

Strengthening the Criminal Justice System's
Response to Sexual Violence in Sindh

COVID-19 AND SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE REPORTING: A STUDY OF SINDH LEGAL ADVISORY CALL CENTER DATA



COVID-19 AND SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE REPORTING

A STUDY OF SINDH LEGAL ADVISORY CALL CENTER DATA

FATIMA AAMIR¹ AND SOHA RANDHAWA²

¹ Senior Delivery Associate – Legal Aid Society

² Delivery Associate – Legal Aid Society

© Legal Aid Society

COVID-19 and Sexual and Gender-based Violence Reporting—A Study of Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center Data.

Year of Publication: 2020

This publication is part of Legal Aid Society’s Research Products.

The contents of this publication are the exclusive Intellectual Property of the Legal Aid Society and any unauthorized reproduction, distribution, modification, use, or transmission of this work in any form or by any means, including photocopying or through any other electronic or mechanical methods is illegal and will constitute infringement of such Intellectual Property Rights.

Legal Aid Society shall be identified as the copyright owner on any authorized reproduction, distribution, use or transmission of this work.

For more copies and other related queries, please contact Legal Aid Society at:

Legal Aid Society
Spanish Homes Apartment, Mezzanine Floor
Plot A-13, Phase – 1, D.H.A.,
Karachi, Pakistan
Tel: (92) 021 – 35390132 – 33
Fax: (92) 021 – 99266015
Email:
Website: www.las.org.pk
Facebook: @LegalAidSocietyPakistan

Legal Aid Society is registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 on November 19, 2013 (Registration No. KAR 058 of 2013 – 14) and operates under the chairpersonship of Justice Nasir Aslam Zahid.

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures	i
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	1
List of Definitions	2
Executive Summary	3
1. Introduction	4
1.1 The Shadow Pandemic and Reporting	6
2. Methodology	8
3. Findings and Discussion	14
3.1. Profile of All Queries	14
3.2. Characteristics of Callers	17
3.3. Profile of SGBV Queries	18
3.4. Categories of SGBV Queries	19
3.5. Physical Violence Related SGBV Issues.....	21
3.6. Non-Physical Violence Related SGBV Issues.....	26
3.7. Sources of Information Regarding SLACC-all Callers	32
3.8. Sources of Information Regarding SLACC-SGBV Queries	33
4. Limitations	35
5. Conclusion	36
Bibliography	38

List of Tables and Figures

List of Tables	Page
1. Expansion of Unit of Analysis based on SLACC Queries.....	9
2. Summary of SMS Campaigns.....	13
3. SGBV Queries as Proportion of Total Queries.....	18
4. SGBV Issues as proportion of Total SGBV Issues (month-wise).....	19
5. Number of Reported Types of Physical Violence related SGBV Issues.....	22
6. Number of Reported Types of Non-Physical Violence Related SGBV Issues.....	29
7. Reported Sources of Information for All SLACC Calls.....	32
8. Reported Sources of Information for SLACC-SGBV Calls.....	34

List of Figures	Page
1. Categorization of SGBV Issues.....	11
2. Location of Callers to SLACC.....	14
3. Total number of Queries received per month (Dec'19 to 5 th Jul'20).....	15
4. Percentage (%) of answered and abandoned calls received over study duration.....	16
5. Mean Age of Callers.....	17
6. Gender Breakdown of Callers.....	17
7. SGBV Queries as Proportion of Total Queries.....	18
8. DV related SGBV Issues as a proportion of total SGBV Issues.....	20
9. Non-Physical Violence related SGBV Issues as a proportion of total SGBV Issues.....	20
10. Physical Violence related SGBV Issue as a proportion of total SGBV Issues.....	21
11. Gender Disaggregation of Reported Physical Violence SGBV Issues.....	23
12. Age-wise Distribution of Callers Reporting Physical SGBV Issues.....	23

13. Proportion of Reported Types of Physical Violence SGBV Issues (month-wise).....	25
14. Non-Physical Violence SGBV Issues as a proportion of Total SGBV Issues.....	26
15. Gender Disaggregation of Reported Non-Physical Violence SGBV Issues.....	30
16. Age-wise Distribution of Callers Reporting Non-Physical SGBV Issues.....	30
17. Proportion of Reported Types of Non-Physical Violence SGBV Issues (month-wise).....	31
18. Percentage (%) of Reported Sources of Information for all SLACC Calls.....	33
19. Percentage (%) of Reported Sources of Information for SLACC-SGBV Calls.....	35

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

LAS	Legal Aid Society
SLACC	Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center
VAW	Violence against Women
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
DV	Domestic Violence
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SMS	Short Message Service
WDD	Women Development Department
SWD	Social Welfare Department

List of Definitions

Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV)	Any act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships. It encompasses threats of violence and coercion. It can be physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual in nature, and can take the form of a denial of resources or access to services.
Domestic Violence (DV)	Violence against women perpetrated by a family member (where family is established by blood or marriage or both). It includes acts of control, physical abuse, sexual violence, intimidation and isolation, verbal abuse including threats and coercion and economic abuse.
Non-Domestic Violence (Non-DV)	Violence against women perpetrated by the general society (i.e. where the offender is not related to the victim by either blood or marriage or both) which may be physical, sexual, psychological, financial /economic or a combination of any or all.
Physical Violence	Acts aimed at physically hurting the victim which include, but are not limited to pushing, grabbing, twisting the arm, pulling hair, slapping, kicking, biting or hitting with a fist or object, trying to strangle or suffocate, burning or scalding on purpose, or threatening or attacking with some sort of weapon, gun or knife or sexually abusing and assaulting.
Non-Physical Violence	Intentionally harmful or controlling behavior towards women that leads to any type of harm to their mental, psychological, emotional or financial well-being including verbal assaults, insults, threats, intimidation, humiliation, harassment, infantilization, isolation from family, friends, or regular activities, and giving the “silent treatment”. All reported instances with a <i>threat</i> of physical violence are categorized as current issues of non-physical violence.
SGBV Queries	Cases of Sexual and Gender based Violence identified by the SLACC lawyers and entered into LAS data entry system under individual Query IDs (primary unit of raw data).
SGBV Issues	Expanded issues of Sexual and Gender based Violence identified within each query (data entry).
Answered Calls	Calls which land on the SLACC telephonic software system and are answered by the SLACC lawyers.
Abandoned Calls	Calls which are disconnected by the telephonic software system when no call center agent (legal advisor) is available to respond to the call.
Terminated Calls	Calls that were terminated by the caller themselves before being directed to/ connected to an agent.

Executive Summary

This report examines whether Covid-19 and subsequent government measures to control its spread has impacted the reporting of incidents of Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in Pakistan, and whether increasing awareness through a mass media campaign leads to an increase in the reporting of SGBV. The report divides SGBV into several categories to better analyze the type and nature of SGBV problems faced by callers. LAS conducted its analysis through calls received from across Pakistan at the Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center (SLACC), a twenty-four-hour hotline that provides legal advice to callers. The call analysis is divided into three main time periods: the baseline period pre-lockdown; the passive period during the lockdown but prior to LAS' mass media campaign; and the active period during the lockdown and following a mass media campaign to increase awareness about the legal hotline. The findings show a decrease in reporting of SGBV-related issues during the imposition of the lockdown and a marked increase in the proportion of SGBV reporting after the mass media campaign conducted by LAS. Total number of calls to SLACC more than doubled from 3,459 calls in May 2020 to 7,025 calls in June 2020. An in-depth analysis of the nature of reported queries also shows that SGBV queries as a proportion of total registered queries tripled from May 2020 (7%) to June 2020 (20%). Analyzing the sources of information for callers reporting issues of SGBV, we note that two-third (66%) of callers heard about SLACC services from the SMS received. In addition to the increase in SGBV reporting during the active period, this study points to the success of the mass media campaigns to increase awareness amongst citizens as a means of empowering survivors of SGBV issues to come forward and seek assistance to end their victimization.

1. Introduction

According to the UN Women, globally, 243 million women and girls aged 15-49 are subjected to sexual or physical violence perpetrated by an intimate partner³. In this respect, Pakistan ranks as the sixth most dangerous country for women⁴. The Federal Ministry of Human Rights estimates that 28% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence; 6% have experienced sexual violence; and 34% of married Pakistani women have experienced spousal physical, sexual, or emotional violence.⁵

There is now an international consensus that gender-based inequality in all spheres of life is compounded during pandemics and lockdowns. With the spread of COVID-19, lockdown measures across the world have disrupted movement, livelihoods, and all forms of protective networks for victims of domestic and other gender-based violence.⁶ Countries such as France and Argentina have reported an increase of anywhere between 25% and 30% in SGBV after the imposition of lockdown measures⁷ and an Australian survey reveals 1 in 10 women in relationships has experienced physical or sexual violence in the past three months.⁸

Reasons are multifold. Lockdown measures may require women to be in continual close contact with their abusers in situations of heightened stress and uncertainty, which can cause the latter to lash out and exercise punitive action.⁹ Women are further cut off from access to support systems, such as family members or friends, as well as essential health service providers, hotlines, crisis centers, shelters, and courts.¹⁰ Additionally, unemployment rates – for both men and women – may skyrocket, which opens women up to increased economic abuse.¹¹ In countries like India and Pakistan¹², for instance, where the informal sector is largely dominated by women, the workforce is at risk of losing their jobs and the financial threat for both men and women creates “a pressure cooker of uncertainty, frustration and stress”¹³

Pakistan has emerged as the COVID-19 hotspot in South Asia, with one of the highest number of cases. The provincial disaggregated data tells us that Sindh has led the numbers in terms of the

³ “COVID-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls,” (2020), 2.

⁴ Frank Jacobs, (Big Think, December 6, 2019)

⁵ Ministry of Human Rights, GoP, (2020).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Related stats: Cyprus and Singapore helplines have registered a 30% and 33% increase in calls respectively and an increase in demand for shelters in Canada, Germany, Spain, the UK and the US was observed

⁸ Hayley Boxall, Anthony Morgan and Rick Brown, (2020)

⁹ “WHO Webinar series, (April 2, 2020).

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² The current statistics hold that around 20% of Pakistan’s female population is part of the labor market, of which a large proportion is involved in the informal market. (Ministry of Human Rights, GoP.)

¹³ Rakhi Ghoshal. (2020), 2.

total number of cases (115,883) and recoveries (100,002)¹⁴. The government's policy directives and plans of action to respond to the rising number of cases (including a full lockdown, a selective lockdown as well as restrictions on mobility¹⁵) have shown little recognition of the serious consequences women face during lockdown measures, including domestic, economic, gender-based, physical and online violence¹⁶. For instance, an article posted in the Dawn on 3rd June, 2020 revealed a massive bump alone in the reports of cyber harassment, made to the Digital Rights Foundation (DRF) in Pakistan¹⁷. Of this rise, a significant 74% of complaints were registered by women in the months of March and April, since the commencement of the lockdown¹⁸. Additionally, in the Eastern Punjab province the government officials reported a 25% increase in DV cases in between the months of March and May¹⁹.

There is staggering amount of data in countries and cities remarking a spike in DV cases since the implementation of measures to control the spread of the virus. However, the availability of support services has significantly gone down²⁰. Likewise, in the context of Sindh, *the Rapid Assessment on Current Status of Essential Services* conducted by LAS shows that due to closure of administrative departments such as Women Development Department (WDD) and Social Welfare Department (SWD) delivery of responsive essential services to victims of SGBV has been adversely affected²¹. This is particularly seen in the reduced numbers of survivors reporting to shelter homes as evidenced by Panaah's records that only 5% of walk-in cases have been received during the lockdown compared to 50% walk-in cases during pre-COVID times²²

In light of this context, and the lack of data-driven evidence in Pakistan regarding the increase of SGBV in pandemic situations, this rapid assessment seeks to understand the frequency and types of sexual and gender-based violence women reported experiencing when the government's directives and policy decisions regarding COVID-19 containment measures went into effect. The purpose of doing so is to compare these with data from pre-Covid-19 times to determine trends

¹⁴ (Data as of 24-07-2020) "Sindh - COVID-19 Health Advisory Platform by Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination," COVID, accessed July 28, 2020

¹⁵ Hammad Ahmed Abbasi, TRT WORLD, (Accessed June 18, 2020).

