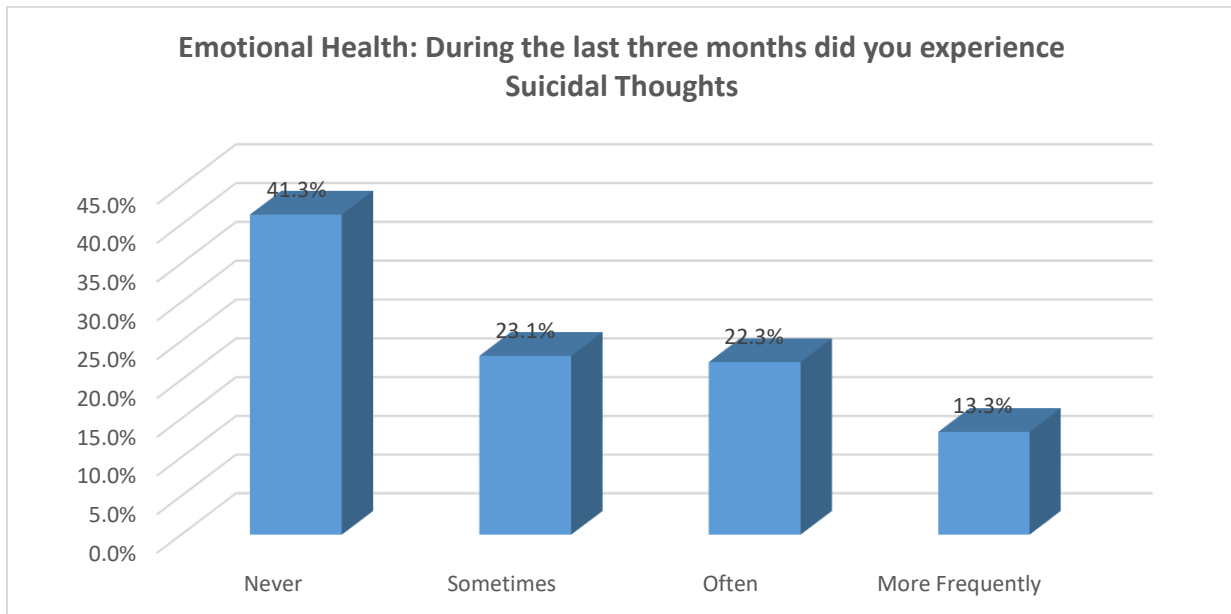


Figure 46: Emotional Health: During the last three months did you experience Suicidal Thoughts

As physical ailments are directly linked with stress and other emotional states of mind of human beings, 48% of the respondents of the study reported some stomach and digestion problems during last three months.

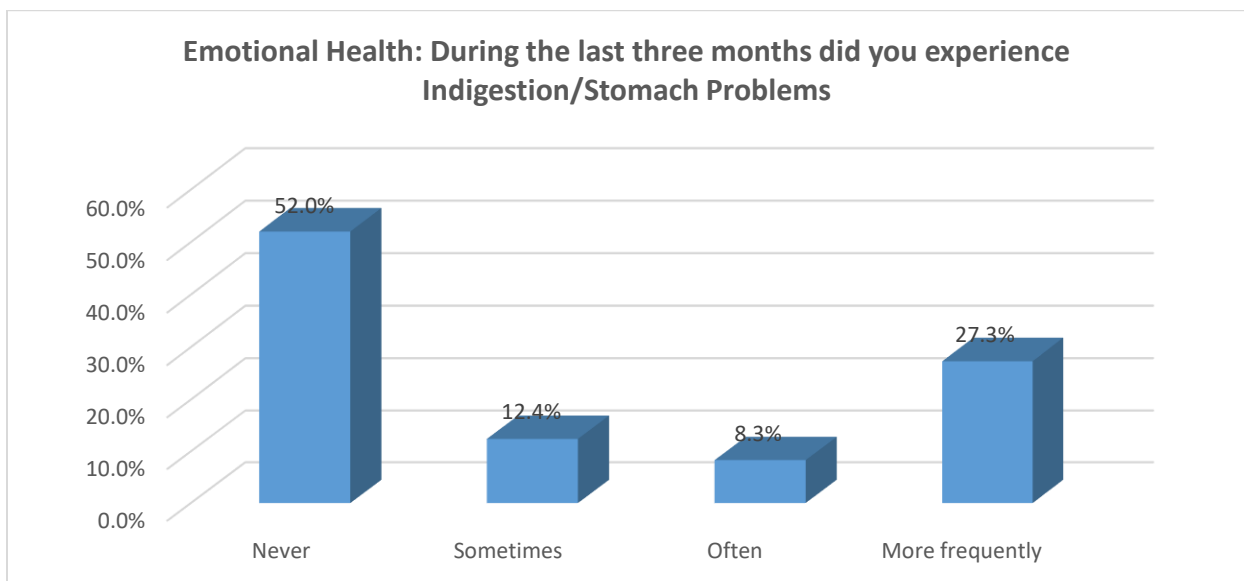


Figure 47: Emotional Health: During the last three months did you experience Indigestion/Stomach Problems

