



CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AMIDST COVID – 19

¹Bhagyashree Kulkarni, ²Sakshi Datre, ³Pournima Patil

¹Assistant Professor and HOD - Department of Forensic Psychology, Institute of Forensic Science, Mumbai

²Student – T.Y.B.Sc, Institute of Forensic Science, Mumbai

³Student – T.Y.B.Sc, Institute of Forensic Science, Mumbai

Abstract

The current research paper discusses the increase in domestic violence against women during the pandemic and finding out the causes for the same. Various cases from different states are collected for determining the different types of abuse faced by the women during lockdown. The various types of causes and their effects on women are been discussed in the paper. Similarly, case laws related to domestic violence are quoted as well.

Keywords: Abuse, domestic violence, lockdown, pandemic.

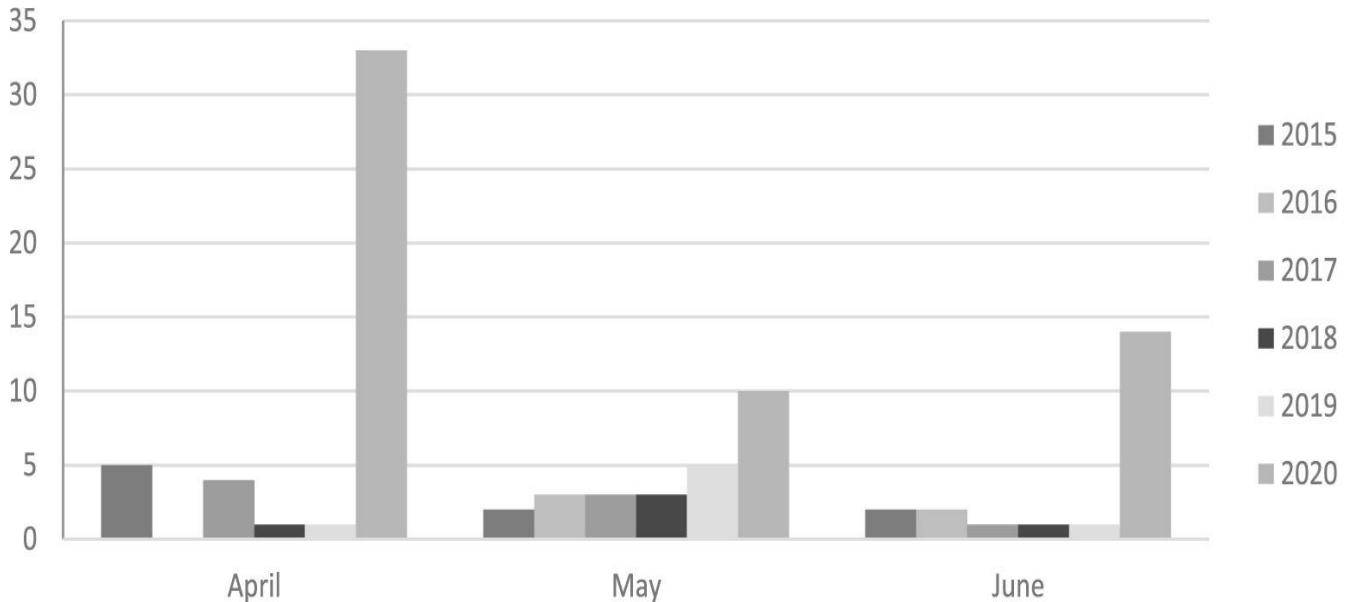
Covid-19 cases increased drastically in the United States and other countries during March 2020. Due to this, the lockdown was imposed all over the world. Schools and colleges were closed, various workers got unemployed while some employees worked from home. Every member of the family was stuck at home and no one was allowed to go out. People stayed at home to decrease the covid cases, but simultaneously there was a greater increase in domestic violence cases against women. Protection of women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 defines domestic violence as physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and financial abuse against a woman by her partner or family members residing in a joint family and also includes unlawful dowry demands (htt1). Domestic violence against women not only refers to the violence caused by their intimate partner but also by elderly people or their in-laws or other members of the family. Women may suffer from either physical, sexual, emotional, or psychological violence. According to WHO, one in every three women experiences at least any type of domestic violence in her lifetime if globally considered.

There were several causes for an increase in domestic violence during the pandemic, for example, lack of employment, stress, economic disruption, and slowed down business. But the main reason behind this was economic disruption due to unemployment. Males being the only bread earner of the family when being unemployed exerted more pressure on their family, and especially their spouse and the conditions became even worse if the female was earning while the male didn't. For females, being employed is a way to improve the financial status of their family and solve other challenges rather than addressing their husbands every time. But if the same woman was unemployed, she had to depend on her husband every time, and also locked up at home 24/7 which eventually led to domestic violence.

