

Domestic Violence during COVID 19 Lockdown in Indian Society

Paper Submission:15/03/2021, Date of Acceptance: 24/03/2021, Date of Publication: 25/03/2021



Meenam Saxena

Assistant Professor,
Dept. of Sociology,
Maharaja Agrasen P.G. College,
Bareilly, UP, India

Abstract

Covid-19 originated from Wuhan in China affected all over the world. The severely affected countries adopted a number of prevented measures like lockdown, wearing mask, social distancing, travel restriction, close all public places etc. to combat with this pandemic. The implementation of lockdown not only restricted the spreading of infection but also a new public health crisis has appeared as a negative consequence of lockdown i.e., domestic violence against women. Several countries have enacted special policies, laws and programs to deal with violence against women in homes. Domestic violence is a life threatening problem for an individual woman and a serious problem for all socio-economic and educational classes.

As per the statistics released by the national commission for women India in early April 2020, there has been 94% increase in complaints related to violence against women after the nationwide lockdown was imposed in march 2020. During the situation of COVID-19 the nature of the domestic violence such as verbal abuse, physical assault, harassment, sexual abuse, offensive nature of the spouse was due to reasons like financial crisis, dominant nature, use of alcohol and unemployment etc.

Keywords: COVID-19, Lockdown, Domestic violence, women, sexual abuse

Introduction

COVID-19 is declared as a pandemic disease in March 2020 by WHO which left the ruinous footprints over the entire world. Many preventive measures like social distancing, isolation, using mask, restriction of movements etc. are taken by all the countries. Finally, total lockdown was the solution to control this pandemic and later or sooner declared by almost all the countries including India.

Indian society faced many negative consequences related to health, education, economy, migration of labour, psychological problems etc. In between all this problem one more major problem came in light that is violence against women. This problem raised all over the world and several countries have declared special policies, laws and some special programs to deal with violence against women in homes.

The National commission for women has reported a rise of 100% in complaints related to violence against women after the nationwide lockdown was declared in March 2020. The NCW launched a nationwide Whatsapp number 7217735372 for women to report domestic abuse. Domestic violence is not only a physical violence but it is any behavioural act to gain power and control over a spouse partner or intimate family member.

The effect of domestic violence can be physical, verbal, emotional, sexual and it can range from humiliating, insulting, controlling behaviour physical behaviour to sexual violence.

Review of Literature

This paper reviews the reports on domestic violence, published reports as well as mass media literature on the same during lockdown and the measures taken by Government to tackle this issue. It also reviews some research papers.

1. Domestic violence during COVID-19 Pandemic's lessons to be learned by Tharun R Krishan, Halit Saadiah Hiussan, Veena A Santyanarayana, Prabha S Chandra.

In this paper they discuss about the domestic violence, challenges in data gathering and provide recommendations for various stakeholders to address DV in future pandemic.

2. COVID 19 and Domestic Violence: A possible Public Health Crises by Anant Kumar, It Reviews the negative consequences of DV on individuals and families but it also reviews the positive impact of living together during pandemic.
3. Examining the impact of lock down due to COVID -19 on domestic violence: An evidence from India by Monob Das, Arijit Das, Ashish Mandal.
4. A Review of domestic violence against women in India during lockdown by Suman Singh, Rituparna Bhattacharya. The objective of their study is to critically analyse available instances of DV in India during quarantine and deduce the reason for the same.

Causes of Domestic Violence

This pandemic caused economic and social stresses as well as restriction on movements which increased the number of women and girls facing abuse and domestic violence cases. Following causes of domestic violence are considered at prime level-

1. Loss of jobs and loss of income, especially for the males and they faced financial insecurity for their families. Male members started to consume alcohol and if stopped doing so by any family member they started violence at home.
2. In India we have patriarchal society and domestic work is primarily considered as a women’s job only. During the lockdown maid services for domestic help were stopped and female were extra burdened which may also be a cause of domestic violence.
3. During lockdown people are forced to live at home so it is noticed that the visit of porn sites, sexual videos, adult movies is increased by students and adults. This became a major cause for increasing abusing and domestic violence.
4. Most of the working men and women started to work from home. Because of this their working hours are increased and their mental stress, tensions, psychological pressure is increased which results in domestic violence.
5. In Indian society, men think that their female partners are not equal to them, their wife do not have right equal to them and husband has a right to control her. Men think that they have valid reasons to beat or abuse their wife.

