



## PRACTITIONER RESEARCH

<https://e-journal.uum.edu.my/index.php/pr>

How to cite this article:

Muniandy, V. D., Mariamdar Chethiyar, S. D., Ganesan, K., & Equatora M. A. (2020). The effect of domestic violence on women's mental health during the Covid-19 Pandemic. *Practitioner Research*, 4, July, 113-126. <https://doi.org/10.32890/pr2022.4.7>

### THE EFFECT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN TERMS OF WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

<sup>1</sup>Venothiney Dewi Muniandy,

<sup>2</sup>Saralah Devi Mariamdar Chethiyar,

<sup>3</sup>Krishnavani Ganesan & <sup>4</sup>Muhammad Ali Equatora

<sup>1</sup>Student Affairs Division, Multimedia University,  
Cyberjaya, Malaysia

<sup>2&3</sup>School of Applied Psychology, Social Work and Policy,  
Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

<sup>4</sup>Department of Community Guidance,  
Politeknik Ilmu Pemasarakatan, Depok, Indonesia.

<sup>2</sup>Corresponding author: [devi@uum.edu.my](mailto:devi@uum.edu.my)

Received: 25/5/2022 Revised: 1/6/2022 Accepted: 20/6/2022 Published: 31/7/2022

### ABSTRACT

The most common issue throughout this pandemic is domestic violence. Women are the most victims of domestic violence during the Covid-19 pandemic. Domestic violence is a pattern of aggression, torture, or harassment used to retain authority over a spouse in a close relationship. Around 57% of domestic violence cases were reported from women during Movement Control Order in Malaysia.

The objective of this study is to identify the effect on the issue of domestic violence during the Covid-19 pandemic. The researchers employed quantitative approaches to collect long-term data on domestic violence incidents during the COVID-19 Pandemic with four registered counselors from the National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN) and the Department of Social Welfare. According to the counselor's perspective, the study's findings show several effects of domestic violence during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

**Keywords:** Domestic Violence Issues, Counselors, Covid-19 Pandemic, Impacts, Issue.

## INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 is a phenomenon that is currently happening around the world. Countries worldwide are battling Covid-19 by taking action to stop the virus' spread, such as implementing national controls, boundary limitations, prohibitions on online work, and closing schools (Insider, 2020). Covid-19 has had a significant impact on many people. The effects of the epidemic's rising domestic violence cases are one such significant impact that is currently being seen to an alarming degree (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020). Domestic violence is a pattern of aggression, torture, or harassment used to retain authority over a spouse in a close relationship (Women and Organisation, 2020). Some of the acts listed below are considered domestic violence. They aim to produce fear and physical harm to the victim, consciously or subconsciously (MyGovernment, 2020).

The incidence of spousal violence has increased since the Covid-19 epidemic. Each year, nearly 10 million Americans are impacted by domestic abuse. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2021), twenty people are allegedly abused by a spouse every minute. In the United Kingdom, domestic violence affects over 2.3 million people annually, ranging in age from 16 to 74, and more than one in ten occurrences were reported to the police (Domestic Abuse Act, 2021). 902 instances of domestic violence were confirmed in Malaysia for the first four months of this year during the movements control order (Free Malaysia Today, 2021). A total of 2,287 instances of domestic abuse were reported this year, with

