




# LOCKDOWN: IMPACT ON WOMEN



Lockdown Unheard: Documenting  
Women's Experiences and Challenges

# Members of Study Team

## Process Steering Team

Ms. Rajani, Mr. Ranvijay Kumar, Ms. Unnati Rani, Mr. Dharmendra Kumar Singh, Ms. Lajwanti Devi, Ms. Ruby Devi, Ms. Munni Kumari

## Design

Ms. Rajani

## Data Tabulation

Mr. Nirbhay Kumar

## Report by

Mr. Bishwajeet Bhattacharya

Mr. Ranvijay Kumar

## Thanks

We extend our sincere gratitude to all the community cadres and women who placed their trust in us and courageously shared their deeply personal experiences.

© **Sahyogi, 2020**. Any part of this document may be reproduced or referenced with proper acknowledgment to Sahyogi.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The novel coronavirus, known as SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19, continues to spread relentlessly across the globe. Despite extensive efforts, the world is still grappling with effective solutions to combat this pandemic. Various vaccine trials are underway at different stages, but as yet, no definitive or conclusive results have been achieved. India, like many other nations, is actively pursuing measures to overcome this crisis at the earliest. The global community awaits with great anticipation the announcement of a successful outcome.

As the nation prepares to emerge from prolonged lockdowns imposed to contain the spread of the virus, a significant human aspect was largely overlooked during this period. The country witnessed the long and arduous journeys undertaken by millions of migrant workers attempting to return to their native villages. With the extension of lockdown measures, the plight of these workers intensified, resulting in one of the largest migrations in independent India's history.

This massive migration, coupled with prolonged unemployment, has severely impacted the mental and physical well-being of affected populations. The scarcity of essential resources in rural households, escalating health concerns, rising domestic violence fueled by male unemployment, lack of livelihood opportunities, extended confinement due to lockdown restrictions, and the increasing number of dependents have collectively created an unprecedented crisis in the rural hinterlands.

In response, Sahyogi conducted a survey to assess the ground realities within its operational areas. Between May and June 2020, 221 respondents—both married and unmarried women—were interviewed using a carefully designed questionnaire developed by Sahyogi. Although the team aimed for a larger sample, prevailing conditions limited the scope of the survey.

The primary objective of the survey was to understand the prevailing conditions faced by families and communities during the pandemic. The insights gained will enable Sahyogi to design targeted interventions addressing the challenges women face and contribute to shaping informed public opinion for effective problem-solving.

The findings reveal compelling insights into gendered responses during times of crisis. It is important to interpret the results within the context of Sahyogi's ongoing engagement with the community on gender-based discrimination and violence. Typically, women are hesitant to discuss personal issues openly; however, the trust and rapport established by Sahyogi's team encouraged candid sharing of deeply personal experiences. Sahyogi's sustained presence and support have empowered community cadres and women to recognize and respond to gender-based challenges during this critical period.

## Survey Methodology:

The study employed purposive sampling to gather information from respondents representing diverse occupational backgrounds across five panchayats of Danapur, encompassing predominantly rural and urban populations. Women aged 18 years and above were included in the sample group.

A total of 221 women from different households within the community, where Sahyogi has been actively engaged for several years, participated in the survey. Given the constraints imposed by the ongoing pandemic, the questionnaire was administered verbally—often via telephone—as door-to-door data collection was not feasible under the prevailing conditions.

## Key Highlights:

- First-ever community survey assessing the multifaceted impact of COVID-19 and prolonged lockdown.
- Identified critical challenges faced by families, including food scarcity, health issues, and increased domestic workload.
- Explored coping strategies and the role of institutional and government support during the crisis.
- Examined the psychological effects and changes in family dynamics, including the rise in domestic violence.
- Captured how lockdown altered daily routines and fundamentally changed the lives of women and their households.
- Highlighted widespread resource scarcity affecting daily essentials and personal hygiene needs.
- Revealed gender-based disparities in the experience of scarcity and domestic responsibilities.
- Assessed the impact of forced isolation on male family members and consequent household tensions.
- Documented the community-wide increase in domestic violence and its effects on women and children.

## Five Key Focus Areas of the Survey:

The survey was structured into five key sections to comprehensively understand the prevailing conditions within households and how women were managing increased workloads during the pandemic.

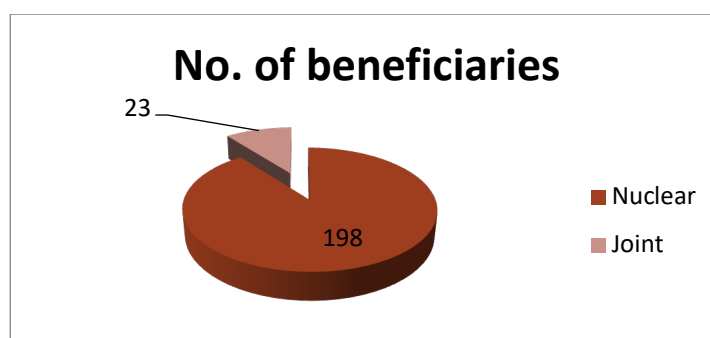
1. **Food Security and Household Support:** The first section focused on food requirements, which remain a critical concern. With incomes significantly reduced or entirely halted following the nationwide lockdown, the survey explored how families were coping and the extent of assistance they had received.
2. **Health and Medical Needs:** The second theme addressed the health and medicinal needs of families. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, many healthcare facilities were unable to provide regular services, and transport disruptions further exacerbated the crisis. This challenge was especially severe in rural areas, where access to quality medical care is limited.
3. **Personal Hygiene:** The third section examined women's individual hygiene requirements. Financial constraints and scarcity of resources forced many respondents to neglect essential personal hygiene practices, which poses significant health risks.
4. **Family Dynamics and Women's Roles:** The fourth set of questions focused on family needs and challenges, investigating how women were managing the increased demands placed upon them. It also assessed the support—or lack thereof—from extended family members during these difficult times.
5. **Community and Domestic Violence:** The final section explored observations of domestic violence and physical abuse within the neighborhood. These insights revealed alarming, often unreported realities. The incidence of domestic violence has increased dramatically in recent months, as men spend more time at home, and women face heightened domestic workloads alongside abuse.

These thematic areas collectively brought to light many harsh realities that are frequently overlooked or underreported by frontline media, underscoring the urgent need for targeted interventions.

## Findings: Experiences of women

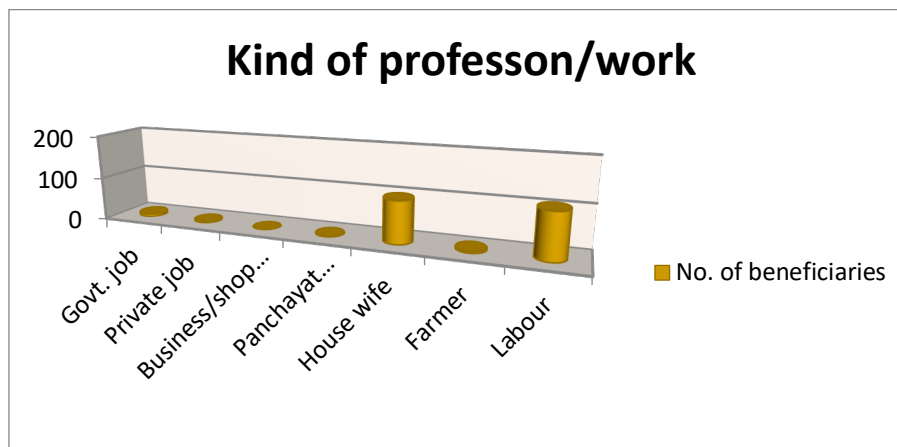
It is commonly perceived that joint families tend to experience more issues related to domestic abuse and violence compared to nuclear families. Conversely, joint family structures are often seen as advantageous during financial crises or health emergencies, providing greater support to overcome challenging times. Therefore, it was important for the survey to include respondents from both family types to ensure a balanced and comprehensive understanding of the situation.

