

Battle field of women: COVID-19 or domestic violence

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ABSTRACT

The 2019–20 corona virus pandemic many countries have reported an increase in domestic violence and intimate partner violence. After Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the nationwide lockdown, the number of domestic violence complaints received by the National Commission for Women (NCW) had doubled. Domestic violence during Covid-19 in India has three major components: emotional abuse; physical violence; sexual violence. The aim of the study was to estimate the prevalence of domestic violence during lockdown in India. The high prevalence of domestic violence in our community needs to be addressed as it has tacit implications on socioeconomic well-being, physical and mental health of a woman, her family, and thereby, society as a whole. March 23 to April 19 Ever since the lockdown began, there has been an increase in domestic abuse complaints. The lockdown has turned into a trap with the abusers for women and children. India's National Commission for Women (NCW) has seen a more than twofold rise in gender-based violence during the lockdown in India; total complaints from women rose from 116 in the first week of March to 257 in the final week. Between 23 March and 16 April NCW registered 587 domestic violence complaints, a 45% increase from the previous 25 days. The latest example of this has come to light in Gujarat where cases of domestic violence have also increased amid increasing cases of corona infection. The state has received more than 8,000 complaints of domestic violence in the last one month. Factors compounding the situation include the confinement, financial worries due to the lockdown, and lack of access to alcohol. There has also been a threefold rise in police apathy towards women complaints, with the police busy with lockdown orders. Ever since the lockdown began, there has been an increase in domestic abuse complaints. 133.9 people are locked in their homes. In India Gujarat got a second position of covid-19 virus infection. In this situation lockdown has turned into a trap with the abusers for women and children.

Keywords: Covid-19, Domestic Violence, Women

Domestic violence (also named domestic abuse or family violence) is violence or other abuse in a domestic setting, such as in marriage or cohabitation. Domestic violence is often used as a synonym for intimate partner violence, which is committed by a spouse or partner in an intimate relationship against the other spouse or partner, and can take place in heterosexual or same-sex relationships, or between former spouses or partners. In its broadest sense, domestic violence also involves violence against children, parents, or the elderly. It

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takes a number of forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, economic, religious, reproductive, and sexual abuse, which can range from subtle, coercive forms to marital rape and to violent physical abuse such as choking, beating, female genital mutilation.

In abusive relationships, there may be a cycle of abuse during which tensions rise and an act of violence is committed, followed by a period of reconciliation and calm. Victims of domestic violence may be trapped in domestic violent situations through isolation, power and control, traumatic bonding to the abuser. Cultural acceptance, lack of financial resources, fear, shame, or to protect children. As a result of abuse, victims may experience physical disabilities, deregulated aggression, chronic health problems, mental illness, limited finances, and a poor ability to create healthy relationships. Victims may experience severe psychological disorders, such as posttraumatic stress disorder.

World Epidemic and Economic Insecurity and Poverty-Related Stress:

While the depth and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic is still uncertain, it is clear that households in affected areas will feel some economic shock—with the largest effects among the population of already economically vulnerable. These shocks could be large, for example households may face increased unemployment (or the reduced ability to work due to location or nature of economic activities) and/or reduced level of earned income. In addition, women in particular may be disproportionately affected by additional unpaid care (caretaking and caregiving) work, which may further decrease ability to undertake paid work (Wenham, Smith and Morgan, 2020).¹⁵ The aggregate economic impact of pandemics can be huge. For example, economic costs of the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa have been estimated to range from \$2.8 to 32.6 billion in lost gross domestic product (GDP) (Huber, Finelli and Stevens, 2018). While the full range of economic impacts from COVID-19 is unknown, in mid-March 2020, the US Treasury Secretary warned Congress that unemployment rates could reach levels of 20 percent if the government did not intervene.¹⁶ Even without direct shocks to earning levels, pandemics may incite temporary food insecurity and increased stress due to uncertainty about future economic security or general wellbeing. A broad body of evidence suggests that even in HICs, and especially in LMICs, these points of economic insecurity can lead to large increases in likely both the incidence and frequency of IPV and violence against children. Further, economic shifts may result in changes in economic power between partners—with predictions of both increases and decreases in IPV when women gain additional economic power, depending on the underlying gender norms and men's reaction (accepting or resisting) to shifts in power.

Lockdown and DV

Movement restrictions aimed to stop the spread of the corona virus may be making violence in homes more frequent, more severe and more dangerous. Movement limits imposed by countries around the world have forced people to spend much more time at home, leading to a surge in domestic abuse cases. Add another public health crisis to the toll of the new corona virus: Mounting data suggests that domestic abuse is acting like an opportunistic infection, flourishing in the conditions created by the pandemic.

