

# Pain, Anger and Frustrations: What the Tweets Say about Domestic Violence during COVID-19 Outbreak?

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Since the outbreak of COVID-19, there have been increasing trends of domestic violence incidents reported globally. Rapid changes in the lifestyle with constant lockdowns and stay-home orders have escalated the rise in the prevalence of domestic violence. This study explored the nature of conversations on Twitter using #domesticviolence or #DV for two months from April 2021 to May 2021. The dataset was analysed using the content analysis approach. Key findings of this study include: an increasing trend of domestic violence resulting pain, anger and frustration among victims, a close link between domestic violence, access to guns and men with drinking habits, broader consequences of domestic violence to individuals and families, limited supports and access to services available to

the DV victims, a direct association between the global outbreak of COVID-19 and the escalation of domestic violence, and a greater need for appropriate response strategies to end domestic violence in the society. The government needs to pay attention to address the increasing prevalence of domestic violence, so the women, men and families are protected and supported. An integrated service response system bringing public, private and community sectors together could be effective to address the issue of gender-based violence.

*Keywords: domestic violence, family violence, sexual violence, gender-based violence, domestic violence services, Twitter research*

**D**omestic Violence (DV) is a gendered public health issue and violation of human rights. A recent estimate reports that 30% of women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner or non-partner in their lifetime ([WHO, 2021](#)). While DV is preventable, on average, one woman a week is murdered by their current or former partner in Australia ([Our Watch, 2021](#)). A reported increase in the experiences of DV has been seen during the COVID-19 pandemic with noticeable failure to provide support and services to the victims and families (Boxall, Morgan, & Brown, 2020; Carrington et al., 2020; Humphreys, Myint, & Zeanah, 2020), which resulted in further

risks to ensure the safety of victims including women and children (Every-Palmer et al., 2020; Morgan & Boxall, 2020).

The increased risks of DV during COVID-19 are linked with the imposed social restrictions with substantially longer stay at home with no connection with others in the community (Boxall et al., 2020; Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020). The added economic stress to most families became another critical factor leading to DV (Morgan & Boxall, 2020; Usher et al., 2020; Woodlock et al., 2020). It is evident that DV not only costs the lives of women, children and family members of the victim, it also has significant social, economic and political impacts on the country (John et al., 2020). Further, negative psychological consequences are constantly reported (Every-Palmer et al., 2020; Morgan & Boxall, 2020). Because of the lack of access to services, the experience of coercive control restricts women from seeking help from friends and families (Boxall et al., 2020; Kofman & Garfin, 2020a). There is yet limited evidence to understand what mechanisms the victims of DV use to seek support during the pandemic.

In recent years, communication moved from face-to-face interactions to digitally based platforms, and social media has been the critical source of information (Moorhead et al., 2013). Social media has been used widely to create community awareness (Evers et al., 2013; Stollefson et al., 2020) and to share health information (Guinta & John, 2018; Park et al., 2019). Specifically, social media channels have been effective to share critical messages to reach wider populations take immediate actions (Chan et al., 2020; Li & Liu, 2020) and the use of smartphones to access web-based information have been increasingly popular (Stawarz et al., 2019; Yıldız, 2018). While social media plays a positive role in sharing information, there are reported complexities around the consequences of overuse of social media (Dhir et al., 2018; Viner et al., 2019). Twitter is a popular and fastest growing social media platform to generate conversations (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). For the victims of DV, social media conversations create both positive and negative influences (Afdal et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2021) and highlights the social significance of the issue (Woodlock et al., 2020; Xue et al., 2020).

Digitalization, from a public communication perspective, refers to the use of digital technologies to improve information delivery, encourage citizen participation in decision-making processes, and make government more accountable, transparent, and effective in

providing services. Given that 2020 has been a year of digitalization for all age groups across the sectors in many countries to share public health messages, whether the same patterns have been seen to seek DV related information and services is worth exploring. With an increase of abusive content during the stay home restrictions reported widely (Babvey et al., 2020; Xue et al., 2020), DV conversations in social media have steady growth (Alaggia & Wang, 2020). It is anticipated that understanding the nature of conversations on Twitter will help design appropriate response strategies to minimise the DV risks across the communities (Pfitzner et al., 2020).

## **METHODS**

This study aimed to explore whether DV has been the topic of conversation on Twitter during the global pandemic of COVID-19. In addition, we were interested in identifying the conversations based on the reported evidence of increased DV incidents due to the lockdowns and stay at home orders issued to control the spread of the virus.