¹⁶ The *Pakistan Humanitarian Response Plan for Covid-19 pandemic* acknowledges the heightened risk of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and other forms of domestic violence facing the women in response to the aggravation in the related stressors during a pandemic. However, hardly any hard and fast implementation took place. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/globalhumanitresponseplancovid19-200510.v1.pdf>

¹⁷ "189pc increase in cyber harassment complaints during lockdown: Digital Rights Foundation". Dawn Newspaper. Posted on 3rd June, 2020. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1561065>

¹⁸ Starting from 21st March, with the lockdown initiated by Sindh Government till 25th March, every single province was under lockdown condition within Pakistan. (Anadolu, "Pakistan Extends Lockdown to April 14," The Nation (The Nation, April 1, 2020), <https://nation.com.pk/01-Apr-2020/pakistan-extends-lockdown-to-stem-coronavirus-spread>.)

¹⁹ Bari, Mavra, DW News, Accessed 29th June, 2020.

²⁰ Ghoshal, (2020), 2.

²¹ Legal Aid Society (LAS), (May, 2020), 3

²² LAS, (May, 2020), 10

and patterns over time. This will be done through an analysis of helpline data from the Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center (SLACC). Since 2018, the Sindh Law Department has partnered with the Legal Aid Society to spearhead SLACC, the twenty-four hour, toll-free helpline manned by High Court enrolled lawyers to respond to any and all legal queries received from across Pakistan and abroad.

1.1. The Shadow Pandemic and Reporting

On April 6, 2020, the Executive Director of U.N. Women released the following statement: “With 90 countries in lockdown, four billion people are now sheltering at home from the global contagion...It’s a protective measure, but it brings another deadly danger. We see a shadow pandemic growing, of violence against women.²³” As the shadow pandemic shows no signs of lessening, it is important to understand the ways in which government policies during COVID-19 on a global level exacerbate the survivors’ vulnerabilities and make it harder for them to come forward, report violence, and access state-sponsored support services.

First, spending more time in close contact with abusive family member’s present perpetrators with the opportunity to manipulate the imposed restrictions and reduce access to essential service, help or psychological support.²⁴ Second, in most countries, SGBV services are not considered essential, as a result of which during lockdowns SGBV service providers (including, helplines, first responders etc.) are often not permitted to work²⁵. In a WHO SGBV webinar conducted on the 2nd of April, 2020, the panel noted that the SGBV service providers may need to adapt a mode of service delivery that is flexible and less reliant on conventional modes of providing support to continue to provide meaningful support to survivors.²⁶

The consequence, ironically, is that while actual instances of SGBV may increase during pandemics, reporting can be seen to decrease in some countries when lockdowns and social distancing measures are imposed. Whereas in the U.K. and Cyprus, calls and messages to helplines shot up by 25% and 30%, respectively, after the lockdown, in the first week of lockdown; in India, not all helplines reported a drastic increase in DV related calls. The AKS Foundation in Delhi for example recorded a drop from 15 to 20 calls per week to seven calls—a more than a 50% drop in their call volumes²⁷. The organization reported lack of scope, privacy, and access to make calls as reasons for the drop.

The decrease in reporting is associated with a host of reasons, some of which are compounded as a result of the shortcomings in the pre-existing system. As per the Demographic Health Survey

²³ “Violence against Women and Girls: the Shadow Pandemic,” UN Women, (April 6, 2020)

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ Dorcas Erskine, (Unicef, 2020).

²⁶ WHO Webinar series, (April 2, 2020).

²⁷ Ghoshal, (2020), 3.

of 2017-18 conducted in Pakistan, one-third women, aged 15-19 recalled instances of physical violence by someone in the immediate family. Amongst these women, half did not register a complaint because of “the stigma and patriarchal notions of privacy attached to violence within the home”²⁸. The likelihood of timely reporting further reduces with the existing ‘gender digital divide’ due to which women have restricted or no access to mobile phones, computers and internet^{29 30}. The increasing risk of online or ICT-facilitated violence may further restrict the online presence of women. Eventually resulting in inaccessibility to online services, which include accessing legal support³¹.

The trend of low reporting and access is very much the case in Pakistan, too. The Pakistan’s Ministry of Human Rights setup a helpline (1099) and a WhatsApp number (0333 9085709) to report cases of DV under lockdown,³² however few efforts were made towards raising awareness about the helpline. In a country where women are 54% more likely to have limited access to information in comparison to men³³ under normal circumstances, this outcome is not surprising. A rapid assessment survey conducted two weeks into the pandemic by the UN Women’s Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), revealed that from their sample within Pakistan, 32% women reported not having received any information regarding COVID-19. The study recorded the lack of ownership of mobile phones and limited access to internet as a leading reason³⁴.

Novel in its approach and methodology, this study aims to build on the existing scant data on reporting of SGBV in Pakistan to report the prevalence of and factors contributing to such crimes, specifically in the midst of the on-going pandemic.

²⁸ UNODC, Advocacy Brief 4, (2020), 8.

²⁹ In a developed country like Italy (which recorded the highest number of deaths and the fastest rate of increases in corona cases), women found it tough to ask for help under lockdown conditions due to limited access to essential services. Along with, the inaccessibility to means such as mobile phones and emails, this resulted in 55% fewer calls in the first 2 weeks of March.

³⁰ “COVID-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls,” (2020), 6

³¹ U.N. Women. (2020), Online and ICT facilitated violence against women and girls during COVID-19

³² UNODC, Advocacy Brief 4, 9

³³ Ministry of Human Rights, GoP.

³⁴ U.N Women, Survey shows that COVID-19 has gendered effects in Asia and the Pacific, (29th April 2020)

2. Methodology

This study uses a quantitative approach for trend analysis. Data collected by SLACC between 1st December 2019 and 5th July 2020 is evaluated for any changes in the reporting of violence against women prior to, during, and after the imposition of the nation-wide lockdown in response to the outbreak of COVID-19. This study also analyzes the effect of increased awareness on reporting of SGBV cases during the state of lockdown.

While similar methodology of utilizing call center information for the study of SGBV-related legal needs has been undertaken by Spittal et. al. in a study of one of the largest crisis helplines in Australia,³⁵ this study is the first in Pakistan (to the best of our knowledge) to use call content from a legal aid helpline for the purpose of understanding the needs of victims of SGBV in this context. To the best of our knowledge, this report is also the first to attempt to identify changing trends in reporting on SGBV in Pakistan following the outbreak of COVID-19 using call center data.

SLACC utilizes a customized Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that documents the queries received and the legal advice offered by the lawyers. This information is documented at two levels—the caller and the query (where each query is not necessarily representative of a call). This distinction between query and call is key to understanding the methodology of data analysis utilized by this study and the consequent results: calls may contain one or more queries which are then entered into the CRM system by the SLACC lawyers.

Since calls are bifurcated into queries as per the discretion of the SLACC lawyers, there is an inherent inconsistency in the raw data received from the SLACC server—some queries may be clubbed within one call and categorized for only one of the multiple issues raised within the call whereas others may be categorized separately. Since an individual ID is assigned to each data entry, it is difficult to assume instances in which multiple queries may be pertaining to the same call. The unit of analysis used for this report is built on queries as identified by the SLACC lawyers and then further expanded to include each individual issue relating to instances of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. This ensures uniformity within our primary unit of analysis. An example is provided below:

³⁵ Matthew J Spittal et al, (2014), 1.

Table 1: Expansion of Unit of Analysis based on SLACC Queries

Inquiry (Query ID)	Individual cases of SGBV identified by Call Center Lawyers (Queries)	Expanded issues of SGBV identified as unit of analysis (Issues of SGBV)
The caller stated that her husband wants to contract second marriage and kicked her out of the house. In this regard, caller seeks advice.	Polygamy	Polygamy
		Forcing out of House
Caller stated that her cousin aged 22 years solemnized marriage. After 8 days of marriage, her husband started to beat her and pronounced divorce. When her cousin’s parents approached the ex-husband’s house to collect dowry articles, they discovered that all furniture was damaged. They are seeking legal advice as to how the dowry articles may be recovered?	Financial Deprivation	Physical Assault/Torture
		Dissolution of Marriage
		Financial Deprivation

Since this activity has been undertaken for queries pertaining to SGBV *only*, this report utilizes query-level information as identified by the lawyers for a summarized understanding of SGBV queries as a proportion of total queries across the time period of the study. On the other hand, this report utilizes expanded information for individual issues for a methodological understanding of changes in the *type* of violence perpetuated against women before and during the pandemic. For the purpose of establishing clarity, this study will use the term “query” to relate to information entered by lawyers against each individual Query ID and the term “issue”

to relate to distinct issues of gender-based violence identified within *each* entry against a Query ID.

All SGBV issues are categorized as pertaining to either Domestic Violence or Non-Domestic Violence and as issues of either Physical Violence or Non-Physical Violence.

This study defines domestic violence as violence against women perpetrated by a family member (where family is established by blood or marriage or both). *It includes acts of control, physical abuse, sexual violence, intimidation and isolation, verbal abuse including threats and coercion and economic abuse.*³⁶

Non-domestic violence, on the other hand, as defined for the purpose of this study relates to *violence against women perpetrated by the general society (i.e. where the offender is not related to the victim by either blood or marriage or both) which may be physical, sexual, psychological, financial/ economic or a combination of any/all.*³⁷

Physical violence is categorized as *acts aimed at physically hurting the victim and include, but are not limited to acts like pushing, grabbing, twisting the arm, pulling hair, slapping, kicking, biting or hitting with a fist or object, trying to strangle or suffocate, burning or scalding on purpose, or threatening or attacking with some sort of weapon, gun or knife or sexually abusing and assaulting.*³⁸ Issues of physical violence are further divided into six sub-categories

Non-physical violence as defined for the purpose of this study refers to intentionally harmful/controlling behavior towards women that leads to any type of harm to their mental/psychological/emotional/financial well-being *including verbal assaults, insults, threats, intimidation, humiliation, harassment, infantilization, isolation from family, friends, or regular activities, and giving the "silent treatment".*³⁹ For this study, all reported instances with a *threat* of physical violence are categorized as current issues of non-physical violence. Issues of non-physical violence are further divided into seven sub-categories.

The chart below visually represents the categorization of SGBV issues used in this report:

³⁶ "About Domestic Violence ," Arizona Coalition: To End Sexual & Domestic Violence.

³⁷ UNODC, Criminal Justice Handbook Series (2014), 7-8.

³⁸ United Nations, 2014. Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women, 2014, 2.

