

## An Analysis of Covid-19 and Gender Based Violence

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**ABSTRACT:** Covid-19 has exposed the miseries and inequalities within the countries and across the world. It is crucial to understand them to build a better world for tomorrow where gender differences and violence no more exist. GBV, the short of gender-based violence, which illustrates gender inequality and toxic masculinity, is another pandemic in all societies with its varying forms. Our purpose in writing this paper was to investigate the problem. A mixed research method was adopted to cover maximum aspects of the problem. Fifty females and 11 males were scrutinized to collect information, aged 16-52. To examine the data we used thematic analysis. Results of this study show a direct relation between gender-based violence and pandemics, which adversely affect females' mental and physical health. The study proposes different methods to control GBV, which significantly increased during Covid-19 and the economic crisis.

**KEYWORDS:** Gender Based Violence, Social isolation, Ageism, Gender Discrimination, Violence perpetrator

### I. INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence is a type of violence based on gender differences. It includes any form of violence like sexual, mental, and physical harm usually condoned within the family and the general community. The state or its institutions could direct it. It occurs in various forms in all social groups, communities, and societies. The majority of the victims of gender-based violence are females, as males hold the dominant position in most societies. Out of every three women who have reached the age of reproducing, most have been violently abused or sexually harassed by a sexual partner in her lifetime. (Yenilmez, 2020). At the individual and social level, the risk of violence increases as victims of nigga balls report the crimes due to isolation during Covid-19. Margaret Chan, general director of the world health organization, once stated, "Violence against women is a global health problem of epidemic proportions" (1). If we take the percentage of women who suffer from violence, it will be enough to shock any rational mind.

Each year approximately 770 million women are attacked by their partners or ex1 -partners on the planet. (Acosta,2020 ). When we examine two different elements clearly define the GBV perception. First, it is a historical problem that depends on the forms of behavior in different situations; secondly, it is not a social problem that we often see in different circumstances. Cases of domestic violence and child and elder abuse are now prevalent in Pakistan. Already vulnerable women are exposed to a high risk of Violence due to compulsory Covid: 19. According to UN Women 2020's report, 87,000 women were killed in 2017. These were the reported cases. According to the UN Women report, Less than 40 percent of women report Violence. Most of them sought to solve the issue through family talks. Less than 10 percent reported to the police that 200 million women faced genital cutting. According to November 2016 the survey by the All-China Women's Federation, 30% of married Chinese women had experienced some form of domestic Violence (Allen - Ebrahimian , 2020 ).

A recent article published in The Guardian reported a significant increase in domestic Violence, which follows a statement that mental issues are not shared at home; therefore, women do bear a high degree of burden , which shows that the home environment is a kind of property where men show his power and authority . This burden becomes trauma due to isolation and leads to divorce, and most women commit suicide. Home is a severe contributor to Violence against women and is now magnified due to corona virus. WHO report says that the worldwide extension of gender-base Violence amounts to 30%. It stands at 22.3% in Europe. A report published by EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), Violence against women, indicates that 20% of women over 18 suffer from gender-based Violence, 43 % suffer from Psychological Violence, and 7 %

bear sexual Violence . Efforts are being made worldwide to stop the Covid-19 pandemic. It is an excellent humanitarian act to save people from Covid-19, but women are exposed to more danger as financially deprived women have lost their jobs.

They should be provided with a stipend to provide financial support and encourage them. Local social workers should be asked to conduct surveys to know the situation of different households within a community. Governing authorities should provide equal opportunities to both genders as gender-based Violence is interlinked with socioeconomic structure. Reports say every year approximately 50,000 women are killed in the context of gender-based violence that is often done by their intimate partner. ( **Housman , 2020**). In Pakistan, the statistics of GBV skyrocketed. Due to cultural barriers, they are unable to share their experience. They never reported the violence experienced nor sought help. A staggering 32 percent of women have experienced physical violence in Pakistan, and 40 percent of ever-married women have suffered from spousal abuse at some point in their life (**The Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2012-2013**).

## II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to increase the awareness regarding GBV to protect women against violence during the pandemic. We have attempted to demonstrate how pandemics make it worse. We have also discussed how violence gives rise to stress, anxiety, and mental traumas. The study aimed to demonstrate the real image of the current scenario of GBV in times of pandemic. This study explains how economic dejections impact spousal relationships. Furthermore, this study gives solutions on how to tackle GBV and how government agencies can perform their role. It seeks government and lawmakers' attention towards GBV, so they should take strict actions against this tyranny to build up a healthier environment for women.