### ***Data Source***

Twitter has emerged as a significant platform for public health messaging, enabling health organizations to disseminate information rapidly and broadly. Its global reach and real-time communication capabilities have been instrumental in promoting health awareness, disease prevention, and crisis management, thus playing a pivotal role in global health communication strategies. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the utilization of social media platforms, particularly Twitter, has significantly increased as a critical conduit for disseminating real-time information about the pandemic's status (Imran, et al., 2015), with public health agencies leveraging its instantaneous and broad reach to engage with the public and prompt necessary actions. Consequently, this study focuses on public tweets to investigate the discourse surrounding domestic violence (DV) during the pandemic period.

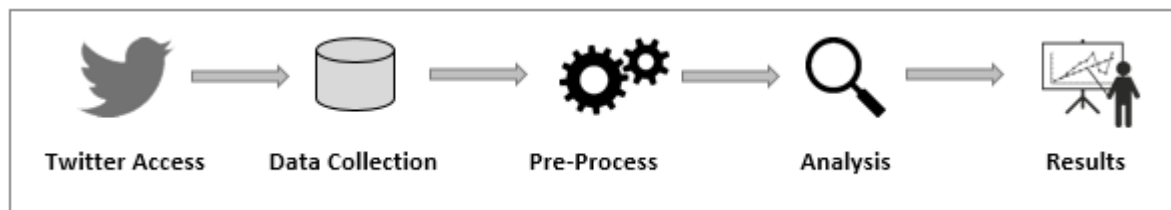
### ***Process***

The process began with data collection of public tweets from Twitter. Twitter provides two API types: search API (Twitter, 2021c) and streaming API (Twitter, 2021b). The Standard version of the search API is used to search against the sample of tweets created in the last seven days, while the Premium and Enterprise versions allow

developers to access tweets posted in the previous 30 days (30-day endpoint). The streaming API is used for accessing tweets from the real-time Twitter feed. The Academic Research product is a new and enhanced product accessible via Twitter API v2 (Twitter, 2021a). The data collection was created by extracting tweets using different searching patterns relevant to domestic and family violence for two months, from April 2021 to May 2021.

After this research was conducted, there have been changes in Twitter but accessing the Twitter API (renamed to X API) remains the same. The X API can be used to programmatically retrieve and analyze X data, as well as build for the conversation on X. Over the years, the X API has grown by adding additional levels of access for developers to be able to scale their access to enhance and research the public conversation. Recently, X released API v2. The X API v2 includes a modern foundation, new and advanced features, and quick onboarding to Basic access. New features included lookup and managed posts, timelines, searching and counting tweets, filtering and managing tweets and a range of other features. The X API also provides access to create, delete, receive, or adjust a variety of different resources (e.g., posts, users, lists, trends and places) on the platform.

The following figure gives an overview of the complete process used in this study.



*Figure 1: Analysis Process*

Following filter criteria were used to select the tweets for this study.

Period of analysis: April 2021 to May 2021

Keywords were used: “domestic violence” and #DV

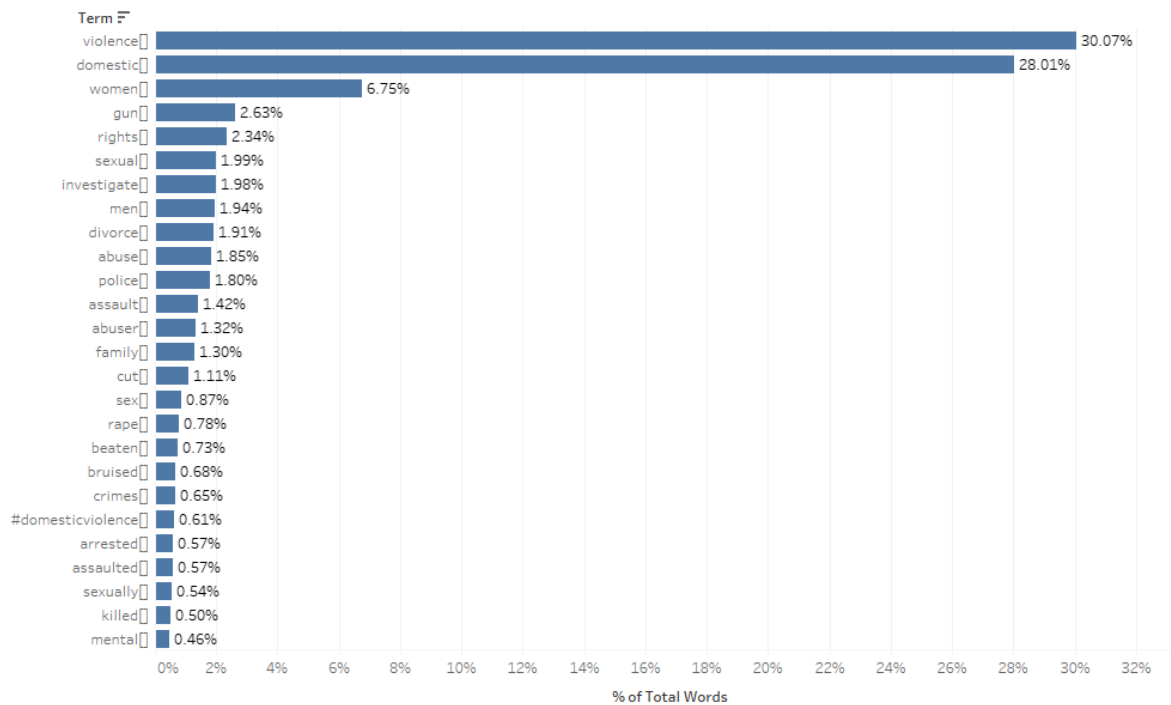
Extraction was performed using the following query string: (domestic violence) OR #DV

