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GENDER DISPARITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AMIDST COVID19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The year 2019 brought with it a horror dream for the globe in the form of pandemic, the COVID-19. It plunged the entire globe into an unparalleled crisis, leaving it in a condition of lingering insecurity. The COVID-19 pandemic was triggered by the SARS-CoV2 virus spreading over the world. It caused a widespread worldwide shock, resulting in, crisis of public health, deaths and a significant economic slump. Along the pandemic has illustrated society's reliance on women on the front yards and at home, while also highlighting fundamental inequities in health, the economics, security, and social protection. Women and girls endure disproportionate impacts with far-reaching repercussions in crisis situations, when resources are taxed and institutional capacity is restricted, which are magnified in situations of fragility, violence, and catastrophes. This article is an attempt to illustrate the issue of gender violence and violence against women during the pandemic period.

Keywords: Gender, Pandemic, Violence.

1.0 Introduction

Women account for almost half of the world's population, despite that fact yet gender equality has not been completely recognised. Still, their position and prestige are seen as inferior to those of male members of the community. Women have become a weaker segment of the society in nations like as India, which has outstanding socioeconomic and cultural variety with broad differences and the growth of patriarchal culture, their roles have been relegated to greater reproduction and attending to home chores solely. Despite the fact that women's contributions to the growth of the country are comparable to those of men, they face a variety of constraints that prevent them from realising their full potential. They have been becoming soft target of social, economic and political exploitation. Terms like Invisible hand, Subordinated half, half hidden world, are often used to reflect the inequality and human right to women. It also reflects their less freedom in decision making which negatively affects their lives and widens disparities in the capabilities of human dividing in two genders. Women face significant discrimination in a variety of domains, including integrity and autonomy, holding public office, birth control, abortion, education, fair salaries or equal pay, property, and so on. Women perform several functions in society, such as breadwinner for her family, caretaker for her family as a mother, wife, daughter, and service providers to society. Despite the fact that women's contributions to the growth of the country are comparable to those of men, they face a variety of constraints that prevent them from realising their full potential. The outbreak of covid 19 pandemic has worsen the existing gender-based discrimination and violence against women in the society.

Gender based violence or discrimination can be understood as any acts or threats of acts meant to injure or make women endure physically, sexually, or mentally, and which impact women because they are women or adversely affect women. The European Commission has defined gender-based violence as "Violence directed against a person because of that person's gender or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately. 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 harm, sexual harm, psychological, or economic harm or suffering to women. It can include violence against women, domestic violence against women, men or children living in the same domestic unit. Although women and girls are the main victims of Gender Based Violence, it also causes severe harm to families and communities." (<https://ec.europa.eu/>)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees held that -

"Gender-based violence is a serious violation of human rights and a life-threatening health and protection issue. 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 Gender Based Violence significantly increases for women and girls. Gender-based violence may have serious health consequences as it can harm women's physical, emotional, sexual, and reproductive health, as well as their children's health and well-being." (unhcr)

The COVID-19 epidemic exacerbates the issue in a variety of ways. For instance, the prevalence of gender-based violence has risen, owing mostly to stay-at-home policies and the heightened insecurity and stress caused by the epidemic. Again, due to



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overburdening and a priority on COVID-19 cases, the number of social and health care professionals who give life-saving support to women who have experienced violence, such as clinical management of rape and psycho-social support, has been severely decreased. This shift in focus and budget allocation also jeopardises attempts to prevent gender-based violence.

2.0 Objectives

The objective of this article is to examine the gender related issues caused by the covid 19 pandemic. It also objected towards inquiring in to the hurdles or impacts of covid 19 pandemics upon women.

3.0 Methodology

The present study is a qualitative one based on descriptive analytical method. The interpretations are based on the synthesis of various secondary data collected from various sources like books, journals, articles, newspapers and web links. APA 7th edition referencing style has been used to authenticate the data used in the study.

