

Understanding the Economic and Social Constraints during Covid-19 Lockdown and Their Influence on Domestic Violence against Women in Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

Domestic abuse, a common concern in all cultures, and debates around this practice are linked to complexities and taboos. Domestic violence/relationship harassment refers to personal or partner-to-partner relationships, most of which are female victims. Many women witness psychological and physical abuse in their close relationships and immediate social atmosphere, which then becomes a major health issue for them. Domestic violence is a pattern of manipulative approach that involves physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and emotional harassment that one person conducts against another related person in order to create and retain power and control. The prevalence of domestic abuse can be found in all sorts of close relationships such as married spouses, romantic couples, living in couples, individuals who have common children, former relationships, etc. The goal of this research is to identify the extent, economic and social causes of domestic violence against women during the locking situation of COVID-19. Samples of 200 females from the economic capital of Cameroon Douala, comprised of females from various industries with different educational qualifications and social backgrounds, were surveyed using standard questionnaires and random sampling. The random sampling test was used to obtain the required findings. It can be seen that, during the COVID-19 circumstance, there could be various causes and natures of domestic violence, such as emotional abuse, ill-treatment, physical injury, stalking, maltreatment, the aggressive nature of the partner, and sexual abuse, for reasons including female sexuality, financial collapse, oppressive temperament, alcohol, and extramarital relations.

Keywords: Domestic violence on women during Covid, security, law enforcement, social media influence and Media, curative actions.

Introduction

According to NHS 205, domestic violence is defined as violence between intimate partners but is also referred to as violence against elderly people, children, or any other family member (Nursing and Health Sciences, 2015). In this study, the focus will be particularly on women's domestic

abuse during the quarantine period in Cameroon. As per the World Health Organization (WHO), one woman in each and every three women undergoes violence, both physically and/or sexual abuse, by a relative or male partner. Any person in charge of them in their lifetime. This includes slapping, striking, kicking, hitting, etc., In addition to these disrespectful, unjust criticisms, constant bullying, coercion, inflicting of injury, or taking away children are used in "emotional" or "psychological" abuse. Domestic abuse is also regulated, such as isolating a victim from family and friends, tracking their activities, restricting financial, jobs, education, and medical services.

When stay-at-home orders emerged as a measure to curb the transmission of the infection, women in abusive relationships are gradually separated from the services and support that can protect them. Globally, there have been allegations of abuses such as intimate relationship brutality, sexual assault, domestic and sexual exploitation of young women in many cases by family members, which are compounded especially by lockdowns, limited movements, and school closures.

Causes or explanations behind domestic violence

According to the African Union Commission 2016, there are many psychological, cultural, and economic influences that affect domestic violence. These considerations suggest that this behaviour is a learned pattern and a decision(African Union 60TH MEETING -COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, 2016).

Patriarchship: Gender identity is one of the key reasons behind domestic violence. In this sense, the generally accepted "right masculine behaviour" that excuses and hails hostility, brutality, and superiority is essential. There are certain people who uphold conservative values, who point out that, almost 42 %of men claim that they have legitimate excuses to beat their partner. Their female partners are not equal to them, and they have the right to regulate their actions.

Influence in culture: Some abusers have grown up to see domestic violence in their own families and in the society in which they exist. Boys who are not encouraged to respect their female siblings and mother in their youth, and those who see similar behaviours in their own homes are likely to harass women in their lives in the future. Girls who witness domestic violence in their families and their societies are the victims and believe that they are natural. (Community, 2020).

According to Economic causes: Low employment rates, drinking and any sort of drug use are the major contributors to aggressive behaviour.

Socio-Cultural factors: Domestic abuse and dowry-related deaths and honour killings are a fact in society.

Individual factors responsible for domestic abuse: Many offenders have a sense of desire to dominate their partner because of "low self-esteem," a feeling of envy, a struggle in regulating their indignation and other intense emotions, and most of them are suffering from an inferiority complex with their partner in their professional, educational or socio-economic context.