Fifty-five percent of men participating in the study claimed to be seeking health service regularly during the pandemic of Coronavirus pandemic while approximately 45 percent denied seeking health services during COVID-19 pandemic. Sixty-eight percent of the men who sought medical services during last three months consulted a medical professional for seasonal medical problems.

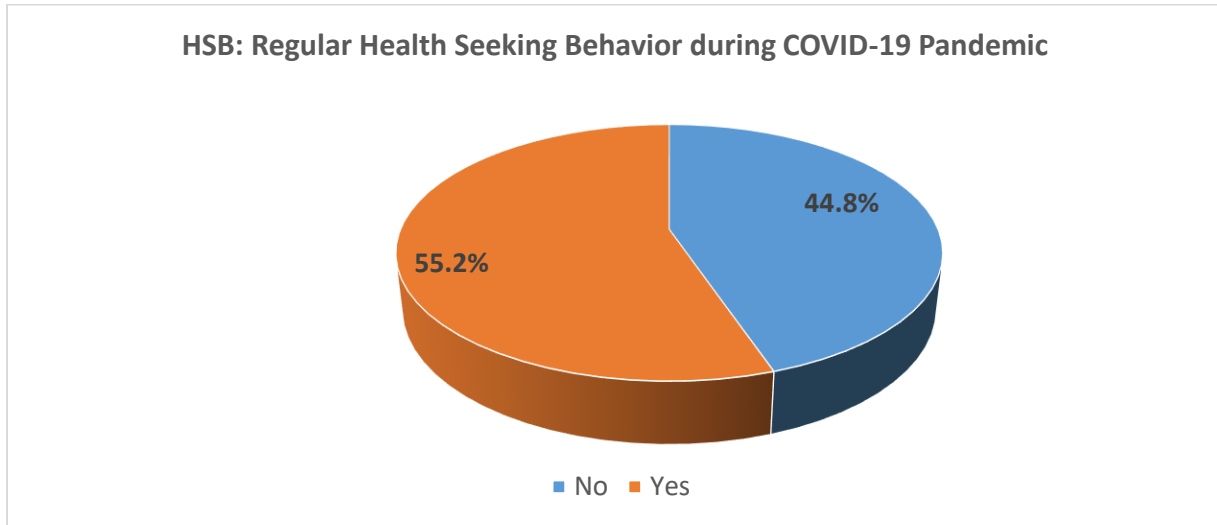


Figure 48: HSB: Regular Health Seeking Behavior during COVID-19 Pandemic

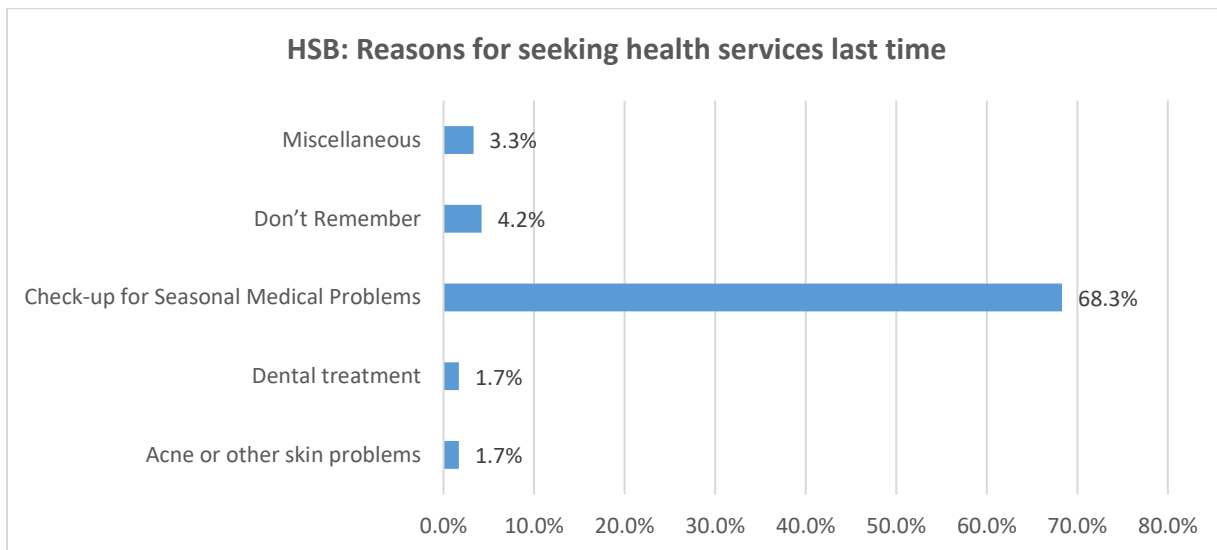


Figure 49: HSB: Reasons for seeking health services last time

Emotional Health of Men during COVID-19 pandemic in the Community of Kuri:

Self-body image of an individual plays an important role in gaining or losing confidence in daily life. Various factors in life may participate into this phenomenon. Men in Kuri were asked about the satisfaction level they had during COVID-19 pandemic. Majority of men showed satisfaction about their body image during the pandemic of COVID-19. 