

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)
at home during COVID-19 lockdown:
Results from a Rapid Survey in Uzbekistan

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Contents

List of Figures

Introduction	1
Rapid Assessment: Objectives, methodology and sample	3
COVID-19: Early Child Care and Education Practices	5
Parents and Families Engaging with Young Children	5
Establishing and ensuring a daily routine for children	6
Engaging children household activities with other family members.....	8
Early childhood care and education (ECCE) activities at home	9
Physical Activities:.....	10
Reading Activities.....	11
Arts, dance and music activities.....	12
Television and other entertainment activities.....	12
Who in the family is mostly engaged with children during the lockdown?	13
Materials used by families for engaging children in ECCE activities.....	14
COVID-19: Health and hygiene Practices among children during the lockdown	16
Handwashing before and after eating meals:.....	16
Handwashing after using toilets/ urinals	16
Handwashing practices after outdoor games.....	17
Handwashing practices after coming home from outside.....	18
COVID-19: ECCE through entertainment Practices among children during the lockdown	19
Children spending time on Cartoon-based programmes on television and internet/online	20
Children’s time on education related television and internet/online programmes	20
Children time on general entertainment programme (not specific to kids) on TV during quarantine	21
Parents / family watching Television programmes with children during the COVID19 lockdown.....	21
COVID-19: Parents /caretakers’ Knowledge on ECCE during COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown	22
Parental knowledge about ECCE at home	22
Young children’s Knowledge about COVID-19 related safe behaviour and hygiene practices	23
COVID-19: Parents /caretakers’ Attitude towards COVID-19 pandemic and related issues	24
Children’s attitude towards COVID-19 lockdown and associated restrictions and ECE	24
Parents/ caretakers’ take on ECCE during lockdown.....	28
ATTITUDES: Parental views on the television and online programmes for preschool children during COVID19 lockdown	29
ATTITUDES: Parental views and Plans regarding preschool re-opening.....	31
Summary	33
Parents/ families’ Practices related to young child’s daily routine, household chores and early childhood care and education activities	33
Health and hygiene Practices among children	33
Entertainment and education through television/ media related practices.....	33
Parents’ knowledge about ECCE at home and children’s knowledge about healthy behaviour.....	34
Parents as well as children’s attitude towards the lockdown and related aspects.....	34
Parents’ views on the national television programmes for young children.....	34
Parental views on preschool re-opening	35

Suggestions and Recommendations	36
Care for children and early childhood education at home	36
Health and hygiene habits	36
Entertainment and infotainment habits	36
School Re-opening	37

List of Tables

#	Title	Page #
Figure 1	Objectives of the Rapid Assessment	3
Figure 2	Parents' response on the time spent with young children in the preschool age group (3-6 years) during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown	5
Figure 3	Parents' response on the time spent with young children in the preschool age group (3-6 years) during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown by gender and other disaggregation	6
Figure 4	Parents/ families practices of establishing and following a daily routine for young children during the lockdown	7
Figure 5	Parents/ families practices of establishing and following a daily routine for young children during the lockdown: By gender, location, family education levels and migration status of the household	7
Figure 6	Parents/ families practices of engaging children in household chores	8
Figure 7	Parents/ families practices of engaging children in household chores: By gender, location, family education levels and migration status of the household	9
Figure 8	Parents/ families engaging children in various types of ECCE activities at home	9
Figure 9	Extent of Physical activities (sports and games) that parents/ families engage with children at home	10
Figure 10	Extent of Physical activities (sports and games) that parents/ families engage with children at home: By gender of the child and location	10
Figure 11	Extent of Reading activities that parents/ families engage with children at home	11
Figure 12	Extent of Reading activities that parents/ families engage with children at home: By gender of the child and location	11
Figure 13	Extent of Extra-curricular activities that parents/ families engage with children at home	12
Figure 14	Extent of Entertainment activities that parents/ families engage with children at home	13
Figure 15	Extent of Entertainment activities that parents/ families engage with children at home: By gender of the child and location	13
Figure 16	Family member who is mostly engage with children at home	14
Figure 17	Families reporting at least 3 books (or more) of children's literature at home for engaging children through reading: by location and wealth quintile of families	14
Figure 18	Materials available at home for children to engage in various arts and crafts related activities	15
Figure 19	Handwashing behaviour of children before and after meals	16
Figure 20	Handwashing behaviour of children before and after meals: By gender of the child and location	16
Figure 21	Handwashing behaviour of children after using toilets	17
Figure 22	Handwashing behaviour of children after using toilets: By gender of the child and location	17
Figure 23	Handwashing behaviour of children after active outdoor games	17

Figure 24	Handwashing behaviour of children after active outdoor games: By gender of the child and location	17
Figure 25	Handwashing behaviour of children after active outdoor games	18
Figure 26	Handwashing behaviour of children after active outdoor games: By gender of the child and location	18
Figure 27	Parents engaging children in television and other social media: By gender of the child, location, households' education and wealth levels	19
Figure 28	Children's time watching cartoon programmes on TV	20
Figure 29	Children's time watching cartoon programmes on internet	20
Figure 30	Children's time watching education programmes on TV during the quarantine period	20
Figure 31	Children's time watching education programmes online during the quarantine period	20
Figure 32	Children's time watching general programmes on TV during the quarantine	21
Figure 33	Parents watching television and other entertainment programmes with children during the quarantine period	21
Figure 34	Parents' Knowledge of ECE activities for engaging children at home	22
Figure 35	Young Children (Preschool age group of 3-6 years)'s Knowledge of COVID-19 related health and hygiene practices	23
Figure 36	Parents reporting on children's feelings with respect to being confined to home during the quarantine	25
Figure 37	Parents reporting on children's feelings with respect to being confined to home during the quarantine: gender of child, location & household economic conditions	25
Figure 38	Parents reporting on children's feelings towards having their ECE lessons through television /online	25
Figure 39	Parents reporting on children's feelings towards having their ECE lessons through television /online: by gender of the child, location etc.	25
Figure 40	Parents reporting on children's feelings towards not able to attend preschools	26
Figure 41	Parents reporting on children's feelings towards not able to attend preschools: By gender of the child, location etc.	26
Figure 42	Parents reporting on children's feelings towards not able to meet/communicate with their teachers	26
Figure 43	Parents reporting on children's feelings towards not able to meet/communicate with their teachers: By gender of the child, location etc.	26
Figure 44	Parents reporting on children's feelings towards not able to meet/communicate with their friends	27
Figure 45	Parents reporting on children's feelings towards not able to meet/communicate with their friends: By gender of the child, location etc.	27
Figure 46	Distribution of children on a stress index (no stress to multiple /high stress)	27
Figure 47	Proportion of young Children (Preschool age group of 3-6 years)'s attitude towards COVID-19 situation: Children with high or mild stress on account of any factors related to lockdown	28
Figure 48	Parents' attitude towards being at home and spending more time on household chores and ECCE activities	28
Figure 49	Parents' views on the national television / online programmes for preschool aged children	29

Figure 50	Parents' views on the national television / online programmes for preschool aged children	29
Figure 51	Parents' views on the content of the national television / online programmes for preschool aged children	30
Figure 52	Parents' reasons for watching television or online programmes with their young children	30
Figure 53	Parents' willingness to send their children to preschools once the preschools re-opens	31
Figure 54	Parents' concerns about the risk of pandemic spread if preschools re-open in September 2020	31
Figure 55	Parents' concerns about the medical facilities and preparedness of preschools to re-open in September 2020	32
Figure 56	Parents' concerns about the staff's ability and preparedness to handle safety and health issues during preschools re-opening in September 2020	32
Figure 57	Parents' concerns about the children's learning /development loss due to preschool closure	32

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) at home during COVID-19 lockdown: Results from a Rapid Survey in Uzbekistan

Introduction

The initial responses to COVID-19 pandemic by governments across the globe were targeted at preventing and containing the spread of the virus and the unprecedented steps taken in this regard have changed the daily life for people in many ways. The imposition of physical distancing requirements and nation-wide or partial lockdowns of all non-essential public services also affected the education sector, particularly the closure of schools and early childcare and education (ECCE) services. The severe restrictions on access to education and care opportunities have compromised the healthy developmental trajectory for many children who are being confined to home in almost every country.

For young children in the age group of 3-6 years, optimal brain development requires a stimulating and enriching environment, adequate nutrition, learning opportunities and social interaction with attentive caregivers. Due to the closure of ECCE centers, many children are now entirely reliant on their parents and caregivers for nurturing care and supporting to meet all their developmental needs (physical, emotional, social and cognitive). This added burden on families to balance childcare and work responsibilities, compounded by economic instability and social isolation in many cases, is fertile ground for home environments characterized by toxic stress. Unsafe conditions, negative interactions and lack of educational opportunities during the early years can lead to irreversible outcomes, which can affect a child's potential for the remainder of his or her life¹.

In Uzbekistan, preschools and schools were closed on March 16, 2020². Before the closure, out of the 2.7 million young children in the age group of 3-6 years, 1.2 million were attending around 14000+ preschools, out of which around 6000 were in government sector and the rest, in private. While only 42% of the 3-5 years old children were in preschools, among the 6-year old, close to half (49%) of the children were attending preschools prior to the lockdown. A UNICEF study (2020) on the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) of parents towards ECCE shows that while 52% of the rural boys were attending any ECCE programme, only 42% of the rural girls attended the same. There were huge gaps across regions within the country in preschool participation. A multi-variate analysis conducted for the study showed that the age of the child, gender, household size, parental education as well as household wealth/ economic status mattered in preschool participation of children. The "readiness" of 6-7-year-old children for school in terms of various expected competencies. An analysis of "school readiness" among the 6-7 years in the study showed that participation in preschool education was the most important factor in improving school readiness skills of children related to pre-math and number concepts, cognitive and conceptual areas and pre-literacy and language skills.

¹ <https://data.unicef.org/topic/early-childhood-development/covid-19/>

² As on September 21, 2020 out of 5885 state preschools, 151 are opened and out of around 8000 private preschools, 5135 have started functioning (mostly preschools operating in Public-Private-partnership [PPP] mode)

In order to address the potential loss of “school readiness” or “compromised care”, the Ministry of Preschool Education (MOPSE) had come up with a series of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) messages as well as video lessons and activities for children with UNICEF support and telecasted through television as well as telegram channels.

In order to support preschool children during the quarantine period, the Ministry of Preschool Education (MOPSE), Government of Uzbekistan with the help of National Television and Radio Company had developed the “Online Kindergarten” programme as a methodological aid to parents in providing systematic, useful and developmental education to preschool children³. The programme included two specific types of educational programmes: (a) "Ilk Kadam" or “First step” - for children aged 3-5; and (b) "Aqlvoy" - for pre-school education of 6-year-old children. These programmes basically consisted of 20-25-minute videos based on the state programmes "Ilk Kadam" and "Aqlvoy". Each lesson topic covers 4-5 areas of preschool child development: exploring the world around them, developing creative and educational, speaking and logical skills.

However, it was not enough to take these measures, rather it was even more important to understand the ground reality in order to come up with evidence-based interventions for young children and their holistic development. Since there is no state mechanism to collect data systematically on preschool children’s daily routine and life under COVID-19 quarantine, it was important to collect and analyze data through specific rapid assessments.



³ <https://mdo.uz/uz/news/maktabgacha-yoshdagi-bolalarni-karantin-vaqtida-oqitish>

Rapid Assessment: Objectives, methodology and sample

Education section of the UNICEF Uzbekistan country office carried out a detailed study on the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) of parents and caretakers of 3-6 years old children regarding ECCE (the data for the study was collected in November 2019 and the report was finalized in May 2020). The KAP study looked at the knowledge of parents and caretakers about the child development outcomes, appropriate and desirable childcare practices and behaviour, including equity and inclusion; the attitude towards child development services and its efficacy, particularly the quality, and affordability of available preschool services, willingness to adapt appropriate childcare practices and behaviour; and practices in terms of use of preschool services, engagement with children etc.

As the KAP study looked at the scenario before the COVID-19 pandemic, it was important to do a quick survey to assess ECCE scenario, particularly caring and rearing practices at home, and parental attitudes and knowledge regarding ECCE during the COVID19 lockdown. It was also important to understand what parents thought about the ECCE programmes that the government produced and broadcasted through television for young children. Thus, this rapid assessment was aimed at dealing with a sub-set of issues covered in the KAP study with focus on engaging children during the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown which forced children to be at home and parents to be more engaged with children in one way or other.

The objectives of this rapid assessment are to study:

- parental knowledge about appropriate care and behaviour towards young children during the pandemic and associated lockdown;
- parental attitude towards the care and early learning needs of children due to preschool closure, requirements of increased childcare and concerns towards the health and education issues when the preschool opens; and
- practices by parents and other family members towards engaging children and nurturing their learning and development needs during the pandemic related lockdown.

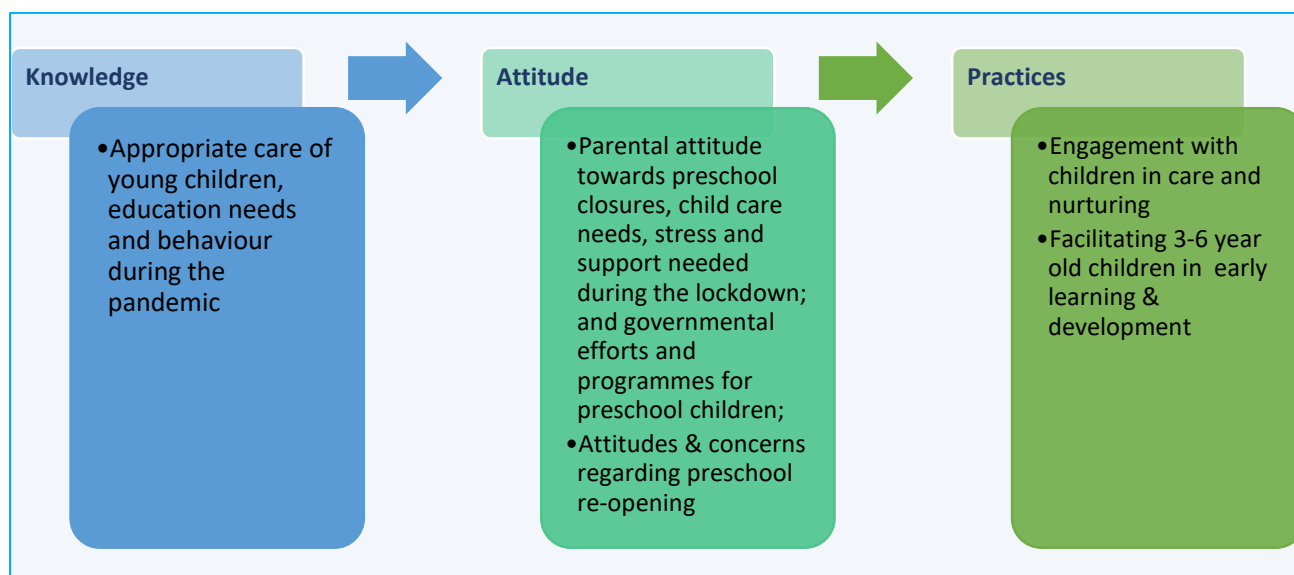


Figure 1. Objectives of the Rapid Assessment

Given the quarantine measures, it was not feasible to visit sampled households and conduct interviews, hence it was decided that the assessment will be conducted through telephone calls and interviews.

The data for UNICEF Uzbekistan's 2020 report on the Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) of parents and caretakers of 3-6 years old children regarding ECCE was collected in November 2019. The study had covered 2670 randomly sampled, nationally representative households. It was decided that for the rapid assessment, 10% of the households used for the KAP study will be covered.

The questionnaire for the telephonic interviews was prepared by the UNICEF Education team in consultation with Expert Fikri, the national data collection agency who had carried out the data collection for the KAP study. The telephonic interviews were conducted during June-July 2020.

This report presents the results of the rapid assessment covering the following areas:

- Parents / family's **Practices** related to engaging with children, childcare and early education activities during the COVID-19 lockdown;
- **Practices** related to health and hygiene that children follow in the context of the pandemic;
- **Practices** related to children's engagement in entertainment and other social media activities;
- Parents' **Attitudes** towards engaging children, government programmes and resuming preschool attendance for children post-COVID19; and
- Parental **Knowledge** and understanding on how to respond to the ongoing situation and providing care and education to young children during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown.

COVID-19: Early Child Care and Education Practices

Parents and Families Engaging with Young Children

Both parents and children being confined to home for a longer duration was one of the immediate impacts of nation-wide lockdown in response to COVID-19 and the closure of preschools. Obviously, it is expected that parents will be spending more time with children in such a situation than before the lockdown. Parents were asked as to whether they have been spending more time with the children since lockdown than before the lockdown.