Due to lockdown and social distancing norms, women were confined to their homes even after knowing they were most likely to get affected by family violence, with no social support provided. During the second month of lockdown, domestic violence cases doubled. The complaints rose from 116 in March's first week to 257 in the final week of March. The National Commission for Women (NCW) provided official data which said that there was a 2.5 times increase in the registered complaints of domestic violence against women in April 2020. 1,477 complaints were registered between 25th March to 31st May as received by NCB. Between the age group 15 to 49 years, there were about 243 million girls and women who faced domestic violence in the year 2020. It was estimated that the red zone districts which were imposed with greater restrictions had domestic violence complaints 131% greater than that of the green zone districts which were imposed with fewer restrictions. Not only physical or sexual abuse but there were cases where dowry was still taken that subsequently led to domestic violence.

During the pandemic, about 50% of violence was verbatim abuse while 40% was sexual and 36% was physical violence. When surveyed, the majority of women believed that domestic violence is common for them, but due to the lockdown, it has increased to a greater extent. 7 in 10 women believe that domestic violence had increased due to the lockdown which led to a psychological impact on their life due to which they faced emotional instability.

Mentioned below is a graphical representation of the number of domestic violence cases against women reported in the past 5 years.



Graphical representation of the data

As mentioned in the above graph, the number of domestic violence cases increased from 2015 to 2020 in the months of April, May, and June respectively. More cases were found in the month of April and May due to greater lockdown restrictions but it declined a little until the month of June due to fewer restrictions or the unlocking process.

The following cases were quoted for interpreting the causes and effects of domestic violence against women.

CASE STUDY I

Name: X

AGE: 44 years old

Gender: Female

Education/qualification: Worked as an employee at Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital

Eyewitnesses: A and his wife B

The incident took place in the Budh Vihar market in Delhi on the 10th of April. X(44-year-old) and Y were married for 9 months, Y used to work for a matrimonial site and Y suspected his wife of cheating on him as she continuously denied his request to leave her job at Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi. He was waiting for her wife to return at an expected time, 10:00 AM and when X returned from work at almost 1:20 PM, Y ambushed her on her way home. Eyewitnesses A and B (55 years old) overheard that Y was asking his wife to come home with him. Y continuously kept asking her to go with him while she kept saying that she would only go to her house.

The couple was standing right outside A's shop of puncture repairing. He tried to pull her but she rescued her hand from his grip then he took out the knife from underneath his shirt and started stabbing her non-stop and stabbed her almost 26 times. This incident was caught on a local CCTV camera. "He had a pervert mind and an unreal sense of attachment to her," the police said. When asked if he had a psychological assessment done, the policeman said that he seemed stable and did not show any need for such a check-up.

"He was of sound mind for certain. There was no need for a psychiatrist," the police said. Y was arrested a few mins after the incident and was taken to Rohini's Vijay Vihar police station. Y was booked for Murder (Section 302 of IPC) and was moved to the Tihar Jail on the evening of 11 April 2020.

CASE STUDY II

Name: A

AGE: 22 years old

Gender: Female

Profession: Houseworker

The shocking incident was reported on 20 March, 2021 in the Rampur district of Uttar Pradesh, India. about 200 km from Delhi. The couple got married two years ago. X her husband worked as a daily wage labourer and A was a homemaker. The husband, identified as 25-year-old X admitted to police that he stitched his wife's genitals with aluminium wires because he suspected her of cheating on him. When her answer was no, the doubtful X asked his wife to take a "fidelity test" and prove her innocence towards him, but still continued beating her even after she agreed to undergo the test.

X then tied A's hands and feet before allegedly sewing her genitals with an aluminium thread. After the incident, X fled the spot, leaving his wife profusely bleeding. She shouted for help and then the mother alerted the police, and also arranged for an ambulance to bring her to a local hospital. The mother filed a complaint at the Milak police station. Doctors informed that A had two stitches on her private part.

After lodging the FIR, teams were dispatched to arrest the X, and on Saturday night he faced charges under IPC sections 498-A (husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 506 (criminal intimidation), 326 (Voluntarily causing grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means).

CASE STUDY III

Name: Y

AGE: Undisclosed

Gender: Female

Profession: Undisclosed

The shocking incident was reported on March 2021 in the Nellore district. X lived in Gautam Nagar in Ayyavaripalli, Sitaramapuram Mandal. On October 25, 2020, he was married to a young woman Y from Alavalapadu in Prakasam district's PCP Mandal. In the starting, their married life went smoothly but after that, X started harassing Y for dowry. X allegedly sexually assaulted his wife two days before the incident. She was supposed to have been strangled to death but X resisted. He hanged the wife to death in the house without anyone suspecting it.