Tab.1 Nature of family	
Family	No. of beneficiaries
Nuclear	198
Joint	23



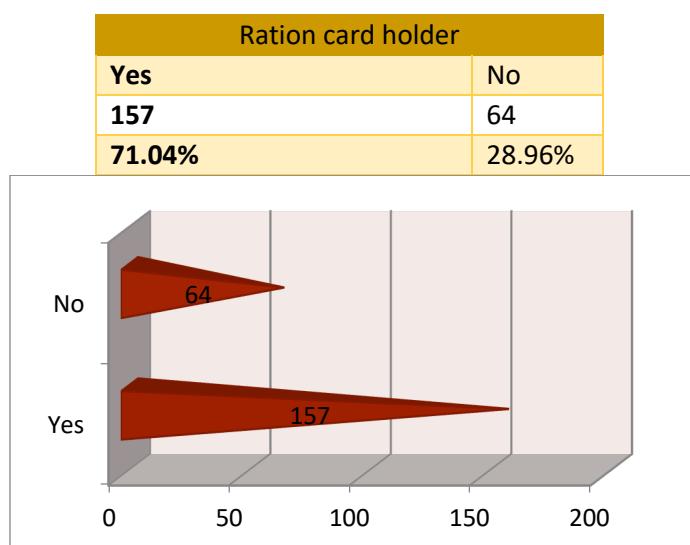
The respondents were categorized according to their professions to better understand the impact of the pandemic and lockdown on individuals engaged in diverse activities. While the majority of respondents are manual laborers or homemakers, some are involved in other occupations as well. To obtain a comprehensive and accurate picture of the community's overall experience, it was essential to gather responses from all sections of the population.

Kind of profession/work	
Profession/work	No. of beneficiaries
Govt. job	7
Private job	3
Business/shop/animal husbandry	0
Panchayat representative	2
House wife	98
Farmer	5
Labour	106



The first theme, as previously mentioned, relates to the availability of essential commodities such as ration and daily-use food items. The strain and challenges faced by the common people due to the prolonged lockdown have been immense and continue to persist. The combined fear of COVID-19 and the daily struggle for survival have severely tested the resilience of vulnerable populations.

The initial question aimed to determine whether the respondent is registered under the Public Distribution System (PDS), as government benefits are accessible only to those holding valid ration cards.

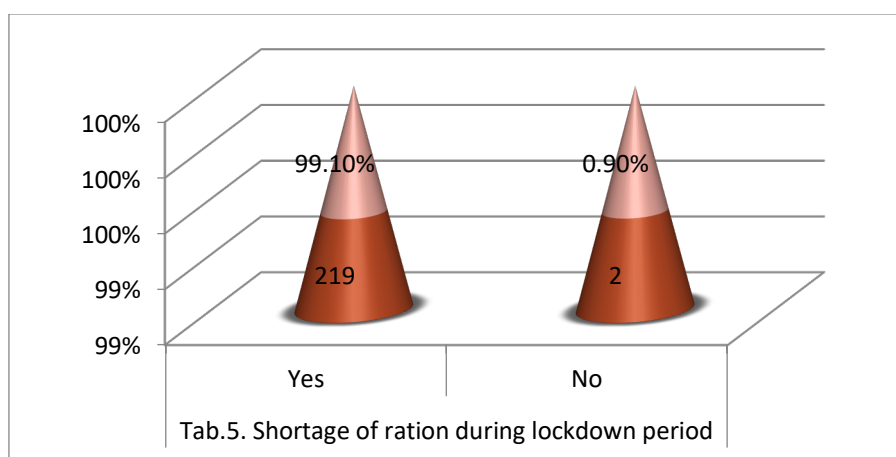


The data presented in the table and chart above clearly indicate that a significant number of respondents are not enrolled in the Public Distribution System (PDS). Specifically, 64 respondents lack ration cards and are therefore unable to access the government benefits to which they are rightfully entitled.

The second question in the first category addresses a critical issue—the shortage of foodstuffs experienced by individuals and their families in the changed landscape of the country. With factories, businesses, and manufacturing units across India shutting down, thousands of workers lost their livelihoods and income. Daily wage earners—including

painters, carpenters, masons, plumbers, and roadside vendors—were left without any source of sustenance. Millions of these workers undertook arduous journeys back to their native villages. While the media has covered their struggles to some extent, the full extent of their hardships—marked by hunger and, in some areas, discrimination upon return—remains largely undocumented and underreported.

Shortage of ration during lockdown period	
Yes	No
219	2
99.10%	0.90%

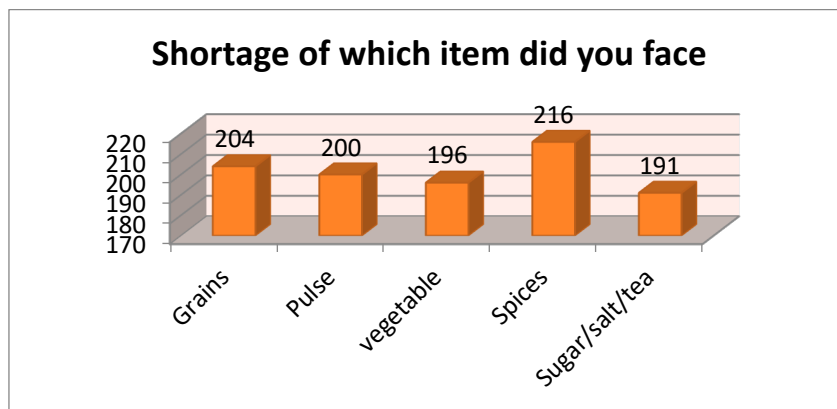


The chart above clearly shows that nearly all respondents are experiencing shortages of essential commodities such as ration supplies. Only two respondents reported no shortage. It is evident that families with limited resources and unstable incomes have been the hardest hit. The ongoing lockdown and the continuing spread of the pandemic are likely to exacerbate this situation further.

To gain a more precise understanding of the logistical challenges, a follow-up question was posed regarding which specific items were most in shortage—whether food grains, cooking oil, salt, sugar, or other essentials.

Shortage of which item did you face	
Items	No. of response
Grains	204
Pulse	200
vegetable	196
Spices	216
Sugar/salt/tea	191



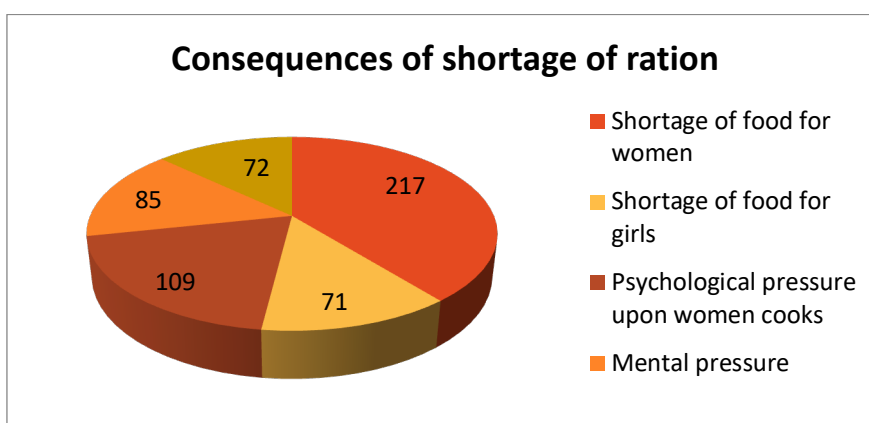


The chart clearly indicates that nearly all essential items were difficult to procure. Grains and spices emerged as particularly scarce compared to other commodities. Overall, the data reflects a widespread shortage of essential food items among the respondents.

Despite this scarcity, gender discrimination remains pervasive in our society. This disparity is especially pronounced in rural communities, as evidenced by the findings from the subsequent survey question.

Consequences of shortage of ration	
Consequences	No. of response
Shortage of food for women	217
Shortage of food for girls	71
Psychological pressure upon women cooks	109
Mental pressure	85
Upon children's health	72

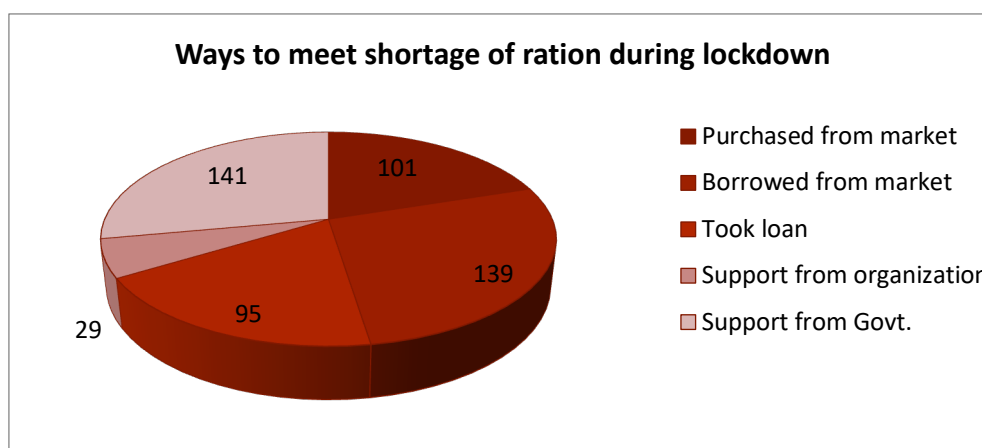
The shortage of food was predominantly experienced by women and other female members of the family, highlighting clear gender discrimination against women and girls, as illustrated in the chart above. Respondents are also under immense psychological pressure to ensure adequate food supply for their families, which is negatively impacting the health of the children. These developments are deeply concerning for society. While we emphasize the importance of a healthy childhood as foundational to national growth, the pandemic has severely undermined the safety and security measures meant to protect our children.



