

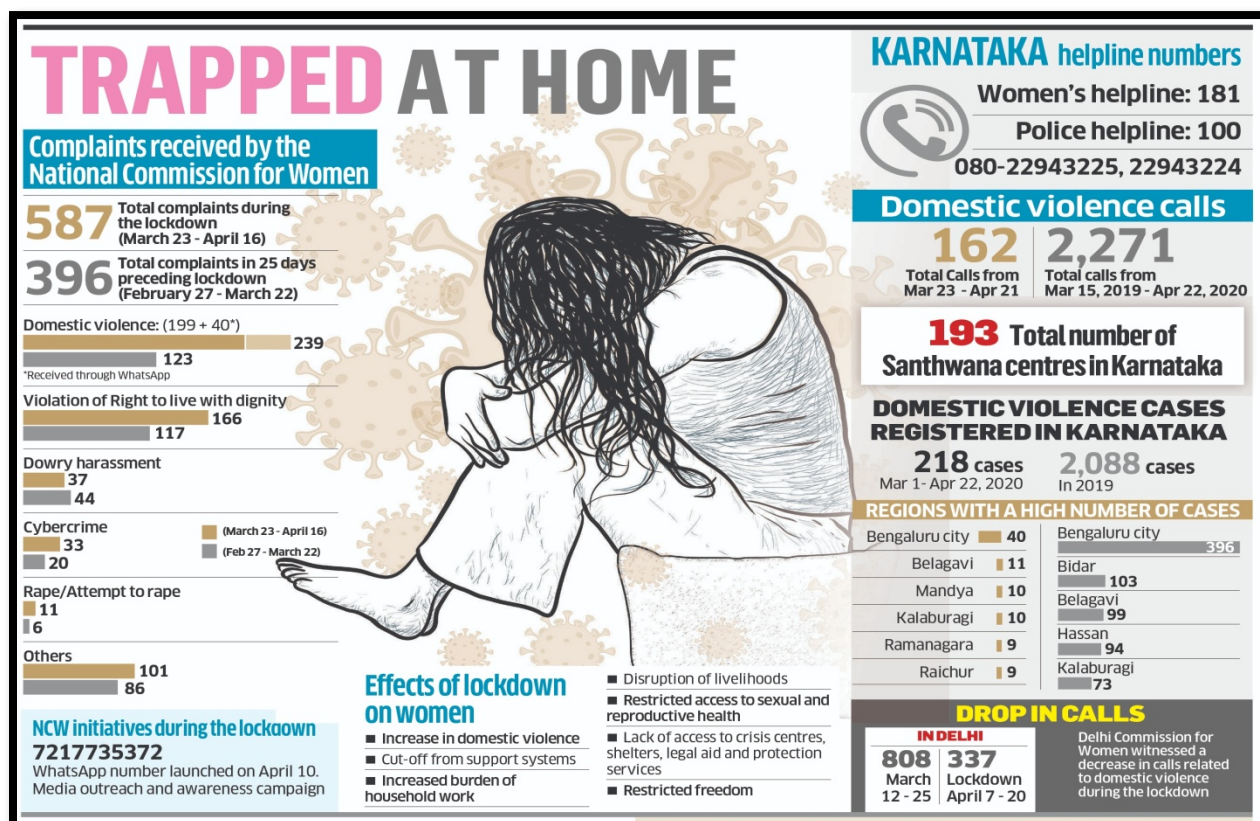
COURSE-VI (1.4.6)

GENDER SCHOOL AND SOCIETY

Q. Discuss with illustration the impact of covid-19 on the rise of sexual and gender based violence.


Ans.

Introduction: Sexual and Gender-based violence increases during every type of emergency – whether economic crises, conflict or disease outbreaks. Pre-existing toxic social norms and gender inequalities, economic and social stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with restricted movement and social isolation measures, have led to an exponential increase in sexual and gender based violence. Many women are in ‘lockdown’ at home with their abusers while being cut off from normal support services.



