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Addressing the “Shadow Pandemic”: Combating the Global Rise in domestic violence during and post crises.

Introduction

The global surge of the pandemic COVID 19, was a period of time that had a lot of tensions and difficulties, not only because of the infected people and the highly demographic scale crisis, but due to the people being inside of their homes, which lead into people being mentally ill because they were isolated, they had paranoia and fear they were getting infected, a loving one being infected, and staying at home just made this anxiety much bigger. As people could not get out of their homes in the pandemic (because they had the risk of getting infected and being fined by authorities), this potentially locked up women. There are a lot of different cases of domestic abuse all around the world, and the cases of domestic abuse increased during the pandemic due to the circumstances. Victims were not able to reach out for help due to the fear and stayed silent because nobody could interfere and take action in a place where you don't know if there was hygiene. Exposing victims in dangerous environments and conditions, leaving a lot of women with no help, making a much more difficult way to achieve gender equality. Women represent 80% of domestic victims, research has found that the violence and people reporting gender based violence (specifically against women) intensified since COVID 19, which matches with the quantity of countries that have drastically reduced services for women and to support and help survivors (in mental, physical or psychological ways) Victims may still need help to have a normal life, their trauma may be triggered, and perhaps they may require mental health help to have a regular life. Since the pandemic, we have had more issues that have made women more vulnerable in certain situations or spaces, which has prompted the United Nations to take action.

The commission of the women's organization has helped prevent and stabilize different cases of discrimination, violence, and gender-based abuses towards women to form equality in a place in which we identify the daily life struggles that women may have. We debate our progress toward equality.



Key terms

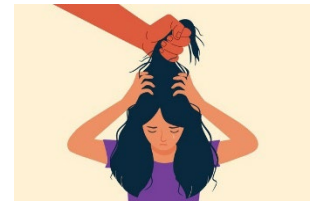
Shadow pandemic

Is a definition used to refer to the global surge of mental health disorders (depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, etc.) That was caused by COVID-19, one of the main factors was because of the isolation people had during this time, people were affected because they were scared of getting infected, or their loved ones getting infected, and economic instability.



Domestic violence

Is a concept used to describe when there is mistreatment or abuse between a family member or your partner. The abuse can be either emotional, physical, or psychological. The victims of these situations generally have difficult situations because they may feel “trapped” with their abuser, especially if both of them live together.



Crisis

It is a period of time that is characterized by serious difficulties, causing instability in a community or group of people. This period may be a time in which everything may change in a short period of time and be very decisive in economic, political, or environmental terms. People during a crisis may be paranoid, scared, or confused by these events.



Trauma

It is a big and deep emotional pain that is left behind after a scary or hurtful moment. It is a psychological response from the brain to protect yourself, the effect of trauma is feeling unsafe or numb when something triggers the trauma.



Current situation

Since the pandemic, there have been more cases of violence. Women could not talk about people being aggressive toward them and could not get the psychological support they needed due to being trapped with their abuser, and the effects that the pandemic left still today. After the pandemic, 45% of women reported that they (or a woman they know) has experienced a form of violence against women, and 4/10 of women feel unsafe in public spaces. Women who are most affected statistically are younger women (18-49), who report that they were (or someone they knew was having issues with violence against women. Unemployed women have reported about violence against women, they feel less safe at home, and feel unsafe walking at night. Women living in rural areas affirm they are more likely to feel unsafe walking alone at night after COVID-19, and now researchers have found that after COVID-19, domestic violence has significantly increased. Violence not only affects physically or mentally, but it also affects the economy as abuse keeps women away from their jobs and is taken away permanently, depending financially on their abusers, and even if they still must go to work, trauma may interfere with their job, making it slower and less productive.