³⁹ Seff, Laura, Richard Beaulaurier, and Frederick Newman, (2008),

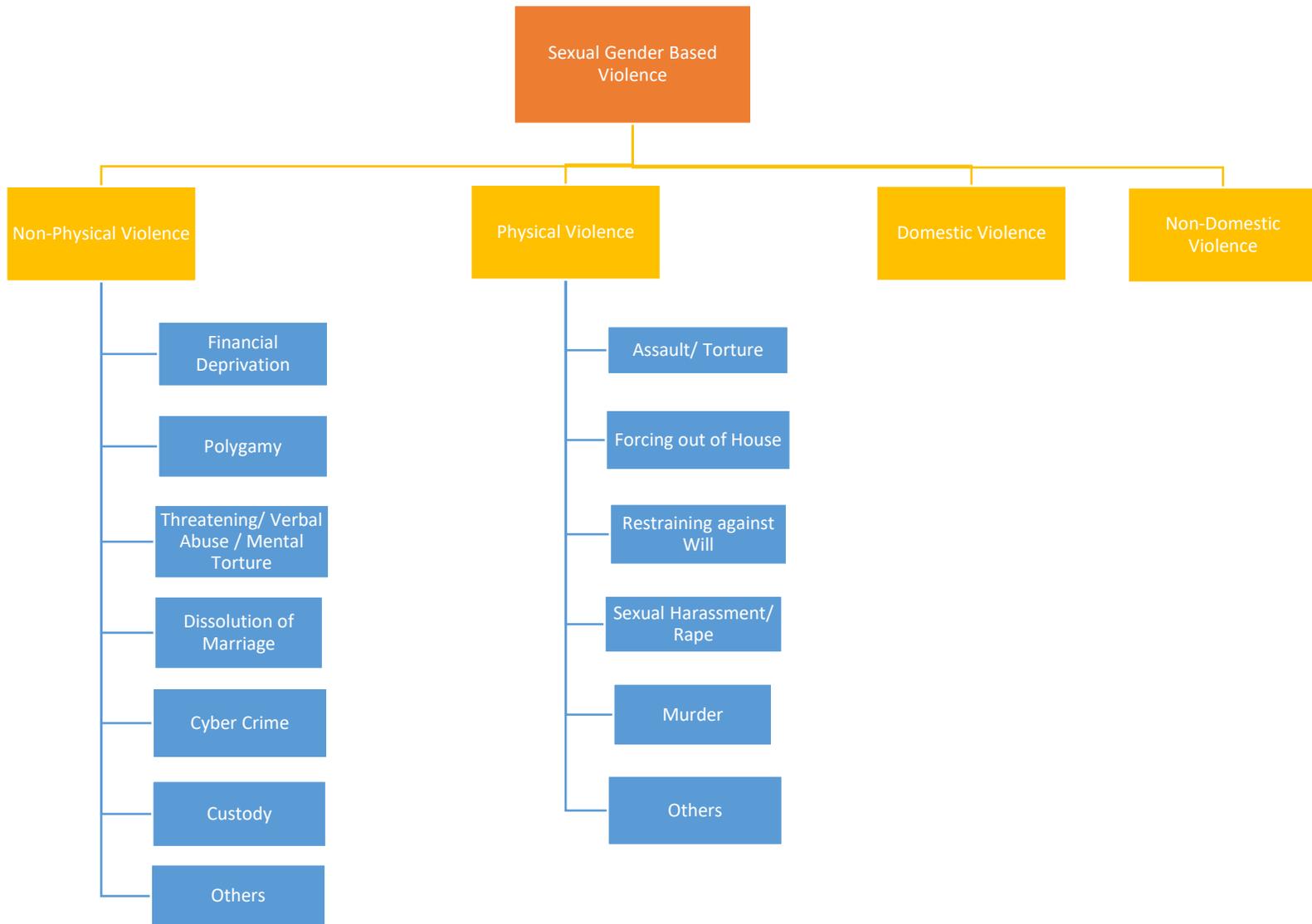


Figure 1: Categorization of SGBV Issues

Data cleaning and analysis is conducted across three time periods: Baseline, i.e. the pre-lockdown period from December 1st 2019 – March 22nd 2020; Passive, i.e. during the lockdown period but prior to LAS’s media campaign from March 23rd 2020 – May 31st 2020; and Active, i.e. during the lockdown period and following a mass media campaign introduced by LAS aimed at increasing awareness regarding SLACC from June 1st 2020 – July 5th 2020.

LAS ran the SMS campaign between 29th May to 4th July through four different telecommunication service providers namely Ufone, Telenor, Zong and Jazz with each of the four service providers running a week-long pilot campaign from 29th May to 25th June 2020. For the remaining days, telecom providers ran a SMS campaign on rotation basis.

For the first month, between 29th May and 30th June, the SMS campaign focused on two messages, both of which were drafted in Urdu:

SMS 1: *If you are a victim of domestic violence or beating/battering at home, call on 0800-70806 for free legal advice from our expert lawyers.*

SMS 2: *You can now receive free legal advice from the comfort of your home; call on 0800-70806 for free legal advice from our expert lawyers.*

Between 1st July to 4th July, LAS introduced two new messages as part of the SMS campaign. Both messages were drafted in Urdu:

SMS 3: *Learn more about dissolution of marriage by the way of Khulla, custody of children, and rights to maintenance. Call on 0800-70806 for free legal advice from our expert lawyers.*

SMS 4: *For more information on inheritance and other legal issues, call on 0800-70806 and get free legal advice from our expert lawyers.*

The table below summarizes the dates of the SMS campaign, telecommunication service providers through which messages were sent, and the number of female telephone subscribers targeted by each service provider.

Table 2: Summary of SMS Campaign

Name of Service Provider	Dates of SMS Campaign	Number of SMS sent	Content of SMS sent
Ufone	29 th May – 4 th June 2020	1,550,000	SMS 1
Telenor	5 th – 11 th June 2020	1,300,000	SMS 1
			SMS 2
Zong	12 th – 18 th June 2020	1,300,000	SMS 1
			SMS 2
Jazz	20 th – 25 th June 2020	1,050,000	SMS 1
			SMS 2
Ufone	26 th June 2020	500,000	SMS 1
Jazz	27 th June 2020	250,000	SMS 2
Telenor	29 th June 2020	250,000	SMS 1
Zong	30 th June 2020	250,000	SMS 1
Telenor	1 st – 4 th July 2020	800,000	SMS 3
			SMS 4

SLACC data was cleaned to identify queries that dealt with multiple SGBV issues and to ensure consistency in categorization. In the first phase of data cleaning, 14,776 queries were individually analyzed to identify all queries pertaining to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. This activity ensured that all SGBV queries received between December 2019 and June 2020 were included in our analysis through a cross-checking process, thereby eliminating all data entry errors in the raw dataset. In the second phase of data cleaning, a total of 1,847 SGBV queries were further subdivided to include each individual issue of SGBV raised within the query. This was then cross-checked by another member of the research team to ensure inter-coder reliability. A total of 2,341 issues were identified and categorized to quantitatively analyze the changes in the type and frequency of SGBV issues before and during the pandemic.

Data was also disaggregated across multiple personal, socio-economic, and geographical variables including caller’s city, province, sex, and age. Sex is coded into two categories (male or female) and age is coded into nine categories (<18, 18-25, 25-32, 33-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70, 71-

80, >80). While SLACC receives calls from all over the country, two-thirds (67%) of all calls between 1st December 2019 and 5th July 2020 are received from Sindh.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Profile of All Queries

Between 1st December 2019 and 5th July 2020, SLACC advocates responded to a total of 14,776 queries. Of these, two thirds (67%) of the queries were received from Sindh followed by 28% queries from Punjab. 3% of the total queries were received from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and only 1% of the queries were received from Baluchistan. Remaining 1% of the queries were received from areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and from callers residing outside of Pakistan.

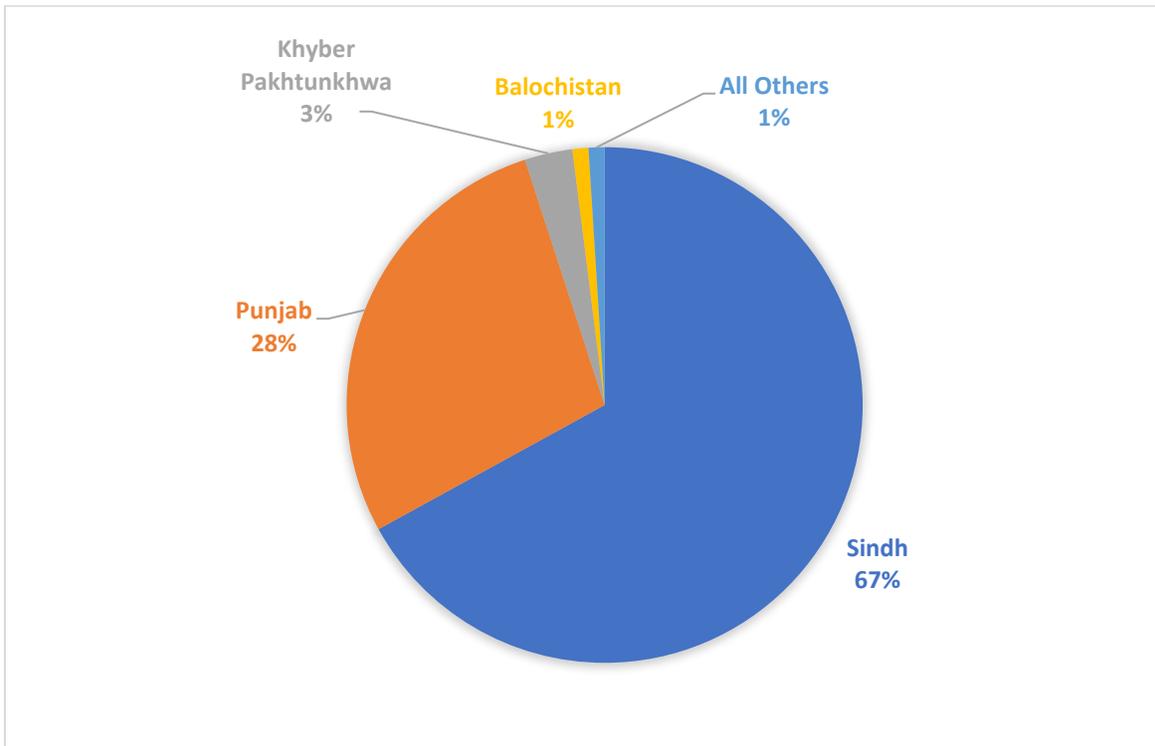


Figure 2: Location of Callers to SLACC

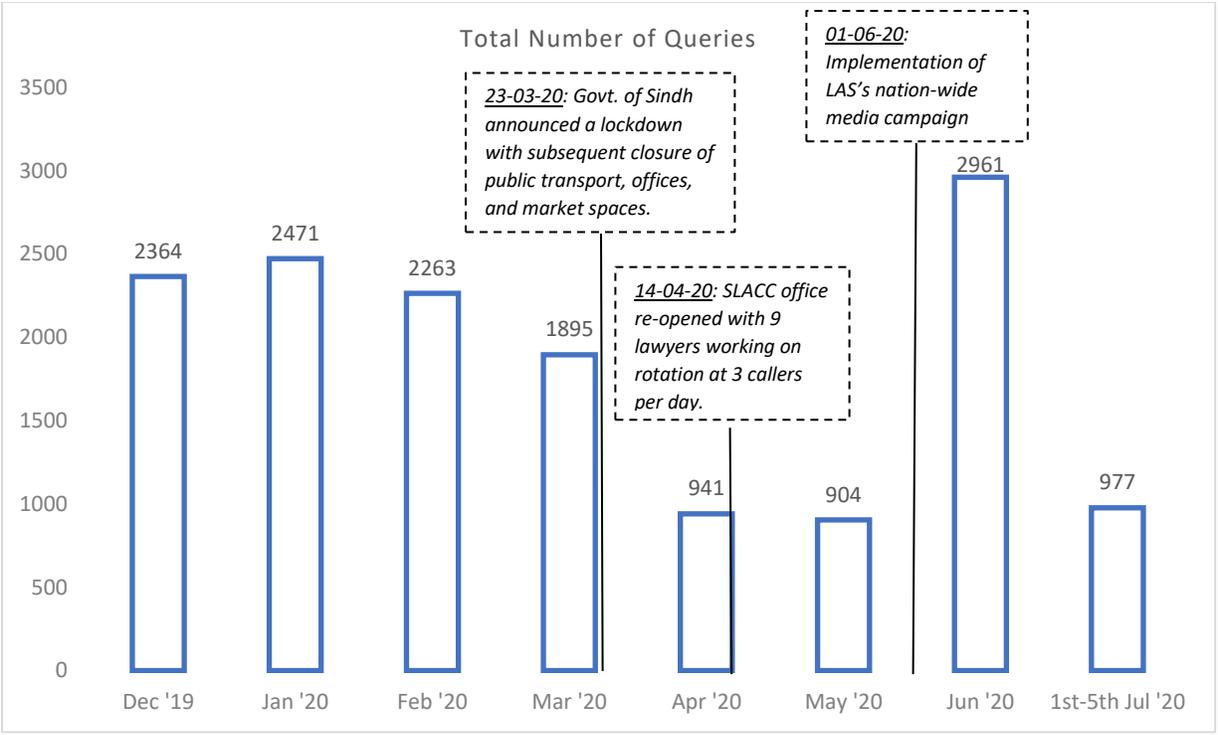


Figure 3: Total Number of Queries Received per month (Dec'19 to 5th July'20)

On 10th March 2020, Sindh reported a total of 19 confirmed COVID cases following which the provincial government imposed a temporary ban on marriage halls, lawns, banquets, and tea stalls operating past 11.15PM. This ban was then extended to educational institutes in Sindh on the 13th of March 2020 with other provinces including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa & Gilgit-Baltistan following suit. On the 18th of March, SLACC shut down its operations temporarily to limit the spread of the virus in the workplace. This was followed by a province-wide lockdown imposed in Sindh starting from 23rd March which included a complete closure of public transport, markets, offices, shopping malls, restaurants, and public areas. Consequently, SLACC remained closed for almost 4 weeks between 18th March and 13th April 2020. While the call center continued to receive queries over voicemail which were then responded to by the call center advocates working from home, we note a significant drop in total responded queries because of SLACC's closure.

While the office re-opened on 14th April 2020 after it was deemed that the functions of SLACC are crucial, resources remained limited because of the in-office SOPs. A total of 9 lawyers worked on rotation from April through June with 3 lawyers physically operating from the SLACC office daily. Consequently, the low rate of queries spilled over to May 2020. As a result, the lowest number of total queries responded to was during the passive period between March 23rd and May 31st.