47.5 percent of men were completely agreed with the statement while 20 percent were partly agreed. On the other hands almost fifteen percent respondent to question were partly disagreed and 13 percent were completely disagreed.

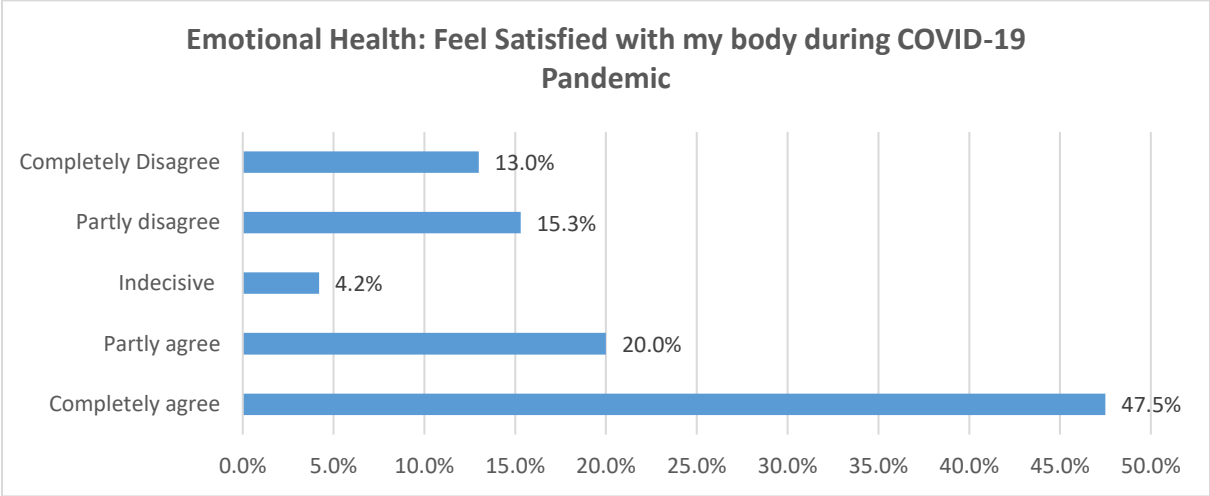


Figure 50: Emotional Health: Feel Satisfied with my body during COVID-19 Pandemic

To measure the emotional state of men during COVID-19 men were also inquired about their perception of usage of their lives for others. In response of the question, a significant number of respondents i.e. 27 percent remained unclear on this and chose option of partly agree and disagree at the same time. Majority of men thought that their life is of no use for others during COVID-19 pandemic. A combined percentage of almost 60% partly agreed and completely agreed with the statement. Only a 12 percent of men disagreed with the viewpoint.