Prolonged shortages and scarcity pose severe health risks not only for children but for the entire community. It is imperative that the government and social organizations take urgent and serious note of this situation. Addressing these challenges will require a fundamental shift in how we support the poor and marginalized sections of society.

The final question in this segment explored how respondents are managing to cope with the acute hunger and scarcity. In the absence of work or other livelihood opportunities, simply staying afloat has become a daily struggle.

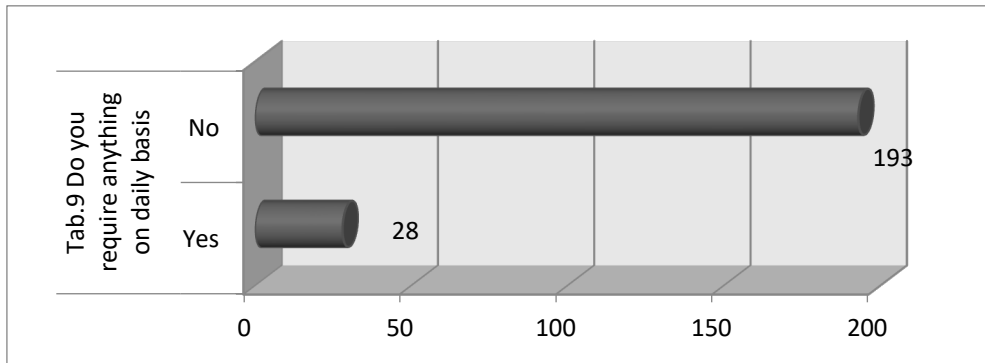
Ways to meet shortage of ration during lockdown	
Ways to meet shortage of ration	No. of response
Purchased from market	101
Borrowed from market	139
Took loan	95
Support from organization	29
Support from Govt.	141



The data above clearly shows that while respondents registered under the Public Distribution System (PDS) received some government support, more than 50% had to resort to borrowing from the market. This reliance on debt perpetuates a dangerous cycle that is difficult for the poor to escape unscathed. A small number of respondents reported receiving limited assistance from civic organizations, but these efforts remain insufficient. There is an urgent need for more proactive involvement from non-governmental organizations to support this vulnerable segment of society. Without such support, gender discrimination and domestic violence are likely to escalate as families struggle to meet their basic needs.

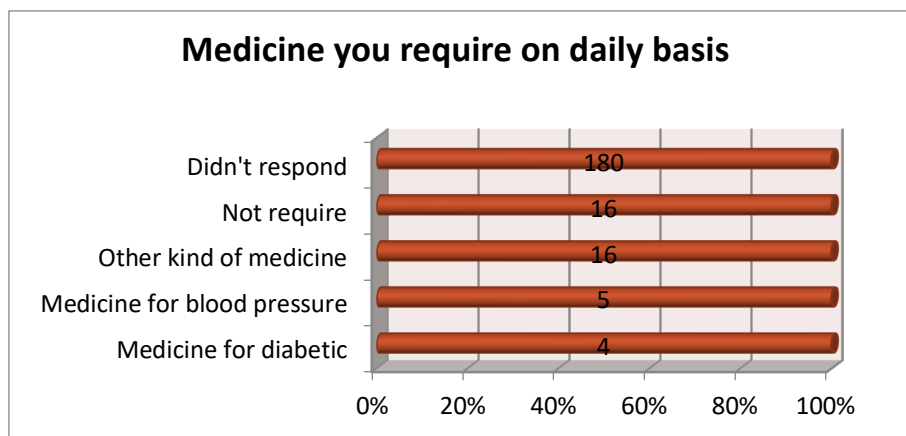
The second thematic area of the survey focused on health-related problems and how respondents managed these challenges. Health infrastructure in the country remains inadequate, particularly in rural areas where access to quality healthcare is limited. With the rapid spread of the pandemic, government resources are stretched to the limit, resulting in the suspension or reduction of many healthcare programs and services at numerous health centers.

Do you require anything on daily basis	
Yes	No
28	193



During the survey, it became evident that many respondents were hesitant to answer questions related to health and medication. Despite widespread awareness of COVID-19 safety protocols, a significant number expressed reluctance, fearing that their responses might trigger quarantine measures for themselves or their family members. This apprehension underscored the pervasive anxiety surrounding the pandemic and the government-mandated safety protocols. Although the Sahyogi team reassured respondents that their identities would remain confidential and emphasized that the survey aimed solely to understand the challenges posed by the pandemic, many still avoided providing direct answers to this set of questions.

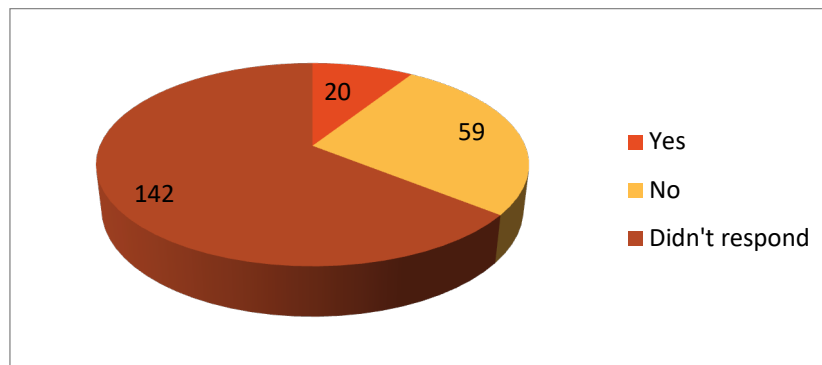
Medicine you require on daily basis	
Kind of medicine	No. of response
Medicine for diabetic	4
Medicine for blood pressure	5
Other kind of medicine	16
Not require	16
Didn't respond	180



The chart above clearly shows that the majority of respondents declined to answer the question. This indicates that the poor and marginalized communities harbor greater fear of **Lockdown: Impact on Women – A study by Sahyogi**

discrimination and government-imposed quarantine measures than of the immediate challenges posed by hunger and scarcity.

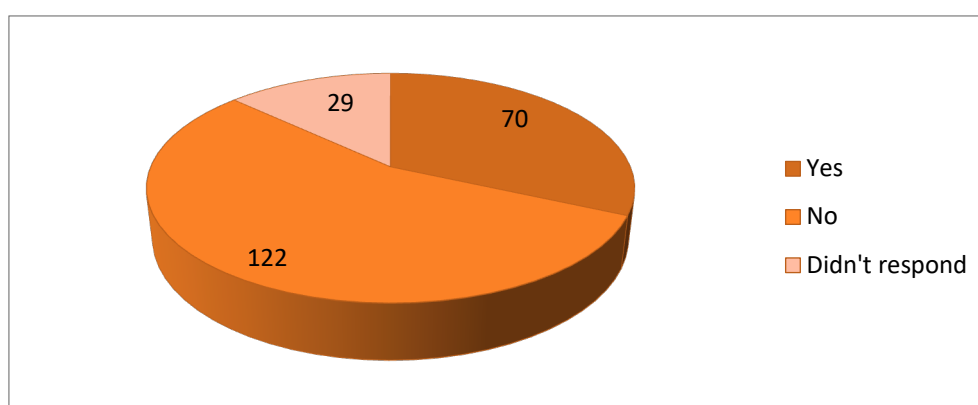
Did you get medicine or had to miss		
Yes	No	Didn't respond
20	59	142



All questions related to health and medicine elicited a similar response pattern, as shown above. A total of 142 respondents declined to answer, highlighting the significant social stigma associated with openly discussing illness within their households. Despite having a familiar relationship with the Sahyogi team members, there remained a clear hesitation to discuss health issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, as reflected in their responses.

The final question of this segment was:

Did you suffer from any kind of illness during lockdown		
Yes	No	Didn't respond
70	122	29



The mindset of the respondents clearly reflects a hesitation to discuss health-related issues. The ongoing pandemic and the associated fear and skepticism have led many to avoid acknowledging any health problems within their families.