4.0 Results and Discussion

In a report of UNHR office of High Commissioner it is revealed that more than one in three women (35.6%) globally report having experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence, or sexual violence by a non-partner. Globally, 38% of all murders of women are committed by their intimate partners. 42% of women who have been physically and/or sexually abused by a partner have experienced injuries as a result of that violence. 7.2% of adult women have experienced sexual violence by a non- partner (OHCHR). These report shows how adverse the situation is when it comes to gender-based violence. From health to the economy, security to social protection, the effects of COVID-19 are amplified for women and girls merely because of their gender. Women and girls bear the brunt of the economic consequences, as they earn less, save less, work in precarious employment, or live in poverty. The gender-based violence are manifested in various forms which include:

4.1 Violence against women

Violence harms women's overall well-being and stops them from fully participating in society. It has an influence on their families, their communities, and the country as a whole. It has enormous costs, ranging from increased stress on health care to legal bills and productivity losses. (S dte, 2021) Economic and societal pressures, along with travel limitations and crowded living conditions, are fueling an increase in gender-based violence. Prior to the pandemic, it was projected that one in every three women would face violence in her lifetime. Many of these women are now confined at home with their abusers, putting them at danger of further types of violence as healthcare institutions and legal systems fail to respond. As more individuals spend time online because of movement constraints, online forms of violence against women and girls in chat rooms, gaming platforms, and other places have risen. (unwomen) The economic consequences of the pandemic are anticipated to exacerbate sexual exploitation and child making women and girls in unstable economies and refugee environments more susceptible. In the month of April, the Secretary-General of UN António Guterres urged the world to put a halt to all types of violence, from conflict zones to people's homes, and to focus efforts on eradicating the epidemic. (G Antonio, 2020)

4.2 Domestic violence

Data reveals a highly disturbing trend COVID-19 is fueling an increase in domestic violence, which is exacerbated by money, health, and security concerns, restriction of movement, crowded houses, and a lack of peer support. Domestic violence complaints and emergency calls have increased by up to 25% in a number of nations when social distancing measures were implemented². Such figures are also likely to reflect only the worst-case scenarios. Many women stuck with their abusers are isolated from friends, relatives, and other support networks due to quarantine and movement limitations. Furthermore, the shutdown of non-essential companies means that employment no longer provides respite for many survivors, and increased economic uncertainty makes leaving more difficult. (unwomen) Safe access to support services and emergency measures, including legal help and judicial remedies, is urgently needed to assist women and girls experiencing domestic abuse, but it has been limited in certain countries due to lockdowns.

4.3 Economic crisis

When a crisis strikes, the economic consequences are disproportionately borne by women and girls. Women earn less and save less globally, make up the majority of single-parent homes, and are disproportionately employed in the informal economy or service sector, where they have less access to social benefits. As a result, they are less able to endure financial turmoil than males. The closures of School and social distancing measures have exacerbated the unpaid care and housekeeping load of women at household for many families, rendering them less able to take on or manage paid work. (unwomen) For instance In Sub-Saharan Africa, almost 92% of working women are in informal employment, compared to 86% of employed males. (ILO) The pandemic is anticipated to cause a



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long-term decline in women's earnings and labor-force participation. According to UN Women survey data from Asia and the Pacific, women are losing their jobs quicker than males and have less options for earning a living.⁵ The outlook is considerably gloomier for young women and men aged 16 to 19, with the jobless rate rising from 11.5% in February to 32.2% in April. Even in male-dominated industries such as manufacturing, women are more likely than males to work in vulnerable/unprotected employment in 26 of the 33 nations where data is available.

