
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING THE PANDEMIC COVID-19 COMPARATIVE REVIEW IN OUR COUNTRY AND OTHER COUNTRIES

Sibeldzan Maksud Shabedin

Faculty of Law, Kicevo, University “St.Clement Ohridski” Bitola, Republic of North Macedonia
sibelcanmaksud@hotmail.com

Nikola Tuntevski

Faculty of Law, Kicevo, University “St.Clement Ohridski” Bitola, Republic of North Macedonia
niktun@t.mk

Abstract. The modern globalization of the 21st century undoubtedly has positive benefits for co-operation between states and greater prosperity. But 2020 will be remembered in the global memory of humanity after Covid 19. This virus affects a number of areas such as economics, politics, health, education, law, social and family life etc. This study includes general information about Covid-19, mainly domestic violence during the pandemic around the world. Domestic violence is violence or other abuse in a domestic setting, such as in marriage or cohabitation. Domestic violence also involves violence against children, parents, or the elderly. Partly on forced isolation, and much more on already broken family relationships and values, there is a risk that the pandemic will have lasting consequences for many families. This is exactly the central theme of this paper.

Keywords: COVID-19, Pandemic, Family Life, Domestic Violence.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is known from historical examples that large epidemics - pandemics have an impact on the social structure and cycle of society. The diversity and severity of these social changes are affected by many factors such as society's perspective on the epidemic, measures taken, economic power, and the prevalence of restrictive measures (McGrew RE 1960 p.61–73).

Criminal tendencies are the main social changes observed. For example, while plundering crimes increased during the medieval plague epidemic, crime rates showed an overall decline in the 20th century influenza epidemic. A similar change seems to be valid in the current period; Data showing that restrictions due to the COVID-19 outbreak reduce crime rates have started to be published. Media reports point to a decline in crime rates in many different continents and countries: Murder rates have dropped sharply in Peru, El Salvador, and the Republic of South Africa (Lederer EM 2020). Likewise, in the United States of America (USA), overall crimes have been reported to decrease by 15% for Los Angeles and close to 40% for San Francisco (Campedelli GM, Aziani A, Favarin S 2020). This periodic decrease in the number of crimes has been attributed to factors such as the restriction in the home environment and the frequent police patrols.

Despite the fact that there is a significant decrease in the total number of crimes, the frequency of some crime types is increasing. The decrease in simple house theft may lead potential criminals to areas such as auto theft and extortion, given the economic factors, and an increase in these crimes is expected. It has been suggested that with the increase in internet use, there may be an increase in fraudulent cybercrime. Again, an increasing trend is expected in online fake news, information production and digital sabotage (Sandell R. 2006).

Factors of concern, unemployment, economic constraints and limited access to the health system increase in catastrophic conditions. Considering the difficulty of getting away from the abuser due to the social isolation policy and the scarcity of social support systems, all these are among the risk factors of domestic violence. After similar natural disasters in terms of their effects on social life although it is not affected by other violent crimes, it is observed that there is an increase in domestic violence cases.

The number of domestic violence cases during the COVID-19 outbreak also increased. The number of domestic violence incidents is increasing, or at least not decreasing, in reports from many countries. Based on media coverage, the United Nations reported an increase in reports of domestic violence in Germany, USA, Argentina, UK, France, Canada, Cyprus and Singapore. In Wuhan, China, where the epidemic first started, the reporting of domestic violence cases has increased three times compared to the previous year (Usher K, Bhullar N, Durkin J, Gyamfi N, Jackson D. 2020).



During the COVID-19 epidemic process, the increase in domestic violence against women, children and the elderly, the reasons for this increase, the situation in the world and in our country, and the recommendations made by international and national organizations in solving this problem will be discussed in this paper.

2. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The victims of violence against spouses, which constitute the subgroup of domestic violence, are women in general, although spousal violence is also observed against men, especially in same-sex marriages. Violence against women is a violation of human rights that is widespread all over the world, continues to be a significant threat to public health and women's health, especially when partner violence is the most common form, one in three women in the world has experienced physical and / or sexual intercourse during their lifetime (Jewkes R. 2002, p.1423-1429). Domestic violence against women causes sexually transmitted diseases, various injuries, including HIV and unplanned pregnancies, and adverse effects on physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health.

In the World Health Organization's publication on 7 April 2020, titled COVID-19 and Violence Against Women, it was emphasized that the risk of violence against women increased in epidemics. There are additional risks, especially for vulnerable groups such as elderly, disabled, migrant and refugee women (WHO/SRH/20.04, 2020.). Causes of increased violence against women during the COVID-19 days; extended stay at home, unemployment, economic problems, stress, reduced communication with family and friends, limited access to helplines, restriction of access to legal aid and protection services.

Domestic violence against women is a special type of violence in which victims hesitate to come to healthcare facilities even outside of the epidemic, unless there are very serious injuries. It has a recurring cycle of violence due to its nature. In this cycle, women who are subjected to violence experience more and more serious health problems and are exposed to injuries and / or killed. In addition to physical violence, women who are frequently subjected to psychological, economic and sexual violence remain at risk throughout their lives, and their years of healthy life are reduced. It should be kept in mind that there may be an underlying domestic violence especially in patients presenting with non-specific complaints such as chronic headache and abdominal pain, sleep problems, and depressive mood (No.WHO/FRH/WHD/97.8, 1997).

Health workers, the majority of whom are women in many locations, may also be at risk of violence in their home and / or workplace. Health managers should have plans to ensure the safety of health workers. Psychosocial support, non-performance-based incentives, additional transportation allowance and childcare support should be provided. It is stated that healthcare workers dealing with COVID-19 may face stigmatization, isolation and social exclusion.

Decision-makers should identify ways to make physical distancing measures accessible, taking into account domestic violence against women in their plans to combat the COVID-19 outbreak. Local services (hotlines, shelters, sexual assault crisis centers, counseling, etc.) should be identified with appropriate healthcare institutions,

opening hours, contact information; should be made accessible. Coordination mechanisms between institutions should be maintained in the development and implementation of policies to reduce violence against women during the epidemic. The needs of victims should be evaluated through multi-stakeholder processes, including non-governmental organizations and women's rights organizations. The capacities of service providers should be strengthened and measures should be taken to meet the needs of women infected with COVID-19 for shelters. Non-governmental organizations should provide services for women who are subjected to violence and their children, collect data on reported cases of violence against women, record data and ensure that they can be used by interested parties.

It is important for women who are subjected to violence to create a security plan that can be implemented in case the violence increases. For both herself and her children, the woman can determine in advance a neighbor, friend, relative or shelter to go when they need to leave home immediately. It should keep requirements such as identity card, money, personal clothing, medicines in a specific place. She must plan how she can leave the house and get help.

States are taking some precautions against the increased domestic violence in the COVID-19 epidemic. The French government has announced that it will accommodate domestic violence victims in hotel rooms and fund pop-up counseling centers in grocery stores. In addition to accommodating victims and their children in hotels, the Spanish government has launched a new campaign encouraging women to seek helpline. In addition, it keeps all services open to assist victims of domestic violence during quarantine. In addition to providing access to shelters and social services, the South African government keeps courts open for emergency protection orders. Also, there have an active messaging line where victims can get help (Jang B, Farise K. 2020).

