

Domestic Violence against Women during COVID-19 Lockdown

**Dr. Veda C.V, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Bangalore
University, Bengaluru, Karnataka.**

**Dr. Venkataramanappa, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Bangalore
University, Bengaluru, Karnataka.**

Abstract: In India, the Domestic Violence Act, enacted in the year 2005, expands the definition of domestic violence to include any act which harms, injures, or endangers the physical or mental well-being of a woman and includes physical, verbal, emotional, sexual or economic abuse. While one-fourth of the total population is under home-isolate to control the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, another emergency is blending away from public eye that is domestic violence against women. The objectives of the study are to understand the domestic violence against women during lockdown and to suggest suitable intervention strategies for the protection of women against domestic violence. The method adopted in the study was historic research. The secondary data was collected through edited books, journals, previous studies and web sources. Usage of helplines, online counselling, psycho-social support and seeking the help of ASHA workers in community helps women to protect themselves from domestic violence. In conclusion, being stuck at home because of during COVID-19 lockdown was difficult for everyone, but it becomes a real nightmare for victims of domestic violence.

Key Words: Domestic violence, Protection, Women, Lock down.

Introduction

Women are viewed as most vulnerable group in the society along with children, elderly and person with disability. "Under humanitarian law, women are not considered "vulnerable" as such, Rather, the law recognizes that women are vulnerable in certain circumstances owing to their physical characteristics and specific needs, such as those of pregnant women, maternity cases or mothers of young children"(Internationa Committee Red Cross, 2007). Women came across various psycho-social problems such as violence, abuse and trafficking. Problems encompassing gender orientation and position makes the women in community increasingly vulnerable for violence at home. Being dependent on male from childhood to old age in family, women are getting less significance in family as well as in society.

Review of Literature

It is very much reported that during a war, a catastrophic event or a pandemic, Women's bodies bear the more regrettable brunt of the emergency. Violence at home against women is now across the board and under-detailed in India. Presently, at the hour of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations perceives Violence at home against women as a "shadow pandemic". The COVID-19 pandemic has set off an immense spike in violence at home against women in China, Australia, France, the U.K., Spain, and Bangladesh, among others. In India, as well, the National Commission for Women has announced a huge increment in trouble calls from survivors of violence at home since the pandemic broke out(Natarajan, 2020).

As families are lockdown together at home, there is mounting disappointment among individuals prompting increasingly sexual violence against women. We know about conjugal assault circumstances and this has been expanded since the hour of lockdown. Women don't have backing or assets to report violence against their intimate partner.(Vaiphel, 2020).

“The national strategy against COVID -19 emphasises that home is the safest place to be. Ironically, for domestic violence victims, home is the most unsafe place to be quarantined as they are forced to live with their abusers. Although asking people to stay at home is an effective and welcome anti-COVID-19 strategy, home is not the safe haven it should be for many women because abusers have increased access to their victims and survivors have decreased or no access to resources”(Natarajan, 2020).

During lockdown, Women and girls are much more exposed to sexual violence, whatever the motives of the aggressor may be. The most effected section of women are those who are dealing with mental illness, homeless and migrates women, women with disability, adolescent girls and elderly women. The major factors for violence is due to lack of financial resources and less or no social support.

Method

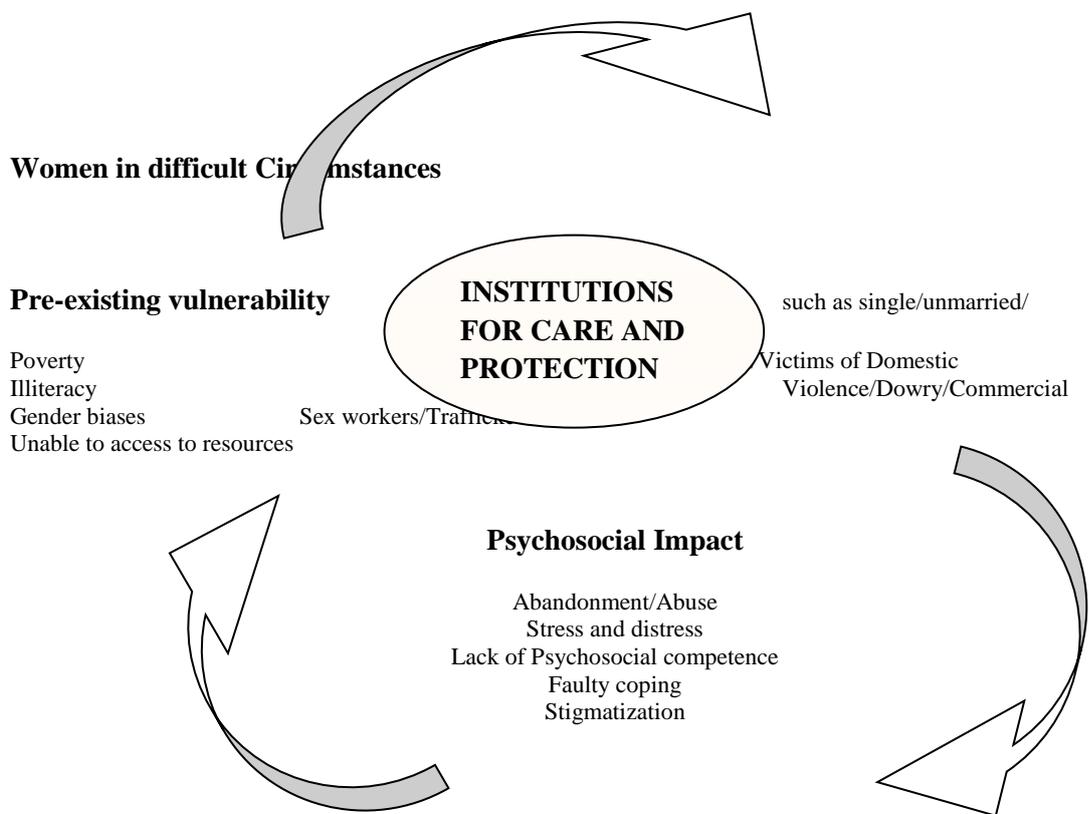
The **historic research design** has been applied to the present study. The secondary data was collected through edited books, journals, previous studies and web sources.