Effect of COVID-19 on increasing domestic violence in Cameroon: According to the African Union Commission 2020, 300 cases of domestic violence were reported with Gender-Based

violence in Africa during the Covid – 19 pandemics. The woman gender equality commission also collects reports of 36% of domestic violence cases during the pandemic period, although it is believed that in fact, the number of cases is much greater than they are published. When there is virtually no movement of people and the police force is busy ensuring that the population of Cameroon follows the lock-down rules in the right manner, there is no way for women to defend themselves from domestic violence and rape, and in too many extremes, and they have even had to face death (The African Union Commission - Women, 2020).

In addition, it is stated that gender-based abuse claimants have had restricted access to legal defence programs, while most civil courts and court case-file receptions are suspended; court decisions are greatly delayed; and also, most legal assistance facilities are closed, with limited access to support lines for girls and mothers.

In addition, due to the obvious popularity and broadness of orthodox social standards and stigma, these perpetrators of domestic violence are not obliged to report to the authorities their instances against the offenders. They are left to the mercy of neighbours and friends who are not always willing to spread violence, and often elderly women who counsel victims to deal with the situation and tolerate the violent situation. Women belonging to the helpless and the lower class are not in a position to report their cases. The contributing parties are:

Non-operational NGOs: there are women's centers that can approach the victims of domestic violence to provide advice to the victim and the abuser and, to a large extent, resolve the issue, but because of the quarantine measures, these NGOs were not accessible and voluntary organizations who are available to women for their assistance and advice after the incidents. Therefore, rendering the victims helpless and oppressors gaining additional powers.

Degradation of gender equality: The implementation of lockdowns during the Covid'19 pandemic has brought back women to their standard basic duties set by culture and gender standards. Prior to the pandemic women especially in Cameroon were trying to break the barriers to gender inequality by getting into activity levels via the use of micro-businesses and micro-investments. With the event of Covid and lockdowns, women are back to the household duties and roles (ONUFEMMES-BUCREP, 2020).

Added to the low-digitalized status of the economy women were engaged in daily activities, where meeting people daily was involved, product marketing, and random road markets. The main purpose of gender equality is to look forward to eliminating all aspects of favouritism and abuse against women in both the public and private spheres. Gender equality also aims to undertake improvements and reorganizations so that women can also enjoy the same rights as men with regard to financial opportunities and have their land rights. There is an extensive list of additional obstacles when unravelling the negative psychosocial effects on women's mental health, and this condition causes them to lose their jobs and allows them to suffer economic stresses (The African Union Commission - Women, 2020).

The emerging statistics on the effect of COVID-19 on women and girls outlined in this briefing are currently likely to represent all the worst cases. Without connections to private rooms, several women will fail to get available assistance due to inadequate digital help groups and also fail to

set up an online call or get assistance.

Literature Review

Studies have shown that there is an increase of an overall average of (35.2 %) and that women alone account for (36 5) victims of domestic violence due to restrictions on movement, a decline in financial resources and societal anxiety may very well be the cause of the increase, also women reported that their husbands physically hurt 32% and that 44% are mentally ill. (ONUFEMMES-BUCREP, 2020).

There are 10 percent females, those with limited basic needs, 44% of whom suffer from depression, 48 % of whom state that their children's education is impaired by domestic abuse. 76% of them are people who are not mindful of the legislation dealing with domestic abuse. Studies also indicate that alcohol is the main cause of domestic violence and that most women are not aware of their rights and laws in relation to domestic violence. (Choudhary, 2017).

Based on Vora, it is understandable that, at this moment of the pandemic, priority should be given to providing people with critical needs and taking the appropriate measures to curb the transmission of viruses relative to taking action to avoid domestic abuse, and it is also true that the long-term consequences of domestic violence are also quite destructive, which is why comparable attention needs to be paid to COVID-19. The Domestic Violence Act needs to be implemented efficiently and the media should raise awareness among the general public and offer information on the helplines, shelters, legal aid, NGOs, etc. can be used to support social services to raise consciousness about COVID'19 yet at the same moment raising awareness of domestic abuse that can recognize symptoms of spousal abuse to report directly to the department involved (Vora, 2020).

Domestic abuse has been documented all across the world, leading to Antonio Guterres, UN Chief of Staff, calling for a "national truce" as domestic violence against women and girls is on the rise around the world in regards to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis (UN News, 2020).