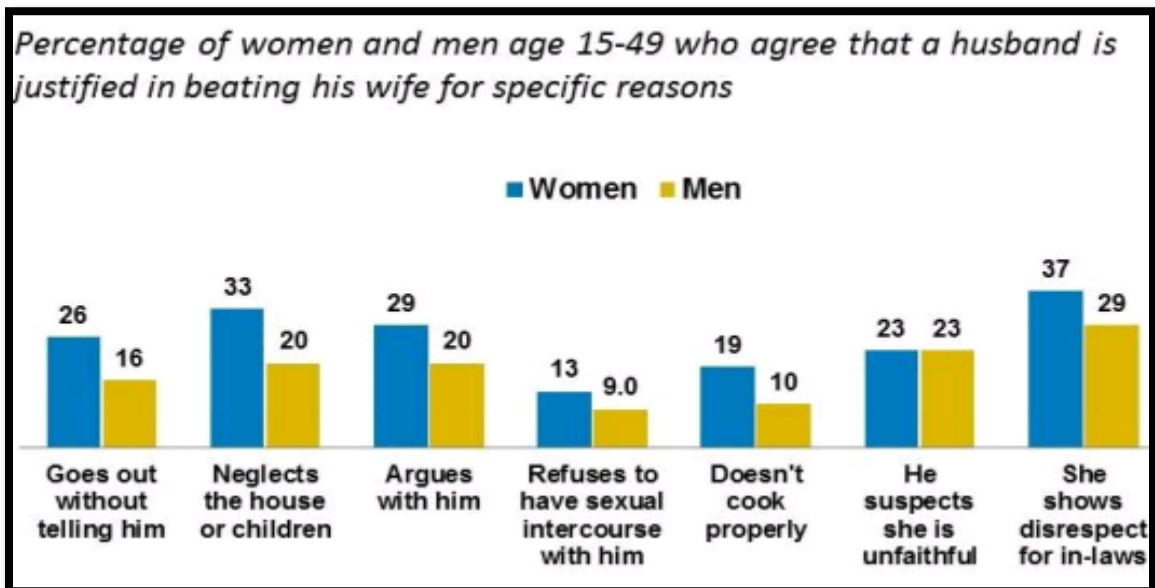
Source: www.deccanherald.com

Impacts of COVID-19 on the rise of sexual and gender based violence:


 **Domestic violence:** As the communities around the world are forced to stay at home, cases of domestic violence has taken a peak. The targeted groups here are mainly women and children. Not only that, aged population are also highly affected by this.

Example, Elder Abuse: Due to pandemic, domestic helpers are not coming at home. As a result, older people are exploited to perform the entire task forcibly. Same is the case for women and children both physically and sexually.

Also, stress due to loss of job, anxiety, depression and staying at home increases consumption of intoxicated drink and food resulting into domestic violence of women and children.