3. CHILD NEGLECT AND ABUSE

Although there are not enough systematic studies yet, the increase in domestic violence cases draws the attention of the society. Child abuse is often associated with violence between partners. Visual or auditory witnessing of this violence by children may cause post traumatic stress disorder and some behavioral disorders in children. Because researches have shown that children living in homes where domestic violence is seen are at 60 times more risk of abuse and neglect than the normal population (Vu NL., Jouriles EN., McDonald R., Rosenfield D. 2016, p. 25-33). During this period, children spend more time at home than normal, because schools and libraries are closed. Children are forced to stay at home under the curfew. There is a risk of neglect in the children of working parents and of physical, verbal and psychological abuse in the children of non-working people (or home-office style workers). This is mainly for children under 12 months the process may end in death. In this period, it is possible that the intruder inside the house, who wants to increase his/her control over the household, target the children in the house (Humphreys KL, Myint MT, Zeanah CH, 2020). The danger is serious given the fact that one in eight children in the United States suffered child abuse even before the pandemic, a significant portion of which was recurrent. During this period, it is stated that between 1 and 2.3 million children in England are open to similar risks (Cluver L, Lachman JM, Sherr L, Wessels I, Krug E, Rakotomalala S, 2020).

Low-income, crowded families are particularly at risk in this process. In addition to the prolongation of the time spent at home due to restrictions, other factors such as stress, fear, aggravation of the economic problems of the crisis reduce tolerance and long-term thinking ability in family members and increase the possibility of child abuse and neglect. It has been reported that the measures taken to protect against the pandemic may cause a secondary hidden pandemic in the form of increased frequency of child abuse and neglect (Herrenkohl TI, Sousa C, Tajima EA, Herrenkohl RC, Moylan CA. 2008, p.84-99).

In Ireland, it has been reported that calls to some child support lines have increased just a week after school closures. On the other hand, although reports of domestic violence have increased in the United States, some organizations dealing with children's rights have been informed that reports of child abuse and neglect are decreasing (Campbell AM., 2020). Inability to monitor children by healthcare professionals due to postponement of routine health screenings. The fact that schools are closed and they cannot reach teachers and social workers due to curfews reduce our chances of detecting child neglect and abuse. For this reason, it becomes difficult to fully reveal the extent of the damage caused by child neglect and abuse until the beginning of the school season.

National / international organizations and non-governmental organizations should support the dissemination of good parenting practices, conduct research and inform the society in different ways. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, the United States Agency for International Development, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the UK Global Problems Research Fund, etc. Some official organizations such as these are under the leadership of associations. Controlled studies of these groups in low-middle-income countries target good parenting practices such as coping with stress

and building positive relationships with children during the crisis period, and are shared free of charge in 55 different languages (Peterman A, Potts A, O'Donnell M, Thompson K, Shah N, Oertelt-Prigione S. 2020). During the COVID-19 epidemic, it is important to establish emergency help lines and reference centers where children and women can apply in cases of possible abuse and neglect. Spreading the use of online methods as widely as possible will increase the effect. It is possible that these approaches will make it possible to reach the groups at risk and to have the chance of early diagnosis and intervention. In clinical follow-ups made by phone or video calls and in children brought to clinics for any reason, signs of possible abuse or neglect should be sought, and the frequency of follow-up of cases considered to be at risk of domestic violence should be increased, and their parents should be advised on good parenting practices (Boserup B, McKenney M, Elkbuli A., 2020).

4. ELDER ABUSE

Elderly abuse is accepted as a growing public health problem all over the world. The elderly can be abused or neglected by healthcare professionals, caregivers and household members. While the proportion of the elderly population in the total population has been increasing in recent years, the number of the elderly victims of abuse applying to emergency services has also increased. Elder abuse is defined as any kind of harmful behavior done consciously or unconsciously by household members who care for the elderly and those who have a relationship of trust among them. Elder abuse can manifest itself in physical, psychological, economic and neglect (Lachs MS, Pillemer K. 2004, p.1263-1272).

In addition to the COVID-19 threat, the risks of the elderly are increasing in terms of abuse and neglect due to reasons such as social isolation, fear of death and increased dependence on caregivers. While other types of elderly abuse have not yet been investigated due to pandemic restrictions, the United States Federal Trade Commission and the American Bar Association report a massive increase in the economic abuse of the elderly group (Kleinschmidt KC. 1997, p.463-472).