Data were obtained from Twitter and the keyword filter applied, i.e., it was not filtered based on geo-location. All instances of the keywords (regardless of location) were extracted and analysed.

### ***Word Frequency***

(Note: Word frequency < 0.5% not shown)

Ranking of words that appeared most frequently in tweets.

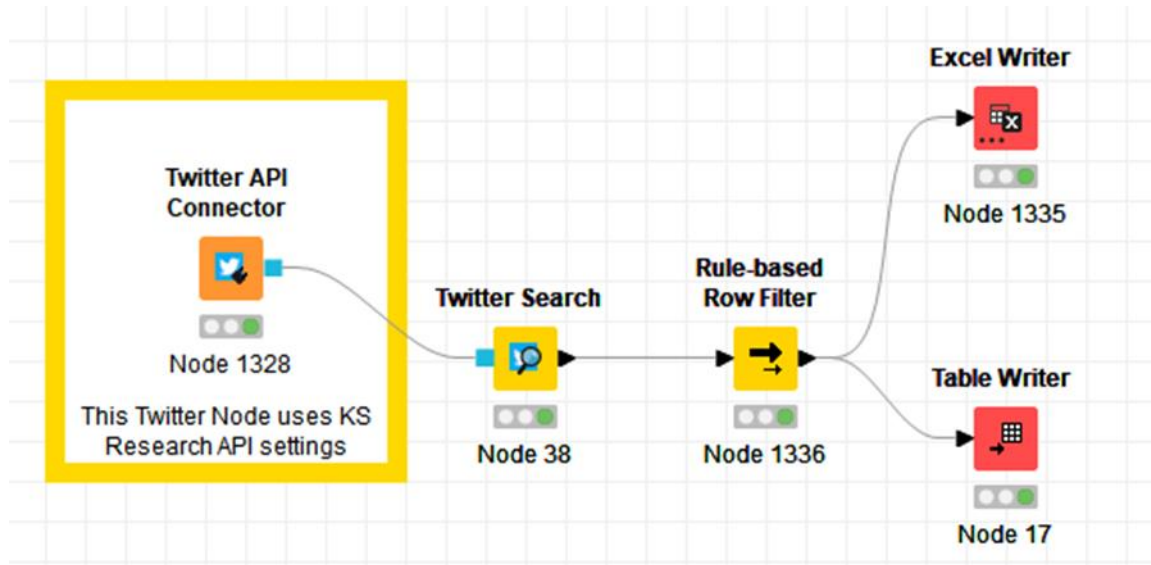


*Figure 2: most frequently appeared words*

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analysed using a qualitative exploratory thematic content analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analysis allows researchers to systematically analyze data to identify themes and make subjective interpretations about the phenomenon. Furthermore, since Twitter posts involve a short maximum of 140 characters, content analysis enables researchers to apply an inductive approach and make meaningful interpretations of the themes that emerged from the data. We followed the recommended framework to maintain the ethical standards for this research (Townsend & Wallace, 2016).

Data was extracted from Twitter using the Twitter API. The KNIME Analytics Platform was the primary data extraction tool through which the Twitter API was used. The keywords were the basis of the rules used to filter the data. Output from the KNOME workflow was in Excel format. The actual workflow used is shown below, where extracted data were processed and analyzed in Tableau. All graphs and charts were also generated in Tableau.