Aim of the Study

The paper will explore the reason of domestic violence during COVID-19, Data on domestic violence and government effort to tackle this problem as well as suggestion to solve this problem.

Number of Domestic Violence Cases during Covid

The National Family Health surveyed 22 states and union territories in survey 5 and its report is released on 12 December 2019-20. As per the report, over 30% women suffered physical and sexual violence by their spouses in 5 states which are Karnataka, Assam, Mizoram, Telangana and Bihar. About 44.4% women aged 18-49 years experienced domestic violence by their spouse in Karnataka, about 40% women in Bihar, about 39% in Mizoram, 36.9% in Telangana and 32% in Assam suffered spousal physical and sexual violence

according to National Family Health Survey-5 while it was only 20.6% in 2015-16(survey -4).

As per report of NFHS-5 (2019-20), domestic violence faced by women aged 18-49 years is increased as compared to NFHS-4 (2015-16). National commission of women reported an exponential rise in domestic violence during the pandemic-particularly during the lockdown.

During the first four phases of the COVID-19 related lockdown, Indian women filed more domestic violence complaints than recorded in a similar period in the last 10 years. In 2020. Between March 25 and May 31, 1477 complaints of domestic violence were made by women. This 68-day period recorded more complaints than those received between March and May in the previous 10 years. According to recent data of National Legal Service Authority, the rates of domestic violence have increased all over the nation after lockdown.

The National Commission for Women received over 13,000 complaints of domestic violence during the COVID – lockdown in between March to September. Out of these highest percent cases were from Uttar Pradesh and Delhi. From Uttar Pradesh 5,470 complaints and from Delhi 1,697 complaints were reported by women.

State & UT	Cases
Uttar Pradesh	5470
Delhi	1697
Maharashtra	865
Haryana	731
Bihar	659
Rajasthan	572
Madhya Pradesh	479
West Bengal	342
Tamil Nadu	341
Karnataka	322

Table1-Top 10 states & Union Territories reporting the greatest number of domestic violence cases between March 2020- September 2020

Table-1 shows that highest complaints registered from Uttar Pradesh (5,740) followed by Delhi (1,697). Maharashtra along with Haryana, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh also featured among top states in the National Crime Records Bureau data and complaints from North-East States are lesser in comparison to other states in India as shown below in Table-2.

State& UT	Cases
Dadar & Nagar Haveli	8
Meghalaya	6
Manipur	5
Puducherry	5
Daman & Diu	4
Tripura	4
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1
Arunachal Pradesh	1
Lakshadweep	1
Nagaland	1

Table 2-Top 10 states & Union Territories reporting least number of domestic violence cases between March 2020- September 2020

Steps Taken by Government to stop domestic violence

1. The National Commission for women launched a WhatsApp number 7217735372 to report cases of domestic violence which have seen a rise during the lockdown period.
2. The NCW started audio-visual media outreach programme which aims to create awareness about legal provisions for protection of women and to apprise women to approach the government through various helplines and institutional support.
3. The ministry of women and child development had conducted special sensitization webinars to provide psychological and legal counselling to help the victims.
4. The government directed the District Magistrates to provide logistical support to helpline personnel and to make duty rosters for concerned officers so that they are able to render help to affected victims.
5. The Jammu and Kashmir High Court has directed all courts in Ladakh and J&K to treat cases of domestic violence "as urgent" and has suggested the government to designate certain pharmacies or grocery stores as safe spaces for women. Court also suggested to increase the availability of tele /online legal and counselling services and conduct awareness campaigns increasing the publicity of steps being taken by the government.
6. Odisha and Tamil Nadu have started Phone-Up-Programmes under which concerned departments and social welfare workers contact or keep an eye on women who had previously complained of domestic violence.
7. The Kerala Government has launched a 24-hour WhatsApp number to report such cases, in addition to child and women helpline Mitra numbers.

Some reasons why the reporting of domestic violence was reduced during lockdown

1. During lockdown women were unable to move to safer places in cases of violence and abuse.
2. In India only 38% of women own phones and fewer have an internet connection, so in spite of the WhatsApp number launched by the NCW they were unable to use this service to protect them.
3. During lockdown women were unable to contact and take the help of their natal family.
4. During lockdown police officers were at the frontline to tackle COVID-19 issues so they were not able to help victims effectively, and NGOs were not able to have physical interactions with them. The protection officers were not able to visit households of victims.

