

## **Domestic Violence against women in Haryana during Pandemic: A Review**

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### **Lalita**

*Ph.D Research Scholar, Public Administration, M.D. University, Rohtak*

### **Jagbir Narwal**

*Assistant Professor, Public Administration, M.D. University, Rohtak*

### **Abstract**

The Novel Corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic has put the entire country under lockdown, creating many problems like unemployment, household financial crisis, mental stress, etc. further resulted a spike in domestic violence (DV) cases all over the world. To curb DV, the government of India passed the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA, 2005) which came into force on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2006. The objective of this paper is to study the status of cases of DV in Haryana before and during the period of lockdown and to find out the reasons for the same. It discusses the related review of literature and also some unique challenges, risks and dilemmas faced by women victims during this pandemic. The study concludes with some suggestions for effective implementation of PWDV Act, 2005, keeping in view the problem of such pandemic.

**Keywords:** Domestic Violence; COVID-19 pandemic; lockdown; women victims.

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### **Corresponding author:**

Lalita, Ph.D Research Scholar, Public Administration, M.D. University, Rohtak

## Introduction

Epidemic and disaster-related tension, insecurity and fear, along with social exclusion and movement constraints, have sparked concerns about an increase in gender-based violence (Muldoon et al., 2021). India's Prime Minister declared a statewide curfew to stop the spread of the Novel Corona virus, on March 24, 2020 (Hebber, 2020). During the time of lockdown a progressive increase reported in the cases of domestic violence in India (Halder, 2020).

The term 'Domestic Violence' includes any act that causes harm to women by her intimate partner or a family member. It affects women physically as well as mentally. The United Nation Declaration 1993 defined domestic violence (DV) as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a women, includes threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life"(Choudhary et al., 2019). It is an act of coercion upon an individual and women from all kind of backgrounds are affected by violence every day in their life. It has become a public health menace for society which never sees the caste, religion, region and nation.

'Let's discuss the role of home in individual's life. Apparently the place "home" is been considered as the safest place for everyone. It is the place from where an individual can expects love, care, affection, and psychological piece' (UNICEF-Innocenti Digest, 2000). A home is often believed as just a "haven," a safe place where family members can hang their hearts, but facts reveals that it has also become a center of violence (Singh & Bhattacharyya, 2020).

It becomes a dangerous place for women and girls because they live in anxiety, terror, stress and in great danger in their so called own house. Their human rights are bitterly violated and their lives are stolen from them by the ever-present threat of violence (Rani et al., 2021). Bradbury & Isham (2020) said that living at home isn't always secure; it is the place where sexual, physical and psychological violence occurs against women. This is because the house may be a location where power dynamics are perverted and subverted by those who abuse frequently without the scrutiny of anyone "outside" and from family unit (Bradbury& Isham, 2020). Ironically, as the threat of DV has increased, "safest-home" has proven disastrous for a huge percentage of the population.

On September 14, 2005, the Ministry of Law and Justice of the Government of India enacted the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 in response to the rising rate of DV against women in India (Singh & Bhattacharyya, 2020). It came into force on 26th October 2006. One and half decade has been passed of the implementation of this Act but the reporting of violence is increasing day by day. The study will discuss the

causes of DV and the problem faced by women in registering the complaints in Haryana. It also evaluates the PWDVA, 2005 and suggests some measures for effective implementation.

### **Objectives of the Present Paper**

1. To study the status of domestic violence cases during lockdown in Haryana and factors responsible for the same.
2. To examine the applicability of PWDVA 2005, during the lockdown.
3. To make suggestions to attain the goals of the PWDV Act.

### **Research Methodology**

The current paper is primarily based on secondary data gathered from a variety of sources. Information collected from Women and Child Development Department Haryana, from newspaper articles and from different governmental agencies in India. Some other sources were used like reports from the NCW and the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), as well as the Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), the Press Information Bureau, and the Haryana State Statistical Abstract. The systematic approach has been adopted for analysis.

### **Domestic Violence in situation of crisis**

The Economic & Political Weekly: Engage, (2020) quoted the belief of Marianne Hester, a sociologist, that DV goes up whenever families spend more time together, such as the festivals celebrations and summer vacations (EPW Engage, 2020). This got proved when all the family members remain constraint at home because of lockdown. During the lockdown period the considerable enhancement in DV cases has been reported at global level and India is not an exception (Kumar, 2020). The reported cases were coming from rural areas as well as from cities also. Shalu Nigam (2020) said that women were at a heightened risk of harm since they were stuck with the abuser and had no one to help them.