Using a directed content analysis approach, one investigator (KS) extracted data from Twitter into Excel and shared it with the lead investigator (SK) for coding and analysis. This deductive categorization of contents by location, numbers of re-tweets and engagement in conversations facilitated the systematic organization of the data for thematic analysis. The researchers’ proactive engagement with the data not only enabled the quantification of those engagements but also provided a deeper understanding of the societal implications related communication on social media. Consequently, this methodological approach yielded a refined data for further analysis.

SK led the coding of the full dataset, created consistent categories of qualitative contents, and shared with the co-investigators for their review and confirmation. Once the codebook was reviewed for inclusion and exclusion of data from the entire dataset, SK analyzed the whole dataset to identify relevant and consistent themes. Finally, all investigators were involved in doing cross-analysis of the data and reviewing the proposed final themes. To maintain confidentiality and privacy, we excluded individual Twitter user handles, demographic information, and geographic location, for the analysis.

In total, our search of #domesticviolence or #DV resulted in a total of 6,970 tweets. We took a random sample of 10% (697) tweets that included conversations. We further screened the data by excluding the tweets done in other languages than English (67) and were not directly related to DV within the context of the relationship (127). After this screening process, we included a total of 503 tweets for the inductive content analysis.

From the iterative coding and content analysis process, six themes that emerged from the dataset are included in the results of this article.

## RESULTS

The analysis of selected 503 tweets explored various emotions and responses that users expressed in their Twitter posts. Where most of the posts were related to incidents of DV, an interesting pattern of conversations demonstrate a mix of emotional, social, and political sentiments. We grouped those sentiments under six themes to present in this paper.

### **Increasing trend of domestic violence: pain, anger, frustration**

*“She’s a DV survivor. Her husband was abusing her. She left to save her life. When women stay & end up dead y’all always say “why didn’t she leave?” Well, she DID & threw a party afterwards. We love to see it.”*

There were significantly high numbers of posts reflecting the prevalence and impacts of DV on women. These posts included both voices – victims and bystanders to get the attention of the broader community on how DV impacts physical, emotional, and social wellbeing. For example, the following post was retweeted 149730 times which reflects that DV is more than physical.

*“Domestic violence causes far more pain than the visible marks of bruises and scars. It is devastating to be abused. Domestic violence needs to stop!”*

Some posts included the lived experiences of women who were victimised in relationships, and they were trying to create awareness about DV using their own experiences. This post was retweeted 2949908 times which indicates that society has started to act together.

*“Domestic violence is real. Especially in same sex relationship. And it isn’t addressed enough. Last night I experienced something no woman should ever have to experience. My face and neck were bruised, cut, and I was beaten. I am still in shock.”*

Another post reflected the frustration of how perpetrators usually play a drama of love and continuously abuse women in a relationship. A similar sense of anger and frustrations was shared by the users who retweeted the following post.

*“My abuser, who would tell everybody how I was the love of his life, and he couldn't live without me, had sat down and written my eulogy and planned to murder me.”*

These tweets were powerful to make the issue visible in social media and generate conversations around the socio-emotional impacts on women and society. In addition, some tweets represented bystanders and allies' voices, reinforcing the prevalence of DV with poor actions taken by the government to address the issue.

*“This is what happens when problems like domestic violence gets ignored AND gets rejected by the goons of this country to have control over women. SPREAD THIS!”*

Many users supported the frustrations that the system has not criminalized DV. The following post resonates with how the system has not yet paid serious attention to the issue of DV.

*“On July 15, ... beat his wife ... to death in front of their four children.... Post-mortem report confirmed brutal violence on her. This is a country that has continuously refused to criminalise domestic violence & abuse.”*

Twitter conversations further included how law within the system of various countries fail to acknowledge DV as a severe crime and ignores the fact that this form of violence is increasing day by day. For example, the following post made another call to lawmakers and reinforced the message that DV should stop happening in society.

*“I am still in shocked (sic) after hearing this incident 💔 domestic violence should stop, and lawmakers should take action about it. Day by day domestic violence is increasing, and innocent sisters are dying because of these monsters...”*

Another post reiterates that law has a critical role in ending DV and shares an example of how a woman ended her life being a victim.

*“If someone needs to know why we need a DV bill I went to an unknown person's funeral yesterday ... she was in her 60s, a week ago she came from a village to ...bridge and started heading down towards the river... she sat there for 5 minutes and then...”*

This frustration and agony about the law being silent to act against the perpetrators of DV were raised again.

