

COVID-19 and Domestic Violence: Is there a Correlation?



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Introduction

In light of its efforts to raise awareness on violence against women, UN women dedicated the 25th of November to be the International Day of Elimination of Violence against Women. In light of helping to spread more awareness about this topic, we're presenting this report about violence against women.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality, and continues to be one of the most notable human rights violations within all societies. GBV is the violence directed against a person because of their gender. Both women and men experience gender-based violence but the majority of victims are women and girls.

According to Europe Institute for Gender equality, GBV and violence against women are terms that are often used interchangeably as it has been widely acknowledged that most gender-based violence is inflicted on women and girls by men. However, using the 'gender-based' aspect is important as it highlights the fact that many forms of violence against women are rooted in power inequalities between women and men. GBV and violence against women are both considered a violation of human rights.

GBV includes violence against women, domestic violence against women, men or children living in the same domestic unit. It is estimated that one in three women will experience sexual or physical violence in their lifetime. During displacement and times of crisis, the threat of GBV significantly increases for women and girls.

The Corona pandemic has negatively affected the rights and lives of women around the world, as the social and psychological burdens on women have increased through the social, health and family roles that women play, as well as their important role on the front lines of combating the emerging corona virus. With regard to the



repercussions of the Corona virus on the situation of Egyptian women, an increase in cases of domestic violence was monitored in Egypt due to the deteriorating economic conditions due to the loss of many women's jobs, which led to the deterioration of the economic and social conditions of many Egyptian families in which women are the only breadwinners for the family.

First: Types of Gender-Based Violence

According to UNHCR the United Nations Refugee Agency, ***“Gender-based violence can include sexual, physical, mental and economic harm inflicted in public or in private. It also includes threats of violence, coercion and manipulation. This can take many forms such as intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation and so-called ‘honor crimes.’”***

“The consequences of gender-based violence are devastating and can have life-long repercussions for survivors. It can even lead to death.”

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines violence against women as ***“any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”***

Although women and girls are the main victims of GBV, it also causes severe harm to families and communities. There different forms of Gender-based of violence the most known one of them are domestic violence and physical violence while we can find that people may neglect or might not be able to recognize that psychological violence could be a form of Gender-based violence too.



"The consequences of gender-based violence are devastating, and for survivors it can have lifelong repercussions, it can even lead to death."

-UNHCR

- 1. Physical violence:** it is an act intended to cause or result in pain or physical injury. As with all forms of violence, the main aim of the perpetrator is not only—or may not always be – to cause physical pain, but also to limit the other’s self-determination. Some people classify human trafficking and slavery as a form of physical violence against humans. Physical violence within intimate relationship is called domestic violence which is a phenomenon that is widespread.
- 2. Domestic violence:** it is the most common type of gender-based violence. Some point of views think that domestic violence needs more attention as it happens in relationships between people who know or knew each other for a period of time therefore it is very different from violent incidents that occur among strangers. The way that domestic violence was for some time viewed as a private, domestic issue has altogether hampered acknowledgment of the phenomenon as a human rights violation.

Domestic violence had been mentioned by different conventions and different organizations as they all try to define it and raise awareness about it to help the victims of domestic violence to get help and survive what they’ve been through. Not only women are exposed to domestic violence, men too could be exposed to domestic violence not necessarily physical domestic violence it could be psychological too. According to the United States Department of Justice Office



on Violence against Women, the definition of domestic violence is “*a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain control over another intimate partner*”. Another definition for domestic violence is presented by the United Nations “*Domestic abuse, also called "domestic violence" or "intimate partner violence", can be defined as a pattern of behavior in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse is physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person*”.

This includes any behaviors that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone. Domestic abuse can happen to anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. It can occur within a range of relationships including couples who are married, living together or dating. Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels.

Some civil organizations tried to define domestic violence too, so we find the National Coalition against Domestic Violence in the United States defines domestic violence as follows “*Domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, threats, economic, and emotional/psychological abuse. The frequency and severity of domestic violence varies dramatically*”.



Second: International Conventions on Violence against Women

Domestic violence is recognized in international law as a violation of human rights. Although early international treaties only provided protection against domestic violence implicitly, in the 1990's domestic violence began to receive more explicit attention with the passage of the General Comment No. 19 by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1992) and the Declaration of Elimination of Violence against Women (1993). The past two decades have also seen numerous resolutions from the UN General Assembly on violence against women, including one that specifically addressed domestic violence. According to different UN treaties on domestic violence, domestic violence violates human rights: as a violation of basic freedoms such as the right to life and security of person, as a violation of the right to equality, and as a violation of the prohibition against torture.

1- UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or CEDAW, is an international legal instrument that requires countries to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas and promotes women's equal rights. CEDAW is often described as the international bill of rights for women. The United Nations adopted CEDAW on 18 December 1979. As of 2016, 189 countries have ratified CEDAW. This convention defines discrimination against women and girls as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made by men against women with the purpose of affecting and weakening women enjoyment of political, economic,



cultural, or civil human rights. All countries ratifying this convention are obliged to pursue a national policy that eliminates discrimination against women in its all forms. These countries should also provide legal protection and assistance to the victims of discriminations against women.

Article (1) of the CEDAW states that: *“the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.*

Article (2) sets instructions states to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and to adopt policies aimed at that:

(a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle; (b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women; (c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination; (d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation; (e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise; (f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women; (g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.



2- Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against women & Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)

The Istanbul Convention recognizes violence against women as a violation of human rights. It condemns all forms of violence against women and describes this violence as an expression of a historical imbalance of power between women and men. When the Convention was open for signature in 2011, it was the most comprehensive human rights convention in its field and the first legally binding regional instrument on violence against women in Europe. All countries that have ratified the Istanbul Convention must adopt legislation on matters such as rape, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, honor-based violence and oppression and forced marriage. Ratification of the Convention brings with it obligations to comply with the Convention's requirements concerning prevention, protection, prosecution and coordinated policies in the efforts to combat men's violence against women.

Article (3) of this Convention defines domestic violence as follows:

(a) “violence against women” is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life; (b) “domestic violence” shall mean all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim; (c) “gender” shall mean the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men; (d) “gender-based violence against women” shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately; (e) “victim” shall mean any natural person who is subject to the conduct specified in points a and b; (f) “women” includes girls under the age of 18.”



3- PROTOCOL TO THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN AFRICA (Maputo Protocol).

The protocol is called (the Maputo Protocol) after the city of Maputo in Mozambique, and the protocol guarantees comprehensive rights for women including the right to participate in the political process, social and political equality with men, improved independence in reproductive health decisions, and an end to female genital mutilation. The articles of the protocol include the elimination of discrimination against women, the right to dignity, the right to personal safety and security, and the elimination of harmful practices. The texts of these articles come from the protocol as follows:

-Article (2) Elimination of Discrimination Against Women: *“States Parties shall combat all forms of discrimination against women, through appropriate legislative, institutional, and other measures. States Parties undertake to work to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of women and men, with a view to achieving the elimination of cultural practices, harmful customs and all other practices based on belief. That either of the sexes is inferior or higher than the other, or that they have stereotypical roles for women and men, through education, media, education and communication strategies.”*

-Article (3) Right to Dignity: *“Every woman has the right to the inherent dignity of human beings and to the recognition and protection of her human and legal rights. Every woman has the right to respect for her person and to freely develop her personality. States Parties shall adopt and put in place appropriate measures with a view to prohibiting the exploitation or degradation of women Effective implementation: States Parties shall adopt appropriate measures to ensure the protection of the right of every woman to respect for her dignity, and to protect her from all forms of sexual and verbal violence, and shall put these measures into effective implementation. ”*



-Article (4) Right to life, personal safety and security: *“Every woman has the right to respect for her life and personal security. All forms of exploitation and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment shall be prohibited.”*

4- Agreement on the establishment of the Arab Women's Organization

The Arab Women Organization believes that the concept of violence is not limited to physical or physical abuse, but rather extends its concept to include all other manifestations of discrimination against women and depriving them of any of their human rights. This includes: (denial of education, deprivation of work, deprivation of political participation, deprivation of all kinds of services such as health service and others, various forms of discrimination against them within the family and in the workplace, violence against women in times of armed conflict, violence perpetrated by terrorist organizations).

Third: The Correlation Between COVID-19 and High Rates of Domestic Violence

According to UN women, the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, working from home during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic increased the levels of stress and anxiety among many family members. Isolation during the pandemic triggered tensions leading to domestic violence. As a result, the perpetrators of abuse extended their power.

The pandemic's disruptions also reduced access to services, and the necessity to stay at home to avoid Covid-19, along with many women's low socioeconomic level, negatively impacted women and children who are most prone to domestic violence.



According to the United Nations, during the coronavirus outbreak, calls to helplines from victims of domestic violence increased by five times their usual rate in some countries. Domestic violence was called "the shadow pandemic" by many for this.

Vulnerable groups like women with disabilities were at greater risk of violence as the curfews and other related restrictions associated with Covid-19 made them more likely to face violence at home.