Even after the pandemic, victims may struggle with unhealed trauma, which may not disappear if it is not treated and respected with the seriousness it deserves. A lot of victims may end up with post-traumatic stress disorders that may be triggered daily, even by the slightest feeling affecting women in their daily life, and making no progress whatsoever. Girls with domestic abuse may face a much more difficult time going to school and socializing than other kids because of the psychological effects in their brains of constantly remembering trauma to protect themselves from others. This may affect their behavior during learning,



Main Countries involved

United States

During the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence reports increased significantly across many states. Lockdowns and social isolation placed victims in prolonged contact with their abusers, while many support services operated at reduced capacity. Studies estimate increases ranging from 8% to 33% in domestic violence-related incidents. The United States has since invested in hotlines, shelters, and digital reporting mechanisms, but challenges remain, particularly among low-income communities.



India

India experienced a sharp increase in domestic violence complaints during lockdown periods. The National Commission for Women reported a substantial rise in reports related to domestic abuse during 2020. Factors such as economic hardship, overcrowded housing conditions, and limited access to support services contributed to the problem. Rural women and women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds faced difficulties accessing protection mechanisms and legal assistance.



United Kingdom

The United Kingdom saw a significant rise in calls to domestic abuse helplines during the pandemic. Restrictions on movement made it difficult for victims to leave abusive environments or seek help discreetly. The government responded by increasing funding for shelters and emergency services, while organizations developed online support systems and code-word initiatives in pharmacies to help victims report abuse safely.





Kenya

recorded some of the highest levels of reported violence against women following the COVID-19 pandemic. Economic instability, school closures, and limited social protection systems increased the vulnerability of women and girls. Rural areas were particularly affected due to limited access to support services, legal resources, and healthcare facilities.



Colombia

Studies conducted after the pandemic found that nearly 60% of surveyed women reported experiencing or knowing someone who experienced violence against women. Colombia has worked to strengthen legal protections and reporting systems, yet many survivors continue to face barriers when seeking justice, psychological support, or economic independence.



Previous Attempts to Address the Problem

The international community has taken numerous steps to combat domestic violence and gender-based violence. In 1993, the United Nations adopted the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, establishing violence against women as a violation of human rights.

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women launched the "Shadow Pandemic" campaign during COVID-19 to raise awareness about the increase in domestic violence and encourage governments to strengthen protection services.

The World Health Organization and UN Women have supported research, data collection, and policy recommendations aimed at protecting victims during emergencies and crises.

Many governments introduced emergency shelters, 24-hour hotlines, online reporting systems, and public awareness campaigns during the pandemic. Some countries also implemented special legal procedures allowing victims to access protective orders remotely.



Despite these efforts, significant gaps remain in funding, access to services, survivor protection, and long-term recovery support.

Possible Solutions

Strengthening Support Services

Governments could increase funding for shelters, counseling services, healthcare programs, and emergency hotlines to ensure victims have access to assistance during both normal periods and crises.

Expanding Digital Reporting Mechanisms

Developing secure online reporting systems, emergency applications, and confidential communication channels can allow victims to seek help even when physical movement is restricted.

Improving Access to Mental Health Care

Many survivors continue to suffer from trauma long after the abuse ends. Expanding affordable and accessible psychological services can support long-term recovery and improve quality of life.

Promoting Economic Empowerment

Financial dependence often prevents victims from leaving abusive environments. Job training programs, employment opportunities, and financial assistance can help survivors achieve independence.

Enhancing Education and Awareness

Public education campaigns can help communities recognize signs of abuse, challenge harmful gender stereotypes, and encourage reporting.



Strengthening Legal Frameworks

Countries can improve domestic violence legislation, ensure effective law enforcement training, and simplify legal procedures for obtaining protection orders.

Preparing for Future Crises

Governments should incorporate domestic violence prevention and survivor protection measures into national emergency preparedness plans to ensure that support services remain available during future pandemics, conflicts, or natural disasters.

Questions a Resolution Should Answer

1. How can governments ensure that victims have access to support services during emergencies and lockdowns?
2. What role should international organizations play in protecting women during crises?
3. How can countries improve mental health support for survivors?
4. How can economic dependence on abusers be reduced?
5. What measures can be taken to improve reporting rates and access to justice?
6. How can governments better prepare for future crises that may increase domestic violence?



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