*“I am speechless as there is no punishment whatsoever for any crime. Weak investigation as well as weak justice. DV is on the rise with women getting killed in front of kids. We are living in a jungle with no Law or Justice.”*



These posts demonstrate deep suffering through the language of pain, anger and frustrations that victims of DV and their bystanders expressed on Twitter. While the ongoing and increasing trend of DV and its impacts on women has been subtle in society, the negligence and hesitancy of the political and legal systems to criminalise DV has been raised consistently.

### **Use of gun and alcohol: intersections with DV**

Every year more than ten million women in the United States (US) experience intimate partner violence, and the presence of guns in DV situations increases the risk of homicide significantly (Frattaroli et al., 2021). Gun-related intimate partner violence is very common in the US, where 90 percent of the victims are female (Bender et al., 2021). Gun violence against women in the US is highly concerning, as the rate of firearm homicides among US females is about 15 times the rates seen among females in other industrialized countries (Olufajo et al., 2021).

A gradual start of conversations about how access to guns at home escalates DV and puts women at high risk of getting killed was revealed on Twitter.

*“The presence of a gun in the home increases the risk of domestic violence homicide by 400 percent.”*

In the US, females living in the high gun ownership states had five times higher homicide rates triggered by domestic violence (Olufajo et al., 2021). This suggests that the availability of firearms increased the incidence of DV, leading to the death of women. A tweet critiques the missing link between gun and DV related fatality in the US.

*“This article doesn’t mention that having a gun in your home doubles your risk of homicide, triples your risk of suicide, and - for women - makes it five times more likely domestic violence will be fatal.”*

Another post made the link explicit how guns are attributed to DV and homicide.

*“Guns can easily turn domestic violence into domestic homicide.”*

Between the gun and domestic violence, drinking culture adds to the patriarchal power and coercive control over women. A strong link between excessive drinking and intimate partner violence in US societies is undeniable (Bender et al., 2021; Coleman et al., 2021; Sanchez et al., 2020).

*"Research shows women, who are disproportionately affected, are five times more likely to be killed if their abuser has access to firearms."*

The following post exemplifies the prevalence and the close link between guns and homicide.

*"The bullet is still in my neck right now. A 22-year-old single mother to an 11-month-old boy, said she is lucky to be alive after being shot in the face by her son's father and his girlfriend two weeks ago."*

The following tweet condones the violent attitude and echoes the voice of perpetrators.

*"When I get drunk, I choose domestic violence every time."*

Excessive consumption of alcohol is a well-established risk factor for aggressive behaviour (Berke et al., 2020; Laura, 2017; Parke et al., 2018). The social construct of masculinity gives men authority and power to dominate female partners (Berke et al., 2020) and, more often, perpetuates violence in relationships. Social drinking may be considered a cultural symbol of masculinity in many cultures, but drinking provides men with a context to exercise power over women in a more violent way (Coleman et al., 2021).

The social construct of gender and how it intersects with DV has been discussed on Twitter.

*"Take domestic violence. What makes a person, usually a man, more likely to assault a partner or a former partner? Experts point the finger at a daunting long list of influences, including rigid gender stereotypes that tightly circumscribe appropriate female role."*

Men who adhere to masculine constructs prescribing restrictive emotionality and mental toughness tend to suppress their feeling of vulnerability and exhibit coercive control (Berke et al., 2020). Men's coercive behaviour is demonstrated through aggression and is often linked with intimate partner violence.

*"It's funny when people say weed bros get angry. It's almost like they totally forget about alcohol-related domestic violence, not to mention the glaring lack of any cannabis-related violent crimes. But hey yeah, say whatever comes into your brain first hey 🤔"*

There is a legitimate relationship between masculinity and alcohol related aggression that exhibits in the form of violence against women (Florimbio et al., 2019).

Although women are the regular victims of DV, the consequences of this form of violence are broader.

*"The legislation would create a new crime called "coercive control," a behaviour that causes the victim to fear they will be physically harmed, causes their mental health to decline and has an effect on their day-to-day activities."*

### **It doesn't only impact women: the language of victimization in DV**

*"Domestic violence hit a little too close to home today, a family friend lost her life. This can happen to anyone; this is a quiet suburban street. No one knew any kind of abuse was happening until today 😞 If you or anyone you know is being abused, please find help."*

The gendered nature of DV is perpetrated highly by men against women. While some evidence claims women's violence against men is an emerging issue (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Hines & Douglas, 2009; Walker et al., 2020), the impacts of DV against women have far more serious consequences.

