

Changing Dynamics of Domestic Violence: A Study of Section 498A Cases Amid the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT COVID-19 has caused extraordinary societal issues, including domestic violence, and India is no exception. In India, the execution of There is a section of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) called Section 498A that commonly known as the anti-dowry law, during the unprecedented crisis caused by the pandemic has received substantial attention, particularly in light of the pandemic. This research paper aims to provide a complete analysis of the abuses of Section 498A IPC during the COVID-19 crisis. This research paper explores the abuses of Section 498A IPC, which was meant to protect women from cruelty and harassment within marriage, through an extensive review of several reports, newspapers, and ministries data. Alcohol use and unemployment were recognized as crucial elements to the detection of domestic abuse based on survey results. The parties involved harmed and unfairly took a domestic violence practices of their spouses. And the restrictions of the lockdown made it harder and harder for women to defend themselves. Therefore, it may be concluded that during times of lockdown, the likelihood of domestic violence dramatically increases. The Covid-19 situation poses multiple problems to all societies across the world. The virus-prevention lockdown led in employment losses, a lack of support, and economic instability. Fear of the virus has increased stress levels in the most vulnerable families.

KEYWORDS - Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence, India, Covid-19, Pandemic Lockdown.

I. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has highlighted current discrimination in families and society, as well as increased fundamental factors contributing to domestic violence. Despite the UN Secretary General's call for Member States to prioritize women's safety and to incorporate gender-based measures into their plans to combat the COVID-19 threat, India was one of the 140 countries that endorsed. However, as a result of the lack of established divided data at the national level regarding violence against women including domestic violence, Information published in reports by the National Commission for Women (NCW) and women's organizations and shared through the media, is being referred to. The National Commission for Women (NCW)¹, which collects reports of violence against women nationwide, witnessed a significant increase in complaints during the country's lockdown. Women made a total of 116 complaints during the initial week of March (March 2–8), but when the implementation of the lockdown was announced (March 23–April 1, 2020), the number rose to

257. Out of the 257 complaints they received, 69 were related to domestic violence. The number of complaints on the "right to live with dignity" has also the number doubled, increasing from 35 to 77 cases. Such examples may inadvertently lead to discriminatory outcomes based on certain marginalized class, gender or caste or a combination of all three². In the months of April and May, The NCW received 3027 complaints covering 22 categories of crimes against women. Among these, 1428 complaints, constituting 47.2%, were linked to the domestic abuse and intimate partner violence. When comparing the statistics to the period between the months January to March 2020, there were 4233 reported grievances in total, with 871 occurrences of domestic abuse and intimate partner violence, accounting for 20.6% of the total.³ This research endeavours to analyse the factors contributing to sudden increases in occurrences of Domestic Violence in India during the global COVID-19 pandemic. By doing this, it aims to encourage a discussion

¹ The National Commission for Women is the apex national level organisation of India with the mandate of protecting and promoting the interests of women.

² The Hindu, April 02, 2020,

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/covid-19-lockdown-spike-in-domestic-violencesays-ncw/article31238659.ece>

³ The Times of India, June 02, 2020,

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/domestic-violence-accounts-for-over-47-complaints-to-ncw-in-lockdown/articleshow/76161829.cms>

among academics and decision-makers on the need to strengthen and expand the 2005 Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act. The introduction of the examination provides a succinct survey of domestic violence, which is followed by the methodology used in this study. The Domestic Violence Act, 2005 and the intricate concern associated with the prevalence of domestic violence in Bharat⁴ are then discussed. The examination of domestic violence in India throughout the lockdown ensues. The research's last sections explore the lockdown's impacts and advocate for changes to the 2005 Domestic Violence Act while building on the threads of analysis.

II. MEANING OF SECTION 498A

The Indian Penal Code, 1860, was significantly expanded in 1983 to include Section 498A of the IPC to safeguard women's rights and promote their empowerment. The Indian Penal Code's Section 498A makes it illegal to force a woman to give up any type of property by treating her cruelly. Furthermore, a relevant modification was enacted to the Evidence Act, transferring the burden of proving guiltlessness from the accused to the prosecution in situations where a married lady assisted in her own suicide and the wife died seven years later of marriage⁵. By means of the Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act 1983, the Indian government revised the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC) on December 26, 1983, adding an additional Section 498(A) to Chapter XX-A, "Of Cruelty by Husband or Relatives of Husband". This chapter was introduced with the aim of penalizing a husband and his family for torturing and harassing the wife in an effort to coerce her or anyone associated with her into complying with illegal demands or to pressure her to commit suicide. Section 498A mandates a three-year prison term as well as a fine for a woman's husband who subjects her to cruelty in order to make the offense deterrent⁶.

Section 498A IPC.

- Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, was enacted by Parliament of India in 1983.
- The section 498A of the Indian Penal Code represents a criminal law provision.
- It stipulates that if the spouse or any spouse's relative subjects a married woman to viciousness, they may be sentenced to confinement for a duration that can put forth up to **36 months and may also be subject to a fine.**
- Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code represents a significant intervention for Violence against Women (VAW), underscoring the distressing certainty of

domestic violence unfolding not beyond the confines of a home.

Acts of domestic violence.

- **Physical brutality**, including actions such as slapping, hitting, kicking, and beating.
- **Sexual assault**, which includes forced sexual intercourse and various other forms of sexual demand.
- **Mental abuse**, such as defame, belittlement, persistent dishonour, frightening, danger.
- **Administering behaviours**, which involves setting apart an individual from closed one's, watching their activities, and limiting approach to funds, medication, job, etc.

Need of Section 498A.