An overwhelming majority of parents/ caretakers (89% of the respondents) reported that they spent more time with the child now than before the lockdown and when many children were attending preschools. Around 78% of the parents reported that they are now spending a “*lot more time with the child*” now than before, while 11% parents reported that they spent “*a little more time*” with the child now than before the lockdown. While 4% parents reported that there is no change in the time spent with the child, 6% parents reported that they were now “*spending less time with the child than before*”. Only 1% of the respondents reported they were not spending any time with the child in general.

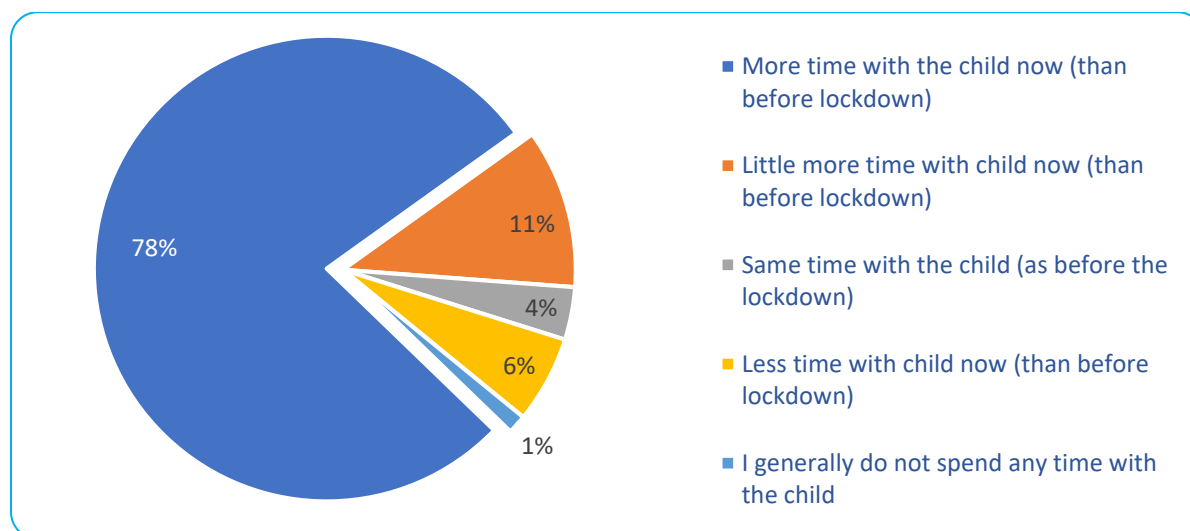


Figure 2. Parents’ response on the time spent with young children in the preschool age group (3-6 years) during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown

Interestingly, parents of girls (compared to parents of boys) reported spending more time with the child now than earlier. 81.3% of parents of girls reported spending much more time with the child whereas only 74% of parents of boys reported so. While 75% of the parents in rural areas reported spending much more time with their young children while 81% of parents in urban areas reportedly spent more time with their children during the lockdown.

In households where one of the family members is a migrant (live and work abroad) have several constraints in terms of time a member can devote to a child. This is reflected in the time reportedly spent by caretakers with a child. In households where one of the earning members is a migrant, the time spent is 14 percentage points less than that of a family where all members live in the household. Interestingly, parents from poorest 20% families (estimated based on the household wealth index)

reported spending much more time with the child now during the lockdown than before during lockdown in comparison with parents from richer families (richest 20% households based on household wealth index). Parents from poorer families may be now out of employment and at home, hence able to spend more time with children! Proportionately, more parents with only secondary education are spending much more time with their young children now than before the lockdown compared to parents with higher education.

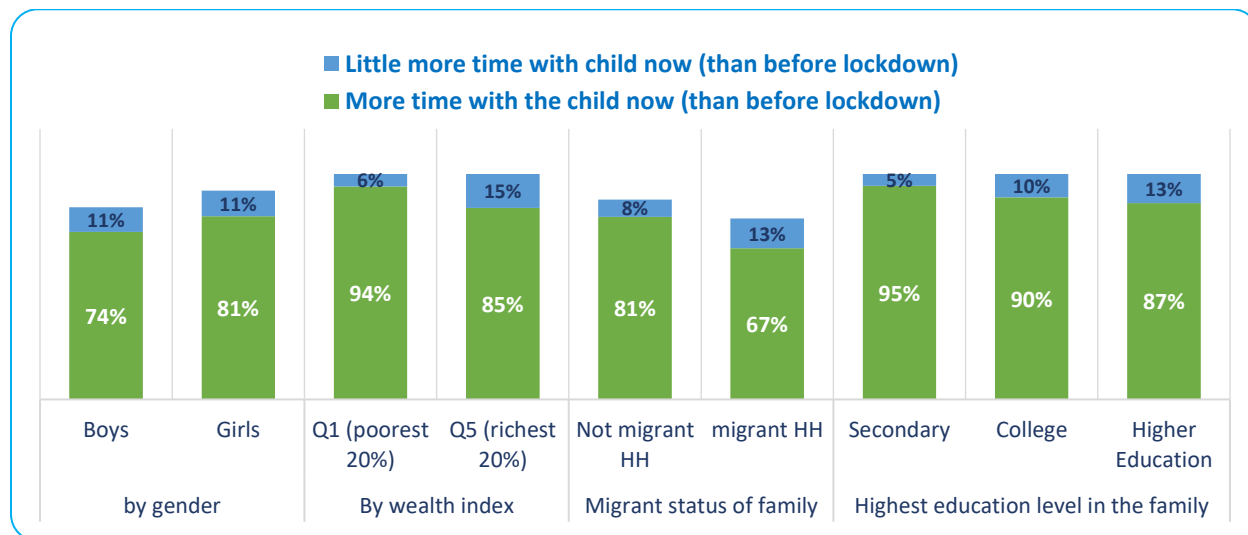


Figure 3. Parents’ response on the time spent with young children in the preschool age group (3-6 years) during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown by gender and other disaggregation

Parents/ caretakers’ engagement with young children took many forms, but mainly they were around: (a) establishing and ensuring that the child has a daily routine (health and hygiene routine, eating, sleeping etc.); (b) engaging children in household activities with other members to use the additional time child is t home; and (c) early childhood care and education (ECCE) related activities. These are explained below.

Establishing and ensuring a daily routine for children

The pandemic and the associated lockdown have imposed changes in everyone’s life, and these changes could also be stressful not only for adults, but also for children. A routine is important to bring some “normalcy” or consistency and comfort to a child’s life. Establishing healthy and constructive habits and following a routine based on these habits is important – children who practice a daily routine will be not only able to better manage their time, have self-discipline in terms of healthy grooming and eating habits as well as a calm and relaxed behaviour.

The survey of parents shows that around 2/3rds of the parents had planned a daily routine for their children to be followed at home during the lockdown. Out of them, 42% parents reported that they had strictly ensured that their children followed the daily routine whereas 24% parents reported that despite their detailed plan, they could not ensure that the children followed it as planned. Around 32% of parents reported that they had not planned any routine activities for children, but children still followed some routine activities daily. Only 2% of the parents reported that they did not plan, nor children followed any daily routine during the lockdown.

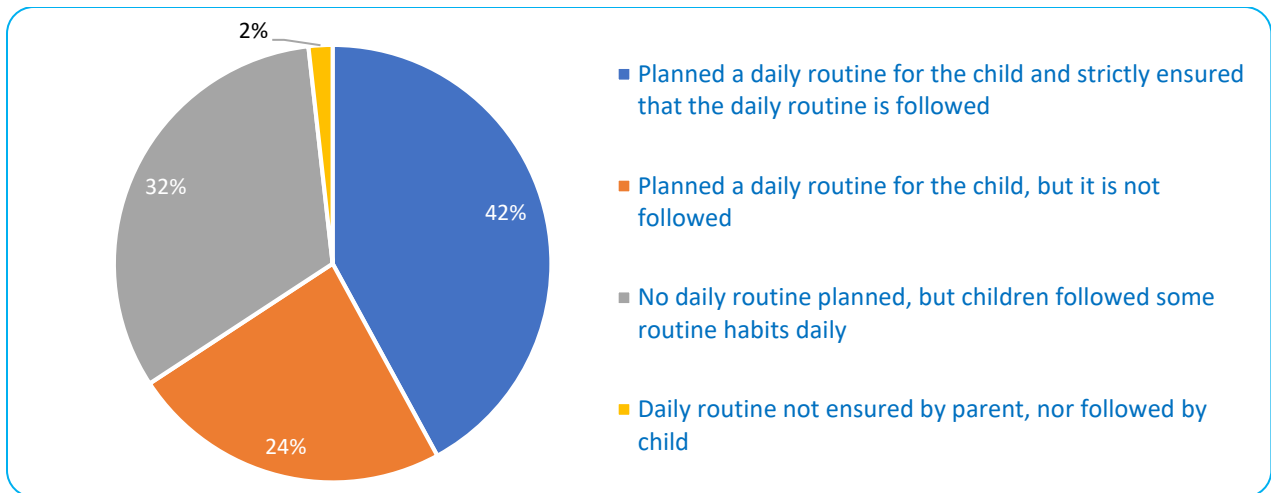


Figure 4. Parents/ families practices of establishing and following a daily routine for young children during the lockdown

Among the parents who reported that they had planned a daily routine for the child, parents of boys reported that they were following the routine **strictly** (45.4%) than parents of girls (38.9%). On the other hand, among the parents who reported that they did not plan to ensure any routine for the child, parents of girls reported their children were still following a routine (34.8%) more than parents of boys (30%).

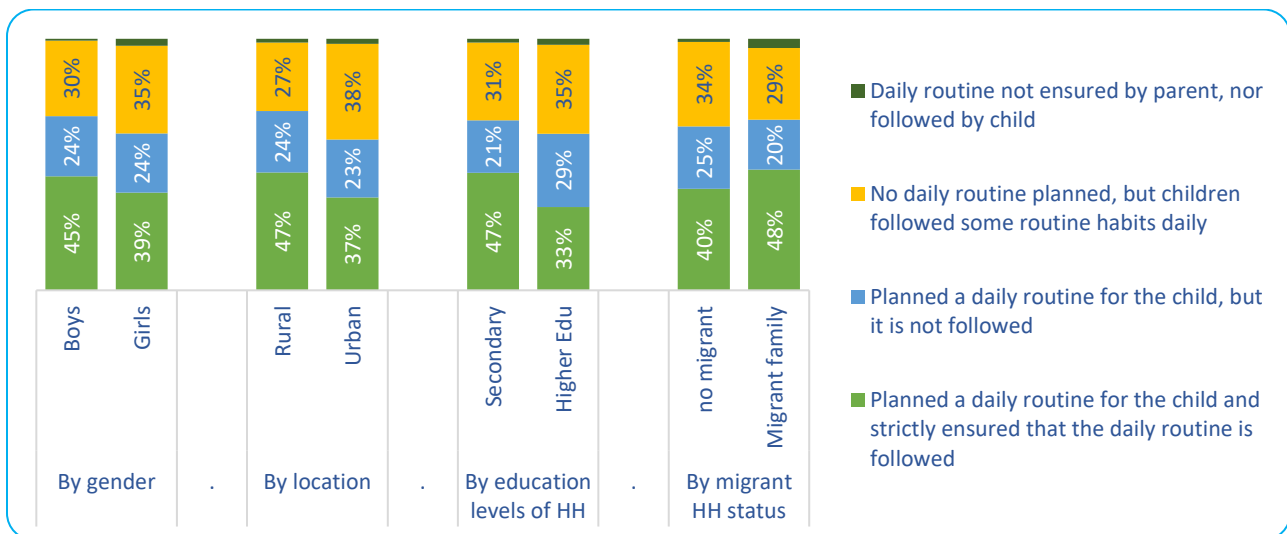


Figure 5. Parents/ families practices of establishing and following a daily routine for young children during the lockdown: By gender, location, family education levels and migration status of the household

Proportionately more parents in rural areas (47%) reported that they strictly ensured that the children carried out their routine activities daily than their urban counterparts (37%). On the other hand, proportionately more parents in urban areas (38%) reported that children followed their routine activities voluntarily without their imposition compared to rural parents (27%).

Parents with higher education were not very strict with children in terms of following daily routine (33%) compared to parents with only secondary or college level education (47%). Parents of 3-5 years reported strictly ensuring that children followed their daily routine (43%) or children following daily routine without parental control (33.8%) compared to parents of 6-7-year-olds (only 37.7% strictly ensured that children followed the routine while 27% parents reported that the children went on with the routine without the parents strictly following up with them. Caretakers in migrant families were stricter that the children follow daily routines compared to other families.

Engaging children household activities with other family members

Household chores are a necessary part of everyday life and involving children in household chores gives them an opportunity to acquire important life skills such as planning abilities and also develop fine and gross motor skills. Household chores may make the child more accountable and help them to be responsible contributors.

The survey revealed that in 8% households, parents did not allow children to participate children in any household activities and in around 30% cases, parents left it to the children to decide whether he/she wants to participate in any household activities. However, in 48% households, parents asked children to join the daily activities with other adult family members and in 14% households, parents even organized specific activities for children so that they can participate in household chores in a meaningful manner.

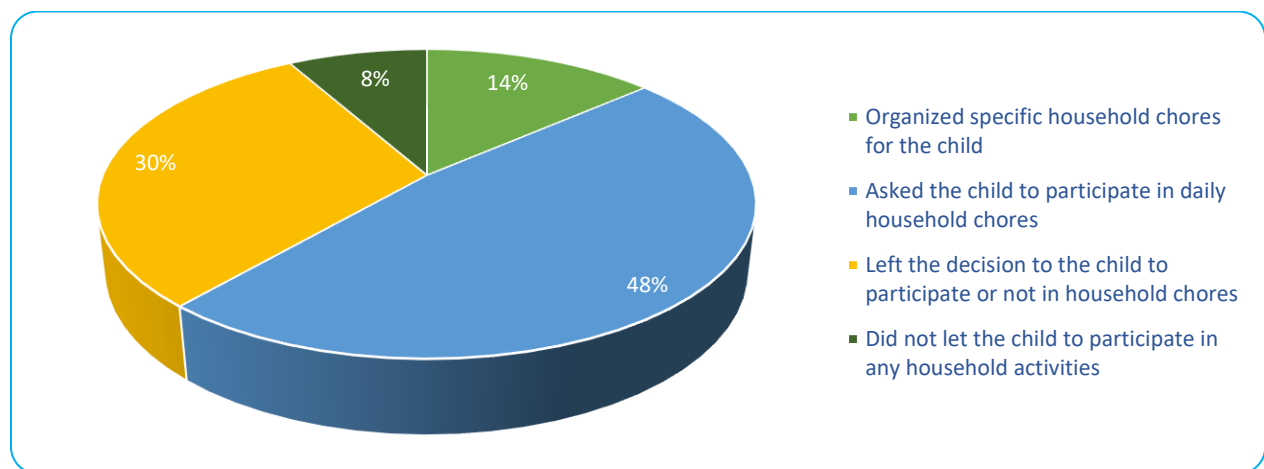


Figure 6. Parents/ families practices of engaging children in household chores

Proportionately parents organized specific activities more for boys (18%) than for girls (9%). On the other hand, parents expected girls to join other household members in daily chores more (55%) than boys (40%). Parents allowed boys (32%) to decide activities they like to do than girls (29%).

There were hardly any major differences in the way parents in rural and urban areas behaved when they engaged children in household activities during the lockdown – while slightly more urban households organized activities for young children (15%) compared to rural households (13%), rural households asked children to join daily household chores more (49%) than households in urban areas (46%). Caretakers in migrant families tried to organize more specific activities for children (22%) than those in non-migrant families (11%).

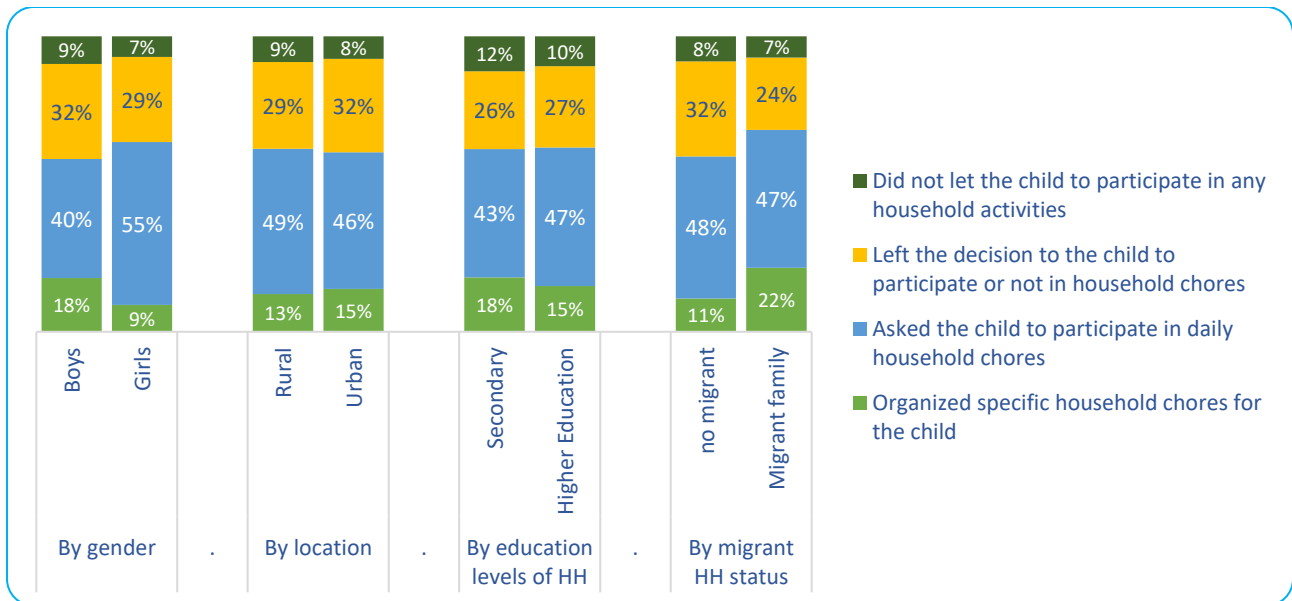


Figure 7. Parents/ families practices of engaging children in household chores: By gender, location, family education levels and migration status of the household

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) activities at home

With preschools closed, families had the additional responsibility of providing meaningful early childhood education activities at home. At home, parents mainly engaged children in (a) physical activities such as sports and games; (b) cognitive activities such as reading books, stories and songs; (c) artistic activities such as drawing, painting, singing and dancing; and (d) entertainment by watching television, video games etc.