According to Nigam 2020, Human rights, particularly the health-related rights of women and girls, are the main problems facing COVID-19. As the lockout is mandatory for the world's people, there is also a rise in domestic violence against women and girls. It has been found that there are several countries in which special policies, rules, and services are put in place to address the situation of domestic abuse in households. (S. Nigam,2020).

Karwa mentions that domestic abuse against women and children is an illustration of the ability of men to confront women and children who are just as dominant, Men as a husband, assumes that he has an inherent right over his wife in regards to sexuality of a woman. In reaction to all such issues relating to domestic violence, women's organizations around the world are concentrating their efforts on sexual harassment and assault on women as a violation of human rights and are collaborating with the governing bodies to eradicate all gender discrimination against women. During the quarantine time, women are pushed into all homes, there is little or hardly any contribution from the other participants to support them, and this is one of the causes

for abuse in the home. (KARWA, 2020).

UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka. states that even before COVID-19, abuse of women became one of the most common abuses of human rights, with almost 18% of women and girls witnessing physical or sexual domestic violence during a 12-month span. As the pandemic escalated, a troubling upsurge in the "ghost pandemic" of violence against women became visible, as heightened rates of data on domestic violence, including on the streets, online, and in a number of settings. Calls for helplines soared five-fold in certain countries during the first weeks of the coronavirus pandemic. On the other hand, a decrease was reported due to the reluctance of women to obtain aid across normal networks, while sheltering in place with their abusers. Projections suggest that an extra 15 million women are likely to be harmed by abuse every three months. (Women, 2020).

Aim and Objective of the study

The broad objective of this survey is to identify the economic and social factors that influence domestic violence. The research seeks to demonstrate how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted mothers, children, and their household internal interactions. Therefore, it aims to shed light on their expectations and concerns within the context of Covid-19. Also, to provide a tangible gap of digitalization in Cameroon and provide remedies to alleviate the burden of domestic abuse on women.

Research Questions

- To assess the extent to which Lack of law enforcement influenced domestic abuse against women and children during the disease outbreak situation of COVID-19.
- Determining the role played by social media and communication channels and how they can enhance awareness to alleviate the level of domestic abuse during COVID-19
- To identify how social-cultural beliefs affect the mental health of women faced with domestic violence during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Cameroon.
- To determine economic factors and impacted the pressure on women suffering domestic violence during the Covid '19 period.
- To stress the advantages of men's education and reduce the potential rate of domestic abuse.

Research Methodology

Exploratory analysis is undertaken where there is not enough information about a phenomenon and a topic that has not been well identified. It does not seek to offer definitive and definitive answers to research questions, but merely discusses the subject of study in differing degrees of detail. Its theme, however, is to address new issues on which little or no prior research has been conducted (Kumar, 2011)

The survey was completed in the present analysis on the sample size of 200 females. The females selected were from various fields with different professional backgrounds and family statuses. A generic questionnaire was used to identify the various causes and significance of domestic abuse. The impact of Covid restrictive measures on the women during the pandemic. Assessing the various difficulties encountered by women and their adaption process during the pandemic. Investigating the effectiveness of the security options available to women facing domestic violence during the Covid lockdown period. The article was an exploratory research design in nature and the sampling process was simple random. Sampling -test was used to achieve the required answer (Boru, 2018).

Except in exceptional cases, exploratory research forms the foundation for more definitive research and decides the original design of the research, sampling technique, and data collection process. On the other hand, the Explanatory Study aims to clarify and compensate for the descriptive detail. So, while descriptive research asks the 'what' kind of questions, explanatory studies aim to ask 'why' and 'how' questions (Creswell, 2011).

Explanatory sequential approach gathers quantitative data and qualitative information follows to expand on quantitative results; the reasoning behind this approach implies that although the quantitative form of data provides a general image of the study issue, the qualitative type of data refines, expands, or explains the general picture. The survey concentrated on GBV and also the spread of household and care jobs between women.

The final objective of the survey could include elements for activism in order to further integrate the basic needs of women in the responsible approach to the Covid-19 pandemic in Cameroon.