After that he informed the parents that his wife had committed suicide. He said the same thing to his in-laws and tried to convince them. But after investigation, the scene completely changed. The victim allegedly had bruises on her neck. X was suspected to have murdered his wife. Relatives of the deceased, who came to Gautam Nagar, lodged a complaint with the police suspecting foul play. The police immediately rushed to the spot and conducted an inquiry in the presence of the Tahsildar. Later, a post-mortem was performed on the victim due to the injuries which were inflicted on the body. Police said that the case would be fully investigated and court gave appropriate punishment for the offender.

INTERPRETATION:

Even though the lockdown was imposed for preventing the spread of Covid 19, it eventually led to a drastic increase in domestic violence cases all over the world. Women were able to walk and stay free without any restrictions before lockdown, but post lockdown all of their freedom was taken away. Women even if a housewife or working person had to do their household chores along with their office work with no help from other family members. Also, if the husband was unemployed all the responsibilities were imposed upon them. Alcohol consumption by the husband on a daily basis was the major cause of an increase in domestic violence cases. Similarly, there was a period where the availability of alcohol was limited due to which it was difficult for men to cope up with their stress and hence tried to be dominant on their spouse. Many women faced sexual and physical abuse during the lockdown period.

The above-mentioned cases were quoted for interpreting the causes and effects of domestic violence on women.

The first case was of a female worker who was working as an employee at a hospital in Delhi. Her husband suspected her of having an extramarital affair and misbehaved with her. On a day when she was returning to her home, the accused stabbed her 26 times with a knife claiming that she had an affair at the hospital and was angry because of which he killed her. As per the researcher, it seemed that there was a lack of communication between the partners because of which the husband was more suspicious of his wife and misbehaved with her. This suspicious nature of him however might have led to an increase in aggression leading to the cause of death. A feeling of insecurity by the husband as he might be unemployed but the wife was employed might also be the reason why he wanted her to leave the job.

The other case was again of suspicion in which the husband stitched the genitals of his wife as he suspected her of having an extramarital affair and asked her for a fidelity test. As per the researcher, the husband might be very aggressive, and because of this he grew suspicious of his wife.

The next case was related to dowry in which the husband strangled his wife to death for the sake of dowry. He claimed that she had committed suicide but the strangulation marks found in the post-mortem report confirmed her death by strangulation. As per the researcher, dowry has always been a crucial part that has ultimately caused domestic violence. Even after marriage, women are assaulted physically and sexually to meet the dowry demands of their in laws family. It has always been a major cause of an increase in domestic violence in society.

CAUSES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

Violence against women is due to a variety of factors, not just one. Research has increasingly concentrated on the interconnectedness of diverse components, which should enhance our comprehension of the issue in many cultural contexts. Women have remained disproportionately vulnerable to violence against them due to a number of institutionalized, complicated, and interwoven social and cultural variables, all of which are reflections of historically uneven power relations between men and women. Socioeconomic forces, the family institution—where power relations are enforced—fear of and control over female sexuality, the notion that men are inherently superior, as well as legal and cultural restrictions—which have historically denied

women and children an independent legal and social status—all contribute to these unequal power relations. These are the factors that contribute to domestic violence:

- a) Cultural
- b) Economic
- c) Legal
- d) Political.

1. It is not required for two individuals from different cultures to be aware of cultural differences when they decide to engage in matrimony. It may appear promising at first, but cultural differences may eventually become one of the most prevalent causes of domestic violence. What is suitable in one culture may not be appreciated in another. As a result, one of the major reasons of marital violence will emerge.

If partners do not take a mindful approach to cultural differences, it may lead to domestic violence reasons. It has the potential to jeopardize the future. How should the children be raised? What cultural ideology should be followed? If couples do not share cultural compatibility and/or appreciate one other's decisions, a lot can happen.

2. In former times, patriarchy predominated in the structure of society. Therefore, it is not totally feasible to completely abolish one of the main causes of domestic violence all at once, even if the condition of patriarchy and male domination does not exist in all areas of society. Therefore, one of the main causes of domestic violence is the chauvinistic superiority complex and its intrinsic immorality.

3. There is economic aggression in relationships between intimate partners. It reflects a situation in which a husband has influence over a woman's ability to acquire, use, and maintain financial resources. A growing social concern is domestic economic violence against women. Through economic exploitation, job sabotage, and economic control, an intimate partner can create an environment of economic violence. From "denying women their most basic needs, such as food, clothes, shelter, and so on, to more complicated requirements, including their economic independence and freedom to participate in household purchasing decisions," economic violence against women may take many different forms. Economic violence may force women to beg for money or place them on a strict allowance.

