

# Violence against Women during COVID-19-A Review

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Received: 26 Apr 2021/ Revised: 23 June 2021/ Accepted: 03 Aug 2021

## ABSTRACT

Any gender-based crime that causes mental, sexual or physical harm to women is a crime against women and affects 1 in 3 (approximately 736 million) women during their lifetime. This violence can be done by an intimate or non-intimate partner. All forms of violence against women and girls have intensified according to the data obtained during the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the guise of the epidemic, crimes like domestic violence, sexual harassment and trafficking were carried out. As a result, there was an increase in the number of suicides among women, as well as physical and other mental diseases were born in them. There are different types of laws at the global and national level for the rights and protection of women, yet the increasing statistics of crimes against women are very worrying. The safety of women is possible only when every person is sensitive to the safety of women and considers their responsibility towards the safety of women. Apart from this, it is also necessary to take prompt action of the administration against the aggrieved woman.

**Key-words:** COVID-19 Pandemic, Domestic violence, Sexual Violence

## INTRODUCTION

It is not enough to just call crimes against women as violence but it is very broad which includes not only physical but also sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse. Violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or pain to women and includes threats, coercion or deprivation of a woman's liberty, whether private or public, of such acts [1].

Physical violence includes any form of bodily injury, including slapping, pushing, dragging, burning, or causing harm by any means [1]. Emotional violence or psychological violence is humiliating women, putting them under pressure etc [2].

While only certain aspects of family violence fall under the category of violence, any behaviour that causes the victim to live in fear is a crime. Similarly, sexual violence is sexual assault such as rape, sexual assault with devices, being forced to watch or participating in pornography, the enforcement of prostitution and the involvement of friends or having sex with them in such offences. In other words, sexual assault includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the vulva or anus with a penis, other body part or object, attempted rape, unwanted sexual touching and other non-contact forms [3]. Violence against women is the result of the habits, mental tendencies, extreme ambitions, lusts and fanatic acts of the enlightened men of the society [4]. In other words, the main reason for violence against women is historical and traditional unequal, unbalanced powers between men and women prevailing in the world. The status of women in patriarchal societies is often considered low. Patriarchy skies are based on power relations, in which man has control over every aspect of a woman's life. For this reason, men dominate women and women are

### How to cite this article

Singh S, Kumar M. Violence against Women during COVID-19- A Review. SSR Inst. Int. J. Life Sci., 2021; 7(6S): 61S-65S.



Access this article online

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discriminated against. This discrimination and sky social, cultural, economic and political status is the root cause of violence against women, which is spread all over the world. Women of all ages, religions, caste, class, culture, regions and educational levels are affected by it [5].

**Global landscape of violence against women-** It is generally said that with time the society becomes civilized. But it is a matter of great misfortune that instead of being civilized, society is getting corrupted. Day by day the number of crimes is increasing and innocent people and women are affected by these crimes [6]. It can be estimated from a report by NCRB that in a span of just one year (2019-2020) there has been an increase of 8.3% in crimes related to women [7].

According to the WHO report, around 1 in 3 i.e. 30% of women worldwide have been subjected to physical or sexual violence, either by their intimate partner or non-partner, in their lifetime [8]. In this violence, most of the violence is done by the intimate partner [1]. Worldwide, about one-third of women aged 15-49, who has been in a single relationship report having been subjected to some form of physical and sexual violence by their intimate partner [9].

According to UN estimates, 20% in the Western Pacific, 22% in high-income countries and Europe, and 25% in the Americas, 33% in Africa, 31% in the Eastern Mediterranean and 33% in the South-East found to be done by an intimate partner [1]. Globally, 38% (137 murders per day) of total murders of women are committed by intimate partners, while globally, 6% of women report sexual assault by a person other than a partner [3]. This may be due to the fear of stigma, the possibility of marriage breakdown, etc. That is why the statistics of non-partner sexual abuse are limited.

Globally, 155 countries have passed laws against domestic violence related to women and 140 countries have laws related to sexual harassment of women at workplaces, still, women have to be victims of the various violence's and the increasing statistics of such violence day by day is shocking [10]. Under the guise of some practice in 31 countries of the world, about 200 million girls and women aged 15-49 years were amputated [1]. Worldwide, 1.5 million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 commit a criminal act of forced sex or attempted sexual intercourse [11]. In the Middle East and North Africa, 40–60 per cent of women have experienced street-based sexual harassment [12].