the numbers being significantly higher during the implementation of effective mobility restriction orders, according to the ministry of women, family, and community development (MyGoverment, 2020). As a result, domestic violence instances in Malaysia increased during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Women make up the majority of domestic violence victims. Noor'Ashikin (2010), who claimed that the majority of victims of domestic abuse are women, supports this claim. The Malaysian Statistics also noted 2,328 incidents of domestic abuse, of which 96.5 percent involved women and only 3.5 percent involved men (Jabatan Kebajikan Malaysia, 2012). Even though there are many studies on the effects of domestic violence, not many concentrates on the repercussions of domestic violence during the Covid-19 pandemic. The repercussions of domestic violence during the Covid-19 pandemic are discussed in this study.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Domestic violence is an issue that has increased globally during the pandemic. Domestic violence victims were locked in abusive relationships, with a greater danger of assault, as societies used to have to lock down activities, enterprises, and activities, and people were constrained to imprisonment at home (Evans, Lindauer & Farrell, 2020). According to reports from the world, domestic violence has risen as a result of the pandemic. In April 2020, the WHO observed a 60% rise in emergency calls from women experiencing domestic abuse in Europe compared to the earlier year (Mahase, 2020). In France, domestic violence cases have increased to 30% (Ertan et al., 2020). According to Harrison et al. (2020), domestic abuse was reported, and the need for immediate refuge has also increased in Germany and Spain. A total of 409 domestic violence cases were reported in Malaysia in one month (Buletin Bernama, 2020). Women are the most victims of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Around 57% of domestic violence cases were reported by women during Movement Control Order in Malaysia (The Star Online, 2020). Few studies focus on domestic violence effects during the pandemic of Covid-19. In this research, the researchers explain the effects of domestic violence during the pandemic of Covid-19.

## **OBJECTIVE OF STUDY**

The objective of this study is to identify the effects of domestic violence in terms of women's mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Nulfadhilah Binti Yahya (2014), domestic violence harms family institutions. The victim will experience physical, mental, and spiritual stress. A victim whom her partner has abused will live in unsafe conditions. Not only that, but if this issue is left unchecked, it will only worsen for a long time. Not only that, the negative impact that arises as a result of the issue of domestic violence is a problem for the growth or development of children. Children tend to repeat what they have learned from their parents when they become adults. Most likely, they will also become abusers when they become adults. If the problem of domestic violence persists, there will likely be fights and divorce between husband and wife.

A previous study by Muhazir & Marzuki (2015) said that domestic violence also impacted the individuals around them. For example, this problem will have a terrible effect on her children, especially from a psychological point of view. Children who witness abuse in their families will feel more depressed or feel less comfortable and also easily disturbed. Children will also feel marginalized by both their parents as well as will become aggressive and passive individuals as a result of the problem of domestic violence.

Besides that, Hadigunawan & Azahari (2016) explained that domestic violence could cause an individual to experience trauma and emotional disorders such as depression, restlessness, panic attacks, and will also experience stress disorders. The effect of domestic violence on children is that they will experience developmental problems, have low self-esteem and also experience disruption in education. The fights that erupted between the husband and wife caused their children to suffer though they were not attacked directly. The effect of domestic violence due to the Covid-19 pandemic is that fights between married couples affect their children.

Muhazir & Marzuki (2015) stated that the victim would suffer physical injuries and health problems and be traumatized due to mental and emotional disorders such as fear, emotional tension, and low self-esteem. Not only that, women who are victims of domestic violence will experience symptoms such as being pessimistic, will experience a lack of motivation, and feeling useless.

Idris et al. (2018) said that domestic violence affects the health of victims, such as miscarriage, bleeding, vaginal bleeding, and even weight loss. Also, serious fights will leave deep impressions such as cuts, bruises, and fractures. Apart from the physical effects of the domestic violence problem, stairs also impact mental health, where most victims will experience depression, fear, anxiety, low self-esteem, and suffer from obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. (Equatora, Muhammad Ali; Awi, 2021).

According to Katherine Sell (2010), the Great Recession crisis's impact on domestic violence between husband and wife has had a harmful physical and mental impact on their kids. The majority of kids from middle-class homes will experience difficulties as a result of the crisis. Because most parents will eventually lose their employment, they will begin to express the burden they feel on their kids. In addition, children's health started to suffer since their parents started ignoring them due to their arguments. According to Safta et al. (2010), domestic abuse can lead to trauma and emotional illnesses such as sadness, anxiety, panic attacks, and stress disorders. Children who endure domestic abuse struggle with their development, have low self-esteem, and experience learning disruptions. Not only that, a conflict between a husband and wife also hurt their kids even though they were not directly targeted. Additionally, arguing between married couples as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic has an impact on the children of those couples. This is significant because they grew up witnessing their father's combative behavior; perhaps his kid will carry on the family tradition and become a beater.