4.4 Health care workers

The pandemic highlights the fact of the significant role that women perform at all levels. Women are on the front lines of the COVID-19 response in a variety of roles, including health professionals, community volunteers, transportation and logistics managers, scientists, doctors, vaccine developers, and others.(un working paper 2019) According to world health organization's Health Workforce Working paper published in 2019, Women comprise seven out of ten health and social care workers which is seventy per cent of the total health workforce and contribute US\$ 3 trillion annually to global health, half in the form of unpaid care work. The WHO SDG health price tag study finds that almost half of the investment required to achieve the health SDGs relates to education, training and employment of health workers. The WHO Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030 (GSHRH) estimates a global shortfall of almost 18 million health workers by 2030, primarily in low- and lower middle-income countries (un working paper 2019). Despite these statistics, women are frequently underrepresented in national and global decision-making on COVID-19 response. Furthermore, women are still paid far less than males and hold fewer leadership roles in the health industry. Women are more vulnerable to exposure when masks and other protective devices are designed and sized for men. Priority must be given to the needs of female frontline workers: This includes providing health care professionals and caregivers with women-friendly personal protection equipment and menstrual hygiene supplies, as well as flexible working options to help balance the load of care.

4.5 Conflict

In response to a request for an emergency worldwide ceasefire, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called in April 2020 to halt all kinds of violence everywhere, from combat zones to people's homes, in order to focus efforts on eradicating the epidemic.(un women) According to the most recent available data, from united nation's ECOSOC, Commission on the Status of Women, maternal mortality rates were already dangerously high prior to the pandemic, with 300 deaths per 100,000 live births or higher in half of the countries afflicted by disaster or war.⁶ Women and girls are especially vulnerable to gender-based violence when performing hygiene near latrines or water delivery facilities, for example, in refugee camps where confined conditions make physical distance difficult. Women must contribute to the solution: Evidence suggests that when women are included, peace negotiations are more likely to last. Unfortunately, they are frequently sidelined from peace talks, and their particular needs and concerns are unaddressed. In 2019, just 26% of negotiated peace treaties included gender clauses. We cannot afford for peace treaties to break apart so swiftly in a COVID-affected world.

4.6 Young women and girls

Youth's people are joining efforts to combat the COVID-19 epidemic at all levels, from organising outreach programs to volunteering to help the elderly to working on the front lines. However, owing to movement restrictions, discrimination, and other factors, youth, particularly young women, indigenous peoples, migrants, and refugees, experience heightened socioeconomic and health consequences, as well as a higher risk of gender-based violence. The closure of schools and overburdened health-care systems also have a significant impact on young women and girls. UNESCO was very concern while predicting estimation that by the end of March 2020, more than 89 percent of the total student population would be out of school or university due to COVID-19 school closures, forcing many learners online and putting large segments of the population in reduced or no-internet environments at a massive disadvantage.(unesco) Moreover all families could not effort to have multiple internet connection and hence preference of online learning was headed mostly to boy child than girl child. Young women and girls who are poor, disabled, or live in rural, remote areas are more likely to be taken out of school earlier to compensate for greater care and domestic duties at home. They are also more likely to engage in child marriage and other types of abuse as families seek methods to reduce financial pressures.

5.0 Concluding Remarks

Women all throughout the world are affected by gender related violence. It has an influence on women's health, hinders their capacity to fully engage in society, interferes with their enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights, and causes enormous physical and psychological suffering for both women and their families. Regardless of rank, class, age, caste, or religion, face violence in almost every aspect of their lives, whether at home, school, job, on the street, in government institutions, or during times of conflict or disaster. Violence occurs throughout a woman's life, impacting both girls and elderly women. The covid 19 pandemic which comes in an unexpected way and the effects of which has touched the whole human society is a nightmare specially for women. It has hindered the women in all way. Starting from domestic violence in various forms to violence in societal platform it had adversely



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affected women. The International standards consider violence against women as a form of discrimination and require States to take reasonable precautions to avoid, examine, and punish any forms of violence against women committed by any actor, including both State and non-State actors. To halt all such activities the national governments in all countries should initiate some holistic approach keeping in view the ob going injustices against women.

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