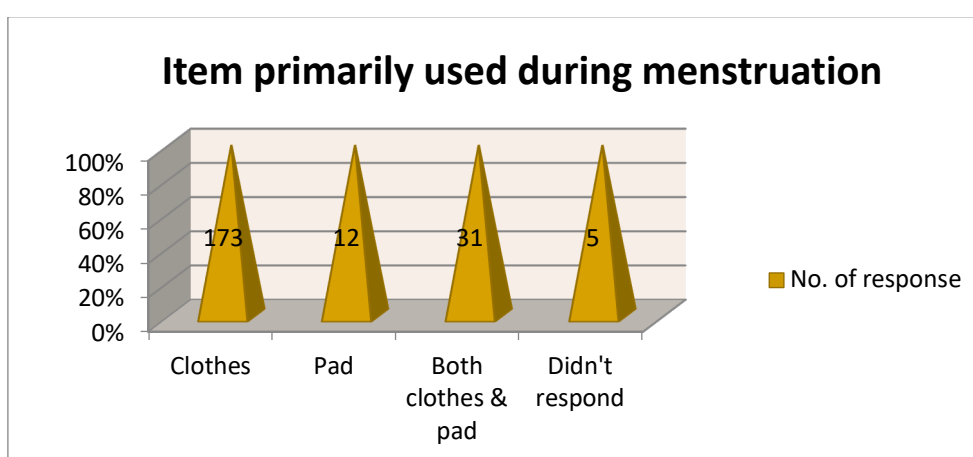
The third segment of the survey focused on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM), a more specific and personal topic with which respondents could more readily identify. Given its relation to personal hygiene, many women felt more comfortable discussing the challenges they faced and how they managed these issues. MHM has long been a taboo subject, but recent years have seen a gradual shift in attitudes and increased awareness among women regarding its importance.

However, women living in rural areas of the country still often hesitate to openly discuss personal health matters. Awareness around MHM is a relatively recent development, gaining momentum due to increased focus from civic society groups and non-governmental organizations, which are actively promoting this critical aspect of women’s health.

The following set of questions focused specifically on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM):

Item primarily used during menstruation	
Item	No. of response
Clothes	173
Pad	12
Both clothes & pad	31
Didn't respond	5

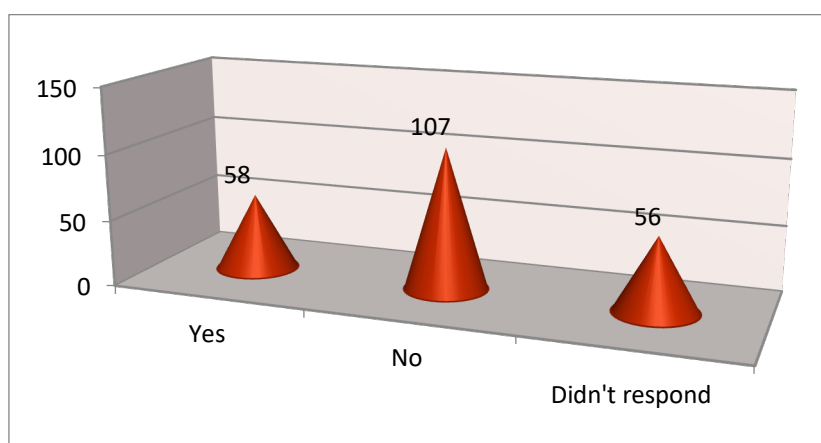
The table clearly shows that traditional methods remain prevalent within the community. The majority of respondents continue to use old and unused cloths as their primary choice for menstrual hygiene. Modern alternatives such as sanitary pads are still largely avoided in rural areas. While there are numerous underlying factors contributing to this preference, exploring these reasons is beyond the scope of this survey and would require a dedicated study to fully understand the barriers to sanitary pad usage among these women.



The second question in this segment is particularly relevant to the lockdown context, aiming to identify the difficulties respondents faced during this period. With businesses and shops closed and travel restrictions in place, access to menstrual hygiene products posed a significant challenge, especially for those living in rural areas.

Did you face problems in arranging pads during the pandemic		
Yes	No	Didn't respond
58	107	56

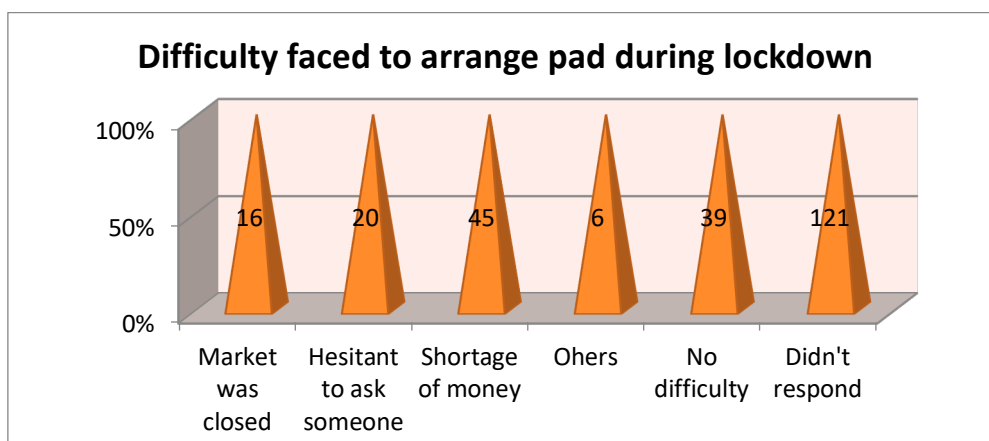
A large number of women responded negatively to this question, which aligns with the findings from the first question in this segment. Since the majority of respondents are accustomed to using cloth, they did not face significant difficulties managing menstrual hygiene during the lockdown. Only 26.24% of respondents reported challenges, likely representing those who regularly use sanitary pads or have other female family members who do. In many cases, the unavailability of pads was not a major concern, as most rural families continue to rely on cloth as an alternative menstrual hygiene method..



The third question focused on the specific difficulties faced by respondents during the lockdown. The imposed stay-at-home directives disrupted daily routines for many, creating significant challenges. A substantial portion of the population experienced job losses and a decline in income opportunities. These hardships were particularly pronounced among those residing in rural areas, who faced greater obstacles compared to their urban counterparts.

What kind of difficulty was faced to arrange pad during lockdown	
Difficulties	No. of response
Market was closed	16
Hesitant to ask someone	20
Shortage of money	45
Others	6
No difficulty	39
Didn't respond	121

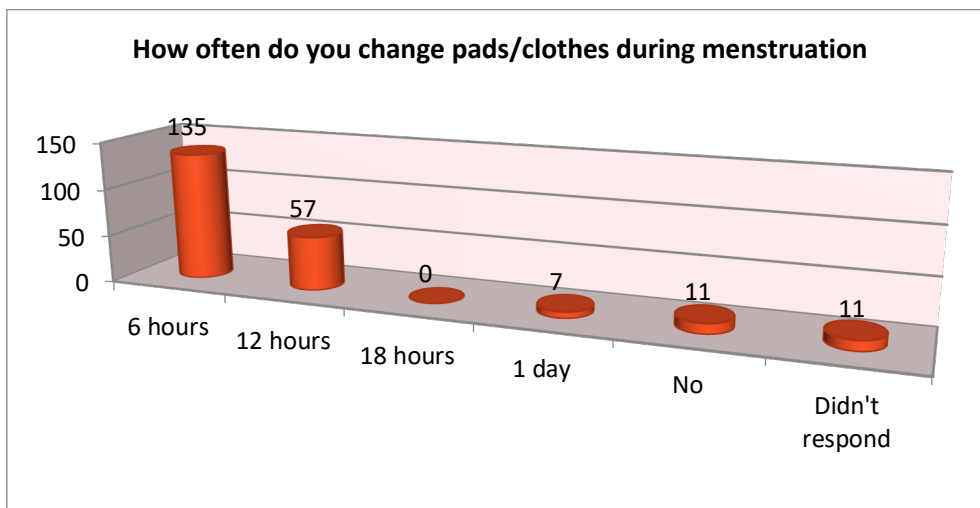
As anticipated, this question elicited a response pattern similar to earlier ones. Nearly 50% of respondents chose not to answer, while the remainder cited a variety of difficulties. Among these, shortage of money was a predominant challenge, along with reluctance to seek help from others. Additionally, the closure of markets and travel restrictions further compounded the hardships faced by the respondents.



The final question in this segment focused on the frequency with which respondents changed their pads or cloths, an important indicator of menstrual hygiene practices. Proper Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) is closely linked to women’s reproductive health and has a direct impact on Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR). Inadequate MHM can lead to various health complications. Despite some visible progress, menstruation remains a taboo subject for many women, surrounded by stigma and hesitation in our society. The data presented in the table below reflects the level of seriousness with which respondents maintain their personal hygiene during menstruation.

