

## **Increase in Domestic Violence against Women and Children during COVID-19**

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### **Abstract**

Domestic violence, a prevalent concern in all societies and the discussions regarding this practice is associated with the uncertainties and taboos. Domestic violence/relationship abuse refers to intimate relationships or between partners and mostly the female gender are the victims in these instances. There are many women that in their close relations and immediate social environment experiences psychological and physical violence that later on becomes a serious health problem for them. A pattern of coercive approach that includes physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and emotional abuse that one person perpetrate against another close person with the aim to establish and maintain power and control is the domestic violence. The occurrence of domestic violence can be seen all kinds of close relations like married couples, dating couples, live in couples, people that are having common children, partners with same sex, in former relations etc. The objective of this study is to find the nature and different causes of domestic violence against women during the lockdown situation of COVID-19. Samples of 165 females from various sectors with different educational qualification and level of family status were surveyed with the help of standard questionnaire and random sampling. T-test was applied to get the appropriate results. It can be identified that during the situation of COVID-19 there can be different reasons and nature of the domestic violence such as verbal abuse, ill-treatment, physical assault, harassment, maltreatment, offensive nature of the spouse and sexual abuse due to the reasons like identity of the female, financial crisis, dominant nature, alcohol and extramarital affairs etc.

**Keywords:** *Domestic Violence, COVID-19, Women, Lockdown, Issues.*

### **Introduction**

In many countries, domestic violence, refer the violence between the intimate partners but many times, it also includes the children and abuse of elderly people or any other members of the family also. As per the World Health Organization (WHO), across the world, in every three women, one woman experiences the violence physically and/or sexually by a close

relation or partner or sexual violence by any person that is responsible for this in their lifetime. It includes slapping, hitting, kicking, beating etc. along with these insulting, unfair criticisms, continuous humiliating someone, intimidations, threatening of harm or to take away the children are included in “emotional” or “psychological” abuse. Many times in the domestic violence behaviours are controlled like to isolate a person from the family and friends, their movements are monitored, financial, employment, educational and medical resources are restricted.

### ***Causes or reasons of Domestic Violence***

There are many social, cultural and economic factors, which causes domestic violence. These factors indicate that this behaviour is an acquired habit and a choice.

***Patriarchy:*** Gender-role identity is one of the main factors behind domestic violence. The socially accepted “appropriate masculine behaviour” that justifies and hails aggression, violence, and dominance is the crucial aspect in this context. There are some people that follow customary belief, think that they had the women partner is not equal to them, and they have the right to control her behaviour. According to the data of National Family Health Survey, nearly 42% of men think that they had valid reasons to beat their wife.

***Influence of the society:*** Some abusers are grown up seeing this domestic violence in their family itself and the society they lived in. Boys that are not taught to value their sister and mother in their childhood and they see these things in his own family are likely to abuse the women in their life in future and the girls who see things in their family and society are the victims and think it to be normal.

***Economic causes:*** Unemployment, alcohol and any kind of drug addiction are the main contributors of violent behaviour.

***Socio-Cultural reasons:*** Domestic violence and deaths related to dowry and honour killing is a reality of the society.

***Individual Factor responsible for domestic violence:*** There is a feel of need in many abusers to have a control on their partner due to “low self-esteem”, feeling of jealousy, they face difficulty to regulate their anger and other strong emotions, and some of them suffer from inferiority complex with their partner in their educational or socioeconomic background.

***Impact of COVID-19 in rise in Domestic Violence in India:***

In March 2020, 291 complaints of domestic violence was recorded with National Commission of Women (NCW). The NCW is still receiving the complaints through digital modes such as email and it is assumed that in reality the number of cases is much higher as they are reported. When there is almost no mobility of the people and the police force are busy to ensure that the population of India is following the lockdown guidelines in proper way, women are founding any way to protect themselves from the domestic violence and abuse and in so many extreme, and they had to face death also. In addition, because of the popularity and commonness of orthodox social norms and shame, these survivors of domestic violence are not going to the police to report their cases against the abusers. The women that belong to helpless and poor class are not on the condition to report their complaint. The factors that contributed to the same are:

**(i) *Non-operational NGOs:*** There are centres for the women that are supposed to contact to the person that had complaint against the domestic violence and do the counselling of the victim and the abuser as well and to a great extent solve the issue but due to the lockdown these NGOs were not functional and the volunteer organizations that are available to the women for their help and counselling after domestic violence were not working.