Unfortunately, very often the health services were busy containing the pandemic itself, and services such as counseling, legal advice, and sexual health and other medical assistance were relatively unavailable to victims isolated from their social-support networks.

Consequently, both the health and well-being of domestic-violence survivors hugely deteriorated.

1- Domestic Violence amid COVID-19

Cases of domestic violence and reports on these cases have increased significantly with outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic all around the world. And this report shows some of the statistics on Domestic violence worldwide:

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the Eastern Mediterranean region is in second place worldwide for cases of domestic violence against women, reaching 37% of total global cases.

The statistics also show an increase in violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean region. Calls to helplines increased by 53 per cent in Mexico during the first quarter of 2020.



Figure (1): statistics on domestic violence

US and international studies have compared the number of incidents before the pandemic started in March 2020 and right afterwards, according to the US TV channel CNN. According to a US National Commission on Covid-19 and Criminal Justice (NCCCJ) report, there was an increase of 8.1% in domestic violence incidents in the US over this period. Between March and April 2020, the National Network of Refuges in the US also reported an increase of 77% in domestic violence, compared to the same time in 2019.

Surveys around the world have shown domestic abuse spiking since January of 2020—jumping markedly year over year compared to the same period in 2019. According to the American Journal of Emergency Medicine and the United Nations group U.N. Women, when the pandemic began, incidents of domestic violence increased 300% in Hubei, China; 25% in Argentina, 30% in Cyprus, 33% in Singapore and 50% in Brazil. The U.K., where calls to domestic violence hotlines have soared since the pandemic hit, was particularly shaken in June by the death of Amy-Leanne String fellow, 26, a mother of one and a veteran of the war in Afghanistan, allegedly at the hands of her 45-year-old boyfriend.



In the U.S., the situation is equally troubling, with police departments reporting increases in cities around the country: for example, 18% in San Antonio, 22% in Portland, Ore.; and 10% in New York City, according to the American Journal of Emergency Medicine. One study in the journal Radiology reports that at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, radiology scans and superficial wounds

In Israel, On the occasion of the International Awareness Month for Combating Domestic Violence, the Ministry of Welfare announced that there has been an increase in the number of cases in the past year. About 19,000 people turned to the aid centers, and about 15,000 of the calls required intervention.

Awareness Month for Combating Violence against Women: The Ministry of Welfare and Social Security in Israel released data, according to which there was a 10% increase in requests for assistance following domestic violence. 19,337 people applied last year to centers for this type of violence, of which 7,039 were women who were treated individually.

It is also worth noting that since Afghanistan fell under the rule of the Taliban in the 1990s and they returned to power in August 2021, Afghan women have been subjected to many violations, and it is unfortunate that there is not enough data due to the closedness of Afghan society and the difficulty of journalists and human rights activists accessing the family interior and obtaining information where they are exposed to Afghan women are oppressed, and women are forced to stay at home, give up their jobs and not get the required education.

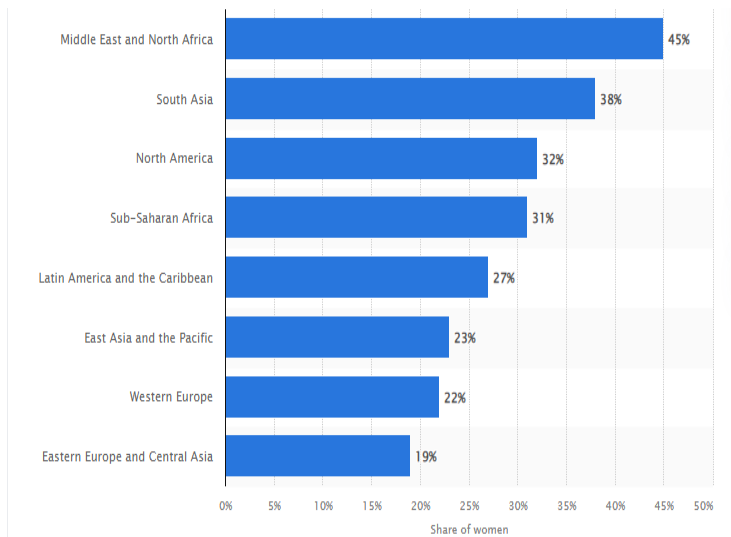


Figure (2): Share of women who suffered intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence in 2020, by region

2- Domestic Violence amid COVID-19 in Egypt

According to National Council for Women (NCW) statistics, around eight million Egyptian women are at risk of domestic violence each year, and up to 86 per cent of wives may face spousal abuse.

