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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING FIRST AND SECOND WAVE OF COVID IN SRINAGAR

Sabira Aalia Dkhar, Ruqia Quansar and S.M. Salim Khan

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#### Abstract

Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation. Domestic abuse, also called "domestic violence" or "intimate partner violence", can be defined as a pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels. Study design: cross-sectional study design. Research tool: semi structured pre-tested questionnaire. Sample size was calculated based on recent study on domestic violence which showed an increase of 5% during pandemic. Sampling technique was convenient purposive sampling. We had 92 participants. Out of which 42 were married women. Around 31 were of the age group 31-40. About 16 out of 92 said they have experienced domestic violence. Out of 16, 6 had experienced abuse during Covid while 10 said it started before Covid. All of the 16 women had confided about this to someone. 10 of them had never sought for help, 6 who had sought for help had received some kind of assistance.

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#### Introduction:-

One in three women worldwide, experience physical or sexual violence mostly by an intimate partner. Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation. Domestic abuse, also called "domestic violence" or "intimate partner violence", can be defined as a pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person.(1)

The UN has defined domestic violence as the "Shadow Pandemic".(2) The reason is that its presence is always there but it is not given due importance as it should or sometimes also known as hidden pandemic.

As the world went into the claws of Covid 19, many countries took resort to 'stay at home' orders and had gone into lockdown which was essential to contain the global pandemic but has brought along some unintended negative consequences. The couples were now more accessible and available hence more abuse was seen. As the fear of virus dominated our mind which hindered our movement outside our homes also the closing down of most of the resources and the all attention shifted to the disease which captured the world. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, emerging data and reports from those on the front lines, have shown that all types of violence against women, particularly domestic violence, had increased.(3)

Corresponding Author:- Sabira Aalia Dkhar

While many people preferred to stay quiet, some had sought out help and had confided about their conditions to someone close. The reasons for them to stay quiet or not to confide could have been due to multiple reasons such as the thought of future of their children, the shame of society, not being independent and the financial dependencies.

The impact of Covid lockdown and stay at home has overall increased the misery of those who were already facing the trauma of domestic violence and also increased a certain number of those who never had experienced it before. Domestic violence leaves the scar of a lifetime which makes it hard to forget and forgive. Though there are several studies which shows how domestic violence is dominant and something which needs immediate action, to screen women for abuse, integrate gender-sensitive approach in healthcare services, create community awareness.

## **Methodology:-**

### **Study design:**

The study has a descriptive cross-sectional study design.

### **Study tool:**

The study data collected was done using an online questionnaire which was pretested in a pilot study on 20 women and necessary changes in language, style and a response was done following the pre-test and then later was done through Google forms.

### **Sample size:**

Based on recent study on domestic violence showed an increase of 5% during pandemic.(4) The sample size came out to be 73. We had a total of 92 participants.

### **Study questionnaire:**

The questionnaire had three parts:

1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants
2. Experience of domestic violence among participants
3. Associated factors with domestic violence among participants

### **Selection study subjects:**

Women who were married or living with partners for more than 1 year

### **Sampling Technique:**

It was a convenient purposive sampling.

### **Statistical test:**

All analysis was done in excel for descriptive results.

## **Result:-**

A total of 92 women responded to the google forms.

Approximately 63.1% women belonged to the age group of > 30 years, 65.2% were postgraduates, 91.3% women were housewives and 54.3% women were married. (Table 1)

Almost 17.4% women reported to have experienced domestic violence in any form from their intimate partner or family member, out of which 6.5% were those who had started experiencing during Covid-19 times. (Table 2)

All the women who had experienced violence have confided to their friends or any trust worthy person, out of which 6.5% women have looked for any help to ease out this domestic violence. 17.4% who experienced violence were worried for their future. Having children, societal pressure and no one to support their decision to divorce the person were the reasons cited for staying back with the perpetrator. (Table 3)

**Table 1:-** Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Age		

≥ 30	58	63.1
31-40	31	33.7
>40	3	3.2
<b>Education</b>		
Matric	4	4.3
12 <sup>th</sup> pass	12	13.1
Graduate	16	17.4
Post-graduate	60	65.2
<b>Housewife</b>		
Yes	84	91.3
No	8	8.7
<b>Marital status</b>		
Yes	42	45.7
No	50	54.3

**Table 2:-** Experience of domestic violence among participants.

	Response	Number	Percentage
<b>Ever experienced domestic violence</b>	Yes	16	17.4
	No	76	82.6
<b>When have you experienced domestic violence?</b>	Everytime	10	10.9
	After Covid-19	6	6.5
	Not applicable	76	82.6

**Table 3:-** Associated factors with domestic violence among participants.

	Response	Number	Percentage
<b>Confided to any family member/friend</b>	Yes	16	17.4
	No	76	82.6
<b>Looked for help to reduce domestic violence</b>	Yes	6	6.5
	No	10	10.9
	Not applicable	76	82.6
<b>Received help</b>	Yes	6	6.5
	No	10	10.9
	Not applicable	76	82.6
<b>Worried for future</b>	Yes	16	17.4
	No	0	0
	Not applicable	76	82.6
<b>Reason to stay back*( N=16)</b>	Children	6	-
	Financial dependence	2	-
	No one to support	6	-
	No place to go	4	-
	Societal pressure	6	-

\*Multiple responses

**Discussion:-**

The study was done to assess the increase in domestic violence experienced by women especially during Covid-19. A total of 92 women participated in the survey.