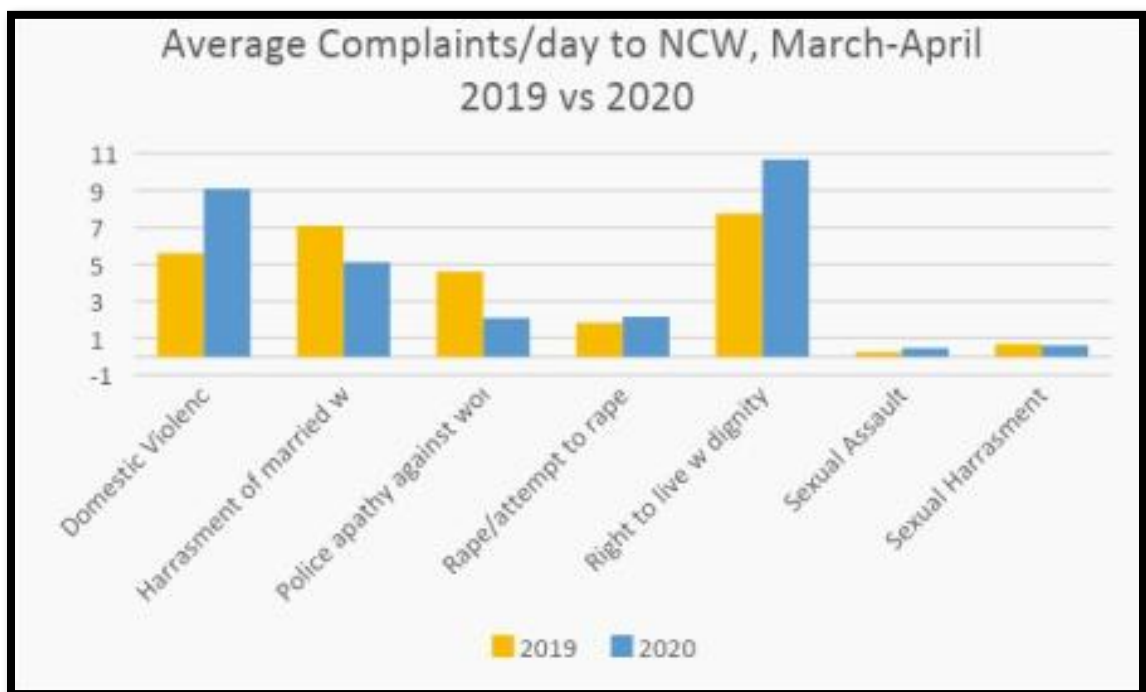
Source: www.counterview.com

 **Child abuse:** Pandemic has also resulted into a rise in child abuse. Children are abused both physically and sexually.

Since lockdown started, many reports have been lodged at the police stations regarding beating of child to death, raping and murder of a child.

Example, In India, a teen-aged girl who became famous by bringing his poor daily waged labour, father, by cycling around 1500kms during lockdown. She was praised even by the Ibanca Trump, daughter of American president, Donald Trump. The girl was raped and murdered by a middle aged man during pandemic. This type of news is heart-wrenching.

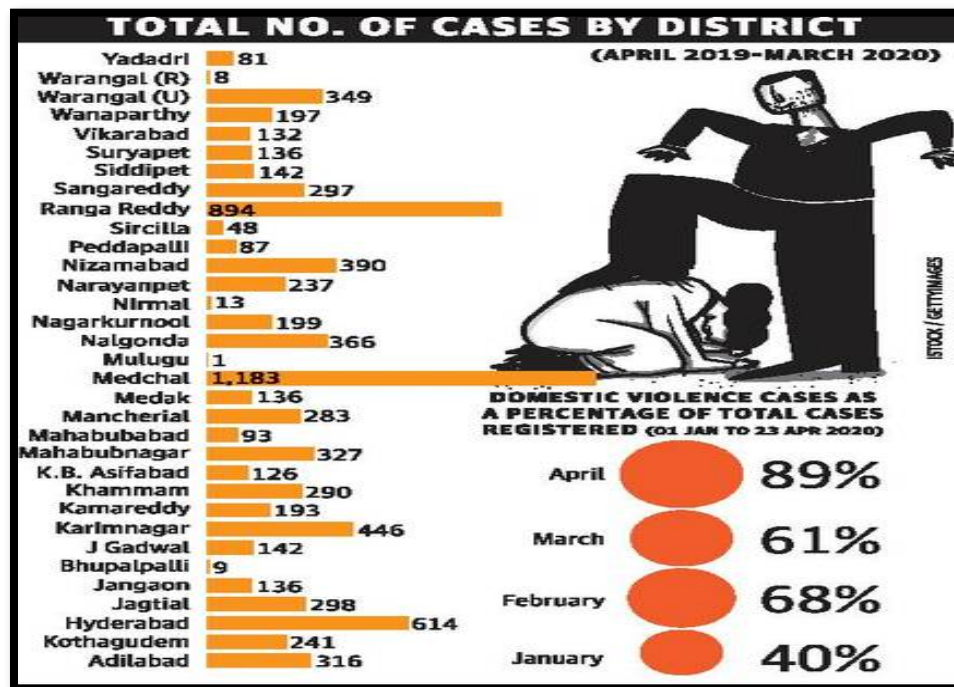
 **Child marriage:** Prolonged school closures put young and adolescent girls at increased risk of child marriage and teenage pregnancy. In a context