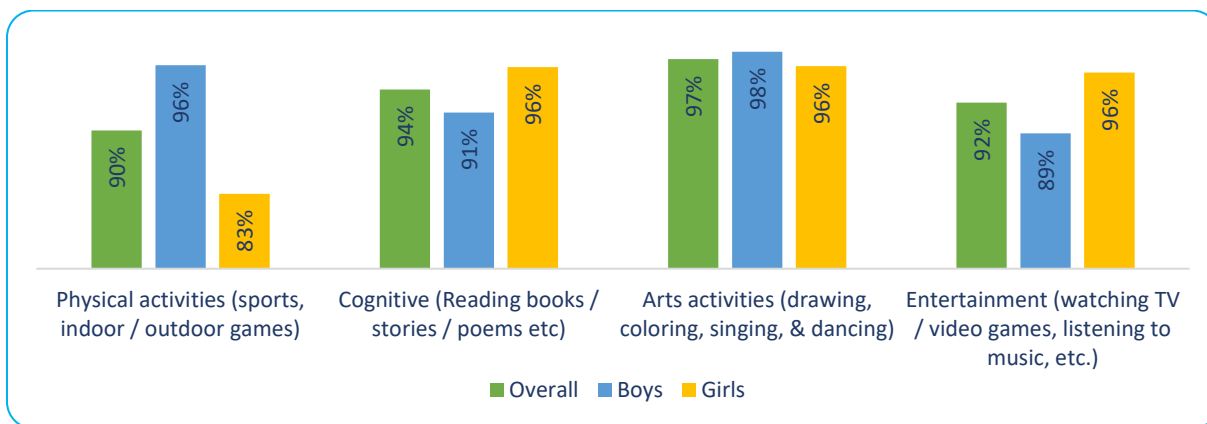


Figure 8. Parents/ families engaging children in various types of ECCE activities at home

Overall 90% parents ensured that children had some physical activities, however, 96% of boys were engaged in physical activities, only 83% of girls were doing any sports or games. On the other hand, proportionately parents of girls reported that they were engaging their child in cognitive activities or entertainment in comparison with boys.

Physical Activities:

Overall, while a tenth of the parents reported that they were not engaging children in much physical activities during the lockdown, close to half of the parents (49%) reported that their children are engaged in physical activities such as sports and games more now in comparison to the time before the lockdown. 13% of parents were not sure about the extent of physical activities as parents were not engaged and children were left to do whatever physical activities they wanted to do. While 14% parents reported that their children are engaged in physical activities as the same time as before the lockdown, another 14% reported that the physical activities children were engaged in have reduced after the lockdown.

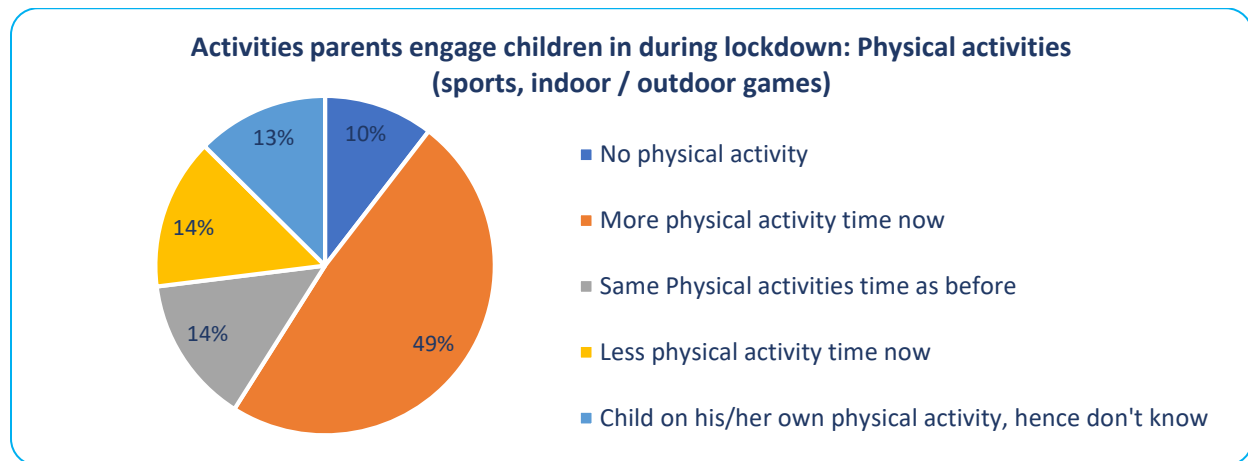


Figure 9. Extent of Physical activities (sports and games) that parents/ families engage with children at home

Proportionately more girls (17%) were deprived of engaging in physical activities such as sports and games compared to boys (4%). Parents engaged boys in more physical activities (or more time in physical activities) post-lockdown than before (56%) compared to girls (41%). For 16% of girls, lockdown also meant less time on physical activities or reduced physical activities in comparison, in comparison to only 12% boys with reduced physical activities. Roughly 13% parents had limited knowledge about the extent of physical activities by children as they were not engaged with children the activities.

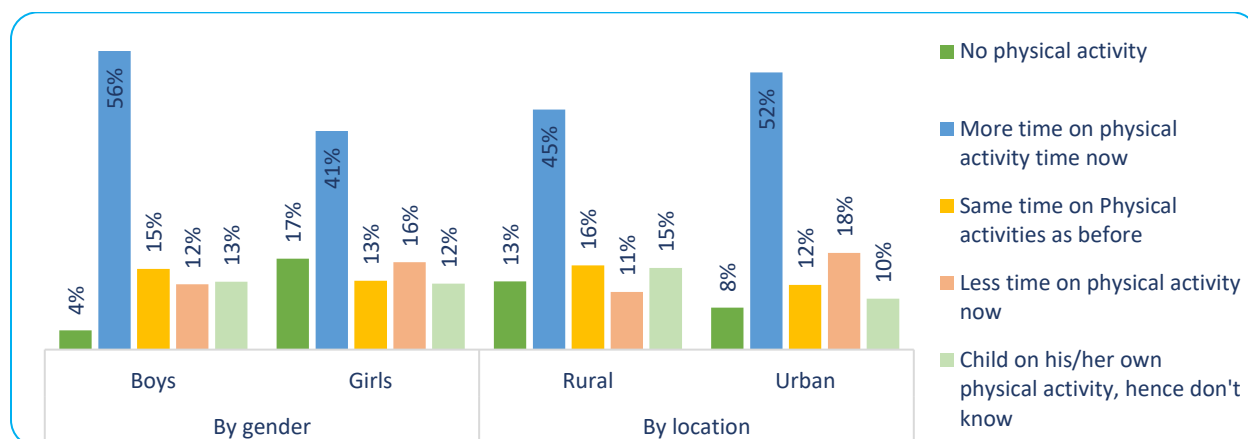


Figure 10. Extent of Physical activities (sports and games) that parents/ families engage with children at home: By gender of the child and location

Proportionately more children in rural areas were deprived of physical activities (13%) compared to only 8% in urban areas. On the other hand, parents in urban areas were engaging children more in physical activities (more time) during lockdown than before (52%) compared to parents in rural areas (45%). However, 18% children in urban areas had reduced physical activities post-lockdown compared to children in rural areas where only 11% faced reduced physical activities.

Reading Activities

To stimulate cognitive capabilities, it is important to improve language skills, skills for listening, reasoning etc. For young children, it is important that they are at least engaged in reading related activities, such as reading stories, poems, solving puzzles etc. During the lockdown, 94% of parents reported that reading activities formed part of ECE activities at home. Only 6% parents reported that their children were not engaged in any reading activities (while another 6% parents reported that they were not aware of the extent since they were not engaged with children in any reading activities and children do it on their own). 41% of parents reported that they were doing more reading with children now (either children reading or parents reading out stories and poems to children). 21% of parents reported that the level of reading activities remains the same as before the lockdown, but around 26% parents reported that the time spent on reading activities with children had come down during the lockdown period.

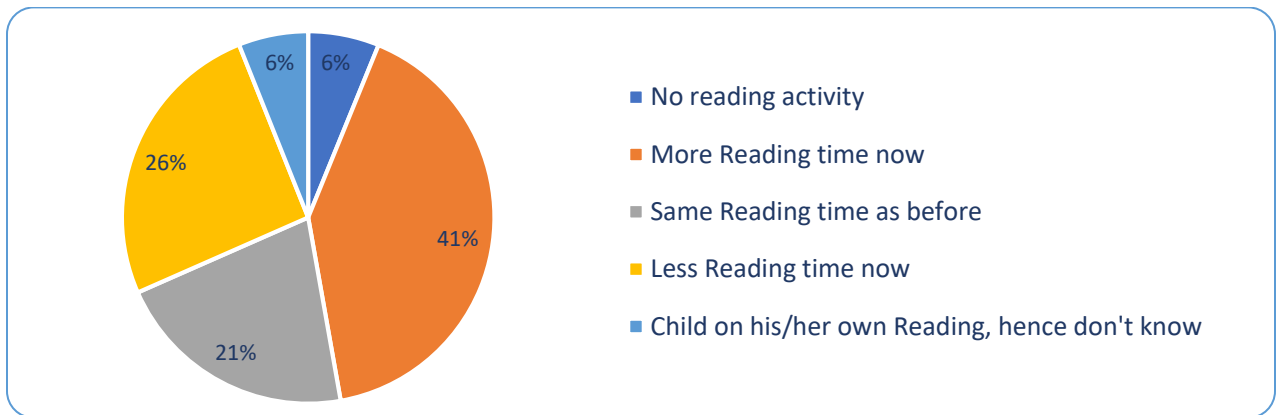


Figure 11. Extent of Reading activities that parents/ families engage with children at home

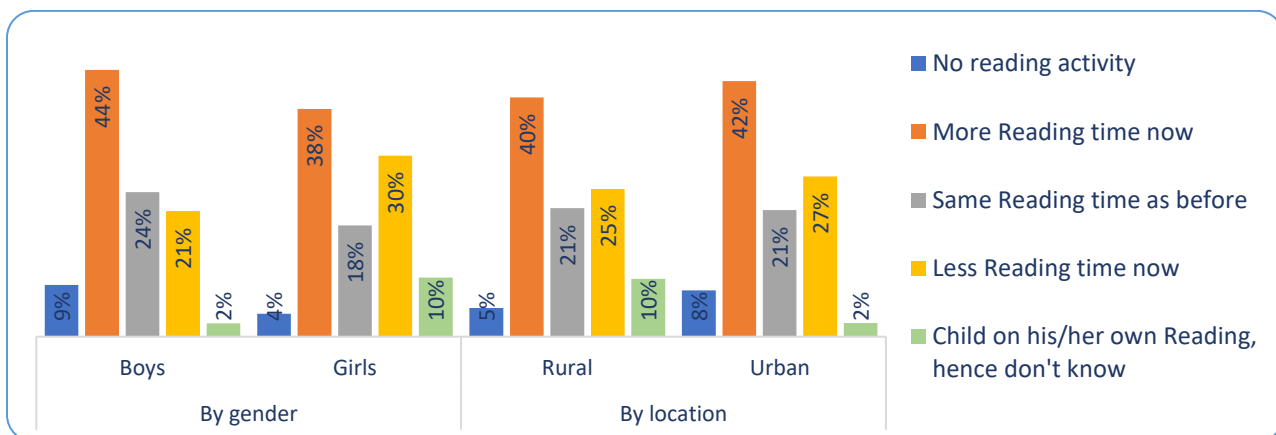


Figure 12. Extent of Reading activities that parents/ families engage with children at home: By gender of the child and location

Parents reported that children’s time in reading activities have increased during the lockdown period more for boys (44%) compared to girls (38%). Similarly, reading activities with young children have increased more in urban areas (42%), slightly more than that in rural areas (40%). On the other hand, reading activities and time has decreased for 30% of girls during lockdown, compared with only 21% reporting reduced learning activities among boys. Around 10% of girls’ parents reported that they don’t know about girls’ reading activities as girls do it mostly on their own, in contrast to only 2% of boys’ parents who reported so.

Arts, dance and music activities

Only 3% of parents reported that their children were not engaged in any extra-curricular or art related activities during or after lockdown. Another 15% parents reported that they are not able to say whether their children’s engagement in arts activities have changed because they were not involved, and children were left to do it as they wish. As expected, a large proportion of parents – 41% reported that their children are more engaged in extra-curricular or arts related activities during the lockdown than before, while a fifth of the parents reported that their children are spending as much time in arts activities as they did before the lockdown. However, 21% of parents mentioned that children are doing less of arts related activities during lockdown than before the lockdown. The gender or location wise differences are not apparent in the arts related activities that children were engaged in, hence not reported here.

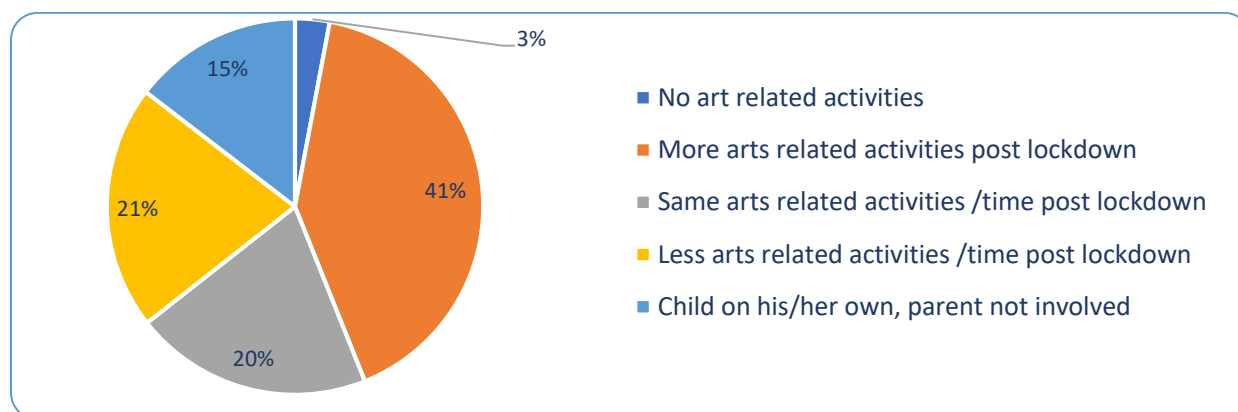


Figure 13. Extent of Extra-curricular activities that parents/ families engage with children at home

Television and other entertainment activities.

In the survey, 8% parents of young children reported that they do not allow children to watch television programmes, nor engage in video games or other programmes available in the internet. Around 15% parents reported that the children are allowed to watch television programmes or surf internet and play video games, but since they do not keep a watch on it and let children do it at their will, they were not able to judge whether children were spending more time on television and other entertainment activities. However, almost half of the respondents (49%) reported that their children are now watching television programmes and engage in other entertainment activities much more during or after the lockdown compared to the time before the lockdown. While 13% parents felt that the children are engaged in television and other entertainment programmes just the same way as they were before the lockdown, 15% parents felt that the young children are now less engaged in television programmes and other entertainment activities than before the lockdown.