**Status of Crimes against women during COVID-19-** Human life has been overwhelmed globally by the Covid-19 pandemic. Along with this, human health, food system, traffic has also been affected [13]. Due to which the economic, social systems started dying, people were forced to stay at home (due to lockdown) even after losing their jobs. As a result, the life of almost every section of the people became very challenging. The double whammy of this terrifying situation fell on women and girls. During this period there was an increase in the incidents of domestic, physical, sexual violence against women, child marriage from poor and uneducated families [14]. According to the reviews done during Covid-19, this was a very difficult period for women because if they were forced to stay indoors then they had to bear the violence against them and if they were able to leave the house, then there could be a risk of infection with the virus [15]. So women chose the first option. The statistics of crimes against women is not sufficient due to lockdown during Covid, but from the study of some available data, it can be said that the cases of VAW increased during Covid [15]. During the lock-down in different countries, the VAW was something like this, in China the initial phase of the lock down it was 300%, in the UK the number of VAW in two months (March-April 2020) almost doubled to the average of 10, those women in Tunisia [16]. There has been an increase in physical and psychological violence against those who have faced such violence in the past [17]. Here VAW increased by 45%, in Germany by 5%, in India by 21%, in Malaysia, by 47%, in the Philippines by 63% in just 8 months, by 55%, in South East Asia, 40% in 12 states of Brazil [18]. In March and April 2020, an increase in the cases of femicides was estimated at 22% [19]. Apart from these, VAW also increased in France and America.

**Trafficking-** There was a sudden spurt in cases of domestic violence and trafficking of women and children during the Corona Pandemic, according to the report of the Indian Parliamentary Committee [20]. All this was mainly due to the interruption in economic activities, work from home during the lockdown and spending more time with family [21]. According to the report, women migrant labourers and their children became victims of trafficking in large numbers and went missing during the lockdown.



### Reasons for increasing VAW globally during lockdown-

There was complete or partial lockdown in about 90 countries of the world, due to which 3.9 billion people were forced to remain imprisoned in their homes. However, one positive aspect of this is that the family members got time to be together and understand each other. But due to indefinite stay at home with economic uncertainties, fear of corona infection and other types of pressures, there has been an increase in domestic violence globally [18,22]. Most of which were carried out by intimate partners. Its impact was more on the women of poor and middle families because inadequacy of funds, mental pressure due to the struggle to mobilize food and other essential materials was the main reason for family discord, due to which incidents like bigamy, dowry murder and harassment for dowry increased [23]. Domestic violence increased in most countries including the United States, China, United Kingdom, Australia, Brazil, Tunisia, France, Africa and India [24-26]. During this time, domestic violence was strengthened due to the continuous stay of men at home, differences of opinion on one thing or the other, consuming alcohol at home, watching pornographic videos and harassing the partner etc. and Coercive control has the opposite effect on the mentality of the person [27].

**Effects of Violence-** Violence against women not only has physical, sexual and psychological effects on women but also has a profound effect on the mentality of children [28]. VAW badly affects the life of the woman – women affected by these crimes end their life by committing suicide [29]. Women affected by domestic violence or sexual harassment sometimes suffer from serious diseases such as AIDS and problems such as miscarriage or giving birth to a premature baby or giving birth to a dead child arise [30]. Victims of violence face severe stress, depression, psychosis and digestive diseases, problems like sleeplessness, as well as women become addicted to drugs like smoking and drinking or drugs [31,32].

**Laws related to Women-** Every woman herself should be aware of the related rights and laws because lack of information makes women weak. The following are the laws related to women:

#### Women-specific legislation

The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956

The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 (28 of 1961) (Amended in 1986)

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986

The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 (3 of 1988)

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (prevention, prohibition and redressal) Act, 2013

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013

#### Women -Related Legislation

Indian penal code, 1860

The Indian Evidence Act, 1872

#### CONCLUSIONS

Violence against women has increased especially globally during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several factors affecting violence against women increased during the lockdown. Domestic tensions, decreased freedom, gender discrimination, increased economic burden during the lockdown. Despite there being a law related to the protection of women, complaints are not filed by women. This is the reason that actual statistics of violence against women are not available.

Women should be apprised of the administration for strict action against the crimes being committed against them.

#### CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS

**Research concept-** Sunayana Singh, Mukesh Kumar

**Research design-** Sunayana Singh, Mukesh Kumar

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**Materials-** Sunayana Singh

**Data collection-** Sunayana Singh

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