When more than half of the world was under some kind of lockdown during the pandemic, it spread like an infectious disease across millions of households (Singh & Bhattacharyya, 2020). It is necessary to mention here that various studies like, UNICEF 2020; Johnson 2014; and Christian Aid 2015, have shown that when there is a crisis, economic instability, or calamity, there is always an increase in domestic violence, as well as a long-term gendered effect on women. It has been noticed during Ebola epidemics where women disproportionately affected by epidemic. In the context of India, the Bhopal gas disaster harmed women more than men (Sen, 2020).

Pandemic increased the risk for women because in India women played complex multiple roles in family. Because of the mandated lockdowns, a vast number of enterprises and offices, including schools and colleges, have adopted the work-from-home concept (Halder,

2020). As a result, the notion of house is shifting, since homes are providing services previously supplied by colleges, schools, offices, hospitals, restaurants, and technical services such as plumbers and electricians (Nigam, 2020). Nagpal, Akshita (2020) on Indiaspend quoted the saying of Urvashi Gandhi, the director of a global women's rights organization, that the load of work has increased in houses because everybody is at home. With housekeeping staff being unavailable, the expectation is from women to bear the load, and chances of violence increase if she fails to do so (Nagpal, 2020).

According to the National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS-4) study from 2015-2016, one out of every three women was abused during non-pandemic times (NFHS, 2015-16) However, it was extensively documented in various publications, newspapers, and organizations that the rate of domestic violence (DV) in India had increased following the lockdown. (Das et al., 2020) Domestic violence (DV) rates have surged across the country after the lockdown, according to latest data from the National Legal Service Authority (NLSA).

Domestic violence has always been a serious problem in Indian states and Haryana is well known for gender discrimination and the COVID-19-related lockdown exacerbated the problem. It should be noted that throughout the four phases of the lockdown, women of India filed more domestic violence complaints than in a similar period in the previous ten years (Singh, 2020). In all Indian states Haryana was second in getting complaints of violence in the starting phase of lockdown. According to data compiled by the Haryana State Commission for Women, the number of crimes against women recorded in the state during the lockdown increased by 78 percent between March 22 and April 28 (Pant, 2020). The Vice Chairperson Preeti Bharadwaj of Haryana State Commission for Women said, "Our office collected data from 22 women police stations across Haryana and police helpline-1091, where about 1,447 complaints have come since lockdown started on March 23 till April 9, as we are tracking the disposal of these complaints" (Thakur, 2020).

When the country was ravaged by the Covid-19 epidemic, the National Commission on Women received 4,550 complaints via email, phone, and a special WhatsApp number between March 1 and September 18. According to figures presented to parliament by the ministry of women and child development during the Monsoon Session, which ended on September 23, Uttar Pradesh got the most complaints (968), followed by Delhi (784). Maharashtra is in third place with 458 instances, followed by Bihar (254) and Haryana (229) during this time period (Joy, 2020).

#### **PWDV Act, 2005 and Domestic Abuse in Haryana**

According to National Family Health Survey-4, 34 percent of women in Haryana have experienced physical or sexual violence (NFHS-04, 2015-16).

Haryana government also implemented PWDVA, 2005 in the state to overcome this menace. PWDVA defines domestic violence "any harms or injures or endangers the health, safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical, of the aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse, harasses, or endangers the aggrieved person with a view to coerce her or any other person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any dowry or other property or valuable security" (Hazarika et al., 2017).

As per the provision of Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 a Department of Women and Child Development, Haryana has appointed full time Protection cum child marriage Prohibition Officer (PPO) on contractual basis for each district. One consultant at headquarter also appointed to coordinate the work of PPOs and ensure effective implementation of Protection of PWDV Act in Haryana (W&CD, Haryana).

This is a specially framed Act to give relief to the female victims of Domestic Abuse. Victims can directly approach the 'Protection Officer,' the 'Service Provider,' the police, or a Magistrate' under this statute. The judge or the Magistrate might order various steps to guarantee the affected person's security and well-being as soon as the complaint is submitted (R. Singh et al., 2018).

According to National Family Health Survey (NFHS-04), 'only 14% of women who have ever been the victim of physical or sexual violence have sought help in Haryana. Over three-fourths of women (77%) have not sought aid or informed anyone about the violence. Only 4% of battered women who sought aid for the violence turned to the police for assistance' (NFHS-04, 2015-16). S. Singh & Bhattacharyya (2020) explains the reasons those contribute in distorted reporting of domestic violence like Fear, humiliation, taboo connected to deeply ingrained socio-cultural norms, and the affection that many DV victims may feel towards their abusers (Singh & Bhattacharyya, 2020). Furthermore, many women's tactics for resisting domestic violence at home sometimes entail severe measures such as relocating out of their houses or even committing suicide. Unfortunately, ladies under COVID-19 lockdown are unable to move out of their houses (Singh & Bhattacharyya, 2020).