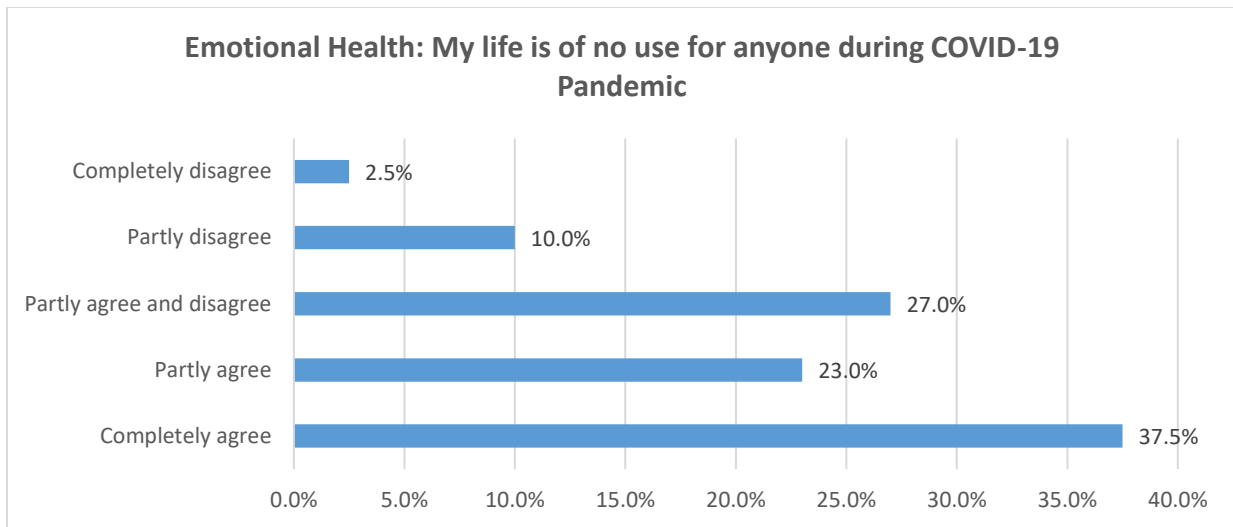


Figure 51: Emotional Health: My life is of no use for anyone during COVID-19 Pandemic

With reference to emotional health, men were also questioned about seeking psychological help, they felt sad, disappointed or frustrated during the time of COVID-19. A huge portion of respondent i.e. seventy-eight percent believed that they sought psychological help during the time when they felt down.

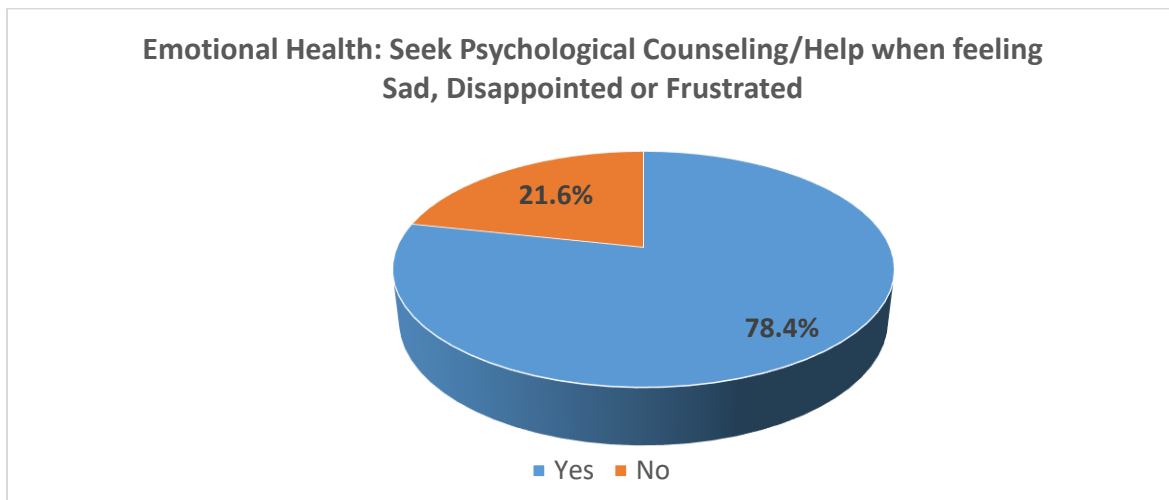


Figure 52: Emotional Health: Seek Psychological Counseling/Help when feeling Sad, Disappointed or Frustrated

While explaining about the relationship they took psychological help from majority i.e. 41 percent discussed their state of mind/problems with family members, 21 percent discussed it with friends and 21 percent discussed their issues with spouses. Furthermore, 16.7% males took help from emotional health service provider.