For an in-depth understanding of calls received and queries responded to by the SLACC lawyers, this report evaluates how the proportion of answered calls and abandoned calls changes over the duration of the study. Answered calls are defined as the calls which land on the SLACC telephonic software system and are answered by the SLACC lawyers, whereas abandoned calls are defined as the calls which are disconnected by the telephonic software system when no call center agent (legal advisor) is available to respond to the call. Changes in proportion of answered and abandoned calls are directly representative of the call center’s capacity and consequently help to explain changes in responded and recorded queries during the lockdown period.

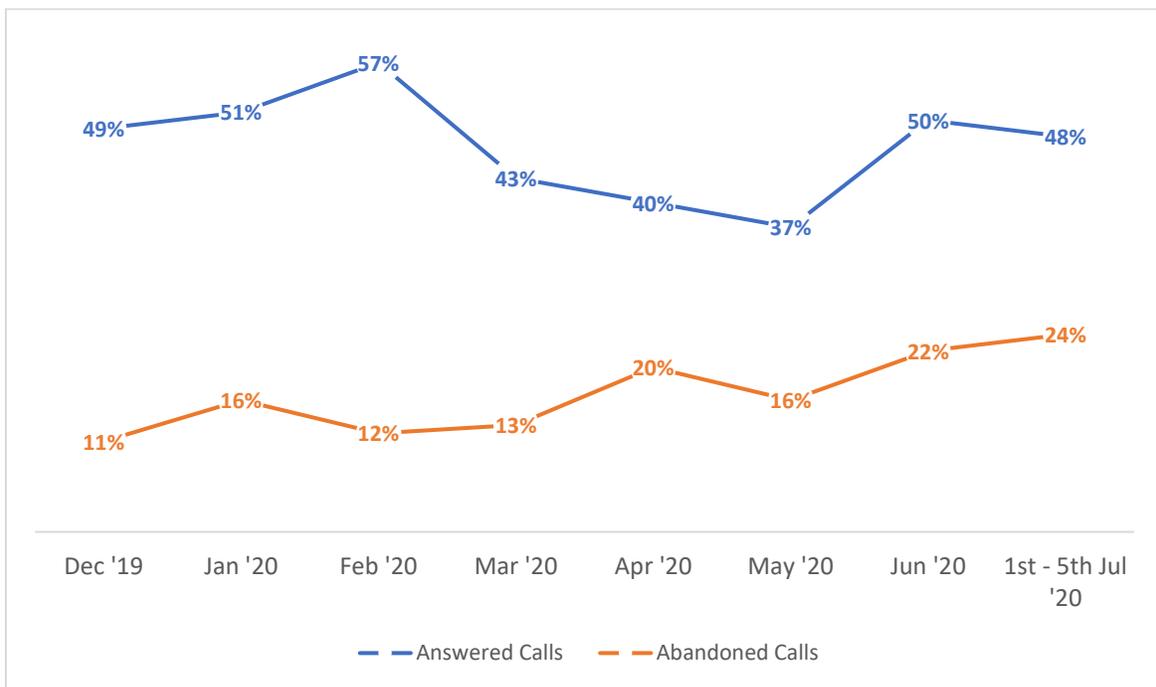


Figure 4: Percentage of Answered and Abandoned Calls received over the study duration

Calls that are not covered under those that were answered by the SLACC lawyers or those dropped by the telephonic software system are defined as terminated calls. These refer to those calls that were terminated by the caller themselves before being directed to an agent.

The decrease in answered calls and increase in abandoned calls during the passive period is explained by the decrease in SLACC working capacity to 33% due to the lockdown SOPs aimed at increasing the practice of social distancing. While the percentage of abandoned calls continued to increase in June and first week of July, SLACC also observed an increase in the percentage of answered calls during the lockdown period. This increase in the percentage of answered calls is best explained by the increase in SLACC’s working capacity from 33% to 50% in

the beginning of June 2020. We do, however, attribute the increase in abandoned calls to the overall increase in offered calls to SLACC with the implementation of LAS’s mass media campaign. The number of offered calls landing on the SLACC CRM system increased from 3,459 calls in May 2020 to 7,025 calls in June 2020 (more than 100%). The number of calls answered by the SLACC lawyers increased from 1,294 in May 2020 to 3,542 in June 2020 (almost 175%).

3.2. Characteristics of Callers

The average age of a caller reporting a legal query to SLACC between December 2019 and July 2020 was 36.5 years and majority (81%) of the total queries were reported by male callers. This gender divide in reporting can be explained as a direct consequence of the existing gender digital divide due to which women may not have access to mobile phones, computer, or internet to access services or have a private space to utilize these services⁴⁰

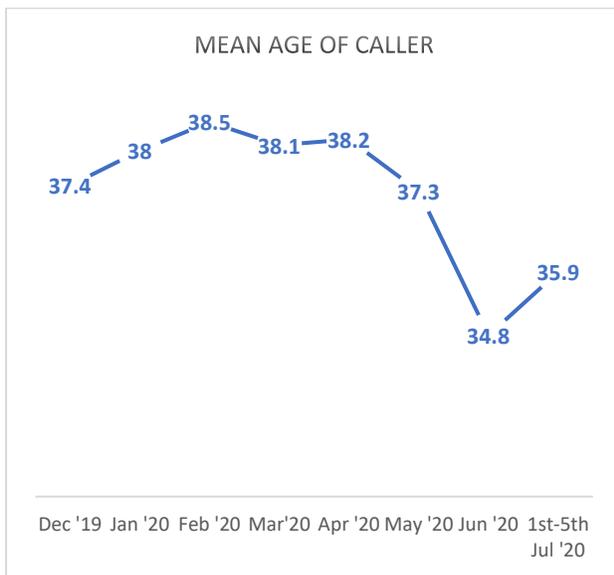


Figure 5: Mean Age of Callers

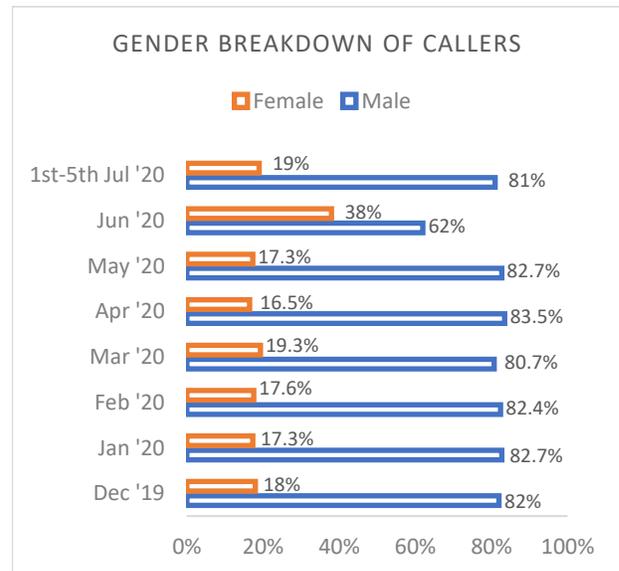


Figure 6: Gender breakdown of Callers

Most significant increase in proportion of female callers was observed during the active period, characterized by Legal Aid Society’s mass media campaign initiated towards the end of May 2020, specifically targeting female mobile phone users.

Even more significantly, we observed an increase in the share of younger callers during the active period of data collection, with the mean age of the caller dropping from 38.1 years in March 2020 to 34.8 years in June 2020.

⁴⁰ “COVID-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls”,6.

3.3. Profile of SGBV Queries

From December 2019 to March 2020, approximately 10% of all queries received pertained to violence against women. In April and May, proportion of queries related to SGBV fell to 6% and 7% respectively. This decrease in reporting can be explained as a problem of both demand and supply. Multiple studies on VAW during a pandemic show a correlation between increased violence and decreased reporting. This is most frequently attributed to lack of privacy and access for women to make calls, especially in cases where the perpetrator is a family member⁴¹. A UNODC advocacy brief also identified lack of sensitization of frontline officers, police or a proper referral system as a significant reason for non-reporting of domestic violence cases⁴². Along with the decreased reporting of violence itself, it is important to consider the supply-side limitations of SLACC with only 33% functionality during the passive period of data collection. This consequently meant that the number of lawyers available for responding to queries that landed on the SLACC hotline was lower than average.

SLACC observed a significant increase in proportion of SGBV queries during the active period of data collection (i.e. period marked by LAS’s nation-wide SMS campaign targeting women) with 20% of total queries in June and 15% of total queries between 1st-5th July relating to VAW.

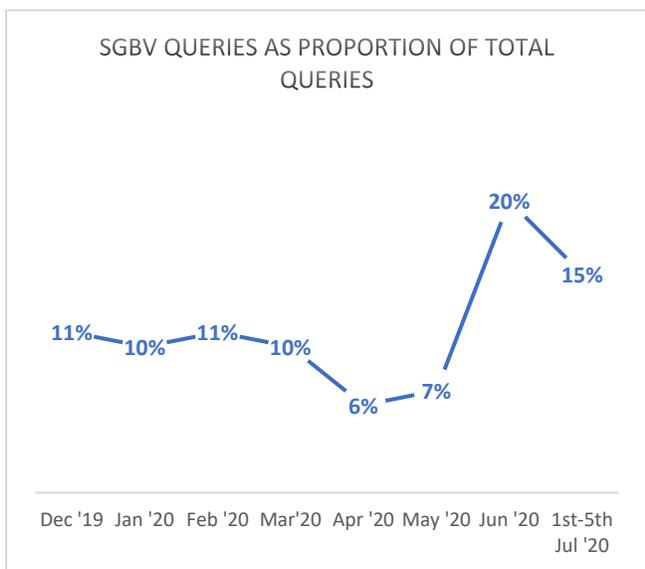


Figure 7: SGBV Queries as proportion of Total Queries

Month	Total Queries (n)	SGBV Queries (n)	SGBV Queries (%)
Dec '19	2,364	271	11.5%
Jan '20	2,471	252	10.2%
Feb '20	2,263	250	11.0%
Mar '20	1,895	195	10.3%
Apr '20	941	60	6.4%
May '20	904	65	7.2%
Jun '20	2,961	605	20.4%
1 st -5 th Jul '20	977	149	15.4%
Total	14,776	1,847	12.5%

Table 3: SGBV Queries as Proportion of Total Queries

⁴¹ Ghoshal, (2020), 4.

⁴² UNODC, Advocacy Brief 4, 8.

3.4. Categories of SGBV Issues

This study identified a total of 2,341 issues of sexual and gender-based violence within the 1,847 SGBV queries responded to by the SLACC advocates. These issues have been categorized into two subsets: as pertaining to issues of either domestic violence or non-domestic violence; and as pertaining to issues of either physical abuse or non-physical abuse.

Majority (almost **94%**) of all SGBV issues reported to SLACC between 1st December 2019 and 5th July 2020 related to matters of domestic violence and the remaining **6%** pertained to matters of non-domestic violence.

One-quarter (**25%**) of all SGBV issues reported between 1st December 2019 and 5th July 2020 related to matters of physical abuse, whereas three quarters (**75%**) of all SGBV issues reported to SLACC pertained to matters of non-physical violence.

Table 4: SGBV Issues as Proportion of Total SGBV Issues (month wise)

Month	Number of SGBV Issues pertaining to DV	Number of SGBV Issues pertaining to non-DV	Number of SGBV Issues pertaining to Physical Violence	Number of SGBV Issues Pertaining to non-Physical Violence
Dec '19	Total SGBV Issues: 341		Total SGBV Issues: 341	
	324 (95%)	17 (5%)	71 (21%)	270 (79%)
Jan '20	Total SGBV Issues: 325		Total SGBV Issues: 325	
	295 (91%)	30 (9%)	74 (23%)	251 (77%)
Feb '20	Total SGBV Issues: 334		Total SGBV Issues: 334	
	313 (94%)	21 (6%)	83 (25%)	251 (75%)
Mar '20	Total SGBV Issues: 236		Total SGBV Issues: 236	
	224 (95%)	12 (5%)	27 (11%)	209 (89%)
Apr '20	Total SGBV Issues: 67		Total SGBV Issues: 67	
	65 (97%)	2 (3%)	8 (12%)	59 (88%)
May '20	Total SGBV Issues: 79		Total SGBV Issues: 79	
	77 (97%)	2 (3%)	14 (18%)	65 (82%)
Jun '20	Total SGBV Issues: 791		Total SGBV Issues: 791	
	736 (93%)	55 (7%)	258 (33%)	533 (67%)
1 st -5 th Jul '20	Total SGBV Issues: 168		Total SGBV Issues: 168	
	163 (97%)	5 (3%)	49 (29%)	119 (71%)

The proportion of DV and non-DV issues remained more or less constant throughout the 7-month period of this study with issues of domestic violence making up an overwhelming majority (more than 90%) of total SGBV issues. Similar findings are reflected in the Demographic Health Survey of 2017-18, where evidence shows that almost one-third women between the age of 15-19 reported physical violence with almost all reporting the perpetrator to be someone in the immediate family⁴³.

