
PANDEMIC AS A CAUSE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

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Abstract: Crises and emergencies are unexpected and unpredictable, and usually have multiple affects on the society, especially those of global character such as the current pandemic given as a result of the Covid-19 virus. In addition to the large number of human losses, the pandemic is having a huge impact not only in the economy of many households, but also in their way of living, in the family relations, intercommunication between the people and their mental health, beside others.

This study presents the treatment of domestic violence, respectively violence against women in the Republic of Northern Macedonia during the period of the pandemic. How can we define the violence? Violence as an act of violation of human rights, in this case of women's rights is a phenomenon that cripples our society in all its spheres. Different forms of violence against women are a very widespread element in our society, but it became more apparent during the period of pandemic and the following isolation, which were established as a preventive measure. In this paper we will present the types of domestic violence, such as psychological violence, physical violence and sexual violence.

Although with the spread of the pandemic Covid -19 the terms isolation and quarantine became very popular, isolation aims to separate healthy people from those who are infected, thus restricting their movement for a certain period of time in order to restrict the spread of the disease.

This study refers to the data taken from the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia on violence and complaints of our citizens (mostly women) during January-March 2020. For data evaluation have been used the following methods like: the method of explicit analysis, analog induction, concretization, synthesis, descriptive and comparative methods.

These methods have been used to validate and analyse the on the increase of violence as a result of pandemic and quarantine. From the data can be concluded that during the period of the pandemic violence has significantly increased for different family members such as children and spouse, but the numbers for violence against women show a clear increase of violence during the pandemic and following isolation.

At the end of the paper a discussion about the measures taken by the Republic of North Macedonia on the occasion of the presentation of violence against women in pandemic times will be given.

Keywords: violence, pandemic, quarantine, women, victims.

1. INTRODUCTION

Pandemic, quarantine and isolation are not synonymous with each other but all three of these situations cause the same effect in society. A pandemic occurs when a virus spreads around the world and most people do not have the immunity to cope (WHO, 2020).

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the word quarantine refers to a period of time during which an animal or person who may have a disease is kept away from other people or animals so that the disease does not spread (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/quarantine>, 2020).

Historically quarantine was first introduced during the 14th century in an effort to protect coastal cities from plague epidemics in Venice (CDC, 2012).

Isolation aims to separate healthy people from those who are now infected, thus restricting their movement for a certain period of time.

Although quarantine and isolation are meant to protect and secure human life they in some cases pose a risk to their lives especially to the lives of women.

The findings of various sociological and psychological studies confirm that women all over the world are at considerable physical, psychological and sexual risk from their partner. Through analysis, description and

comparison in this paper will be presented violence from another prism, i.e. violence in quarantine conditions which severely harms the female sex both physically and psychologically and sexually.

1.1. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN OUR COUNTRY

Violence against women is a complex social problem, and our knowledge of how to address it is evolving. Addressing the problem requires coordinated action that engages different communities and sectors, including health, education, and justice, to challenge inequalities and social norms that cause violence, and to provide emotional and physical support to victims (Krantz, 2005).

So, violence as an act of violation of human rights, in this case of women's rights is a phenomenon that cripples our society in all its spheres. The hardest part of using violence against women is when violence is used within the family because the family counts as the membrane of every individual to which the individual seeks protection and salvation. Violence can be varied and endless.

1.2. PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Physical violence is often the most obvious type of violence, which can be understood as "the use of physical force against another person or group, which causes physical, sexual or psychological harm" (Conditions of Work and Equality Department, 2016).

Physical violence has often been used as a synonym for "force", but this does not mean that it is inalienable for a person who possesses force to use violence. Force used intentionally to mutilate another person's life means physical violence.

Physical violence can be manifested through various forms such as: pushing, slapping, hitting with heavy objects, hair pulling, burning, attempting to strangle, cutting with a knife, hitting the head against a wall, kicking... etc.

1.3. PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

Psychological violence represents the set of minor incidents that occur against a person. This violence can manifest itself in various forms such as intimidation, humiliation, humiliation or insult in front of others, obstruction of work outside the home and harassment, creating a sense of inferiority to another, creating a sense of dependence, etc.

Victims of psychological violence show that they often suffer from a number of psychological consequences (FRA, 2015).

While quarantine and self-isolation is often the necessary public health response to pandemics, they also come at a significant cost to the population for both physical and mental health (Peterman, Potts, O'Donnell, Thompson, Shah, Oertelt-Prigione, van Gelder, 2020).

The use of psychological violence is more prevalent indoors as men tend to express feelings of appropriation towards women and this situation causes severe consequences to the female gender leading them towards depression and self-closure.

1.4. SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act or any other act directed against the sexuality of a person using coercion, by any person, regardless of their relationship with the victim, in any circumstance (WHO, 2014).

Sexual violence refers to the partner in the marital relationship, the partner in the extramarital affair as well as the ex-partner who can cause sexual harm to the victim who in 99% of cases is an unprotected woman.

Sexual violence is manifested through sexual abuse, seeking sexual favors without the desire of the partner, coercion for sexual intercourse, sexual abuse during the menstrual cycle, experimenting with various forms of sexual intercourse without the readiness of the partner, etc.