The section was put into place to address the risk of dowry deaths. The Criminal Law Reform Act of 1983 (Act 46 of 1983) included it into the code. By the same Act, Section 113-A of the Indian Evidence Act was enacted, raising the presumption of a married woman aiding in her own suicide. The primary purpose of I.P.C. section 498-A is to protect wife from abuse by her spouse or his family members. Harassment for dowry constitutes under the authority of the Section's last part, and one of the components of "cruelties" is to put a woman in a situation that compels her to commit suicide. According to the law, if the groom or a relative of a woman's partner treats her cruelly, he will be sentenced to up to three years in prison and must pay a fine as well. The violation of Section 498A is punishable by law and is not subject to compounding or bail.

Several Indian laws that aid in curbing cases of violence against women.

- **The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961:-** This act enacted on May 1st, 1961, with the objective of curtailing the practice of giving and receiving dowries. According to the Dowry Prohibition Act, dowry refers to any property, goods, or money given to a marriage by either party, their parents, or any other person regarding the marriage.
- **The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986:-** The Indecent Representation Of Women (Prohibition) Act of 1986 (No. 60 of 1986) is an Act designed to Prohibit Indecent Representation of Women in Broadcasting, Writings, Paintings and other Media, and for other Purposes, and for matters associated with it or related to it.
- **The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987:-** The Rajasthan Government proceed the Sati (Prevention) Act in 1987. The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987, passed by the Indian Parliament in 1988, solidified it into law. The intention of act is to curb sati, the freely or forced immolation or burial alive of a widow and to outlaw glorifying this deed by holding

⁴ Article 1 of Indian constitution, https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/15240/1/constitution_of_india.pdf

⁵ Shobha Rani v. Madhukar Reddi, AIR 1988 SC 121.

⁶ L.V. Jadhav v. Shankarrao Abasaheb Pawar, AIR 1983 SC 1219.

ceremonies, taking part in parades, setting up trust funds, building temples, or doing anything else to remember or to honor the memory of a widow who committed sati.⁷

- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005:-** Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 is a law proceeded by the Parliament of India to keep secure women from domestic abuse. The government of India, under the Ministry of Women and Child Development, enforced it on 26th October in the year 2006. For the first instance in legislation of India, a phrase of "domestic violence" is given in the Law. As such description is exhaustive, covering a wide range of potential circumstances covers not just physical assault but also mental, verbal, sensual, and psychological mistreatment. It's under civil law that places more emphasis on enforcing protection orders than it does criminal laws.

Domestic Violence during Covid-19.

It might be argued that even while governments' initial across the state lockdowns were meant to keep people secure, the choice has unfortunately resulted in a rise in domestic violence. Understanding the causes of the worrying increase in Domestic Violence is essential considering the dire situation experienced by Indian women amid the lockdown. This study demonstrates how patterns in documented instances of domestic violence changed during the COVID-19 lockdown and the factors influencing a surge in gender-based domestic violence. In order to do this, a variety of Domestic Violence incidents that occurred during the COVID-19 lockdown was gathered and analysed through articles from Indian media publications, foreign news organizations, and numerous state and central government organizations in India. There were also findings from the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) reports and the NCW. All of this data was acquired from grievances lodged via the Indian government's helplines, including the National Commission for Women (NCW), for women facing or enduring any type of domestic violence. A few of the governmental bodies providing these statistics include Mitra, Sakhi One Stop Centre (OSC), Mahila Samakhya, and NCW. Domestic violence rises globally during the Covid-19. Domestic abuse is a global issue, not just a problem in India. There were numerous incidents of domestic violence during a lockdown.

For example, In Australia, there was a surge in violence against women during the lockdown. As per the report, 42% of the specialists noted increases in domestic violence⁸. In Europe, there was a 60% increase in

emergency calls associated with violence according Mahase report⁹. Likewise, according to Aguero, the number of helpline calls increases by 48% in Peru¹⁰. Many countries noticed significant increases in the number of DV occurrences that have been reported amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Cyprus (30%), Argentina (25%), France (30%), and Singapore (33%), are among them¹¹. Additionally, other nations in Latin America, including Columbia, Mexico, and Brazil, also have noted a surge in domestic violence. Similar trends have been observed in Germany, Spain, the UK, Australia, Canada, and the US¹¹¹². We contend that during the shutdown, India also saw one of the biggest increases in Domestic violence cases. However, there is still an idea that Domestic violence equates to violent assault, particularly in developing nations like India.¹³ ¹⁴. All of the preceding examples demonstrate that Covid- 19 increases domestic violence in various nations. During the pandemic, there were also several tweets and comments from government officials on women's safety and health education. During the Covid-19, there are little studies and researches on domestic violence. This phenomenon can largely be attributed to the prevailing patriarchal culture and the subordinate status of women, which cuts across class, caste, and religion. But there hasn't been much study done on Domestic Violence against men. This is a result of India's profoundly ingrained patriarchal system, which overlooks culturally prevalent discrimination against men. This assessment centres on domestic violence against Indian women during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown days. Domestic violence causes a variety of issues for women, including physical and mental health issues such as sadness, anxiety, and fatigue. In light of these conversations, the subsequent part offers a critical analysis of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 and domestic violence in India.

Domestic violence amidst COVID-19 in India.

COVID-19 and the increase of domestic violence against women 4 (Monash University, 2020).

⁹ Mahase E, "Covid-19: EU states report 60% rise in emergency calls about domestic violence" BMJ: British Medical Journal (Online) 369, PMID: 32393463 (2020).

¹⁰ Jorge M. Aguero, "COVID-19 and the rise of intimate partner violence" World Development 137, 105217 (2020).

¹¹ COVID-19 and ending violence against women and girls. Retrieved from

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls> .

¹² Another pandemic:

In Latin America, domestic abuse rises amid lockdown. Reuters. Retrieved from

<https://in.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-latam-domesticviolenc/another-pandemic-inlatin-america-domestic-abuse-rises-amid-lockdown-idINKCN2291JM>.