**(ii) *Deterioration of Gender Equality:*** The “Sustainable Development Goal” or SDG looks forward to remove all the forms of favouritism and violence against the women in the public and the private areas as well. SDG also undertakes improvement and reorganizations so that the women can also have the same rights as the men related to financial resources and had their rights in the property. There are so many additional challenges while untangling the negative psychosocial impacts on the women’s mental health and this situation leads them to lose their job and forced them to suffer from economic pressures.

***Some remedies to avoid domestic violence***

Since there are number of steps are taken by the government all over the world to contain the transmission of the corona virus and for that there is a need to stretch the lockdown and isolation process and for that public need to confined themselves for some more time, therefore, there is a great need to address the increase in domestic violence as soon as possible. Related to this issue it is very important for the government to utilise the human rights and the “intersectional” based approaches in order to ensure that all of us and even the

most marginalised population has the access to all the essential information and the system that are there to supports each one of us along with the necessary resources during this situation of crisis. “Help lines” and “essential services” should be available during in the lockdown. Media can aware the public against the violence activities and make awareness about the services and resources that are available and encourage people to share the household tasks. Make the NGOs more active to respond to domestic violence and provide the aid, shelter, counselling along with legal aids. Additional the responsible person of domestic violence need to bring for trials and the ones who are repeating this should be strictly dealt as per the provisions of law.

### **Literature Review**

Domestic violence is a common problem that is affecting the women not considering her age, “socioeconomic” or “socio cultural” status. There is no existence of risk profile and the affected women are having serious health issues. The percentage of the women that are seeking medical attention due to violence is not clear. An initial study of United States says that there are a considerable number of these women and the doctors (general practitioners and gynaecologists) are the primary person that is contacted in these cases of domestic violence (**Flury, Nyberg and Riecher-Rössler 2010**). The studies revealed that 20 percent of the women are physically hurt by in laws or the members of the family, 34 percent of them were mentally tortured by in laws, their husbands physically hurt 32 percent, and 44 percent are mentally tortured by their husbands. There are 10 percent women, those are getting restricted basic needs, 44 percent are suffering from depression, 48 percent of them says that the education of their children is affected due to domestic violence. 76 percent of them are those who are not aware of the laws associated with domestic violence. The studies also shows that alcohol is the key cause of domestic violence in Indian society and majority of women are not aware of their rights and laws related to domestic violence (**Choudhary, Kaithwas and Rana, 2017**).

It is logical that in this time of pandemic priority is to provide basic needs to the people and take necessary measures to contain the spread of virus as compared to take steps to stop domestic violence but it is also true the long term effects of domestic violence is also very devastating, therefore it also needs equal attention as COVID-19. There is a need to implement the Domestic Violence Act effectively and media should create its awareness in the general public and provide details about the help lines, shelter homes, legal assistance,

NGOs etc. help of the social workers can be taken that are creating awareness about COVID-19 can create the awareness about the domestic violence at the same time and they can identify the sign of domestic violence and can report it to the concerned department (**Vora et al, 2020**). Human rights including health related rights of women and children are the larger challenges that are posed by the challenges of COVID-19. As the lockdown is mandatorily forced on the population of the whole world, there is an increase in the domestic violence against the women and children as well. It is found that there are some countries in which special policies, laws and programs are implemented in order to deal with the situation of domestic violence in homes (**Nigam, 2020**). Domestic violence has been reported all over the globe including China, Argentina, Germany, turkey etc. Antonio Guterres, the UN chief has called for “global ceasefire” as the domestic violence against women and girls is increasing during the lockdown situation all over the world in response to pandemic COVID-19 situation (**UN News, 2020**).