where girls' education is already undervalued, and families are forced to make sacrifices due to economic constraints such as prioritising boys' education, the option of marrying girls off to wealthy men is likely to seem more appealing.

Sex Trafficking: Sex trafficking predominantly victimizes women and significant numbers of male and female children. It relies on the exploitation of female poverty and the impunity of male demands for commodified sex. Political positions about sex trafficking are cause for heated controversy because they are connected to positions that argue for abolishing, decriminalizing or legalizing prostitution.

Right to live without dignity for women: Right of women to live with dignity is a conflicting issue in majority areas. The pandemic has led to the increase of cases regarding suppression of women rights to live freely and with dignity. As they are spending most of the time in house and absence of domestic help forces them to do all the domestic chores alone. They are restricted to do parties, gossip with friends and as a entering into a state of mental distress.



Psychological well-being: Incidences and reports of violence against women within the household have also risen. This points to male

psychological distress due to short-term loss of work and earnings, and subsequent violent behaviour and/or confinement at home with abusive partners during lockdown. As a result, in the long-run women's psychological well-being might be affected even more adversely than men's from financial and emotional stress, combined with physical violence.

- ***Economic consequences of COVID-19 for women:*** In rural areas, women's involvement on farms may go up in regions where there is shortage of labour due to a decrease in the number of migrant labourers. For instance in India, during this year's harvest season (March-April), many migrants have moved back to their homes. This may result in higher agricultural wages for women in the short-run. Therefore, the demand for women's time both within and outside the household may rise in rural India.

In urban areas, due to the greater proportion of nuclear families, women may be needed to support the family by being at home to take care of the sick and/or due to loss of jobs/earnings in the immediate future.

INITIATIVES TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT TO STOP SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE DURING COVID-19:

- ***Expansion of help lines and information sharing:*** Helplines and online support platforms are being expanded or established. Italy, one of the countries hardest hit by the pandemic, is preventing “an emergency within an emergency” by advertising **the 1522 helpline** for violence and stalking.
- ***Funding shelters and other safe accommodation options for survivors:*** Numerous countries have acknowledged that additional safe housing is needed during times of quarantine. Safe accommodation allows survivors (and accompanying minors) to temporarily escape abusers. As part of its COVID-19 relief package, Canada has allocated **\$50 million to women's shelters and sexual assault centres** .In France, a €1.1 million funding

increase for anti-abuse organisations included **20,000 hotel nights for survivors to escape abusive partners** .

- ***Expansion of access to services for survivors:*** As quarantine limits personal mobility and freedom of movement, some countries are finding ways to expand access to violence-related services. France has initiated ‘**pop up’ centres in grocery stores**, where women are likely to be already visiting.
- ***Limiting risk factors associated with violence:*** Some countries are tackling the negative ways of coping with COVID-19 that may exacerbate the risk of violence. *Greenland* has ***banned alcohol sales*** in its capital to reduce the risk of violence against children in the home. . Curtailing gun sales, for example, would limit access to fatal weapons at a time of heightened stress, potentially **reducing the risk of female homicide and child deaths**.
- ***Modifications to family law and justice systems:*** Australia has implemented a number of **modifications to family law** to allow the justice system to better respond to cases during quarantine .

CONCLUSION:

Violence against women is continue to occur since time immemorial. This pandemic has accelerated the violence to another level which causes hike in various types of crimes. Government has taken a very good initiative to solve this problem but before that the thing needed to be done is to change one’s own thinking and attitudes.