

Investigating the impact of the Corona pandemic on the increase in violence against women

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ABSTRACT

The widespread pandemic of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the implementation of measures to prevent the disease, including home quarantine and restrictions on movement, led families to be exposed to many social, psychological, and economic harms. Domestic violence against women is one of the harms that increased during the Corona crisis. This study investigated the reasons for the increase in family violence against women during the spread of the Coronavirus and analyzed the role of laws in protecting the victims. This study was conducted using a descriptive method of a systematic review type. In this method, research findings that were found during the outbreak of Corona in the databases ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, Med Internet Res, JMRH, Frooyesh, and Rescue were analyzed by searching for the keywords of Corona and women, domestic violence, family violence and the Corona crisis, the law and the victim of violence. Among the 40 reviewed articles, 9 that met the research criteria were selected and investigated. The findings showed that the rate of domestic violence against women has increased in all its types. Studies have shown that mobility restrictions, economic stressors, increased alcohol consumption, and psychological disorders are among the factors that increase family violence against women in the Corona crisis. Due to the limited communication of the victims with the outside world, the gaps in the laws, and their lack of updating in the field of domestic violence, the law to protect women cannot be practical except in a few cases.

Keywords: Corona and women, family violence, rights, law

1 Introduction

The World Health Organization declared in March 2020 that the coronavirus is a pandemic, and as previously seen with other pandemics such as Ebola, the spread of these diseases increases the rate of family violence (World Health

Organization, 2020). Many countries have planned effective measures to control the spread of the disease; Social distancing, closure of unnecessary business places, travel restrictions and quarantine are among the strategies of governments to prevent, reduce and control this virus.

Although these measures are largely effective in controlling the coronavirus, they have negative social consequences such as stress, unemployment, and increased violence against women and children (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020). In general, violence can be defined as any physical, sexual and psychological abuse that endangers the health, mental health, emotional, and psychological balance of women and children in the family and harms society (Miller & McCaw, 2019). According to research, domestic violence is one of the priorities of the World Health Organization due to the prevalence of physical and psychological complications and deaths caused by it (Sharifi, Larki, & Latifnejad Roudsari, 2020). Scientific findings have shown that violence by members of the same family (father, brother, and son) has been mentioned as family violence against women, intimate partner violence and child abuse. Since the strategies of the countries to contain the coronavirus overlap with many strategies related to family violence, the vulnerability of women exposed to violence increases (Van Gelder et al., 2020). With the increasing exposure of women in a stressful environment, the reduction of support options and requests for help, economic stress and social isolation, the possibility of women being confined at home increases as an unsafe environment (Committee, 2019; Khalifeh & Dean, 2010). In some countries, there have been calls regarding the need for services related to family violence. In addition, after the implementation of restrictive measures for quarantine, the number of searches on Google for help related to family violence during the Corona outbreak has been significant. In England, after the implementation of quarantine in the first week, calls to the family violence line increased by 25% (Gulati & Kelly, 2020). In China, during the implementation of quarantine in some provinces, family violence has tripled, and in the United States, there is also a 10% increase. The reports confirm this increase in countries such as Spain, Italy, France, Canada, Germany and Brazil. Meanwhile, a new document published by the United Nations Population Fund indicates that for every three months of home quarantine, 15 million cases of violence against women are predicted (Mirza Nia & Firoozi, 2020; Sharifi, Larki, & Latifnejad Roudsari, 2020). These reports show that living in a closed space with an abuser takes its toll on victims. However, the data related to family violence against women in the Corona crisis is inadequate and there is a need for further studies. Due to the special conditions of this epidemic, it is impossible to obtain Corona's effect on the increase of family violence with advanced monitoring. In addition,

many women are not fully aware of family violence, and the understanding of violent behavior by the family did not arise for them. Many women recognize physical and sexual violence but are unaware of psychological violence that occurs much more often. Despite the limitations created in the context of the coronavirus disease, by conducting descriptive and review research, it is possible to increase women's awareness of family violence and its types. Understanding the public debate can help governments adopt best practices to support and protect victims while implementing social exclusion measures. This article aims to investigate the reasons for the increase in family violence during the outbreak of Corona and evaluate the laws related to it to reach the basic mechanisms, prepare policies, and respond to the issues related to women during the pandemic.