The world is expecting that there are millions of cases that are related to “domestic violence”, “child marriage”, “female genital mutilation” and “unintended pregnancies” will be reported in this situation of crisis and lockdown period due to COVID-19 in 2020 (**UNFPA, 2020**). Home is considered as the safest place in this lockdown period but it is not the safest place for all the people and many of them do not have the luxury of have a home where they can maintain social distancing. People are forced to live in worst conditions and they are pushed to the margins. The corona virus exposes all precarious lives and invisible faces of hunger and it is predominated among the women. Women living in slums are forced to face worst living conditions due to lack of basic resources. The migrants are compelled to face starving situation due to lockdown and absence of work in the cities. Initially they were provided food from the government but many of them are not able to avail the facility (**Kumar Chandan, 2020**). Later in the lockdown period many of the workers are sent to their homes by the government and still many of them are left behind and due to lack of food and money the frustrations gave rise to domestic violence and due to the dwindling support system, women and children were kept at high risk. Women are not able to avail any of their support system outside the house and they are away from the safety net of their parents. The women are burdened by the responsibility of the household work by the gendered social norms and they are judged by the quality of the work.

During the lockdown period, women are forced to do all the households, there is no or very little contribution of the other members in her help, and this becomes one of the reasons of

the violence in the home (Shekhar, Divya, J., 2020). Domestic violence against women and children is an explanation of the power of the men that is put together against the women and children that are less powerful. Man as a husband believes that he had an absolute right over the sexuality of the woman as his wife. To give a response to all such kind of problems related to domestic violence, the organizations for the women all over the world are focusing to pay attention on the domestic violence against the women as infringement of human rights and they are working with the governing bodies so as to eliminate all the discrimination against the women (Agnihotri et al, 2006). An effective action by the government and an sincere implementation of the laws are the common demand of the common people that can give swift justice to control and limit these increased case of domestic violence against the women, girls and the children as well. In India, there is a need to change the perception and the mindset of the people regarding the fundamental rights of the women for their “justice”, “safety”, “security”, “equality” and “freedom”. We should forget our traditional learning that a woman is a source of power and without women the world of men can stand nowhere, she is the creator of life and has the ability and capability to sustain and educate new generation (Kumar and Chary, 2016).

### **Objective of the study**

1. To find the nature of domestic violence against women and children during COVID-19 pandemic situation.
2. To find the different causes those are responsible for domestic violence during COVID-19.

### **Methodology**

In the present study, the survey was conducted on the sample size of 165 females. The females that were considered were from various sectors with different educational qualification and level of family status. A standard questionnaire was used to know about the different causes and the nature of the domestic violence. The study is exploratory in nature and the sampling method was random. In order to the appropriate result, t-test was applied.

### **Findings of the study**

Table1 demonstrates the demographic background of the respondents that have the questions regarding their gender, age, qualification, occupation, area, family status and class. The survey is done with females in which 23.6 percent of them are from the age group of 28-35

years, 22.4 percent belongs to the age group 36-42 years, and 20 percent are from 43-50 years, 17.6 percent are from the age group of 51-60 years and the rest 16.4 percent are above 60 years of age. Among them 18.8 percent were uneducated, 13.9 percent had studied till secondary level, 12.7 percent till senior secondary level, 17.6 percent were graduates, 20 percent were post graduates and the rest 17 percent had some other educational qualification. 55.2 percent of them were from the urban areas and 44.8 percent comes from the rural areas. It is seen that 29.7 percent of them were unemployed, 34.5 percent are working in different sectors and the rest 35.8 percent were house makers. 56.4 percent of them come from a joint family and 43.6 percent had a nuclear family. 28.5 percent of them come from a rich family, 38.2 percent belongs to a middle class family and the rest 33.3 percent come from a poor family.

**Table 1 Demographic background of the respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% age</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	165	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age groups</b>		
28-35 years	39	23.6%
36-42 years	37	22.4%
43-50 years	33	20%
51-60 years	29	17.6%
Above 60 years	27	16.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Qualification</b>		
Uneducated	31	18.8%
Secondary	23	13.9%
Senior secondary	21	12.7%
Graduates	29	17.6%
Post graduates	33	20%
Others	28	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Area</b>		

Urban	91	55.2%
Rural	74	44.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Unemployed	49	29.7%
Working	57	34.5%
House makers	59	35.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Family status</b>		
Joint Family	93	56.4%
Nuclear Family	72	43.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Family class</b>		
Rich	47	28.5%
Middle	63	38.2%
Poor	55	33.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2 Nature of domestic violence against women during COVID-19**

