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RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPACT OF LOCKDOWN ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is one of society's most harmful gendered afflictions. Domestic violence (physical, sexual, and emotional) has been linked to an elevated risk of psychopathologies as well as physical morbidity, according to researchers. In India, there are a lot of domestic violence instances, and they're getting worse at an alarming rate because of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the current study looked into incidents of domestic abuse among Indian women. The issues surrounding the increase in domestic violence incidents during the COVID-19 lockdown period were investigated using newspaper reports from the previous five years. When compared to previous years, the COVID-19 period saw a significant increase in domestic violence cases. In addition, the number of cases was larger in the early stages of the pandemic but gradually declined as time passed. The COVID-19 epidemic had an extraordinary and worsening impact on women. As a strategy to preserve the public's health and well-being, home containment has resulted in greater suffering for women, including disease-related pain and increased domestic violence. Finally, a lack of skilled guardians was caused by a shortage of police officers and travel restrictions on both formal and informal sources. We find that during the COVID-19 lockdown, disruptions in people's daily activities gave greater opportunity for domestic abuse perpetrators.

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INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is defined as violent behavior in a family or couple relationship that is based on cohabitation. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), domestic abuse can take many different forms: In a relationship, anyone can become a victim of abuse. However, research shows that women and children are the most vulnerable, while the old and disabled are more likely to be neglected. As a result, domestic violence encompasses a wide range of behaviours, many of which are subtle and aimed at controlling the other person. Mistreatment does not always show up in the open, but it usually follows a spectrum of violence that starts with intimidation, progresses to isolation, devaluation, and finally full-fledged abuse. The majority of the time, the perpetrator does not have a recognized psychological disorder, according to the sector surveys. In circumstances when the abuser is suffering from a full-fledged psychological or psychiatric problem, however, the pandemic's limits could be used as an excuse to avoid seeking professional help or taking psychotropic drugs, making the disorder more severe and hazardous.

The abuser's possessive and destructive control drives a relational dynamic of chronic frustration, stress, and disappointment in the intra-family setting, according to the analysis. To break free from this cycle, the victim must recognize that she or he is in a violent relationship. However, many victims do not report their abuse because they are afraid of sanctions or the influence on their family. Because these crimes are rarely reported, they are frequently underestimated and go unpunished, allowing the abuse to continue and wreaking havoc on the victim's psycho-physical health and the home environment.

METHODS

The information in this paper comes from secondary sources such as the internet, websites, articles, books, journals, and research papers. This research examines the negative aspects of pandemic lockdown, as well as the consequences for the victim and her family. The application of several ideas allows researchers to investigate domestic violence during a pandemic from a range of aspects and viewpoints. Because research involves a vast volume of text, its scope is broad. As a result, the present study employs subjective and qualitative research

methodologies, which are followed by a content collected from the secondary sources to complete and conclude.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on domestic violence in India: The Prime Minister of India announced a one-day nationwide lockdown on March 22, 2020. To stop the spread of COVID-19, the lockdown was extended for a week, then for 21 days, and eventually for many more days. Under the Catastrophe Management Act of 2005, India labelled COVID-19 a "notified disaster." Women were especially vulnerable to domestic violence as a result of the pandemic's extended lockdown and other social distancing tactics. Inside their homes, women were combating a darkness pandemic. Domestic violence allegations in India increased after the country's state-wide shutdown, according to data from the National Commission for Women. Domestic abuse reports have risen in Tamil Nadu, according to the police. During the lockdown, they got about 25 calls each day and recorded at least 40 occurrences of this nature. Similarly, the Bangalore Police Department recorded an increase in domestic abuse victim complaints from 10 to 25 per day. Domestic violence incidents rose across the country during the lockdown, according to data gathered from various sources. However, existing literature on domestic violence during the lockdown is scarce. Moreover, the lockdown situation is different from other types of disasters. Almost all the states were affected by the presence of this virus at a single time. The question remains as to what factors are associated with an increase in domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic? Whether any theoretical framework could explain these factors? Domestic violence is not new, pervasive globally and it would be wrong to deny the chances of an increase in violence against women during the pandemic.

Domestic violence in the context of COVID-19: Domestic violence is a term that encompasses all sorts of domestic violence perpetrated by one family member against another, including stalking, physical, sexual, and emotional violence, as well as child abuse, which includes sexual, physical, emotional, and neglect. In many states across the country, including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, and others, domestic violence and intimate partner violence has increased. Similar trends are being observed in India, a country known for gender-based violence (and, according to popular opinion, the fourth worst country for gender equality). Domestic violence has been reported to worsen in times of social, economic, and financial difficulty, such as the COVID-19 induced lockdown.