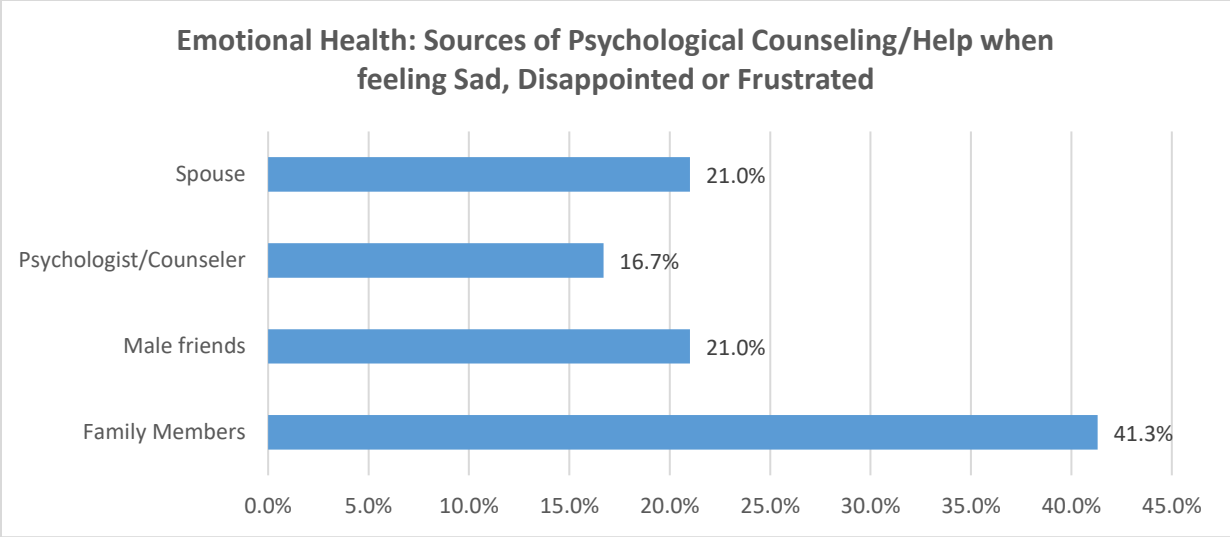


Figure 53: Emotional Health: Sources of Psychological Counseling/Help when feeling Sad, Disappointed or Frustrated

An overwhelming majority of the respondents i.e. 77.5 percent denied seeking psychological help from a professional mental health services provider. Around 16 percent of the respondents thought that they took help from a professional services provider.

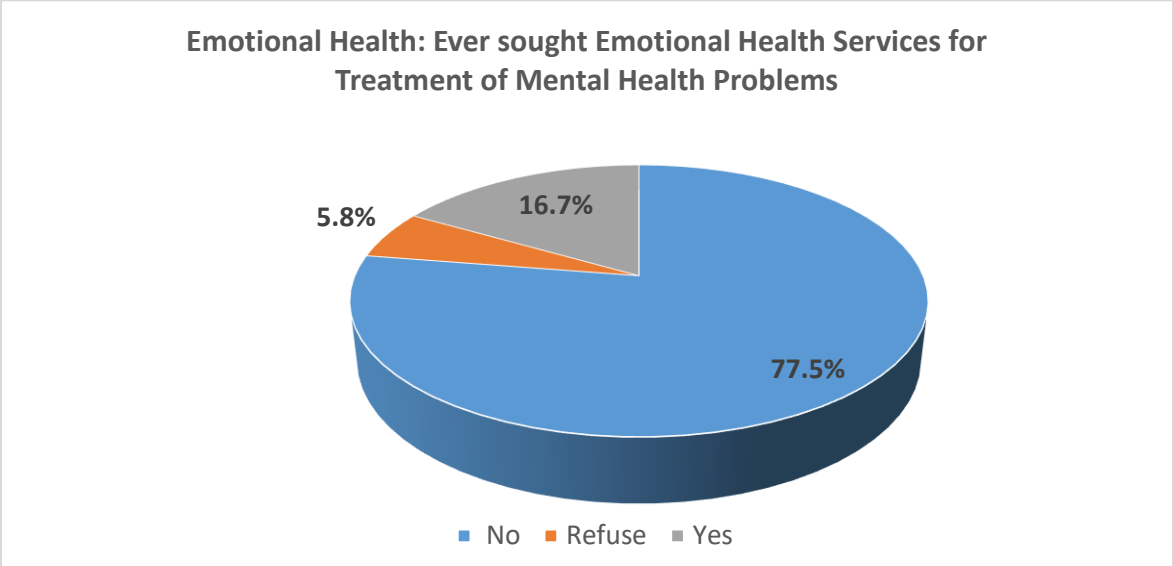


Figure 54: Emotional Health: Ever sought Emotional Health Services for Treatment of Mental Health Problems

While unpacking the sort of professional services providers, it turned out that majority of the respondents who thought that they took help from mental health services providers consulted a medical doctor in nearby health service. The percentage of such respondents remained 45

percent. 22.5 percent of those respondents who sought psychological help consulted a psychological counselor. A 25% of the respondents among those who consulted professional mental health services provider received services with recommended medicines on a doctor's prescription.