In this period when the calls to stay at home are increasing worldwide, the abusers are generally the relatives of the elderly. Older patients and those with diseases such as dementia are at risk of neglect. Elderly people living in nursing homes become more isolated due to the decrease in family visits and this increases the risk of abuse and negligence of caregivers. In addition, the risk of abuse increases in the elderly living at home with their children due to the increase in the time they spend with other members of the family. One of the factors leading to the abuse of elderly people in this period is the display of discrimination and aggression against a certain age group due to their age, which is defined as ageism by the World Health Organization. All of these factors are elderly abuse and harm the elderly:

- Showing COVID-19 as an elderly disease since the beginning of the epidemic,
- Persistently targeting the elderly on curfew,
- Selectively emphasizing the elderly rate in official statements made about the deceased,
- Verbal and physical attacks against the elderly population in the society, reflected in the language and media used.

In order to reduce the addiction of the elderly population, it is recommended that governments make arrangements such as hourly grocery shopping permits for the elderly, provide clinical follow-up by phone, and spread the discourses against aging through social and mainstream media (Han SD, Mosqueda L. 2020).

Due to the restrictions made, the importance of shelters, where the elderly can not reach the homes of their families and friends, where the victims can feel safer and where they can receive legal and medical support, has increased. During this period, it is important to develop shelters due to possible urgent needs, to establish them if they do not exist, to create safe shelter options for all individuals who have been subjected to ill-treatment, abuse and violence (Kleinschmidt KC, 1997).

5. CONCLUSION

Social change created by a pandemic of this size it shows itself in all examples of violence. Death, as the foremost form of violence, may increase not only due to illness but also through personal destruction. According to the first calculations, it has been suggested that there will be an increase of fifty thousand people in the number of suicides. It is pointed out that the approach that focuses on COVID-19 in health services may have already increased the loss of life due to other diseases. Apart from mortality, morbidity is expected to show a rising streak. This will have a more pronounced effect on vulnerable groups. It has been argued that the stress caused by isolation increases the risk of alcohol and substance abuse, especially the possibility of relapse. Depending on the psychosocial consequences caused by COVID-19, an average of 0.2 years of total life-year loss per person is predicted. Moreover, it has been estimated that this loss will be 9.8 years for 2% of the population (Moser DA, Glaus J, Frangou S, Schechter DS. 2020).

Domestic violence has increased visibly. The dominant patriarchal order and gender inequality are pointed out as the main reasons for this increase. Apart from this, the increase in alcohol use with the restriction, the increased time spent together, etc. There are many risk-increasing factors. As a result of restrictions, potential aggressors and victims exist in a certain socio-geographic area for a long time. This situation makes the restriction of staying at home compatible with many known theories of criminology in terms of domestic violence. In this context, the environment in question sets the ground for violence, as well as creates situational forms of violence such as the threat of COVID-19 transmission (Dean T. 2015, p. 367–393).

Social impacts such as domestic violence continue long after natural disasters. Moreover, with a possible COVID-19 peak that may occur following social isolation, the risk can spread over a longer period of time. Considering the factors that delay the diagnosis of domestic violence, the measures to be taken should be long-termed, highly inclusive and capable. The number of qualified personnel should be increased, especially psychological support units, and the necessary budget should be planned now.

In this process; The workload of working women may increase even more: After women finish their work at the workplace, they start and care housework. All kinds of care, education and training of children, meeting their emotional needs, planning games and activities are expected from women because of the children staying at home and online education. Since no help can be obtained for services, more food, cleaning, housework, and even quarantine management of families and parents are mostly carried out by women.

Although death rates due to COVID-19 are reported to be higher in men, the risk of domestic violence is also known to be higher in women. With the measures taken to cope with this challenging COVID-19 epidemic, while staying at home for safety, the safety of the home for women and children should also be considered and necessary measures should be taken (Shayegh S, Malpede M. 2020).