Conceptual Framework

Research has shown that there is a relationship between certain personality traits and a vulnerability to domestic violence. Lack of awareness about forms of violence, lack of

information about legal and human rights, economic dependency can make an individual women vulnerable to managing problematic situations (for example, sexual abuse, economic abuse, physical abuse etc.). Prolonged period of psycho-social issues such as abuse, violence leads to changes in personality that increase denial, rigidity, depression, as well as anxiety, panic and obsessive traits. With an increase in these symptoms, the individual is yet again more vulnerable to relying on problematic situations to manage. This result in a vicious cycle – increased vulnerability leads to lack of self esteem maladaptive coping.

THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF VULNERABILITY



Source: Adopted from the Article on “*Psychosocial issues of women in institutions*”, from *Women and Mental Health*, NIMHANS Publication number: 75, ISBN-81-86430-00-X.Pp:106

Operational definitions

Domestic Violence: In the present paper, domestic violence covers all kinds of violence faced by a woman at her “shared household”.

Protection: In this paper, Protection means protection of women against all form of violence mention in the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, such as Verbal and Emotional abuse, Sexual, economic and so on.

Lockdown: Lockdown the present paper implies a temporary condition imposed by governmental authorities (as during the outbreak of an epidemic or pandemic disease like COVID-19) in which people are required to stay in their homes and refrain from or limit activities outside the home involving public contact (Merriam-webster).

Domestic Violence against Women

Information from an ongoing methodical survey by the World Health Organization (WHO) gives comparable local gauges and recommends that women in South-East Asia (characterized as India, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bangladesh) are at a higher probability for encountering accomplice maltreatment during their lifetime than women from Europe, the Western Pacific, and conceivably the Americas (etl, 2016). In India, the Domestic Violence Act, enacted in the year 2005, expands the definition of domestic violence to include any act which harms, injures, or endangers the physical or mental well-being of a woman and includes physical, verbal, emotional, sexual or economic abuse. While one-fourth of the total population is under home-isolate to control the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, another emergency is blending away from public eye that is domestic violence against women. Violence against women has always been a social, cultural and economic issue.

“Domestic Violence can be verbal, financial, psychological and sexual. It incorporates the abuser withholding financial or medical assistance. Women are frequently the caregivers for those quarantined at home and already infected with the virus, which makes them more vulnerable to contracting the disease. Domestic Violence is established in the disparities of power and control. The abusers feel an enormous loss of power and control over their own lives due to the pandemic. They find expression for their frustration on the women in the house. Mental health issues arise out of isolation as well as reactive depression, but instead of recognising these issues and seeking professional help, people become violent” (Natarajan, 2020).

The lockdown with regard to the control of the covid-19 has essentially devastated support networks, making it undeniably hard for victims to seek help or to protect themselves from abusers. And also the victims are less likely to be able to make an immediate telephone

call in panic of being overheard by the abusers. Being stuck at home because of coronavirus is difficult for everyone, but it becomes a real nightmare for victims of domestic violence. A crucial safety net therefore must be offered to some of the most at risk women, children and anyone vulnerable to abuse in order to triumph over the immediate and long-term impact of this corona virus crisis.

Intervention Strategies

Usage of helplines for women should be encouraged to utilize the social support to protect them against domestic violence during lockdown.

The psychosocial support boosts the women's mental health by increasing their self-esteem and by reducing their fear and anxiety to face the abuser.

Online counselling services facilitate the legal information about the Acts which is helpful for women to take legal action against the abuser.

During COVID-19 lockdown, ASHA workers are active in communities. Women in remote places can seek help from them to protect themselves.

Conclusion:

The estimate that 1 in 3 women around the world have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence, mostly by an intimate partner is one that is widely cited today. Whilst this is a worldwide figure, there is variation in the prevalence of violence seen within and between communities, countries and regions. (World Health Organization, 2018). Being stuck at home because of coronavirus is difficult for everyone, but it becomes a real nightmare for victims of domestic violence. A crucial safety net therefore must be offered to some of the most at risk women, children and anyone vulnerable to abuse in order to triumph over the immediate and long-term impact of this corona virus crisis.

References:

Works Cited

etl, A. K. (2016, feb). Domestic violence against women in India: A systematic review of a decade of quantitative studies. Retrieved June 2020

International Committee Red Cross. (2007). *Women in war: a particularly vulnerable group?*

Merriam-webster. (n.d.). Retrieved june 2020, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lockdown>

Natarajan, J. (2020, April 13). Women's safety during lockdown. India. Retrieved june 2020, from <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/womens-safety-during-lockdown/article31324318.ece>

Vaiphel, D. (2020). Women and Mmental Healthin the Times of COVID-19.

Worl Health Organization. (2018). *Displaced or refugee women are at increased risk of violence. What can WHO do?* WHO.