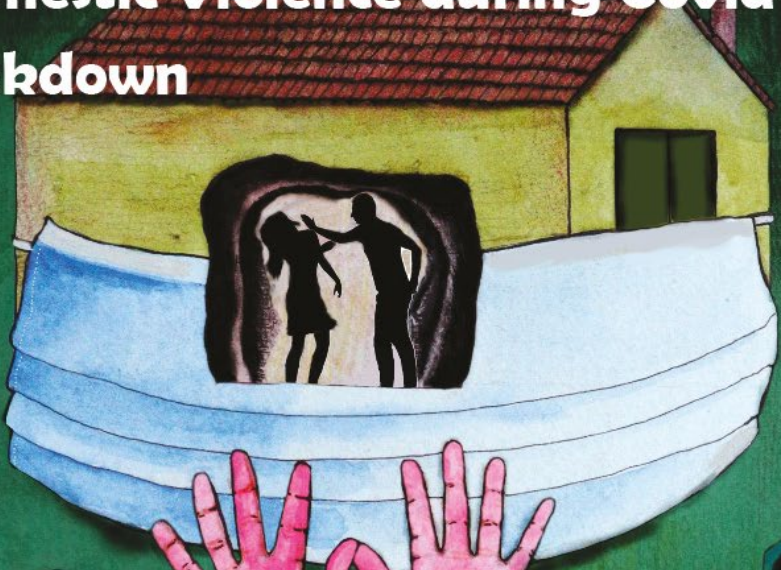


The Gender Pandemic:

# Domestic Violence during Covid-19 Lockdown



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## FOREWORD

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Domestic Violence, especially against women and children, is widespread in most societies and in all countries, with the perpetrators of that violence known to the victims. Sadly, Covid-19 also established that, “home is not the safest place one can be.”

Domestic violence continues to be alarmingly common and accepted as “normal” within many societies. Even today, many men and women believe domestic violence to be a personal issue, that is to be dealt within the family.

Aptly titled, ‘The Gender Pandemic: Domestic Violence during Covid-19 Lockdown’ have chosen the correct time to publish this study report. The Study categorically asserts the significance of looking at domestic violence through the gender lens and a rights-based approach, for all practical, legal and policy purposes. The chapters are organised in a way that explain this understanding, the compelling inference from primary/secondary data, interventions at the national levels, reiterating the gender and violence aspects in urban and rural spaces, weighing the factors of power and control, throw interesting insights into domestic violence seeping across religion, caste, class, and literacy levels, with the kind of violence suffered by the victims, especially sexual.

The World Conference on Human Rights, and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women-1993, categorically affirms that civil society and governments have recognised, that violence against women is a public policy and human rights concern. It is this acceptance that has motivated the constitution of international standards, to guide policy and action regarding safety for women.

The Covid-19 pandemic in the worldwide context proved that home confinement led to heightened contact between perpetrators and

victims, which aided the increased violence, yet reporting, seeking support decreased. The Study reports and case studies confirm that family dynamics forcibly changed and reiterated the undisputed aspect of power and control as a primary factor in domestic violence. It also affirms that there are devastating consequences for the women victims and a traumatic effect on those witnessing it, especially children. As we start to emerge from the pandemic, it is important to prioritize funding resources for domestic violence prevention programmes and organizations

I am sure this Study and the data provided, is a good reference tool, for police, policy makers, people dealing on these issues, including helplines, first responders, physicians, social support services, family, and criminal courts, as a step towards fulfilling the state's obligation to eliminate violence against women under national and international human rights laws. The Study is a beacon light to accelerate the role of the State who have a duty to exercise due diligence to prevent, prosecute and punish violence against women, while raising awareness at all levels on this silent gender pandemic.

**Ms. Brinda Adige**

Women and Human Rights Activist

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Nation-wide lockdown was imposed in March 2020 to control the spread of Coronavirus in India. However, within a few months of isolation and quarantine, it was reported in the media that there was an unprecedented increase in domestic violence experienced by women all over India. Karnataka was no exception. Domestic space remained a major threat for women during the lockdown period, without much socio-legal or psychological support. While there was a sharp increase in the reported instance of domestic violence, there were many unreported cases. Isolation to protect from the Corona pandemic took a new turn of gender pandemic. The pathos of the migrants, the invisible workers, came to the limelight during the lockdown. Needless to state that the state's response in addressing domestic violence and the untold sufferings of the migrants has been appalling.

The institute took note of the condition of the migrants as well as women who were subjected to domestic violence and initiated action research. The study on migrants was published in 2020, titled, 'Walking with the Migrants beyond Covid-19 Pandemic'. The current study, 'The Gender Pandemic: Domestic Violence during Covid-19 Lockdown' is another effort to bring out in the public domain the pain and suffering of women during lockdown due to domestic violence from a gender lens and human rights perspective.

I am deeply grateful to Mr. Shujayathulla, who mooted this idea and teamed up with Ms. Rosemary FN, currently teaching Social Work in Acharya Institute of Graduate Studies, Bengaluru and Ms. Harshita, a former student of St. Claret College to implement this study. From the time of conceptualization of this study, it was a teamwork, each one contributing their might from different perspectives.

I would also like to acknowledge the support received from Ms. Ashwini HA, Ms. Ranjitha G, Ms. Swapna BN, Ms. Papacchi M, Ms. Usharani R, Ms. Varalakshmi D, Ms. Venkatarathnamma KC, Ms. Shilpa N, Ms. Vennela L. V, Ms. Sri Lakshmi, Ms. Pavithra S.Y and Ms. Kalavathi R students at Bengaluru North University, Kolar, who went to the field to interview the battered women, especially in rural Karnataka. These students also collected some case narratives. Unambiguously the students stated, “Going to the field and interviewing women who had experienced abuse was a great awakening.” Special thanks to Ms. Roshni Peter, Ms. Christina Mary and Ms. Mary Joyce who took efforts to reach out to some victims of domestic violence and interview them.

I am indebted to Ms. Brinda Adige, a women and human rights activist and Board member of the institute for her insightful foreword. I thank Ms. Reshma Khatoon, freelance artist, former student of Jamia Millia Islamia University, Delhi, who studied Master of Fine Arts (Painting) for designing a meaningful cover and Optim Graphics Institute, Bengaluru for designing and printing this publication.

The institute believes in social change from a bottom-up and experienced-based knowledge development. This publication will be yet another benchmark in the history of the institute for its timely response to the Covid-19 challenges, especially on a critical gender issue, which will continue to haunt the memories of many right-thinking people in the future.

**Dr. Joseph Xavier SJ**

Director, Indian Social Institute, Bengaluru

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# CHAPTER

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# 1

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## Introduction and Methodology

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Domestic Violence (DV) refers to violence perpetrated by an intimate partner in any setting and in any form. Domestic violence has been defined by Amnesty International as the “most violent attacks” on a woman. It is also a form of structural violence and is used as a tool to oppress mostly women across the world by means of physical, sexual, psychological and emotional violence. However, it is to be noted that men and same sex couples are also the victims of domestic violence. From time immemorial, the practice of DV has been institutionalized through the structure of patriarchy and by denying the rights of women in various forms, leading to multiple types of oppression.

Any violence has to be analysed from the rights perspective. In 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, women across the world rose against injustice, illogical rituals, evil practices, inequality, oppression and violence against them which gave birth to feminist movements. The feminist movements

demanded social, cultural, economic and political rights for women across the globe. The unflinching hope and determination of feminist movements, paved way in 1981 for the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and was ratified to address the different types of discrimination against women. Following this Convention, Beijing's declaration was signed in 1995.

The mission statement of Beijing Conference highlighted:

The Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment. It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. This means that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centred sustainable development and for their children and for society to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) is a cross-country measure of discrimination against women in social institutions. Currently, over 155 countries have passed legislation to prohibit domestic violence. India passed Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

For many years, perhaps, for many generations, when a man began to construct shelter, a wall, a roof beneath the sky, and a door to protect himself, began a concept of privacy for every clan, every family. But this very concept of privacy has become a tool for a certain type of violence. Any violence that happens within the walls of the home cannot be scrutinized because, ultimately, it is of personal nature.

Domestic violence has been a part and parcel of some cultures across the globe. These violations happen behind closed doors, leading to silent suffering. From the time a woman is born, home becomes a final boundary to a few of them. Problem also lies in the way society tends to view or consider women. As a customary practice, it is observed that at the time of wedding, the father gives away daughter to the to-be son-in-law and this particular ritual is called 'Kanya Daan'. Daan means giving away 'something'. This means a daughter is treated to be an article or an entity that can be given away, which implies that a woman is considered as an 'object'. Therefore, objectification of women is very much common in a patriarchal society (Goswami, 2017).

Violence is nothing but pure display of brutality, having no boundaries and can take place anywhere. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 defines domestic violence as women's experience of abuse and includes not only physical violence, but also other forms of violence such as emotional, verbal, sexual, and economic abuse. Domestic violence is a 'threat or exercise of physical, psychological, and/or emotional or any type of force against another person with the intent of inflicting harm or exercising power and control over them' (Flury, 2010). The above definitions clearly state that a domestic violence can be physical, psychological, sexual and emotional in nature. Upon division of the two terms, Domestic and Violence, domestic here would mean in the premises of home and violence

would incorporate not just physical but emotional and other kinds of assault.

Various reports show that a worldwide lockdown has resulted in various forms of indoor violence against children and women. With no ray of hope, these sections were trapped at home with their abusers. In India, the National Commission for Women (NCW) had recorded an increasing number of domestic violence cases compared to previous months. The National Commission for Women reported that between the weeks of 2 to 8 March 2020 and 23 March – 1 April 2020, the gender-based violence cases increased from 116 to 257 (Roy, 2020). It is likely that many cases would have gone unreported.

Despite this alarming scenario, the government did not come out openly to address the drastic increase in domestic and other forms of violence at the time of lockdown. Why the government preferred to remain silent or why there was lack of willingness to effectively handle increasing violence against women, deserve a detailed study. If India desires to move towards Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant), then the leaders or political parties in power must address issues of women. This is an explorative study to bring to public domain the scenario of domestic violence before and during lockdown in Karnataka.

### **Goal of the study**

- To bring into public domain domestic violence/abuses experienced by women before and during lockdown.

### **Objectives**

- To understand the nature of domestic violence during lockdown.
- To learn about coping strategies adopted by women, to manage/resolve domestic violence.

- To understand how a woman perceives the realities of other women in India

### **Areas of inquiry**

1. To understand the nature of violence during lockdown
  - a. Do men support women in domestic work?
  - b. What were the different kinds of violence/abuse women have gone through?
  - c. Which type of violence/abuse was common during the lockdown period?
  - d. What were the reasons for domestic violence/abuse?
  - e. Who were the perpetrators of abuse?
  - f. How did such abuses affect the women?
2. To learn about coping strategies adopted by women, to manage/resolve domestic violence
  - a. Were women aware of the DV Act? Was the Act helpful?
  - b. How did the women respond to abuse?
  - c. Were women prepared to report when abused?
3. To understand how a woman perceives the realities of other women in India
  - a. Is there a change among different categories of women about their understanding of women and their rights?
  - b. To make concrete recommendations to prevent/reduce incidents of domestic violence.

## Respondents

The primary respondents of this study were women who were either married or women who were in a live-in relationship, from Karnataka. This implies when the term ‘husband’ is used in the study, it also refers to live-in partners. Considering the sensitivity of the issue, the team decided to collect about 150 responses.

## Methodology

The study adopted a mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative tools. A google form was prepared as a self-administering questionnaire and was used to elicit the responses. The google form was shared among women, NGOs and individuals who are working among victims of domestic violence. It was an ‘open source’ sampling. In some cases, some who received the google form also shared it with their potential contacts who had been subjected to domestic violence. In some cases, women researchers conducted interviews and filled-up the questionnaire by visiting some of the institutions which were caring for the victims of domestic violence. Along with it, the researchers collected 10 case narratives. To understand domestic violence scenarios, about 5 women subject experts from CSO sectors were also interviewed on lead perspectives of the data analysis to derive insights.