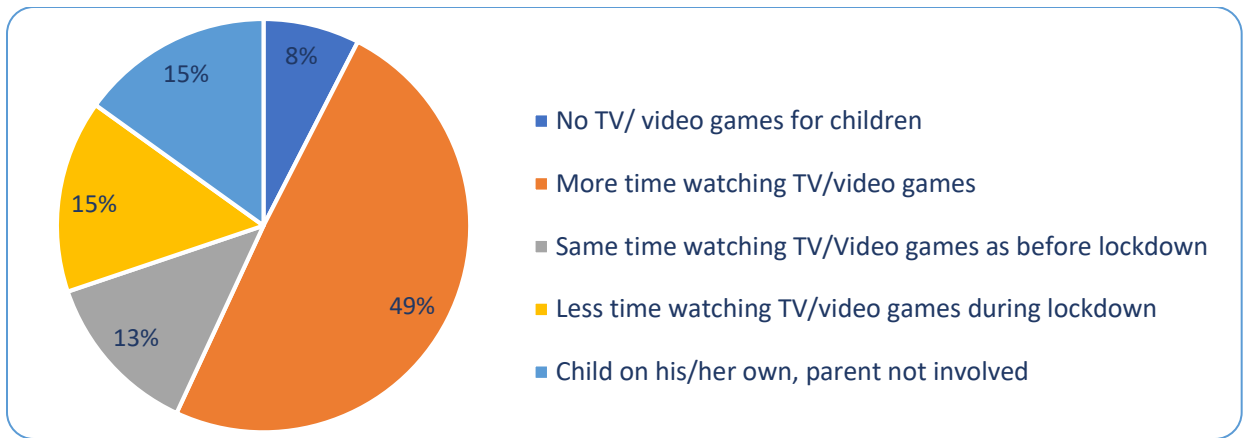


Figure 14. Extent of Entertainment activities that parents/ families engage with children at home

While proportionately more boys did not watch TV or video games (11%), it was only 4% among girls; but there were no remarkable differences between boys and girls in terms of participation in entertainment activities and programmes. On the other hand, 57% of parents in rural areas reported that their children were more into television programmes and other entertainment activities, only 42% parents in urban areas reported such increased engagement in television programmes or other entertainment.

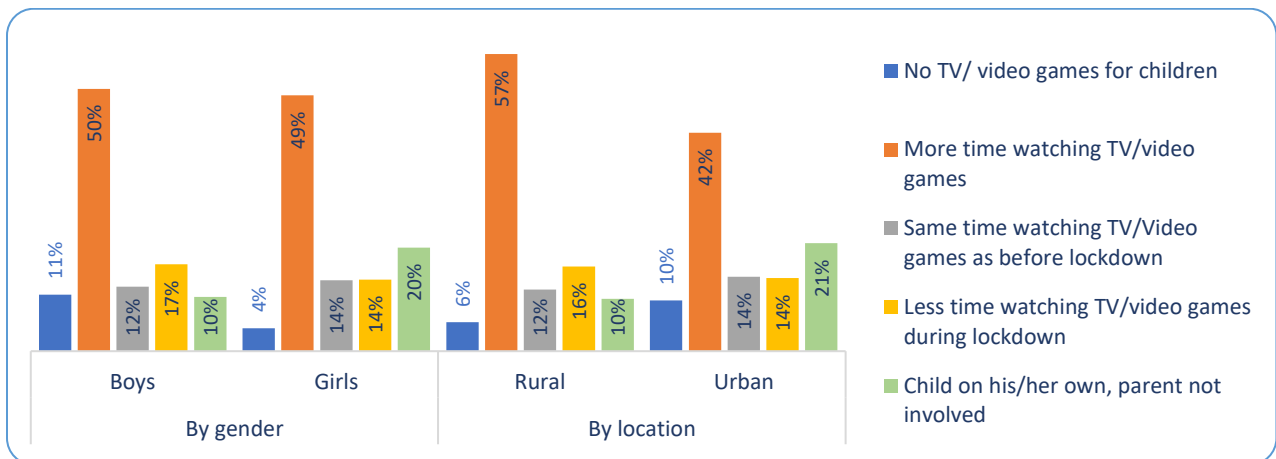


Figure 15. Extent of Entertainment activities that parents/ families engage with children at home: By gender of the child and location

Who in the family is mostly engaged with children during the lockdown?

In the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) Study of Parents' demand for ECE (UNICEF Uzbekistan, 2020) for which data collection was held during November 2010, households reported that for 63% cases, it was the mother who engaged children, with father's engagement limited to only 4% of children. However, the lockdown changed the scenario. While the share of children entirely taken care of by mothers have declined from 63% in KAP study to 55% during lockdown, while children under father's care remained 4%. During the lockdown, 4% children were taken care of both parents. Only a tenth of the children were mostly engaged by grandparents during the lockdown (compared to 26% a few months ago, during the KAP survey). The share of children with older siblings engaged with them

increased from 6% in the KAP study to 25% during the rapid assessment. While there was not much difference in terms of the proportion of children engaged mostly by mother by education levels of the household or wealth status, the role of older siblings was high in poorer households and households with highest education being secondary.

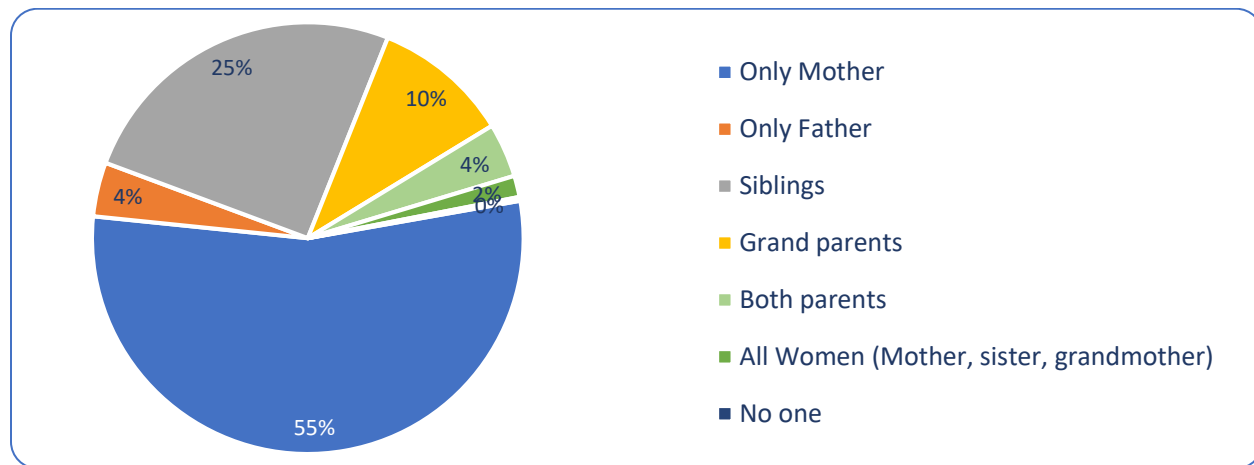


Figure 16. Family member who is mostly engaged with children at home

Materials used by families for engaging children in ECCE activities

Overall, 75% of parents reported that they have at least 3 books of children’s literature to read out to children at home. For a longer period, to continuously engage children, more books are desirable. However, even in the minimum books available, there are huge differences in by location as well as economic /wealth status of the households. While 83% of urban households possessed some books of children’s literature, in rural areas, only 68% households had any books for young children. Similarly, only a slightly more than half of the poorest households in the country have some books for young children whereas 80% of the richest households have books for young children. An earlier UNICEF study (2019)⁴ on primary school children’s learning pointed towards the importance of having learning-enabling environment at home as well as parents reading out books to children in early years in learning achievements.

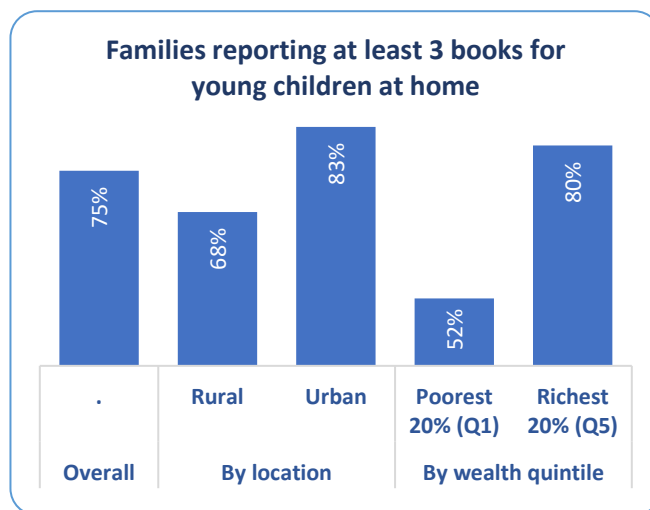


Figure 17. Families reporting at least 3 books (or more) of children’s literature at home for engaging children through reading: by location and wealth quintile of families

4 UNICEF Uzbekistan (2019); Student Learning at primary grades in Uzbekistan: Outcomes, Challenges, and Opportunities: A summary of Uzbekistan National Learning Achievement Study, Grade IV, 2018

The most easily available materials for children at home for arts & crafts are the color pencils and then papers. As expected, children in poorer households had less access to arts & crafts materials than those from richer households.

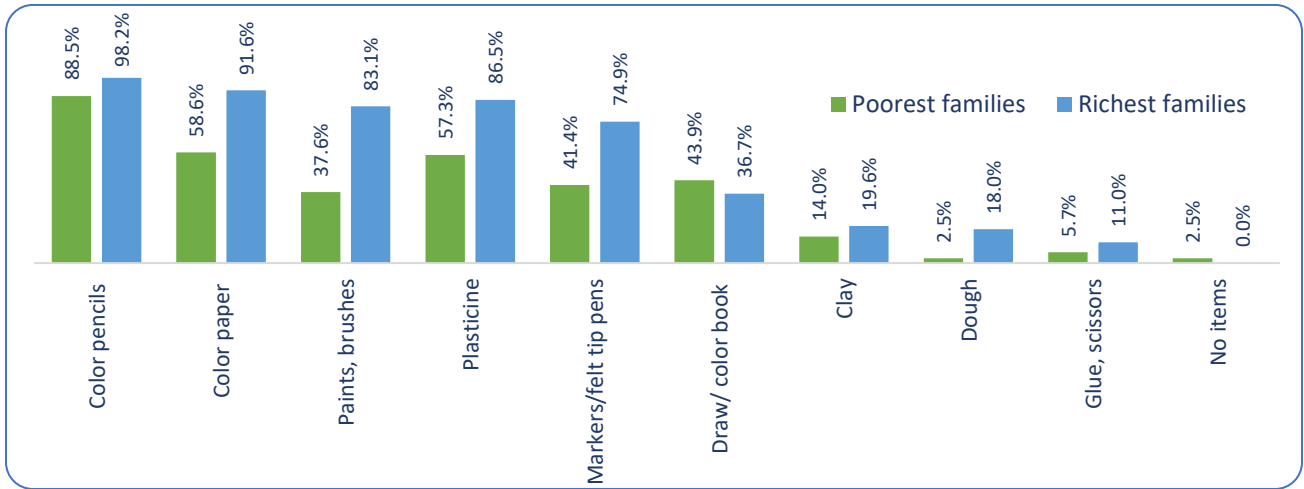


Figure 18. Materials available at home for children to engage in various arts and crafts related activities

COVID-19: Health and hygiene Practices among children during the lockdown

Promotion of physical distancing and hygiene behaviour (particularly handwashing) was one of the priority areas that governments and community acted upon during the onset of COVID-19 pandemic. Hence this is one of the behaviour that this study wanted to assess, as enforced by parents and practiced by young children. Parents were asked about the “hand washing” behaviour of children in the following events: (a) before eating meals and after eating meals; (b) after using toilets; (c) after physical activities (sports and games); and (d) when returned home from outside any visit to outside or activities.

Handwashing before and after eating meals:

81% parents /caretakers reported that children are taught about the importance of handwashing before and after meals and that they ensure that the child practices it daily. Another 13% parents reported that children are taught, and they practice it most of the times. Around 3% parents reported though they have taught children, they do follow it sometimes, while the rest 3% reported that they are yet to teach children about the need to wash hands before and after eating meals. In terms of gender of the child, 88% of parents of boys reported that they have always ensured their child practicing handwashing before and after meals, while 75% of parents of girls also reported so. In rural areas, 79% parents always followed up with their children, in urban areas, 84% parents taught and ensured that their children washed hands before and after their meals.

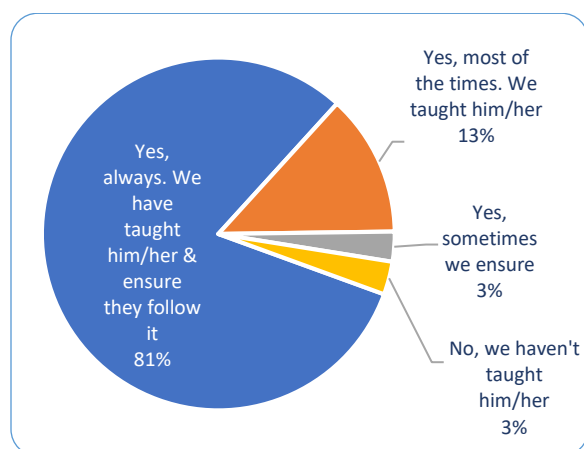


Figure 19. Handwashing behaviour of children before and after meals

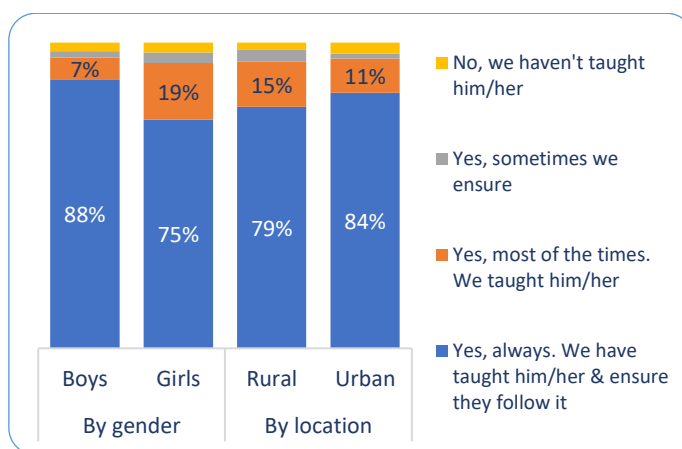


Figure 20. Handwashing behaviour of children before and after meals: By gender of the child and location

Handwashing after using toilets/ urinals

Around 76% of the parents reported that the young children are trained in toilet-hygiene practices and their children wash hands thoroughly after using the toilets. Only 9% parents reported that their children were yet to be trained in toilet-hygiene behaviour. 81% of the parents of boys reported that their children are not only trained in toilet related hygiene practices, but also ensure that they practice it, compared to only 72% of parents of girl children. Similarly, in rural areas, only 70% parents reported ensuring that children practice handwashing after the use of toilets compared to 83% parents in urban areas.

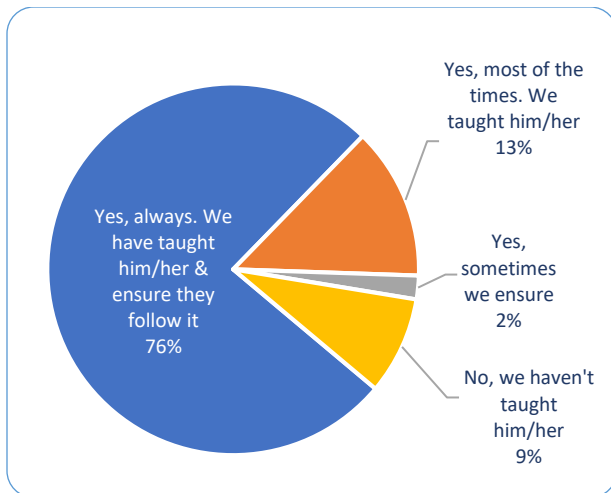


Figure 21. Handwashing behaviour of children after using toilets

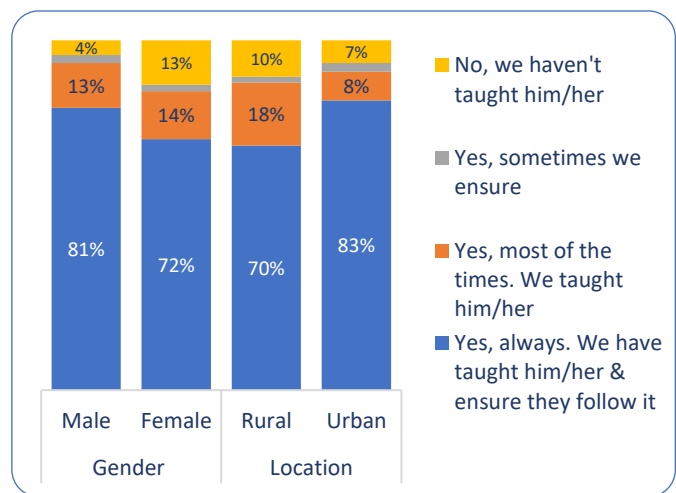


Figure 22. Handwashing behaviour of children after using toilets: By gender of the child and location

Handwashing practices after outdoor games

Around 78% of parents reported that children know and wash hands after playing outside; parents ensure that boys wash hands after games (81%) more than girls (74%) and parents in urban areas ensure this (81%) more than the parents in rural areas (75%). Only a small minority of parents (5%) have not taught children this habit and another 4% do not ensure that children adhere to these practices.