There was every reason to believe that the restrictions imposed to keep the virus from spreading would have such an effect, said Marianne Hester, a Bristol University sociologist who studies abusive relationships. Domestic violence goes up whenever families spend more time together, such as the Christmas and summer vacations, she said. Now, with families in lockdown worldwide, hotlines are lighting up with abuse reports, leaving governments trying to address a crisis that experts say they should have seen coming. In addition to physical

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violence, which is not present in every abusive relationship, common tools of abuse include isolation from friends, family and employment; constant surveillance; strict, detailed rules for behavior; and restrictions on access to such basic necessities as food, clothing and sanitary facilities.

Home isolation, however vital to the fight against the pandemic, is giving still more power to the abuser, Dr. Hester said. “If suddenly people have got to be at home,” she said, “that gives him an opportunity, suddenly, to call the shots around that. To say what she should be doing or shouldn’t.” Its lockdown began in early March. Soon after that, domestic violence reports began to rise, but there was nowhere for newly desperate women to go. Shelters could not take them because the risk of infection was too great.

This article is a list of known epidemics caused by an infectious disease.

List of epidemics in India

Death toll (Estimate)	Location	Date	Event	Disease
9000+	India	1881	Fifth cholera	cholera
22	India	1903		Bubonic plague
15,000	India	1974	Smallpox epidemic in India	Smallpox
52	India	1994	Plague epidemic in surat	Plague
17 55+	India	2006 2006 2006	Malaria Dengue outbreak Chikungunya virus outbreak	Malaria Dengue fever Chikungunya virus
49	India	2009	Gujarat hepatitis outbreak	Hepatitis B
36	India	2014 2015	Odisha jaundice outbreak	Primarily Hepatitis E, but also Hepatitis A
2,035	India	2015	Indian swine flu outbreak	Influenza a virus subtype H1N1
1,317 (as of September 2017)	India	2017	Gorakhpur Japanese encephalitis outbreak	Japanese encephalitis
18 (as of February 2020)	India	2018	Nipah virus outbreak in kerala	Nipah virus infection
826 (as of April 27, 2020)	India	2019-2020	Corona virus	Covid-19 virus infection

“There is evidence that in situations of crisis or calamity there is an increase in violence against women. There is a lot of anxiety in people’s minds, uncertainty whether they will find a job, whether there will be pay cuts, there are hardships such as in accessing food. In a patriarchal society like ours, men find women easy targets for venting their anger,” Ms. Velankar explained.

Impact of Epidemic lockdown on DV in India:

Ever since the lockdown began, there has been an increase in domestic abuse complaints. 133.9 people are locked in their homes. In India Gujarat got a second position of covid-19 virus infection. In this situation lockdown has turned into a trap with the abusers for women and children. “Lockdown can’t mean that you save me from a virus, but you expose me to other forms of violence,” said Ms. Grover. The Child line India has reached more than 92,000 calls asking for protection from the violence. With restrictions in movement, it is difficult for the victims to seek help to escape from their abusers. The victims are mostly women and children, who are now captive with their abusers all 24/7. Women are scared to seek help from the police because in many cases the in-laws would torment them in their husband’s absence and when the husband would return, he’ll be a lot more violent and abusive. Women

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with no financial security and the ones who are dependent on their partners for support are subject to more abuse. Women from low-income households are worst hit with their partners now out of job due to the outbreak would resort to abuse to take out their pent-up frustration. Many new cases have come up too; people with no traces of abuse in the past are now reporting violent episodes.

The panic of the outbreak, which has led many people to lose their jobs and lack of alcohol, is all adding to the frustration of these abusive men. Reports say that from March 24 till April 1, 257 complaints related to various offenses against women were received out of the 69 complaints are related to domestic violence. The current lockdown with around 1.3 billion people asked to stay home in view of the corona virus outbreak, which has claimed at least 149 lives and infected more than 5,100 people. This has led the domestic abuse complaints to double. Another significant aspect responsible for this surge in domestic abuse is domestic labour. Gendered roles world over have placed domestic work on women's shoulders, which is socially and culturally often demarcated as "women's work." Under lockdown conditions, domestic work can be especially taxing if it is not divided equitably. Urvashi Gandhi, the director of another global, women's rights organisation has said, "The load of work [during the lockdown] has increased in houses because everybody is at home. With housekeeping staff being unavailable, the expectation is for women to bear the load, and chances of violence increase if she fails to do so." While there are laws in place to protect against domestic abuse, it is not easy for the judicial system to break into the stranglehold of the patriarchal family.

