

RESEARCH REPORT

2025

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1. Introduction

Aurat Tech conducted mixed-methods research before the commencement of its second phase of the Digital Skills Program. A Convergent Parallel design mixed-methods research was carried out with the engagement of 86 girls and women of Saidpur Village, Pakistan. The key purpose of conducting this study was to gauge the current community level concerns, especially those faced by young girls and women, their accessibility towards digital technologies, and their keenness towards participation in Digital Skills programs to empower them through tech-based initiatives. The needs assessment survey was conducted to capture the quantitative data. In contrast, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted to validate the findings of the survey and to understand their interest towards engagement in the Digital Skills program in a fuller picture.

2. Methodology

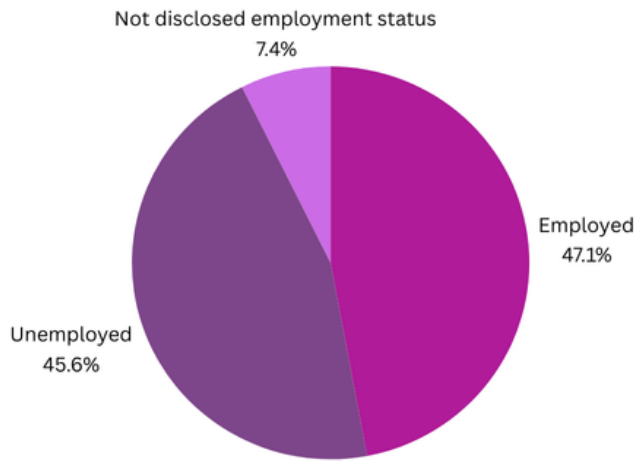
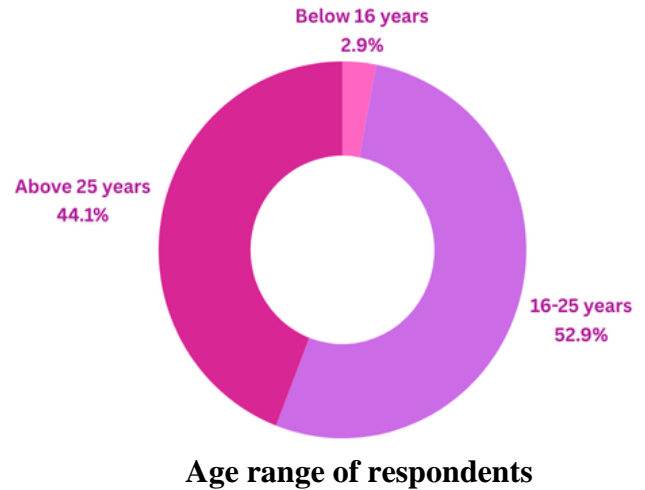
A **Convergent Parallel mixed-methods research design** was employed for this study. A survey questionnaire comprising both closed-ended and open-ended questions was developed. To ensure a higher response rate, the questionnaire was administered in person with girls and women community members in Saidpur Village, and an online version was shared with previously engaged student groups. In parallel, a **Focus Group Discussion (FGD)** was conducted to gather qualitative responses. The purpose was to identify current issues faced by the Saidpur Village community, collect feedback from alumni, and understand the expectations of potential new students regarding the upcoming program cycle. The FGD was divided into two sub-sessions and included eighteen participants — ten from the 16–25 age group, and eight either below 16 or above 25. Half of the participants were alumni of Aurat Tech’s previous six-month Digital Skills Program, while the other half were new and had not previously engaged with Aurat Tech. The main objective of involving alumni was to gather feedback on the completed program. The FGD was conducted by the Aurat Tech program team, with roles assigned to team members, including a facilitator to lead the discussion and a note-taker to document key points.

Before the FGD, informed consent was obtained from all participants, covering their voluntary participation and data confidentiality. The facilitator ensured an inclusive discussion by actively engaging both young girls and women to capture diverse perspectives. The key highlights of the research findings are as follows:

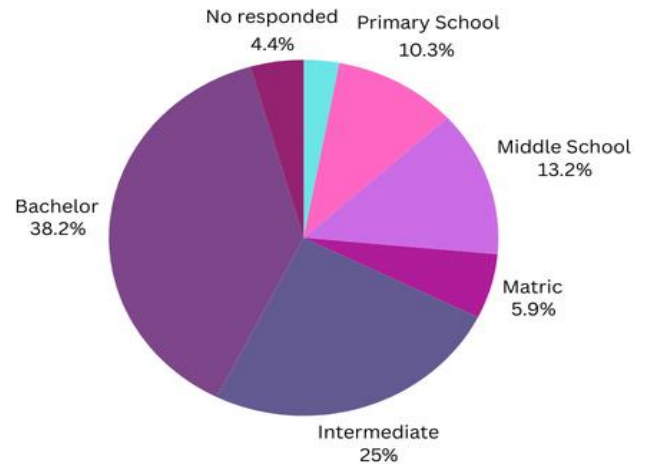
3.0. Demographic Insights of Needs Assessment Survey