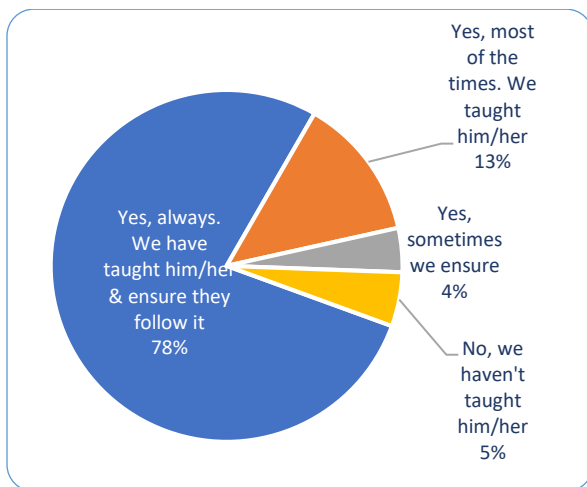


Figure 23. Handwashing behaviour of children after active outdoor games

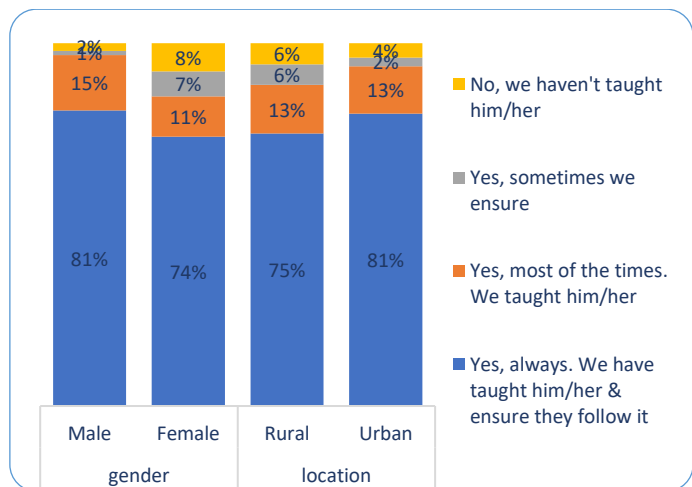


Figure 24. Handwashing behaviour of children after active outdoor games: By gender of the child and location

Handwashing practices after coming home from outside

Similar to the habits of handwashing after outdoor games, a whopping majority of parents ensure that children always wash hands after coming from outside. While there is hardly any variations in terms of the gender of the child in this behaviour, in urban areas, parents ensure this for young children more than parents in rural areas.

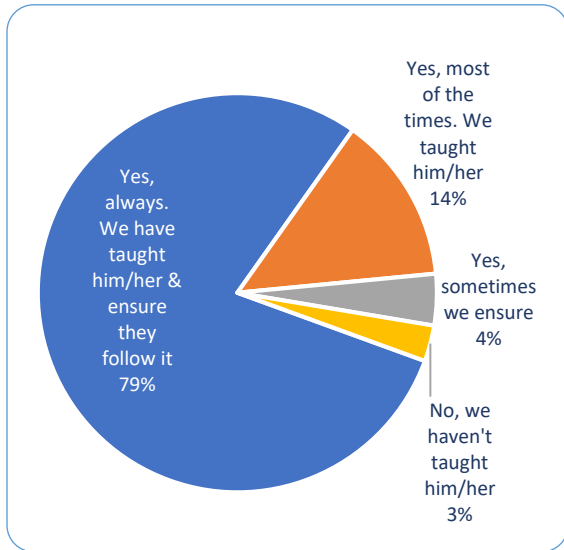


Figure 25. Handwashing behaviour of children after active outdoor games

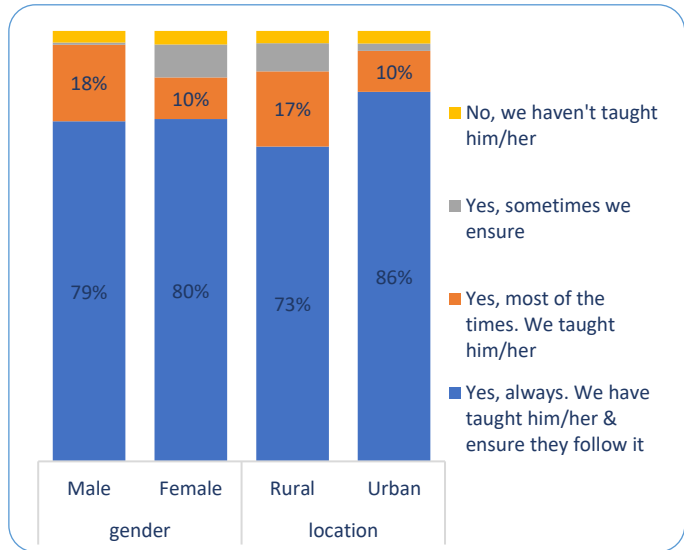


Figure 26. Handwashing behaviour of children after active outdoor games: By gender of the child and location

COVID-19: ECCE through entertainment Practices among children during the lockdown

Even before the COVID-19 lockdown, television (or television content offered through varied media platforms on internet) was an important part of every child’s life. With a considerable portion of children’s time spent on such programmes, entertainment content has an influence in shaping children’s attitude and personality. The right kind of television content is important for promoting social, emotional, cognitive and holistic development of young children. Schmidt and Anderson⁵ (2009) concluded that educational television has a substantial positive impact and that entertainment television has a negative impact on children.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and reduced social interactions, the tendency to watch television and other entertainment programmes and social media is expected to be high. In Uzbekistan, while the regular television programmes targeted at all populations, MOPSE had developed and broadcasted specific “Online Kindergarten” programme for children and as a methodological aid to parents in providing systematic, useful and developmental education to preschool children⁶. The programmes "Ilk Kadam" or "First step" - for children aged 3-5 years and "Aqlvoy" - for pre-school education of 6-year-old children consisted of 20-25-minute videos based on the national ECCE curriculum (approved in 2019). The survey looked at how parents engaged children in television and digital media programmes during the quarantine period.

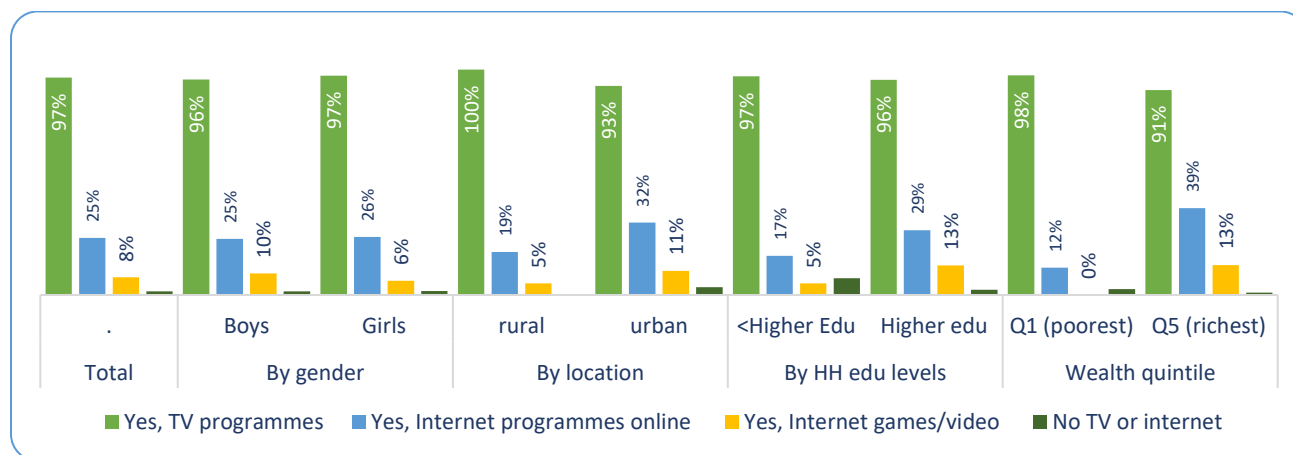


Figure 27. Parents engaging children in television and other social media: By gender of the child, location, households’ education and wealth levels

Almost all parents reported that they were engaging children either on television programmes and/or on internet programmes or games during the quarantine. 97% parents reported that children were watching television; 25% parents reported children being engaged through programmes available on internet. In rural areas, almost all parents reported children watching television programmes. 98% of parents belonging to poorest families (wealth quintile) reported allowing children to watch television

⁵ Evans Schmidt, M and Daniel R. Anderson (2009): The Impact of Television on Cognitive Development and Educational Achievement, in Norma Pecora, John P. Murray, Ellen Ann Wartella (eds) Children and Television: Fifty Years of Research, Routledge.

⁶ <https://mdo.uz/uz/news/maktabgacha-yoshdagi-bolalarni-karantin-vaqtida-oqitish>

compared to only 91% of the families in the richest wealth quintiles were doing so. Parents in urban areas and belonging to the richest wealth quintiles reportedly allowed children to use internet programmes and games more than those in rural areas and belonging to poorer households.

Children spending time on Cartoon-based programmes on television and internet/online

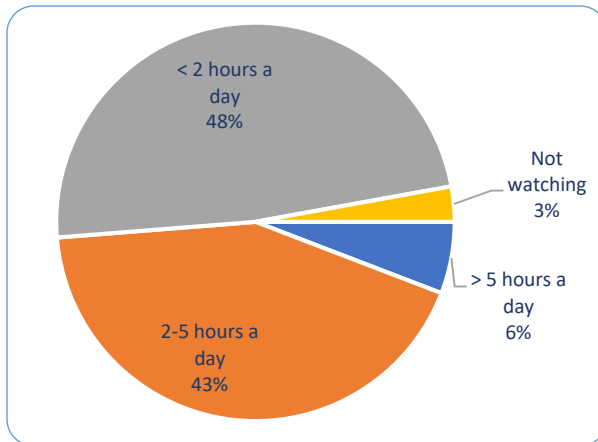


Figure 28. Children’s time watching cartoon programmes on TV

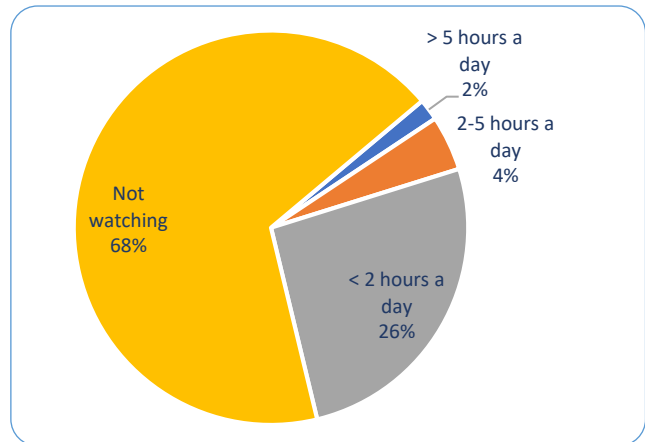


Figure 29. Children’s time watching cartoon programmes on internet

During the survey, parents reported that 97% children watch cartoon related programmes on television every day, around 32% children also watch cartoon based programmes on internet / online. While children spent quite a huge amount of time on television watching cartoons, those who use online spent mainly less than 2 hours watching the cartoon programmes.

Children’s time on education related television and internet/online programmes

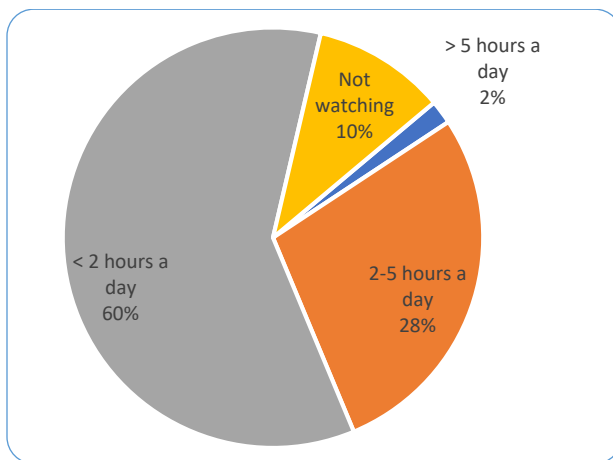


Figure 30. Children’s time watching education programmes on TV during the quarantine period

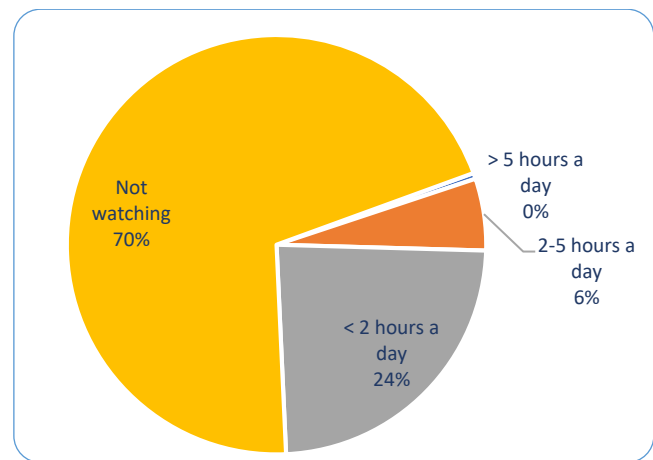
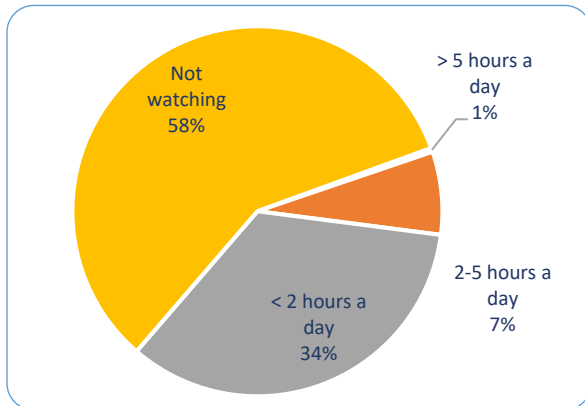


Figure 31. Children’s time watching education programmes online during the quarantine period

In general, 28% parents reported that their children watch education related television programmes for 2-5 hours a day while 60% parents reported that their children were watching education related

television programmes for less than 2 hours a day. Around a tenth of the parents reported that their children did not watch any early childhood education programme on television and 70% of young children did not watch education related programmes on internet. Around 30% children watched some ECE related programmes on internet for some time.

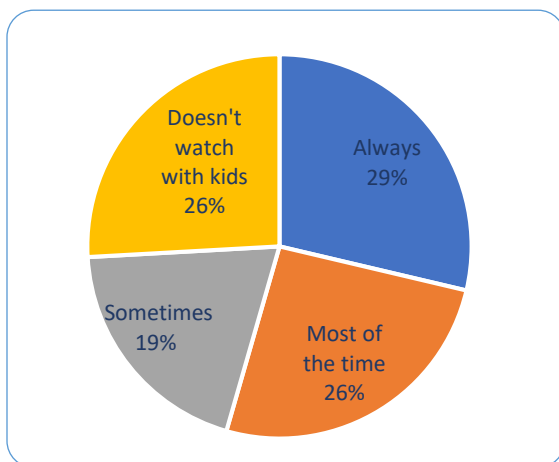
Children time on general entertainment programme (not specific to kids) on TV during quarantine



58% parents reported that the children were not allowed to watch the general entertainment programmes on TV, mainly watched by adults in the family, even during the quarantine. Parents reported that they allowed their children to watch general television entertainment programmes for some time (34% of parents reported children watching general TV programmes for less than 2 hours a day). However, 8% of parents reported that their children were allowed to watch general television programmes for more than 2 hours a day during the lockdown.

Figure 32. Children’s time watching general programmes on TV during the quarantine

Parents / family watching Television programmes with children during the COVID19 lockdown



29% parents ensured that they or any other family members watched TV (or online) with young children all the time. In 26% families, parents or any other family members ensured that they watched TV when children were watching it as much as possible or most of the time. In 19% families, elders watched TV with children occasionally. However, slightly more than a fourth of the parents reported that no parents/ family members were watching television programmes along with children (or when children were watching the programme). In summary, around 45% of children watch television /online programmes on their own. Such unmonitored and unsupported exposure to television or any entertainment programme is not desirable at all for young children.

Figure 33. Parents watching television and other entertainment programmes with children during the quarantine period

COVID-19: Parents /caretakers’ Knowledge on ECCE during COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown

People’s knowledge about COVID-19 pandemic, required safety measures, physical distancing and health care have already been studied in Uzbekistan by various surveys. For example, the “Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan” (L2CU) survey updates for May 2020 (World Bank, 2020) reveals that almost all people were familiar with COVID-19 pandemic, with more than 75% respondents stating that they were “very familiar” with the pandemic issues. Hence, this survey did not focus on understanding parents’ knowledge about the pandemic. As mentioned earlier in the report, the UNICEF Uzbekistan (2020) study on KAP on parents’ demand for ECCE had covered several topics related to parents’ knowledge about ECCE in general. Hence, for this survey focuses only on parents or young children’s knowledge about ECCE during the times of COVID19 pandemic, hence covers two main areas: (a) parents’ knowledge about the ways of engaging children at home; and (b) children’s knowledge/ awareness about safe behaviour during the lockdown.

