



**Mental Health and Wellbeing of Parents During COVID 19
and its Impact on Child Development**

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Introduction

- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic extends far beyond the sphere of physical health.
- The pandemic is having profound effects on mental well-being, social development, safety, privacy, economic security, and family relationships.
- COVID 19 pandemic has affected the lives of millions of people around the world. Pakistan's first case was reported on 26th February 2020 and from then onwards, the situation has only gotten worse.

- This corona epidemic has a direct psycho-social impact on the child. It includes child abuse and neglect, mental health issues including feeling of helplessness, isolation, fear, and anxiety.
- As whole of the household is overexposed to the constant updates on mainstream and social media about the number of Covid-19 cases and deaths, the level of anxiety increases among parents as well as their children.

Research Project-1

- Participants were recruited from parents visiting the pediatrics Out-Patient Department (OPD) of public and private hospitals in three provincial capitals of Pakistan i.e., Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar.
- All women and men, who were mother/father of at least one child under the age of 18 visiting the Pediatric OPDs for any reason and who agreed to fill the questionnaire were included in the study through a purposive sampling technique.
- The sample size was 923

Stressors during COVID-19 lockdown

- Uncertainty about the situation of COVID-19 was reported as a stressful indicator by highest percentage of the respondents (83.8%).
- Continued updates on the media on COVID-19 situation and economic burden came out as the second highest reported stressful indicators (reported by 81.2% of the respondents).
- A large majority (79.9%) also reported being stuck indoors a stressful indicator, 79% considered unavailability of the desired products due to lockdown while 75% considered inability to go out and socialize stressful, during lockdown.

| Sr. no | Indicators | Not Stressful | | Stressful | | | | | | Not Applicable | | |
|--------|--|----------------------|------|--------------------|------|----------------------|------|---------------------|------|----------------|-----|------|
| | | Not at all stressful | | Slightly stressful | | Moderately stressful | | Very much stressful | | Total % | n | % |
| | | N | % | n | % | N | % | N | % | % | n | % |
| 1 | Uncertainty of the situation | 130 | 14.1 | 199 | 21.6 | 287 | 31.1 | 287 | 31.1 | 83.8 % | 20 | 2.2 |
| 2 | Continued updates on the situation from media | 117 | 12.7 | 154 | 16.7 | 267 | 28.9 | 329 | 35.6 | 81.2 % | 56 | 6.1 |
| 3 | Economic burden | 141 | 15.3 | 169 | 18.3 | 209 | 22.6 | 372 | 40.3 | 81.2 % | 32 | 3.5 |
| 4 | Getting stuck indoors | 148 | 16.0 | 208 | 22.5 | 307 | 33.3 | 222 | 24.1 | 79.9 % | 38 | 4.1 |
| 5 | Unavailability of the desired products due to lockdown | 172 | 18.6 | 275 | 29.8 | 235 | 25.5 | 219 | 23.7 | 79 % | 22 | 2.4 |
| 6 | Need to go out and/or socialize | 148 | 16.0 | 191 | 20.7 | 253 | 27.4 | 248 | 26.9 | 75% | 83 | 9.0 |
| 7 | Constant supervision of the children | 205 | 22.2 | 180 | 19.5 | 255 | 27.6 | 254 | 27.5 | 74.6 % | 29 | 3.1 |
| 8 | Studies of children | 159 | 17.2 | 248 | 26.9 | 182 | 19.7 | 257 | 27.8 | 74.4 % | 77 | 8.3 |
| 9 | Lack of recreational activities | 233 | 25.2 | 315 | 34.1 | 176 | 19.1 | 175 | 19.0 | 72.2 % | 24 | 2.6 |
| 10 | Distribution of time among all the chores | 217 | 23.5 | 194 | 21.0 | 299 | 32.4 | 142 | 15.4 | 68.8 % | 71 | 7.7 |
| 11 | Inability to teach my child properly | 299 | 32.4 | 157 | 17.0 | 156 | 16.9 | 224 | 24.3 | 58.2 % | 87 | 9.4 |
| 12 | Lack of house help | 149 | 16.1 | 144 | 15.6 | 226 | 24.5 | 162 | 17.6 | 57.7 % | 242 | 26.2 |
| 13 | Unavailability of outside food | 237 | 25.7 | 235 | 25.5 | 163 | 17.7 | 116 | 12.6 | 55.8 % | 172 | 18.6 |
| 14 | Work from home | 164 | 17.8 | 208 | 22.5 | 161 | 17.4 | 146 | 15.8 | 55.7 % | 244 | 26.4 |

