Research Paper

Domestic violence against women during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Background: As Covid-19 and subsequent lockdown confined people to their homes, complaints of domestic violence and cybercrime against women went up while those of harassment, sexual assault, and rape dipped, with the effect more pronounced in the country's red zones, districts with the strictest lockdown measures. The aim of this study was to find out and help the women who suffer with domestic violence by the partner. *Methods:* A descriptive survey approach was used for the present study. The sample consisted of 121 women between the age group of 25 – 55 years selected by convenient sampling techniques, who were not tested COVID positive and not in quarantine. Data were collected by using a modified domestic violence scale through direct and indirect interview technique and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Chi-square test). *Results:* In order to facilitate the analysis and interpretation of the scope of the domestic violence was arbitrarily graded into extremely severe (4%), severe (96%), moderate, mild and no domestic violence were (0%) zero percent. the mean, median and standard deviation of domestic violence scores, which is 21.66, 22 and 1.475 respectively. All most all women were not interested to get a helpline support with various reasons. There was an association between mean scores of domestic violence and the selected demographic variables. At 10% confidence level the test is statistically significant as p<0.10. *Discussion:* Severe domestic violence during lockdown is very high and this pandemic has triggered the domestic violence more. Adequate strategies to be taken to help the women is the at most priority but the victims should come forward for the remedies.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Women, Pandemic lockdown

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[1]. Globally, the victims of domestic violence are overwhelmingly women, and women tend to experience more severe forms of violence. They are also likelier than men to use intimate partner violence in self-defense[2].

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Domestic violence often occurs when the abuser believes that abuse is an entitlement, acceptable, justified, or unlikely to be reported. It may produce an intergenerational cycle of abuse in children and other family members, who may feel that such violence is acceptable or condoned. Many people do not recognize themselves as abusers or victims because they may consider their experiences as family conflicts that got out of control. 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, dysregulated aggression, chronic health problems, mental illness, limited finances, and a poor ability to create healthy relationships[3,4].

Need for the study
Indian women filled more domestic violence complaints during the first phases of the COVID-19 related lockdown than recorded in a similar period in the last ten years. This is the tip of the iceberg in this unusual spurt as 86% women who experienced domestic violence did not seek help.

Domestic violence related complaints made by women were 1,477 between March 25th and May 31st 2020. Complaints recorded during this period are the highest in the similar period of last decade. About 86% women who experienced violence never sought help, and 77% of the victims did not even mention the incidents to anyone. This is the fact, that, the women buried their personal problems but in which it never reduces unless they sought help and one way to reduce the mental disturbances among women[5,6].

Problem statement
A study to assess the prevalence of domestic violence against women during Covid 19 pandemic lockdown in Kerala.

Objectives
1. To assess the prevalence of domestic violence against women during Covid 19 pandemic lockdown.
2. To find the association between mean scores of domestic violence and selected demographic variables.

Hypothesis
H_0: There is no significant association between the level of domestic violence and demographic variables.

METHODS AND MATERIALS
Research approach: Quantitative study approach was used in the study since the purpose of the study was to determine the prevalence of domestic violence among women.

Research design: A Descriptive survey study design was adopted in the study to assess the prevalence of domestic violence among women.

Variables: The demographic variables such as age, occupation, spouse occupation, social relationship, family, family income and spouse alcoholic status.

Extraneous variables: The extraneous variables like treatment for mental illness, extra marital relationship, COVID Pandemic and closure of liquor shop.

Settings of the study: The study was conducted in North Malabar regions of Kerala state.

Sample and Sampling technique: convenient sampling technique with direct and indirect interview method used.

Inclusion criteria:
1. Women;
2. Who were willing to participate in the study and available for direct or indirect interview.
3. Between the age group of 25 – 55 years

Exclusion criteria:
1. Women;
2. Who were married newly
3. Who were tested COVID positive or in quarantine
4. Who were above 60 years
5. Who were on treatment of mental illness

Description of the tool
Tool I. Part-I Base line proforma - It consisted of 07 items.
Part-II Modified Domestic Violence Scale: It consisted of 32 items. The total score was 32.

RESULTS

Table 1: Distribution of Demographic variable and the percentage.   (n=121)

Sl. no	Demographic Variables	Percentage (%)
1.	Age in year a) 25-35 b) 36-45 c) 46-55	19 53 28
2.	Occupation a) Home maker b) Employed c) lost job after lockdown	46 40 14
3.	Spouse occupation a) Employed b) lost job after lockdown	81 19
4.	Family income a) as usual b) reduced after lockdown c) no income	12 76 12
5.	Social relationship a) as usual like before lockdown b) reduced after lockdown	08 92
6.	Family a) Joint Family b) Nuclear Family	5 95
7.	Spouse is an a) Alcoholic b) Not an alcoholic	67 33

Table 2: Range, mean, median and standard deviation of Modified Domestic Violence scores. *n=121*

| Domestic violence score	Range	Mean	Median	Standard deviation
	19-25	21.66	22	1.475

The data presented in the Table: 2 shows that the mean, median and standard deviation of domestic violence scores, which is 21.66, 22 and 1.475 respectively.