¹³ Thomas, B. (2017) Intimate partner violence: Exploring links with men's childhood gender inequality and violence experiences. World Conference on Women's Studies, 1-11. doi: 10.17501/wcws.2017.2101

¹⁴ Thomas, B. (2018). Intimate partner violence as reported by men in India: Exploring pathways with childhood gender inequity and violence experiences of perpetrators. *Man in India*. 98(3-4), 605- 616

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<https://web.archive.org/web/20110809004932/http://www.frontlineonnet.com/fl2105/stories/20040312002504600.htm>

⁸ Fitz-Gibbon, Kate; Pfitzner, Naomi; True, Jacqui; Walklate, Sandra; Meyer, Silke; Segrave, Marie; et al. "Current research projects on domestic violence against women and the COVID-19 pandemic"

The Prime Minister of India imposed a nationwide lockdown starting from March 23, 2020, to curb the spread of Covid-19 up until May 31, 2020. From June 8 onwards, the nation has been reopening in phases under the tagline As of July 1st, 'Unlock 1' and 'Unlock 2' have been initiated. The government has taken numerous initiatives to protect individuals and prevent illness transmission. For example, separate persons, basic requirements supply, and masks and sanitizer distribution. According to the Disaster Management Act of 2005. Covid- 19 was labelled an epidemic disease by the authorities. Government actions such as extending the lockdown cause a variety of issues for women in India. Domestic violence and marital rape are common crimes committed by women's husbands or spouses.

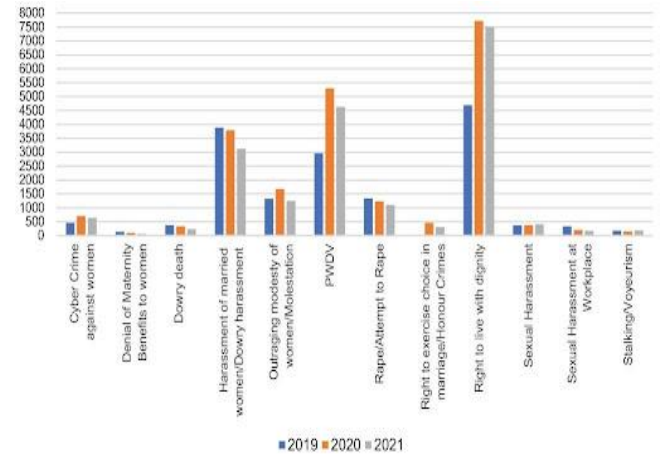
Domestic abuse incidents in India climbed from 2960 in 2019 to 5297 in 2020, as per a report by the National Commission for Women (NCW) report. According to NCW data, there were 19,730 total crime complaints against women in 2019 compared to 23,722 in 2020. According to Rekha Sharma, Chairman of NCW, the primary causes of domestic violence during the lockdown time were depression, a lack of financial assistance, a lack of support, and worry. In addition, the home has become a workplace for both the husband and wife, as well as a school or college for their children. In such circumstances, women were juggling professional and domestic responsibilities. The most difficult difficulty for women in this volatile climate is not only adjusting but also succeeding.

According to Yogita Bhayana, Head of People Against Rape in India, the high percentage of complaints against domestic abuse is attributable to women's willingness to talk about and report it. Women are encouraging other women to disclose abuse against them. Previously, they had repressed the information and were unaware that it had been reported. Several organizations, including AKS, Jagori, and Shakti Shalini, reported that the number of helpline calls about domestic abuse fell during the lockdown. Domestic violence is also decreasing due to isolation and a lack of support, and self-decision making. "Because of social media the reporting of domestic violence has increased. Women have become more vocal and they have less tolerance, which is very good" the Chairman of NCW Rekha Sharma added.¹⁵

Figure 1 depicts a rise in several prevalent forms of gender-based violence officially acknowledged from 2019 to 2021 in India. The National Commission for Women (NCW) receives grievances from women facing such hardships and endeavours to address them outside of the judicial system. Domestic abuse (as outlined in the PWDV Act), harassment related to dowries and violations of one's

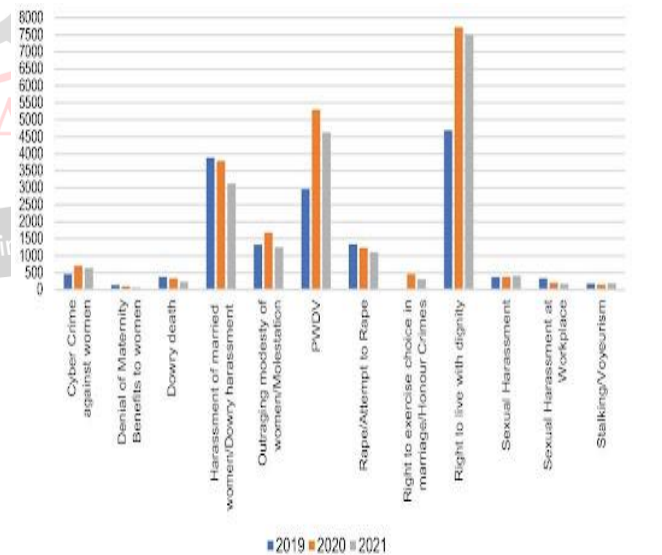
right to a dignified life have all experienced an increase in recent years. It is vital to highlight that all of these occurrences are related with a household's perceived "safe" location.