<b>How often do you change pads/clothes during menstruation</b>	
Duration	No. of response
6 hours	135
12 hours	57
18 hours	0
1 day	7
No	11
Didn't respond	11

As shown in the table, the majority of respondents demonstrate awareness of personal hygiene by changing their pads or cloths regularly. Over 55% of respondents reported changing every six hours, which aligns with the recommended standard for maintaining proper menstrual hygiene. However, concerningly, seven respondents admitted to changing only once a day, and eleven respondents answered “no” when asked if they change at all, which is alarming. Given the survey was conducted both via telephone and in-person visits, the “no” response likely indicates that these respondents do not use pads or cloths at all. It is important to note that telephonic surveys can sometimes lead to misunderstandings about the intent or meaning of certain questions, which may contribute to this confusion.

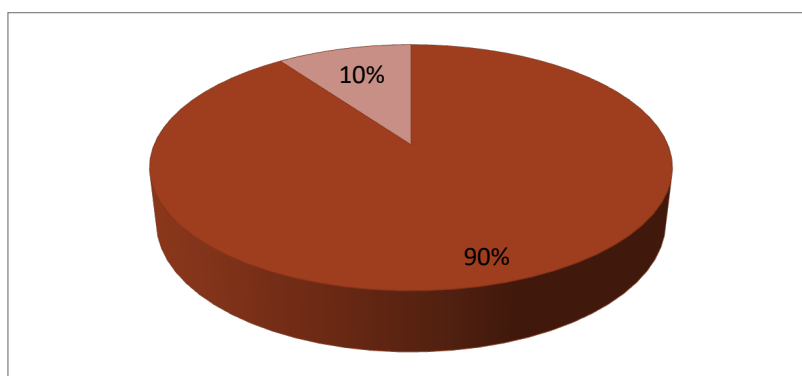


The fourth thematic area of the survey addresses a critical issue that Sahyogi has been actively engaged with: domestic violence and its impact on society. We anticipated that the prolonged lockdown would significantly affect household dynamics and behavioral patterns. With many male members confined to their homes and often unemployed, heightened frustration and anxiety were expected to manifest in their relationships. Women, in particular, were at increased risk of experiencing both mental and physical violence during this challenging period. Many men returned home after losing their jobs, and their anger and stress frequently affected family interactions. The survey aimed to assess whether the incidence of domestic violence had increased due to these recent developments, and if so, whether it was predominantly physical or verbal and psychological in nature.

The survey yielded some revealing responses. The first question posed was:

Did you face any difficulty due to staying of your husband or other male members at home during lockdown	
Yes	No
199	22
90.05%	9.95%

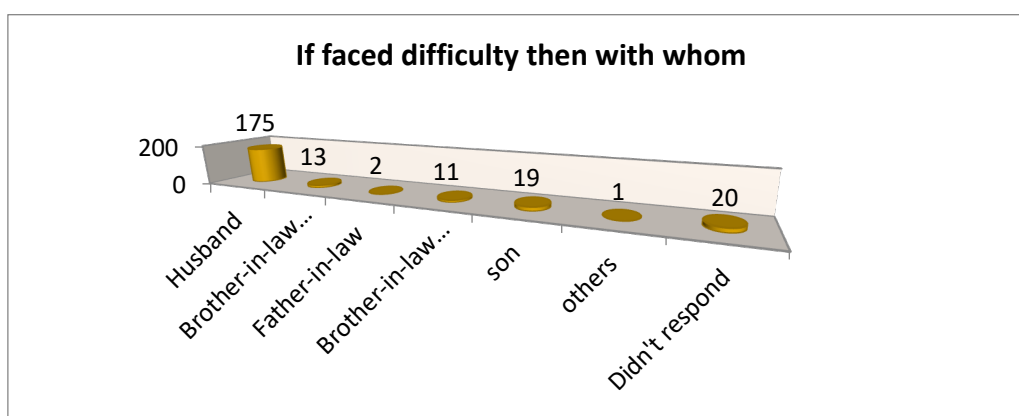
More than 90% of respondents affirmed that they faced difficulties due to male family members staying at home during the lockdown. In rural settings, it is uncommon for adult males to remain indoors all day; even when not working, they typically spend time outdoors in the fields or socializing at the village square. The lockdown restrictions, which prevented such movement, led to forced isolation that significantly increased frustration among men who were unaccustomed to prolonged time spent at home.





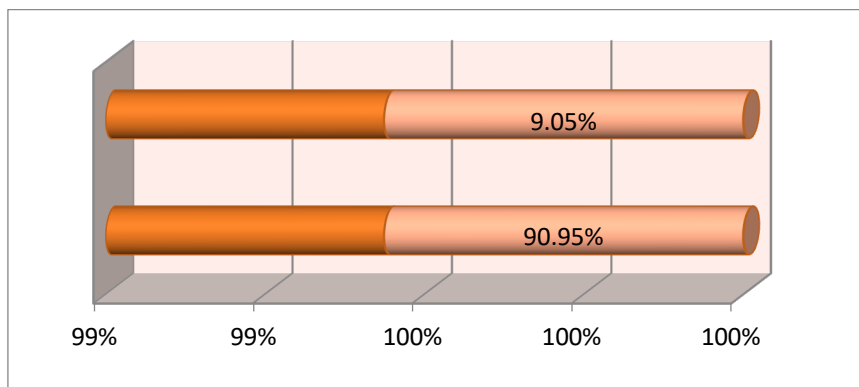
Only 10% of respondents answered in the negative, indicating that the overwhelming majority experienced some form of difficulty due to the prolonged and forced presence of male family members at home. The next question sought to identify which specific male member's presence during the lockdown contributed most to these problems. Understanding who within the household was the primary source of tension was essential for gaining deeper insights into the dynamics at play.

If faced difficulty, then with whom	
Persons	No. of response
Husband	175
Elder Brother-in-law	13
Father-in-law	2
Younger Brother-in-law	11
Son	19
Others	1
Didn't respond	20



The overwhelming majority of respondents identified their husbands as the primary source of problems during the lockdown. It was expected that the frustration and anger experienced by men would manifest in strained personal relationships, particularly with their wives and children. While there were instances where brothers-in-law also contributed to household tensions, the data clearly indicates that husbands were the main contributors, as reflected in the chart and graph above. In a few cases, sons were also reported to have caused difficulties, likely due to the frustration of being confined at home without opportunities for outdoor activities. Nonetheless, approximately 80% of respondents attributed their problems primarily to the prolonged presence of their husbands.

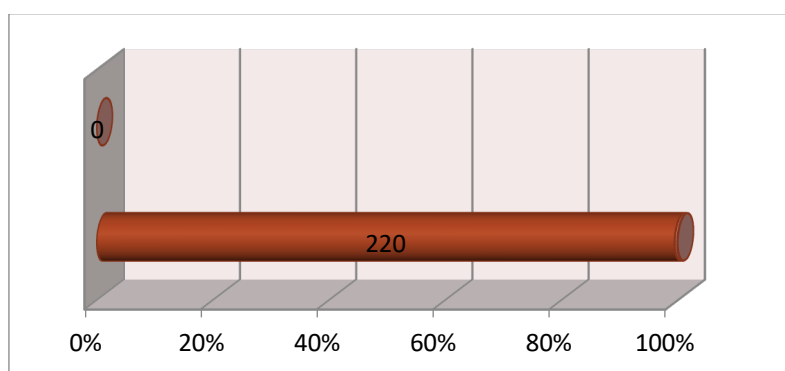
Did you have to work in kitchen for more hours	
Yes	No
201	20
90.95%	9.05%



The table and graph above clearly illustrate the impact of the lockdown on the respondents' households. With male members confined indoors, the demand for food, tea, and snacks increased significantly, resulting in women spending substantially more time in the kitchen. Over 90% of the women surveyed acknowledged that they devoted long hours to meal preparation and meeting the family's needs.

Subsequent questions in this category were more direct and elicited candid responses from the respondents. These questions were carefully designed with the understanding that the lockdown had profound implications for family relationships. Given the well-documented prevalence of domestic violence within the community, the survey sought to create a safe space for women to openly share their experiences with the animators conducting the study.

Did you face any kind of atrocities/torture during lockdown	
Yes	No
220	1
99.55%	0%



The response, as reflected above, was truly shocking. An overwhelming 99.55% of respondents reported experiencing some form of abuse or violence during the lockdown period. While we anticipated high figures given the circumstances, numbers approaching 100% indicate a deep-rooted systemic issue. Such a stark reality demands serious reflection on the underlying values and social structures within our society.