2 Methods and Materials

The current study was a descriptive study that was conducted using a systematic review method. In this method, the scientific findings collected regarding the effect of the Corona pandemic on the increase of family violence against women were analyzed. In conducting this research, the findings obtained from the beginning of the widespread spread of the coronavirus, in the range of 2020, were analyzed in the databases of Science Direct, Med Internet Res, JMRH, Frooyesh, Rescue, and Google Scholar. The keywords of Corona and women, domestic violence, family violence and Corona crisis, law and the victim of violence were searched in these databases. After searching, among the 40 reviewed articles, 9 that met the research criteria were selected and investigated.

Inclusion criteria: In order to conduct this research, studies that investigated family violence (violence by father, brother, and son) against women during the outbreak of Corona disease were selected. These studies, mostly published in English in 2020, were thoroughly reviewed, and articles whose research was incomplete or examined violence against other family members, for example, men or children, were excluded from the study.

Evaluation of articles: At the beginning of the research, 40 articles were reviewed. Of these, only ten articles met the criteria for entering the research. Many articles were incomplete and did not have comprehensive and reliable information. In addition, some articles were excluded from the research process since their references seemed invalid or were just a limited report of an event. Finally, ten articles were examined in detail.

3 Findings

The articles that met the inclusion criteria were examined. The results of the review of 9 articles to report the results of their content are listed in the [Table 1](#).

Table 1

The details of selected articles (N=9)

Author(s)	Conclusion
(Gulati & Kelly, 2020)	Domestic violence during the Corona outbreak is aggravated by those who have mental disorders and those suffering from Corona disease. Mental health teams must act to identify and support victims.
(Xue et al., 2020)	By leveraging tweets, they overcome the limitations of education about family violence and provide targeted support to victims and survivors by understanding domestic violence during the pandemic.
(Sharifi, Larki, & Latifnejad Roudsari, 2020)	All healthcare providers must be prepared and receive the necessary training to deal with psychological disorders during the pandemic and post-corona period.
(Brooks et al., 2020)	The evidence of this study shows that in the context of quarantine, appealing to altruism by reminding people about the benefits of quarantine for the wider society can be desirable.
(Peterman et al., 2020)	The results of this research showed that by linking epidemics over the past years, solutions can be found to control violence, economic insecurity and poverty.
(Mirza Nia & Firoozi, 2020)	At the same time as the spread of the Covid-19 disease, alcohol consumption and reduced income have led to increased domestic violence.
(Usher et al., 2020)	Evidence from this research shows that in many countries, including Australia, the demand for domestic violence services and reports of increased risk to children is also increasing.
(Mazza et al., 2020)	During the quarantine and the outbreak of the coronavirus worldwide, there is a need for programs aimed at preventing acts of domestic violence and achieving an accurate assessment of several areas of abuse (psychological, physical, sexual) by multidisciplinary trained staff.
(Telles et al., 2020)	Quarantine limits the victim's mobility and ability to ask for help. Therefore, dealing with domestic violence caused by COVID-19 requires psychiatric and legal interventions.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

During the outbreak of Corona, people faced an invisible and dark enemy and experienced helplessness. Many countries have asked people in contact with the disease to quarantine themselves at home or in special centers. Most reviewed studies reported negative psychological effects, including post-traumatic stress symptoms, confusion, and anger (Brooks et al., 2020). The tension within families increases with these adverse effects and the accumulation of one of two matters: stressful events and lack of social support, both intensified during the coronavirus epidemic. As a result, the domain of family violence expands. In acute cases, when none of the family members can manage their anger, and there is an emotional divorce, this violence reaches its peak. Meanwhile, limited access to health and social services leads to greater vulnerability of women.

5 Limitations and Suggestions

However, studies show a lack of data provided. Due to the limitation of women's communication with the environment outside the home during the Corona era, in many cases, they are forbidden by the abuser to report or talk about the violence. The current research had limitations due to the pandemic conditions; we cannot expect accurate and

advanced monitoring to provide a correct understanding of the existing risk. In addition, these studies are mostly descriptive and cannot be extended to all similar cases.

It should be noted that violence against women is an important issue of public health, social policy, and human rights. Therefore, its solution requires several organizations to provide stable and effective services. Suppose the victims are identified and supported at first. In that case, they are treated with the help of several organizations, including psychological, educational and legal teams; we can expect to see less violence against women during the pandemic in the future.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

Not applicable.

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