Understanding The Impacts Of COVID-19 On Domestic Violence In Brazil

BRASIL

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CONTEXT:
Reports of an increase in domestic and family violence against women and children (DFVAWC) as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic has recently come to light. Women’s rights organizations - shelters, call centers, etc. - across the world have reported that a combination of economic and social stresses brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as restrictions on movement, have drastically increased the number of women and children facing abuse. In line with these reports, the United Nations Secretary General called for governments to make the prevention and redress of violence against women a key part of countries national response plans to Covid-19. Without targeted action, the pandemic has the potential to replicate the harmful consequences to gender relations and lead to an increase in DFVAWC, as already witnessed and neglected in past epidemics (SARS, Swine Flu); natural disasters (Haiti’s earthquake); and humanitarian disasters (refugees crisis, civil wars, mass population migration). The other “epidemic” of gender-based violence is of grave concern in a country like Brazil, with its already existing high levels of DFVAWC, gender norms that sustain patriarchal behavior, large geographic area, heterogenous socio-economic conditions, health disparities, and the way public authorities have responded to the epidemics. Despite the expected prevalence of DFVAWC and the anecdotal evidence presented by the media and gray literature, there is limited research on the effect of health shocks such as SARS and Covid-19 on rates of domestic violence, especially in developing countries and over a longer time span.

PROJECT AIM:
The overarching aim of the project is to investigate the impact of Covid-19 and the associated responses - including public health measures and a national emergency conditional cash transfer - on domestic and family violence against women and children in Brazil. We will use a uniquely large and representative panel survey -The PCSVDF-Mulher project - econometric and statistics strategies, and guidance from economic theory, as well as literature and analysis from different disciplines including law, human rights, public health, gender and psychology to understand the impact of the pandemic.

STUDY CONTRIBUTION:
The project will:

- Produce data and indicators on the prevalence and incidence of DFVWC and socioeconomic conditions during and after the Covid-19 pandemic at both individual, household and city levels;
- Adapt the PCSVDF-Mulher survey questionnaire into a telephone format and apply it to a sub-sample of women already interviewed in 2019 in 5 regions of Brazil;
- Analyse the mechanisms, and assess the impact, of the morbidity and mortality risks of Covid-19 public health measures and emergency conditional cash transfers on DFVWC;
- Make recommendations for a post-Covid-19 socio-economic reopening plan that takes into account the heterogeneous effects on different genders in morbidity, mortality, vulnerability, behavioral response, and strategies for overcoming the disease.

The study will contribute to the sparse literature on the effect of large-scale health shocks on mental health and wellbeing, and on DFVAWC. It will also shed light on the ‘coping strategies’ used by families to mitigate the impact of Covid-19, especially around domestic violence, as there is limited understanding of the effectiveness of these coping strategies and how to develop public interventions supportive of these responses. Lastly, the study will provide evidence on the impact of conditional cash transfers to families mitigate the economic shock brought on by Covid, and its impact on the rates of DFVAWC.

1. “Make the prevention and redress of violence against women a key part of national response plans for COVID-19” | United Nations