Figure 1: Trend analysis of gender-based violence (GBV) complaints lodged with the NCW (2019-2021)



Complaints filed with authorities for civil, non-judicial settlements seem to have risen dramatically; simultaneously, First Information Reports (FIRs), which are required to commence judicial procedures, appear to have decreased significantly. Contrary to the trend exhibited in NCW statistics and media stories, registered cases in the majority of India's states have either remained the same or decreased (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: Cases of crimes against women as per FIRs filed (2018-2020)



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Domestic violence captured women in India in 2020. The home was seen as a haven after India declared a state of emergency owing of the Covid sickness. On this The International Day to End Violence Against Women is observed on growing number of domestic abuse cases raises concerns. The question now is whether the house is

¹⁵ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/complaints-of-domestic-violence-against-women-spiked-in-year-of-lockdown-ncw-data/articleshow/81687915.cms>

¹⁶ https://www.orfonline.org/research/domestic-violence-and-womens-health-in-india-insights-from-nfhs-4/#_edn45

a safe haven for women. As stated by a UN document, approximately 243 million females between the ages of 15 and 49 were victims of physical or sexual abuse from their spouses.¹⁷

The type of Domestic violence differed greatly between cases. In a particular instance, a young girl was coerced into a marriage against her wishes by her parents, who also subjected her to physical abuse. In another case, a brother in Tripura lodged a complaint with the National Commission for Women (NCW) regarding the physical mistreatment of his sister through her in-laws. In one more incident father from Rajasthan expressed concerns about his daughter not only enduring physical assaults from her spouse from the onset of the lockdown but in addition to deprived of food¹⁸. There have also been reports of women as denied entry into residences owned by their in-laws. Furthermore, throughout the lockdown time, Jammu and Kashmir recorded 19 incidences of dowry harassment.¹⁹

Even while domestic abuse complaints were filed in numerous states, only a small number had comprehensive data (refer to Table 1). Of the states with available data reporting, Punjab saw the greatest amount of domestic violence complaints during the lockdown, with Uttarakhand, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu coming next.

Table 1: Number of Reported Domestic Violence Cases During the Lockdown in Some Indian States.

State/Union Territory	Period	Number of reported cases of domestic violence	Authority
Punjab	Since March 22, 2020	At least 30 cases per day (approximately 900 in a month)	Punjab State Commission for Women
Tamil Nadu	March 25 – May 14, 2020	616	Tamil Nadu State Government
Karnataka	March 23 – April 21, 2020	162	Karnataka State Government
Uttarakhand	March 24 – May 15, 2020	144	National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)
Haryana	March 24 – May 15, 2020	79	NALSA
Jammu & Kashmir	March 24 – April 24, 2020	65	Government Sources
Chhattisgarh	Per month of lockdown	60-65	Chhattisgarh Police
Delhi	March 24 – May 15, 2020	63	NALSA
Maharashtra	March 24 – May 15, 2020	12	NALSA

¹⁷ UN Secretary-General Policy brief, The impact of COVID-19 on women, UN Women, UN Doc, 21

¹⁸ Vijayalakshmi, A., & Dev, P. (2020, April 9). No lockdown for abuse. The Hindu. Retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/no-lockdown-for-abuse/article31292334.ece>.

¹⁹ Bhat, W. (2020, 14 May). JK reports 16 rapes, 64 molestation cases, 65 distress calls during lockdown. <https://groundreport.in/kashmir-crime-against-women-in-lockdown/>.

Sources: i) Bhat, W. (2020, 14 May). JK reports 16 rapes, 64 molestation cases, 65 distress calls during lockdown. Ground Report/ Retrieved from <https://groundreport.in/kashmir-crime-against-women-in-lockdown/> , ii) Joy, S. (2020, 26 April). Coronavirus crisis: No lockdown for domestic violence. Deccan Herald, <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/coronavirus-crisis-no-lockdown-for-domestic-violence-829941.html>, iii) Mahapatra, D. (2020, 18 May). Least Covid affected state reports highest domestic violence and eviction cases. Times of India. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/least-covid-affected-state-reports-highest-domestic-violence-and- eviction-cases/articleshow/75797029.cms>, iv) Ratnam, D. (2020, April 26). Domestic violence during Covid-19 lockdown emerges as serious concern. Hindustan Times. Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/domestic-violence-during-covid-19-lockdown-emerges-as-serious-concern/story-mMRq3NnnFvOehgLOOPpe8J.html> , v) Uttarakhand witnesses highest number of domestic violence amid lockdown, Delhi on number 3 (2020, May 17) <https://www.timesnownews.com/mirror-now/in-focus/article/uttarakhand-witnesses-highest-number-of-domestic-violence-amid-lockdown-delhi-on-number/593038>, vi) Raipur Police launches "Chuppi Todd" campaign as domestic violence cases surge amid lockdown. (2020, May 13). Times of India. Retrieved on May 13 2020 from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/raipur/raipur-polices-chuppitod-campaign-to-deal-with-domestic-violence-survivors/articleshow/75714642.cms>

It appears that the overall state-by-state statistics for domestic violence during the lockdown match with the national trend of rising complaint rates. Reports of domestic violence in Chhattisgarh jumped during the lockdown period, increasing monthly from 40 in January and February to 60–65 (an increase of more than 60%). In the same spirit, in the first five weeks of the 2020 campaign, from March 22 to April 28, state's lockdown, the Haryana State Commission for Women recorded a 78% rise in domestic violence complaints (Pant, 2020).

However, there were aberrant trends in Domestic Violence reporting in a few states. During the lockdown, the quantity of domestic violence grievances filed with the states of Telangana, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh decreased (Ratnam, 2020). According to Deepak (2020), the decline in Telangana was actually as high as 50%. However, as the data solely encompasses the incidents that the victims reported, this does not mean that the actual number of such crimes reduced.

According to certain reports, there is a negative connection between the incidence of COVID-19 reports and cases of domestic violence. The Indian state with the greatest number of COVID-19 cases is Maharashtra, documented the lowest count of domestic violence instances. Conversely, Uttarakhand, which experienced the fewest COVID19 instances during the initial phase, had the most Domestic Violence instances during the lockdown (Mahapatra, 2020). Nevertheless, a more extensive dataset would be necessary to thoroughly comprehend this pattern and make any meaningful inferences.