Data Analysis

The findings of the study are the outcome of a questionnaire distributed across 200 women in the city of Douala in Cameroon. The survey was focused on women aged from 20 – to 60 years old, the women's occupations ranged from basic education with 60 respondents, graduates accounting for the majority of 85 respondents, and postgraduates for 55 respondents.

Results

Figure 1, illustrates the percentage of women undergoing any form of physical abuse in general and based on respondents' feedback. A majority of 40% of respondents replied far too much, 40% answered too much and 20% responded about right. Therefore, showing in general few women experience domestic violence in general due to economic constraints faced by the partners both prior to and during the restriction period in Cameroon.

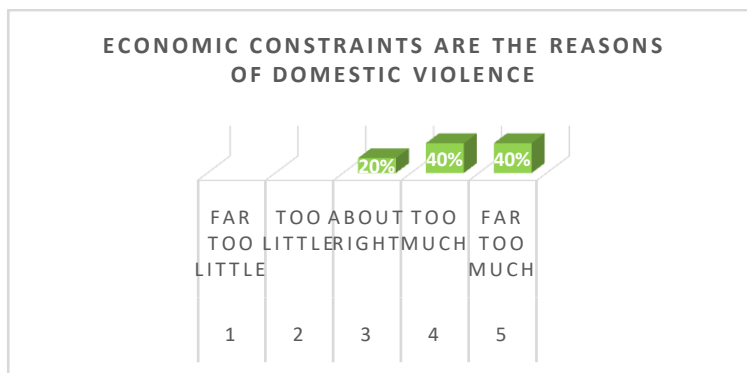


Figure 1: economic constraints are the reasons of domestic violence

Figure 2, is the results from the degree to which domestic violence has changed after the lockdown order was put in place. This will enable us to make an observation on the change in the intensity of domestic violence during this specific period. As such the results from the respondent illustrate to us a 30% that selected about right, 55% significantly selected too much as the degree of violence endured during the lockdown, and 15% with far too much.

This shows a drastic increase in domestic violence as compared to the status prior to the lockdown period. This, therefore, shows us a gap between the very little violence experienced prior to the lockdown and the far too much after the lockdown period.

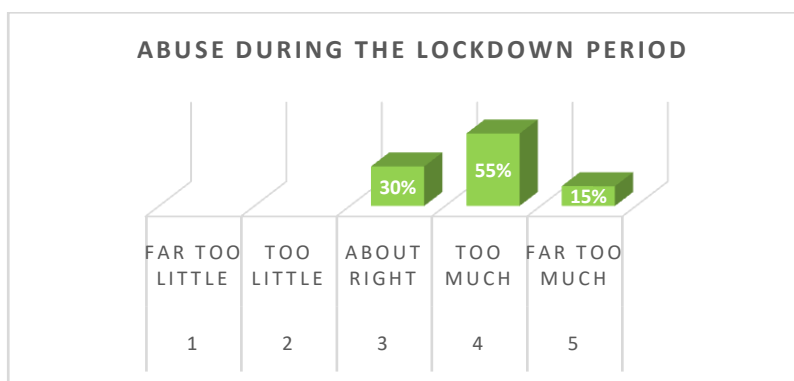


Figure 2: Abuse Levels during the lockdown period

Figure 3, brings to our attention to assessing the impact of cultural beliefs on women victims of domestic violence. Referring to the data collected, respondents highlight a 70% with far too much influence of cultural beliefs and 20% accounting for too much impact of cultural beliefs and 10% with the about right influence of cultural beliefs are responsible for the violence inflicted in their households.



Figure 3: Role of cultural beliefs in domestic violence

Figure 4, is the question assessing the level of assistance provided to the women suffering from domestic violence. This assistance from law enforcement. The data collected illustrates 80% for far too little assistance provided by the existing institutions to the women facing domestic violence and 20% too little assistance.

