

IRISS-INITIATED TV TALK SHOWS ON EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN AIRED ON 'METRO ONE NEWS'

Islamic Research Institute for Social Sciences (IRISS) supported a talk show on Metro One News, to discuss the impact of Covid-19 on women. The show was hosted by anchor Muhammad Ali and three women scholars participated in the discussion. The show underlined that women were hit the hardest by Covid-19. The presence of men and children at home increased the burden of women. Frustration of being jobless and lack of resources destroyed the harmony and peace within families. Pakistani society practices patriarchal norms and instead of rationally analyzing the consequences of the Pandemic, a large majority unjustifiably put the blame over shoulders of women as their inefficient sense of domestic management. At the same time, Pakistani women typically shoulder a greater burden of care. The primary objective of the program was to highlight the efforts of women on the media instead of putting the blame on them.

Starting off, Dr. Sarwar Askari, a well-known scholar, said men cannot manage economic as well as social issues without the support of a female. Explaining the role of women during pandemic, she said women stood on the frontline to secure their family from such a deadly situation which spread on a global scale. Further she said that, lockdown proved more challenging for women in contrast to men as she had to see domestic chores 24/7 by following SOPs. She praised women for coaching their kids by their own and giving the much needed emotional and moral support to their husbands.

Aalima Sadia Saeed from Minhaj ul Quran expressed her notions about the COVID pandemic and role of women in a way that **“being a mother when women were facing lockdown their responsibilities demanded more attention towards the training and education of their kids”**. She said that women not only focused over the behavioral training of their kids but during online classes, they helped teachers side by side to educate children. She said uneducated mothers along with their husbands kept children conscious and attentive to cover the schooling gap. She said though COVID-19 brought more psychological social stress but we can't ignore the fact that it balanced the relationships with a sense of mutual understanding in men and women towards their responsibilities.

Aalima Ayesha Bilal, a religious scholar, said male chauvinists of our society should take example from the life of Holy Prophet (SAW). She said during pandemic, women on the basis of their over consciousness towards their family proved a strong force to reduce the risk of spreading COVID. They strictly bound their husbands and kids to wash hands properly and sanitize returning back to home. In some cases they prepared sanitizers at home to reduce the burden of increased expenses of men.

Participants said that the level of stress on women managing home is double or triple as compared to men and the women should be given the moral support by their husbands. They said that the negative economic impact caused by COVID should be managed by husbands and wives with understanding and mutual support. The blame game accusing women for inefficient management is distortion of facts and should be discouraged by society. Participants also noted it is striking how many of the key decision-makers in the process of designing and executing the pandemic response are men. This is not surprising that women still do not enjoy the same degree of

participation in major decision-making bodies—governments, parliaments, cabinets or corporations—as men do. Women are conspicuous by their absence in decision-making during this pandemic. Instead they were victimized for being inefficient and managing the home with lack of purpose. A false and baseless allegation far away from reality and the blame game on women should come to an end.

In his concluding remarks, host Muhammad Ali highlighted and praised the sincere efforts of Islamic Research Institute of social sciences for the awareness of people. He said other organizations should also come forward and learn from IRISS to educate, motivate and inspire people towards a disciplined and well organized society. Overall the efforts of IRISS to bring a sense of equality in behavioral crisis in men and women during COVID19 proved fruitful.