According to Sa'odah Ahmad and Mariani Mansor (2007), the issue of domestic violence is that the abused person is constantly in a state of fear and taught helplessness. Three primary parts of this learned helplessness have been identified: emotional trauma (emotional trauma), intellectual impairment (intellectual impairment), and motivational disability (motivational impairment). The victim is prevented from trying to do something positive, such as asking for

aid, since they feel unable to do so. They eventually decided to give up and accept their fate as being tortured. The principal justification for women's willingness to endure hardship in marriage is learned helplessness. Additionally, the victim is left with a negative perception of the problem of domestic violence.

The economic recession crisis that occurred in the United States between 2007 and 2009, according to Cohen, P. N. (2014), had a significant impact on married couples and increased the number of divorces. According to Community Studies America 2008–2011, most Americans, particularly men, have lost their jobs because they no longer receive a living wage. They are now under pressure due to this and are ready to harm their wife.

According to NurFadhilah Yahya (2014), domestic violence can hurt a victim's health by causing miscarriages, vaginal bleeding, and even weight loss. Additionally, a severe altercation will leave behind profound wounds, including cuts, bruises, and even fractured bones. Domestic violence issues also impact mental health, with most victims reporting symptoms such as despair, anxiety, fear, low self-esteem, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative studies usually use a small number of respondents because qualitative studies emphasize the knowledge, understanding, and experience of respondents based on the research issue than numerical and quantitative methods. All the information provided by the respondents will help the researcher to launch the research process. A qualitative method was used in this study. Researchers have used unstructured interviews. Qualitative data was obtained through observations, interviews, and document analysis (Equatora & Rahayu, 2018). All respondents were also selected using purposive sampling techniques and gave their consent to be respondents before the study was conducted. One of the common characteristics among all respondents is that they are all registered counsellors. Researchers conducted interviews with four registered counsellors around the National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN) and State Social Welfare Department Center (JKM), Penang, Kulim District Social Welfare Department, Kedah, and the Population and Development Board Negara (LPPKN), Perak. Two registered counsellors working for the National Population and Family

Development Board (LPPKN) in the states of Penang and Perak, and two registered counsellors working for the Social Welfare Department (JKM) in Penang and Kedah, participated in the researcher's study. The researchers, in collaboration with counsellors, collected the data. The researchers have recorded every conversation between the researcher and the respondent involved to make a transcription as solid evidence. The researchers used an electronic device, a mobile phone, to record the conversation.

## ANALYSIS OF DATA

**Table 1**

### *Data Analysis Method*

Respondent	Effects of Domestic Violence	Dialogue
1	Effects on mental health	This matter has been highlighted as follows: "The effect of the course on the psychological is more, fear, trauma, especially to young children".
2		"I ran away from home because I could not stand her husband beating me every day. I have emotional disorders, and also my body is very sick. Impact on children. They are traumatized to see parents who often quarrel and fight".
3		"Victims will experience depression when there is an issue of domestic violence. Changes will occur in the husband or wife in terms of behavior, cognitive thinking, or emotions. For example, before violence, her household life is in a very normal state; otherwise, when there is domestic violence, her rrrrrrr starts to change, and she will also experience high stress".
4		"The effect is the same where it has an effect in terms of physical and emotional. The victim is often beaten and abused by her husband. Most women have emotional disorders because they cannot prove in court that their husbands get a fair punishment. After all, the victim does not have any physical injuries. "

(continued)

Respondent	Effects of Domestic Violence	Dialogue
1	Increase in Divorce Cases	This matter has been highlighted as follows: "Divorce cases are also increasing, so where is the PKP? Divorce is indeed increasing according to the data".
2		"The wife can no longer bear the pain of starting to ask for a divorce from her husband. Divorce has an impact on how to survive with her children. Previously could withstand being beaten but became more severe during this PKP because the husband stayed home for 24 hours".

## DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the interviews, all four respondents have said the effect on the issue of domestic violence as a result of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic is psychological. The victim will experience fear as well as trauma after this incident occurs. Not only the victims but the children were also traumatized. The issue of domestic violence not only has an impact physically but emotionally as well. Most of the victims of domestic violence are women. Not only that, most victims who become victims will experience prolonged depression.

Flury, Nyberg, and Rossler (2010), said that the problem of domestic violence affects women's health in a variety of ways. The effects of domestic violence can cause to occur over time, short, medium, or long. The victim's health will be affected mentally or emotionally, which could cause the victim to die. Most women with this problem often complain that they experience head and abdomen pain and even menstrual disorders. In addition, the psychological effect is that the victim will experience depression, anxiety, panic, and insomnia. Studies show that 37% of women have experienced depression, 46% have had panic attacks, and as many as 45% suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.

According to a prior study by Muhazir and Marzuki (2015), domestic violence impacts those around them. For example, this issue will hurt her children, particularly from a psychological standpoint. This is



because children who experience abuse in their families are likelier to become unhappy, uneasy, and easily disturbed. As a result of the problem of domestic violence, children will feel ignored by both their parents and will become angry and passive individuals.

According to Hadigunawan and Azahari (2016), domestic violence can result in trauma and emotional problems such as despair, restlessness, panic attacks, and stress disorders. Domestic violence hurts children's growth, self-esteem, and educational opportunities. Not only that, but the disputes between the husband and wife affected their children, even though they were not personally targeted. Domestic violence has an additional consequence due to the COVID-19 Pandemic in those disagreements between married spouses impact their children.

A previous study by Alejo and Kavita (2014) says that out of 90%, as many as 29% of women have experienced mental disorders caused by the problem of domestic violence. Not only that, based on studies showing as many as 27% have experienced the disorder mood, 2% have psychotic disorders, and 42% have anxiety disorders.

Based on the results of the interviews, as many as two respondents said the impact of the issue of domestic violence is a growing case of divorce. Based on the current data of the Movement Control Order, divorce cases have increased dramatically more than before. Cohen (2014) said that the crisis of economic recession, which occurred in the United States from 2007 to 2009, had a very profound effect on married couples; that is, there has been an increase in divorce. Based on Community studies, Americans 2008-2011 say that most citizens of the United States, especially men, have become so unemployed that they do not earn income to make a living. This has caused them to be pressured and willing to hurt his wife.

Sukeri and Man (2017), stated that after years of torture, these women were out and believed that divorce was their only option. Unconditional support from family and friends and government assistance immensely aided these women in sticking to their resolve to leave their abusive situations. According to research, women who left violent marriages in New Zealand did so because they could no longer stand it, were physically harmed, worried about their children, and feared being killed by their husbands (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the interviews, all four respondents agreed that the issue of domestic violence had felt the psychological influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic. After this incident, the victim will feel traumatized and apprehensive. The trauma affects not only the victims but also the young ones. Domestic abuse impacts people not just physically but also emotionally. Women make up the majority of domestic violence victims. Additionally, the majority of victims who become victims suffer from protracted depression. Based on the results of the interview, as many as two respondents said that the effect of the issue of domestic violence is that divorce cases are increasing.

Based on data during the Movement Control Order, divorce cases have increased dramatically compared to before. Most of the women who are victims of violence experience internal problems such as trauma, depression, anxiety, and also symptoms of trauma as a result of the issues that occur. Children will also experience psychological problems, and most children exposed to domestic violence for a long time are likely to be stuck in violence problems after becoming adults. This can be proven during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Victims of abuse will experience long-term mental disorders such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Future study ideas should be implemented to learn more about the problem of domestic violence and how to eliminate it. Among the studies that can be implemented is the study on the Effectiveness of Counselling Services Based on the Perspective of Female Clients During the Covid-19 pandemic and the study on the Role of the Government in Addressing the Issue of Domestic Violence During the Covid-19 pandemic.