Managing the uncertainty and fear associated with COVID-19, disruption of family routine, increased time spent with a violent partner, and isolation from others have all been identified as factors that precipitate and worsen the occurrence of violence, as the lockdown meant families huddled together and stayed in the close confines of their homes for extended periods of time. As people become imprisoned in their houses, physical, emotional, and sexual violence becomes more common, often as a result of the offender being exposed to heightened levels of stress brought on by the pandemic's unintended repercussions. Due to the existing restriction on visits during the lockdown, the perpetration of violence could continue unabated and possibly intensify, with little or no repercussions for the perpetrator. The financial hardship connected with the lockout has been known to cause stress and frustration, as well as negative coping techniques like substance misuse, all of which

are recognised to be baseline triggers for violence. In large cities in Nigeria, such as Lagos, which was the hub of the epidemic, and Abuja, the federal capital, financial distress was shown to have led to an increase in the prevalence of spousal abuse. Increased violence towards children and spouses, who are particularly vulnerable to domestic violence, has also been linked to poor mental health and increased internet reading of pornographic content. Numerous countries, including the United States, China, and many European countries, reported an upsurge in the incidence of domestic violence during the lockdown. In places where tight lockdown measures were in place, India saw a 131 percent spike in domestic violence.

Emergencies exacerbate domestic violence: We know that women are more vulnerable during emergencies, especially health disasters like pandemics. We also know that during times of economic distress, violent, abusive, impulsive, compulsive, and dominating behaviour and hostility directed at cohabiting partners and romantic partners increases. Women whose livelihoods have been impacted by the crisis may suddenly be in financial difficulty, which is one of the barriers to escaping a violent household. Women who may have been putting money down to leave may now have to spend it elsewhere.

The lockdown affects the situation further: The National Commission of Women (NCW) observed an increase in the number of domestic violence complaints received via email within a few days after the shutdown in India. Because the majority of complaints come from women who write their grievances by mail and may not be able to use the internet, the NCW chairperson feels the true amount is likely to be higher. The NCW received 310 reports of domestic violence and 885 complaints of other forms of violence against women between the beginning of March and April 5th, many of which are domestic in origin, such as sexual offences, polygamy, dowry deaths, and dowry harassment. The number of cases reported is unlikely to reflect the real increase in domestic violence. This is due to the fact that those who are locked up with their abusers may not have access to a phone or the space and time to call for help. The majority of options for seeking aid or physically removing themselves from their conditions are severely limited. Being trapped in a room with violent or manipulative people can result in increased threats, physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, humiliation, intimidation, and controlling behaviour. A lockdown increases the capacity to isolate a person from family and friends, track their travels, and limit access to financial resources, career possibilities, education, and medical treatment. These behaviours frequently have long-term consequences for people and can have a considerable impact on their mental health and well-being.

CONCLUSION

The data showing a drop in the number of reports of violence is concerning. Personal limitation measures during the pandemic are likely to be a serious risk factor for domestic violence, which could be fueled by factors such as:

- Close proximity in terms of shared space and time between the victim and the abuser;
- Increased stress as a result of societal, economic, and psychological reasons;
- A reduction in the victim's interaction with outsiders;

- A lack of possibilities for the victim to escape abuse.

We believe it is critical that the responsible authorities and organizations be watchful and develop and maintain innovative victim communication tactics. As a result, we advise that information programmes and support initiatives be expanded across all mass media (TV, social media, cell phones):

- Encourage victims to report assault while the abuser is not present;
- Keep teachers and educational institutions in touch with young people online, even when they are isolated;
- Allow victims to report crimes more quickly by transmitting simple codes or symbols to toll-free phones;
- Encourage family members, acquaintances, and neighbours with information or suspicions to report cases;
- Ensure that victims who disclose acts of violence are protected.

A greater emphasis should be placed on families with a history of domestic violence and who are already known to the police. In these instances, it would be desirable to establish an online social support service that intervenes on a regular and obligatory basis, even if there is no present active request for assistance, to ensure the family's safety. If these ideas are implemented, victims will be protected while also bringing to light concealed cases of domestic abuse, and some crimes will be avoided entirely. Because of the increased opportunities for an abuser with his captive cohabitants and reduced contact outside the home, the forced isolation of families in their homes as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic may create a dangerous situation with the potential to trigger domestic conflicts and episodes of abuse within the family that may go unpunished.

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