### **District-wise status of Domestic Violence cases in Haryana (April 2019 to March 2021)**

Various studies as discussed above show that there was high level victimization of domestic violence during the time of lockdown. In other words, domestic abuse has been the worst effect of the lockdown. To study and analyze the above aspect, the following table 1 is presented with the data indicating the number of cases registered and resolved during the periods just before and during the lockdown.

Table 1  
District-wise status of Domestic Violence cases in Haryana  
(April 2019 to March 2021)

Name of districts	April 2019 to March 2020			April 2020 to March 2021		
	No. of complaints registered	No. of DIR filed	No. of Complaints Resolved through mediation	No. of complaints registered	No. of DIR filed	No. of Complaints Resolved through mediation
Ambala	347	126	75	211	50	63
Bhiwani	371	261	17	117	70	6
Faridabaad	596	406	66	317	206	20
Fatehabaad	320	223	60	154	107	29
Gurugram	276	178	79	98	57	14
Hisar	786	0	279	574	0	273
Jhajjar	248	125	72	147	63	44
Jind	930	735	711	712	28	624
Kaithal	283	178	23	140	101	22
Karnal	482	280	60	316	182	57
KUK	299	169	34	286	91	74
Mahendergarh	272	247	141	141	123	70
Mewat	327	275	197	242	233	170
Palwal	343	0	103	217	0	80
Panipat	242	123	74	207	51	47
Panchkula	238	158	36	209	91	70
Rewari	326	0	145	234	0	146
Rohtak	492	0	64	440	0	69
Sirsa	450	320	46	206	81	41
Sonipat	259	198	8	426	143	19
Y. Nagar	803	0	374	294	61	212
Charkhi Dadri				92	39	7
Total	8690	4002	2664	5780	1777	2157

Source: Compiled from Women and Child Development Department, Panchkula, Haryana

Table 1 shows the district-wise status of Domestic Violence cases reported in Haryana during the period of April 2019 to March 2021 including the details of complaints registered, domestic incidence reports (DIR) filed and resolved cases through mediation. As per the table, during the period April 2019 to March 2020, the highest numbers of complaints were registered in Jind (930) district followed by Yamuna Nagar (830), Hisar (786), Faridabad (596), Rohtak (492), Karnal (482) and Sirsa (450). The lowest number of complaints were registered in Panchkula (238) followed by Panipat (242), Jhajjar (248), Sonipat (259), Mahendergarh (272) and Kaithal (283).

During the same period, the highest number of DIR filed during this period were in Jind (711) followed by Faridabad (406), Sirsa (320), Karnal (280) and in Mewat (275), and the lowest number of DIR filed in Panipat (123) followed by Jhajjar (125), Ambala (126),

Panchkula (158), Kurukshetra (169), Kaithal (178), Gurugram (178) and Sonipat (198). At the same time, no DIR was filed in the districts of Hisar, Palwal, Rewari, Rohtak and Yamuna Nagar.

Highest number of cases resolved through mediation was in district Jind (711) followed by Yamuna Nagar (374), Hisar (279), Mewat (197) and in Rewari (145). The lowest number of cases resolved through mediation was in district Sonipat (8) followed by Bhiwani (17), Kaithal (23), Kurukshetra (34), Panchkula (36) and in Sirsa (46).

The above table further shows the district-wise status of domestic abuse complaints in Haryana, during the lockdown period (April 2020 to March 2021). During the above said period, the highest numbers of complaints were registered in Jind district (712) followed by Rohtak (440), Sonipat (426), Faridabad (317) and Karnal (316). The lowest numbers of complaints were registered in district CharkhiDadri (92) followed by Gurugram (98), Bhiwani (117), Kaithal (140) and Mahendergarh (141).

During the same period, the highest number of DIR filed was in Jind (711) followed by Mewat (233), Faridabad (206), Karnal (182), Sonipat (143) and Mahendergarh (123) and lowest number of DIR filed was in Dadri (39) followed by Ambala (50), Panipat (51), Gurugram (57), Yamuna Nagar (61) and Jhajjar (63). At the same time, no DIR was filed in the districts of Hisar, Palwal, Rewari and Rohtak.