Fig 1: Percentage distribution of domestic violence score *n=121*
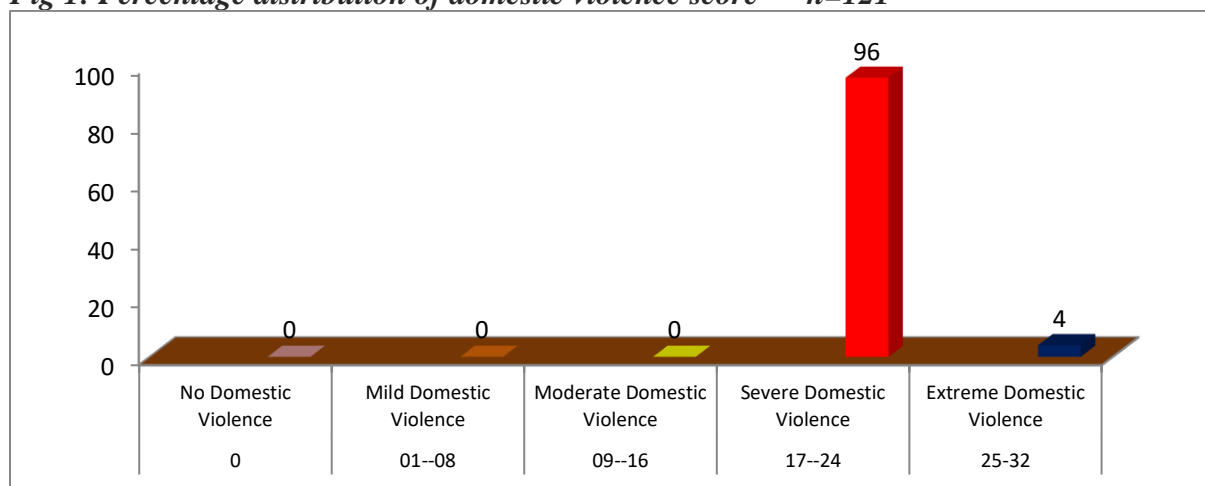
The figure 1 shows that the highest percentage (96%) of severe domestic violence and four percent of extreme domestic violence. No mild or moderate level identified.

Fig 2: Samples statement wise score *n=121*
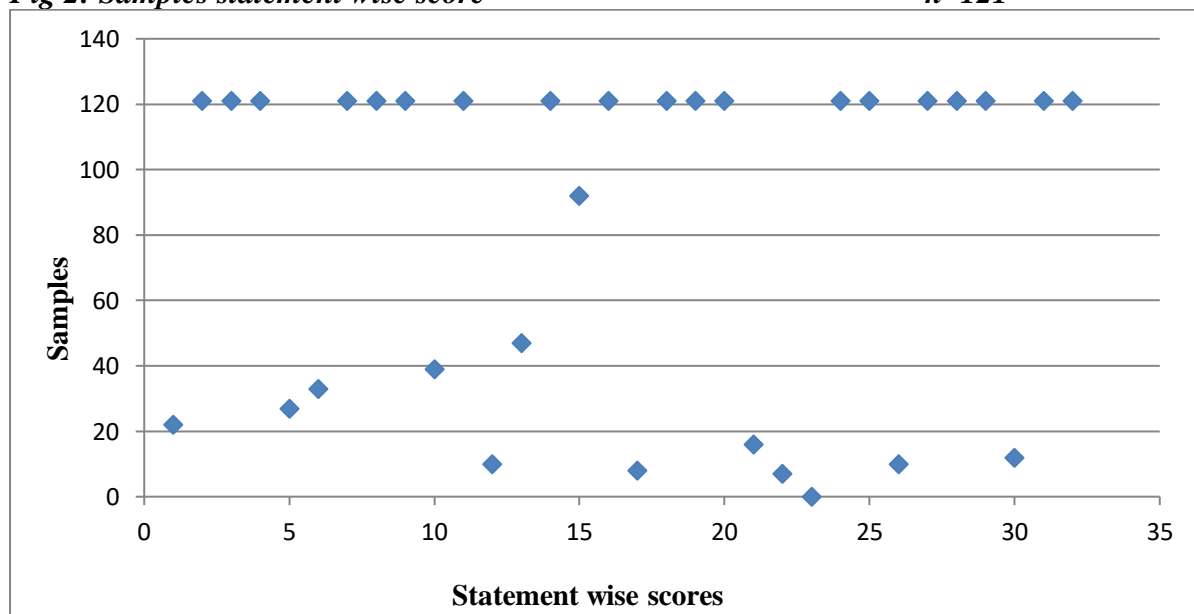
The figure 2 shows that out of 32 statements 19 statements scored full by the samples which predict the highest amount of domestic violence.