The study's limitation is that it solely focuses on the impact of domestic violence due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, this study does not include external parties such as predators, the government, NGOs, and the community. This study uses only qualitative methods such as interviews with respondents to learn more about the essential points in greater depth. The information or data acquired from the outcomes of interviews with four registered counsellors chosen as respondents for this study was the focus of the study's findings and discussion.

This study has some importance that can be seen from various angles. The importance of this study is for the community, victims, and the Department of Social Welfare (JKM). This study's results hope to impact and benefit other researchers in the future. This study is expected to provide understanding to the community about the issue of domestic violence that is increasing during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This study can also help the community to take appropriate measures to deal with the issue of domestic violence. The formation of family institutions is significant because it affects the upbringing of children.

In addition, the study aims to provide benefits to women. This is the case during the COVID-19 Pandemic; most domestic violence issues involve women who have been victims. Every woman should be careful in daily activities and make early preparations to prevent crimes that occur nowadays, such as the issue of domestic violence. The results of this study can help victims involved in the issue of domestic violence to find a solution and act to remove themselves from the unwanted phenomenon.

The results of this study can help the Department of Social Welfare (JKM) to make it a reference source to help victims of domestic violence. This is because most women who experience domestic violence issues do not have a shelter to seek protection. Not only that, the JKM should help victims of domestic violence by providing counselling sessions so that victims have a way to file a complaint and also seek temporary protection.

The study concludes that during the Covid-19 pandemic, most counsellors shared their views on the topic of domestic violence. During the Covid-19 pandemic, most counsellors stated similar perspectives on the effects that lead to the issue of domestic violence. A more in-depth investigation of the subject of domestic violence from the perspective of counsellors in the Covid-19 pandemic phenomena. Future research is expected to benefit from the ideas made. Domestic violence is rising, and those responsible must take necessary steps to address it, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

## REFERENCES

- Alejo & Kavita. (2014) "Long-Term Physical and Mental Health Effects of Domestic Violence". Themis: *Research Journal of Justice Studies and Forensic Science*, 2, Spring 2014.
- Bradbury-Jones C, Isham L (2020). The pandemic paradox: The consequences of COVID-19 on domestic violence. *Journal of clinical nursing*, 29:2047–2049.
- Buletin Bernama (2020). Kisah Duka dan Derita Isteri di Sebalik Tadbir PKP. Retrieved from. <https://www.bernama.com/bm/am/newscovid-php?id=184340>
- Cohen, P. N. (2014). Recession and Divorce in the United States, 2008–2011. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 33(5), 615-628. doi:10.1007/s11113-014-9323-z.
- Domestic Abuse Act (2021). Domestic Abuse Act: Overarching Factsheet. Retrieved on 13 August from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill2020-factsheets/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-overarching-factsheet>
- Ertan D, El-Hage W, Thierree S, Javelot H, and Hingray, C. (2020). COVID-19: urgency for distancing from domestic violence. *Eur J Psychotraumatol*, 11(1):1800245.
- Evans ML, Lindauer M, Farrell M.E. (2020). A pandemic within a pandemic: Intimate partner violence during COVID-19. *N Engl J Med*, 383(24):2302–4.
- Equatora, M.A., Awi, L. M. (2021). *Teknik Pengumpulan Data Klien* (01 ed.). Bitread. <https://ebooks.gramedia.com/id/buku/teknik-pengumpulan-data-klien>
- Equatora, M. A., & Rahayu, M. (2018). The Effectiveness of Self-reliance Coaching of Prisoners at Wirogunan Correctional Institutions in Yogyakarta. *Proceedings of the Borneo International Conference on Education and Social Sciences*, 158–163. <https://doi.org/10.5220/0009018201580163>
- Fanslow, J. L., & Robinson, E. M. (2010). Help-seeking behaviors and reasons for help-seeking reported by a representative sample of women victims of intimate partner violence in New Zealand. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 25(5), 929-951.
- Flury, M., Nyberg, E., & Riecher-Rössler, A. (2010). Domestic violence against women: Definitions, epidemiology, risk factors and consequences. *Swiss Medical Weekly*. doi:10.4414/smw.2010.13099.