**Table 1.1 Respondent’s DV reference period**

| <b>Domestic Violence</b>         | <b>N</b>   | <b>%</b>     |
|----------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Before the lockdown period       | 38         | 23.9         |
| During the lockdown period       | 33         | 20.8         |
| It is before and during lockdown | 88         | 55.3         |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>159</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

This study was initiated during the first lockdown when the reports came in the public domain about the increased number of cases of

domestic violence. Data collection continued until the end of the second lockdown. Accordingly, the response period is classified as DV before the lockdown, DV during the lockdown and DV before and during the lockdown. From Table 1.1, it is obvious that the number of respondents who have chosen the response period as before and during lockdown is much higher than either before or during lockdown. This might be an indication of the obvious - while domestic violence was prevalent before and during lockdown, the number of cases increased multifold during the lockdown as it was reported in the public domain. It is also to be noted that number of respondents before the lockdown does not adhere to a specific time frame. Some women respondents had been subjected to domestic violence over a decade. 33 out of 159 respondents stating that they experienced domestic violence during lockdown indicates the hike in domestic violence during lockdown.

In the next chapter, review of literature is presented to understand domestic violence from rights-based perspective, definition of domestic violence, type of abuse, relationship between violence, power and control, role of women during lockdown, and coping strategies.



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## CHAPTER

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# 2

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### **Understanding Domestic Violence from Rights-based perspective and Gender Lens**

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When the entire world had been under lockdown owing to Covid-19, people thought that the world would be at peace. No traffic, no noise on the street, and the animals have been venturing outside their jungle without fear. But what was happening in several places behind closed doors made some of the human rights defenders to sit up and take notice of it. The cases of domestic violence were getting reported at an alarming rate, not just in India but in the entire world. History has taught us that whenever the world has been facing crisis, women have taken the brunt. Be it world war, civil war or communal violence, women have been targeted, raped, tortured and killed. The same experience has repeated during Covid-19 pandemic which has disturbed the world, yet again. Domestic, sexual and gender-based violence have been reported during Ebola of 2014 – 2016, and Zika epidemic which occurred in 2015 and 2016. The same gender-based violence has been happening at homes when the entire world has been under quarantine (Laya, 2020).

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During pandemic, domestic violence in India too surged. For example, in Karnataka alone, as many as 477 calls has been received on domestic violence soon after the nationwide lockdown was imposed (<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/477-calls-on-domestic-violence-received-during-lockdown-karnataka-government/article31433939.ece>). It has been reported that during lockdown between 25 March 2020 to 31 May 2020, 1,477 domestic violence complaints were reported by women in India (Radhakrishnan, 2020). The above figure clearly shows the increase in the reported domestic violence (The Hindu, June 2020).

In this background, this study was carried out to understand the factors and reasons for the domestic violence. Domestic violence may not happen overnight. We should not be waiting for a pandemic to happen again to understand how complex the issue of domestic violence has been. Women continue to suffer in silence and in most instances, it has been happening for generations. There are many factors interlinked which act as causal factors, like, patriarchy, gender discrimination and male preference related socialization.

### **National Data on Incidences of Domestic Violence during Lockdown**

1. The National Commission for Women has reported a rise of 94 per cent in complaint cases where women have been abused in their homes during lockdown. The pandemic had adverse gender impact in two ways– 1) Middle or upper-class women facing abuse in homes during the lockdown and 2) Poor women who have no homes or are surviving in slums or those on the roads walking back home or those awaiting in villages for migrant men to come back.
2. During the lockdown, up to April 9, as many as 1,409 calls had been received on the 181 women’s helpline. A majority of these

calls were blank calls or related to general matters that did not require the department's intervention, the counter added. As many as 111 counsellors had been temporarily designated as protection officers to address cases of violence expeditiously (<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2020/apr/25/effective-steps-taken-to-curb-domestic-violence-during-lockdown-tn-tells-madras-hc-2135296.html>).

3. The National Crime Records Bureau 2018 data affirms that domestic violence tops crimes against women, with the “majority of the cases being registered under ‘cruelty by husband or his relatives’ at 31.9 per cent. This was followed by ‘assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty’ at 27.6 per cent. The cases of the ‘kidnapping and abduction of women stood at 22.5 per cent and the rape cases comprised 10.3 per cent of the overall crime figures” (National Herald 2020) (<https://www.epw.in/engage/article/stay-home-stay-safe-interrogating-violence>).
4. According to the first report dated 3 April 2020, the NCW had received 257 complaints between 23 March 2020 and 1 April 2020, among which 69 were cases of domestic violence. This figure had increased dramatically from 30, between 2 and 8 March, indicating a twofold increase in the number of cases (Kumar et al 2020). Further, figures suggested that between the beginning of March to 5 April 2020, the NCW received 310 grievances of domestic violence and 885 complaints for other forms of violence against women, many of which are domestic in nature, such as bigamy, polygamy, dowry deaths, and harassment for dowry (Kumar et al 2020) (<https://www.epw.in/engage/article/stay-home-stay-safe-interrogating-violence>).
5. In a matter of 7 days of lockdown in India, between 23 – 30 March 2020, National Commission of Women (NCW) has

received 58 complaints and there many reports which are most likely unreported (PTI, 2020). Gender based violence increased twofold between the beginning and end of March 2020, from 116 to 257, as reported to National Commission of Women (Roy, 2020). In April and May, of the 3027 complaints received by NCW across 22 categories of crime against women, 1428 (47.2%) were related to domestic violence. The data from January to March, on the other hand, show that of a total of 4233 complaints made during that period, about 20.6 per cent (871) were related to domestic violence (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/domestic-violence-accounts-for-over-47-complaints-to-ncw-in-lockdown/articleshow/76161829.cms>).

6. In Punjab, there has been an over 21 per cent increase in the number of crimes against women, with 700 cases of domestic violence being reported since the curfew and lockdown kicked in (<https://www.epw.in/engage/article/stay-home-stay-safe-interrogating-violence>).
7. 42 per cent men and 52 per cent women believed that husband is justified in beating his wife in certain situations such as when she argues, disobeys, cannot serve hot food or could take care of babies. Only less than one per cent sought help from police. (<file:///D:/C%20drv%20data%20dont%20del/Downloads/DV%20INDIA%20Covid.pdf>)
8. Government intervened to stop over 5,584 child marriages during coronavirus-induced first lockdown.

### **Interventions: National**

9. The Delhi High court, on a petition filed by an NGO, directed the government to deliberate on measures to ensure effective implementation of Protection of Women. The state in its

reply said that it has put a protocol in place where a survivor once calls the helpline, the tele-caller will take the complaint and will forward it to the counselor who will establish a phone communication with the survivor during the lockdown. The court disposed of the petition after the status report is filed by the government.

10. The Jammu and Kashmir High Court took suo moto cognizance and on 18 April 2020, offered slew directions that include creation of special funds and designating informal spaces for women such as grocery stores and pharmacies where women could report abuse without alerting the perpetrator.
11. The Karnataka High Court too has asked the state government about the helplines and action taken on domestic violence complaints. The state in its reply stated that helplines, counselors, shelter homes and protection officers are working round the clock to help victims of violence.
12. In Tamil Nadu, protection officers appointed under the Domestic Violence Act 2005 are allowed to move during the lockdown and some women in dangerous situations are being rescued and have been moved to shelter homes.
13. In UP, the state government has initiated a special helpline for victims of domestic abuse under the title “Suppress Corona not your voice”.
14. In one of the early initiatives taken by Uttar Pradesh (UP) police, there was a Hindi newspaper advertisement on 20 March 2020, saying “Suppress Corona, Not Your Voice,” asking women to dial 112 to make complaints and for women police officers to make home visits subsequently (Bose 2020) (<https://www.epw.in/engage/article/stay-home-stay-safe-interrogating-violence>).

15. The chairperson of NCW claimed that ASHA, Anganwadi and other frontline health workers are counselling against domestic violence and women can report to these workers in case they are facing abuse.
16. Educating and using available human resources like ASHA workers and other health workers, who are currently conducting door to door surveys about Covid-19, in identifying subtle signs of DV would be prudent (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7295494/>).

### **Understanding Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence is any behavior that is used to gain control of someone and in most cases, it will be a spouse in a marriage. Domestic violence has several names, such as, wife abuse, marital assault, women battery, spouse abuse, wife beating, conjugal violence and intimate violence. All these points out that there exists a problem and that the victim is always a woman.

World Health Organization (WHO) has done a study in this regard “Women’s Health and Domestic Violence” in 10 different countries representing diverse culture and in both urban and rural settings. The study was made in Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Peru, Namibia, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Thailand and Tanzania. The study reveals horrifying experiences of women and also indicates how these countries must respond to the violence. The agony and violence are beyond immediate harm and these instances of violence affect many aspects of women’s future health (Flury, 2010).

Going by the rule, the domestic violence does not mean just one incident of violence but rather a complex and repetitive system of abuse which includes, physical, sexual and psychological violence. It is also evident that Domestic Violence is gender specific violence based on inequality of sexes. The word ‘gender violence’ was coined by

C. Hagemann White, who says domestic violence happens as gender violence entails all forms of injury inflicted to show power over other gender both emotionally and physically and exploitation continuous and this is to show one's power over the other (Flury, 2010).

Opinions about responsibilities and understanding the gender roles in context of marital relationship is another reason for domestic violence at home. A traditional perspective of this ideology would expect that the husbands must be the primary breadwinners of the family and women should remain at home. Another perspective is a belief that women's earning is also crucial for running the house. As per Gendered Resource Theory, women who are primary breadwinners, are more susceptible for the violence if their husbands are traditional. The same theory also emphasizes that the violence is like a compensation for them because of the shortage of resources of men! (Aziz, 2018). This study results are widely being accepted by other scholars.

Gender inequality has strong relationship with kinds of violence, which could be sexual violence, domestic violence and family violence. The violence is inherently gendered because the act of violence against women happens all across the globe. Gender inequality is a social condition characterized by unequal value afforded to men and women and an unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity between them. All over the world, women have lower social status, decreased access to resources, lower wellbeing and greater chance of living in poverty when compared to men. There are various types of disadvantages that combine to make women's lives even more vulnerable, such as, their wealth, language, transgender status, race, disability and age. All these factors affect women and shape their involvement and status that they can achieve socially, politically, culturally and economically (Gillespie, 2016).

Unequal power relations are considered to be a major factor for men to perpetrate violence against women. The respective gender qualities which are made to adopt for both men and women which teaches men to be dominant and women to be submissive. We are wrong in our socialization process itself. It is within the system where we glorify the strength and masculinity of men and nurture women to be tender, soft like a flower to be trampled.

Sometimes, women also tend to show positive attitude towards wife beating. And they even accept these forms of violence. A study done by Khawaja and Colleagues (2008) found that women show positive attitude to women beating in eight different hypothetical situations:

- a. Deliberately do not comply with what husband asked for
- b. Do not respect her husband's family
- c. Go alone in public without being accompanied
- d. Behave in a way that he does not like at home or in public
- e. "Talk back" speak in a way that is hostile to him
- f. Do not take care of the children properly (that is not in the way the husband thinks it should be done
- g. Incompetent in doing household chores and
- h. Do not prepare food properly or in a timely manner

And women are also made to feel guilty if the above hypothetical situations are not managed by them as her husband thinks it should be done. A woman is a human being with psychological emotions and not a robot that could be programed to act as per the whims and fancies of the patriarchal societies.

## **Definitions**

Domestic Violence is defined as the threat or exercise of physical, psychological, and/or emotional violence i.e., any type of force



against another person with intent of inflicting harm or exercising power and control over them (Ganley, 1998). Domestic Violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners.

Violence against women is manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and prevention of the full advancement of women (United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, General Assembly Resolution December 1993).

The definition of Domestic Violence as per domestic violence Act 2005 includes four categories of abuse namely: physical, sexual, verbal/emotional and economic.