Four out of every five married men have directed a form of psychological violence against their wives. Additionally, almost half of young women have reported physical violence against them by either their brothers or fathers.

According to the data, there was a 13% increase in the number of patients in domestic violence treatment centers. 2,704 women received individual care, and 9,278 received family care.



In this context, Nihad Abu al-Qumsan, President of the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights and a member of the National Council for Human Rights, stated that Egyptian women suffer from fragile economic conditions and are exposed to violence in large proportions before the Corona crisis. Abu al-Qumsan confirmed that the rates of violence that women are subjected to, whether marital violence, domestic violence or violence resulting from the closure of the courts and the slowdown in litigation procedures, have increased due to the crisis of the Corona epidemic, which imposed a quarantine for a long time, which led to an increase in the rates of domestic violence for women.

Fourth: International Efforts Combating Violence against women

Efforts to combat violence against women and especially domestic violence have been made globally through different ratified conventions and treaties that most of the countries are abided by it to fight violence against women and develop sanctions and laws to help reduce and eliminate it. The international community is concerned with raising awareness about domestic violence too and this is being done through international campaigns raising awareness worldwide.

1- The 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence

It is an annual international campaign that kicks off on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, Human Rights Day. It was started by activists at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991 and continues to be coordinated each year by the Center for Women's Global Leadership. It is used as an organizing strategy by



individuals and organizations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

In 2020, the Campaign increased its efforts to amplify the voices of women workers in the informal economy while continuing to call for the ratification of ILO Convention 190 and to end all forms of GBV in private and public spaces. In 2021, the Campaign will focus on Domestic Violence in the world of work.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Global 16 Days Campaign. To commemorate the anniversary.

2- The UNiTE Campaign

Another international campaign is the UNiTE campaign. Launched in 2008, the United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE by 2030 to End Violence against Women campaign (UNiTE campaign) is a multi-year effort aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls around the world. UNiTE calls on governments, civil society, women's organizations, young people, the private sector, the media, and the entire UN system to join forces in addressing the global pandemic of violence against women and girls. The campaign builds on existing international legal and policy frameworks and works to synergize the efforts of all UN offices and agencies working to end violence against women.



- Orange Day

The UNiTE campaign has proclaimed the 25th of each month as “*Orange Day*”, a day to raise awareness and take action to end violence against women and girls. As a bright and optimistic color, orange represents a future free from violence against women and girls.



Orange Day calls upon activists, governments, and UN partners to mobilize people and highlight issues relevant to preventing and ending violence against women and girls, not only once a year, on 25 November (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women), but every month.

On the 25th day of every month, Say NO–UNiTE mobilizes people around the world to support the “Orange Day Initiative”. It calls on people everywhere to wear the color orange and take action to end violence against women and girls in every community, at home, in public spaces, in schools and workplaces, during conflict and in times of peace.

3- The International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women

Women's rights activists have observed 25 November as a day against gender-based violence since 1981. This date was selected to honor *the Mirabal sisters, three political activists*





from the Dominican Republic who were brutally murdered in 1960 by order of the country's ruler, Rafael Trujillo (1930-1961).

On 20 December 1993, the General Assembly adopts the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women through resolution 48/104, paving the path towards eradicating violence against women and girls worldwide.

Finally, on 7 February 2000, the General Assembly adopts resolution 54/134, officially designating 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and in doing so, inviting governments, international organizations as well as NGOs to join together and organize activities designed to raise public awareness of the issue every year on that date.



Conclusion

Violence against women is divided into two parts: direct violence such as physical, and indirect violence, which is the structure of social and cultural values, customs, traditions and social norms, as well as laws and regulations that differentiates between men and women.

In order to prevent violence against women in all its forms and promote the status of women in societies, the international community was involved in fighting against this phenomenon through various conferences, especially the Beijing Declaration, which included the protection of women from violence.

Domestic violence is considered a global phenomenon. Up to 50% of women worldwide have been physically abused by their intimate partner. Domestic violence can be defined as an incident or threatening behavior regarding violence or abuse between adults who are or have been considered intimate partners.

Domestic Violence is a serious and prevalent health issue that affects victims worldwide and unfortunately is associated with considerable morbidity and mortality rates. Most women who are exposed to domestic violence are high risk for physical complications such as poor pregnancy outcomes, sexually transmitted infections and even abortions. These consequences significantly lead to poor physical and mental health issues, increased hospitalizations, and greater use of outpatient care, such as emergency room visits. This explains why preventive care is so important.