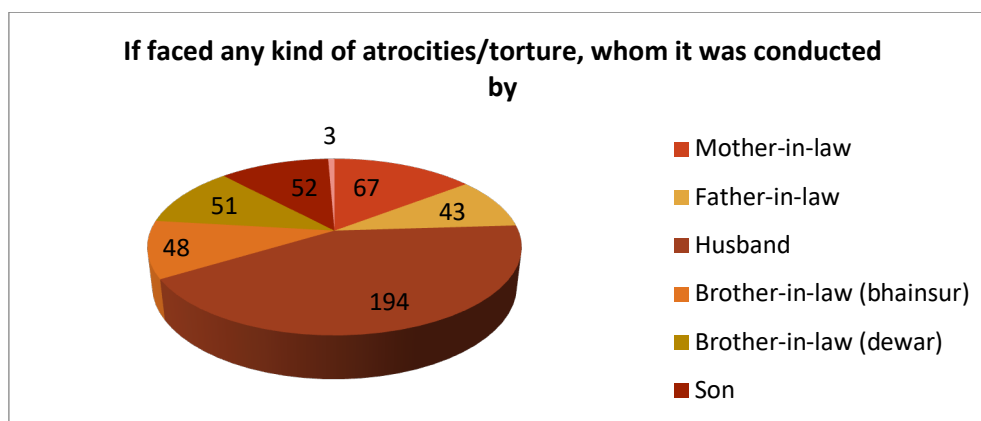
Gender discrimination remains a critical challenge that we continue to address. Although we have achieved some progress, the unprecedented nature of the pandemic and lockdown exposed harsh realities often hidden beneath the daily struggle for survival. This crisis brought to light the pervasive violence that many women endure silently.

One of the key objectives was to identify the primary perpetrators of this abuse and understand the dynamics contributing to these atrocities.

Who were the main perpetrators of the atrocities?	
Person	No. of response
Mother-in-law	67
Father-in-law	43
Husband	194
Elder brother-in-law	48
Younger brother-in-law	51
Son	52
Others	3

As the table above clearly illustrates, husbands are the primary perpetrators of abuse, but other male family members also contribute significantly to the mistreatment of women. Notably, in nearly 25% of cases, sons are reported to have inflicted some form of abuse. Gender discrimination is pervasive, and this crisis has made it starkly visible.

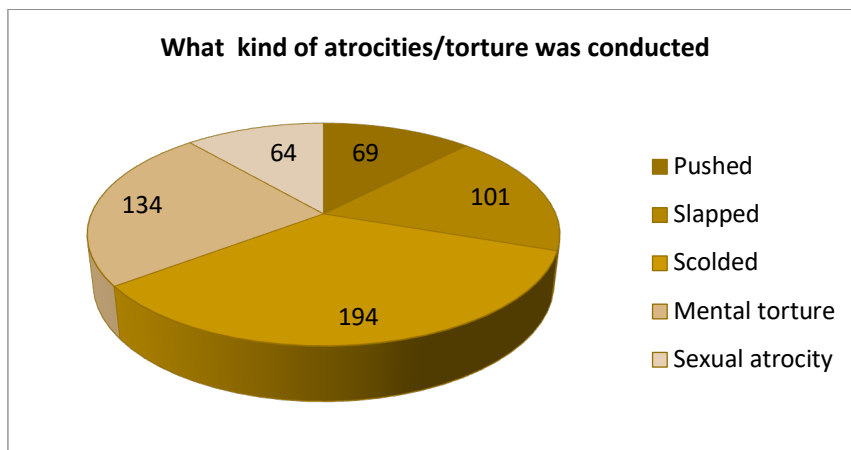
One of the most surprising findings is the prominent role of mothers-in-law, who rank second only to husbands in the frequency of abuse and mistreatment of their daughters-in-law. This highlights the complex dynamics within households that exacerbate women’s vulnerabilities during times of crisis.



The trend evident from the graph highlights that gender discrimination and violence against women are not only perpetrated by male family members but also significantly influenced by the matriarchs of the household. This pattern of abuse within the family hierarchy is

widespread in our society and tends to be perpetuated across generations. Children observe and internalize these behaviors within their homes, often accepting them as normal and replicating the same mindset as they grow. It is important to recognize that abuse can take various forms, and many within the community consider certain behaviors to be natural and commonplace, further entrenching this cycle of violence.

What kind of atrocities/torture was conducted	
Kind of atrocity	No. of response
Pushed	69
Slapped	101
Scolded	194
Mental torture	134
Sexual atrocity	64



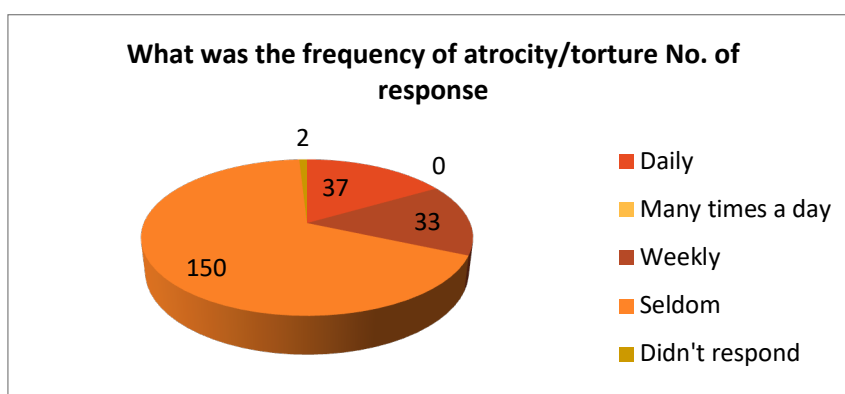
Verbal abuse and scolding are the most common forms of domestic violence reported, but physical abuse such as pushing and slapping is also widespread. Alarming, many respondents do not recognize such physical contact as a form of violence. As noted earlier, this pattern of discrimination and abuse has been perpetuated across generations. Girls have grown up witnessing these behaviors in their own homes and have come to accept them as a routine part of life. The data in the table and graph further reveals that mental and emotional torture is also highly prevalent.

The lockdown forced many male family members to spend extended periods indoors. The combination of close quarters, resource scarcity, and the constant fear of the pandemic may have fueled increased frustration, leading to a rise in domestic violence. A deeper psychological analysis by experts is needed to better understand this surge in violence within households.

Additionally, a distressing number of respondents reported sexual violence. Many men perceive sexual gratification as a natural right and expect their wives to comply whenever desired, with little regard for consent. The prevailing mindset places male desire above female autonomy, treating acquiescence as a duty rather than a choice.

The next question in the survey examined the frequency of these abuses—whether they occurred daily or only occasionally.

What was the frequency of atrocity/torture	
Frequency	No. of response
Daily	37
Many times, a day	0
Weekly	33
Seldom	150
Didn't respond	2



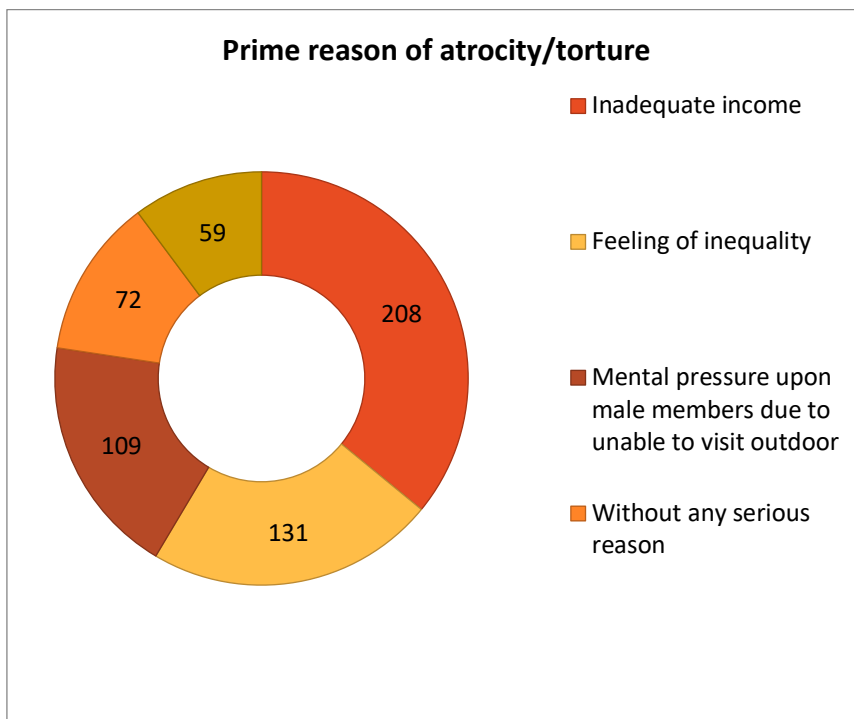
Fortunately, the responses to this question revealed a somewhat positive outcome: the majority of abuse and violence was not frequent. One hundred and fifty respondents indicated that such atrocities occurred only rarely. While the presence of violence is deeply concerning, the infrequency provides some relief. However, it is distressing that 33 respondents reported experiencing abuse on a daily basis, which can cause severe psychological trauma. This underscores the urgent need for proper counseling and support mechanisms to help these individuals regain confidence and resilience.