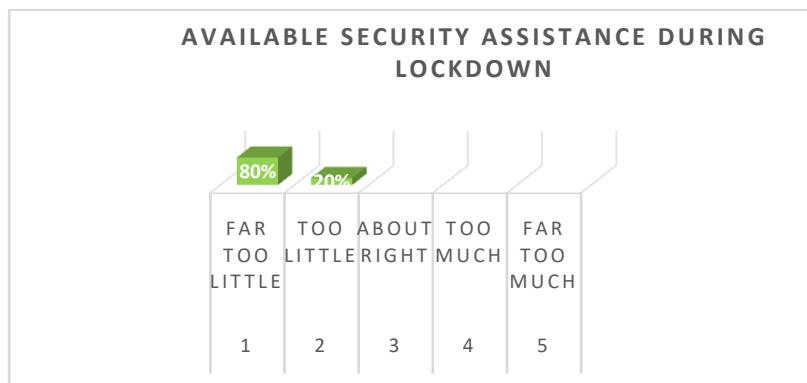


Figure 4: Available security assistance during lockdown

Figure 5, this data is the response for the assessment of social media assistance to the women facing domestic violence. This would provide us a foundation on the efforts made by the existing media channels to provide assistance (verbal, advisory) to the victims of domestic abuse. The data shows 60% for too little and 40% for far too little assistance provided by the social media channels.

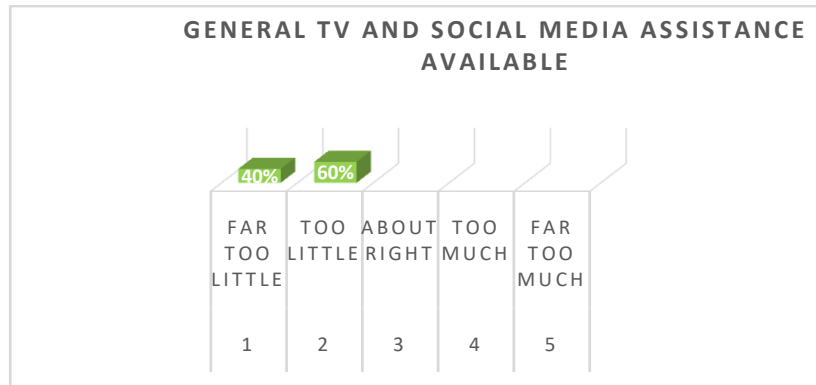


Figure 5: General Tv and social media assistance available

Figure 6, Is focused on highlighting the impact of domestic abuse on the mental health of women that are victims of domestic abuse. This will bring clarification on the possible side effects which are most often hidden and detected only by victims taken under professional care. The respondents shared information and account for 45% with far too many women that are mentally impacted by the domestic violence they are victims of. Followed by 30% that claims that domestic violence has highly impacted their mental status and 25% that responded being impacted about the right level.

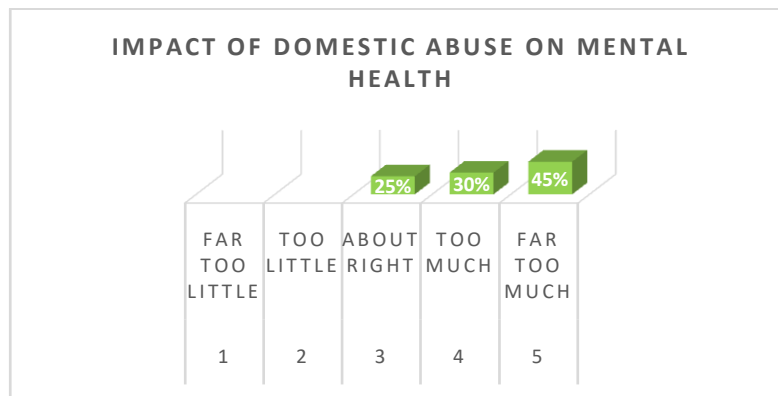


Figure 6: Impact of domestic abuse on mental health

Figure 7, brings about the respondents' opinion on the possible benefits of the helpline and how it can alleviate domestic abuse in households. The results show us a vast majority voting 10% as far too much, 50% helplines would greatly help and 40% proposed that helpline would provide the about right assistance to individuals suffering from domestic violence. This highlights therefore a gap that can be researched and used to better assist the victims.