Fig: 3 Reason for not interested to get Helpline support   n=121
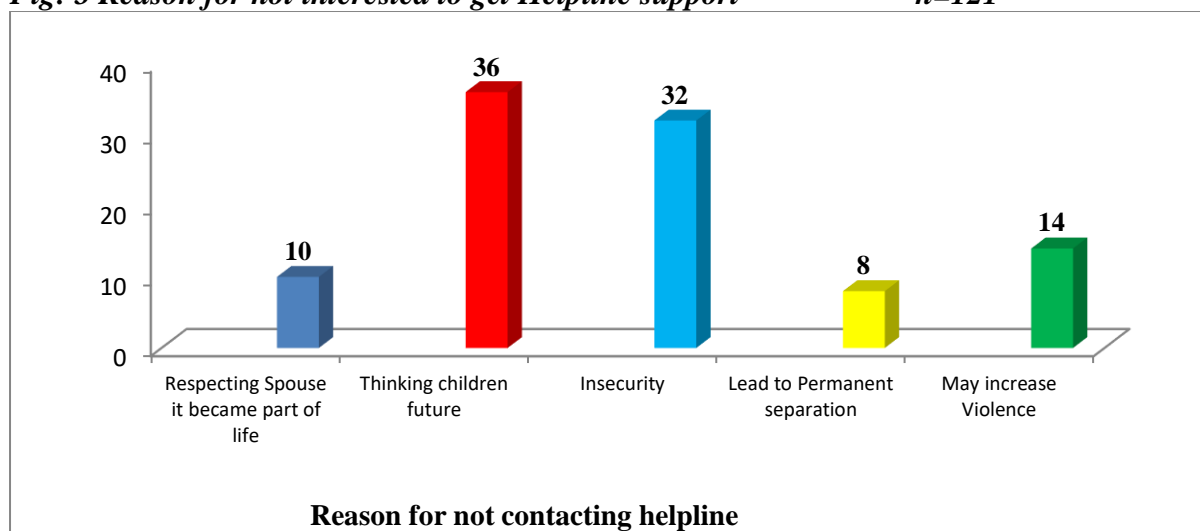

Reason for not contacting helpline

Figure 3 shows that nearly half (36%) of them thinking about their children future, 32% expressed that they feel insecurity, 14% of them have fear that violence may increase, 10% pointed that they were respecting their spouse and it is becoming the part of life and the eight percent have afraid that it may lead to permanent separation from spouse.

Association between the mean scores of domestic violence and demographic variables.

H0: There is no significant association between the level of domestic violence and demographic variables.

In order to test the null hypothesis, an alternative hypothesis was stated;

H1: There is a significant association between the level of domestic violence and demographic variables.

Chi-square test was used to find the association. It is identified that there was an association between mean scores of domestic violence and the following demographic variables.

n=121

Sl. No	Variables	df	X^2	'p' value
1	Age	12	13.603	0.327
2	Occupation,	12	9.087	0.696
3	Spouse Occupation	6	6.518	0.368
4	Social Relationship	6	4.236	0.645
5	Family	6	1.542	0.957
6	Family Income	12	12.183	0.431
7	Spouse alcoholic status	6	4.528	0.606

(p<0.10, Significant*)

At 10% confidence level the test is statistically significant as p<0.10 so that, null hypothesis was rejected and research hypothesis was accepted. It implies that there was no significant association found between domestic violence score and selected demographic variable.

Implication

It should be emphasized in educational curriculum regarding the gender sensitization, talking about gender in general and gender-based violence though it is theoretically learned in many disciplines but not implemented in the society. Empowering the women is just word of count and it should be kindle among every woman to fight against the violence knowing the power and control.

CONCLUSION

Domestic violence in India is not looked at as violence, women consider this is a part of life, future of the children and customised within the society they couldn't come forward to report openly as it is a patriarchy a lot of violence against women is expected and accepted. They required support more than anything else. Women have self-blame, confusion, hopeless, guilt and shame still they respect their life partner and love him but are also fed up life. A lot of them feel helpless and hopeless as they feel stuck in their situation. Women have remedied in their hand understanding that;

1. Don't live in the false hope that things will get better someday.
2. Don't look to other people to save you from your abuser.
3. No one can help you if you are not willing to help yourself.
4. Only you can take action on your own behalf –legally and emotionally.

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