Understanding the root causes of this behavior is equally important, particularly in the context of the prolonged lockdown. Many male family members, especially those who lost their jobs or livelihoods, were under immense mental and emotional stress. This pressure likely contributed to their outbursts of anger and frustration, with wives often bearing the brunt of these difficult circumstances. The next question in the survey aims to provide further insight into this situation.

Prime reason of atrocity/torture	
Reason	No. of response
Inadequate income	208
Feeling of inequality	131
Mental pressure upon male members due to unable to visit outdoor	109
Without any serious reason	72
Happening since past and due to staying of male members indoors for longer duration	59

Loss of income emerged as the most significant factor contributing to the abuse experienced by women in the family. Financial stress, combined with movement restrictions during the lockdown, was a primary driver of violence against respondents. Those who lost their jobs or livelihoods often felt a sense of inequality and frustration stemming from their inability to provide for their families. Additionally, some individuals are habitual abusers who resort to violence regardless of circumstance; their behavior stems from ingrained chauvinistic attitudes rather than specific triggers. These perpetrators require no justification for their actions, perpetuating a cycle of abuse within the household.

Overall, it is evident from the data that financial hardship is the predominant cause of domestic violence during this period.

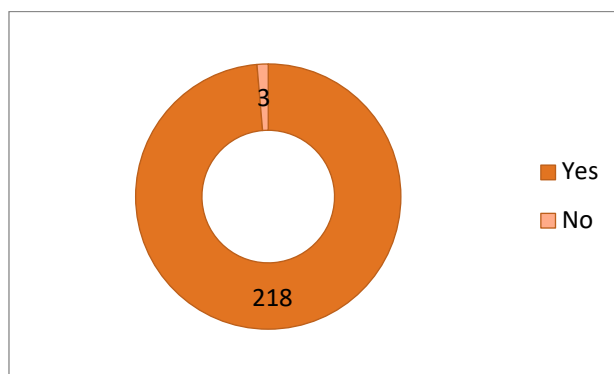


Domestic violence and abuse at home profoundly affect the mental well-being of children. It is well-established that children must be shielded from any form of violence to ensure healthy emotional and psychological development. When a child witnesses such incidents in their own home—the place that should be their safest refuge—the consequences can be particularly damaging. Exposure to violence during formative years can lead children to internalize and replicate these harmful behaviors later in life. Therefore, creating a safe and nurturing environment is essential for fostering a child’s understanding, growth, and future outlook.

The next question in this category addresses this critical aspect of family life.

**Tab.25. Did atrocity/torture you faced during lockdown impact your children**

Yes	No
218	3
98.64%	1.36%

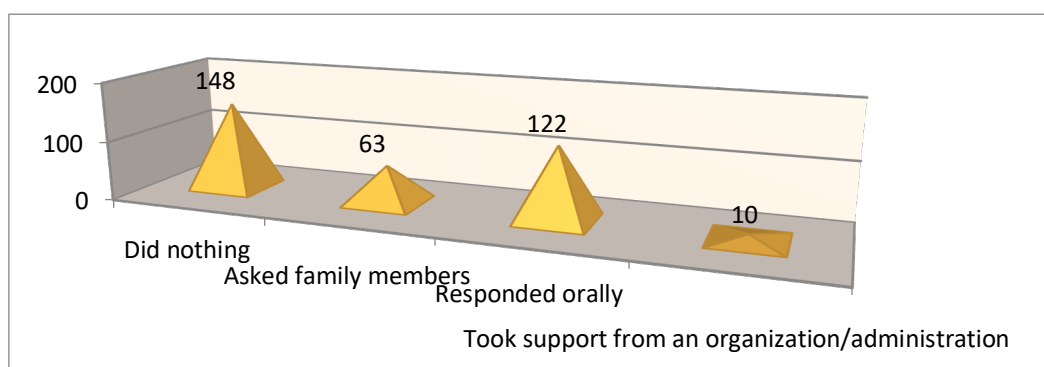


The table and graph above clearly demonstrate the detrimental impact that violence and abuse faced by the respondents had on their children. An overwhelming 218 out of 221

respondents agreed that the atrocities witnessed by children negatively affected them. Children, being impressionable and innocent, tend to absorb the behaviors and emotions they observe, often replicating these patterns over time. It is therefore imperative that parents and caregivers provide a safe and nurturing environment where children can learn the values of equality and respect.

Understanding how victims of abuse respond to these situations is crucial, as their reactions can influence whether the volatile environment escalates or stabilizes. The next question in the survey focuses on this important aspect—how respondents reacted to the abuse and whether their responses helped in managing or normalizing the situation.

What measure did you opt against atrocity/torture	
Measures	No. of response
Did nothing	148
Asked family members	63
Responded orally	122
Took support from an organization/administration	10

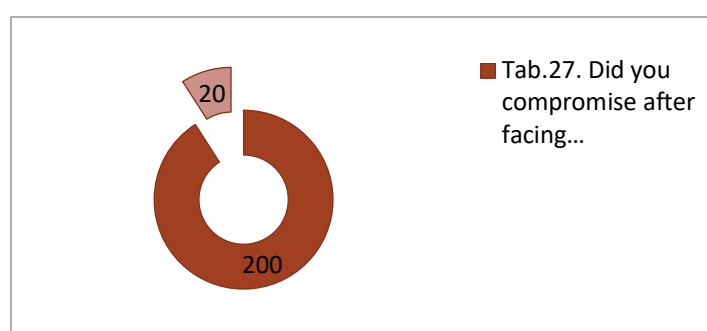


As reflected in the table, the majority of respondents reported taking no formal action in response to the abuse they experienced. This aligns with a broader societal acceptance of certain forms of discrimination and violence as “normal” or tolerable. Many women have been conditioned over time to perceive verbal reprimands or even physical slaps as routine aspects of their daily lives. This mindset is clearly evident in the survey responses.



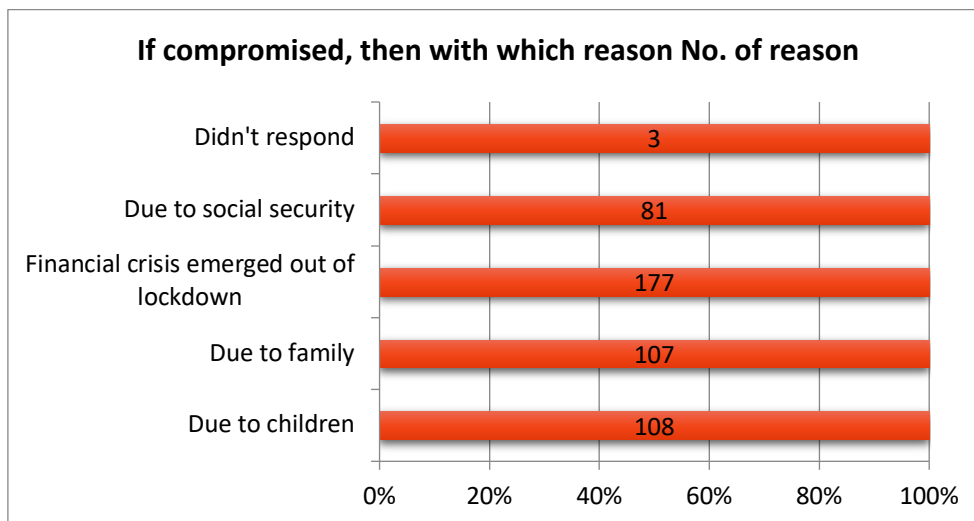
Most women either remained silent or responded verbally to the abuse. Given the constraints of the lockdown, which confined them to their homes, seeking external help or alternatives was particularly challenging. Additionally, domestic violence remains a taboo topic, and many women fear the social stigma associated with discussing it openly. While social organizations are actively working to raise awareness and encourage change, progress is still in its early stages. For many women, compromise is chosen due to concerns about children, societal expectations, peer pressure, and the stigma surrounding domestic violence.

Did you compromise after facing atrocity/torture	
Yes	No
200	20



As noted above, compromise emerged as the predominant coping strategy, with 200 out of 221 respondents choosing this as the safest and most feasible way to manage their situation.

If compromised, then for what reason	
Reason	No. of reason
Due to children	108
Due to family	107
Financial crisis emerged out of lockdown	177
Due to social security	81
Didn't respond	3



As discussed earlier, the primary reasons for opting for compromise include the prevailing socioeconomic conditions, concern for children, and the strong influence of social stigma. The majority of respondents viewed compromise as the most practical and safest approach given the financial hardships they faced. Children, in particular, were a significant factor in choosing this path, as compromise was seen as the best way to avoid escalating tensions and protect the family’s well-being.