S. No	Nature of domestic violence	Mean score	t Value	Sig
1.	Couple and family members abuse each other verbally	3.63	8.796	0.00
2.	Ill-treatment and physical assault is also seen in many families	3.19	2.199	0.01
3.	Women of many families faces Harassment and maltreatment in day to day life	3.82	10.717	0.00
4.	Offensive nature of the spouse hurts the partner many times in number of cases	3.79	9.834	0.00
5.	Domestic violence can be in the form of sexual abuse even between the married couples	3.91	10.246	0.00

Table 2 shows the nature of domestic violence against women during COVID-19. It is seen that married couple and other family members use to abuse each other verbally with the mean score 3.63 due to their personal frustrations during the lockdown period in COVID-19 pandemic. Ill-treatment and physical assault is also seen in many families with the mean score



3.19, Women of many families faces Harassment and maltreatment in day-to-day life by their families and spouse with the mean score 3.82. It is seen that Offensive nature of the spouse hurts the partner many times in number of cases with the mean score 3.79 and number of times domestic violence can be in the form of sexual abuse even between the married couples with the mean score 3.91. It is seen that the nature of the domestic violence against the women can be different in different situation. One sample t-test was applied to find whether the responses to the statements are significant or not. It was found that for all the statements the value under significance column is below 0.05 hence, all the mean values for the statements have been found significantly more than the test values (3.5) hence all the solutions are significant.

**Table 3 Causes of domestic violence against the women during COVID-19**

Sl. No.	Causes of domestic violence	Mean score	t Value	Sig
1.	Identity of the female damages the reputation of the man that is partially restored by them through domestic violence	3.93	12.985	0.00
2.	Financial crisis during COVID-19 pandemic gave rise to domestic violence	4.01	11.691	0.00
3.	Dominant nature gave rise to domestic violence during COVID-19	3.97	12.677	0.00
4.	Alcohol is the major cause of domestic violence in many families	3.89	11.079	0.00
5.	Extramarital affairs is one of the key reasons of the domestic violence	3.99	11.146	0.00

Table 3 shows the causes of domestic violence against the women during COVID-19 pandemic situation. It is seen that Identity of the female damages the reputation of the man that is partially restored by them through domestic violence with the mean score 3.93. During the lockdown situation due to COVID-19 people are suffering from the financial crisis as there is no work and this frustration takes the shape of domestic violence with the mean score 4.01, it is also that the dominant nature of the spouse is also one of reasons of the domestic violence with the mean score 3.97. In so many families it is observed that Alcohol is the major cause of domestic violence with the mean score 3.89 and the study also shows that Extramarital affairs is one of the key reasons of the domestic violence between so many spouse with the mean score 3.99. Therefore, it is seen that there are so many reasons and causes that are responsible for domestic violence. One sample t-test was applied to find whether the responses to the statements are significant or not. It was found that for all the statements the value under

significance column is below 0.05 hence, all the mean values for the statements have been found significantly more than the test values (3.5) hence all the solutions are significant.

### **Conclusion**

Domestic violence is a noteworthy and important problem that is occurring all over the world from many years now but this situation has been increased during the lockdown situation due to COVID-19 pandemic. This adverse situation of domestic violence is affecting the health and safety of millions of women all through their lifetime. This condition of assault and violence is also as “intimate partner violence” that takes the form of physical violence, sexual violence and mental violence as well. It is the fact that in India, the women are not aware of their rights, laws and the organization that are there to deal with the matter of domestic violence and are there for their help and safety.

The present study concludes that during Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown situation there can be different reasons and nature of the domestic violence such as verbal abuse, Ill-treatment, physical assault, Harassment, maltreatment, Offensive nature of the spouse and sexual abuse due to reasons like the Identity of the female, financial crisis, Dominant nature, Alcohol and Extramarital affairs etc. There are different statements that are all found significant in explaining the reasons of the domestic violence and the nature of the domestic violence during the lockdown period.

It is important to create the awareness about the rights, laws and the organizations that are related to domestic violence. The curriculum of the schools and the universities needs to include gender sensitization and awareness programs related to domestic violence that will definitely bring in the change in the mindset of the future generations. The list of the NGOs and the organizations that are there to deal with domestic violence should be easily available so that women can use them to avoid and decrease this adverse situation.

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