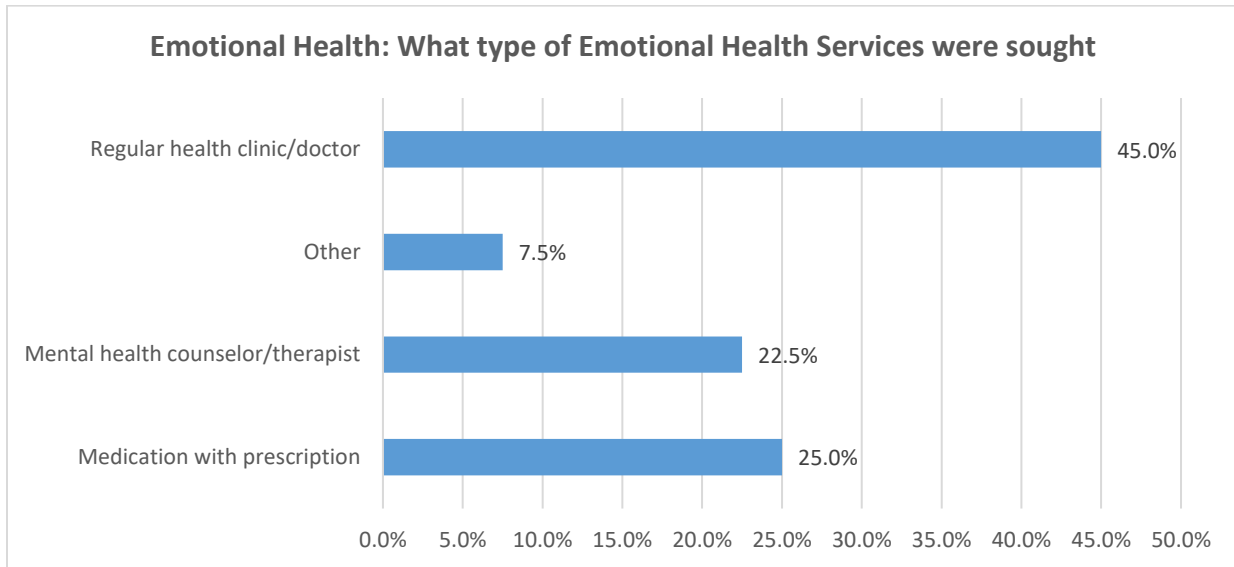


Figure 55: Emotional Health: What type of Emotional Health Services were sought

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to Connell, hegemonic masculinity is considered the ideal one among various facets of masculinities in any given patriarchal social setup. Although manifestation of hegemonic masculinity differs with change in societies, but its consideration of superiority over other forms of masculinities and other genders remains a common feature in all male-controlled societies. Hegemonic masculinity also proves to be one of the biggest restrictions globally in the path of women empowerment.

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the newly discovered strain of coronavirus. It engulfed the world within months of reporting the first case in Wuhan China in December 2019. First case of COVID-19 was discovered in Pakistan in the last week of February 2020 and in a matter of just three weeks, government imposed a national lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The said pandemic and lockdown were a situation which the modern world had never seen before. Pakistan's economy, like other countries, struggled due to this situation.

People faced an unprecedented situation due to the lockdowns disrupting their regular lives. Men were not an exception in this situation as their lives were adversely affected more than others because of the lockdown.

Rozan, a local NGO founded in 1998, has been working in the community of Kuri for about three years. This research, focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on the concepts of masculinities was carried in collaboration with Iqra University, Islamabad Campus (IUIC). Kuri Village is a semi-rural community in the suburb of Islamabad, Capital Territory of Pakistan. The community houses approximately 5500 individuals with usually large families in small houses. Men are engaged in economic activities while majority of women stay at home as housewives. The community doesn't have a government's health facility, but private practitioners extend their services for ill persons. The families are usually big with respect to the space available in their houses. Although educational opportunities are available for girls and boys in the community up to the level of 10th grade, but students need to access the main city of Islamabad for further education. It is important to note that there is no public transport available to directly approach the community and in case one has to move out of the area, s/he has to use a personal vehicle or hire one.

The research study is designed with a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodology. A survey tool was run with 120 individuals (90 men and 30 women) from the Kuri community to explore their views on the study topic. The qualitative data was gathered through FGDs from groups of senior men, young men and boys, and women and girls. IDIs were also held with selected key informants from the community. The quantitative data was analyzed through SPSS, while qualitative data was reviewed and interpreted manually.

The current exploration was able to identify four major themes, i.e. economic and financial pressures, family relations, socialization, and health and wellbeing.

During pandemic of COVID-19, situation in the community of Kuri remained hard in terms of economics and finance, as reported by the respondents. About 85% of the respondents shared that they did not receive any support by any of the government or private sources during lockdown. The level of difficulty to manage household expenses increased manifolds. Analysis also showed that the stress of financial burden faced by men was more than what was experienced by women. More than 50% of the respondents reported stress due to the threat of losing their livelihood during lockdown and COVID-19 pandemic.