Intimate Partner Violence Correlates.

Intimate Partner Violence is an important global health issue that violates women's rights and is a gender-based

issue. Women are more likely to become victims of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse compared to men, even when retaliating or engaging in combative opposition. Societal conditioning of men to assert power often perpetuates gender-based violence, rendering women vulnerable to victimization. Battered Women's Syndrome (BWS) is a psychological disorder that people who have experienced subjected to prolonged domestic violence due to long-term abuse. The term "syndrome" medicalizes domestic abuse, giving credibility to arguments. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides a definition for IPV as comprising bodily assault, sexual assault, psychological abuse or stalking by a spouse or partner, whether they are married or not. Intimate partner violence has been acknowledged as a major world health hazard, as evidenced by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of eradicating violence against married women by 2030²⁰. Physical IPV has been experienced by in the US, 14.0% of males and 22.3% of women.

Autobiographical fiction serves as a foundation for intersectional analysis, a concept that explains how various forms of discrimination can intersect and affect an individual's life. In terms of intersectionality interlinked character of social groupings such as gender, race, and class, which establish intersecting and mutually reliant frameworks of prejudice even disadvantage^{21 22}. An intersectional analysis seeks to offer understanding regarding the compounding impacts of multiple interconnected categories and factors. Comprehending the historical contexts of an issue is also required when using an intersectional lens. Violence and institutional prejudice have left fundamental inequalities that have placed certain individuals at a disadvantage from the beginning. Racism, sexism, poverty, and caste systems all represent instances of inequalities that curtail individuals' rights and opportunities. Once the notion interconnectedness is incorporated within the feminist movement transforms into genuinely inclusive, enabling women of diverse nationalities, economic backgrounds, cultures, identities, and sexual orientations must be given a voice²³.

In the COVID-19 Pandemic, violence against intimate partners.

The application of stringent Public health initiatives to stop COVID-19 from spreading are probably affected the

prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV). Brink and colleagues investigated variations in IPV throughout Europe in the era of early stages within the pandemic²⁴. Their findings revealed the fact that the IPV expanded in six nations, decreased a 2, and remained constant in half. Empirical research has indicated that social distancing policies and directives to stay at home have heightened women's susceptibility to intimate partner violence (IPV) and hindered their entry to a support system^{25 26}. Couples with children (as opposed to those without) may have had higher levels of IPV during the pandemic's early phases. Prior to the pandemic, IPV was more common in households with kids, especially when there were small children present²⁷.

Understanding the occurrence of intimate partner violence (IPV) victimization during the coronavirus pandemic and determining if it has altered in relation to current estimates were the goals of our initial set of studies. Examining the contributing causes to IPV during the COVID-19 epidemic was the second goal. In particular, stresses brought on by COVID-19 and pre-existing vulnerabilities were both investigated. Since school closures presented a particular difficulty for couples who are also parents, we also looked into whether there was a difference in the impact on IPV rates between couples with and without children.

Effects of lockdown.

The rise in domestic violence incidents is a complex problem with a number of underlying causes. One of the main causes of this unsettling trend is the sudden implementation of lockdown procedures. Women, especially those who are more vulnerable to domestic abuse, found themselves unable to flee the safety of their homes and the threats that came from their violent family members because they had neither prepared nor anticipated this. As a result, the implementation of lockdowns significantly limited the conventional channels via which victims could obtain assistance. Women who were victims of domestic abuse were made even more vulnerable by the lockdown's restrictions on social interactions, which made it impossible for them to seek safety with friends or family. This unprecedented confinement within the walls of their homes not only increased the risk of abuse, but also made it difficult for them to reach external support networks or seek help from authorities. As a result, the sudden announcement of lockdowns not only amplified the already-existing dangers of domestic violence, but also worsened the difficulties

²⁰ United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. Retrieved March 18, 2022, from <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

²¹ Grounds for dialogue: intersectionality and super diversity Tijdschr. Gender stud., 21 (1) (2018), pp. 7-25 from <https://www.aup-online.com/content/journals/10.5117/TVGN2018.1.KHAZ>

²² <https://www.scopus.com/record/display.uri?eid=2-s2.0-78651385338&origin=inward&txGid=0e002a75d235bcd6e075adcd0baeccc>

²³ <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780429321054-14/women-economics-charlotte-perkins-gilman>

²⁴ Brink, J., Cullen, P., Beek, K., & Peters, S. A. (2021). Intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic in Western and Southern European countries. *European Journal of Public Health*, 31(5), 1058–1063.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckab093>

²⁵ Bradbury-Jones & Isham, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.15296>

²⁶ Usher et al., <https://doi.org/10.1111/inm.12735>

²⁷ Bair-Merritt et al., <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-008-9154-y>

victims confront in seeking safety and help during such challenging times.

The rise in joblessness amid the lockdown as a contributing factor to domestic violence.