## **Types of Abuse**

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse may compose of spitting, scratching, biting, grabbing, shaking, shoving, pushing, restraining, throwing, twisting, slapping with (open or closed hand) punching, choking, burning, and use of weapons, leg, household objects, knives, guns against the victim. The physical assault may or may not cause injuries. Sometimes, even simple act of violence can result in serious injuries. For example, perpetrator pushing a victim against a couch or a wall or out of a moving car can result in trauma which these women carry for their entire life.

### **Sexual Abuse**

This includes sexually battering their victims. Which may include pressing for sex when victim is not agreeing for the act. Manipulating a victim and then coercing a victim for sex, sex by threatening to assault physically, forced sex or sexual assault accompanied by

violence. Some victims are forced to perform sexual acts against their will such as sex with third parties, physically painful sex, forcing into sexual activity which women feel offensive, verbal degradation during sex. Forcing for sex when women do not want it such as during illness, in front of children, after a physical assault or when they are sleeping. Few perpetrators attack victims' genitals with blows or weapons. Some even deny contraception or protection against sexually transmitted diseases. The abuser makes victims think that they do not have any say over their bodies. Some even go through these episodes thinking one day all of this will come to an end and thus, endure violence in silence.

### **Verbal Abuse**

Typically, verbal abuse involves some sort of verbal interaction that causes a person emotional harm. Just like other forms of abuse, verbal abuse can leave a lasting impact on victims. Victims may suffer from anxiety to depression to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Verbal abuse can make a victim believe negative about themselves which may not be true. Their negative feelings and perceptions may affect their relationships, success at work and perspective towards life (Gordon, 2020).

Patricia Evans in the *Verbally Abusive Relationship* recognizes various types of verbal abuse, such as, withholding, countering, discounting, disguised as jokes, blocking and diverting, accusing and blaming, judging and criticizing, trivializing, threatening, name calling, denial, abusive anger (Brogaard, 2015).

### **Emotional Abuse**

This is an abuse where the approach is to gain control over the victim which consists of verbal attacks making victim feel worthless as her role as a parent, family member, friend, coworker or a community member. Verbal abuse always gets focused at victim's weakness such as

language ability, parental skills, religious beliefs, etc. Here, sometimes abuser also plays mind games to make the victim not realize what the actual reality is. Like say for example, making victim do something and claiming that he never asked her to do it when she has obeyed. The abuse also includes humiliating victim in front of friends and relatives or even strangers. The abuser will begin to assert that victims are crazy, incompetent and unable to do anything right. It is to be noted that all verbal insults are identified as domestic violence, but it must be a part of pattern of coercive behaviors that always threaten to use physical force (Ganley, 1998).

### **Economic Abuse**

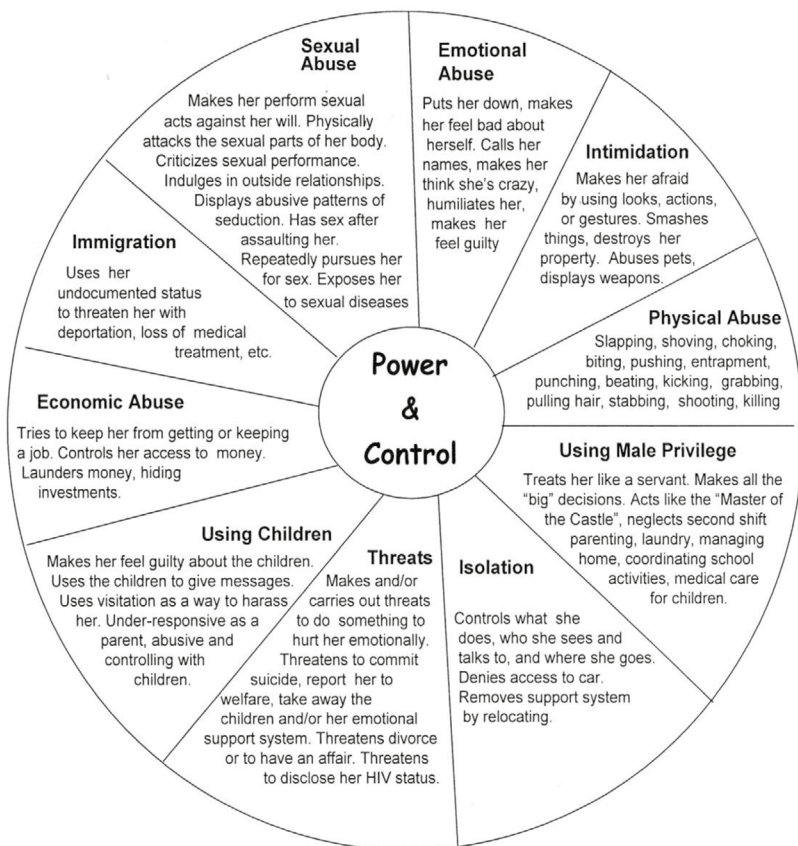
Economic Abuse is depriving the aggrieved woman from all sorts of financial resources to which she is entitled to under any law or custom or legal order or which she requires out of necessity, such as for running the household, taking care of the children, etc. It also includes alienation of the movable or immovable assets in which she has interest too, prohibiting the aggrieved woman or putting restriction on her to continue the use of resources or facilities. Courts have also interpreted not giving food to the aggrieved person, interfering with the aggrieved person's ability to get an employment, forcing a woman to leave her job etc. as a form of economic abuse (Singh, 2018).

### **Structural violence**

When one man beats his wife, it is interpersonal violence, but when a million men beat their wives, it is structural violence. Domestic violence is a structural violence. Something within society is perpetuating or unconsciously condoning domestic abuse (<https://www.focusforhealth.org/the-role-of-patriarchy-in-domestic-violence/>). Domestic abuse or violence is seen in every part of the globe and has been reported historically in every era that passed by. The prevalence of domestic violence is because of the fact that this

particular violence was tolerated and even considered legal in the ancient day. To cite some examples from the history, in the Roman Empire, women were considered as property of men, they can beat them up, divorce her or murder her for the offences which are done by her! And these were considered ‘private’ matter and there was no question of public scrutiny. There was a common law which said a woman can be beaten up for maintaining family discipline! (Davies).

## Violence, Power and Control



Source: [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)

## **Role of Women in Families during Lockdown**

Our society is constructed based on certain norms. Those, parameters have trickled at the family level as well, leading to classification of specific roles for women and men. In a family setup, women have to play the role of a Mother, Sister, Daughter, Wife, Sister-in-law, among many others. In addition to this, women also have to do household chores. They also should play the role of caretakers, appease the men in fulfilling in smallest of their wishes. All such actions reinforce gender roles within our society.

Amid pandemic, women in their respective families have been put under challenging situations. Those women who had domestic helpers, had to manage without help. Those who did not have domestic workers had to deal on their own, where they had to comfort all the family members by fulfilling their requests or orders. Working women too had insecurity of job. Yet they had to overcome and keep their family running and manage their household chores without any complaints. Although there has been a shift in some sections, many women The Telegraph quoted said, the average Indian husband did not feel the urge to share the wife's workload and the pandemic had only worsened the situation (<https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/calcutta/coronavirus-lockdown-role-of-the-women-of-the-house-as-seen-through-the-eye-of-the-child/cid/1771804>). Even though the men want to help women, the other family members, quashed the efforts.

It must be also noted that due to various efforts, especially as a result of assertion of women fighting for the rights, small measures of changes have happened to bring the gender balance in the society. However, it is interesting to note that despite all such efforts, lockdown has brought the gendered roles very strongly in the families, which also indicates that 'those' who had claimed themselves to be changed,

can easily switch back to their conventional 'gendered mindset', which also is an indicator for the policy makers and those who are working for the transformation, to think differently to break the patriarchal mindset.

### **Domestic Violence in Rural Spaces**

The study was conducted in rural Mangalore on domestic violence by Shiny Nesan, Gundmi Maiya and Rashmi Kundapur from Post Graduate Department of Community Medicine on Domestic Violence and consequences on married women. The study revealed that women went through 53.8 per cent of physical abuse, 21.1 per cent had experienced sexual abuse. 31.1 per cent of the respondents said they faced emotional abuse. About 82.4 per cent of respondents reported their husbands scolding them in front of friends and relatives was a major form of emotional abuse. 76.4 per cent reported that they were let down by their husbands, 68.3 per cent of the respondents said that they were teased by their husbands and 53.3 per cent of respondents reported that their husbands constantly monitored their activities. While this study tried to understand the reasons behind the domestic violence, 94.5 per cent of respondents said that their husbands felt that they were not being taken good care by their wives. 79.3 per cent of domestic violence occurred because victims argued with their in-laws and 94.4 per cent respondents said the instances of domestic violence occurred because their husbands felt that their behavior is being controlled by the victim. In the same study, when it was analyzed, why these women do not report domestic violence cases against their husbands, 68.3 per cent of respondents feared losing the family reputation if cases are registered, 52.3 per cent feared their husbands to report cases against them and 23 per cent of women felt they were willing to endure domestic violence rather reporting against their husbands (Nesan, 2018).

## **Coping Strategies**

A woman can endure domestic violence from the day of marriage to several years. Many women don't even realize that that they are actually going through the abuse. As it becomes a normal part of their life, and they begin to accept it that in a marriage, abuse is a normal aspect that one has to endure and get submissive. It is seen that if a woman begins to fight back and stand up for her rights, the abuse gets even more intense and intolerable (Talk, 2020).

It is also observed that some women resort to substance abuse to have temporary relief from the abuse (Talk, 2020). Some seek support by managing secret ways to communicate with friends and family and some approach professionals. Some work to become financially independent so that one no longer will depend on her husband. These are some coping strategies women usually adopt to seek freedom from an abusive partner.

If women have grown up witnessing the violence from their childhood and if the same thing is recurring in their marital life, many would normalize it. These women would consider this as a normal part of their lives. Many women go into denial that what is happening to them is not abnormal and they don't get to believe what is happening to them and deny that they are abused. But when we understand why a few women go into denial is because they rationalize and begin to make themselves accept that what is happening is very much normal. These abused women would keep their ordeal of abuse a secret, fearing how their partner would react if they came to know of her seeking support regarding the abuse.

For some women, their husbands are always good despite having a controlling nature because they feel that the husband does for wife's best interest (Talk, 2020). They try to see good nature in them and always trust them even after enduring abuse. Making peace with the

husband meant to these women is to change one's habits in order to make men not angry. Some come to a conclusion that whatever the husband does is right and will be right. When some women interviewed on the ways they make peace with their husbands, they had acknowledged that they had sex with their husbands in order to appease them against their will.

Studies have indicated that the coping strategies would differ to each as per their age, as per their personality traits, intensity and type of violence. Coping is a way to come out of the stressful situation, from those negatives which might affect their mental health. Coping is a multidimensional concept where there are three types of strategies. First one is task oriented where one begins to use problem solving approach. Second one is emotion oriented where one controls or regulates the kind of emotional response that may give stress to the victim. And the third one focuses on avoidance that is by avoiding the distress situation by distracting oneself, keeping oneself entertained or engaged in different tasks, etc (Koolae, 2018).

In the next chapter, analysis and experience of 159 Karnataka women respondents is presented.



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## CHAPTER

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# 3

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### **The Women of Karnataka speak out!**

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In this chapter, analysis and interpretation of women who have experienced domestic violence either directly or who had the firsthand knowledge of women who had been subjected to domestic violence is presented. The duration of the study stretches out from the first to the second lockdown period. At the outset, it is only appropriate to note that the researchers provided ‘enabling space’ for the respondents so that one could answer the questions respecting privacy and confidentiality. It was also observed that some women respondents decided to answer not as direct victims of domestic violence but shared their real experiences of abuse and violence as if the actual victim was someone else. It is also to be mentioned that some respondents, having gone through domestic violence openly shared that they were hesitant to respond. Some of them shared their stories, which are also included as part of the analysis.