As majority of men's activities in public life were halted due to lockdown imposed by the government, men stayed at home way longer than their routine, their time duration for interaction with their families increased. The research finds out that 48% men extended their support in household (HH) chores during their stay at homes in the time of lockdown. But further research revealed that their support was mainly offered in chores that involved tasks like fetching water from outside and shopping groceries for families. The study confirms that expectations from the family with regards to HH chores on men and boys increased due to spending more time at home. A slight change in decision making pattern could be observed during COVID-19 health emergency where more women comparatively participated in decisions regarding large investments or purchases during lockdown than in same kind of decisions before COVID-19 situation.

As the livelihood activities in majority of walks of life were stopped due to lockdown imposed by the authorities, men and boys had more free time than before COVID-19 emergency. The freer time may also be related to the pressure on men and boys to participate in household chores as they had less work to carry out than their routine. The freedom of mobility of men also increased a little overall during lockdown situation in comparison to women.

Division of work at home did not see much change during the health emergency of COVID-19 and lockdown. The results follow the same trend before and during lockdown time; except for carrying out few outside tasks like fetching water and shopping groceries, involved men and boys more than their routine before lockdown. As reported earlier that community faced tough times with regard to economic and finance management due to limited or in some case no sources of income. Women's involvement in budget making was increased during lockdown, a significant increase of 10% could be observed where men and women jointly made budgets of home expenses. Men's participation in community meetings also increased significantly during lockdown.

Kuri community, being patriarchal in its overall setup, limits women's movement which was observable in decisions about married women's mobility especially. Although the study discloses

that men's involvement in decision making regarding wife's movement out of home in general increased by 10% during COVID-19 pandemic, but husbands seemed less involved in decision making about wife going to their parents' home even during pandemic times; only 3% percent increase was observed.

Rozan adapted the GEM scale in the Pakistani social context and same tool was also applied to compare the view of respondents from the community of Kuri.

Kuri is mainly a patriarchal society where the GEM scale shows that men still want to be in control of the decision-making and with respect to giving rights to women. The important fact is that there is still a strong belief that primary role of women is to take care of the household and domestic issues. Also, most men are of the opinion that women have been given their rights and that women have achieved equality in the society. Here the question arises regarding the definition of equality? What is equality and how has it been achieved? There is need to understand the difference between gender equity and gender equality. Gender equity is when men and women are treated fairly and gender equality is when they have equal opportunity for education, employment and decision-making power regarding themselves and their children.

The men in Kuri still expect women to tolerate violence verbal or physical. There is still a substantial percentage of men thinking that violence in form of beating the wife is justified. The things are improving in this regard but it will take a considerable time for changing the attitudes towards women. Tolerating violence and expecting it as a norm is as much a problem as the violence itself. There is a need to create awareness and to educate men and women both in this regard.

The COVID19 pandemic has not only caused physical harm but has increased the mental health issues. This is true for all countries all-round the globe. There has been discussion on pandemic fatigue that people are feeling because of continuous lockdown in many countries and Pakistan is not any different. The men and boys in the Kuri community have been feeling depressed and suicidal. The long term lockdowns and non-availability of regular jobs have left men and boys feeling helpless and inferior to others. The men are the sole bread earners of their household in Kuri and the current situation has rendered them unemployed and unable to support their families. Either they have to rely on other family members, community or the government. As mentioned earlier not many households got aid from the government therefore many of the household were dependent either on other family members or the community. This has caused immense mental pressure and low self-image for the men in the Kuri community.

The number of men and boys seeking professional help is not very high but some did go for psychological help but mostly the help was sought from the regular medical practitioner. This can be either because they had no awareness or because going to the psychologist is considered a

taboo. But mostly men and boys sought the help of their family members or friends. This shows that men were not comfortable to visit a doctor or accept that they have mental health issues.

4.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded.

4.1.1 Stigma with Men's mental and emotional health

It is usually considered that men are naturally strong, tough, and mostly emotionless and those who are unable to meet this standard are treated less of an "ideal man". Societies generally lack the understanding that these personality traits are learned by men from the very young age without realizing the societal pressures, thus considering them natural traits a man should have possessed. Under this personality development process most of the men lose connection with their self, emotions and feelings and resultantly develop inability to show emotions which are through weaker like fear, stress and not only develop a disconnection from their own emotions as well as the real reasons behind these. This disconnection also causes frustration and stress in many cases which further may result in violence by men in public and domestic spheres of life. The study finds that men in the community were also stressed and frustrated due to limited opportunities of livelihood during COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown and were unable to deal with the stress effectively due to the fear of looking weak. The study recommends removing the stigma around men and boys through long term intervention programs at primary, secondary and tertiary level to engage all potential stakeholders. This will not only highlight the importance of emotional health for all in general and specifically for men but also may help in reducing violence at multiple avenues in the society.