An advisor or consultant to India's NITI Aayog, a government policy think tank, Narinder Singh Rawat, lists the main causes of the rise in DV as the lengthened "interaction time," the ambiguity surrounding economic opportunities, and the overall climate of dread and uncertainty²⁸. Gainful employment is unquestionably a crucial component in preventing or lessening cases of domestic violence since the physical separation brought about by work obligations frequently lowers the likelihood of conflict in the home. However, the implementation of COVID-19 lockdowns has unintentionally forced people to stay restricted in their houses, which has increased the proximity and frequency of encounters between spouses. Due to the lack of physical separation that job usually provides, homes are now more vulnerable to increased tensions and conflicts, which has led to a rise in the incidence of domestic violence events. The sudden disruption of the long-standing balance between work and family life has not only made tense circumstances more likely to occur, but it has also reduced the amount of coping strategies and outside distractions that come with working outside the home. Because of this, the unexpected confinement brought on by the pandemic-induced lockdowns has greatly increased family stress, which thus has elevated the risk of domestic violence for many people and families. But it's important to recognize that both men and women have been negatively impacted by the lockdown-induced unemployment; there hasn't been any gender discrimination. However, the negative consequences have put a number of women in a precarious situation and increased their risk of physical and economic harm. In addition to being financially insecure, many women have lost their livelihoods as a result of the economic crisis brought on by the epidemic, making them more vulnerable to domestic abuse. Many women have ended themselves in dangerous situations, even though they tried to run away from their abusive relationships and take sanctuary in the protective arms of their parents' houses. A terrible example of this harsh reality surfaced in one particular case, in which a brother turned to physical violence toward his sister because he was unable to handle the additional responsibility of providing for another person in the home. This disturbing episode highlights the critical need for comprehensive support mechanisms to protect women's security and well-being in light of the increasing socio-economic pressures that have exacerbated the precarious situations that many women have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, as women typically provide their money to the men in the home due

to the lockdown, the number of men who commit domestic violence has increased.²⁹.

III. METHODOLOGY

Data Collection:-

First, we used a combination of specific phrases to look for news stories on the Google search engine. The terms "lockdown," "COVID-19," "coronavirus," "spousal violence," "marital violence," "domestic violence," and "intimate partner violence" were among them. The Hindu, The Diplomat, Scroll.in, The Economic Times, The Times of India, The Times of India, The Wire, News18, and Times Now, were among the online newspaper sources we used. By using the site syntax and Google search date, we gathered news articles that were released between March 22, 2020, and May 31, 2020. We only gathered news reports that were written in English. Translation and back translation were therefore unnecessary.

Data Analysis:-

We chronologically ordered the articles after gathering data from the web newspapers. We examined 59 news items in all. These articles' content was personally examined by us. We did not include in the analysis any publications that were repeated or that did not address domestic violence episodes or factors related to them. As reported in Asian Journal of Criminology 16:19–35 (2021), page 23. Themes were not determined through an inductive process, but rather beforehand³⁰. To be more precise, we looked at the domestic violence episodes that were documented in these papers to see how the current causes of Domestic violence falls into the three categories within the Risk Assessment Tool (RAT). The three elements that make up RAT were our pre-existing themes. At first, the data was coded by each contributor separately. We later shared the information to come to an agreement on the codes pertaining to relevant subjects. We combined related codes to create a single code. We classified events where multiple codes developed independently in order to get as much information as possible. We were able to acquire 27 codes total under the three distinct themes. Any differences of opinion amongst the writers were settled amicably.

Ethical Considerations.

The safety of research participants is paramount during COVID-19³¹. Owing to travel limitations imposed by the government, we were unable to gather primary data from

²⁸ <https://www.niti.gov.in/making-homes-safer-women-during-covid-19>

²⁹ Coronavirus crisis: No lockdown for domestic violence. Deccan Herald. <https://www.deccanherald.com/india/coronavirus-crisis-no-lockdown-for-domestic-violence-829941.html>

³⁰ Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101

³¹ Considerations for doing intimate partner violence research in the time of coronavirus. Retrieved June 10, 2020, from Sexual Violence Research Initiative : <https://www.svri.org/blog/considerations--doing--intimate--partner--violence--research--time--coronavirus>.

domestic abuse victims or institutions involved in combating domestic abuse, including law enforcement and non-governmental organizations, and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) workers. We also chose not to do telephone interviews with victims of domestic abuse in order to safeguard them and prevent them from becoming victims again. We chose to gather and examine domestic abuse incidents reported in media in India during the lockdown period as a possible approach. This article relies on secondary data. Consequently, The Institutional Review Board's ethical clearance was not necessary.

IV. FINDINGS

A Motivated Offender

We discovered nine occurrences from the content analysis that were significant to determining the offender's likely reasons. We discovered four situations in which alcohol was the primary cause of domestic violence. Domestic abuse was committed in three of the four cases mostly because the abuser was going through withdrawal symptoms from alcohol withdrawal. In a case from Hyderabad, a "woman and her teenage son from an earlier marriage, were facing the brunt of her second husband's frustration over not getting 24 Asian Journal of Criminology (2021) 16:19-35 alcohol during the lockdown"²⁹. Similarly, one domestic abuse victim informed The Tamil Nadu police reported that her spouse had been harassing her on a daily basis due to alcohol was unavailable³². Within the third occurrence, a college-aged student said that "his father was becoming violent, beating up his mother and even grandmother, because he was going through alcohol withdrawals." It was found that having symptoms of alcohol withdrawal in addition to alcohol consumption itself was a contributing factor to domestic violence". She was depressed as her husband had taken to alcohol abuse out of anxiety over a financial crisis," a domestic violence victim explained³³. Unemployment was also identified as a factor that increased an offender's motivation throughout the study of material. We discovered three cases when job stability and unemployment were the primary underlying reasons behind domestic abuse. A domestic abuse victim disclosed that her spouse, who had recently fired from his industrial job and assaults her in front of her children³⁴. In the second occurrence, "a woman from Kolkata was apprehended at home with her husband, who had been unemployed since

the lockdown." He was hitting the wife, robbing her of her financial savings, and abusing her in front of her child."³⁵ Frustration and anxiety were discovered to be connected factors that contributed to motivation. One domestic violence survivor expressed that things were more balanced while her alcoholic spouse worked. He stayed at home all day after losing his job, became furious, drank wine, and caused a commotion³⁶. This highlights the relationship between alcohol intake, Joblessness and annoyance as contributing factors to domestic violence.