**This chapter contains the following sections:**

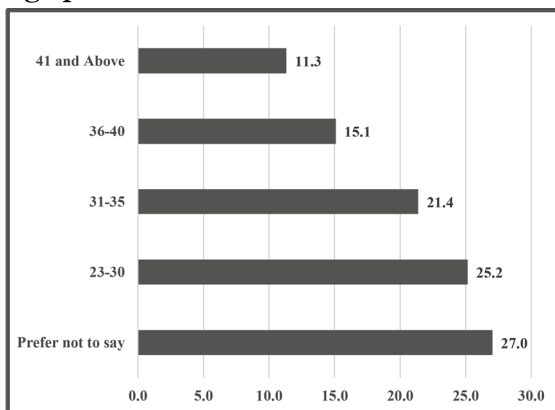
1. Profile of the respondents
2. Marital life setting
3. Nature of violence
  - a. Verbal
  - b. Physical
  - c. Emotional
  - d. Sexual
4. Coping mechanisms
  - a. At a personal level
  - b. Knowledge and use of the DV Act
  - c. Reporting
5. Efforts to mend family relationship
6. Perceptions and understanding of women in Indian context

**3.1 Profile of the respondents**

Total number of respondents was 159. Out of which, 60 (37.7%) of the respondents were from Bengaluru city or small town and 99 (62.3%) were from Bengaluru rural and villages of Karnataka. About 89.3 per cent of respondents were from Bengaluru urban and rural. Though an attempt was made to collect data from all districts of Karnataka, the final data shows that the respondents are largely from in and around Bengaluru, except for 13 from Mysore division, 3 from Belagavi and 1 from Kalburgi.

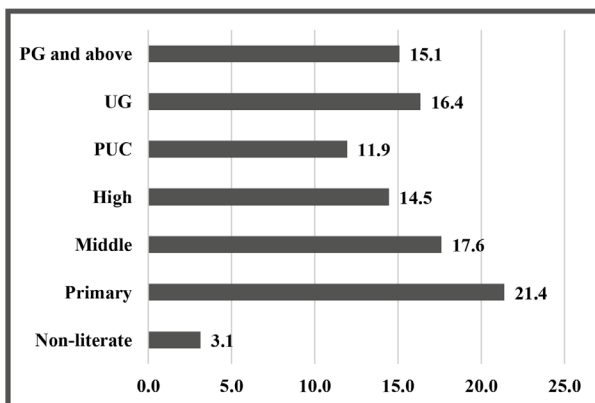
## Age and Education

### Chart 3.1 Age pattern



About 43 respondents (27%) did not want to reveal their age. Among those who openly stated their age, 74 respondents (46.6%) fell in the age group of 23 to 35. As the age increases, the number of respondents who participated in the study steadily decreased.

### Chart 3.2 Educational scenario

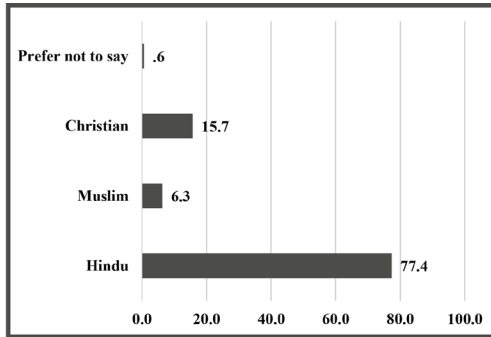


There were only 5 non-literate respondents. About 50 (31.4%) respondents had completed either graduation or post-graduation. Among these, 26 (16.4%) and 24 (15.1%) had completed graduation and post-graduation respectively. The chart also shows that nearly

92 (57.8%) respondents have completed High school and above. The data indicates that a reasonable number of respondents are educated.

## Religion and Social Category

**Chart 3.3 Religion**



**Table 3.1 Social Category**

| Social category   | N          | %            |
|-------------------|------------|--------------|
| Dalit (SC)        | 77         | 48.4         |
| Adivasi (ST)      | 21         | 13.2         |
| OBC               | 24         | 15.1         |
| General           | 33         | 20.8         |
| Prefer not to say | 4          | 2.5          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>159</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

As per Chart 3.3, a majority of the respondents 123 (77.4%) were Hindus. Christians were 25 and Muslims were 10. In terms of Social Category, as seen in Table 3.1, 77 (48.4%) were the Dalits, 33 (20.8%) belonged to General Caste, 24 were of OBC and 21 belonged to the Adivasi community. Among the Hindu respondents which was about 123, about 88 respondents belonged to Dalit and Adivasi communities. 17 were from the General Caste community and 15 were from the OBC community. This trend indicates that domestic violence has been prevalent across all religions and social categories.

## Occupation of the respondent and husband

**Table 3.2 Respondent's occupation**

| <b>Respondent's occupation</b> | <b>N</b>   | <b>%</b>     |
|--------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Housewife                      | 96         | 60.4         |
| Professional                   | 33         | 20.8         |
| Service sector                 | 4          | 2.5          |
| Self employed                  | 3          | 1.9          |
| Other                          | 23         | 14.5         |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>159</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

**Table 3.3 Husband's primary occupation**

| <b>Husband's primary occupation</b> | <b>N</b>   | <b>%</b>     |
|-------------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Own Business                        | 22         | 13.8         |
| Sales & Marketing                   | 15         | 9.4          |
| Unemployed                          | 13         | 8.2          |
| IT & Software                       | 8          | 5.0          |
| Government employee                 | 7          | 4.4          |
| BPO/KPO & Customer support          | 4          | 2.5          |
| Engineer                            | 4          | 2.5          |
| NGO/CSOs                            | 4          | 2.5          |
| Corporate professionals             | 4          | 2.5          |
| Homemaker                           | 4          | 2.5          |
| Hospital/Pharmacist                 | 2          | 1.3          |
| Bank/accounting                     | 2          | 1.3          |
| Media/advertisement                 | 1          | 0.6          |
| Legal/Law                           | 1          | 0.6          |
| Education/Professor                 | 1          | 0.6          |
| Other                               | 67         | 42.1         |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>159</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

What emerges from the data is that women are subjected to domestic violence irrespective of their occupation. While 96 (60.4%)

respondents have stated that they function as housewives, about 33 were working as professionals and 4 were in the service sector. Among the other 20, are daily wage labourers and 3 were employed before but not when the study was conducted.

With regard to the occupation of their husbands, 67 respondents who stated as 'other' refer to drivers (18), farmers (32), wage labour (11), and other workers. About 92 were in the professional, service sector, corporate or ran their own businesses. All these were monthly wage earners. Monthly salary of the husband was given as an optional question and only about 68 respondents have answered. The mean income stands around Rs. 29,200 per month. About 12 respondents stated that their husbands earn more than Rs. 50,000 per month.

This trend indicates that the economic base of the family is reasonably well off. It is also to be noted that 4 respondents stated that their husbands are working in NGOs/CSOs. Occupational profile is no bar to domestic violence.

### **3.2 Marital life setting**

This section has two parts. The first part deals with the nature of marriage, type of marriage, how long have been married, children, type of family and who makes the decision in the family. The second part deals with the respondent's relationship with their husbands.

About 148 (93.1%) of the respondents are married. The remaining 9 are either divorcees, separated or widows. About 113 (71.1%) respondents stated that their marriages were arranged marriages, while 19 stated as love marriage and 22 as love and arranged marriage.

About 106 (66.7%) got married out of the family relations and only 44 (27.7%) got married either within or extended family relations. 109 (68.6%) were living as a nuclear family and 50 (31.4%) were living in a joint family.

**Chart 3.4 Duration of married relationship**

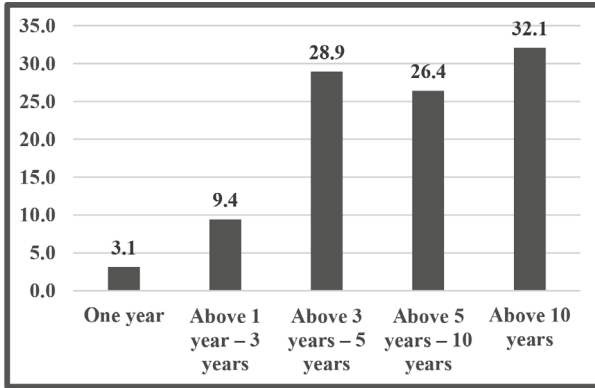
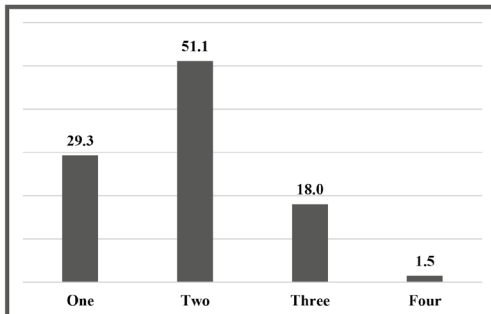


Chart 3.4 indicates that despite domestic violence, the family life or living together seems to go on. Even after 5 to 10 years of married life, domestic violence is continues. It is also to be noted that only 20 women have responded up to three years of marriage. When this trend was taken up with women experts who work on domestic violence, it was stated that many young women do not want to speak about domestic violence immediately after marriage, though many are subjected to. They live with the hope that the situation will change soon. They also feel that it is a private matter and do not want to speak out in public. Only when they cannot bear the violence anymore, they speak out. As the data reveals, the instance of domestic violence continues even after 5 to 10 years of marriage.

**Chart 3.5 Number of children**



Out of 159 respondents, 133 had children. 68 respondents had two children and 39 had one child. About 24 respondents had three children. Domestic violence continues even after bearing two or three children.

**Table 3.4 Who is the decision maker?**

| <b>Decision maker</b> | <b>N</b>   | <b>%</b>     |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|
| You                   | 6          | 3.8          |
| Husband               | 66         | 41.5         |
| Mother-in-law         | 38         | 23.9         |
| Father-in-law         | 21         | 13.2         |
| Other                 | 28         | 17.6         |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>159</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Table 3.4 brings out the interplay of many actors in a family with regard to decision making, which is often closely related to domestic violence. In a patriarchal society, while it is understandable, though not agreeable, that 66 respondents stated that their husbands are the decision makers, it is striking to note that 87 respondents have stated that the decision makers in the family were either mother-in-law, father-in-law or others. About 22 stated that both husband and wife jointly made decisions. Is there a close relationship between domestic violence and decision-making patterns?

**No woman should go through this!**

“I am Asha, a 38-year-old woman. I had undergone domestic violence for many years after my marriage. I was harassed to bring more dowry. At times, I used to talk to my parents and whatever they had given me, I brought them. Still my in-laws were not satisfied. They started torturing me to bring more dowry. My family could not afford it. Moreover, my husband and his family members demanded that I give birth only to male children. My in-laws wanted only male child. Everyone knows that it was not under my

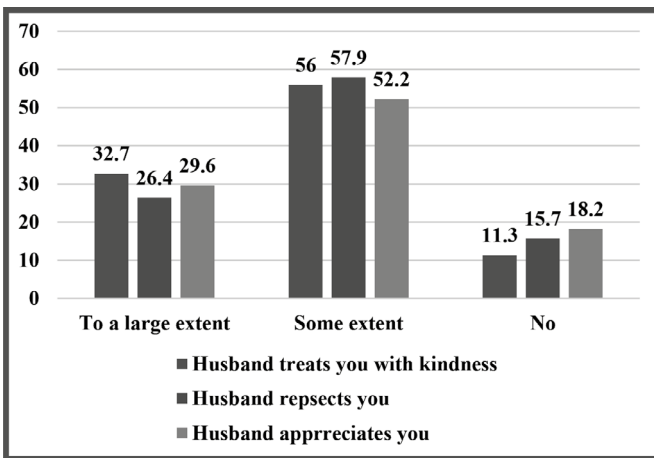


control. But every time they will tell me the same story. I became stressed and mentally ill. There was no one to understand me. My husband and in-laws always look down upon me and were ever ready to create quarrels with me. Added to this, my husband had an extra-marital relationship. This was approved by my in-laws”.