On the other hand, a significant change in the proportion of physical and non-physical violence issues is observed between the passive and the active period of data collection. At the onset of the passive period, physical violence related SGBV related issues made up a mere 11-12% of the total SGBV issues, whereas, at the onset of the active period, one-third of all SGBV related issues pertained to matters of physical violence.

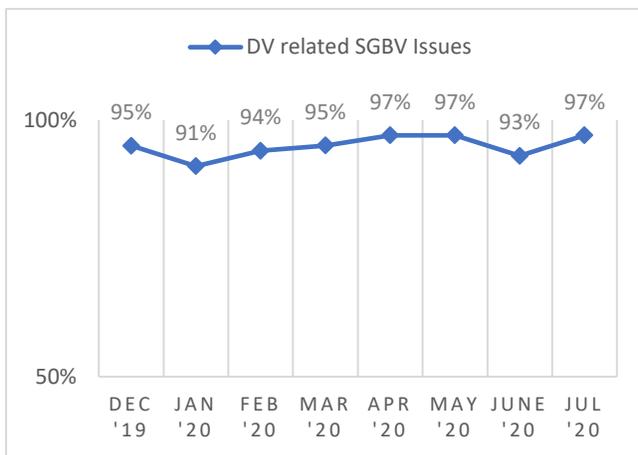


Figure 8: DV related SGBV Issues as a proportion of total SGBV Issues

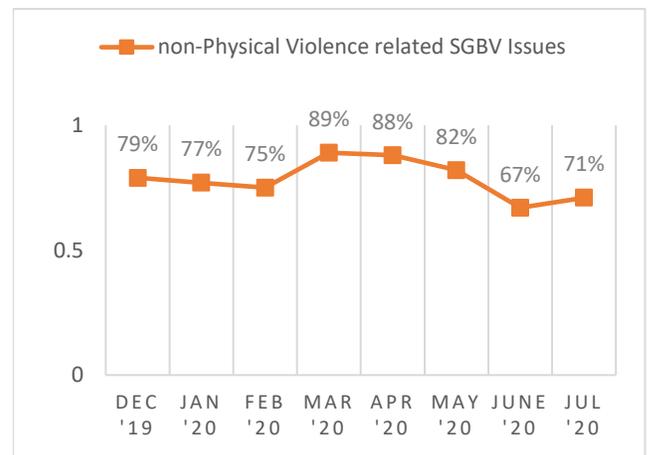


Figure 9: non-Physical Violence related SGBV Issues as a proportion of total SGBV Issues

⁴³ UNODC, Advocacy Brief 4, 8.

3.5. Physical Violence Related SGBV Issues

About one quarter (25%) of all SGBV issues reported to SLACC between 1st December 2019 and 5th July 2020 pertained to matters of physical violence.

Of these, 60% issues reported instances of physical assault including beating and battering; 14% reported instances of physical dispossession from property; 8% reported instances of sexual violation including rape; another 8% reported instances of physical restrain against the will of the victim; 2% reported instances of kidnapping; and remaining 8% reported instances of other forms of physical violence against women including murder, forced marriage and child marriage.

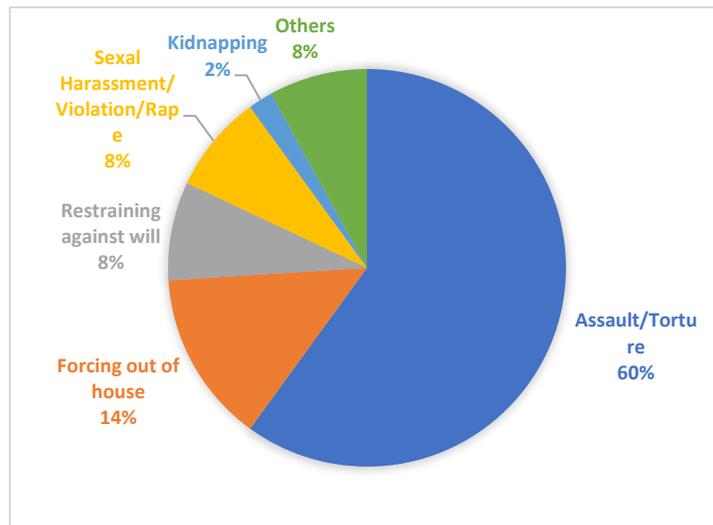


Figure 10: Physical Violence related SGBV Issues as proportion of Total SGBV Issues

Cumulatively, SLACC received 8 reports of murder that could be categorized as instances of violence against women through the period of our study. Such cases were reported to be perpetrated by both family members as well as non-family members. In February 2020, for example, SLACC received a call from a young male reporting the murder of his mother:

Caller stated that his mother had been murdered by his uncle one year ago. Accused has also accepted to committing the crime in the police station. Caller inquired if the high court has the power to revise the sentence against the accused, acquit from the charge, or deduct or increase the sentence?

In June 2020, SLACC received a call from a middle-aged male in Sindh, reporting the murder of a young girl from his area:

Caller stated that a girl had been missing from his area and her dead body was found in another jurisdiction. The caller sought advice regarding the jurisdiction in which the FIR should be registered.

SLACC also received 3 reports of child marriage and 1 report of forced marriage between 1st December 2019 and 5th July 2020. In March 2020, a middle-aged female caller from Sindh reported a case of forced marriage regarding her house help perpetrated by the victim's family:

Caller stated that her maid was forcefully married by her own family and is not consenting to the marriage nor is happy with her husband. She wants to dissolve the marriage by filing Khulla against her husband. Kindly, assist.

A deeper trend analysis of physical violence related SGBV issues shows that reporting of physical violence against women rose during the active period of data collection (June 2020). Not only was the proportion of physical violence related SGBV issues highest during this time, but the actual number of physical violence reported during June 2020 was more than thrice the number reported in any other month.

More than two-thirds (69%) of reported physical SGBV issues in June 2020 pertained to matters of physical assault/torture followed by 11% issues of physical dispossession from property, 7% issues of restraining against will, another 7% issues of sexual violation including rape, 2% of kidnapping, and 4% other issues of physical SGBV including murder and child marriage.

Table 5: Number of Reported Types of Physical Violence related SGBV Issues

	Assault/ Torture	Forcing out of House	Restraining against Will	Sexual Harassment/ Violation/ Rape	Kidnapping	Others	TOTAL
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	
Dec '19	40 (56%)	12 (17%)	5 (7%)	9 (13%)		5 (7%)	71
Jan '20	28 (38%)	9 (12%)	11 (15%)	10 (14%)	5 (7%)	11 (14%)	74
Feb '20	39 (48%)	17 (20%)	10 (12%)	7 (8%)		10 (12%)	83
Mar '20	18 (64%)	4 (14%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)		4 (14%)	28
Apr '20	5 (62.5%)	1 (12.5%)	1 (12.5%)			1 (12.5%)	8
May '20	11 (79%)	3 (21%)					14
Jun '20	177 (69%)	29 (11%)	19 (7%)	18 (7%)	5 (2%)	9 (4%)	257

1 st -5 th Jul '20	32 (65%)	7 (14%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)		6 (12%)	49
TOTAL	350	82	49	47	10	46	584

A gender-wise analysis of physical SGBV issues reported to SLACC during the 7 months period of this study shows a significant increase in reporting by women from February 2020 (48%) to March 2020 (73%). This increase in reporting of physical SGBV issues by women is constant for the months following the initial lockdown decision implemented in Pakistan on March 23rd.

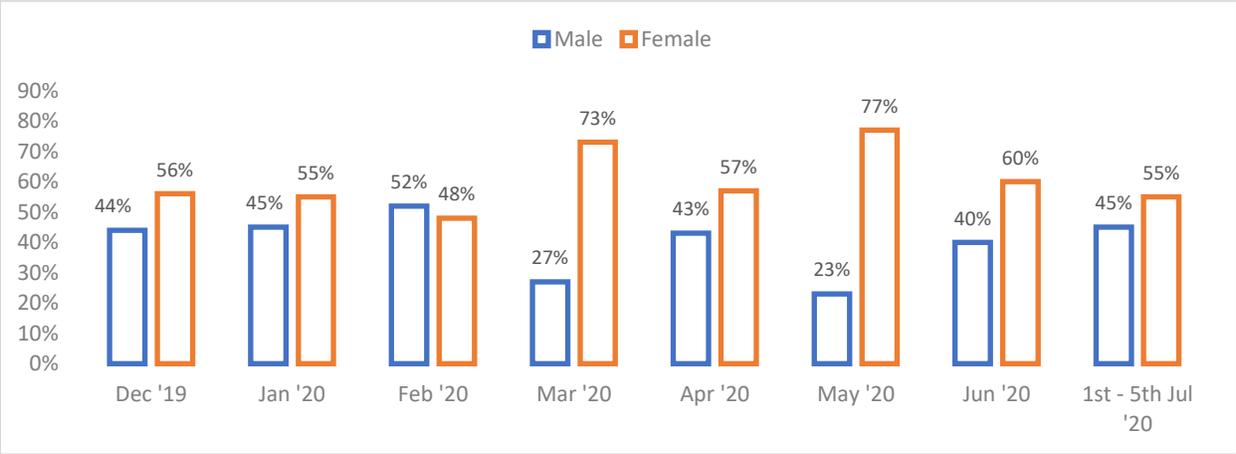


Figure 11: Gender disaggregation of reported Physical Violence SGBV Issues

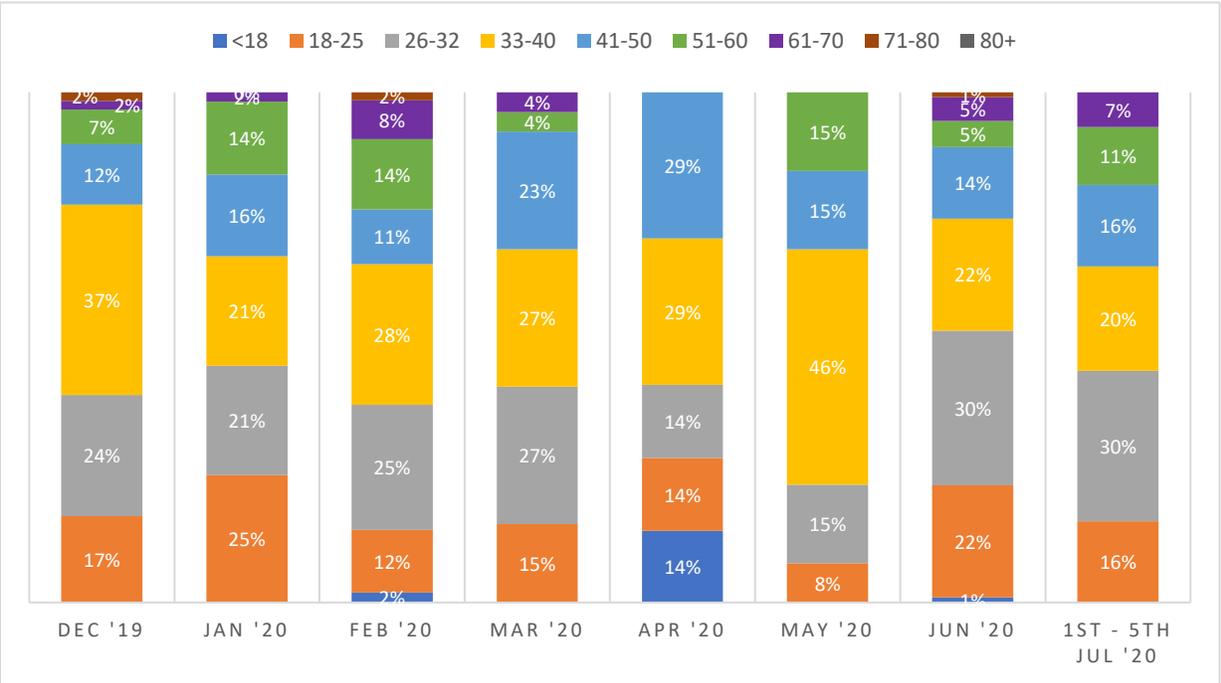


Figure 12: Age-wise distribution of callers reporting Physical SGBV Issues

Callers between the ages of 26 to 40 form the most significant proportion of callers relating incidents of physical SGBV throughout the period of this study. There is no significant trend that correlates age as a key determinant of reporting on physical SGBV in the times of a pandemic. We do observe an increase in callers between ages of 41 and 50 immediately following the COVID outbreak in late March, however, this decreases again for the month of May.