*"If you believe only women and children get abused, you're WRONG. If you think it would never happen to a male friend or family member, it likely already has. If you make jokes when you hear about male abuse, you're scum."*

The evidence of the prevalence of male victimization of female perpetrated DV has been discussed, but in most instances, the experience of such violence goes unnoticed due to the perceived construct and a social fear that speaking about the female violence against males within the relationship could marginalized masculinity, and the men can be seen powerless.

*"She's the monster who abused her husband and her previous partner, who was arrested for domestic violence, who confessed under oath to a series of violent attacks .... Stop defending and glorifying this female abuser!"*

This challenged the commonly understood discourse of women as a 'victim' and men as a 'perpetrator' in domestic violence. The societal perceptions of masculinity conflict with the inherent vulnerability of sharing the experience of victimization and further complicates the desire for seeking help to escape the violent circumstances.

*"It's not hard to discuss DV & hold women accountable for abusing their partners without trivializing abuse. This is the problem with men & their lack of genuine concern when it comes to the trauma they experience."*

Whether the victim is men or women, the DV poses significant impacts on families.

*"The trauma of domestic violence can have wide-ranging effects on families long after a violent incident. ... is talking about the death of her sister to help other families recognize the signs of abuse."*

The emotional trauma that DV left the person has a long-term effect. Taking the context of violence into account to understand the impacts on a broader level is critical. The violent home environments affect children and need special consideration across the criminal justice system.

*"If you grow up living with domestic violence, you will not reach your full potential in life ... unless you unlearn what was learned."*

Including the influences on individuals and families, DV has significant social, legal, political and economic implications that are still overlooked by the criminal justice system. Given the critiques are stronger for not criminalizing DV in many countries, the vision for ending DV needs efforts of all sectors.

### **Spread the message: support to the DV victims**

DV continues to have critical impacts on victims personal, health, economic and social status, which has ripple effects on family and the broader community. While DV consequences are beyond the individual level, women are the constant victim of intimate partner violence.

*"If this ever happens to you, file a police report, go to the hospital & do a thorough medical examination, take photos of your injuries including the bruises that may appear a few days after the incident."*

Social media provides a powerful platform to share information about the support and services available to the victims and families.

*"Just found out Delta Airlines offers half price tickets for domestic violence victims!! Please share this, you never know whose life you could help save that needs to get out and away immediately ♡"*

DV victims need both immediate and long-term support to manage violent circumstances. Access to information could benefit those who are looking for a safe escape locally.

*“Hello, I just thought I’d share that if you’re a victim of domestic abuse/violence then you can go into a Boots pharmacy and “ask for ani” (pronounced as Annie) and you will be provided with a safe space and immediate help.”*

DV victims want confidential assistance due to the fear of further victimization. The disclosure process could be further complicated but having access to information is important, as not many would know what to do or where to seek support.

*“Just learned that if you are a woman in a domestic violence situation, that you can reach out to your local Avon representative. Avon will relocate you, free of charge.”*

Initiatives that run-in a partnership are more sustainable and effective to address DV issues, whether to provide support to the victims or to work towards prevention.

*“Uber is partnering with the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) to provide some 1,000 free rides among eight of their member programs in Buffalo, Westchester, New York City, and Long Island.”*

There is limited evidence of support to the DV victims, and generally available supports are insufficient or inaccessible.

*“One of the best things you can do for yourself if you’re experiencing abuse is to get in touch with your local domestic violence centre. They know the local laws and protocols. A lot of them provide free counselling and legal advice. They’re lifesavers.”*

A collective effort of different service systems is therefore imperative to provide better protection and safety to the victims.

*“People seeking protection from domestic violence need it from every source: police, service providers, and the court.”*

Since DV victims require legal, social, health, and economic support to manage the circumstances, all services across the public and community sectors must collaborate to provide immediate and long-term support. This collaborative effort will create opportunities to work towards ending DV in society.

## Has the pandemic worsened the issue? The COVID-19 and DV

*“Almost one in 10 women in a relationship across the country experienced domestic and family violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, with two thirds saying the violence started or escalated during lockdowns.”*

With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, DV incidents started to grow across the countries (Boserup et al., 2020). Although the exemptions were provided to leave home during the lockdown for DV cases, those measures haven't worked because of the related fear and associated complexities (Kofman & Garfin, 2020b).