The highest number of cases resolved through mediation was in district Jind (611) followed by Hisar (273), Yamuna Nagar (212), Mewat (170) and Rewari (146). The lowest number of cases resolved through mediation was in district Bhiwani (6) followed by Dadri (7), Gurugram (14), Sonipat (19) and Faridabad (20).

While discussing the above table, it is found that during the pre-covid period that is April 2019 to March 2020, the highest complaints registered were 930 in Jind district. In the last week of March 2020, there was complete lockdown in the state. During this lockdown period the highest numbers of complaints registered were 712 in Jind district. Likewise, the lowest numbers of complaints registered during the pre-covid period were 238 in Panchkula district and during the lockdown the numbers were 92 in Charkhi Dadri.

It shows a significant difference of complaints between both the periods. It doesn't mean that there was less violence during lockdown period, the reason for lessor registration of complaints might be due to the restriction imposed by the government, family pressure, social consideration etc.

Further while discussing on the cases resolved by mediation, it is found that during the pre-covid period the highest numbers of cases resolved were 711 out of 930 in Jind and lowest were 46 out of 450 in Sirsa district whereas during the lockdown period the highest cases

resolved were 624 out of 712 in Jind district and the lowest were 6 out of 117 in Bhiwani district. It shows that there is no significant difference between numbers of cases resolved during both the periods.

### **The applicability of the Domestic Violence Act during lockdown**

In India, VAW has increased tremendously over the last few decades. The Domestic Violence Act of India was enacted over a half-decade ago with the goal of providing "more effective protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the Constitution who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and formatters connected therewith or incidental thereto" (Sethi, 2019).

When we review the cases filed under this legislation during the lockdown, the guarantees given in the act have not been fulfilled even after a decade and a half. Though the legislation enlarged the definition of domestic violence to encompass not only physical but also verbal, economic, sexual, and emotional, aggression, it also gave rise to the possibility of urgent protective injunctions as well as economic rights such as assistance and reimbursement. However, cultural elements that informally govern the operation of the administration, police, and court hampered its successful execution.

There needs to be an equal way out of the situation where women are expected to endure everything that comes their way especially in our society. The sufferer's time of isolation will only be extended when lockdown is enforced. Kofman & Garfin (2020) said that lockdown creates a perplexing paradox for victims. They risk experiencing or escalating violence if they choose or are compelled to stay at home. They risk being exposed to a highly infectious and severe virus if they are able to leave (Kofman & Garfin, 2020).

The administration and law enforcement authorities must recognise the gravity of the situation. The protection of women cannot be postponed until the epidemic has been defeated. The PWDVA, 2005 should have some special measures that can be used to protect the women in crisis situation. Without deviating from any epidemic, the administration should take appropriate measures to safeguard and assist domestic violence victims.

During the shutdown, the machinery required by the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act had not been viewed as a vital service. As a result, protection officers were unable to visit victims' homes; NGOs were unable to have physical contacts with them; and police officers, who were at the forefront of our campaign to combat COVID-19, were overworked and unable to properly assist victims (Arora & Kumar 2020).

### **Probabilities of increasing the cases of Domestic Violence during Lockdown**

Covid-19 pandemic is responsible for rise in domestic violence. It's not that women aren't abused in their homes before the lockdown, but the pandemic is reflecting and amplifying



the discrimination, socioeconomic disparities, domination, entitlements, classism, and patriarchal assault always exist in a male-dominated system (Nigam, 2020). The possibilities responsible for spikes of DV cases during the lockdown are discussed below:

- **Unemployment-** It is one of the strongest reasons that have been noticed behind the rise in cases of domestic violence. Aside from morbidity and mortality, the single most serious concern raised in the fallout of COVID-19 is the loss of jobs and livelihoods (Agarwal, 2021). The immediate impact of an unexpected nationwide lockdown on March 25, 2020 was on jobs (Deshpande, 2020). While both men and women have suffered significant negative consequences as a result of the pandemic and its related lockdowns, intra-household dynamics put women at greater long-term danger (Agarwal, 2021).
- **Role of Alcohol-** "Drunkenness is a major factor behind domestic violence in Haryana," said the DGP of Haryana (Siwach, 2020). Many studies have found a strong relationship between alcohol intake and gender-based DV (Renzetti et al., 2020). Liquor vending outlets in the state were closed soon after the shutdown for the first six weeks of lockdown. Many men became agitated as a result of the shortage of alcohol, and most of them committed atrocities against their families. But it was strange that after getting access to alcohol, who lost their savings, indulged in more violence because they don't have sufficient money to purchase that. However, during the lockdown, alcohol has proven as a "double-edged weapon." It makes the situation worst for women. As a result, alcohol usage, when paired with growing unemployment, is aggravating violence against women in Haryana during the lockdown.
- **Barriers in lodging complaints-** Women were rendered helpless by the lockdown, which prevented them from fleeing dangerous situations. The victim's parental family is generally the initial point of contact. They are vital not just in morally supporting the victim in submitting a complaint, but also provide help in registering a complaint to the police quicker (Arora & Kumar 2020). The perpetrator's persistent presence made it impossible for victims to reach their first responder and also prevents them from reporting to institutionalized channels (Rani et al., 2021). So the perpetrators didn't have the fear of being punished and without any interference he was free to do what he wanted. The proximity of the victims to their abusers may have hampered the reporting of domestic violence instances during the lockdown.
- **Spending more time at home-** The lockdowns has bounded households to stay at home. Sufferers and perpetrators were living together for extended lengths of

time, women's privacy was eroding, and violence was on the rise. Women in abusive families must combat both the male predator on the inside and the virus on the outside. Living with violent spouses causes them bodily and mental harm since they are trapped within the boundaries of their homes (Prakhar, 2020).

### **Steps taken by Government to stop domestic abuse during pandemic**

During the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic, many countries have observed significant increases in recorded DV incidences. Other countries' authorities have taken a number of steps to reduce violence against women. In many countries, domestic violence is considered an "important service." New tactics have been implemented, such as creating a 24-hour helpline, sharing Whatsapp, and other digital platforms via which victims may quickly contact the helplines (Nigam, 2020).

Despite the fact that domestic violence is a matter of discussion in India, no policy measures to address the issue have been implemented. Some measures have been adopted by different agencies like NCW, women rights organizations, NGOs and by different state government to curb this issue. The Delhi High Court directed the national and state governments to explore ways to prevent and safeguard women who are victims of domestic violence, as well as to properly implement the PWDVA of 2005, in a two-judge panel (Sen, 2020). The NCW also launched a WhatsApp number with online complaints links which was already operational. Different women rights organizations also took some important measures to support victims women during lockdown. Sen, (2020). According to a new project dubbed red dot, a woman may be identified as a victim of domestic abuse by NGOs and authorities by placing a red dot on her hand. This initiative received 20 complaints within three days of its start, as advertised. (Deccan Herald, 2020) In Uttar Pradesh advertisement was doing in newspapers by saying "Suppress Corona, Not Your Voice"

According to the NCW chairwoman, Anganwadi and ASHA workers, as well as other frontline health experts, educate women on how to prevent family abuse, and victims may notify abuse to these workers.

### **Conclusion & Suggestions**

As evidenced by the findings reported by various sites, DV occurrences in Haryana rose during the COVID-19 shutdown (Saini, 2021). Unemployment, alcohol consumption, dissatisfaction, and women's inability to file concerns were all factors in the rise. Arguably, existing evidences are inadequate to demonstrate a relationship between lockdown and DV, because there is lack of availability of real literature which pays stress on DV in Haryana. A more comprehensive examination is hampered by the dearth of a consistent reporting system about abuse and a dearth of publicly accessible government information for the shutdown period. The accuracy and scope of reporting are always key parameters

to know about reality. But it was noticed that because of proximity of the victims to their abusers may have hampered the reporting of domestic violence cases during the lockdown. COVID-19 has not only resulted in an increase in domestic violence cases, but it has also separated victims from their support networks and systems.

The state government must take critical efforts to reduce domestic violence. Domestic abuse must be labeled a "Vital Service," and individuals who give support and relief to victims of domestic violence must be permitted to move and reach out to women and children in dire demand of help.

During this crisis situation, immediate actions should have been taken to protect women from violence at home. It should be on high priority for the government, and an emergency structure should be developed to reach out to women in need. In order to offer urgent and long-term assistance to women in distress, Standard Operational Procedures must be created with a guideline and structure. Because ASHA and Anganwadi workers are on the front lines of COVID prevention, they should be involved in delivering help and relief more swiftly.

However, the paper emphasizes that the current PWDV Act of 2005, has failed to minimize the amount of DV cases during lockdown. As a result, we advocate for more restrictive amendments to the statute based on the perspectives of DV victims. This review does, in fact, lay the groundwork for a more thorough and in-depth investigation of DV, which is becoming an increasingly serious public health concern in Haryana.

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