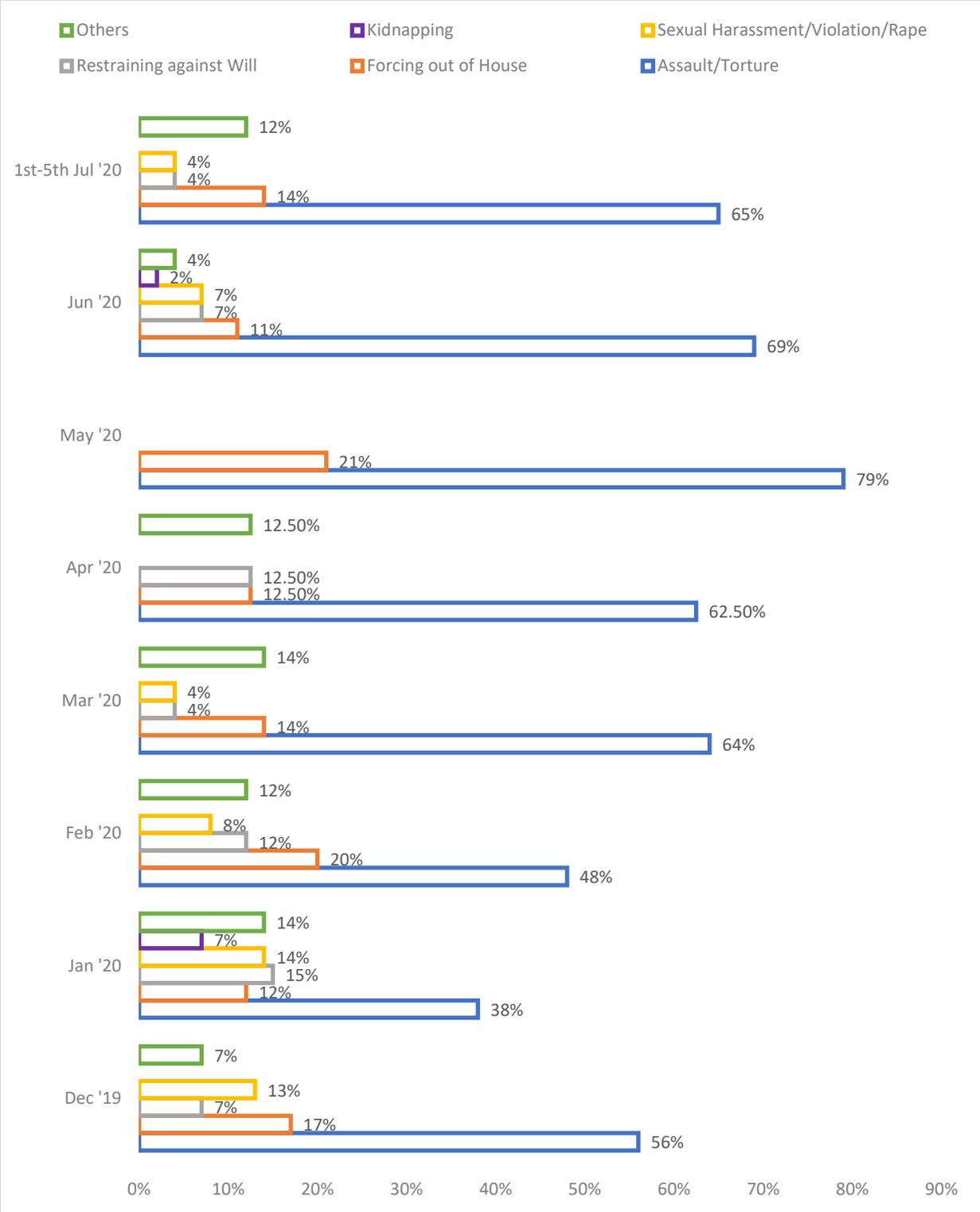


Figure 13: Proportion of Reported Types of Physical Violence SGBV Issues (month-wise)

3.6. Non- Physical Violence Related SGBV Issues

Three quarters (75%) of all SGBV issues reported to SLACC between 1st December 2019 and 5th July 2020 pertained to matters of non-physical violence.

Of these, half (50%) pertained to issues of financial deprivation, 14% pertained to issues of dissolution of marriage, 9% pertained to issues of verbal abuse including threatening, blackmailing and defamation, 7% pertained to matters of child custody, 6% reported practice of polygamy, 2% pertained to instances of abandonment, 1% pertained to cybercrime, and 11% reported other forms of non-physical violence including forced marriage and child marriage.

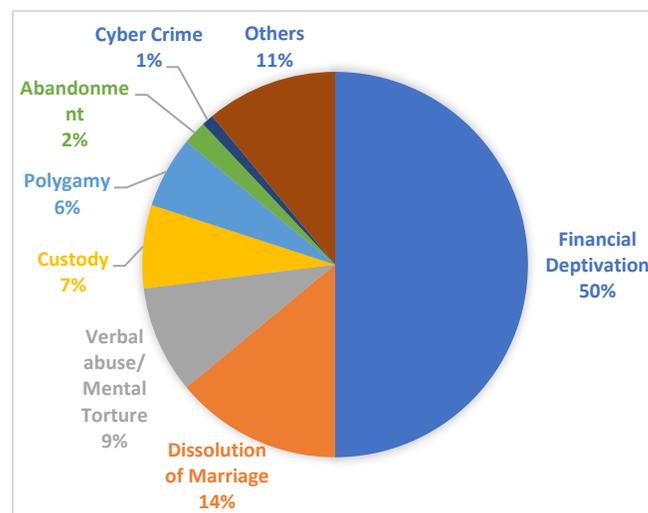


Figure 14: Non- Physical Violence related SGBV Issues as proportion of Total SGBV Issues

For the purpose of this study, all reported issues pertaining to the *threat* of physical violence are categorized as current issues of non-physical violence. This includes 8 reported instances of *threat* of forced marriage and 3 reported instances of *threat* of child marriage. In June 2020, a minor girl from Sindh reported that her brother was pressurizing her to marry against her will:

Caller reported that her brother is pressurizing her to marry a person against her will. In this regard she needs our legal help.

A similar report was received from an adult female from Sindh against her parents in March 2020:

Caller stated that her parents want to contract her marriage against her will; she is seeking legal remedy.

While most instances of forced marriages were reported as violence perpetuated by family members, SLACC received one report of forced marriage being perpetrated by a non-family member in March 2020:

Caller stated that someone residing in her neighborhood wants to marry her forcibly. They constantly intimidate her by using abusive language and demanding sexual favors. She is seeking legal advice.

A deeper trend analysis of non-physical violence SGBV issues shows that while the proportion of non-physical SGBV issues was lowest during the active period (June 2020), the actual number of reported issues was more than twice that of any other month. We particularly notice a significant increase in the reporting of issues of financial deprivation, which can be explained as a triadic phenomenon.

The first is the domestic aspect of financial deprivation, explained by Ghoshal as “a pressure cooker of uncertainty, frustration and stress”⁴⁴. There is significant literature that explores the correlation between lockdown, job insecurity and increased risk of domestic economic abuse on women⁴⁵. The primary argument looks at women as the ultimate cost bearers of not only decreased economic well-being of a household, but also as the consequent sufferers of other forms of violence that may be perpetrated due to the financial difficulties. Schneider, for example, reports that unemployment at the household level during the Great Recession in the United States is positively correlated to abusive behaviors against women⁴⁶.

The second phenomenon that may be attributed as a cause of increased financial abuse during pandemics is explored by Ghoshal who notes the inherent disadvantage women face as the primary occupants of the informal economy in India⁴⁷. A comparative study of the informal economy in Pakistan paints a similar picture: according to the Ministry of Human Rights Pakistan, 20% of Pakistan’s female population is part of the labor market, of which a large proportion is part of the informal market⁴⁸. In economies where women are already financially disadvantaged, the impact of increased unemployment during times of health crises such as COVID-19 is disproportionately higher for the female labor force.

⁴⁴ Ghoshal, (2020), 2.

⁴⁵ WHO Webinar Series, (April 2, 2020).

⁴⁶ Peterman et.al, (2020), 8

⁴⁷ Ghoshal, (2020), 2.

⁴⁸ Ministry of Human Rights, GoP.

The third explanation of increased financial deprivation amongst women is explained using the SLACC data. In certain cases, existing legal issues of financial abuse are exaggerated due to the limited resources available during lockdown. In July, SLACC received a call from a young female reporting delays in her maintenance suit.

Caller stated that she has filed a suit for maintenance which was fixed for hearing on 24 March 2020. Her advocate informed her that no date of hearing is fixed due to the lockdown. She is now seeking legal advice on how to expedite the process.

A similar issue of exaggerated financial abuse was shared by a middle-aged female caller from Sindh:

Caller stated issue of an immovable property that was owned by her deceased husband on a 50% sharing basis. The remaining 50% share belongs to her deceased husband's brother. Caller stated that as a widow she has filed a suit of partition on behalf of her children before the Honorable Court. Her Civil Matter is on revision now and she is awaiting the next date of hearing. Due to the lock down situation, her matter is pending. Kindly, assist.

Financial deprivation made the largest proportion of reported non-physical SGBV issues throughout the period of this study. At the beginning of the active period (June 2020), while reporting of number of cases of financial violence was highest across the duration of the study, the proportion of these cases when compared to remaining reports of non-physical SGBV issues was amongst the lowest. A little less than half (45%) of all reported non-physical SGBV issues in June 2020 pertained to instances of financial deprivation while 18% pertained to dissolution of marriage. Around 1 in 7 (13%) of the cases pertained to issues of verbal abuse or mental torture including blackmailing, threatening, and defamation. 8% of the reported cases pertained to instances of polygamy and 7% pertained to issues of child custody. 3% of the reported issues dealt with instances of abandonment while 1% reported instances of cybercrime. Remaining 6% dealt with other issues including threats of any type of physical harm.

Table 6: Number of Reported Types of Non-Physical Violence related SGBV Issues

	Financial Deprivation	Dissolution of Marriage	Verbal Abuse/Mental Torture	Custody	Polygamy	Abandonment	Cyber Crime	Other	TOTAL
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	
Dec '19	135 (50%)	34 (13%)	18 (7%)	20 (7%)	12 (4%)	6 (2%)	3 (1%)	42 (16%)	270
Jan '20	113 (45%)	32 (13%)	22 (9%)	23 (9%)	12 (5%)	3 (1%)	2 (1%)	44 (17%)	251
Feb '20	129 (51%)	29 (12%)	24 (10%)	11 (4%)	19 (8%)	7 (3%)	3 (1%)	29 (11%)	251
Mar '20	121 (58%)	28 (14%)	7 (3%)	16 (8%)	13 (6%)		3 (1%)	21 (10%)	209
Apr '20	33 (56%)	9 (15%)	3 (5%)	2 (3%)	3 (5%)	3 (5%)	1 (2%)	5 (9%)	59
May '20	42 (65%)	7 (11%)	1 (2%)	5 (8%)	4 (6%)			6 (9%)	65
Jun '20	240 (45%)	95 (18%)	68 (13%)	36 (7%)	41 (8%)	14 (3%)	6 (1%)	33 (6%)	533
1 st -5 th Jul '20	70 (59%)	12 (10%)	10 (8%)	10 (8%)	6 (5%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	9 (8%)	119
TOTAL	883	246	153	123	110	34	19	189	1,757

A gender-wise analysis of non-physical SGBV issues reported to SLACC during the 7 months period of this study shows a significant increase in reporting by women during the passive period of data collection (between March 23rd and May 31st). However, proportion of women reporting non-physical SGBV cases fell again during the active period of data collection from 1st June to 5th July 2020.