4.1.2 Emergency preparedness for Pandemic in future

Although the study was conducted at a limited community level, but it provides some glimpse of lack of ability to deal with any of such situation. Majority of men either lost their jobs and only met the ends with great difficulty during the times of pandemic of COVID-19. An overwhelming majority of people at community level did not receive any support from any source putting them in far more vulnerable condition than ever before. The situation caused stress over men specifically being responsible for bread earning for the family. Health facilities lacked the required equipment to treat the sick persons. People at grass root level struggled for the ration despite there were many campaigns by the philanthropists and government. The situation demands a thorough planning and practical steps to get prepared for any upcoming health emergency like COVID-19.

4.1.3 Long term awareness raising and sensitization efforts on Men and Masculinities Issues

There have been efforts to raise awareness and sensitization around the issues of men and masculinities in Pakistan for some time but given the intensity of deep-rooted problems in cultural and social fabric, it is recommended to upscale the awareness raising and sensitization efforts around men and masculinities with an in-depth understanding of the issues in cultural and sub-cultural contexts. Following groups are suggested to involve in such awareness raising and sensitization efforts:

4.1.3.1 Men and Boys

Men and boys are the prime targets of the system of producing “ideal and hegemonic” men in most of the patriarchal societies. Although all men because of their ascribed status of being men gain some level of advantages at least but overall this causes problems and disadvantages to society specially to vulnerable groups like women and trans-persons. Awareness raising and sensitization programs reaching men with a dedicated focus on boys in their young age may help in changing their attitudes and behaviors later in their lives towards themselves and to other genders as well. This will further slowdown the race of being ideal man and help in reducing violence against vulnerable groups in the society.

4.1.3.2 Women

Women are seen as the nurturing institutes for the younger generation in the society and in many instances women do practice and carry forward patriarchal traditions and values. Under the same patriarchal value system women expect men to behave in certain masculine ways which are hegemonic as well as violent to others thus confirming the same traditions, values and norms violating rights of weaker groups in the society and putting men under stress of being ideal man.

Awareness raising programs must be designed and implemented to help women understand how they can play their role in changing the patterns of social norms and values.

4.1.3.3 Teachers/ Education Institutions

Teachers and education institutes are one of the strongest training institutions in any society helping younger generation to learn social norms and values prevalent in cultures. Gender sensitive content challenging the stereotypical roles of men, women and trans-persons should be incorporated in the curriculum at all stages of education system.

4.1.3.4 Media

Media holds the power of reaching out to masses in shortest possible time. Plays and other media content should be developed with a behavior change communication approach to address men and masculinities and gender related issues.

4.1.4 In-depth Research on Men and Masculinities

Men and masculinities issues have been explored for some time in Pakistan but still there is a lot of room to conduct research regarding various facets of masculinities in vastly different cultural settings. The literature will serve to develop a detailed database on the issues of masculinities in Pakistani social setup and may be used as resource for developing intervention projects/programs with/regarding men and boys to tilt their behavior in a positive direction.

Recommendations with regard to Infrastructure development in the community:

4.1.5 Technical/ Vocational Training

It has been observed that there is a dire need for the vocational training institute for the young members of Kuri community. The proposed institute will help unskilled population to get technical education that will open not only job opportunities for them, but it will also help them to start their businesses. The latest knowledge about advanced mechanism used in agriculture, livestock and related industries can advance the local human capital.

In the current situation, the job market is looking for the people who can be helpful in online businesses and internet marketing. There is also a big market for freelancers who are earning handsome money while working from homes. Furthermore, people are also earning good money from the social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok in different ways.

Therefore, a vocational institute can be setup to provide skilled training to the young boys and girls. This institute can focus on teaching the latest technological tools so that these boys and girls can compete the job market after this training.

4.1.6 Basic IT Infrastructure

Although Kuri is not far away from the urban areas of Islamabad, however the IT infrastructure is not good at all. During the FGD sessions, most of the young people complained about the poor internet connection in the village. Majority of population has smartphones but due to weak signals they cannot effectively use the internet. It is highly recommended that mobile phone operators should provide good internet connections to Kuri village. Moreover, an e-library can also be helpful for the people who cannot afford computers at their homes. The bridging with tech hubs, industries, and professional entities may also be helpful in creating livelihood opportunities for the Kuri community.