Mental Health of the Parents

| Statements | Not relevant | Slightly relevant | Moderately relevant | Very much relevant |
|--|--------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| I am happy that I get to spend more time with my family | 245(26.5) | 334(36.2) | 191(20.7) | 153(16.6) |
| I fear what if my child remained behind in his studies | 200(21.6) | 273(29.6) | 247(26.8) | 203(22.0) |
| I feel what if we will not be able to get access to basic needs items in coming days | 178(19.3) | 383(41.5) | 232(25.1) | 130(14.1) |
| I sometimes feel trapped in the current circumstances of lockdown | 205(22.2) | 315(34.1) | 264(28.6) | 139(15.1) |
| I feel that something awful is about to happen in near future | 277(30.0) | 323(35.0) | 210(22.8) | 113(12.2) |
| I don't have any hope that our lives will ever become normal as they were before the lockdown situation. | 319(34.6) | 288(31.2) | 214(23.2) | 102(11.1) |
| I want some time and space for myself without any other family member | 369(40.0) | 321(34.8) | 145(15.7) | 88(9.5) |
| I will lose my sanity if things remain same | 424(45.9) | 252(27.3) | 163(17.7) | 84(9.1) |
| I feel relaxed that I can accomplish things in my own way (house/work related) | 353(38.2) | 325(35.2) | 156(16.9) | 89(9.6) |
| I get frustrated while managing all the chores | 317(34.3) | 329(35.6) | 191(20.7) | 86(9.3) |
| I feel sad thinking that I cannot go out like I used to go before. | 225(24.4) | 349(37.8) | 244(26.4) | 105(11.4) |
| I take it as an opportunity to spend quality time with my child | 292(31.6) | 311(33.7) | 186(20.2) | 134(14.5) |
| I feel so anxious that I don't feel like taking care of my child | 459(49.7) | 282(30.6) | 132(14.3) | 50(5.4) |

Differences in the Mean Scores of Mental Health based on Sample Characteristics

Results indicates that females reflected poor mental health than males.

Results show that participants who faced loss in income reported poor mental health than those who had not faced loss in income.

Participants living in joint family systems reported poor mental health as compared to those living in nuclear family systems.

Participants in the low-income group reflected poor mental health than those with relatively higher income groups.

Results indicate that mental health of parents is affected greatly where age of the child is between 5 to 8 years and affected lowest in the group where age of the index child is below 5 years.

Parenting Practices during COVID-19 lockdown

Parents reported positive as well as negative parenting practices during lockdown.

Among the positive practices, 85.1% and 80.6% of the participants reported that they did various learning and fun activities with their children.

Among negative practices 76.9% reported that they get easily irritated when their children did not listen to them.