Parental knowledge about ECCE at home

To find interesting ideas to engage children in activities other than daily routine and household activities is not an easy task for parents or caretakers, especially those whose children were attending preschools earlier where the preschool teachers had managed a large part of the ECCE activities. Parents/ caretakers’ understanding of what activities children should be engaged or children would find interesting depend on their own exposure and education.

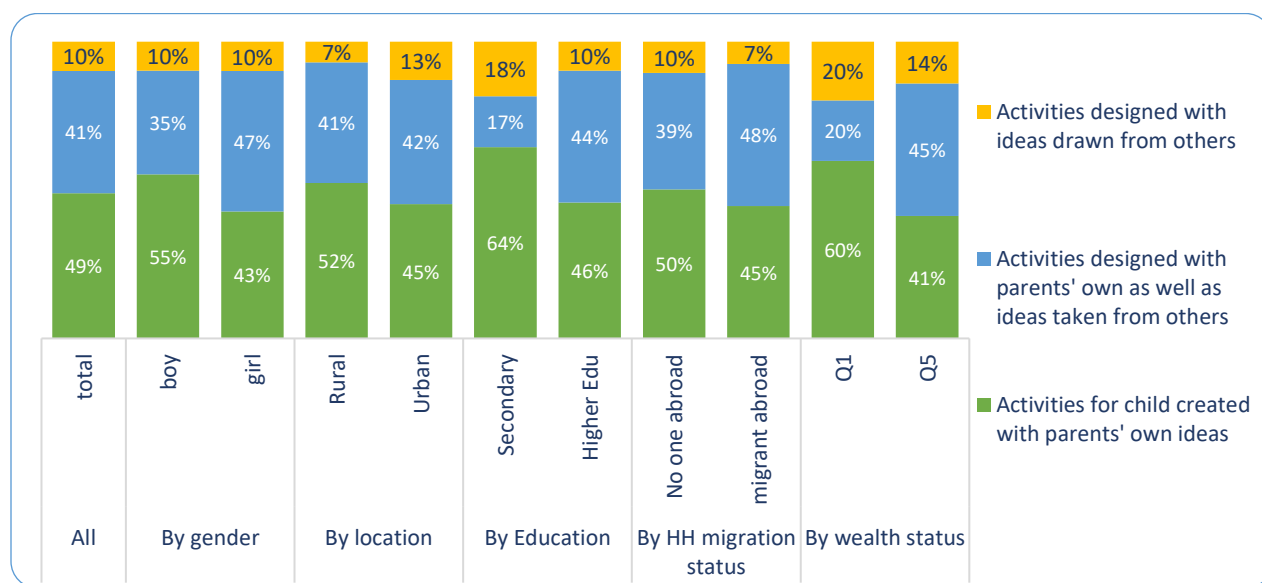


Figure 34. Parents’ Knowledge of ECE activities for engaging children at home

Close to half of the parents reported that the ECE activities that children were engaged in during the lockdown were based on their own ideas of what activities are good for children. 41% of parents reported that apart from their own ideas, they search for ideas elsewhere and use it for children. A tenth of the parents reported that they designed ECE activities for children based on inspirations or ideas drawn from various sources – books, TV programmes, friends and others.

Proportionately, more parents of boys reported that they used their own ideas for creating ECE activities for their children (55%) than parents of girls (43%) while more parents of girls reported that apart from their own ideas, they drew ideas from other sources for designing ECE activities for children at home than parents of boys. Proportionately more parents in rural areas prepared ECE activities for their children based only on their own ideas and understanding (52%) compared to parents in urban areas (45%). This could be a result of limited access of parents in rural areas to other sources compared to parents in urban areas.

In lesser educated homes (parents with only secondary or college education), parents used their own ideas to design ECE activities (64%) as against parents with higher education (46%), who could draw more ideas from elsewhere to design ECE activities for their children. Similarly, families with one of their earning members working abroad used more ideas from elsewhere than just using their own for engaging children. Parents from relatively better of economic background (Q5, the richest 20% of the households, estimated based on household wealth index) could access ideas from elsewhere better compared to parents in the poorest households (Q1, poorest 20% households, estimated based on household wealth index). Poorer families mostly engaged children with ECE activities that they were familiar with or what they knew— 60% of the poorest parents had only their own their ideas to engage children with whereas 59% of parents from richest households combined ideas from other sources to come up with ECE activities for children at home.

In rural areas, family and friends are the main sources for ideas for engaging children whereas in urban areas, parents resorted to social and mass media. Parents in richer households and those with higher education used mass media and internet for drawing more ideas of ECE activities for children at home compared to poorer parents or those with less education.

Young children’s Knowledge about COVID-19 related safe behaviour and hygiene practices

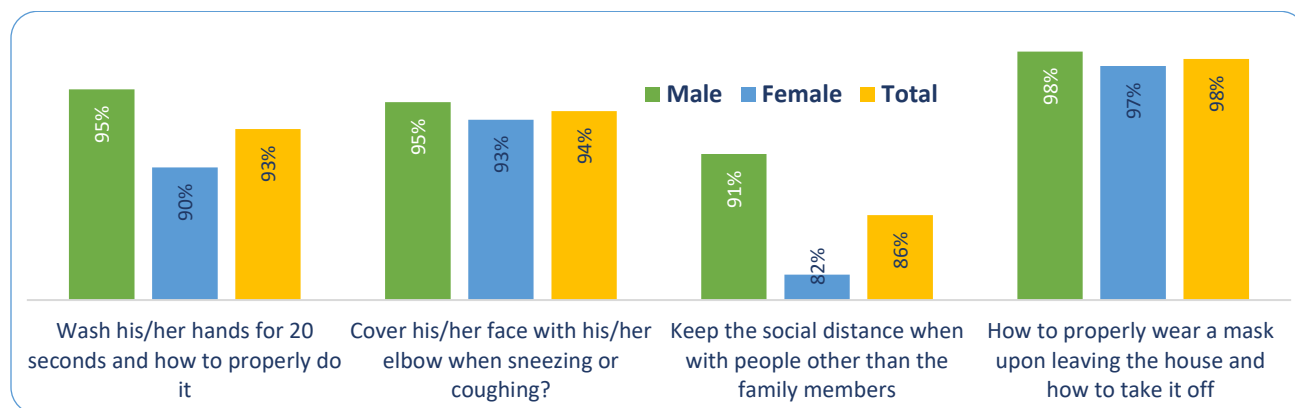


Figure 35. Young Children (Preschool age group of 3-6 years)’s Knowledge of COVID-19 related health and hygiene practices

Overall, parents reported that 93% of children knew “how to properly wash hands for 20 seconds”. Also, 94% parents reported that their children knew the importance of covering their face with elbow when sneezing or coughing. Around 86% of parents reported that children also knew the importance of keeping social or physical distancing especially meeting people other than the family members. Almost all parents – close to 98% reported that children knew how to wear mask properly while going outside home.

COVID-19: Parents /caretakers' Attitude towards COVID-19 pandemic and related issues

People's general attitude towards the health risks of COVID-19 pandemic and related issues have been assessed by the World Bank's (2020) L2CU monthly surveys. For example, the L2CU (April) update reported that about 10% of respondents were unconcerned about the health effects on their families, while more than 64% reported being "very concerned" and 25% somewhat concerned. The L2CU (May) update reported that the degree of concern about the potential effects of COVID-19 fell somewhat from April to May: the share "very concerned" about health risks fell from 64% to 58%.

This study analyzes parental and children's attitude, particularly concerns regarding the impact of the COVID-19 on children's psycho-social wellbeing and childcare. This section looks at the following aspects around COVID-19 related concerns: (a) children's attitude towards COVID-19 lockdown, staying at home, not able to visit preschools, and not being able to meet teachers and friends; (b) parental views on the television and online programmes available for children during the quarantine; and (c) parents' views and concerns on pre-school reopening.

Children's attitude towards COVID-19 lockdown and associated restrictions and ECE

How resilient are children to the pandemic, lockdown and related restrictions? Parents reported that many children exhibit high resilience to the pandemic and related stress: 2/3rds of the children were either fine, or at least not stressed, and some or rather happy about staying indoors. As per parents' reporting, only 34% children were stressed about being indoors: only 5% children were under high stress about being confined to indoors.

In terms of the gender of the child, proportionately boys were slightly stressed about lockdown and being indoors than girls. Proportionately more children in urban areas were stressed than in rural areas- may be in rural areas children can still be outdoors compared to urban children who are more confined to houses! Interestingly, children from poor families felt the stress of being indoors more than those from richer households. This may be because in richer households, there are more resources and avenues to be engaged compared to those in poorer families!

Children's reaction to having ECE in remote mode through television or online: As per parents' reporting, most children were not stressed at all regarding early learning lessons through online during lockdown: 78% parents reported that children were not stressed, and some children are even happy to be learning at home! Only 22% of the parents reported that their children were stressed about ECE /studies remotely or on online, and only 3% children showed high stress on account of this change.

Proportionately slightly more boys were stressed about not studying or online studies; and proportionately more children in urban areas were stressed about online studies than in rural areas – this may be because in rural areas, hardly any online ECE is happening whereas in urban areas, there are several ways in which parents try to provide children some basic ECE through online. Proportionately slightly more children among poorest families shows stress compared to children from the richest wealth quintiles.

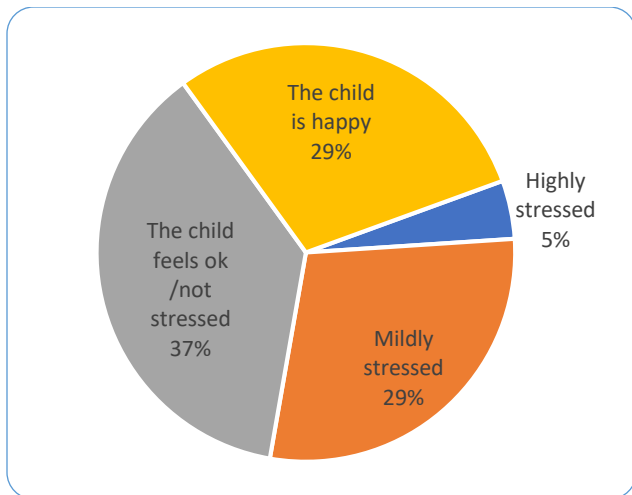


Figure 36. Parents reporting on children’s feelings with respect to being confined to home during the quarantine

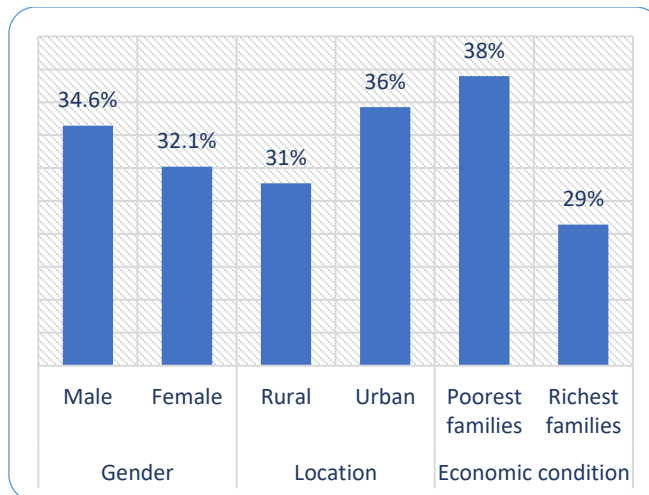


Figure 37. Parents reporting on children’s feelings with respect to being confined to home during the quarantine: gender of child, location & household economic conditions

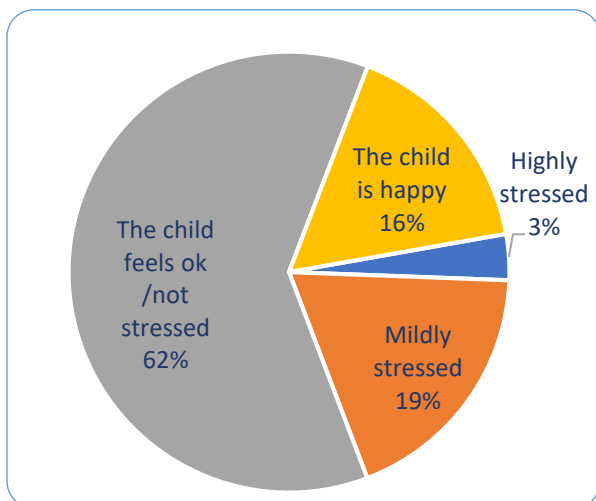


Figure 38. Parents reporting on children’s feelings towards having their ECE lessons through television /online

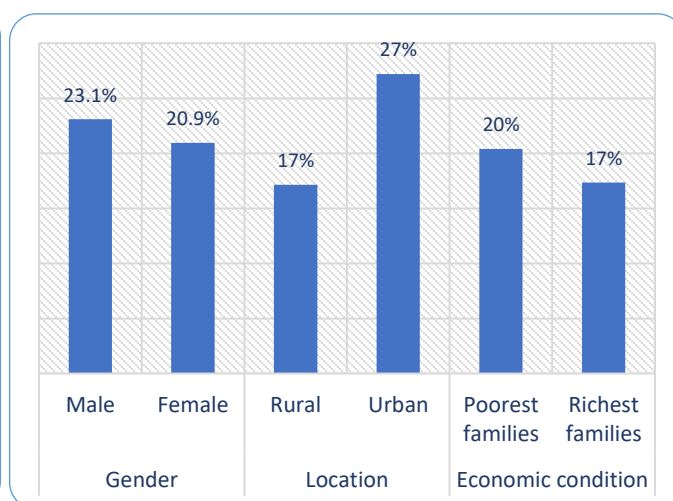


Figure 39. Parents reporting on children’s feelings towards having their ECE lessons through television /online: by gender of the child, location etc.

Children’s reactions to not attending preschools during the lockdown: While only around 21% students were stressed about ECE at home through remote means, 39% children felt highly or mildly stressed about not being able to go to preschools: 10% exhibited high stress while 29% children displayed mild stress. However, 61% children were not stressed or were happy even though they were not able to go to Kindergarten during lockdown. Proportionately more boys, those in urban areas and in poorer families felt the stress of not being able to go to preschool/ Kindergarten compared to girls, those in rural areas and from economically well-off families.

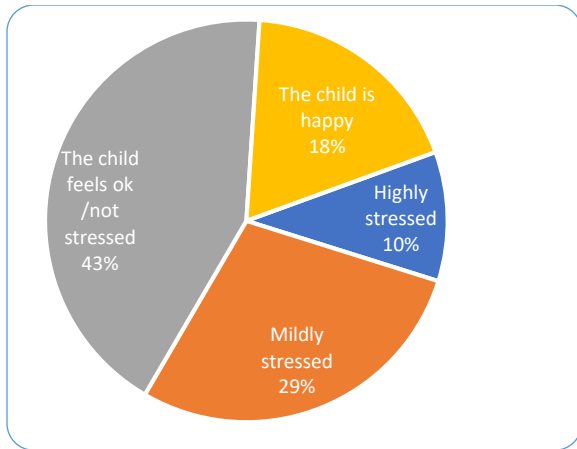


Figure 40. Parents reporting on children’s feelings towards not able to attend preschools

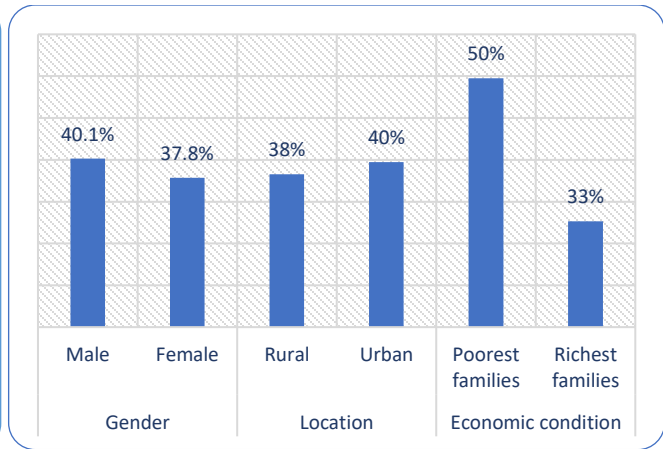


Figure 41. Parents reporting on children’s feelings towards not able to attend preschools: By gender of the child, location etc.

Children’s response to the disconnect (not able to meet and communicate) with teachers: Parents reported that around 39% of children were stressed about not being able to communicate with their teachers in preschools. Proportionately more children in rural areas and those from poorest families missed their teachers and felt stressed about it compared to children in urban areas and from economically better off families.