Suggestions to stop domestic violence

1. India's public health system must view domestic violence as a public health concern and respond to it on an urgent basis.
2. Mental health therapy and telemedicine may come to the aid of those facing violence.
3. New legislation is needed to provide for granting a big sum of money that is paid by the husband /spouse or male relative to a victim of domestic violence. The money may be utilized for rehabilitation of the victim.
4. Sexual material should be censored, ban on pornography should be strictly implemented. The porn sites should be blocked.
5. Parents and teachers should strive to infuse good moral and religious values in children and serve as a role model.
6. It is important to increase the awareness about the Rights, Laws and the Organizations that are related to domestic violence. The list of NGOs helpline numbers 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.
7. The curriculum of the schools and the universities needs to include gender sensitization and awareness programs related to domestic violence. It will definitely bring the change in the mindset of the future generations.

Conclusion

DV can be controlled even if we face any future pandemics again by the enlargement of helplines numbers and counselling services. It should be so approachable by which low literacy women can also share their problems. DV can be controlled if family Laws and justice system can be modified. The nationwide campaign should be start to promote awarded about domestic violence.

References

1. Chandra J. 2020. NCW Launches Domestic Violence Helpline. Retrieved April 29, 2020, from *The Hindu*: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/ncw-launches-domestic-violence-helpline/article31312219.ece>.

2. Dedhia S. 2020. Coronavirus Outbreak: Condom Sales in India Go Through the Roof. Retrieved May 03, 2020, from Hindustan Times: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/sex-and-relationships/coronavirus-outbreak-condom-sales-in-india-go-through-the-roof/story-ibQPGqFNS469BBWkuWjcK.html>.
3. EPW Engage. 2020. COVID-19, Domestic Abuse and Violence: Where Do Indian Women Stand? Retrieved May 03, 2020, from Engage: <https://www.epw.in/engage/article/covid-19-domestic-abuse-and-violence-where-do>.
4. Gearhart S., Patron M.P., Hammond T.A., Goldberg D.W., Klein A., Horney J.A. The impact of natural disasters on domestic violence: an analysis of reports of simple assault in Florida (1999–2007) *Violence Gend.* 2018;5(2):87–92.
5. Govt of India. 2005. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act; p. 2005. Retrieved 2020, from Legislative Department: <http://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A2005-43.pdf>.
6. Moutafis R. 2020. The Shocking Correlation between Quarantine and Domestic Violence. Retrieved May 03, 2020, from Medium Women: <https://medium.com/@rheamoutafis/the-shocking-correlation-between-quarantine-and-domestic-violence-b40425eff605>.
7. Owen L. 2020. Coronavirus: Five Ways Virus Upheaval Is Hitting Women in Asia. Retrieved May 04, 2020, from BBC News: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-51705199>.
8. Schneider D., Harknett K., McLanahan S. Intimate partner violence in the great recession. *Demography.* 2016;53(2):471–505.
9. Tandon R. The COVID-19 pandemic, personal reflections on editorial responsibility. *Asian J. Psyctr.* 2020;50
10. UN Women. 2020. Violence Against Women and Girls: the Shadow Pandemic. Retrieved May 3, 2020, from United Nations: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic>.
11. Domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: Lessons to be learned Tharun R Krishnan¹, Siti Halimatul Saadiah Hassan², Veena A Satyanarayana³, Prabha S Chandra¹
12. COVID-19 and Domestic Violence: A Possible Public Health Crisis, Anant Kumar
13. Examining the impact of lockdown (due to COVID-19) on Domestic Violence (DV): An evidence from India, Manob Das,* Arijit Das, and Ashis Mandal
14. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. 2020. <https://www.mohfw.gov.in> (Assessed 2nd July 2020)
15. The Times of India. 2020. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/relationships/love-sex/domestic-violence-cases-in-india-on-the-rise-during-lockdown-says-report/articleshow/75801752.cms> (Assessed 25th June 2020)
16. National Family Health Survey-4. 2015. 2016. <http://rchiips.org/NFHS/nfhs3.shtml> (Assessed 28th June 2020)
17. Hindustan Times. 2020. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/domestic-violence-during-covid-19-lockdown-emerges-as-serious-concern/story-zMRq3NnnFvOehgLOOPpe8J.html> 26-4-20. (Assessed 28th June 2020)
18. A Review of Domestic Violence against Women in India during Lockdown, *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 13 Pages Posted: 1 Nov 2020 Suman Singh Banaras Hindu University (BHU) Rituparna Bhattacharyya Alliance for Community Capacity Building in North East India Date Written: September 30, 2020