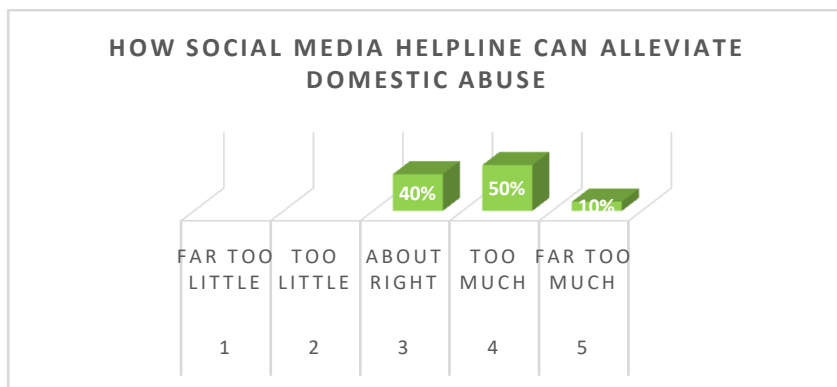


Figure 7: How social media helpline can alleviate domestic abuse

Figure 8, evaluates the future impact of educating boys in the attempt to reduce the degree of domestic violence in households. The respondents indicate 40% saying a better education of boys would have a far too much impact on the future victims of domestic violence, 45% indicate that the impact of better education will have a far too much impact on the future of domestic violence and 15% indicate an impact that would be about right.

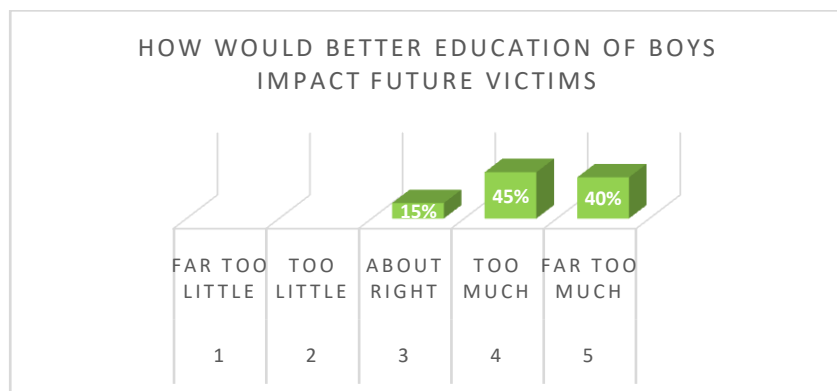


Figure 8: How would better education of boy's impact future victims

Conclusion and findings

The outcome from the research showed that law enforcement in the country in regards to women's protection towards domestic violence is very much inexistent and 80% of women respondents informed far too little presence of law and 20% too little, thereby exposing women to the oppressors without an opportunity for them to justify their actions.

The respondents were given questions that would raise a comparative analysis of present existing social media assistance via (TV, Newspaper, Radio, Digital) during the lockdown. The data collected portrays 60% for too little and 40% for far too little assistance provided by the social

media channels. This illustrates the negative views of the population that a majority of the media channels are not taking domestic violence as a serious matter and therefore do not find it necessary to address it and provide them with valuable and efficient corrective solutions.

The data collected for the research showed us the impact of social-cultural beliefs in domestic violence. We collected 70% of the respondents sharing those cultural beliefs greatly influences domestic violence as negative impacts of cultural beliefs as far too much .20% responded too much influence and 10% as about right. This data does reflect a negative contribution of cultural beliefs thereby acting as a barrier to women as they are unable or constrained to bear the consequences of domestic violence.

The outcome from the research displayed that economic constraints have a considerable impact on the high rise of domestic violence during the lockdown period of 40%. The data illustrates 40% of negative responses of economic constraints have greatly impacted the degree of violence in their households, 40% mentioned too much effect of economic constraints that led to domestic violence in their household. This explains to us that the inability of men to satisfy the basic needs of their families during the lockdown period usually leads to tension in the home vicinity. 20% responded about right, therefore admitting to being experiencing violence due to economic instability caused by the restriction orders during the Covid'19.

The data collected brings about the education factor of the younger generation in order to reduce the degree of domestic violence in the future. Respondents provided 40% with a positive impact of education of the male younger generation on violence and the negative impact it has in society. 45% responded the impact of education will be of great assistance as this will enable the younger generation to understand the wrong treatment being done to their elderly women and possibly adopt better attitudes.15%responded about the right for the education of young men to reduce domestic violence in general.