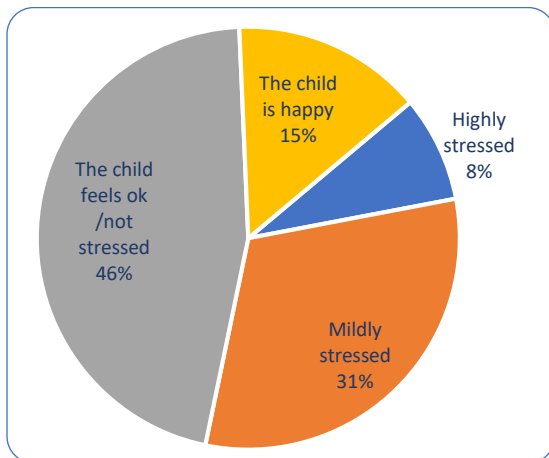


Figure 42. Parents reporting on children’s feelings towards not able to meet/communicate with their teachers

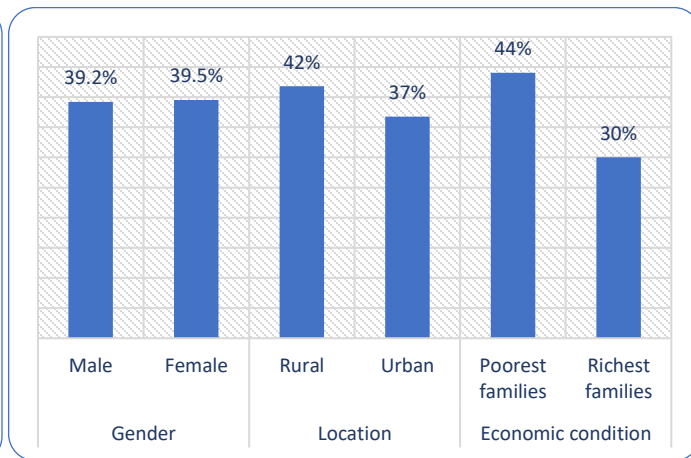


Figure 43. Parents reporting on children’s feelings towards not able to meet/communicate with their teachers: By gender of the child, location etc.

Children’s reaction to not able to meet and interact with their friends in preschools: Nearly half of the children showed high or mild stress on account of their inability to meet and play with their friends in the kindergarten. Proportionately more children in rural areas and those from poorest families were feeling the stress of not being able to meet friends than those in urban areas and from economically better-off background.

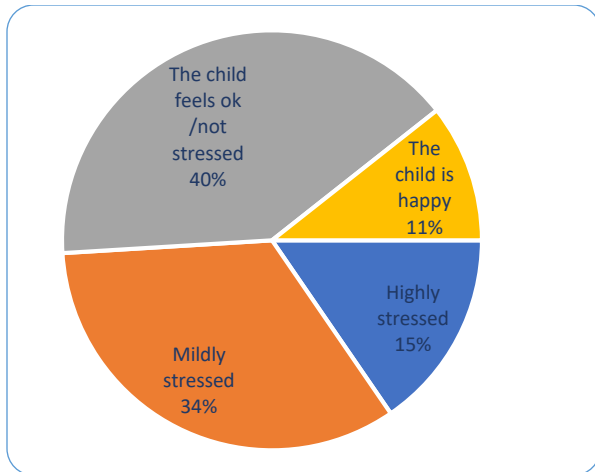


Figure 44. Parents reporting on children’s feelings towards not able to meet/communicate with their friends

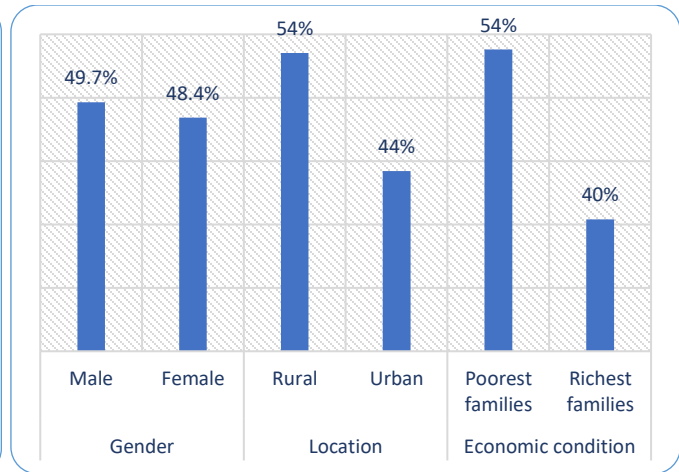


Figure 45. Parents reporting on children’s feelings towards not able to meet/communicate with their friends: By gender of the child, location etc.

Children’s response to playing with siblings at home: In Uzbekistan, in most households, there are more than one child, hence children are not really worried about not having playmates at home. Only 8% children felt stressed about not having siblings or other children at home to engage and play with during the time of lockdown.

Young Children (3-6 years) with mild or high stress during lockdown for various reasons

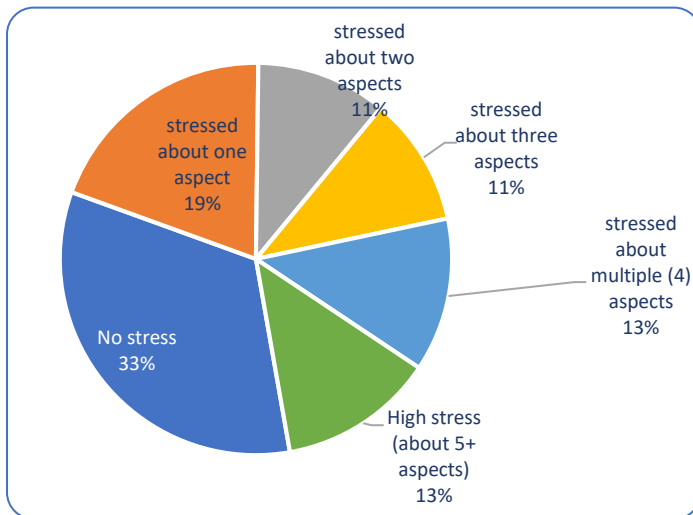


Figure 46. Distribution of children on a stress index (no stress to multiple /high stress)

While many children cope very well with various types of constraints, most of them face mild or high stress on account of one or other factor. Overall, parents of more than 2/3rds of the children (67%) reported that their child is having high or mild stress due to COVID-19 lockdown and resulting changes in preschool education services. Around 19% children were stressed on one of the aspects as described above. However, around 48% of the children exhibited stress due to multiple factors – parents reported that around 26% children exhibited stress on four or more related areas.

The proportion of children with mild or high stress levels were more in rural areas compared to urban areas; high among children of migrant families, and for children from poor families and children with not so highly educated family members.

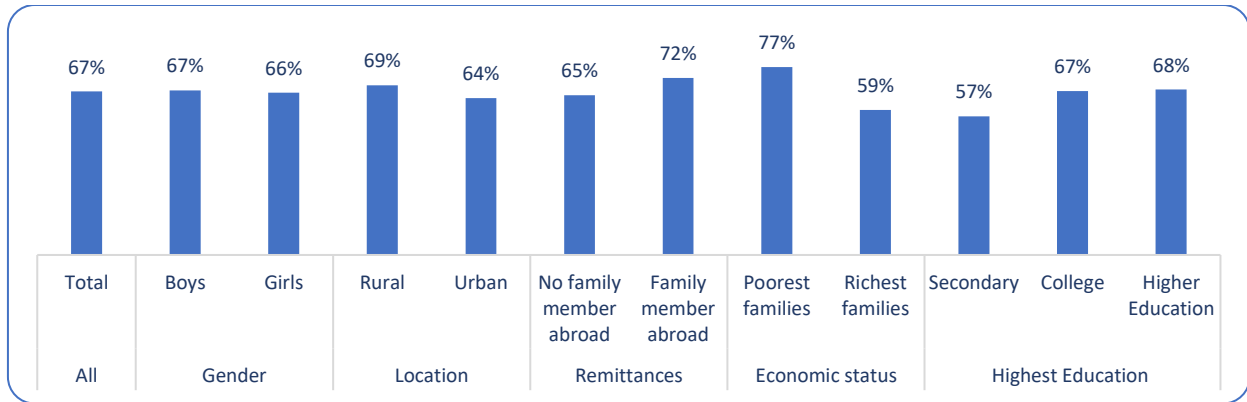


Figure 47. Proportion of young Children (Preschool age group of 3-6 years)’s attitude towards COVID-19 situation: Children with high or mild stress on account of any factors related to lockdown

Parents/ caretakers’ take on ECCE during lockdown

World Bank (2020 September) Update of its L2CU survey shows that the general concerns about the impact of the pandemic had resurged in July and August 2020 and people who were “very concerned” about health risks rose above 72%, and “very concerned” about economic impacts above 68%.

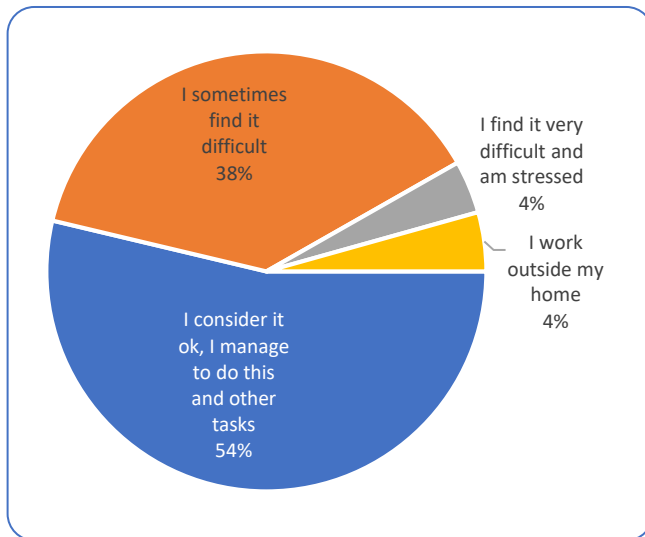


Figure 48. Parents’ attitude towards being at home and spending more time on household chores and ECCE activities

However, when it comes to taking care of children, parents were much more reassured. It was anticipated that in addition to the requirements of staying at home the whole day, additional time and occupation with household chores as well as the requirements to ensure ECE activities during the lockdown could cause some stress for parents / caretakers of young children. However, more than half of the parents (54%) reported that they could manage the additional work and ECE activities during the lockdown. Around 38% of the parents reported that found the additional tasks somewhat difficult. Around 4% of the parents reported that they found the additional work extremely difficult and stressful.

ATTITUDES: Parental views on the television and online programmes for preschool children during COVID19 lockdown

Parents /caretakers were asked about their views (attitudes) towards the national television programmes (and that also aired through online channels) aimed at children, mainly about their views on: (a) nature of programmes; (b) suitability of the content of television programmes for young children; (c) quantity or content richness of programmes; and (d) the reason for them watching programmes with children.

Parental views on National TV programmes for preschool children: With respect to the programmes available on “ilk kadam” and “Aqlvoy”, 42% of the parents were very positive about the programmes, and reported that they were very exciting and interesting for young kids; and 29% parents felt that some programmes were really exciting or, programmes in general was interesting to children to some extent. Around 6% parents were of the view that the television programmes were not interesting enough for their children. However, 23% of parents reported that they had not watched the programmes or had not really given attention to such details.



Figure 49. Parents’ views on the national television / online programmes for preschool aged children

Parents' views on the suitability of the television / video programmes for preschool children: 36% parents were of the opinion that the programmes were appropriate for the age group of children while another 33% of parents felt that only some programmes meant for children were actually age appropriate. Around 8% of the parents felt that the programmes were not really appropriate for the young children in terms of difficulty levels.

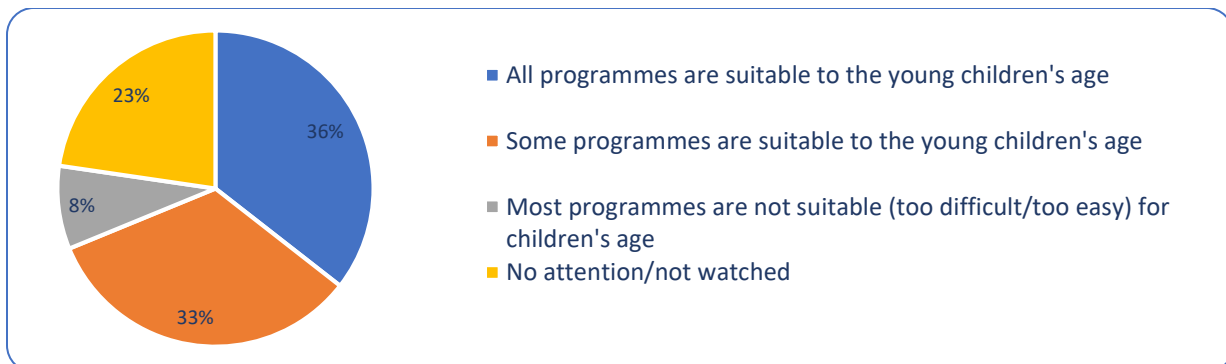


Figure 50. Parents’ views on the national television / online programmes for preschool aged children

Parents' views on the television programmes for preschool children in terms of content: 30% of the parents were of the view that the national television programmes for preschool children were very informative and educating for the young children. Another 34% of the parents believed some programmes that were on national television were informative and educating for young children. However, 13% of the parents were concerned that only a few programmes were educational or informative for children. 23% parents could not comment on it as they had either not watched those programmes or had not attended to such details while watching it.

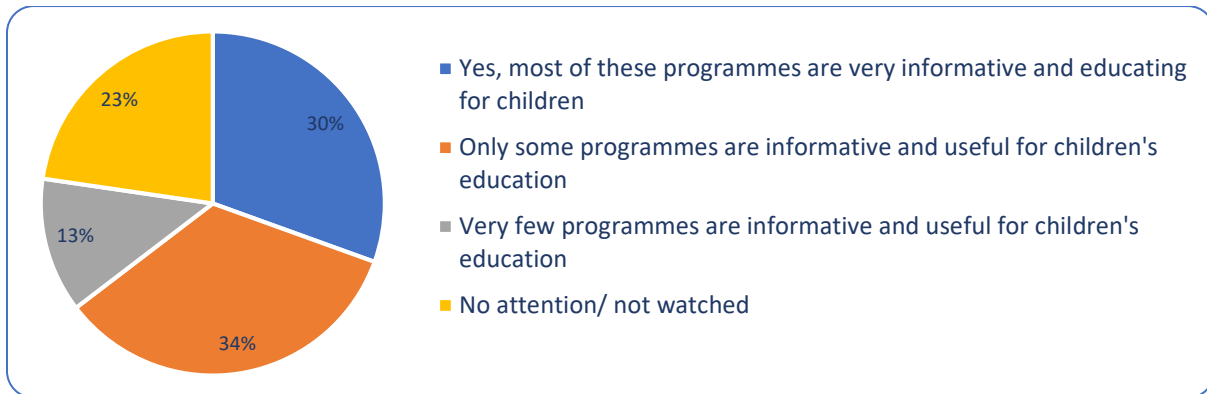


Figure 51. Parents' views on the content of the national television / online programmes for preschool aged children

Why parents /family members watch television/ online programmes with children? 24% of the parents reported that they were watching television /internet programmes on ECE with their children to monitor and ensure that the children are watching appropriate content on television/internet. Around 28% of the parents were watching the programmes with children because the programmes are not only interesting for children, but even parents find them exciting and also to learn what is good for children; another 2% parents reported that they can explain to children by watching it with them. More than a fifth of the parents (21%) felt that their children will find the programme more interesting to watch if an adult sit with them and enjoy them. As already seen, 1/4th parents were not watching with children or not letting children watch TV, hence the question was not applicable to them.