### OBJECTIVES

- To determine relationship between Covid-19 and Gender-based violence
- To know the social and psychological problems faced by women suffering from GBV
- To determine role of state tackling GBV

## III. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study aims to explain the gender-based violence and the problems faced by women during the period of Covid-19 pandemic. Subjective sampling was used to collect data. Participants were selected from Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. Pakistani participants were accessed physically, while online interviews were conducted for Indian and Bengali participants. Google forms questioners were also generated for data collection and semi-structured interviews for this qualitative research. 50 Females were accessed for data collection from January 11 2022-April 19, 2022. Out of 50 females, 30 were married, 10 unmarried under 29 students, six widowed, and four divorced. All studies are 2 elaborated via thematic analysis and coding. All interviews were conducted in Urdu, Hindi, and Bengali for Pakistani, Indian, and Bengali participants. Native speakers were selected to translate the questionnaires to make the interviews and online survey forms easy. The interviews duration was between 45 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes. All interviews were recorded, written, and replayed several times to get full information and complete understanding. **Findings of the Study**

**Covid and GBV in direct proportion:** After a deep study of available data, we found that Corona virus and gender-based violence are directly proportional. As the circumstances due to corona magnified, the graph of GBV also went upward. We have found that the areas with relatively low corona cases reported fewer cases of violence than those with high sanctions and lock-downs. Due to a greater level of sanctions and continuous lock-down in many areas, including big cities, many people have lost their jobs. Due to inflation and price hikes, many people are unable to fulfill their very basic needs. The majority of Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh live under the poverty line, so how can they withstand continuous lock -down . As a result , their already waggling economic structure is now destroyed. Poor and middle-class families are under infuriation of economic deprivation, which is a direct source of depression.

*"I know my parents are poor and unable to pay my school dues. My mother often faces the scornfulness of my father, who reproach that she cannot handle the household now. He beats her, abuses her, and threatens to divorce them. " (17 years old daughter).*

From the above, we can understand that lock-down has created an ideal condition for the growth of GBV. Studies show that aggressors benefit from the situations in which movement is restricted to increase the violence against women. It keeps increasing when not reported, and in the current situation, women in far-off areas and even in cities cannot report the atrocity of men. It is unsafe for women to stay at home with the perpetrator of domestic violence because most cases of GBV happen at home. Data from different new papers show an increase in online reports against GBV. There was an increase in calls and a fall in reports. Consumption of the substances was increased that are considered to add up elements against women, sale of pornographic content was increased to 61.3, and alcohol by 84.4. Therefore it can be said that lockdown trapped women and freed their attackers. (**ACP Journals**) **Depression, fear and anxiety**

Almost every maltreated woman was diagnosed with anxiety and depression, aggravating their psychological health. The sole reason for anxiety and depression was not merely the maltreatment they faced but also the economic atrophy. Most of the participants had a constant degree of anxiety, maltreatment, and verbal abuse. (Patel R, Gupte SS, Srivastava S, Kumar P, Chauhan S, et al)

*"Before the spread of corona virus, my husband used to work in a tannery in Agra, India. The tannery has stopped its operation, and we lost the job like every worker. We have no source of passive income. We are facing starvation, and children cry due to hunger pains. It is worse. She started weeping then." (35 years old mother from Agra, India).*

Uncertainty of the future and fear of starvation, economic losses, and pandemic have developed catastrophic circumstances for poor people. There is a significant rise depression and suicide cases in Pakistan. Perhaps, every country in the world has the same condition in some context due to lock-down and isolation. Psychological symptoms of anxiety and depression depend on how long women face maltreatment and bear with abuse. We have found that a significant element of depression was not the severity of violence but its duration. Women with higher depression and anxiety had had a more extended history of violence and vice versa. We cannot ignore the severity of violence, another contributor to depression.

*"I have just married and cannot fight with him. What if he divorced me in case I response or report to the police?" (A 26-year-old participant from Jhang Pakistan).* Fear of divorce is another factor that pressurizes the women to live with perpetrators of violence as divorce is considered vilification in Indo Pak society. It freed the men to treat in any toxic way they wanted, and women had no choice but to bear and compromise with it.

#### **Insomnia**

Stressful events lead to sleep disturbance. According to a study led by Hauri and Fisher, insomnia is caused by stressful events that disturb the sleep environment and adversely affect decision making and 3 memory, and may undermine attention. Problems related to sleep arise when someone feels danger or threat. (Matos M, Goncalves M. ) Women locked up at home facing violence develop insomnia. We asked every participant to tell us their sleep cycle, and we found that 95% of victims were facing insomnia.

#### **Divorce threat**

The worse factor that cannot women reports violence is the threat of divorce. Indo - Pak society does not accept divorce women to a greater extent.

*"I cannot leave home. My husband said I will be divorced if I tell anyone what his treatment is. If I have to live with him, I must be silent". (Pakistani participant, 32- year-old married woman).* The fear of divorce and being marginalized in society, and constantly facing violence in lock-down has made the circumstances worse for women to survive. They have no escape room, nor can they report the abusive threats against them. (Vu, Ha Song, et al)

#### **Poor policy making**

We asked every participant whether they were getting any assistance from the government. The answer was no. One of our participants answered, why would they help us? They are male. Rising cases of violence and inadequate government policy have proven fatal as victims are not getting proper help. Though Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India have moral laws to control violence against women, it seems to have no effect. Due to the unavailability of resources and cultural barriers, they cannot help. Fear of ignominy keeps them away from legal assistance, and they prefer solving the issues at home.