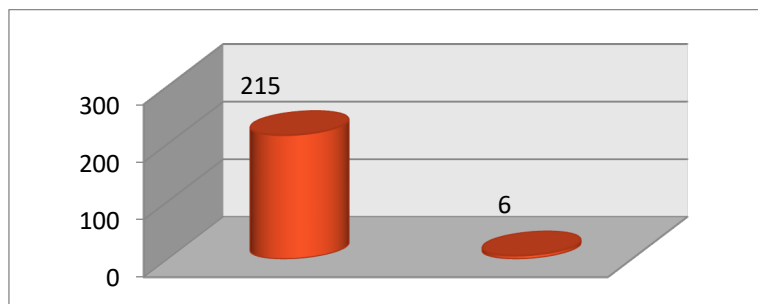
This period of unprecedented crisis caused by the ongoing pandemic placed immense pressure on every household to survive. With limited options and widespread uncertainty about the future, mental stress and fear of the contagion dominated people’s lives. The lockdown and its restrictions created temporary but intense circumstances, which influenced behavior and reactions. Under normal conditions, responses might have differed, but the uncertain future compelled respondents to prioritize their families above all else.

The fifth segment of the survey shifted focus to the behavior and reactions of neighbors during this crisis. These questions were designed to explore whether violence and tensions extended beyond individual households into the broader community. Typically, neighbors share problems and provide support during difficult times, but the pandemic posed unique challenges—raising the question of whether neighbors acted differently or maintained their usual patterns of interaction.

Did you get information regarding violence in your neighbourhood during lockdown	
Yes	No
215	6

Similar to the respondents’ experiences, the data reveals that domestic violence was a widespread issue within the broader community. A significant majority—215 respondents—reported being aware of incidents of domestic violence occurring in their neighborhoods. Given that most families belong to similar socioeconomic strata, it is unsurprising that the entire community was grappling with comparable crises. For many, violence became an outlet for expressing the intense frustration and stress accumulated during the lockdown period.

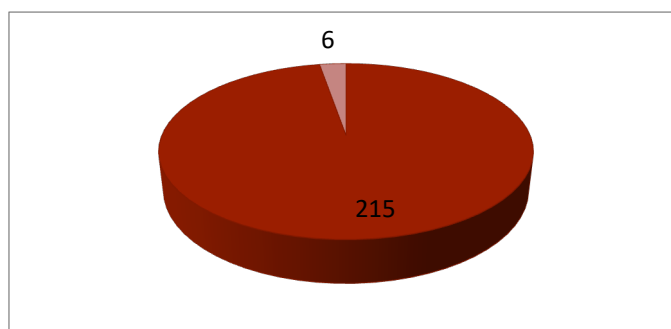
Male family members, often unemployed and restricted in their movement, experienced feelings of insecurity and helplessness, which in turn contributed to tensions within the household. In a community deeply rooted in longstanding traditions and customs, these reactions followed patterns that, while concerning, are consistent with their societal norms.



Violence in any form is unacceptable in a civilized society; however, domestic violence and gender discrimination have been entrenched in our society for generations. While efforts to change these mindsets are ongoing, progress remains challenging, especially in cases where the matriarch of the family herself perpetuates abuse. Change requires time and sustained awareness, and although positive shifts were evident, the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown significantly altered societal dynamics.

The immense financial strain experienced by many families within the community has further exacerbated violence against women, underscoring the urgent need for targeted interventions..

Do you think that violence against women in your neighbourhood has increased during lockdown	
Yes	No
215	6

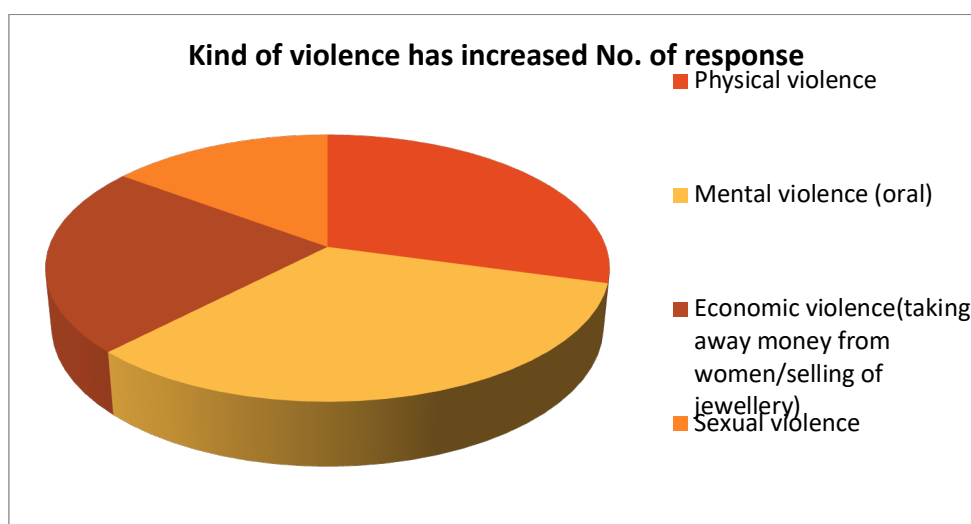


It is evident that the conditions imposed by the government lockdown contributed to a significant rise in domestic violence within the community. The overwhelming consensus among respondents was that violence against women increased during this period, reflecting the deep uncertainty and stress experienced by families.

These circumstances mirror the broader challenges faced by the community, characterized by fear and hardship. The lockdown severely impacted the livelihoods of poor and marginalized populations across the country. Government assistance often failed to reach those in need, forcing many families to struggle to meet basic necessities. These strained conditions heightened community tensions, leading to a marked increase in domestic violence.

The final question in the survey explored the specific forms of violence that respondents observed most frequently within their neighborhoods.

Which form of violence has increased	
Kind of violence	No. of response
Physical violence	136
Mental violence (oral)	153
Economic violence (taking away money from women/selling of jewellery)	106
Sexual violence	69



The above table and chart clearly illustrate the types of violence respondents witnessed during the extended lockdown period. Mental violence, primarily verbal abuse, was reported frequently, alongside numerous instances of physical abuse such as slapping and pushing, which were also documented during the individual interviews.

The violence observed in the community mirrored the experiences of the respondents themselves, indicating that neighbors faced similar struggles and hardships. Although the survey included only 221 respondents, the findings provide a representative reflection of the broader community's reality.

An additional critical aspect revealed in the data is the economic violence experienced by many women, who were compelled to part with their savings and jewelry due to financial scarcity. While this form of violence is significant, it remains debatable how much these numbers might have differed under less extraordinary circumstances. The unprecedented lockdown and widespread fear of the pandemic undoubtedly influenced behaviors and reactions that might have otherwise taken a different course.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Conclusion and way forward

Societies are among the most inclusive and complex social organizations in today's world. They encompass all facets of human social life, and the manner in which a society functions deeply influences its patterns of social order and cultural values. Understanding how a society reacts in times of calamity is crucial to grasp the inherent dynamics within its structure. Societies strive for functional autonomy by establishing processes to secure resources and meet the needs of their members.

When this inherent functionality is disrupted—as witnessed during the lockdown—the underlying biases and social norms become starkly visible. Often, women bear the burden of maintaining family honor and stability through compromise, perpetuating age-old traditions that demand their sacrifice for the sake of peace. The survey reveals these uncomfortable truths that cannot be overlooked.

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown life into unprecedented turmoil. With economies shuttered and lockdowns extended across multiple phases, daily wage earners and vulnerable populations faced devastating hardships as factories, businesses, and informal sectors came to a halt. For many, the struggle was more about surviving hunger than the virus itself. Government relief efforts and aid failed to reach the most marginalized, and local administrations were often unable to provide adequate support.

One of the clearest findings of the survey is that financial scarcity inflicts the deepest mental and emotional fatigue, fueling tensions and violence within communities. Years of advocacy and social progress were severely undermined by the crushing weight of extreme poverty.

While the surge in domestic violence during the lockdown is alarming, it is important to recognize that this was not a natural or isolated outcome. The community's response was shaped by an unprecedented crisis—unemployment, confinement, and uncertainty about survival created an environment of vulnerability and stress. The resulting frustration and fear manifested as increased domestic tensions.

Looking ahead, a gradual return to normalcy is hoped for in the coming months as economies reopen. However, the path forward depends heavily on the government's commitment and strategies to address the massive unemployment and economic disruption caused by the pandemic. Civil society and community organizations must urgently collaborate to formulate actionable plans to support vulnerable populations in rebuilding livelihoods.

At this juncture, addressing basic survival needs must take precedence. Poverty exacerbates health risks, fuels fear, and breeds social discord. While other issues remain important, they must temporarily take a back seat until stability is restored.

When people are struggling to secure their daily bread, discussions lacking empathy and practicality will fall on deaf ears. It is imperative that we find ways to alleviate immediate hardships to restore trust, confidence, and hope within the community.

\*\*\*\*\*