*“Talk about domestic violence have skyrocketed during the pandemic but was it enough to take it from these amazing, indispensable insects.”*

Concerns have been raised around the increasing rate of DV and urged the government to take a proactive approach. However, frustrations grew when actions weren't taken to address the issue.

*“Again, I see politicians in government praising themselves for raising DV issues ...when the matters in the tweet are still not addressed. No question about the increase in domestic violence but it hasn't been adequately addressed by the government.”*

Since DV is a hidden epidemic of our society, the mandated stay home orders have worsened the situation. There are hardly any safe shelters for women to access within the community for immediate escape from the violence. Undoubtedly the attention of the government focused on controlling the spread of the virus and getting people vaccinated, where no attempts have been made to ensure the safety of those who are at risk of DV.

*“I'm looking at the doors for signs of punch marks. Charities say domestic violence has worsened during lockdown.”*

While community-based organizations, charities and groups seem to be on top of DV issues to offer to require support and resources (Humphreys et al., 2020); concerns remain as the pandemic is hitting the communities harder and DV incidents are on the rise.

*“It's talked about less, but it's no less true that men experience domestic abuse as well. And intimate partner violence has increased since the global pandemic began. If you need help, please know we are here to help!”*

Combined hard lockdown measures - home-schooling and working from home increased unemployment and financial insecurities in the family which contributed to

escalating DV (Piquero et al., 2021). The social and economic impacts of DV triggered by the current global pandemic will have a long-term effect if not taken seriously to address it now.

### **Is there an end to DV? Response strategies and actions**

*“When reporters (rarely) cover rampant domestic and sexual violence by cops, they don't call it a “wave” or an “epidemic” or give readers context about how often police domestic/sexual violence happens in every city. Same reporters, but different language for crimes by the poor.”*

While growing efforts to respond to DV seen in recent years, there is still a lack of appropriate legal and political responses. The criminal justice system hasn't yet taken considerate actions against the offenders of DV. The trend of community-based services supporting victims is gradually shifting into an integrated service model where police, the justice system and community organizations work together to provide the best possible response to the DV victims.

*“Minneapolis has a lawless zone. Where a female domestic violence victim was thrown out a glass window, was cut and bleeding, called 911 for help but officers are unable to enter due to the politics... I guess the feminists in the MSP are going to protest this.”*

Public services are target driven within their system to respond to DV. The legal definition of DV further complicates the response and causes delays in taking appropriate actions.

*“It's NOT safe for domestic violence perpetrators to be responding to DV call outs. DV is the single biggest reason for a police officer call-out. It's time we recruited officers with the appropriate knowledge & attitudes re gendered violence.”*

There is a backlash between DV advocates and the public authorities. The police system admitted their lack of understanding of the issue to provide an appropriate response, but it is failing government action for advocates.

*“A senior police officer says there has been a “concerning increase” in the number of police accused of DV– something the organisation's leadership is “grappling” with how to respond to. Simple --- prosecute the... and stop protecting them.”*

Advocacy voices must be heard, and effective actions should be taken across all levels to protect victims while addressing the causes of DV.

*“Women’s advocates say knowing there are people accused of domestic violence among police ranks contributes to a reluctance for women to seek assistance.”*

Working towards ending DV needs an early start to shift the gendered social construct of masculinity and femininity. This requires teaching our children to learn and establish respectful relationships.

*“Domestic violence can only be addressed by teaching and training our youth the skills of being a good husband or wife. It all boils down to good parenting.”*

DV is a human rights issue, and focus must be given to establishing a collaborative response system. With a lack of collective responses to draw the attention of the government, community and other sectors for taking actions against DV, reducing the incidence isn’t possible.

*“It’s worrying to still see our cases rise past the 100-mark, as domestic violence, sexual harassment and mental health concerns continue to affect many people. When it happens, gender-based violence can affect all areas of our lives - financially, emotionally and mentally.”*

The messaging around the seriousness of DV and its consequences on individuals, families, and society must be a matter of discussion to generate collective efforts so no one becomes the victim of such a brutal form of violence.

## DISCUSSION

Exploring domestic violence conversations on Twitter during the pandemic produced interesting insights to consider across all levels. The victims of DV shared a mixture of emotions with the deep invisible trauma they endured as the justice system failed to criminalise the violence. Given that women are still seen as victims and men as perpetrators of DV, most conversations were led by feminists and focused on ongoing frustrations of dismissing this fatal nature of violence. This relates to the evidence of the emotional trauma that DV victims are experiencing in the long-term (Afdal et al., 2019; Alaggia & Wang, 2020; Every-Palmer et al., 2020; Hines & Douglas, 2009). Lack of appropriate support, resources, and response from the social and justice system reported



widely (Afdal et al., 2019; Pfitzner et al., 2020; Stawarz et al., 2019; Usher et al., 2020). While a shift in understanding DV is happening to draw the attention of community, organizations and public systems, most conversations are still centered on the victim or the incident of domestic violence.