### **IV. DISCUSSION**

This study shows that the corona virus has a significant impact on gender -based violence. Lock-down and other government restrictions have proved a catalyst for increasing GBV. Due to pandemics, economic deprivation, and isolation, women face severe consequences of violence, resulting in physical and psychological issues. Stress, depression, physical threat, insomnia, marginalization, and being blamed in society caused women to bear with violence and abuse. The rise of GBV during lockdown and isolation is an outcome of the risk of new aggressions and the danger of lethality, and economic deprivations have added to it. The current study proved that women are at the rage of double disasters. One is a corona virus, and another one is GBV. Most countries face an economic downfall that has a direct impact on individual celery. Economic crises are proved to have a direct relationship with gender -based violence. Chronic poverty and economic insecurity tend to make individuals and households themselves more likely to experience acute stress and resort to risky coping strategies that increase the risk of GBV (IFPRI Blog, 2022). People living in economically deprived areas face more conflict and violence. Corona virus has almost destroyed the economic structure of third world countries like Pakistan and India, which has made the people vulnerable and exposed them to the direct threat of Covid-19. The circumstances of the lock-down denoted that violence existed more nonstop and chimed and that aggression could be directed at anatomical regions other than the usual bones. Above all, they led to increased mental and sexual violence, and the impact intensively affected any children living at home. The medical-forensic study thus has to take all of these rudiments into account when assessing a case as a whole. Due to the rising inflation graph, people are stressed and facing anxiety, which is a direct source of

violent behavior, which has also been proved in previous studies. (Graham C.L. Davey, Peter J. De Jong, 1993 ). Pakistan is not technologically a developed country. Women do not know how to report a violence case online. They cannot access physical support due to lock-down and isolation, which has provided the violence perpetrators an open environment for violence against women. That is why most cases of violence against women occur at home. In most cases, people involved in violence have a direct relationship with the victims, more often husbands. GBV violates human rights and is also a source of severe physical and psychological disorders, including long-term depression, anxiety, fear of violence, loneliness, depression, suicide, etc. It was found that most of the women were developing ideas of suicide as they thought there left no way for them to tackle violence. Not only psychological but physical traumas are also inevitable. Women facing GBV are often injured, disabled, and have chronic health problems. Sexual and reproductive health problems are also common in GBV victims (Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, 2003 ). Due to fear and depression, victims of GBV face insomnia and other related sleep issues. Seven participants said they could not sleep because they thought their husbands would murder them. Others were disturbed by nightmares.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

Life is altered due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, its impacts are fatal for women. Lock-down and other restrictions have cut the legal aids and left them exposed to violence. Areas with more Covid cases have a higher number of GBV victims. Due to lock-down and isolated women are facing acute physical and psychological problems. Doubtlessly that, lock-down was a preventive measure against Covid, but it harmed developing countries, destroying their economies and increasing conflicts. It can also be concluded from previous research that GBV violence increases after major extremities and natural disasters, similar to earthquakes, backfires, cyclones, and hurricanes. From these experiences, we can read an increase in domestic violence cases during the outbreak of Covid-19. Other contributing factors will increase the threat of violence against women and be seen in the current extremity of Covid-19. These include fiscal strain, job losses and severance, casing deficiency, and increased instability. There will be incapability for victims to escape their abusers during this period. If seminars remain unrestricted, we will also substantiate dropped access to community support groups. That is why it is critical that the applicable authorities and associations, especially health and enforcement services identify and snappily respond to family violence. Nonetheless, the Covid-19 outbreak seems like a test to humanity in ways we have no way endured. It is shocking and traumatic to us as we try to get our heads above water. The violence creeping by is a shocking memorial and a challenge to our values and norms that makes us rational human beings. We should strive to survive and crop more vital and reinvigorated, with women serving at the center point of our recovery.

## LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

- The study comprised physical and online interviews, but most respondents were accessed through online interviews.
- The study may present an over generalized analysis due to a limited sample. Due to online interviews, they were hesitant to express their views adequately. Researchers had a meager amount to budget to visit far-off areas accessing more participants.
- Most of the responders were not agree to reveal their confidential information. Moreover, it is a qualitative study; thus, human error cannot be ignored.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that government should take immediate and strict actions against violent perpetrators by introducing new laws and appropriate policy
- Local social workers should visit the concerned population to gather data and should keep an eye on the current situation during Covid-19 lock-down
- An adequate stipend should be given to those who have lost their jobs during Covid crisis, it would remove the economic burden
- It should be acknowledged that natural disasters can expose women to violent situations
- Special applications should be launched to report cases of GBV for women that cannot access legal help due to lock-down
- Special psychiatric clinical centers should be built for victims of GBV to provide psychological and physical relief

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