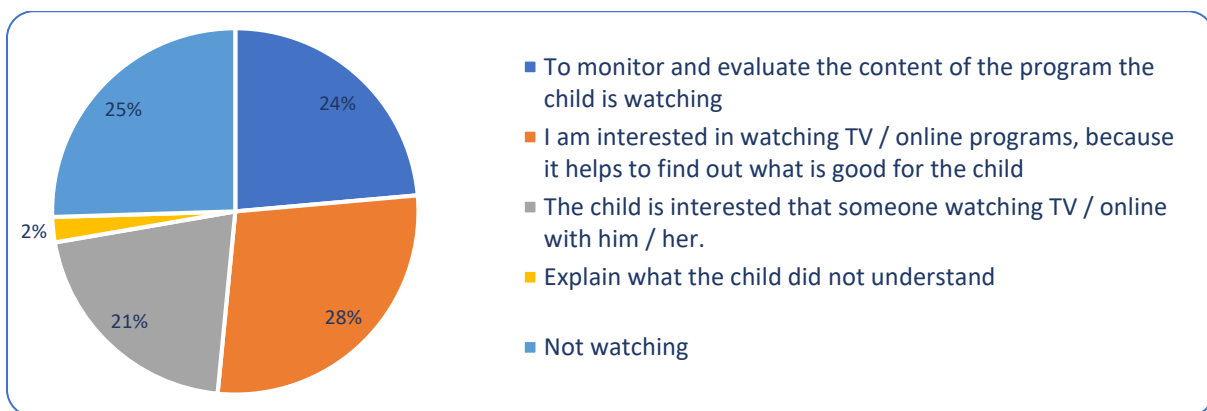


Figure 52. Parents' reasons for watching television or online programmes with their young children

ATTITUDES: Parental views and Plans regarding preschool re-opening

Will parents send their children to preschools once it is re-open? During the survey (held in June-July 2020), 62% of the parents were willing to send their child to the preschool / kindergarten on a regular basis, either full day or several hours of the day. Around 13% of the parents expressed that they may consider sending the kind to the preschools, but they were also concerned about various other factors such as the expenses, health and hygiene factors and requirements of social distancing that are observed in preschools. Around 2% parents reported that they are no longer in a position to send their child to preschools due to various issues, including economic issues, health factors etc., while another 2% parents reported that for them it is difficult say at that moment, though they could not highlight any reasons. 15% of the parents reported that their child was not attending preschools before lockdown and they were not planning to send the child to preschools once it re-opens. For 7% parents, their children will be enrolled in schools in the new academic year, hence will be sending them to schools rather than preschools.

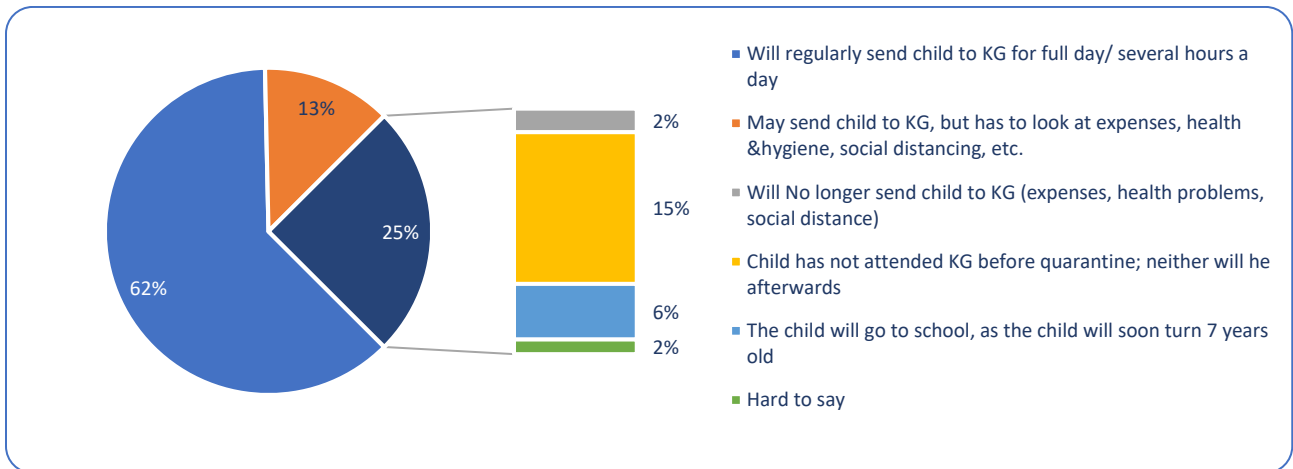
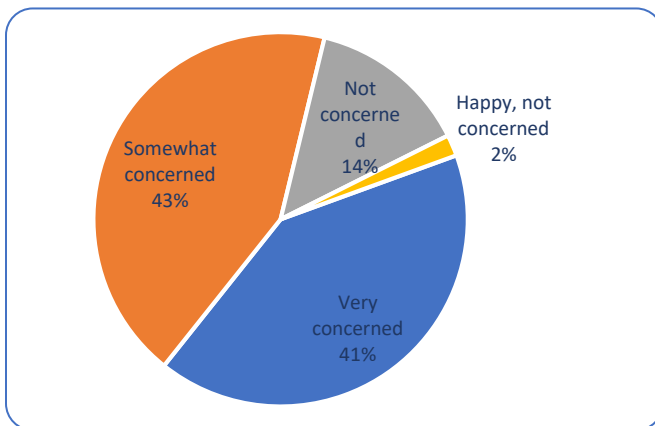


Figure 53. Parents’ willingness to send their children to preschools once the preschools re-opens

How concerned are parents about the risk of pandemic spread if preschools re-open in September?



84% of parents are concerned in some way or other about the risks of the pandemic spread if preschools are opened in September 2020. Out of this, 41% are extremely concerned about the risks of pandemic spread. Only 2% of the parents expressed that they will be rather happy about the prospects of preschool re-opening and sending their children to preschools. It is interesting to note that 80% of the parents who have decided against sending their children to preschools are also the ones with high concerns about pandemic spread in preschools

Figure 54. Parents’ concerns about the risk of pandemic spread if preschools re-open in September 2020

How concerned are parents about the availability and adequacy of medical facilities / equipment / supplies in kindergartens for addressing the pandemic? Around 30% of the respondents expressed their deep concern over the lack of medical preparedness of preschools to address any event of the occurrence of the illness or poor quality of medical equipment and supplies available in preschools now. Another 41% of the parents were also concerned to some extent about the overall scenario of medical facilities in and preparedness of preschools. However, 29% of parents were not much concerned about these issues in preschools.

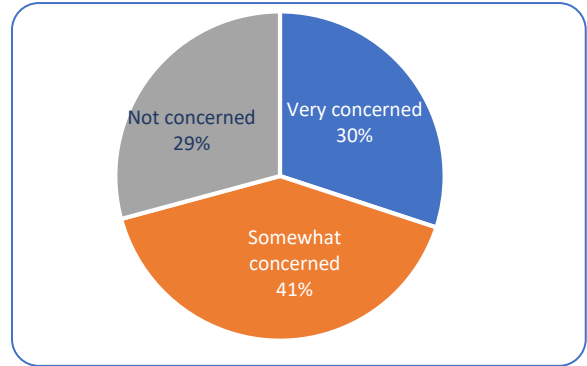


Figure 55. Parents' concerns about the medical facilities and preparedness of preschools to re-open in September 2020

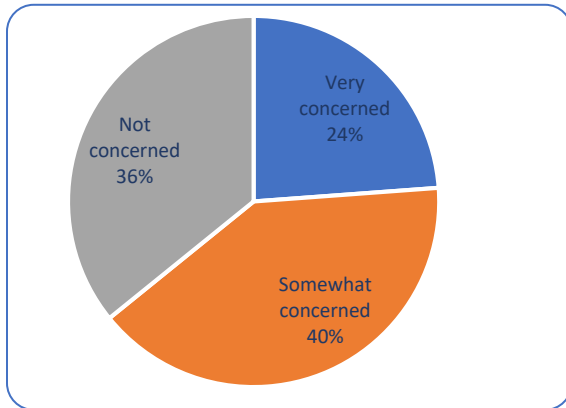


Figure 56. Parents' concerns about the staff's ability and preparedness to handle safety and health issues during preschools re-opening in September 2020

How concerned are parents about the staff and Management's ability to take safety measures in preschools or inform children properly? 24% of parents were highly concerned about the ability of the preschool staff and management to ensure safety measures in preschools or to inform children appropriately. Another 40% parents were also "somewhat concerned" about the preschool staff's ability and preparedness to address the pandemic. However, 36% of the parents were not really worried about how staff will handle the safe and health issues in preschools once the institutions re-open.

How concerned are the parents about the ECE that children missed during the quarantine period?

Parents were also concerned about missing classes and lessons for children due to closure of preschools – 27% were highly concerned while 45% were somewhat concerned. Those who reported that they were not concerned were so mainly because they were not planning to send their children to preschools once the institutions re-open.

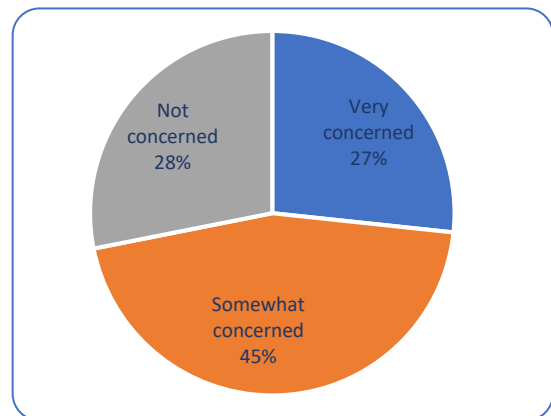


Figure 57. Parents' concerns about the children's learning /development loss due to preschool closure

Summary

The rapid survey results reveal how ECCE activities were carried out at home during the COVID-19 quarantine, and these practices are expected to continue till life gets back to normalcy and the pandemic is over. The summary of the analysis is as follows:

Parents/ families' Practices related to young child's daily routine, household chores and early childhood care and education activities

- Parents and family members in general were spending more time with preschool aged children (3-6 years) since the lockdown;
- A large majority of parents tried to establish and ensure a daily routine for the young children so that they can still feel a normal life and not get stressed about a disrupted life routine;
- While only a few families were able to create activities to involve children in household activities, at least half of the parents were able to involve children in daily household chores, which is important to enhance the life-skills of young children and utilizing their extra time at home;
- A large majority (more than 90%) of parents were able to carry out some early childhood education activities at home – be it physical activities (sports and games), reading with children, arts and crafts or entertainment programmes; and
- As in the case of before the pandemic, it was the mother of the child (55% cases) or other female members in the family who engaged with the young child in any of the activities. However, an important development during the quarantine is the increased involvement of siblings (mostly older sisters and brothers) in activities with the preschool aged child

Health and hygiene Practices among children

- A large number of parents reported that they have trained children in health and hygiene practices to be followed in daily life, and particularly now during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Parents have trained children in handwashing before and after having the meals, after use of toilets, after playing and visits outside home. However, it is a concern that only 76% parents ensure that children wash hands after using toilets and only 81% parents ensure that children wash hands before and after eating meals.

Entertainment and education through television/ media related practices

- Almost all children were watching television during the lockdown for either entertainment or education while only 25% of children had access to programmes available online/ digital media.
- Most children were in regular habit of watching cartoons-based programmes on television; and more than half of the parents reported that children were spending a lot of time (more than 2 hours a day) watching cartoon programmes.

- Around 30% of children on a regular basis spent a lot of time (more than 2 hours a day) watching education-related television programmes, particularly those on “ilk kadam” and “Aqlvoy”; while 60% of the children watched it for some time (less than 2 hours a day).
- Around 58% of parents reported that the kids were not watching or not allowed to watch the usual entertainment programmes available on television. While the rest watch general entertainment programmes, around 34% children were watching it or allowed to watch these programmes for only sometime a day.
- While a little more than a fourth of the parents did not sit with children while they were watching television or digital/online programmes, more than half of the parents /family members (55%) ensured that an adult family member was always with the child while they were watching television / online programmes.

Parents’ knowledge about ECCE at home and children’s knowledge about healthy behaviour

- For engaging children in various activities, including ECE related, half of the parents used ideas that they knew while the other half knew how to extract ideas from various other sources.
- An overwhelming majority of parents reported that their children knew the right health and hygiene behaviour, especially those related to washing hands properly, covering their face with elbow while sneezing or coughing, wearing masks properly while going out and the requirements of maintaining physical/ social distancing while meeting people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parents as well as children’s attitude towards the lockdown and related aspects

- Children were mostly resilient to the changes in their daily life – only a third of the children were found to be mildly or highly stressed about the requirements of being confined to home all the time and only a fifth of the children were stressed about having ECE through television.
- However, around 39% of children were under high or mild stress for not being able to visit preschools or meet their teachers while close to half of the children (49%) were distressed about not being able to meet friends in preschools.
- Overall, while a third of the young children had no stress, close to half of the children (48%) exhibited stress on multiple aspects.
- Among parents, 54% mentioned that the stress and additional work due to lockdown and additional childcare and education was manageable, 38% parents found it somewhat difficult and stressful and the rest, found it extremely difficult and stressful, a small number of parents mentioned that the stress was even accentuated by their requirements to work outside as well.

Parents’ views on the national television programmes for young children

- Several parents (42%) found the national television programmes for preschool children very interesting; 36% of parents were of opinion that these programmes were suitable for the children’s age and development needs and 30% felt the content of programmes were good and adequate for young children. However, around a fourth of the parents were very indifferent to

these programmes, they neither watched these programmes for young children nor reviewed it for its content, relevance and presentation.

- Almost 3/4ths of the parents were watching the television programmes with children either regularly or whenever possible. 24% parents reported that they were watching the television or online programmes with their children to ensure that the children were watching the right programme or to monitor what children were up to while watching the programmes. 28% of parents felt that the programmes were interesting for parents as well as watching them helps them to understand what children are interested in. A little more than a fifth of the parents (21%) were watching it because they felt children will be interested to watch it in a meaningful way when an adult is with the child and support them.

Parental views on preschool re-opening

- Around 62% of parents were willing to send their young child to preschools once the preschools resume its functioning. Another 13% parents had some reservations and they mentioned that they will have to review several factors (economic affordability, health and hygiene conditions etc.) before sending children to preschools.
- While parents are willing to send their child to preschools once they restart in September 2020, 84% of them are concerned about the risks due to the COVID-19 pandemic, out of which 41% were extremely concerned. 71% of parents are concerned about the overall preparedness of preschools for the pandemic, particularly, medical facilities available in preschools, such as medicines, equipment and services of medical staff in the event of any health issues; and 64% of the parents had concerns about the preschool staff's ability and preparedness to address health issues and manage children in terms of health and hygiene as well as social distancing requirements.
- More than 70% of the parents were also concerned about the "learning loss" due to the preschool closure, and they worried whether there will be enough measures to compensate for the same.

Suggestions and Recommendations

As of now, Government of Uzbekistan has allowed private preschools to start functioning for the new academic year 2020-21, and a few state-owned preschools to gradually start functioning. In this scenario, here are a few suggestions and recommendations to the government to ensure continued ECCE for children:

Care for children and early childhood education at home

- Enhance advocacy for increased attention to children at home, particularly, prepare specific guidelines and messages for parents as to:
 - how to improve efficiency and efficacy of time spent with preschool children,
 - how to prepare an appropriate daily routine for children and ways to implement them;
 - how to create specific household activities for children to participate and use them for life skills learning; and
 - the right mix of various ECE activities in terms of (i) sports and games; (ii) reading books and learning letters and numbers; (iii) arts and crafts; and (iv) entertainment and infotainment activities.
- The UNICEF Uzbekistan (2020) study on the parents / caretakers' KAP on ECCE clearly showed that parents and family have very limited knowledge about the new Early Learning Development Standards (ELDS) that articulate the child development requirements and milestones and activities that will enhance the same. Even in the current survey, more than half of the parents reported that they just used their own knowledge to develop activities for children. In order to enhance parents' understanding of children's developmental standards and the activities to enhance the same, it is important that the Government, particularly the Ministry of Preschool Education come up with a series of guidelines, education materials and ideas of activities for parents to learn and implement for children during and after the lockdown phase.
- At present, the responsibility of taking care of young children is mostly on the mothers, with fathers involved much less in engaging children. Parenting is a process that involves both fathers and mothers. The government should develop programmes that will encourage fathers to share more responsibilities of childcare, and particularly in early learning and stimulation process.

Health and hygiene habits

- Overall findings point towards high awareness and behaviour among children related to health and hygiene practices during COVID-19 pandemic. However, in order to sustain the behaviour, the government needs to continue its efforts on enhancing information, education and communication (IEC) on desirable health and hygiene practices.

Entertainment and infotainment habits

- Many parents / family members regulate children's engagement with television and digital media on entertainment and education. However, a sizeable number of parents (more than a fifth of the parents) are not keeping track of children's activities with digital content.

Government may, through social media messages, alert parents about the need to monitor children's engagement with social media or television programmes.

- The government may also work towards improving the programmes aimed at children, particularly making the programmes informative, educational and entertaining for preschool age children. This will naturally help children attend more towards these programmes than get attracted to inappropriate content for children available on television on digital media.

School Re-opening

- Parents are concerned about the pandemic and the measures for ensuring safe and healthy operations of preschools. They are also worried about the ability and skills of preschool staff in managing health and hygiene requirements and preschool children. In this context, the government may consider the following:
 - Improve preschool health and hygiene facilities, particularly WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) infrastructure and supplies.
 - Ensure that the preschools observe/ implement the Health, Hygiene and Sanitation protocols/ guidelines developed jointly by Ministry of Health, Ministry of Preschool Education and other government bodies.
 - Build capacity of preschool staff by training them in the implementation of health and hygiene guidelines and equip them with all the resources needed to ensure that preschools are functional.
 - Strengthen Education Management Information System (EMIS) and quality assurance mechanisms at the national, regional and preschool levels to ensure that the requirements of WASH, health and hygiene measures can be monitored regularly.