Domestic violence addresses the issues that can be faced by any random individual, but most are faced by women living in less developed countries and more often women in regions in which cultural beliefs have a great impact on the community. In the instance of the Covid Pandemic, there have been some lockdown restrictions. These restrictions have led to several economic constraints and several daily workers went out of jobs and have to return home. In addition to these restrictions, the rise of domestic violence cases has been on a rise. Most researchers focus on the impact of lockdown restrictions and their impact on companies, how to manage working performance while working from home and how to make it more efficient. Less research has been done in regards to the impact of domestic violence endured by women and more researchers are encouraged to intensify discussions on how the effectively reduce the degree of domestic violence and measures to optimize women's financial independence after their violent attacks and how to survive with their children. Furthermore, suggestions for a larger set of respondents, for this research only 200 respondents were selected and a larger group of respondents should be chosen. Also, further researchers should not also limit themselves to the capital cities of the

country as there are a wide number of victims in the remote areas of the country that are still in desperate need of assistance as they face hidden domestic violence.

The conclusions of the study are mentioned with the aim of finding solutions to the issues and providing applicable solutions. At the initial stage, a recognition of the issue will be of great value. As the subject matter is being ignored and classified as non-existent or merely a normal duty of men to correct the misbehaving of their partners through violence. The initial acknowledgment that this is a wrong practice both in the minds and attitudes of the elderly community will be very effective. This is to be done via counselling and educating the population (WHO, 2001)

Followed by an adequate and effective set of rules in the country to be implemented in view of protecting women against domestic violence in the various communities will be a great step forward in terms of the security of the victims (Ahmed, 2020). Men who are aware they could be required to present themselves in front of the law to justify their actions will not easily continue the violent behaviours.

As for women, having the support of the law enforcement and the media channels will provide them with a way out to be whistle-blowers for the maltreatment they are undergoing.

The government should set up an adequate infrastructure for the women victims of domestic violence and their children, this will motivate them to trust and have the courage to leave their oppressors without having the fear of lacking basic needs. This should be followed by an adequate re-assignment of the women in the society via adequate training and skillset acquisitions that would enable them to rise on their feet and satisfy the needs of their families (Patrick, 2017). Media channels should be used as a tool to inform the general public of the existence of domestic violence as a wrong practice. Also encouraging women to speak up by providing emergency numbers to call and meeting sessions where women can disclose their suffering and receive advice on how to overcome their mental illnesses. These groups sessions will enable women to realize that the ill-treatment they were undergoing is in no shape or form an illustration of affection or respect for their being but rather an unfortunate need for the oppressor to inflict pain and suffering or a scapegoat on whom to inflict pain.

Educating the younger generation is the next recommendation, this is of high importance as the aim of the study is to reduce the rate of domestic violence. Education is the right tool to apply to the young men of the future generation. To teach them the right way to follow and not to replicate the same mistakes of their parents. Short teaching sessions to clarify why violence within the household is not acceptable. Guide the various existing ways to channel and resolve issues. This will greatly save future young wives and would promote more peace and household wellbeing.

This research concludes with a discussion detailing the researcher and the conclusion of the research finding. After analysing the collected information from 200 subjects, it concludes the fact that most consumers are influenced through electronic word of mouth advertisement when

purchasing a product before or after, and social media influencers do play a role in their purchasing decisions. Technology is evolving so are the advertising and the consumers. Consumers are aware of what product they want, how to get it, and where to get it. Social networks have now a role in influencing the behaviour of the consumers in the environment, especially when the level of exposure of messages and the relation made between the variety of information given and the consumer who makes a purchase.

Consumers now prefer to get their information from their friends, family, and social media influencers as the trust are there compared to a company's website. Consumers do desire meaningful content and relevant information to help them make purchase decisions and they want opinions from people they trust. All reviewed studies demonstrate the high impact of social influence with regard to social media. It is basic for organizations to comprehend social impact systems, select the correct measurements, gather the correct information, and endeavour the impact openings in web-based social networking. To display these components, the Online Social Influence model was made, which gives abnormal state ventures to oversee social impact through web-based social networking.

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