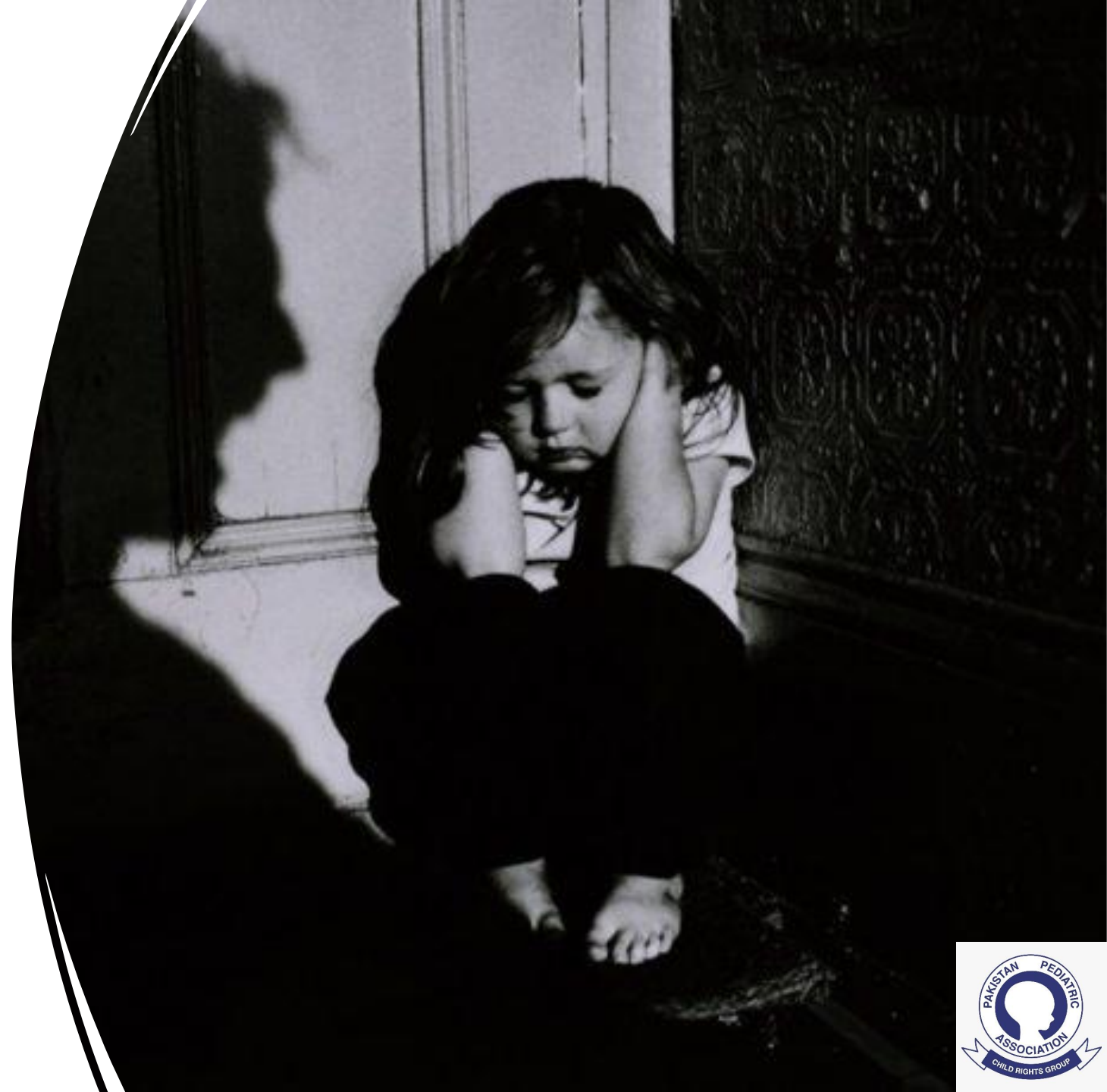
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- 67.5% reported that their children did not listen to them unless they are being shouted at whereas 63.9% reported that they slapped their children if they misbehaved.
 - 59.3% reported that it took so much yelling and cursing to make their children sit and do any work whereas 56.1% reported that without hitting/slapping it was impossible to make their children obey.

(Responses for always, mostly and sometimes have been combined here to indicate overall occurrence of a behavior)



Parenting Practices and Mental Health

Negative correlation between the mental health and parenting practices during COVID-19 show that parents with poor mental health reported negative parenting practices.



STUDY-2

Sample Size:

8,839

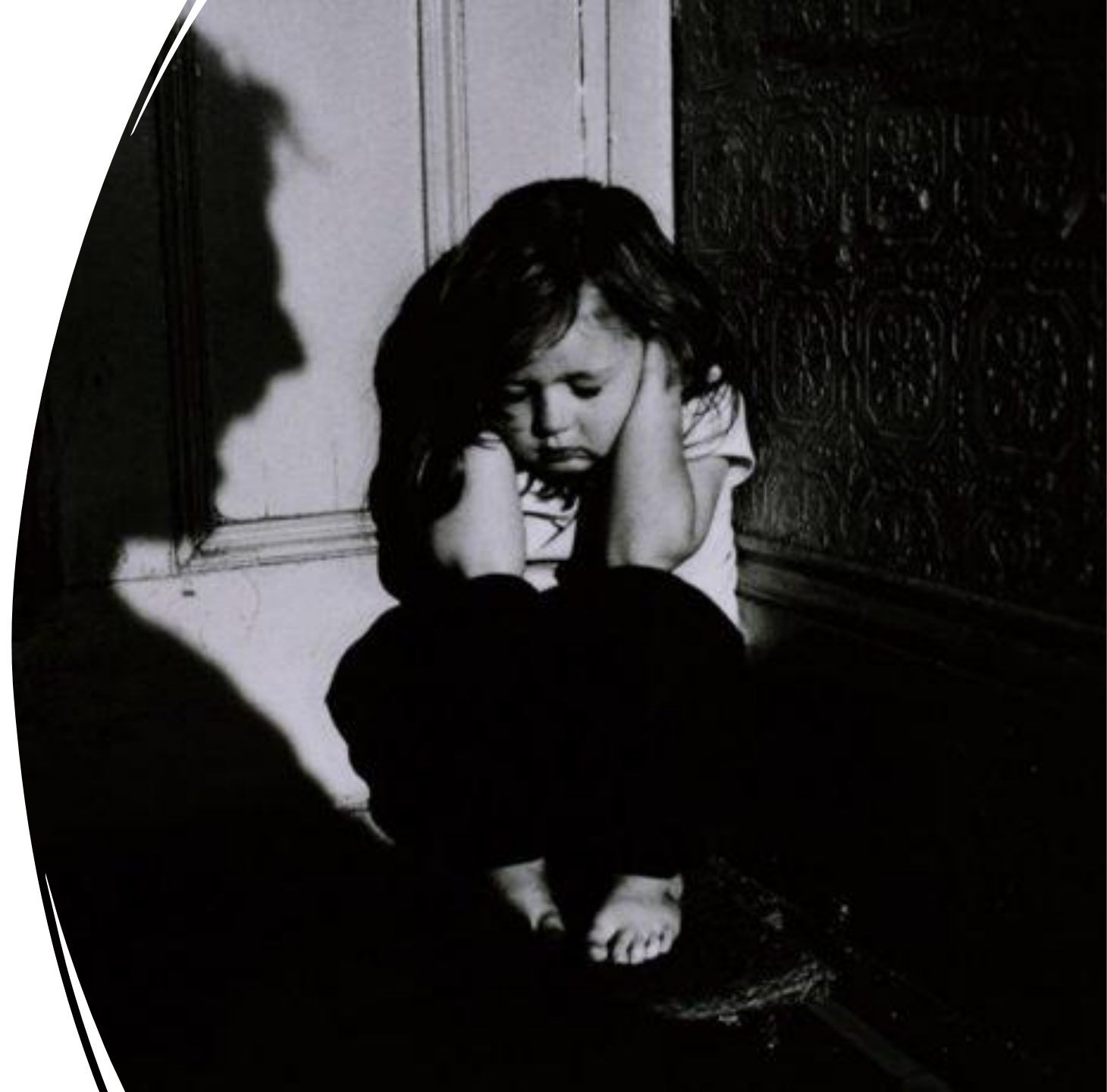
Participants:

Men=1,078

Women=1,825

Boys=3,238

Girls=2,698



Major Psychological Problems Identified & Interventions Conducted

Children

- **Problems**

- Anger, Stress, Anxiety, Fear, Depression, Emotional Abuse, Physical Abuse, Neglect, Learning Issues, Bullying & Sexual Abuse, Denial etc.