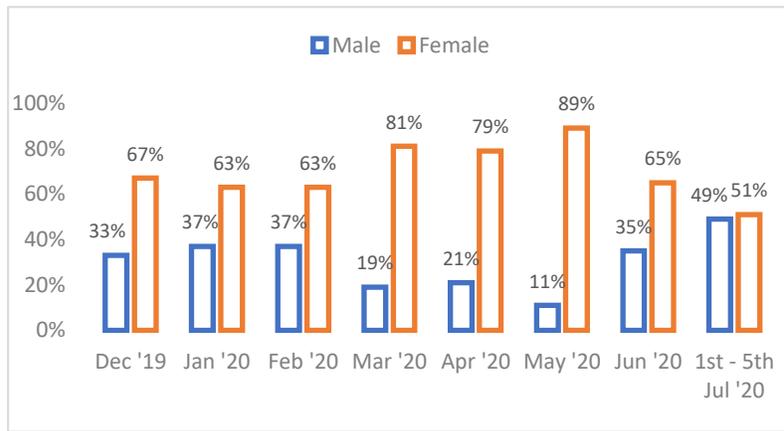


Figure 15: Gender Disaggregation of Reported Non-Physical SGBV Issues

There is no significant trend that correlates age as a key determinant of reporting on non-physical SGBV issues in the times of a pandemic.

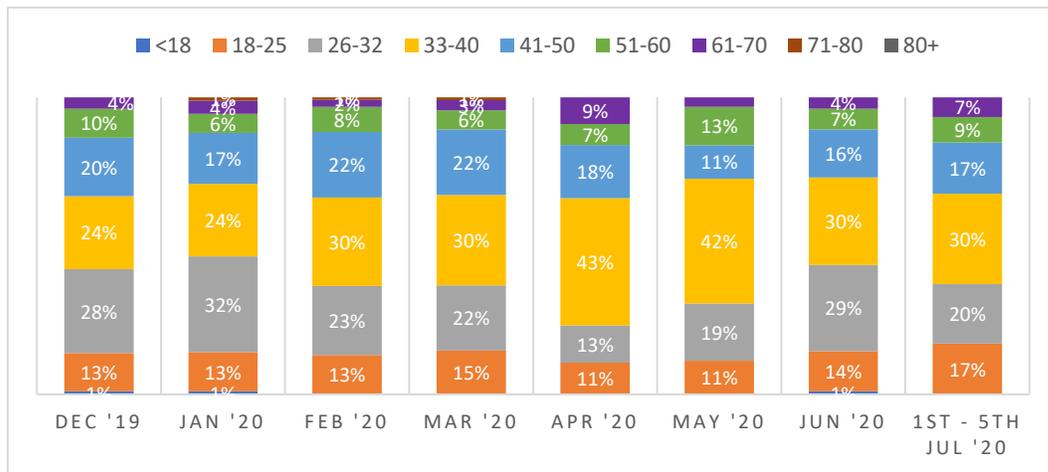


Figure 16: Age-wise distribution of Callers reporting Non-Physical SGBV Issues

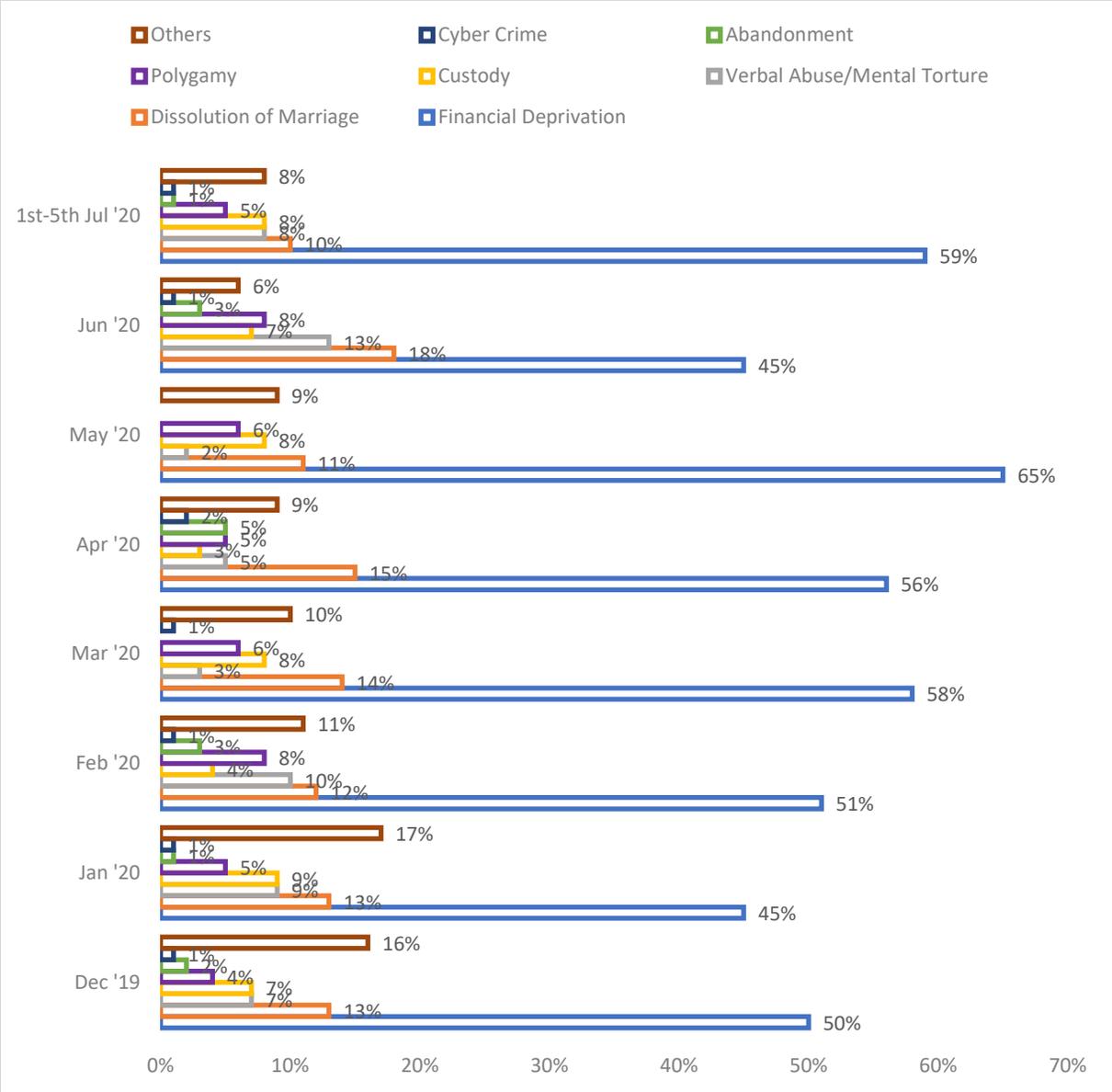


Figure 17: Proportion of Reported Types of Non-Physical Violence SGBV Issues (month-wise)

3.7. Sources of Information Regarding SLACC- all Callers

SLACC uses multiple marketing campaigns to increase outreach. This includes social media publicity, advertisements on TV/Cable, posters and publicity boards outside police stations, posters on public vehicles including rickshaws, SMS campaigns and postings in various local newspapers.

For the purpose of this study, LAS introduced an SMS campaign on the 29th of May targeted towards female mobile users in Pakistan. The campaign was run in collaboration with four telecommunication service providers in Pakistan and contained messages specific to VAW. At a cursory glance alone, we noticed a significant impact of the mass media campaign as number of queries addressed to SLACC after receiving the SMS in June is approximately 75% greater than in May.

Table 7: Reported Source of Information for all SLACC calls

	Internet/ Social Media	Magazine/ Newspaper	SMS	TV/ Cable	Vehicle Poster	Word of Mouth	Wall Poster/ Brochure	Others	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	
Dec '19	132 (6%)	67 (3%)	909 (38%)	739 (31%)	101 (4%)	178 (8%)	85 (4%)	151 (6%)	2362
Jan '20	197 (8%)	43 (2%)	933 (38%)	778 (31%)	164 (7%)	213 (9%)	87 (4%)	55 (2%)	2470
Feb '20	213 (9%)	47 (2%)	911 (40%)	588 (26%)	100 (4%)	205 (9%)	91 (4%)	108 (5%)	2263
Mar '20	169 (9%)	43 (2%)	838 (44%)	378 (20%)	107 (6%)	186 (10%)	109 (6%)	64 (3%)	1894
Apr '20	54 (6%)	28 (3%)	388 (41%)	266 (28%)	36 (4%)	87 (9%)	57 (6%)	25 (3%)	941
May '20	47 (5%)	14 (2%)	509 (56%)	135 (15%)	50 (6%)	89 (10%)	34 (4%)	26 (3%)	904
Jun '20	74 (6%)	10 (1%)	898 (72%)	114 (9%)	25 (2%)	92 (7%)	28 (2%)	14 (1%)	1255
1 st – 5 th Jul '20	56 (6%)	7 (1%)	746 (76%)	51 (5%)	13 (1%)	48 (5%)	23 (2%)	33 (3%)	977

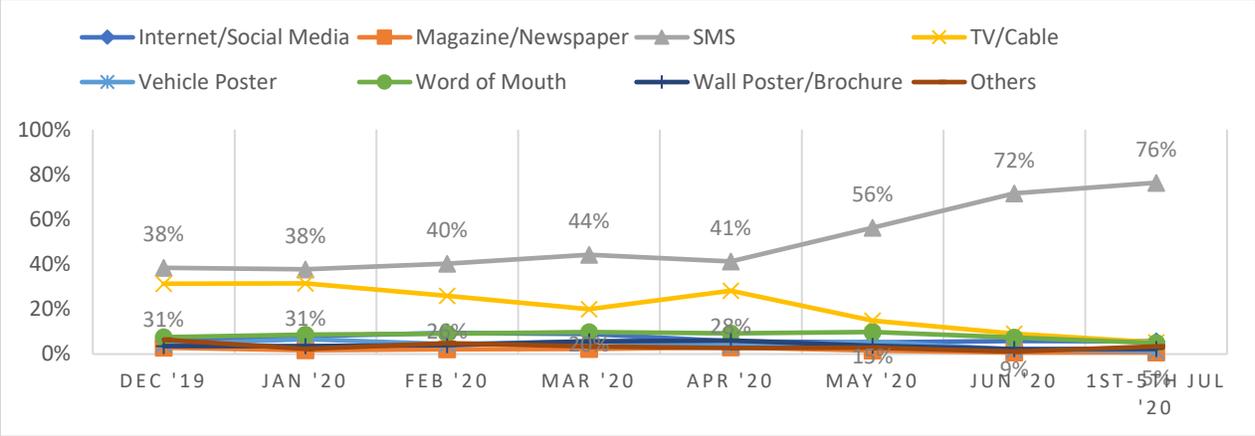


Figure 18: Percentage (%) of Reported Sources of Information for all SLACC Calls

3.8. Sources of Information Regarding SLACC- Callers relating SGBV Queries

Three of the four SMS campaigns run by LAS during the active period of data collection focused specifically on matters of domestic sexual and gender-based violence including beating/battery; domestic financial abuse including matters of inheritance/maintenance; dissolution of marriage and custody of children. One campaign relayed information on SLACC’s capacity to cater to general legal issues.

This campaign aimed specifically at increasing awareness regarding the legal remedies available to victims of SGBV in Pakistan. A trend analysis of SGBV related queries received between 1st December 2019 and 5th July 2020 validates the impact of the campaign- proportion of callers reporting SGBV queries after learning about SLACC from SMS received doubled from May to June 2020. In June, two-thirds (66%) of callers reporting SGBV queries learned about SLACC after receiving an SMS regarding the services.

Table 8: Reported Source of Information for SLACC-SGBV Calls

	Internet/ Social Media n (%)	Magazine/ Newspaper n (%)	SMS n (%)	TV/ Cable n (%)	Vehicle Poster n (%)	Word of Mouth n (%)	Wall Poster/ Brochure n (%)	Others n (%)	Total
Dec '19	22 (8%)	5 (2%)	65 (24%)	106 (39%)	10 (4%)	32 (12%)	7 (3%)	23 (9%)	270
Jan '20	23 (9%)	2 (1%)	51 (20%)	108 (43%)	16 (6%)	41 (16%)	4 (2%)	7 (3%)	252
Feb '20	35 (14%)	3 (1%)	65 (26%)	79 (32%)	12 (5%)	34 (14%)	7 (3%)	15 (6%)	250
Mar '20	14 (7%)	3 (2%)	80 (41%)	46 (24%)	8 (4%)	30 (15%)	6 (3%)	8 (4%)	195
Apr '20	5 (8%)	2 (3%)	19 (32%)	22 (37%)		9 (15%)	3 (5%)		60
May '20	7 (11%)		20 (31%)	17 (26%)		20		1	65
Jun '20	46 (8%)	1 (0.5%)	400 (66%)	65 (11%)	13 (2%)	52 (8%)	25 (4%)	3 (0.5%)	605
1 st – 5 th Jul '20	7 (5%)	1 (1%)	101 (68%)	10 (7%)	5 (3%)	18 (12%)	1 (1%)	6 (4%)	149

The second most effective method of advocacy regarding legal remedies available to victims of SGBV appears to be TV advertisements. Prior to the COVID outbreak, in the baseline period of data collection between December 2019- February 2020, television remained the most widely quoted medium of information on SLACC services by callers reporting SGBV queries. In April 2020, prior to the nationwide SMS campaign by LAS, television advertisements and messages received on cellphones were quoted as their source of information regarding SLACC's services by approximately one-third of the callers each. This proportion changed slightly in May 2020 with a quarter of the callers quoting TV advertisements and one-third of the callers quoting telephone SMS as their medium of information regarding SLACC's services.