Descriptive Statistics

We evaluated 59 articles about domestic abuse that were published during COVID-19 in India. The Times of India published the most pieces (13), followed by The Hindu (12) and Hindustan Times (7). The Economic Times, The New India Express, and Scroll.in each published five pieces; The Indian Express published three; The Diplomat published two; and BBC News, Deccan Herald, News 18, Times Now, and The Wire published one (Table 1). We identified 25 cases of domestic abuse with documented victim experiences. One incident was recurrent and therefore disregarded in the analysis. Furthermore, one instance of domestic abuse involving the victim's parents was omitted from the study. The total number of occurrences investigated was 23.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of newspaper articles and codes

Source (number of articles collected)	Themes		
	A motivated offender (n)	A suitable target (n)	Absence of a capable guardian (n)
The Times of India (13)	1	2	-
The Hindu (12)	3	3	1
Hindustan Times (7)	-	4	2
Scroll.in (5)	-	1	-
The Economic Times (5)	-	-	-
The New India Express (5)	1	2	1
The Indian Express (3)	-	1	-
The Diplomat (2)	1	-	-
Al Jazeera (2)	-	1	-
Deccan Herald (1)	2	-	1
News18 (1)	-	1	-
The Wire (1)	-	1	-
BBC News (1)	-	1	1
Times Now (1)	-	-	1

n, number of codes

Absence of a Capable Guardian

³² Domestic violence cases in Chennai up, cops get 25 calls a day.

Retrieved April 18, 2020, from The Times of India:

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/domestic-violence-cases-in-chennai-up-cops-get-25-calls-a-day/articleshow/75153610.cms?from=mdr>

³³ A parallel pandemic as domestic abuse victims trapped with their abusers. Retrieved June 25, 2020, from The Hindu :

<https://www.thehindu.com/society/covid-19-lockdown-domestic-abuse-victims-trapped-with-abusers/article31388228.ece>

³⁴ India's 'Shadow Pandemic'. Retrieved June 22, 2020, from The Diplomat:

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/04/indias--shadow--pandemic/>

³⁵ . COVID-19 lockdown: You can now report domestic violence using this signal. Retrieved June 13, 2020, from The New Indian Express:

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/apr/04/covid-19-lockdown-you-can-now-report-domestic-violence-using-this-signal-2125720.html>

³⁶ How lockdown + unemployment + hunger + liquor increased domestic conflicts in low income households. Retrieved June 22, 2020, from Citizen Matters: <https://bengaluru.citizenmatters.in/covid--19--lockdown--psychological--effects--mental--health--46426>

We discovered four relevant instances connected to the lack of a competent guardian using text analysis. Amid the lockdown, lack of a skilled guardian fostered marital violence, as seen by these occurrences. The police are the primary official source that serves as a capable safeguard opposing violent crime in all its forms. During the lockdown, there was a dearth of police officers, according to content analysis. As the epidemic struck the country, A large portion of the cops was on the front lines, strictly enforcing lockdown. Numerous officers were deployed within the designated containment areas. Additional personnel were positioned at the state borders to impede the entry of individuals and vehicles from neighbouring states.³⁷ Support services represent the subsequent legitimate resource serving as a proficient protector for victims of domestic violence. NGOs, ASHA workers, and counselling service providers provide these support services. Several non-governmental organizations and providers of counselling services established a helpline lines to assist these victims. However, a few of these hotlines reported very few grievances. As an illustration, a victim of domestic abuse in Delhi asked her brother in Nepal for assistance, and her brother then went to a non-governmental organization (NGO) for assistance. The NGO intervened to negotiate between the offender and the victim with police support, ultimately advising the woman to remain amid the lockdown, at home. The woman's situation deteriorated following this intervention, and she was subjected to recurrent assault³⁸. Neighbours are now vital potential guardians in cases of domestic abuse because of the rigorous travel limitations and the inability of victims' families to offer fast support. Neighbours are frequently the first line of defence, able to spot clues of abuse and act quickly to stop it from getting worse, especially during times when they are compelled to live close to the abuser. Neighbours are essential in recognizing warning signs of distress and acting quickly to prevent domestic abuse because of their physical closeness to the victim. A moving example of this phenomena arose in one specific situation, in which the nine-year-old daughter of a domestic violence survivor bravely went to a neighbour for assistance. The neighbour quickly responded to the distress call, stepping in to prevent more harm from being perpetrated. This powerful example highlights how important it is to have strong community support networks in place to protect the safety and wellbeing of people who are victims of domestic abuse. It also highlights the critical role that neighbours can play in creating a protective

³⁷ Covid-19 lockdown | Rise in domestic violence, police apathy: NCW. Retrieved July 20, 2020, from <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/covid-19-lockdown-spike-in-domestic-violence-says-ncw/article31238659.ece>

³⁸ . Domestic violence during Covid-19 lockdown emerges as serious concern. Retrieved June 14, 2020, from Hindustan Times: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/domestic-violence-during-covid-19-lockdown-emerges-as-serious-concern/story-mMRq3NnnFvOehgLOOPpe8J.html> .

community atmosphere, especially during emergencies³⁹. This was not always the case, though. India views domestic abuse as a personal matter, hence many people hesitate to get involved. A recent instance in Uttar Pradesh involved a woman who was reportedly murdered by her husband's severe beatings. The neighbours could be seen filming the incident rather than stepping in to assist the victim⁴⁰.

V. LIMITATIONS

This research paper has certain limitations. The type and source of the data come first. This research study looked at cases of domestic abuse that were covered by newspapers, which are secondary sources of information. 2021; 16:19–35; Asian Journal of Criminology One weakness of this study is that it solely relies on online newspapers to look for documented instances of domestic violence. Our ability to discern between domestic violence and situational couple violence was hampered by the newspapers' scant material. Situational couple violence lacks a broad pattern of control, even yet domestic violence is committed in an attempt to maintain general control over one's partner⁴¹. One of the primary limitations of this research is that we were unable to ascertain the context or level of violence from the content analysis. Moreover, the newspapers were all published in English. This study did not take into account the likelihood of reporting additional domestic abuse instances in regional languages and local publications. There is a chance that journalists will choose or report stories regarding domestic violence biasedly, as shown by Carlyle et al.⁴² when they observed how severely distorted the framing of domestic violence is in newspapers.