- **Approaches / intervention**

- Play Therapy
- Cognitive Behavior Therapy
- Behavior Therapy

Adults

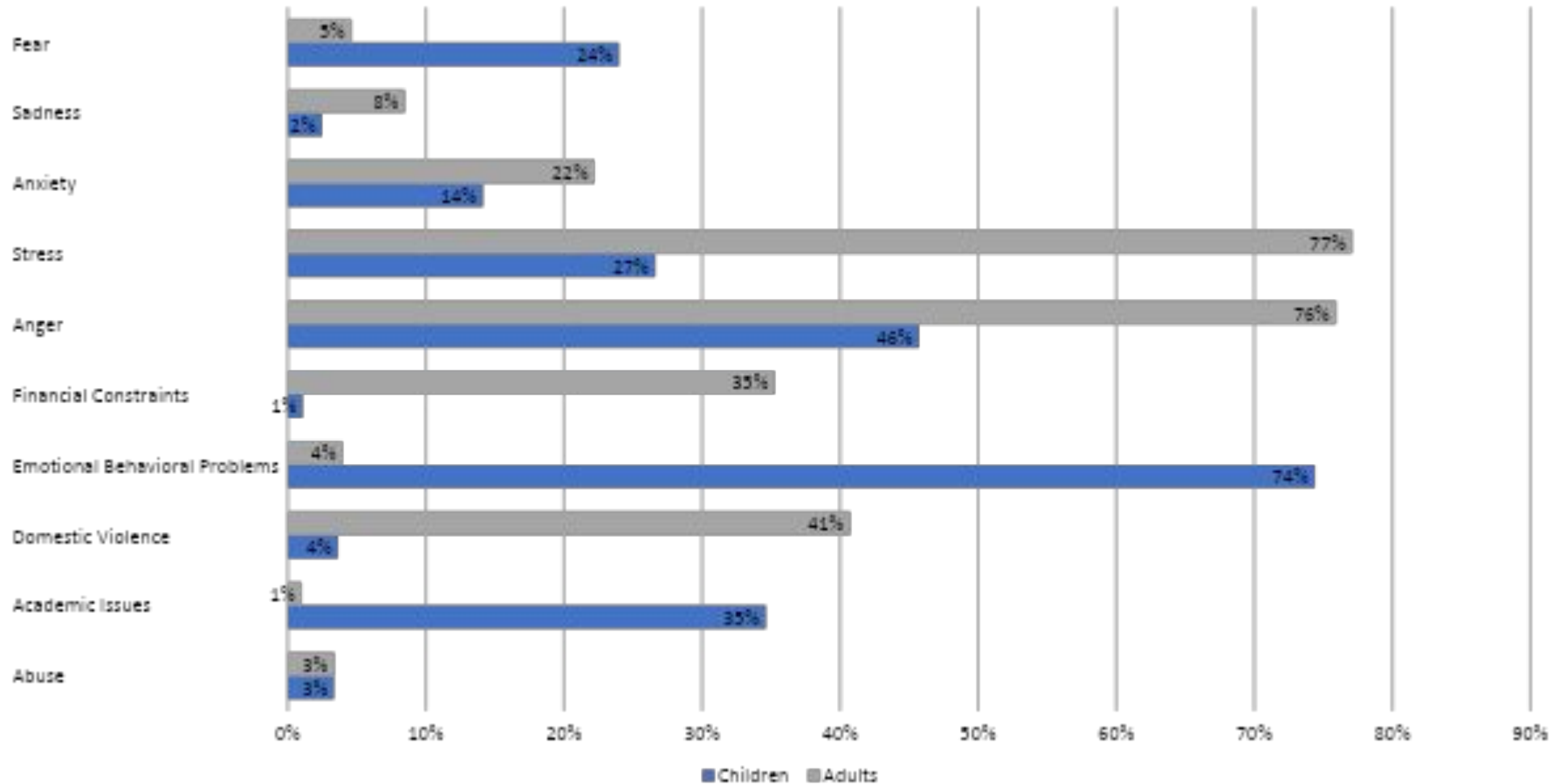
- **Problems**

- Domestic Violence, Relationship Issues, Parenting issues, Family issues, Financial issues, Anger, Anxiety, Stress & Depression, Denial etc.

- **Approaches / intervention**

- Cognitive Behavior Therapy
- Family Therapy

Major Psychological Problems Reported by Participant



Key Issues during COVID-19 Lockdown based on the empirical data

- Increased screen time was reported during COVID-19 lockdown than before lockdown.
- Findings indicate increased practice of physical disciplining and emotional abuse such as shouting, yelling and cursing in the COVID-19 lockdown days than before the lockdown.
- Parents reported higher frequency for statements such as “I get irritated when my child doesn’t listen to me”, “My child doesn’t listen to me unless I shout at him”, “I slap my child when he misbehaves”, “It takes so much yelling and cursing to make my child sit and do school’s/any work”, “Without slapping/hitting it is impossible to make my child obey me” etc.

Results indicate a significant difference in the pre-lockdown and post lockdown parenting practices, reflecting more negative practices in post lockdown period.

Participants who did not face any income during COVID-19 lockdown reported more positive parenting practices than those who suffered from income loss during lockdown.

Children spent more hours on screens during the lockdown than before lockdown.