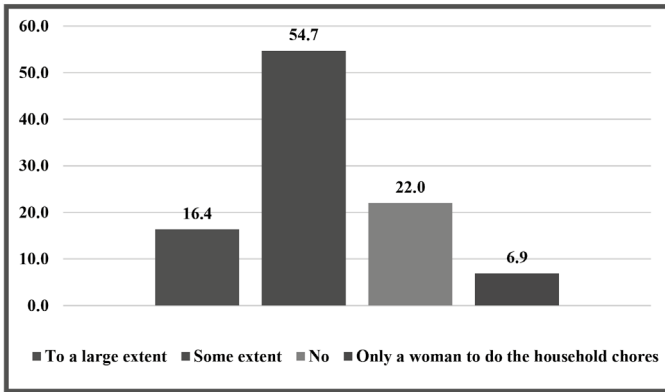
The enumerator found Asha in complete distress. She had no one to share with. She was ready to suffer but did not want to speak with anyone as it would bring shame to the family and spoil the reputation and status of the family. As she opened up, she cried out and said, “No woman should go through this”. “I am a young college student. Listening to Asha shattered me. I was taken aback that even with so much advancement people still demand dowry and make women responsible for giving birth to male children. I was asking myself whether I should get married at all”, enumerator, a Social Work student.

### 3.3 Nature of relationship between the wives (respondents) and husbands

Chart 3.6 How did the husband treat her wife?



**Chart 3.7 Husband helping wife in household chores**



Charts 3.6 and 3.7 indicate the kind of relationship between the respondents and their husbands. There is clearly a lack of respect, appreciation and treating with kindness. Husbands, generally, expect the wives to do the household chores. Such works include: Babysitting, cooking, mopping the house, laundry, buying groceries and vegetables, ironing, cleaning the house, fetching water, paying bills, engaging children academically, gardening, taking care of aged parents, taking care of pets and so on. If at all there is help, many respondents stated that their husbands buy groceries and vegetables and pay bills. A few stated that they get help in babysitting, cooking, washing dishes, ironing, engaging children academically, taking care of aged parents and taking care of pets partially. Despite owning up complete responsibility for household chores, there is lack of respect and appreciation. The burden of household chores was felt much by those respondents who were also working.

### 3.4 Nature of violence

**Chart 3.8 Extent of abuse or violence**

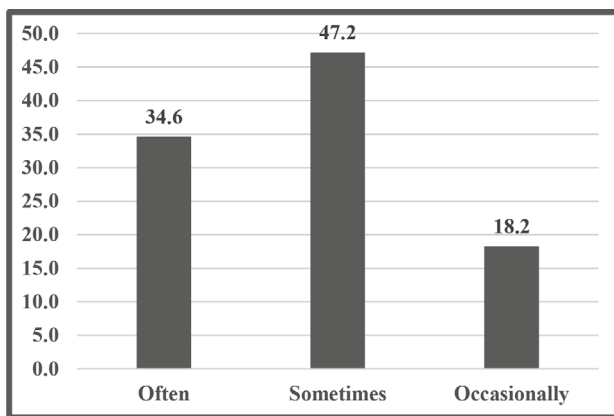


Chart 3.8 brings out the extent of abuse or violence. When extent of violence - often - is correlated with age, education, religion and social category the following conclusions can be arrived at:

- Across the age groups, a substantial number of respondents in the age of 23 and 30 have experienced abuse and violence often.
- It is also observed that highly educated women experience more abuse and violence when compared to less educated women.
- Only women respondents of Hindu and Christianity have acknowledged that they experience violence often.
- Violence experienced by the respondents of OBC community is much less than General, Dalit and Adivasi communities.

**Table 3.5 Reasons for abuse or violence**

| Reasons for abuse            | Responses |      | % of Cases |
|------------------------------|-----------|------|------------|
|                              | N         | %    |            |
| Ego conflict                 | 86        | 24.9 | 54.1       |
| Sometimes without any reason | 47        | 13.6 | 29.6       |
| Demand for dowry             | 37        | 10.7 | 23.3       |
| Insecurity                   | 33        | 9.5  | 20.8       |

|  |            |              |              |
|--|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Incompatibility                              | 22         | 6.4          | 13.8         |
| Forced isolation and stressed                | 20         | 5.8          | 12.6         |
| Fear of losing job                           | 16         | 4.6          | 10.1         |
| Husband/family members wants a/another child | 13         | 3.8          | 8.2          |
| Unsatisfied sexual relation                  | 11         | 3.2          | 6.9          |
| Uncertainty over salaries                    | 10         | 2.9          | 6.3          |
| Other  | 51         | 14.7         | 32.1         |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>346</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>217.6</b> |

The respondents were asked to choose all relevant options. Top six reasons for abuse were:

- a. Ego conflict
- b. Without any reason
- c. Demand for dowry
- d. Insecurity
- e. Incompatibility
- f. Forced isolation and stress

Under the ‘other’, some reasons expressed were: Alcohol addict (26), illegal relationship (17), my way or the highway attitude (7) and suspicious of zoom meetings, especially when the boss was a young male person (3). Among the options, if the number of respondents who stated insecurity, forced isolation and stress, fear of losing job and uncertainty over salaries are added up, the total responses are 79. This is a clear indication that Covid-19 lockdown definitely had its negative impact on domestic violence and cases of domestic violence shot up during this period.

## Verbal, Physical, Emotional and Sexual abuse

**Table 3.6 Kinds of violence**

|           | <b>Often (%)</b> | <b>Sometimes (%)</b> | <b>Occasionally (%)</b> | <b>No (%)</b> |
|-----------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| Verbal    | 35.2             | 43.4                 | 13.2                    | 8.2           |
| Physical  | 35.2             | 28.3                 | 11.9                    | 24.5          |
| Emotional | 39.6             | 41.5                 | 8.8                     | 10.1          |
| Sexual    | 12.6             | 21.4                 | 3.8                     | 62.3          |

From Table 3.6, it is observed that nearly 90 per cent of the respondents have experienced verbal and emotional abuse either often, sometimes or occasionally and 75 per cent of the respondents experienced physical violence and nearly 40 per cent experienced sexual abuse.

In the following tables, forms of verbal, physical, emotional and sexual abuse and violence are discussed. As per the definition of verbal, physical, emotional and sexual abuse given in Domestic Violence Act 2005, the forms of abuses and violence were enumerated, and the respondents were asked to choose all appropriate forms of violence that they had been subjected to.

**Table 3.7 Forms of verbal abuse**

| <b>Verbal abuse</b> | <b>Responses</b> |          | <b>% of Cases</b> |
|---------------------|------------------|----------|-------------------|
|                     | <b>N</b>         | <b>%</b> |                   |
| Yelling             | 91               | 21.1     | 62.3              |
| Blaming             | 82               | 19.0     | 56.2              |
| Insulting           | 57               | 13.2     | 39.0              |
| Abusing             | 55               | 12.7     | 37.7              |
| Name-calling        | 47               | 10.9     | 32.2              |
| Humiliating         | 39               | 9.0      | 26.7              |
| Bullying            | 31               | 7.2      | 21.2              |

|              |            |              |              |
|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Threatening  | 17         | 3.9          | 11.6         |
| Ridiculing   | 13         | 3.0          | 8.9          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>432</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>295.9</b> |

Top five verbal abuses and violence were:

- a. Yelling
- b. Blaming
- c. Insulting
- d. Abusing
- e. Name-calling

**Table 3.8 Forms of physical abuse**

| Physical abuse   | Responses  |              | % of Cases   |
|------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
|                  | N          | %            |              |
| Hitting/slapping | 84         | 29.7         | 70.0         |
| Shoving/pushing  | 40         | 14.1         | 33.3         |
| Pulling hair     | 37         | 13.1         | 30.8         |
| Kicking          | 34         | 12.0         | 28.3         |
| Throwing objects | 31         | 11.0         | 25.8         |
| Biting           | 21         | 7.4          | 17.5         |
| Punching         | 16         | 5.7          | 13.3         |
| Choking          | 15         | 5.3          | 12.5         |
| Burning          | 5          | 1.8          | 4.2          |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>283</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>235.8</b> |

Top five physical abuses and violence were:

- a. Hitting/slapping
- b. Shoving/pushing
- c. Pulling hair
- d. Kicking
- e. Throwing objects

**Table 3.9 Forms of emotional abuse**

| Emotional abuse   | Responses  |              | % of Cases   |
|-------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
|                   | N          | %            |              |
| Ignoring          | 72         | 20.2         | 50.3         |
| Isolating         | 65         | 18.2         | 45.5         |
| Humiliating       | 61         | 17.1         | 42.7         |
| Insulting/shaming | 42         | 11.8         | 29.4         |
| Destroying things | 36         | 10.1         | 25.2         |
| Ridiculing        | 30         | 8.4          | 21.0         |
| Doubting          | 27         | 7.6          | 18.9         |
| Intimidating      | 24         | 6.7          | 16.8         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>357</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>249.7</b> |

Top five emotional abuses and violence were:

- a. Ignoring
- b. Isolating
- c. Humiliating
- d. Insulting/shaming
- e. Destroying things

**Table 3.10 Forms of sexual abuse**

| Sexual abuse           | Responses |      | % of Cases |
|------------------------|-----------|------|------------|
|                        | N         | %    |            |
| Sexual harassment      | 22        | 22.9 | 36.7       |
| Forced sex             | 22        | 22.9 | 36.7       |
| Stalking               | 15        | 15.6 | 25.0       |
| Passing sexist remarks | 12        | 12.5 | 20.0       |
| Sexual abuse           | 11        | 11.5 | 18.3       |
| Groping                | 8         | 8.3  | 13.3       |
| Sexual assault         | 5         | 5.2  | 8.3        |

|                                       |           |              |              |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|
| Forced to watch pornography materials | 1         | 1.0          | 1.7          |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>96</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>160.0</b> |

Top five sexual abuses and violence are:

- a. Sexual harassment
- b. Forced sex
- c. Stalking
- d. Passing sexist remarks
- e. Sexual abuse

Who were the perpetrators of abuses and violence?

The respondents were given Husband, Father-in-law, Mother-in-law, Brother-in-law, Sister-in-law and Other family members as options and asked to choose all relevant answers.

**Table 3.11 Perpetrators of abuses and violence**

| <b>Perpetrator</b>   | <b>Verbal</b> | <b>Physical</b> | <b>Emotional</b> | <b>Sexual</b> |
|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|
| Husband              | 113           | 92              | 108              | 47            |
| Mother-in-law        | 54            | 40              | 57               | 15            |
| Father-in-law        | 16            | 8               | 14               | 1             |
| Sister-in-law        | 8             | 8               | 7                | 0             |
| Brother-in-law       | 2             | 2               | 3                | 2             |
| Other family members | 9             | 2               | 9                | 2             |

As Table 3.11 indicates, the three main perpetrators are husband, mother-in-law and father-in-law, while sister-in-law and other family members also play a part, in some cases. While the husband is responsible, it is also to be noted that the mother-in-law seems to play a destructive role. It looks like a woman has to keep in good



books both the husband and mother-in-law to protect herself from all forms of abuse and violence.

Respondents' upper most emotions when subjected to abuses and violence

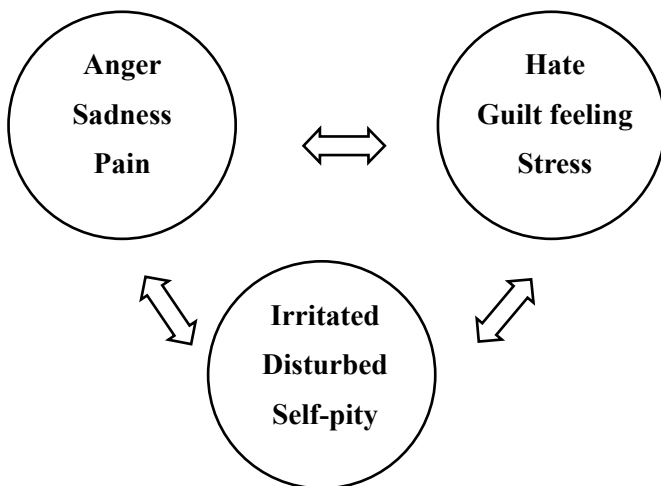
About 15 different emotions, though closely related, were articulated and the respondents were asked to choose a maximum of four upper most emotions under each type of abuse and violence.