Secondly, we explained the three elements of RAT as outlined by Cohen and Felson using a relatively small number of cases - 25. We cannot extrapolate the results to a broader population, even though the cases included in this research provide an explanation of the phenomenon of domestic violence from the standpoint of the RAT. Future research can gather personal information in the form of qualitative and quantitative data to comprehend how RAT applies to domestic violence.

Thirdly, only women who were victims of domestic abuse were included in this study. There is enough data to conclude that men can also be victims of domestic abuse

³⁹ What India's lockdown did to domestic abuse victims. Retrieved June 23, 2020, from BBC News: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-52846304>

⁴⁰ UP: Man beats wife to death in Raebareli, viral video becomes 'evidence' against him. Retrieved June 7, 2020, from Mirror Now News: <https://www.timesnownews.com/mirror-now/crime/article/up-man-beats-wife-to-death-in-raebareli-viral-video-becomes-evidence-against-him/601258>

⁴¹ The differential effects of intimate terrorism and situational couple violence: findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. *Journal of Family Issues*, 26(3), 322–349.

⁴² Newspaper coverage of intimate partner violence: skewing representations of risk. *Journal of Communication*, 58(1), 168–186.

as well. For instance, according to Malik and Nadda (2019)⁴³, 50% of married men in India between 21 and 49 years old have experienced domestic abuse from their wives. Furthermore, people of varied sexual orientations and the third gender are also assault victims committed by their partners⁴⁴. Future studies should consider other genders and sexual orientations when applying RAT to domestic abuse cases. Finally, there was a disparity in the information provided about the severity of domestic violence amid the COVID-19. Some sources in India indicated a decrease in reported instances of domestic violence during the pandemic, despite most of the sources reporting an increase in complaints compared to normal. For instance, groups like Jagori and Shakti Shalini noted a decrease in cases of domestic abuse⁴⁵. For example, officials from the Karnataka Women and Child Development Department documented a substantial 57% reduction in recorded occurrences of domestic abuse in the middle of March 23rd and April 13th, 2020⁴⁶. This statistical decline in reported events provides a more nuanced picture of the complicated mechanisms at work when the pandemic was just beginning to spread and the ensuing lockdown measures. While these preliminary findings appear to indicate a decrease in reported instances, it is critical to realize the need for additional empirical investigations to fully comprehend the complexities underpinning this apparent shift. These studies are critical for giving a more thorough and nuanced knowledge of the pandemic's multidimensional influence on domestic violence, allowing for the creation of more informed and focused intervention techniques. Given the multifaceted nature of domestic violence and its complex relationship with broader societal and economic factors, a thorough empirical investigation is required to establish a more nuanced and accurate portrayal of the underlying trends and dynamics, allowing for the formulation of more effective policies and support mechanisms for vulnerable individuals and families.

VI. CONCLUSION

Despite the study's limitations, it is absolutely clear that domestic violence incidences in India rose in the period of COVID-19 shutdown, as evidenced by examinations reported in numerous places. Joblessness, limited availability of alcohol during the initial the lockdown lasting six weeks, and the subsequent ease of obtaining

following May 4, 2020, alcohol were the key causes for this spike. Given the circumstances, swift action is required to safeguard ladies from harm for the duration of the shutdown. Although certain corrective measures possessed been put in place to aid domestic violence victims during the lockdown, such as the introduction in addition to specific WhatsApp numbers and a helpline, there remains a substantial need for enhancement. With the pandemic hitting practically every country on the planet, our daily activities have changed significantly. Together with other nations implementing lockdowns or releasing home-bound directives, individual's normal routines have radically changed. Individuals refrained from leaving their residences for work, school, or recreational purposes during the lockdown. They were only authorized to leave their households for essential services. Individuals involved in delivering essential services had been the sole individuals who persisted in their regular actions even in the midst of the lockdown. Thus, immediate and consistent attention from authorities is required, especially in a nation like India, where protecting women is a pressing issue even during regular times. This analysis does, in fact, provide a foundation for a more thorough and in-depth investigation of domestic violence, a growing public health problem in India. In this particular situation, the implementation of a legal directive to stay at home in order in order to stop COVID-19's spread inadvertently created an environment where potential criminals, viewing their spouses as vulnerable targets, felt emboldened to perpetrate violence in the absence of effective protection. Several studies have utilized RAT to gain a deeper comprehension of domestic violence, as outlined in the 2021 Asian Journal of Criminology 16:19-35. However, the preceding discourse suggests the significance of RAT in comprehending the exceedingly frequent phenomenon of domestic violence cannot be overstated. Eliminating among the trio conditions conducive to domestic abuse by the same temporal and spatial context, namely a motivated offender, a vulnerable target, and the lack of a capable protector, might lead to a significant decrease in the number of domestic violence victims.

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⁴³ A cross-sectional study of gender-based violence against men in the rural area of Haryana, India. *Indian Journal of Community Medicine*, 44(1), 35–38.

⁴⁴ . Dating violence experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 43(5), 846–857.

⁴⁵ Twin public health emergencies: Covid-19 and domestic violence. *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics*, 5, 195–199.

⁴⁶ Domestic violence calls to 181 helpline dip during lockdown. Retrieved April 18, 2020, from The Times of India: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hubballi/domestic-violence-calls-to-181-helpline-dip-during-lockdown/articleshow/75164334.cms?from=%3Dmdr>

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