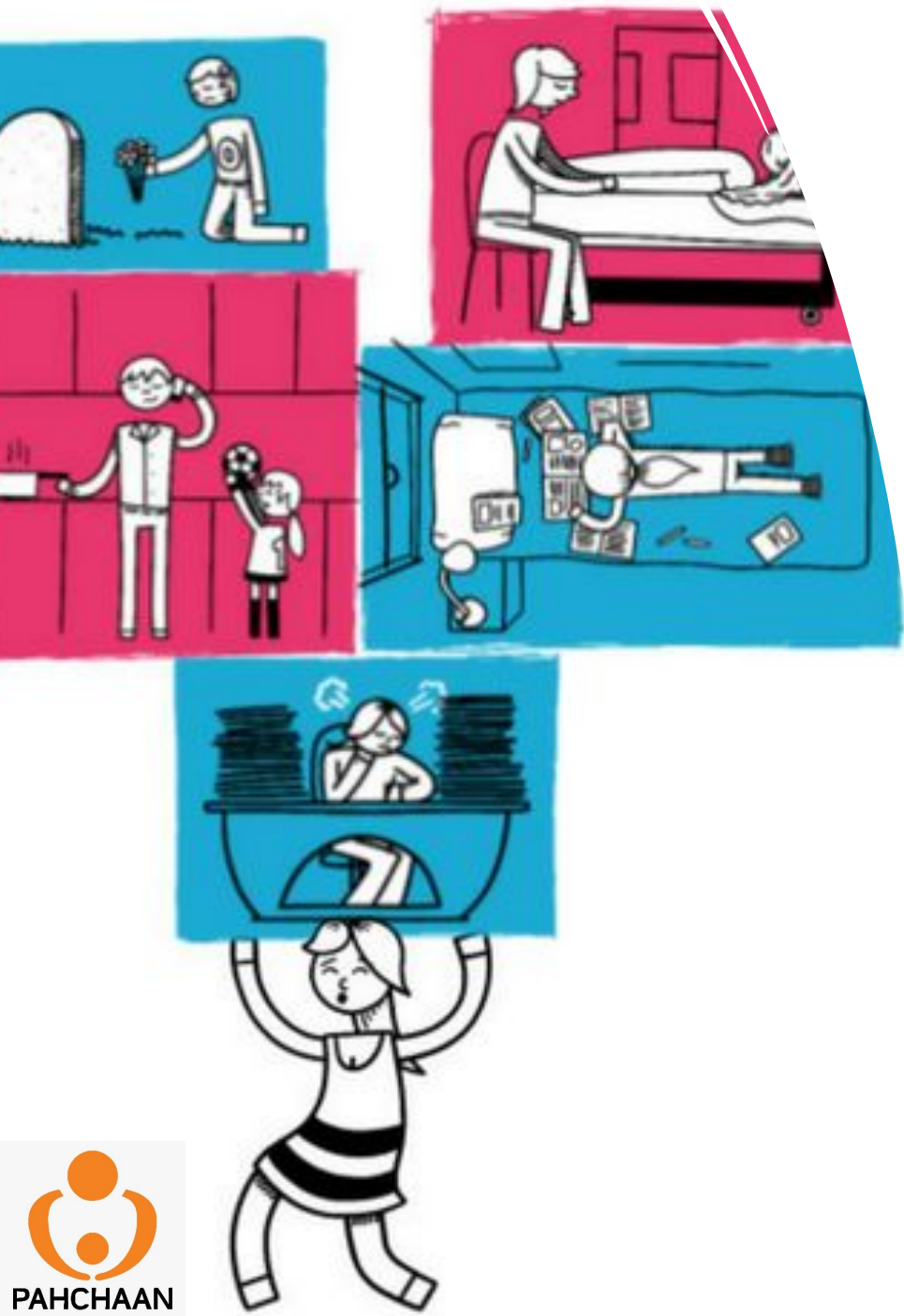
Findings reflect that an increase in the level of stressors leads to poor mental health.