**Table 3.12 Upper most emotions**

| <b>Emotions</b> | <b>Verbal</b> | <b>Physical</b> | <b>Emotional</b> | <b>Sexual</b> |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|
| Angry           | 96            | 77              | 97               | 40            |
| Sad             | 81            | 75              | 89               | 21            |
| Pained          | 75            | 65              | 72               | 22            |
| Hate            | 38            | 34              | 33               | 9             |
| Guilty          | 35            | 31              | 42               | 18            |
| Stressed        | 29            | 29              | 33               | 7             |
| Irritated       | 21            | 9               | 20               | 8             |
| Disturbed       | 16            | 17              | 16               | 11            |
| Self-pity       | 16            | 13              | 10               | 4             |
| Confused        | 16            | 10              | 12               | 1             |
| Offended        | 12            | 2               | 6                | 2             |
| Helpless        | 11            | 16              | 15               | 7             |
| Normal          | 11            | 9               | 12               | 0             |
| Annoyed         | 10            | 6               | 7                | 2             |
| Disgust         | 9             | 8               | 6                | 6             |

The sequence of emotions can be grouped as follows:

**Chart 3.9 Emotions grouped**



While anger is the primary dominant feeling of the respondent, sadness and pain that follow seem to have controlled the anger. In the same manner, hate had been regulated by guilt feeling and stress and irritation was controlled by disturbance and self-pity. Table 3.12 indicates that while on one hand, the respondents were angry, they could not express their anger in most cases as they also suffered from sadness and pain. Clearly, emotions were a mixed bag, often increasing the vulnerabilities of the respondents. This scenario leads us to ask what the coping mechanisms were followed by the respondents to deal with instances of abuse and violence resulting in emotional imbalances.

#### **4. Coping mechanisms**

##### **a. At a personal level**

When a woman experiences abuse or violence, natural response could be either talking to someone close to the person or approaching a

counsellor. Questions were asked to the respondents to explore how each one approached to cope with stressful and traumatic experiences.

**Chart 3.10 Felt like talking to someone**

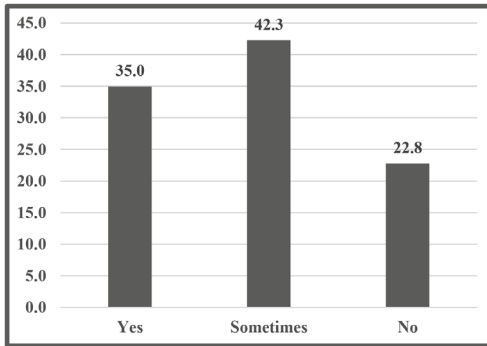


Chart 3.10 clearly shows that only 35 per cent felt like talking to someone. More than 40 per cent felt like sharing with someone only sometimes and 22.8 per cent never felt like talking to someone about the violence or abuse. It is also to be noted that only 123/159, which is about 77 per cent, answered this question.

**Am I a baanjh? Why don't we meet the doctor?**

“We live as a joint family. I, along with my husband, his younger brother, and his wife and my in-laws live together. My brother-in-law has a child. I did not have a child. My husband and my brother-in-law work as coolies. During lockdown, we were all forced to stay at home. Everyone started giving importance to co-sister-in-law and I was looked down upon as I did not have a child. Eventually, all started abusing me. Everyone started calling me baanjh (barren). I was considered useless being at home and not able to give birth to a child. I was asked to go to my parent's house. I was also threatened that if I was not ready to leave the house, I would be given divorce. There was also a talk about my husband getting married to another woman. There was no one to talk to me or listen to my pain. I was talking to my neighbours and

cursing myself for being born a barren. Somehow some villagers came to know about this, and my story was the talk of the village. I was totally shattered.

One of my neighbours suggested that I meet with a doctor. I met a doctor and the doctor asked me and my husband to come and meet him and he would treat both of us. When I shared this with my husband, he got wild and physically assaulted me as if I was trying to find fault with him. I am living in the same condition. Every day I feel that I am useless. I do not want to go to my parent's place. Once I go there the message will also spread there and people will start abusing me. I am deeply distressed without knowing what to do next”.

**Table 3.13 Comfort space providers**

| Whom did you think of? | Responses  |              | % of Cases   |
|------------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
|                        | N          | %            |              |
| Friend                 | 64         | 42.7         | 67.4         |
| Parents                | 33         | 22.0         | 34.7         |
| Neighbour              | 25         | 16.7         | 26.3         |
| Brother/sister         | 18         | 12.0         | 18.9         |
| A religious leader     | 4          | 2.7          | 4.2          |
| Other                  | 6          | 4.0          | 6.3          |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>150</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>157.9</b> |

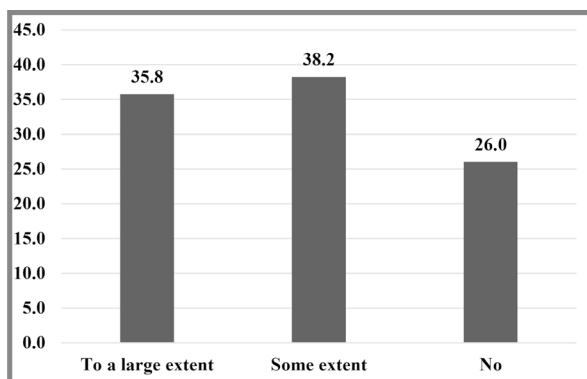
Friends seem to be the best lot to open up and talk to. Nearly 67.4 per cent of cases have stated this. Only then parents or neighbours were thought of. Hardly anyone wants to open up to an unknown person. This trend indicates that there is still a ‘taboo’ around domestic violence and the victims in general would not like to open up and seek someone who could help them in this regard.

**Table 3.14 Reasons for not talking to someone**

| Reasons for not talking to someone        | Responses  |              | % of Cases   |
|---|------------|--------------|--------------|
|   | N          | %            |              |
| Scared                                    | 45         | 23.0         | 36.6         |
| Ashamed                                   | 39         | 19.9         | 31.7         |
| I consider the matter to be very personal | 35         | 17.9         | 28.5         |
| Due to Religious/cultural norms           | 24         | 12.2         | 19.5         |
| I managed as usual                        | 23         | 11.7         | 18.7         |
| Threatened                                | 11         | 5.6          | 8.9          |
| Other                                     | 11         | 5.6          | 8.9          |
| Clueless                                  | 8          | 4.1          | 6.5          |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>196</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>159.3</b> |

Many respondents are either scared of talking about domestic violence, ashamed or consider violence as personal. There is a common belief among the feminists that personal is political or private is political. However, such thinking remains with a small number of feminists. Violence can never be considered as personal or private as it is against law and natural justice. This requires a lot of work on awareness building and providing handholding support to victims of domestic violence. 18.7 per cent of cases stated that they managed as usual.

**Chart 3.11 Did you experience trauma or stress?**



91 (74%) respondents stated that they experienced trauma or stress. 32 (26%) did not experience trauma or stress. This clearly indicates a substantial number of women consider domestic violence as ‘normal’ or ‘accepted’ fact of life. Such a mindset needs to be changed. Violence can never be considered as ‘normal’ or ‘acceptable’ behaviour. Out of 91 respondents who experienced trauma or stress, only 28 respondents approached a counsellor. About 34 of them sometimes approached the counsellor. 29 (31.9%) of respondents never approached a counsellor for assistance.

**Table 3.15 Reasons for not approaching the counsellor**

| Reasons for not approaching the counsellor | Responses  |              | % of Cases   |
|--|------------|--------------|--------------|
|  | N          | %            |              |
| I managed as usual                         | 19         | 19.0         | 30.2         |
| I consider the matter to be very personal  | 18         | 18.0         | 28.6         |
| Ashamed                                    | 17         | 17.0         | 27.0         |
| Scared                                     | 16         | 16.0         | 25.4         |
| Threatened                                 | 11         | 11.0         | 17.5         |
| Clueless                                   | 10         | 10.0         | 15.9         |
| Due to Religious/cultural norms            | 9          | 9.0          | 14.3         |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>100</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>158.7</b> |

The tendency among some women seemed to be to manage the situation as they felt ashamed and considered the matter very personal. They also felt ashamed and scared or in some cases the women were threatened.

**Divorce gave me peace of mind and heart**

Rashi was a 23-year-old woman, hailing from Kolar was forcibly married to a close relative. Her husband Shyam, her in-laws, including her mother-in-law and sister-in-law, always abused her physically. Rashi was asked to do all sorts of work. The in-laws’

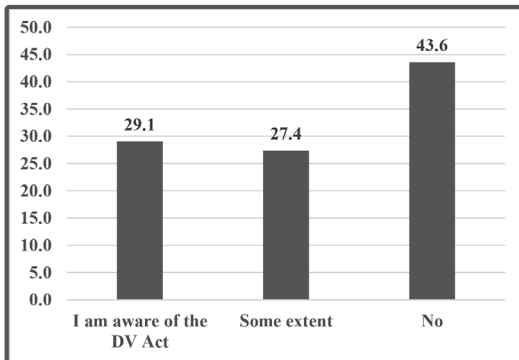
only job was to find fault with anything Rashi did. Her husband was an alcoholic. At times, Shyam used to come home under the influence of alcohol and on those days, Rashi had to go through physical and mental torture. Series of verbal taunts became a way of life for Rashi. Eventually, within a year of marriage, Rashi and Shyam got divorced and Rashi returned to her paternal house. It has been quite a while since the couple got divorced. Though the family was open for remarriage, they had not found a suitable match, as yet.

“I felt so happy that Rashi could take such a decision and that her parents accepted her. I believe the dignity of a woman is much more important than living in a hell like family life. I also realized to what extent the patriarchal value system controls family life. Women are the ultimate victims. I must do something to challenge the patriarchal ideology which destroys the dignity of women and pushes them to undergo domestic violence”, Harshita, 2nd year Social Work student.

### b. Knowledge and use of the DV Act

Yet another possible coping mechanism is to know and use the Domestic Violence Act wisely.

**Chart 3.12 Awareness of the DV Act**



Though the Domestic Violence Act was enacted in 2005, 43.6 per cent were not aware of this act and 27.4 per cent seemed to have heard of this and only 29.1 per cent were aware of this act. This is the awareness level of the Act among women. Despite being subjected to abuses and violence, most of the respondents were not aware of this act.

**Chart 3.13 Awareness, knowledge and use of the DV Act**

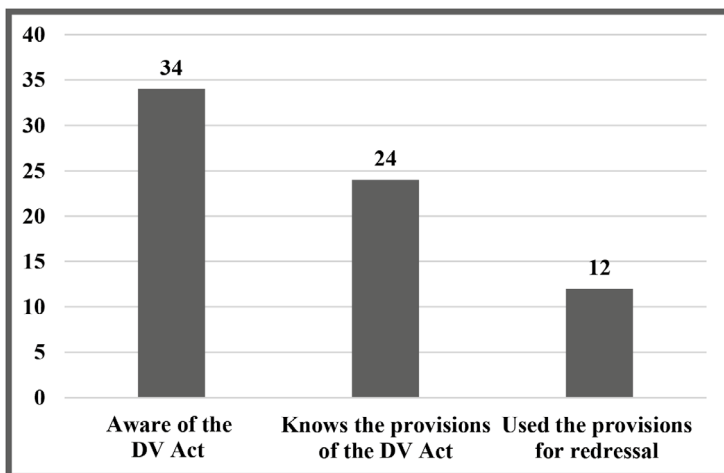


Chart 3.13 brings out clearly the despicable situation of the respondents with regard to awareness of the DV Act, knowledge of the provision of the DV Act and using them for redressal. Out of 159 respondents, only 12 (7.5%) respondents stated that they used the provisions of the DV Act for redressal. For the rest, the DV Act is either a farfetched tool or women were too scared to deal with domestic violence, as a human rights violation.