About 63.1% participants belonged to the age group of ≥ 30 years, 33.7% belonged to the age group of 31-40 years and only 3.2% belonged to the age group of >40 years. The importance of age in experiencing domestic violence is decreasing as in recent times; the prevalence of domestic violence has been seen across all age groups – children, adolescents and even elderly. The reason can be attributed to the fact that the perpetrator vents the anger on anyone and without any hesitation as any age group is vulnerable especially when confided at home during lockdown. A study done by Mr Johnson LK (5) has reported maximum women belonging to the age group of 36-45 years and study by William Peraud(6) reported the mean age of women being 35.1 years.

Approximately 65.2% participants were postgraduates, 17.4% were graduates, 13.1% had studied till 12<sup>th</sup> standard and only 4.3% were those who had studied upto 10<sup>th</sup> standard. The education level of a women determines the extent of domestic violence one experiences as literate women are aware of their rights and may at times revolt back whereas the women who are illiterate or less educated don't have this advantage.

Almost 91.3% women were housewives and only 8.7% women were working. The women at home are at more risk of domestic violence as they are confined to their homes and the time of interaction with the abuser is more. The women who are not working have more stress at home during lockdown because there are restrictions for moving out and it causes more conflict and more chances of domestic violence.

About 54.3% women were unmarried and 45.7% women were married. The women folk at home are at risk of violence irrespective of marital status. Some young girls are even abused as the family members are more in favour of a male child and thus risking them at the hands of their family members as they are cursed and at times beaten up. There are always chances of more gender-based violence which can be seen across the age spectrum. The women are considered a weaker gender and thus male gender tried to dominant and thus making women more prone to violence at the hands of own family members or relatives. (7) Women are vulnerable irrespective of their class, socio-economic status and age. (8)

Approximately 17.4% women reported to have experienced domestic violence at any point of their lifetime and 82.6% women nullified the reports of experiencing it. Women are abused since history times as they are always considered a weaker gender with no voice of their own. The abuser usually abuses as they try to vent their frustration on their women at home. Propagation of male supremacy has always led to lowering down the status of women in society. (9) A study by Tanjir Rashid Soron has reported a higher prevalence of domestic violence experienced by women during their lifetime. (10) NFHS 4 and NFHS 5 also have reported a higher prevalence of violence across India. (11)

About 10.9% women reported to have experienced domestic violence everytime and 6.5% women reported to have experienced violence especially during Covid-19 times. A study by Priyanka Sharma has reported almost similar results of increase in domestic violence during lockdown (7.4%). (12)The Covid-19 times have led to lockdowns and restrictions all across the globe. The lockdowns have placed more chances of staying at home of abuser and thus increasing the interaction, conflicts and thus more abuse. (13)Lockdowns have let to clustering of family members in homes, more work load and more stress on the women folk of the families. (14,15)The lockdowns has led to economic instability, economic insecurities and loss of jobs which have led to frustration and anger issues and thus more abuse. (7,16–20) The loss of income also has led to more stress and thus conflicts and more abuse. (21)

About 17.4% women (all of those who experienced violence) confided to their family or friends about their condition at the pretext of feeling better and thus relieve them of their pain. Many women resorted to talk about it to take validation that they are not at any fault of being getting beaten up or to take validation that this is normal. The women usually think that they experience violence because they are at fault or they are supposed to be silent and they are weak and don't have to raise a voice.

Almost 6.5% women who experienced violence looked for help to save themselves from this abuse and exactly 6.5% women even received the help especially from their family or close friends. 10.9% women never asked for help as they consider that this is their fate and this is normal. The society will blame their women for their abuse and thus the image will be ruined. These women usually propagate male supremacy in families and thus indirectly increase the opportunities for the abusers to feel superior or right.

Almost 17.4% women reported that they are worried for future and they may have to continue to face the abuse. Once an abuser – always an abuser.

When asked about various reasons for not leaving their abusers or moving to a safer place, children at home was the common reason. Women usually have self-blame, confusion, hopelessness, guilt and shame on being abused and still they want to be with their abuser to save the child from being deprived of the family love and care. Women usually consider themselves to be weak and always at fault for being abused. Society also has made an illusion of male supremacy leading to propagation of false sense of dependence on men. If a woman leaves the abuser, society norms will always find faults with the women only rather than supporting them. (5)

Domestic violence at any level and in any form can't be justified. Covid-19 pandemic has led to another hidden pandemic of "Domestic Violence".

### Conclusion:-

The effects of preventing a COVID-19 health crisis have had unintended consequences on domestic abuse (DA) victimization. The effects of preventing a COVID-19 health crisis have had unintended consequences on domestic abuse victimization. Social distancing measures inherently change micro level human interactions, as they force people to spend more time at home.(22) There is need to implement strict laws and policies to counter this and help the victim rather than criminalizing the victim.

To reduce the frequency of the issue, it is central to acknowledge the extent of gender-based violence, create awareness and upkeep networks to make it easier for the victims to access them.

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