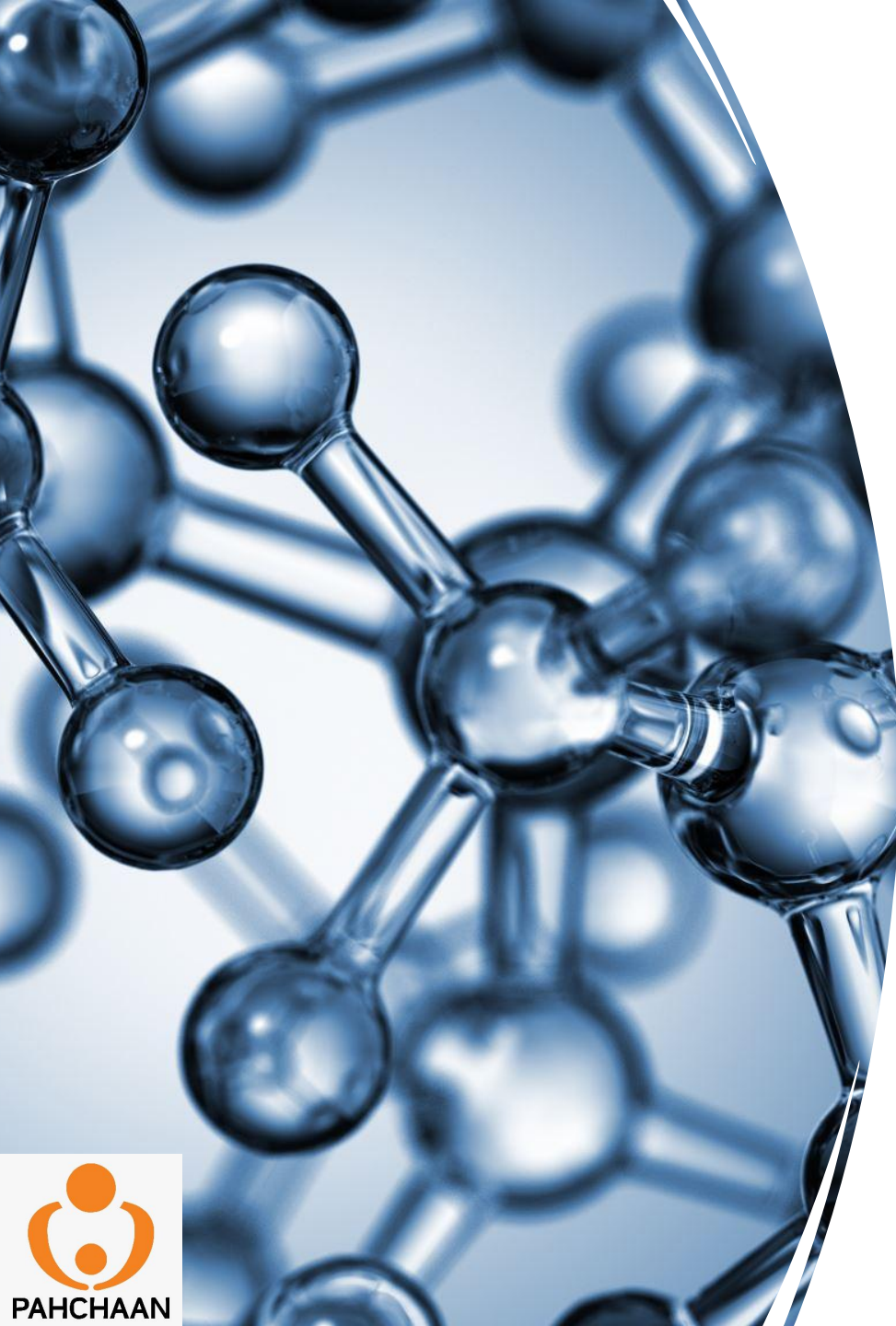
Conclusion and Implications

COVID-19 pandemic presents a global crisis not only of the health of the people but also on family relations and mental well-being.

Most of the studies have been conducted in the upper- and middle-income countries, and very few from lower and low-middle income group countries.



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- Study-1 suggests an association between mental health of the parents and relevance with the stressors, indicating that higher the relevance with the stressors, greater the mental health is affected.



Findings show certain risk factors that make individuals/ families more vulnerable to poor mental health.

These risk factors include gender; as mother showed poor mental health than fathers, socio-economic status as low-income group reflected poor mental health than with the high-income group and income loss during COVID-19 as participants from families that suffered from income loss during this pandemic presented poor mental health as compared to those who have not suffered from income loss.

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