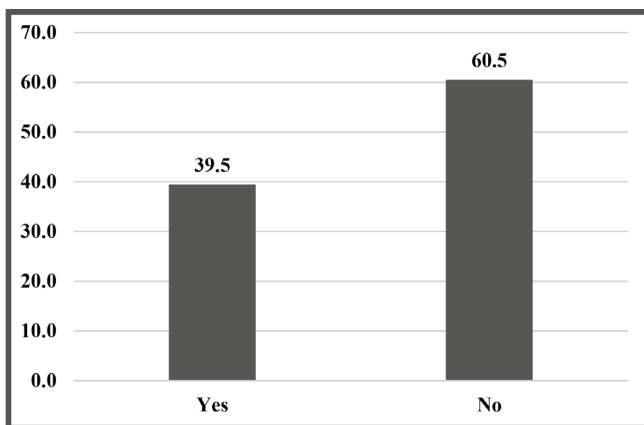
### **c. Reporting**

Considering that some respondents would have taken efforts to report about the violence to competent authority, with or without the knowledge of the DV Act, the respondents were asked whether they



made an attempt to report, whom did they report to, if they have not reported why and what other mechanism they adopted to cope with abusive behaviour of their husbands.

**Chart 3.14 Did you make an attempt to report?**



Out of 114 respondents, only 45 (39.5%) took courage to report about the abuse. Among the 45, 27 respondents went along to report, without anyone’s help. 18 of them went with the help of someone.

**Table 3.16 Whom did you report to?**

| If you attempted to report, whom did you go? | Responses |              | % of Cases   |
|--|-----------|--------------|--------------|
|  | N         | %            |              |
| A police officer                             | 13        | 21.0         | 28.9         |
| Protection Officer                           | 10        | 16.1         | 22.2         |
| NGOs   | 8         | 12.9         | 17.8         |
| Helpline number                              | 7         | 11.3         | 15.6         |
| Lawyer                                       | 5         | 8.1          | 11.1         |
| Religious institutions/bodies                | 2         | 3.2          | 4.4          |
| Other  | 17        | 27.4         | 37.8         |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>62</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>137.8</b> |

Hardly a few had gone to the police station to report about violence. Some seem to have gone to protection officers and NGOs. Under the ‘other’, 16 respondents stated that they reported to their parents. This shows that the respondents did not want to report to authorized public agencies. The domestic abuse national helpline number is 181 while women police helpline numbers are 1091 and 1291. Are these helpline numbers properly used by women who suffer from domestic violence? Apparently ‘no’. Hardly a few use this number. The table also demonstrates that the current protective mechanisms are not of much use for women. While there could be many reasons for the same, the fundamental issues need to be addressed. Some of the fundamental issues are mentioned below.

**Table 3.17 Why an attempt to report was not made?**

| If you did not make an attempt to report, why? | Responses  |              | % of Cases   |
|--|------------|--------------|--------------|
|  | N          | %            |              |
| I consider the matter to be very personal.     | 26         | 24.3         | 37.7         |
| Scared   | 21         | 19.6         | 30.4         |
| I managed as usual                             | 17         | 15.9         | 24.6         |
| Due to Religious/cultural norms                | 14         | 13.1         | 20.3         |
| Ashamed  | 13         | 12.1         | 18.8         |
| Threatened                                     | 8          | 7.5          | 11.6         |
| Clueless                                       | 4          | 3.7          | 5.8          |
| Other  | 4          | 3.7          | 5.8          |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>107</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>155.1</b> |

As long as women who suffer from domestic violence consider violence as ‘personal’ and/or if they are scared to report, we as a civilized society, have a long way to go in addressing domestic violence from a human rights perspective. Religious and cultural conditioning also play a role in subjugating women and make them more vulnerable.

As a result, many women consider domestic violence as ‘nothing unusual’ and manage to put up with abuses and violence. In fact, such attitudes of women give impunity to men, and they continue to take advantage of the vulnerability of women. Consequently, the women look for other forms to cope with violence.

**Table 3.18 Mechanisms adopted to cope with violence**

| Mechanisms adopted to cope with abusive behaviours    | Responses  |              | % of Cases   |
|---|------------|--------------|--------------|
|   | N          | %            |              |
| Discussed with family/friend                          | 92         | 43.6         | 80.7         |
| I tried to forget                                     | 29         | 13.7         | 25.4         |
| Resorted to prayer/mediation                          | 25         | 11.8         | 21.9         |
| Tried keeping self-engaged in household or own chores | 20         | 9.5          | 17.5         |
| Was engaged in teaching children                      | 14         | 6.6          | 12.3         |
| Listened to music/exercise/reading/watched movies     | 12         | 5.7          | 10.5         |
| Did not know what to do                               | 12         | 5.7          | 10.5         |
| I was in complete depression                          | 7          | 3.3          | 6.1          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>211</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>185.1</b> |

For many respondents, talking to parents and friends had been a way out. While some tried to forget, which is not an appropriate option and not possible humanly, some took recourse to prayer and meditation. Some positively distracted themselves to avoid the issue. Probably, the table is the general trend among women, who are subjected to domestic violence.

### **5. Efforts to mend family relationship**

It was also explored to find out whether efforts were made by the husband to mend the relationship at any point of time.

**Table 3.19 Did your husband ever say sorry**

| <b>Husband expressed remorse</b> | <b>N</b>   | <b>%</b>     |
|----------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes, to a large extent           | 26         | 21.5         |
| Some extent                      | 56         | 46.3         |
| No                               | 39         | 32.2         |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>121</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

**Table 3.20 Attempts to bring peace in the family**

| <b>Efforts to bring peace by the husband</b> | <b>N</b>   | <b>%</b>     |
|--|------------|--------------|
| Yes, to a large extent                       | 30         | 24.8         |
| Some extent                                  | 64         | 52.9         |
| No   | 27         | 22.3         |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>121</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

As per Table 3.19 and 3.20, out of 121 respondents, only 26 respondents stated that their husbands expressed remorse and 30 respondents said there was an effort to live in peace with the family.

**If Suresh doesn't drink, then he will be very cordial with me**

Ramya and Suresh fell in love and got married 7 years ago. It was an inter-caste marriage. Both of them are living in Kottakote, Bagepalli taluk. They have 3 kids and got half an acre of dry land. Earlier both of them used to work in a company. After marriage, Ramya moved to her husband's place, and both decided to work in a Garment factory in Doddabalapura taluk.

Whenever Ramya talked to some of her colleagues, Suresh engaged in character assassination, and talked ill of her, verbally abuses her and attributed illegal relationship. According to Ramya, Suresh was over possessive. During lockdown, Suresh suspected her, when Ramya spoke to her brother. Every time Suresh would ask Ramya,

‘Who is on the other side?’. Once, Suresh confiscated Ramya’s phone and left her without a phone for a year.

During lockdown, both could not go to work. Therefore, Suresh demanded dowry. At night, he used to beat her up. Early in the morning at 5 am, both of them used to go to in-law’s house, to demand money. There were times in-laws could not give them money. After returning to the village, Suresh used to verbally abuse Ramya. During lockdown, Suresh started playing cards. He sold Ramya’s jewelry and the Ragi crop and took the money and spent it on booze and cards. Once he was fully drunk and had beaten up Ramya so badly that she became unconscious. In the middle of the night, she was rushed to a hospital. Despite all odds, Ramya says, “If Suresh doesn’t drink, then he will be very cordial with me”.

**Table 3.21 What motivated the husband to make peace?**

| What motivated husband to mend their ways? | Responses  |              | % of Cases   |
|--|------------|--------------|--------------|
|  | N          | %            |              |
| Concern for children                       | 32         | 23.7         | 34.0         |
| Due to social/economic security            | 30         | 22.2         | 31.9         |
| Love/care for me                           | 28         | 20.7         | 29.8         |
| Guilt                                      | 23         | 17.0         | 24.5         |
| Fear of complaining                        | 22         | 16.3         | 23.4         |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>135</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>143.6</b> |

All five variables had equal impact on the husband, which pushed them to mend their ways and make peace, though such attempts were made by a handful of perpetrators/husbands. Children seemed to be a uniting factor. Economic security also plays a role, especially if the respondents are capable of earning. Guilt and fear of complaining had worked among a few. However, the question remains whether domestic violence reduced after lockdown. The answers clearly

indicate that even when lockdown was relaxed, domestic violence continued to increase.

**Table 3.22 Did abuse and violence reduce after relaxation of lockdown?**

| <b>Abuses reduced?</b>          | <b>N</b>   | <b>%</b>     |
|---------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Yes, much less                  | 36         | 29.8         |
| No, it has increased            | 21         | 17.4         |
| Continues in the same way       | 36         | 29.8         |
| Not sure                        | 19         | 15.7         |
| Day by day it is becoming worse | 9          | 7.4          |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>121</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Only about 30 per cent have stated that there was real change of heart among the husbands when lockdown was relaxed. In 70 per cent of the cases, when lockdown was relaxed, either violence continued in the same manner, or the scenario became worse. This is a clear indication that Covid-19 scenario, which necessitated isolation, intensified domestic violence which continued to increase in intensity even after lockdown.

### **An apology united the family**

During lockdown, I lived inside the house most of the time. I was also not allowed to go out. I was living with my husband and two children. My husband abused me for many days for not serving food immediately after cooking. My husband used all sorts of vulgar words, and I could not tolerate it. Not able to tolerate, one day, I decided to commit suicide. I consumed poison. Hearing the loud noise of my husband, my neighbours came and saved me and admitted me to a nearby hospital. My husband was so ruthless towards me as he suspected me of having affairs with someone. This was not true at all.

After I was discharged from the hospital, my husband began saying that he did not want her at all in his life. As we could not make peace, we decided to divide the children and I would go with one child to my parents' house. My father came to know this and came to our house. My father told my husband that if I had made any mistake, he himself would kill me. After some dialogue my husband agreed to take me, and we are a happy family now.

## 6. Perceptions and understanding of women by the respondents in Indian context

About 10 questions were asked to understand the mindset of the respondents on how they perceive the worldview of women in general. Likert scale – Strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree and strongly disagree – was used. Only 'agree' and 'strongly agree' values were added to demonstrate the general perceptions.

**Table 3.23 Perceptions and understanding of women in general by the respondents**

| S. No | Gender perception indicators                                       | Agree in % |
|-------|--|------------|
| 1     | Men have equal responsibility in caring for the children           | 93.7       |
| 2     | Women must fight for their rights                                  | 90.6       |
| 3     | Patriarchal attitudes are strongly operating in families           | 85.5       |
| 4     | Working/earning women are able to assert themselves after marriage | 84.3       |
| 5     | Women are equally strong as men, mentally                          | 79.9       |
| 6     | Women spending more time within houses are prone to more abuses    | 79.9       |

|    |   |      |
|----|---|------|
| 7  | Women refuse to be 'submissive'                                       | 67.9 |
| 8  | Woman has a right not to consent when a husband makes sexual advances | 53.5 |
| 9  | Women are physically weaker/lesser than men                           | 51.6 |
| 10 | Women must not speak or express their opinion in the family           | 42.7 |

### **I am a helpless victim**

My husband was scolding me even for trivial issues. He took pleasure in scolding me in front of others. He was shouting at me if I delayed in feeding the kid. In every meal, he would find something wrong and use it as a pretext to abuse me. He would hit me for using my mobile phone. He suspected me. If he found stains in his clothes, he would shout from the top of his voice. Even if I was talking to neighbours, he would abuse me. This was my lockdown life. He took pleasure in ridiculing and abusing me verbally and physically. Despite all these abuses and violence, I have chosen to live with him as I have no other way to go. I cannot seek help from anyone. If the news goes out, he will kill me.

