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Letter to Editor

Domestic violence in the Covid-19 and women's health and rights

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Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has posed global challenges, prompting strict measures to curb transmission. Yet, it's also sparked a surge in global domestic violence cases, worsened by lifestyle changes and confinement.

Methods: This paper synthesizes empirical evidence from various countries to examine the correlation between the COVID-19 pandemic and the escalation of domestic violence. It explores the impact of home-stay regulations on increasing instances of intimate partner violence and analyzes the implications for public health and legal systems.

Results: Studies indicate a significant rise in domestic violence cases during the pandemic, with notable increases reported in China, the United States, France, Argentina, Cyprus, Singapore, and Australia. The incidence of emotional, sexual, and physical violence against women has particularly surged, underscoring the urgent need for intervention.

Conclusion: Domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic has serious social, psychological, and economic impacts. Addressing it demands a holistic approach: raising awareness, legal measures, support services, family education, cultural promotion, and moral adherence. Collaboration among governments, civil society, and communities is vital for a safer, inclusive society.

Keywords: COVID-19, Domestic violence, Female, Humans

Introduction

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is currently recognized as a viral infection that has escalated to a pandemic, engendering critical conditions globally. Throughout history, numerous epidemics have occurred. However, the COVID-19 pandemic is unequivocally distinct and markedly different from previous epidemics (1).

The elevated mortality rate, coupled with the pervasive fear and anxiety engendered by the virus, has resulted in diminished attention to its numerous other dimensions. One significant consequence of the emergence of the coronavirus is the imposition of forced lifestyle changes and unprecedented restrictions on individuals' lives (2).

The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled nations to implement specific interventions to mitigate or control the transmission of the infectious disease. These interventions include promoting home confinement or quarantine, enforcing appropriate social distancing, imposing travel restrictions, and closing educational institutions and businesses. While these measures are effective in curbing the spread of the virus in the short term, they also significantly impact individuals' quality of life and lead to adverse psychological, social, and economic consequences (3).

A significant psychological concern associated with the extension of home quarantine periods is the escalation of domestic violence (2). Domestic violence, frequently termed intimate partner violence, typically

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targets women and encompasses physical, psychological, or sexual abuse by an intimate partner. Such violence against women constitutes a significant public health and legal issue (4).

Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, empirical evidence indicates a significant increase in instances of intimate partner violence globally. This escalation is attributed to the implementation of more stringent home-stay regulations. Correspondingly, there has been a notable rise in telephone calls and reports of domestic violence directed towards law enforcement agencies and support organizations (5, 6).

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In Australia, 4.6% of women reported experiencing physical and sexual violence following periods of social isolation and quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic (7). Studies conducted in Iran have revealed a concerning trend: instances of emotional, sexual, and physical violence against women have been on the rise during the Covid-19 era (8, 9). Partner violence is a pervasive and preventable issue worldwide. Laws addressing partner violence can differ from country to country. Nevertheless, violence against women stands out as a stark manifestation of gender inequality and a violation of human rights. This is a global concern, particularly pronounced in underdeveloped nations, with significant adverse effects not only on direct victims but also on children, families, and communities at large (10).

The impact of domestic violence extends beyond its immediate physical, sexual, and emotional repercussions. It also diminishes the presence of women in both societal and workplace settings, thereby reducing overall productivity, especially in environments reliant on female labor. Additionally, domestic violence has broader social and political ramifications, dampening women's desire for political and public engagement and inhibiting their ability to fulfill roles as responsible citizens. These effects represent clear violations of women's rights.

Therefore, studies propose several strategies to prevent violence against women and safeguard their health and rights during the Covid-19 pandemic:

Raising awareness and enhancing communication skills among women can significantly reduce domestic violence. Many instances of domestic abuse stem from communication breakdowns and challenges in managing anger, often exacerbated by a lack of awareness about one's rights (4,5).

1. Implementing legal measures involves reviewing and updating civil and criminal laws, as well as developing new legislation aimed at preventing and eradicating violence against women. Additionally, establishing specialized courts dedicated to addressing violence against women can help reduce such incidents (6, 7).
2. Support measures such as establishing crisis hotlines, expanding counseling centers, creating safe shelters, and establishing support funds for vulnerable women are crucial steps in preventing domestic violence against women (4, 8).
3. Educating families about key aspects of family dynamics stands as a paramount preventive measure against domestic violence. Topics such as problem-solving strategies, negotiation techniques, cultivating empathy, constructive criticism while upholding mutual respect, and attentiveness to spouses' needs are essential for promoting healthy relationships within families (8, 9).
4. Promoting the cultural advancement of society is a responsibility that falls on the government. This is crucial because the cultural values embraced by the populace greatly influence the administration of justice. When cultural standards decline, it leads to cultural impoverishment. Consequently, men often replicate the expectations placed on their wives by their fathers.
5. Couples adhering to doctrinal and moral principles can help prevent domestic violence, particularly in cases influenced by factors such as alcohol consumption, extramarital affairs, and addiction. These behaviors often exacerbate violence, particularly among those who struggle with addiction and moral decline (9, 10).

Conclusion

In conclusion, combating domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic requires a multi-faceted

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approach involving collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, and communities. By implementing targeted interventions and fostering a culture of respect and equality, we can work towards creating a safer and more inclusive society for all.

Conflicts of Interest

We have no commercial or financial gains for this study.

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