It is very valuable for all segments of the society to be in unity, solidarity and harmony when fighting a serious health problem such as the COVID-19 epidemic. While fighting this war, equality should be ensured in the distribution of household chores among individuals. Necessary measures should be taken in order to reduce the negative effects of being restricted for a long time at home, and each individual of the society should be aware of its role in the protection of individual and public health and fulfill its responsibility .

REFERENCES

- Boserup, B., McKenney, M., & Elkbuli, A. (2020). Alarming trends in US domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Am J Emergency Med*. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajem.2020.04.077>.
- Campbell, A.M. (2020). An increasing risk of family violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: strengthening community collaborations to save lives. *Forensic Sci Inter: Reports*.
- Campedelli, G.M., Aziani, A., & Favarin, S. (2020). Exploring the effect of 2019-nCoV containment policies on crime: The case of Los Angeles. *arXiv [Internet]*. (2003.11021):1–49. [Cited 2020 May 9]. Available from: <http://arxiv.org/abs/2003.11021>.
- Cluver, L., Lachman, J.M., Sherr, L., Wessels, I., Rakotomalala, S. et al. (2020). Parenting in a time of COVID-19. *Lancet*. 395:e64. Available from: doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30736-4.
- COVID-19 and violence against women: What the health sector/system can do. World Health Organization. [Internet]. (WHO/SRH/20.04). 2020. [Cited 2020 May 9]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/vaw-covid-19/en/>.
- Han, S.D., & Mosqueda, L. (2020). Elder abuse in the COVID-19 era. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.16496>.
- Herrenkohl, T.I., Sousa, C., Tajima, E.A., Herrenkohl, R.C., & Moylan, C.A. (2008). Intersection of child abuse and children's exposure to domestic violence. *Trauma, Violence, Abuse*.
- Humphreys, K.L., Myint, M.T., Zeanah, C.H. (2020). Increased risk for family violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Pediatrics*.
- Jang, B., & Farise, K. (2020). Gender Based Violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic and economic, social and cultural rights. *OpinioJuris*. [Internet]. 2020. [Cited 2020 May 9]. Available from: <http://opiniojuris.org/2020/04/23/genderbased-violence-during-the-covid-19-pandemicandeconomic-social-and-cultural-rights/>.
- Lachs, M.S., & Pillemer, K. (2004). Elder abuse. *Lancet*.
- Lederer, E.M. (2020). Crime Drops Around the World as COVID-19 Keeps People Inside _ Time [Internet]. Time. [Cited 2020 May 9] Available from: <https://time.com/5819507/crime-drop-coronavirus/>.
- McGrew, RE. (1960). The First Cholera Epidemic and Social History. *Bull Hist Med*.

- Moser, D.A., Glaus, J., Frangou, S., Schechter, D.S. (2020). Years of life lost due to the psychosocial consequences of COVID19 mitigation strategies based on Swiss data. medRxiv. 2020.04.17.20069716. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.04.17.20069716>.
- Peterman, A., Potts, A., O'Donnell, M., Thompson, K., Shah, N., Oertelt-Prigione, S. et al. (2020). Pandemics and violence against women and children. Center for Global Development Working Paper. (in press).
- Sandell, R. (2006). Pandemics: A Security Risk? (February):1–9. Research Gate. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Rickard_Sandell/publication/265183868_Pandemics_A_Security_Risk/links/546dfb4f0cf29806ec2e6504.pdf.
- Shayegh, S., & Malpede, M. (2020). Staying Home Saves Lives, Really! SSRN Electron J. 4. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3567394>.
- Usher, K., Bhullar, N., Durkin, J., Gyamfi, N., & Jackson, D. (2020). Family violence and COVID-19: Increased vulnerability and reduced options for support. *Int J Mental Health Nursing*.
- Vu, N.L., Jouriles, E.N., McDonald, R., & Rosenfield, D. (2016). Children's exposure to intimate partner violence: A meta-analysis of longitudinal associations with child adjustment problems. *Clinical Psychology Review*.