Gun laws in the US have raised an ongoing challenge to address the link with DV. Evidence confirms that most violence aggravates with access to the weapons which gives easy ventures to the perpetrators to commit aggressive acts (Bender et al., 2021; Frattaroli et al., 2021; Olufajo et al., 2021; Sanchez et al., 2020). We further explored the intersections between the use of alcohol and domestic violence with explicit links to drinking and aggressive behavior. While there is limited evidence to confirm this association (Berke et al., 2020; Coleman et al., 2021; Florimbio et al., 2019; Laura, 2017), it raises another complexity in the conundrum where drinking is embedded as a part of the culture. Shared tweets symbolically imply the intersections of consumption of alcohol, access to guns, aggressive behavior, and DV with the social construct of masculinity.

DV consequences are multi-faceted and happen across multiple levels. We explored the social, economic, and political impacts of DV at individual, family, societal and system levels. Moving from the notion that DV doesn't only affect women and children, we identified the different frames of language used to describe victimization. This coincides with the arguments in the literature which see DV as a broader social issue and urge everyone to play their part in addressing what causes violence (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020; Hines & Douglas, 2009; Liu et al., 2021). Further, dialogue commenced looking at both immediate and long-term consequences of DV to generate support for the victims and the strategies for ending gender-based violence.

The question remains whether the efforts made by the government are enough to protect the victim and act against the offender of domestic violence. We found that the support responses are negligible compared to the prevalence and consequences of DV. The failing response from the justice system this study highlighted is consistent with the critique made around the lack of support for the victims of DV (Carrington et al., 2020; Pfitzner et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2020). However, the support provided by local community-based organizations is worth acknowledging in the context where services are limited and inaccessible. The role that pharmacies, airlines, taxi services, small businesses

and local community organizations are playing to provide care and support to the victims of DV was exemplary.

Although the posts establishing the link between COVID-19 and DV are limited on Twitter, conversations highlighting the rise of DV incidents during the pandemic are emerging. Consistent with the evidence reported (Humphreys et al., 2020; Kofman & Garfin, 2020a; Li & Liu, 2020; Morgan & Boxall, 2020; Pfitzner et al., 2020; Piquero et al., 2021; Usher et al., 2020; Xue et al., 2020), discussions were focused on raising the alarm about the increasing trends of DV due to the stay home orders during the global outbreaks of COVID-19. Undoubtedly, the response from the government to address DV issues has been overshadowed as the focus is concentrated on controlling the spread of the virus.

There is no end to DV in the current context of the criminal justice system and gendered construct of relationships. Voices in social media are limited to speak on behalf of victims, and the stereotypical comment towards women is aggravating the dialogue to further marginalize the victims. Although researchers have continued to focus on understanding the context of DV (Afdal et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2020) and feminist advocates are consistently raising the voices to criminalize DV (Dhir et al., 2018; Evers et al., 2013; Every-Palmer et al., 2020; Florimbio et al., 2019), there is a long way to see the government working towards ending the gender-based violence. Even though arguments are made to invest in education, training, and setting up a better justice system, we cannot expect any changes without having a collaborative effort where public, private, and community sectors come together to implement an integrated response system.

## CONCLUSION

DV is a contemporary issue that has severe health, social, economic and political consequences across different levels. We explored the nature of conversations about DV on Twitter which revealed multiple voices ranging from the victim to the perpetrators of violence. While understanding and making the meaning of short tweets portray the seriousness of DV could be critiqued, our analysis provides evidence to demonstrate the lack of attention, engagement, support and responses from the public system, as raised by

the Twitter users. Both victims and allies of DV have tried to create social awareness about the consequences of DV at personal, family, and societal levels.

A link between the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing trend of DV started to generate attention and discussion in social media, compared to the extent of impacts - the response to address the issue has been insignificant. Based on the findings, the public health, social service and welfare, criminal justice systems and other agencies should establish an integrated response system to support the victims of domestic violence. Reform of the criminal justice system to protect the victims of DV is imminent; actions are also required across all systems for gender-equitable policy and practice. Additionally, there must be an ongoing focus on refining and implementing appropriate long-term strategies to end gender-based violence in society before it is too late to do so.

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