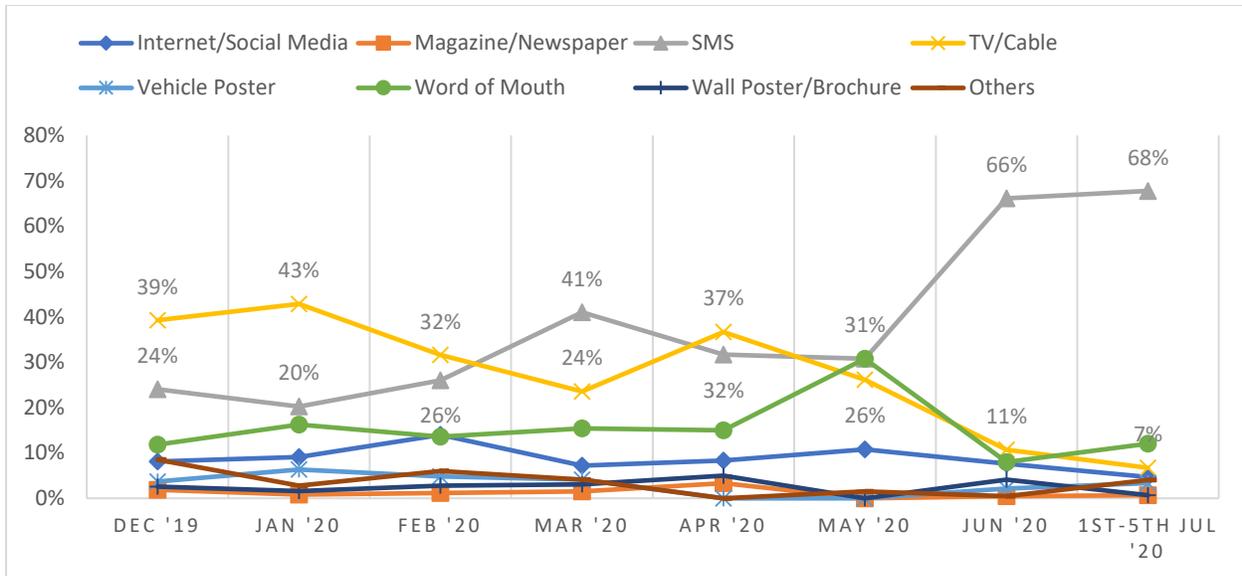


Figure 19: Percentage (%) of Reported Sources of Information for SLACC-SGBV Calls

4. Limitations

We observed three main limitations in this research. First, our analysis was constrained by the information provided in the existing database. Variables such as income levels, marital status, and rural-urban breakdown of locations were absent and analysis was restricted, accordingly. Further, queries received at SLACC are tagged and categorized by the call center advocates to the best of their discretion, which can result in some inconsistency. Significant efforts have been made to limit these caveats by undertaking extensive qualitative evaluation of each individual query to ascertain that all issues highlighted in the call are categorized accordingly.

Second, SLACC functions closed between 18th March to 13th April 2020 to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19 following the nation-wide outbreak. While the voicemail function at the call center remained operational, our data shows a significant decrease in the total value of queries responded to following the lockdown. SLACC resumed its operations on April 14th after the call center's functions were deemed essential during the on-going crisis. The decreased response rate did, however, spill over to the months of April and May 2020. This can be best explained by the decrease in resources available owing to strict implementation of workplace SOPs considering the COVID outbreak.

Third, while there were 10 call center advocates responding to queries daily in December, this number decreased to 6 advocates between January- March 2020. Towards the end of March, the total number of advocates at the call center increased to 9, however, following the COVID-19 outbreak, lawyers were asked to come in on a rotation basis decreasing the number of available

lawyers per day to 3. This decrease in resources had a direct impact on the capacity of the call center to cater and respond to the large number of incoming calls. Consequently, we observed an increase in the proportion of abandoned calls following the imposition of the lockdown. In June 2020, the call center increased its working capacity from 33% to 50%, leading to an increase in the proportion of answered calls. However, as the active period was substantiated with a mass media campaign, the overall increase in calls landing on the SLACC CRM system meant that the proportion of abandoned calls continued to increase. The number of offered calls landing on the SLACC CRM system increased from 3,459 calls in May 2020 to 7,025 calls in June 2020 (more than 100%). The number of calls answered by the SLACC lawyers increased from 1,294 in May 2020 to 3,542 in June 2020 (almost 175%).

5. Conclusion

This rapid assessment presented a unique opportunity to add data-driven findings from Pakistan to a body of international research and statistics that prove the exacerbation of SGBV during Covid-19, and a decrease in reporting of such instances of violence and injustice. While it is difficult to draw larger conclusions from a rapid assessment of a brief snapshot of time, meaningful trends were highlighted, which point the way towards additional areas of research, inquiry, and advocacy.

Our findings point to an significant increase in proportion of SGBV queries during the active period of data collection, and a majority of all SGBV issues reported to SLACC related to matters of domestic violence. While it is not possible to conclude from the data that *instances* of domestic violence increased during the pandemic, it is certainly significant in identifying the nature of vulnerability women and girls experienced. This points to the urgent need for the state to mainstream gender-based considerations in all its programmatic areas, especially during times of national emergency. Our findings corroborate literature that points to the numerous ways in which vulnerable populations bear the harshest consequences in times of global crisis.

SLACC observed a significant increase in proportion of SGBV queries during the active period of data collection, which corresponded to SLACC's mass media campaign—the purpose of which was to increase awareness in the general population that survivors of SGBV did not have to suffer in silence, and had a way to consult a lawyer about their options in the context of abusive household situations. This success of the mass SMS campaign is one of the key insights drawn from this study: increased awareness and advocacy has a significant impact on the reporting of SGBV issues, even during the state of a nation-wide pandemic. There is an urgent need to build on the findings of this research. Wide-spread media awareness campaigns must extend beyond publicizing the opportunity to gain free legal advice; state-sponsored services for SGBV survivors

once mapped must also be highlighted in targeted, strategic mass media campaigns so women can take steps to empower themselves and exercise the option to exit abusive familial environments.

Bibliography

- "About Domestic Violence." What is domestic violence? |. Arizona Coalition: To End Sexual & Domestic Violence. Accessed July 28, 2020. <https://www.acesdv.org/domestic-violence-graphics/>
- Abbasi, Hammad Ahmed. "Key Things to Know as Pakistan Starts 'Selective 'or 'Smart' Virus Lockdown." TRT WORLD, June 18, 2020. <https://www.trtworld.com/asia/key-things-to-know-as-pakistan-starts-selective-or-smart-virus-lockdown-37382>.
- Anadolu. "Pakistan Extends Lockdown to April 14." The Nation. The Nation, April 1, 2020. <https://nation.com.pk/01-Apr-2020/pakistan-extends-lockdown-to-stem-coronavirus-spread>.
- Boxall, Hayley, Anthony Morgan and Rick Brown, The prevalence of domestic violence among women during the COVID-19 pandemic, Australian Institute of Criminology, Statistical Bulletin 28: 1-18. https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-07/sb28_prevalence_of_domestic_violence_among_women_during_covid-19_pandemic.pdf
- Bari, Mavra, "Pakistani women trapped between coronavirus and domestic violence", DW News, Accessed 29th June, 2020. <https://www.dw.com/en/pakistani-women-trapped-between-coronavirus-and-domestic-violence/a-54107216>
- "COVID-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls." *UN Women Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW) COVID-19 Briefs*, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.18356/2fd3ecfb-en>.
- "COVID-19: Emerging Gender Data and Why It Matters: UN Women Data Hub." Homepage, June 26, 2020. <https://data.unwomen.org/resources/covid-19-emerging-gender-data-and-why-it-matters>.
- Erskine, Dorcus. "Not just hotlines and mobile phones: GBV Service provision during COVID-19". UNICEF, 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/media/68086/file/GBV%20Service%20Provision%20During%20COVID-19.pdf>
- "GBV and COVID-19: Ensuring continuity of essential health services for GBV survivors during the COVID-19 crisis," WHO Webinar Series, April 2, 2020. Available at: <http://www9.who.int/health-cluster/about/work/other-collaborations/GBV-AoR-Webinar-3-COVID-GBV-Health-Sector-EN.pdf>
- Ghoshal, Rakhi. "Twin public health emergencies: Covid-19 and domestic violence." *Indian journal of medical ethics* (2020): 1-5.

- Jacobs, Frank. "Worst for Women." Big Think. Big Think, December 6, 2019.
<https://bigthink.com/strange-maps/worst-countries-for-women?rebellitem=1>.
- Seff, Laura, Richard Beaulaurier, and Frederick Newman. "Nonphysical Abuse: Findings in Domestic Violence Against Older Women Study." *Journal of Emotional Abuse* 8, no. 3 (2008): 355–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926790802278933>.
- Legal Aid Society (LAS). (May, 2020). Rapid Assessment on Current Status of Essential Services for Survivors & Victims of Gender-based Violence and Sexual Violence (Sindh): 1-18. <https://www.las.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/RAPID-ASSESSMENT-ON-CURRENT-STATUS-OF-ESSENTIAL-SERVICES-FOR-SURVIVORS.pdf>
- Ministry of Human Rights, GoP (2020). Gendered Impact and Implications of COVID-19 in Pakistan. <http://www.mohr.gov.pk/SiteImage/Misc/files/GenderedImpact.pdf>
- Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2020). Pakistan Humanitarian Response Plan For Covid-19 Pandemic 2020: 1-48
<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/globalhumanitresponseplancovid19-200510.v1.pdf>
- Paz, Carmen De, Miriam Muller, Ana Maria Munoz Boudet, and Isis Gaddis. "Gender Dimensions of the COVID-19 Pandemic." *World Bank Group*, April 16, 2020, 1–29.
<https://doi.org/10.1596/33622>.
- Peterman, Amber, Alina Potts, Megan O'Donnell, Kelly Thompson, Niyati Shah, Sabine Oertelt-Prigione, and Nicole van Gelder. "Pandemics and violence against women and children." *Center for Global Development working paper* 528 (2020).
- "Sindh - COVID-19 Health Advisory Platform by Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination." COVID. Accessed July 28, 2020.
<http://covid.gov.pk/stats/sindh>.
- Spittal, Matthew J., Izabela Fedyszyn, Aves Middleton, Bridget Bassilios, Jane Gunn, Alan Woodward, and Jane Pirkis. "Frequent callers to crisis helplines: Who are they and why do they call?." *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 49, no. 1 (2015): 54-64.
- UNDP (United Nations Development Group) (2015). Socio-Economic Impact of Ebola Virus Disease in West African Countries: A Call for National and Regional Containment, Recovery and Prevention.
<https://www.undp.org/content/dam/rba/docs/Reports/ebola-west-africa.pdf>
- U.N Women. (2020), Online and ICT facilitated violence against women and girls during COVID-19

U.N Women. (published on 29th April 2020). Survey shows that COVID-19 has gendered effects in Asia and the Pacific. <https://data.unwomen.org/resources/surveys-show-covid-19-has-gendered-effects-asia-and-pacific>

United Nations. Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women- Statistical Surveys (2014). <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-05-02-01.pdf>

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC), Handbook on Effective Prosecution Responses to Violence against Women and Girls. (2014). *Criminal Justice Handbook Series: 7-10*. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Handbook on effective prosecution responses to violence against women and girls.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Handbook%20on%20effective%20prosecution%20responses%20to%20violence%20against%20women%20and%20girls.pdf)

“Violence against Women and Girls: the Shadow Pandemic.” UN Women, April 6, 2020. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic>.

“Violence against Women.” World Health Organization. World Health Organization, November 29, 2017. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>.

Winham, Clare, Julia Smith, and Rosemary Morgan. Rep. *COVID-19: the Gendered Impacts of the Outbreak*. The Lancet, March 6, 2020. <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2820%2930526-2>.