2. SUBMISSION OF VIOLENCE IN QUARANTINE CONDITIONS

Violence used indoors is otherwise known as "domestic violence", there are many factors that lead to its occurrence. At the time during which this research was conducted (January-March-2020) in addition to the permanent factors that affect the manifestation of internal violence, a factor different from the previous ones was presented, the quarantine factor.

The general statistics of domestic abuse faced by women claim that since the beginning of the quarantine, the number of women raped inside the home has significantly increased.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, it is observed that women are more likely to be victims of domestic violence, even by being raped by a father, brother, husband or ex-husband. During 2019, in the period January-March, 207 criminal offenses were registered in our country, of which in 197 cases the perpetrator was male and only in 10 cases the perpetrator belonged to a female.

Table No.1: Includes statistical data on domestic violence registered in the Republic of Northern Macedonia during the period January - March 2019-2020 (<https://www.mvr.gov.mk>).

Ministry of Interior - Republic of North Macedonia	Criminal Offenses		Total - perpetrators		Male - perpetrators		Female - perpetrators		Total Victims		Males - Victims		Females - Victims	
	Jan-Mar 20 20	Jan-Mar 20 19	Jan-Mar 20 20	Jan-Mar 20 19	Jan-Mar 20 20	Jan-Mar 20 19	Jan-Mar 20 20	Jan-Mar 20 19	Jan-Mar 20 20	Jan-Mar 20 19	Jan-Mar 20 20	Jan-Mar 20 19	Jan-Mar 20 20	Jan-Mar 20 19
Sector for Internal Affairs - Skopje	75	55	78	55	70	51	8	4	79	55	9	14	70	41
Sector for Internal Affairs - Bitola	38	38	38	38	37	37	1	1	44	42	9	9	35	33
Sector for Internal Affairs - Veles	18	17	18	19	17	19	1	0	18	21	5	8	13	13
Sector for Internal Affairs - Kumanovo	25	28	25	28	24	27	1	1	26	28	5	1	21	27
Sector for Internal Affairs - Ohrid	21	12	21	12	16	11	5	1	21	12	7	1	14	11
Sector for Internal Affairs - Strumica	14	19	14	19	13	17	1	2	14	19	3	5	11	14
Sector for Internal Affairs - Tetovo	26	13	26	14	22	13	4	1	26	14	4	4	22	10
Sector for Internal Affairs - Stip	24	25	25	22	23	22	2	0	26	26	5	10	21	16
Total	241	207	245	207	222	197	23	10	254	217	47	52	207	165

In 2020, during the period January-March, 241 criminal offenses were committed, which means that there is a large increase in the number of offenses committed during this quarter. The increase in the number of criminal offenses turns out to be 36 cases different from last year where the course of life has been in normal conditions. Also, regarding the perpetrator of the criminal offense, in 2020 he belongs to the male gender with 222 cases and only 23 cases are identified by female perpetrators.

The first table also includes the number of victims who have emerged as a result of domestic violence. The total number of victims during the first 3 months of 2019 is 217 and during 2020 this number increases to 254.

Domestic violence is not uniform it can develop from one person to another thus affecting almost every member of the family. In the last columns of table 1 are presented cases of victims on the basis of gender.

In 2019 during the period January-March there were 52 male victims, while 165 female victims, but these data change during 2020 for the same period where in 2019 there were 47 male victims and 207 female victims.

The increase in the number of female victims victimized during the first quarter of 2020 leads to dilemmas and factors that contributed to the increase of domestic violence.

At the beginning of 2020, the world faced the spread of the COVID-19 virus, which also affected the Republic of North Macedonia. As a result of the spread of COVID-19, the state was forced to take protective measures for the citizens, thus declaring a state of emergency and quarantine for two consecutive months.

"Stay at home" is the motto supported by the initiative to restrict the free movement of citizens in the country.

Although quarantine and isolation have been adopted to protect physical health from infectious diseases, it is essential to consider the mental health implications for those individuals experiencing such limitations (Hossain, 2020).

Life before pandemics has flowed in a very dynamic way, family members met in the morning while leaving the house facing their obligations and in the evening they met while having dinner together. This was a pace at which they were accustomed to function. But in quarantine everything changed. This has led to an increase in the level of communication of members within the family, which does not always bring positive results.

Victimization by partners or other persons make victims suffer from a loss of self-confidence letting them feel vulnerable and anxious (Publications Office of the European Union, 2015).

Domestic violence does not only occur in the man-woman relationship it occurs between different family members. Table 2 contains statistical data on the relations of victims with perpetrators of criminal offenses which have caused great physical and psychological damage to victims (<https://www.mvr.gov.mk>).

Based on Table 2, most of victims are in a relationship or marital relationship. During 2019, 91 women were abused by their husbands, but the number of abused women by their husbands increased during 2020, thus during the period January-March 102 women were abused. Violence against women takes a different form when we talk about different family relationships, as shown in the data in Table 2 she is not abused at her parent's house as she is at her husband's. There are only 5 cases identified during 2019 and 6 cases during 2020.