4. The religious factors are a significant kind of dominance over women, even if it is not direct and obvious. Religion draws conclusions about how our civilization was set up. If women fail to follow the religious beliefs, she may be verbally abused by her family members and her in laws for not following the rituals. This also contributes to the performance of domestic violence against women.

5. Domestic violence may also occur from neglecting marital responsibilities due to extramarital affairs or a lack of faith possibly.

6. Sociological factors including poverty, unemployment, status differences, drug addiction, and dominating behaviour are also responsible for domestic violence.

7. One of the valid reasons for battered woman syndrome stated in the list above in the research paper includes violence related to dowry. A dowry, also known as the gifting away of the Indian marriage, is the cash payment made by the bride's family to the bridegroom's family. Dowry deaths are young women who commit suicide after being repeatedly molested and mistreated by their spouses and in-laws. In certain cases, setting the woman on fire results in her death.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LAWS (Kumari, 2020)

- There are several Laws in India that directly deals with the protection of married women from their partner and their partner's family.
- There are various provisions being made for the protection of women against Domestic Violence under the statute such as Section 304B of the Indian Penal Code relating to dowry death.
- Under Section 313-316 of the Indian Penal Code female infanticide has been made punishable which implies forcefully ending the pregnancy of women.
- Other Sections of the Indian Penal Code dealing with these matters are Section 305-306 related to the Abetment of Suicide and 340, 349 of the Indian Penal Code respectively wrongful confinement and wrongful restraint.
- A complaint may also be lodged under Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code for Cruelty which also falls under DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

[1]-Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act, 2005

This is an act of the Indian Parliament enacted to protect women from Domestic Violence. It prohibits a wide range of Physical, Sexual, Emotional & Economical abuse against women and all these are broadly defined under the Act. It provides security to women in a family from men in a family. The extent of the Act covers not only the protection of women who are married to men but also women who are in Live-in-relationship, just as family members including Grandmothers, Mothers, etc. A woman has the right to be liberated from any type of violence under this Act. Under this law, women can look for security against Domestic Violence, Financial Compensation, right to live in their mutual house and they can get maintenance from their abuser in case they are living separated.

This law is to guarantee that women don't get kicked out of their own houses and can support themselves if they have been abused. It also ensures the protection of women from their abusers.

[2]- Section 498A of the IPC (Indian Penal Code)

This is a Criminal Law, which applies to husbands or family members of husbands who are merciless to women. Under Section 498A of the IPC, harassment for Dowry by the family members of the husband or by the husband is recognized as a Crime. This harassment can be of any type either Physical or Mental. Despite the fact that Marital Rape isn't considered a Crime in India, forced sex with one's wife can be viewed as Cruelty under this Section. Section 498A has a vast scope. It also includes any and all

intentional behaviors against woman which force the woman to attempt suicide or risk to life or grave injury or risk to limb or overall health. Here, health incorporates the physical and mental health of the women.

[3]-Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961

This is a Criminal Law that punishes the giving and taking of Dowry. The tradition of dowry itself is banned under the Dowry Prohibition Act, of 1961. According to this law, gives, takes, or even demands dowry, they can be imprisoned for a half year (i.e. for 6 months) or they can be fined up to Five Thousand Rupees.

CONCLUSION:

The research paper provided information regarding an increase in the domestic violence during lockdown. Few case studies were quoted which formed the basis for interpreting the causes and effects of domestic violence against women. It was found that no one cause was the contributing factor for the increase in domestic violence, but all the factors such as social, cultural or financial causes were equally responsible for domestic violence. Various laws related to domestic violence are also mentioned in the research paper.

REFERENCES

(n.d.). Retrieved from <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/542601/>

SakshiPost(2021, March 19). Retrieved from SakshiPost: <https://menglish.sakshi.com/amp/news/crime/mystery-shrouds-nellore-womans-death-did-husband-kill-her-dowry-132204>

Kumari, P. (2020, September 3). *Soolegal*. Retrieved from Laws against domestic violence in India: <https://www.soolegal.com/roar/laws-against-domestic-violence-in-india-1>

outlook. (2021, April 11). *outlookindia*. Retrieved from outlook: <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/india-news-delhi-40-year-old-man-kills-wife-on-suspicion-that-she-was-having-an-affair-video-of-crime-goes-viral/379911>

The Indian Express. (2021, March 23). Retrieved from The Indian Express: <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/lucknow/man-arrested-for-stitching-wifes-genitalia-with-wire-over-suspicion-of-affair-7238850/>