Family as the Primary Site of Abuse.

Gujarat : Gujarat has been lockdown for last one month. According to the information, in February, 32 percent complaints of DV were registered on the helpline number 181 for women's safety in Gujarat. Surprisingly, 43.64 percent DV was reported during the lockdown from March 23 to April 19. There were 32.83 % complaints of violence before the lockdown. Thus complaints of DV against women during lockdown have increased by about 10%. The National Commission for women has also received 587 complaints. While according to the chairperson of the Gujarat Women's commission, 17 complaints of DV have been received by E – mail in the lockdown. Meanwhile, 40-50 cases of exploitation of women have been registered in the women's court. The action aid organization has also received complaints of violence by women against their husbands. Among them, the women had said that their husbands of stay at home due to the lockdown. They do not go to work. Even when there is a voice from the boys, they keep on fighting and beating. Even in densely populated alums, there are complaints of men beating their wives by drinking alcohol. Many women have also lodged a complaint. Cases in this regard have also been registered in the family court.

Family court cases expert Aarushi Desai said that in lockdown, men stay at home the incidence of beating with wives has increased by 10% due to long stay at home and lack of tolerance among the youth nowadays. Complaints of economic and physical abuse of women have increased.

Ahmadabad : Ahmadabad is a hotspot of covid-19 virus infection in that time in ongoing lockdown for corona virus, where the distances of people's hearts should have been less; the distances between husband and wife have started increasing. Husbands living in the house these days have increased the responsibilities for wives. The ex. Of this has come to light in

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Gujarat where cases of DV have also increased amid increasing cases of corona infection. The state has resaved more than 8,000 complaints of DV in the last month.

The first week of the nationwide lockdown, which has left many facing job losses, uncertainty over salaries, forced isolation and stressed households, has resulted in a steep rise in violence against women. The National Commission for Women (NCW), which receives complaints from across the country, has recorded a more than twofold rise in gender-based violence. The total complaints from women rose from 116 in the first week of March (March 2-8), to 257 in the final week of March (March 23-April 1). Complaints of rape or attempted rape have risen sharply from two to 13, while cases of domestic violence have increased from 30 to 69 over the same comparative period. Simultaneously, there has been an almost threefold increase in police apathy towards women's complaints with the NCW receiving 16 complaints on the issue as compared to six earlier, as the police are busy enforcing the lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19. Similarly, complaints relating to the "right to live with dignity" too have doubled, rising from 35 cases to 77. Such cases could pertain to discrimination on the basis of gender, class or caste or all three of them combined.

Activists believe that cases may only be the tip of the iceberg, as many women will not be able to reach out because of restrictions on movement as well as a lack of privacy within homes. Jagori, a Delhi-based NGO, Which runs helplines (011-26692700 and 08800996640) for women victims of violence has in fact experienced a 50% drop in calls.

"women need to be at ease to make calls for help," said jaya Velankar, Director, Jagori. "They need privacy, when they are certain that they will not be discovered by their family. But when the entire family is at home, it is difficult for them to call the helpline. There is no time and space for her to reach out for help. But that doesn't mean that violence has stopped," she added.

Impact of the 2019–20 corona virus pandemic on domestic violence

China : Amid the 2019–20 corona virus pandemic many countries have reported an increase in domestic violence and intimate partner violence. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, noting the "horrifying global surge" has called for a domestic violence "ceasefire". The European Parliament came out with a press release addressing the issue writing "we won't leave Europe's women alone" and asked member states to increase support to domestic violence victims during pandemic. Pandemics, financial insecurity, stress and uncertainty have lead to increased aggression at home which was seen previously with the global financial crisis in 2009 and natural disasters such as the 2011 Christchurch earthquake, with abusers able to control large amounts of their victims daily life. Domestic violence also sees a rise whenever families spend more time together, such as the Christmas vacations. As stated by the French Secretary of Equality Marlene Schiappa; "Confinement is a breeding ground for domestic abuse." Jingzhou-based anti-domestic violence activist and retired police officer Wan Fei told Sixth Tone on 2 March 2020 that the number of domestic violence cases reported to a nearby police station had tripled in February 2020 compared to February 2019. "According to our statistics, 90% of the causes of violence are related to the COVID-19 epidemic," he said, citing quarantine anxiety, economic insecurity and weakened victim support networks as factors.