A needs assessment survey gauging quantitative data was conducted with the engagement of 68 participants of Saidpur Village. Among 68 participants, 36 belonged to the age group of 16-25 years, two were below the age of 16 years, and 30 were above the age of 25 years. Concerning the educational qualification, 38% of participants are Bachelor's degree students, 25% are Intermediate students (college-going), 30% are school-going students (primary- high school group), 3% have never gone to school, and 4% didn't disclose their educational qualification. The statistical finding depicts that 63% of participants have completed their secondary school and are proceeding with higher education. The survey findings reveal an interesting finding that despite

the majority of respondents being currently employed but their per-month income reflects their lower socio-economic status. For Instance, the field data shows that 47% of respondents are employed, whereas 46% of respondents are unemployed, and 7% did not disclose their employment status. However, 56% of respondents per month a family income below 32 thousand PKR per month. This finding confirms that the majority of community participants belong to a lower socio-economic background, with entry-level (such as school teacher) and support roles employment (such as caretaker).



Employment status of respondents



Education status of respondents

3.1. Access to Internet & Internet Devices

The need assessment survey responses confirm that the majority (51%) of participants have access to the internet, whereas half of the participants have access to internet devices such as smartphones, laptops, and desktops, whereas the remaining half of the participants are deprived of internet device accessibility. Moreover, 75% of participants perceive that they have a basic to intermediate level of proficiency in using the internet devices. Only 13% of respondents perceive themselves as advanced users of internet devices. It signposts the concern of Saidpur village’s girls and women about limited access and utility to digital tools.

3.2. Interest towards Digital Skills Program Participation

Despite of Saidpur village girls and women limited access to internet devices, their significant ratio are interested in participating in the Digital Skills program. 88% of the survey respondents displayed interest in participating in a Digital Skills Program. The study reveals that getting a job opportunity and earning through freelance platforms is the key motive behind most of the respondents' (49%) motive behind joining the Digital Skills Program, followed by 34% of respondents who want to learn new skills, whereas 9% of respondents want to open their start-ups and 9% respondents did not disclose their interest. The survey findings conclude that Employability for better livelihood is the key factor behind girls and women's interest in joining the Digital Skills Program.

To further gauge participants' perception regarding the significance of learning digital skills, they were asked to share their views in the follow-up FGD. The majority of participants shared that:

- Learning digital skills will help in academia: making assignments and presentations using Word, PowerPoint, and Excel.
- Learning digital skills will help in learning digital marketing
- Online jobs and freelancing opportunities can be availed through learning digital skills.

3.3. Trend of Contemporary Community Level Concerns

This research study unveils the trend of contemporary community-level concerns. The Needs Assessment survey findings present the key community-level concerns that are validated through FGD discussions with community members are as follows:



4.0. Community’s Perception about Aurat Tech's Status as an Organization

Another important aspect explored through the FGD was the community’s perception of Aurat Tech as an organization. Most participants shared a similar view of Aurat Tech as an institute dedicated to empowering women and supporting their journey toward independence through digital literacy. Understanding participants' perceptions of the organization is valuable in gaining community insights and assessing how well our implementation aligns with Aurat Tech’s strategic objectives.

5.0. Feedback regarding Aurat Tech's Previous Digital Skills Program

During FGD, feedback from those participants who previously engaged in Aurat Tech’s six-month digital skills program was taken about their engagement experience. Participants showed their interest in discussing both positive aspects and also areas of improvement, which is the learning point for Aurat Tech for effective programming for the upcoming second cycle of a three-month program. Key highlights of the discussion are as follows:

Positive Feedback:

- Most of the previously enrolled students shared that the trainers were supportive, and they felt comfortable sharing their concerns with them.
- Few participants (previously enrolled students) shared that they did not even know the basics of using the computer. During the course, they learn the digital skills related to web development, content writing, SEO and CANVA. The courses were interactive and engaging.

Identified Areas of Improvement	Recommendations
Initially, it was told that the duration of the course would be three months, but the course's duration extended to six months	The course duration must be kept short
Most students complain that they did not get job opportunity at completion of courses	Passed-out students should connect to employability platforms to earn and apply their learning skills
No feedback on the submitted projects from the Trainers. Trainers must discuss the individual project's results and areas of improvement with students to improve their learning.	Trainers need to discuss the areas of improvement with students so they can learn from their mistakes.
Courses were taught, but in-depth learning of practical concepts was missing. When students interacted with clients, they came to know the need to learn more practical tech-based skills Students also face communication skills issue while communicating with the client	In-depth detail about concepts and the practice of practical skills is necessary so that students become experts in it. Initiatives to improve students' communication skills are necessary that help them in their professional correspondence.

Gap between previous and upcoming courses program: Participants shared that they learn the tech related skills but after the completion of program, they got disconnected and they forgot the skills	There is a need of a consecutive initiative that connects passed out students and also helps them to refresh and update their tech related skills.
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Conclusion

This research confirms that despite limited accessibility to digital resources, girls and women from underserved communities of Saidpur village want to engage in the Digital Skills Program to earn a decent livelihood. Unemployment is among the key prevailing concerns in the Saidpur Community. In this regard, learning about new digital skills will not only help them in academia but also help them in connecting to career opportunities.