The existing gender gap could be easily understood by these indicators. The 10<sup>th</sup> indicator that women must not speak or express their opinion in the family, agreed by 42.7 per cent of women, is a clear indication of the existing mindset of women. Women believe that they are weaker than men (51.6%) and women has a right not to consent when a husband makes sexual advances as agreed by only 53.5 per cent and women refused to be submissive as agreed by only 67.9 per cent demonstrate amply that patriarchal value system is strongly operative in families (85.5%). Two indicators – men have equal responsibility in caring for children and women must fight for their rights are agreed by more than 90 per cent of respondents. These are positive signs.



However, other indicators clearly show how half the sky is struggling in realizing gender equality. Reduction in domestic violence scenarios could be one of the key indicators to determine the progress and development of women with regard to gender equality.

In the following chapter, conclusions and recommendations are presented.

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## CHAPTER

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# 4

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### Conclusions and Recommendations

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A number of lessons could be learnt from the analysis and interpretation of the data provided by 159 respondents. Though these respondents were from Karnataka and most of them were residing in and around Bengaluru, the conclusions could be relevant to women of other states as well. The following are the major conclusions.

#### **1. Domestic Violence is personal - Talking about it is a taboo**

Despite emergence of feminist movements and assertion of women, a number of women are still shy of talking about domestic violence or report to concerned authorities and willing to go through pain, trauma and stress for long. The dominant thought pattern is ‘Domestic violence is personal’. Feminist movements have stated that with regard to violence, personal is political for a few decades. Still, this thought has not percolated. Even during data collection and interviews, many women expressed apprehensions, and some declined

to speak about domestic violence. Some women also feared backlash, if they had shared with others the abuses and violence they had gone through. There is a sense of fear, shame, stress and vulnerability among women. The cumulative effect is that talking about domestic violence is considered taboo by many women. The implementation of the DV Act 2005, supposedly to empower the women, has not made a substantial impact.

## **2. No correlation between education/religion/caste/occupation and domestic violence**

Does education, religion, social category or occupation play a role in one way or another with regard to domestic violence? The data shows that there is no difference, though it may not be in the same degree and intensity. Educational classification shows that domestic violence is evenly spread across respondents from primary to post-graduation. The study reveals that neither religions nor social categories have an impact on domestic violence. The occupational scenario has been fast changing. More and more women are getting into service sectors and professional employment positions earning handsome amounts. Some of them are independently earning their income and run the families. From the analysis, it is evident that whether the husband is working, or husband and wife are working, whether the monthly income is Rs. 20,000 or Rs. 50,000, domestic violence is a common phenomenon.

## **3. Living in hope that domestic violence will reduce**

Living in hope that domestic violence will end someday in itself may be desirable, but not after a reasonable period. The study shows that many women have not taken domestic violence seriously. They were willing to go through pain and suffering with a hope that a miracle

would happen and one day the partner will change. Some of them continue to live with the same hope even after 10 years of marriage. A few have given up hope after long years of abuse and violence and they have learnt to live with it. They only hope that other women will be more proactive.

#### **4. Multiple decision-making power centres**

The study also reveals that one of the reasons for continued domestic violence is the influence of in-laws and in most of the cases, it has been the influence of mother-in-law, who ultimately made decisions in the family. The respondents were ready to manage and adjust with their husbands and accept the decisions of their husbands. But they found it difficult to deal with the authority of their mother-in-law. A few respondents also stated the influence of their father-in-law.

#### **5. Lack of appreciation and ego conflict**

One of the root causes of domestic violence has been lack of appreciation. The works done by the respondents to run the family are not valued. Some of the respondents have been working to earn a living as well as managing their families. In most cases, despite multiple works being carried out by the respondents, their contribution has not been duly recognised. Yet another reason identified by the respondents for domestic violence has been ego conflict. If a woman was able to earn either equally or a little more than her husband or perceived to be more intelligent than men, domestic violence was prevalent in such families. Men were not able to accept the intelligence, talent, skill and capacities of women. Some of them feared that women might dominate, and the man might lose control over her. This resulted in ego conflict, as stated by more than 50 per cent of the respondents.

## **6. Verbal, physical, and emotional abuse and violence are rampant**

Among the four types of abuse and violence, verbal, physical and emotional were very common. Usually, the violence starts with verbal abuse and ends up in physical abuse, especially hitting and slapping. Along with physical abuse, ignoring, isolating and humiliation are different forms of emotional abuse inflicted upon the women. Sexual harassment and forced sex have been experienced by some respondents, though many respondents felt shy to talk about this aspect during interviews. As much as the respondents felt comfortable to share about verbal, physical and emotional abuses, many felt totally uncomfortable to share about sexual abuse. Sexual abuse data also must be considered in this background.

## **7. Emotional dilemmas – Managing anger and a sense of shame**

A feeling of anger has been dominant among many respondents when they were abused. Along with anger, the respondents also felt sadness, pain and a sense of shame. The feelings have always been a mixed bag. Guilt feeling, stress and self-pity were also common among women respondents. As the respondents did not know how to deal with their emotions, they seemed to have learnt to live with abuse and the common phrase used is ‘managing’ as usual.

## **8. Knowledge of the DV Act is minimum and legal action is a nightmare**

Many women were not aware of the DV Act. Even if they have heard of it, they were not clear about the use of the DV Act. As domestic violence has been considered as ‘personal’, many respondents could not imagine initiating legal action. Some also feared initiating legal action could bring wrath of both families on them. Going for

counselling or guidance was also not considered as a serious option. Instead, many respondents stopped with talking to some persons in a closed circle, primarily to vent out their feelings and emotions and not getting into any constructive response. During the interview, a few women expressed this vulnerability and stated such a situation gave immunity to men.

## **9. Children bring the parents together**

It was heartening to see that the presence of children brought families together. In some cases, the men relented, gave up their ego and changed their ways at the insistence of the children. Children were the peacemakers.

## **10. Abuse and violence which peaked during Covid-19 lockdown continues to be on the rise**

Evidence shows that there has been substantial increase in domestic violence during pandemic. Though lockdown is literally over, instances of domestic violence continue to be on the rise. Over 50 per cent of the respondents have stated that domestic violence has increased after lockdown or continues in the same way, or the situation has become worse. Despite various efforts in the past, the gains made have been wiped off during lockdown. It is time to reimagine and strategize our response to domestic violence.

## **11. Patriarchy is a violent ideology**

Women respondents during interviews agreed that patriarchy is a violent ideology which is very much operative in all families. It shatters the mental and emotional wellbeing of women. It is time to build feminist strategies for strengthening women's resilience.

Domestic violence is a human rights issue. It cannot be considered as 'personal'. Women power (Shakti) is creative, caring, and nurturing and in consonance with nature. This must be nurtured. There are also many unsung heroines who, despite all odds, stood strong against many adversities to protect their dignity, rights and entitlements. Such persons could be considered models.

## **Recommendations**

Though this study is limited to women of Karnataka, a few general recommendations are presented here.

### **1. Acknowledging Domestic Violence is rampant**

The study reveals how widespread domestic violence is across age, educational status, religions, social categories and income variation. State and non-state actors, such as – legislature, government bodies, CSOs, feminist organisations, judiciary, police, policy makers etc must acknowledge that domestic violence is rampant. In most cases, such violence is invisible, unnoticed and unreported. Hardly, a few cases are reported and in a very few cases, actions are initiated. There is also a fear among women in reporting domestic violence cases. Only when there is due acknowledgment of the magnitude of the violence, appropriate strategies at different levels could be initiated. Acknowledgement of problems will help women to openly come forward and talk about the problems.

### **2. Gender awareness building**

There is a wrong notion that domestic violence is personal. This thinking must be changed. Domestic violence cannot be termed as 'personal' and brushed aside. Any violence is an attack on the dignity of the person and all violence is political. Awareness building

strategies must be developed around this concept so that patriarchal myths about domestic violence can be challenged constructively and domestic violence is seen from a human rights perspective. It is not only the education of women, but also of men that is the need of the hour. In fact, gender awareness must be strongly geared towards changing the mindset of men. Informational, Educational and Communication (IEC) materials such as posters, flyers, leaflets, brochures, booklets, social media messages, short video clippings, radio and TV ads could be prepared to break the shackles of male chauvinist ideological myths, stories and labeling. These materials could be used in the public domain to promote public education.

### **3. Strengthening feminist strategies in the post-Covid scenario**

While the global community had been affected by Covid-19, it had multiple negative impacts on women and girl children. It would take many years to return to normalcy. There had been a drastic increase in the instances of domestic violence and vulnerabilities of women. Studies show an increased number of broken marriages, girls dropping out from schools, women losing employment, alcoholism of men impacting families etc. If these issues are not addressed in a timely manner, undoubtedly, there will be a huge increase in domestic violence in future. It is important that appropriate feminist strategies are developed to rebuild the resilience of women.

### **4. Spreading knowledge of the DV Act and strengthening its implementation**

It is ironic that the DV Act remains a paper tiger. The state has the responsibility to spread awareness among the public of the importance of the DV Act and build systems and mechanisms with sufficient



funding support, so that the importance of the DV Act is realized by all concerned persons. There is also still fear among women in reporting domestic violence instances. While some suffer under family and social pressure, many women do not have confidence in the available systems and mechanisms. Going to the police station is considered ‘undesirable’. Women do not have faith in the justice system as it is expensive and time consuming. Instead, many women are ready to put up with their pain and suffering. This calls for serious introspection of the implementation of the DV Act and appropriate amendments must be initiated.

## **5. Counselling services at doorstep**

It is important to reach out to women in distress due to domestic violence. Many seem to be silently going through pain, stress and trauma. They do not know where to go in such a scenario. Talking with family members, friends or neighbours seem to be the final way out, who are helpless and, in most cases, not able to support the women in distress. As women are also scared to come out of home, Counselling service at the doorstep could be initiated by the State and CSOs as a joint venture. Any distress call received at the district level could be diverted to a panel of counselling experts block wise, who could reach out to the victims, by meeting the women and the family in their houses. Such action will boost the confidence of women. Counselling services could include range of actions varying from dialogue to initiating legal actions depending upon the nature of the case.

## **6. Gender equality and equity – Need for change of mindset**

Ultimately, it must be recognized that patriarchy is a violence ideology, and it has no place in a civilized world. Currently, patriarchal ideology is operative from family to top echelons of society, including among

the legislature, political parties, judiciary, police, media etc. Domestic violence also must be seen in the broader context of violence against women and girls. Gender equality and equity perspective must be nurtured from childhood, especially introducing appropriate subjects at the school level as part of the curriculum. It is a long-drawn struggle and actions must begin now.

## **Conclusion**

This study on Domestic Violence was carried out in the context of Covid-19 lockdown, as many instances of domestic violence had been reported. Though it is a small sample study, it brings out how the women have been subjected to domestic violence, especially during and after lockdown. It contains valuable lessons for the future. The researchers earnestly hope that state and non-state actors would take serious note of growing domestic violence and take all measures to address this human rights violation.

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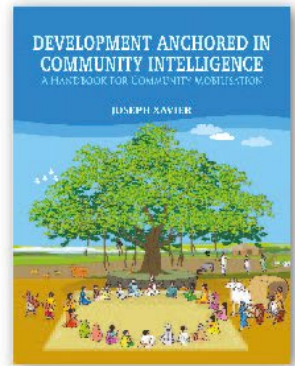
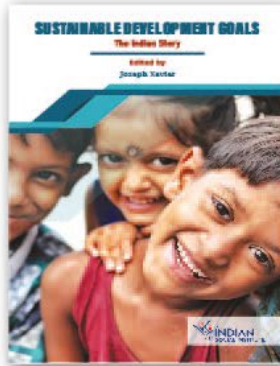
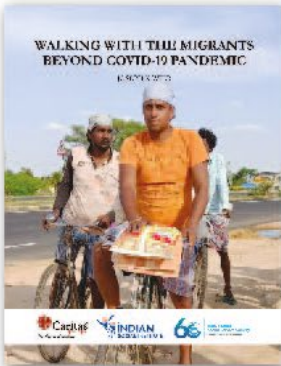
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