Table No.2: Relationships of victims with perpetrators of criminal offenses related to domestic violence in the period Jan-Mar 2020/2019 (<https://www.mvr.gov.mk>).

Ministry of interior - Republic of North Macedonia	Husband		Wife		Son		Daughter		Mother		Father	
	Jan-Mar 2020	Jan-Mar 2019	Jan-Mar 2020	Jan-Mar 2019	Jan-Mar 2020	Jan-Mar 2019	Jan-Mar 2020	Jan-Mar 2019	Jan-Mar 2020	Jan-Mar 2019	Jan-Mar 2020	Jan-Mar 2019
Sector for Internal Affairs - Skopje	3	2	35	16	2	0	1	1	4	4	2	8
Sector for Internal Affairs - Bitola	0	1	14	23	2	1	1	3	6	3	3	5
Sector for Internal Affairs - Veles	0	0	4	9	0	3	1	0	0	1	3	5
Sector for Internal Affairs - Kumanovo	0	0	9	19	1	0	1	0	5	5	2	0
Sector for Internal Affairs - Ohrid	3	1	6	5	2	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
Sector for Internal Affairs - Strumica	1	0	7	8	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	3
Sector for Internal Affairs - Tetovo	0	0	13	6	0	1	1	0	2	1	1	2
Sector for Internal Affairs - Stip	0	0	14	5	0	4	1	1	3	6	3	7
Total	7	4	102	91	7	9	6	5	21	26	16	30

Cases of violence identified by ex-spouses (male) against their ex-spouses (female), where during the first quarter of 2019 were identified 6 cases of this type of violence, while during the first quarter of 2020 these cases have increased and led to 10 cases of violence by ex-spouses.

In the last columns of Table 3 there is another type of violence against women related to the violence created by extramarital affairs. During 2019, 10 cases of this type of violence were identified, while in 2020 this number doubled, leading to 20 cases of women being raped as a result of extramarital affairs.

Table No.3: Relationships of victims with perpetrators of criminal offenses related to domestic violence in the period Jan-Mar 2020/2019 (<https://www.mvr.gov.mk>).

Ministry of interior - Republic of North Macedonia	Ex-husband		Ex-wife		Man in extramarital affair		Woman in extramarital affair		Others	
	Jan-Mar 2020	Jan-Mar 2019	Jan-Mar 2020	Jan-Mar 2019	Jan-Mar 2020	Jan-Mar 2019	Jan-Mar 2020	Jan-Mar 2019	Jan-Mar 2020	Jan-Mar 2019
Sector for Internal Affairs - Skopje	0	1	1	4	0	0	5	0	26	19
Sector for Internal Affairs - Bitola	0	0	3	1	0	0	4	2	11	3
Sector for Internal Affairs - Veles	0	0	1	1	0	0	4	1	5	1
Sector for Internal Affairs - Kumanovo	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	5	2
Sector for Internal Affairs - Ohrid	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	7	2
Sector for Internal Affairs - Strumica	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	2	0	2
Sector for Internal Affairs - Tetovo	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	6	3
Sector for Internal Affairs - Stip	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	1
Total	1	2	10	6	0	1	20	10	64	33

Using the comparison method and the data of the two tables listed above, we can conclude that there is an increase in cases of violence during the first quarter of 2020. The increase in the number of women raped in this quarter has been influenced by the creation of the situation which came as a result of the spread of the COVID-19 virus, as this situation led to the isolation of the population, loss of individual freedom, loss of job, loss of privacy, loss of daily routine, loss of security, loss of contact with the outside world, increasing stress, increasing doubt first in oneself then in others, increasing fear, insecurity... as well as creating many other feelings which unfortunately are manifested with violence and that of violence against women and which in every situation and circumstance has been the victim of the masculine world.

3. MEASURES TAKEN BY THE STATE TO PROTECT ABUSED WOMEN DURING THE PANDEMIC

The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, in a state of emergency, ensures full coordination for the prevention of the entry and spread of COVID 19 and reaffirms its commitment to take all necessary measures to protect victims of domestic violence.

For this purpose, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, in cooperation with the OSCE Mission in Skopje, prepared a campaign for the prevention and protection from domestic violence in a COVID 19 emergency through which victims of domestic violence and public are widely informed to know all forms of domestic violence, where to go and apply for help and what are the existing services for the protection of victims of domestic violence.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Policy encourages victims of domestic violence, but also all citizens who testify or have knowledge of violence, to report it to the SOS lines, the nearest police station, center for social work, health care, so that experts act and protect them from the perpetrator of domestic violence (www.mtsp.gov.mk).

4. CONCLUSION

The outbreak of the pandemic that consequently led to the creation of quarantine brought about great changes in society thus causing reactions of the most varied, including internal violence.

From the above data it is clear that the case of domestic violence which is manifested by males against females as a result of quarantine has increased, thus significantly increasing the number of cases that have been reported by abused women to the responsible authorities.

Domestic violence causes serious consequences to abused persons as well as other family members, thus damaging the essence of society that is the family, therefore the state takes adequate measures to minimize the factors that cause it.

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