- Free Malaysia Today (2021). 900 domestic violence cases reported in the first 4 months of 2021. Retrieved on 13 August from <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2021/05/04/900-domestic-violence-cases-reported-in-first-4-months-of-2021/>
- Graham-Harrison E, Giuffrida A, Smith, H., Ford L. (2020). Lockdowns around the world bring a rise in domestic violence. *The Guardian*. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/28/lockdowns-world-rise-domestic-violence>
- Hadigunawan, N., & Azahari, R. (2016). Penghayatan Islam dan Hubungannya dengan Konflik Rumahtangga: Kajian di Unit Runding Cara, Bahagian Undang Undang Keluarga, Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor. *Jurnal Syariah*, 417-418.
- Idris, S. A. M., Aziz, N. N. A., Khalid, R. K. R. M., Nizar, N. F. M., Rasip, K. A., & Ayub, W. (2018). Causes and effects of domestic violence: a conceptual model on the performance at work. In *4th Putrajaya International Conference On Children, Women, Elderly and People with Disabilities* (pp. 84-94).
- Insider (2020). Our ongoing list of how countries are reopening and which ones remain under lockdown. Retrieved on 13 August from <https://www.businessinsider.com/countries-on-lockdown-coronavirus-italy-2020-3#germany-is-slowly-reopening-though-its-also-seen-the-infection-rate-rise-1>
- Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat. (2012). Laporan statistik keganasan rumah tangga. Retrieved from <http://www.jkm.gov.my/jkm/index.php?r=portal/full&id=eDhOXZLT05BWWp%20INGJ6eUNvRXgvdz09>
- Sell, K. (2010). The Effect of Recession on Child Well-Being: *A Synthesis of the Evidence by Policylab, The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia*, University of Wisconsin School of Law.
- Mahase, E. (2020). Covid-19: EU States report a 60% rise in emergency calls about domestic violence. *BMJ*, 369:m1872.
- Muhazir, S. M., & Marzuki, E. M (2015). Keganasan Terhadap Rumah Tangga. *Jurnal Kemanusiaan*, 215-232.
- MyGovernment (2020). *Domestic Violence*. Retrieved on 13 August from <https://www.malaysia.gov.my/portal/content/28911>
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2021). *World Population Review 2021*. Retrieved on 13 August from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/staterankings/domestic-violence-by-state>

- NurFadhilah Yahya. (2014). Kesan Emosi Yang Dihadapi oleh Wanita yang Bercerai Akibat Keganasan Rumah Tangga: Satu Kajian di Negeri Johor, Fakulti Pendidikan, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Negeri Johor.
- Safta, C. G., Stan, E., Iurea, C., & Suditu, M. (2010). Counselling and Assistance for Women Victims of Domestic Violence in Romania - Case Study. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 5, 2034-2041. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.07.409
- Sa'odah Ahmad & Mariani Mansor (2007). Pengetahuan Mahasiswa tentang Perundangan dalam Keganasan Rumah Tangga. *Jurnal Personalia Pelajar* 21(1), 37-42.
- Shariffah Nuridah Aishah Syed Nong Mohamad & Noor'Ashikin binti Hamid. (2010). *The Crime of Domestic Violence Against Women in Malaysia: Its Concept & Solutions*. Universiti Teknologi MARA.
- Sukeri, S., & Man, N. N. N. (2017). Escaping domestic violence: A qualitative study of women who left their abusive husbands. *Journal of Taibah University medical sciences*, 12(6), 477-482.
- The Star Online (2020). MCO Sees Spike in Domestic Violence Cases. Retrieved from [https://www.star.com/online/am/news\\_violencephp?id=1234548](https://www.star.com/online/am/news_violencephp?id=1234548)
- Women and Organisation (2020). What is Domestic Violence? Retrieved on 13 August from <https://wao.org.my/what-is-domestic-violence/>