In the Hubei province of China, domestic violence reports to police more than tripled compared to the previous year, jumping from 47 cases in February 2019 to 162 cases in February 2020. 26-year-old Lele from Anhui province said that she had already faced abuse

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by her husband for six years, but the COVID-19 lockdown made it far worse; in a 1 March escalation, he repeatedly hit her with a chair and wholly bruised her legs while she was holding their 11-month-old daughter.

Pakistan : Mental health professionals in Pakistan reported that cases of domestic abuse had risen in the country during lockdown. Ministry of Human Rights also setup a National Domestic Abuse Helpline. National Disaster Management Authority of Pakistan has setup a dedicated “Gender and Child Cell” to deal with domestic abuse cases.

United States : While reporting their abuse, 951 callers between 10 and 24 March mentioned Covid-19, on the **National Domestic Violence Hotline**. One caller to the hotline said that she was being "she was being kept home against her will after being threatened by her abuser with a hammer and an unregistered gun" who was using the pandemic as an excuse to stop her from leaving home. Of 22 law enforcements polled by NBC News in early April 2020, 18 agencies stated that they had seen a rise of reports in the previous month. **Houston** saw an increase of 20 percent, **Charlotte-Mecklenburg** saw an 18 percent, and **Phoenix** police saw a jump of 6 percent.^[49] Some places such as New York City have seen a decrease in the number of reported incidents, although police believe the severe lockdown and concern about the virius have lead to some under reporting by the victims. On 11 April 2020, **Georgia** governor **Brian Kemp** referred to an **Atlanta** hospital report that noted a '15% increase of domestic violence cases in their facilities'; local media, hospitals, police and advocates were unable to verify the claim, but said that the figure was realistic and would fit in with the anecdotal evidence they had been receiving in recent weeks and the increased risk of domestic violence that the lockdown situation posed.

Response Government on Domestic violence

There are many dimensions to domestic violence, including the gendered division of domestic work, all of which are rooted in the exercise of patriarchal power. As the COVID-19 pandemic has forced several countries into a lockdown, cases of domestic violence rose at an alarming pace all over the world. On 6 April 2020, the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for a “ceasefire” to address the “horrifying global surge in domestic violence.” According to sociologist Marianne Hester, “domestic violence goes up whenever families spend more time together, such as the Christmas and summer vacations.”

In India, the National Commission for Women relaunched a WhatsApp number for the duration of the lockdown. This would allow women to contact them for help related to domestic violence through messages. One in every six new complaints during the lockdown has been made over this Whatsapp number. Odisha Police has launched a drive to contact and ascertain the status of all previous cases of domestic violence in the state. In Pune, perpetrators of domestic violence will be institutionally quarantined. Three Indian agencies related to women's welfare will conduct an anti-domestic violence drive similar to the United Nation's "Ring the bell campaign".

Help lines and NGOs are working to find aid for these victims by moving them to hostels or provide counseling online or over the phone. Yet, the lack of system from a government which is already under pressure due to the outbreak is also adding to the issues. Child rights bodies recently wrote to the Prime Minister's Office, asking the government to declare 1098 toll-free and to make it a COVID-19 emergency outreach number for children or parents or caregivers. Critical services & protection against violence, social protection, and

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child-sensitive cash transfer initiatives are needed to reach the most vulnerable children and poorest families.

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the nationwide lockdown, the number of domestic violence complaints received by the National Commission for Women (NCW) had doubled. From 30, in the first week of March, the number of complaints rose to 69 between 23 March and 1 April. As complaints surged, the NCW announced a WhatsApp number to receive complaints, to be more accessible to women who find themselves in abusive homes. However, as Jaya Valenkar of the women's rights organisation, Jagori, told IndiaSpend, "If a woman has to complain or seek help from a helpline about her family being abusive, she needs to have a landline or mobile phone while being 100% sure that she is not being overheard--whether it is her marital home or natal home." With almost 57% of the women in India not having access to phones, their options for registering complaints under the lockdown are now limited. Sometimes, women rely on other family members to report on their behalf. For instance, the Press Trust of India reported that the NCW received a complaint filed by a father on behalf of his daughter whom he alleged was being brutally beaten by her husband, and being denied food. There are many dimensions to domestic violence, all of which stem from the exercise of patriarchal power.

CONCLUSION

While the strict lockdown was being enforced to check the spread of corona virus in the country, it would close women's avenues to escape violence such as by relocating to their natal homes or contacting the local police. There is evidence that in situations of crisis or calamity there is an increase in violence against women. There is a lot of anxiety in people's minds, uncertainty whether they will find a job, whether there will be pay cuts, and there are hardships such as in accessing food. In a patriarchal society like ours, men find women easy targets for venting their anger.

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Conflict of Interest

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