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AN INVESTIGATION OF SOCIAL ISOLATION AND ITS ASSOCIATION WITH MENTAL HEALTH AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: EVIDENCE FROM COVID-19 AND POST COVID-19 PERIODS

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Abstract
The COVID-19 pandemic was not only a global health crisis but also a period of profound psychological and social challenges. Lock down restrictions and prolonged isolation disrupted everyday life, limited social interaction, and potentially intensified difficulties within domestic relationships. These circumstances raised important concerns about mental health, domestic violence, and the lasting effects of pandemic on psychological well-begin. This research study aimed to examine the relationship between isolation and mental health, investigate the association between isolation and domestic violence, explore mental health concerns persisting in the post COVID-19 period. A quantitative research approach was employed, using survey method. Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between the study variables. The finding revealed significant positive correlations between isolation and mental health (r=.250, p= .001) and between isolation and domestic violence (r=.250, p=.004). A further positive correlation was identified in the post COVID-19 analysis (r=.31, p=.001). These findings highlight the interconnected nature of isolation, psychological well-being, and domestic relationships during and after the pandemic. The study underscores the improving access of domestic violence services and recognising the potential long-term consequences of pandemic-related isolation.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 transformation changes everyday life across United States. Medical and Economic uncertainty disrupted social relationships and family routines. Public health restrictions changed how people worked, studied and interacted. These consequences raised drastically an important question about psychological well-being and safety within the home.

New Jersey provides useful setting for examining these issues because state experienced substantial disruption during pandemic lockdown. Residents faced uncertainties about employment, restrictions to social activities and pauses to ordinary lifestyles. Lock down offered the individuals a protection from infection but it prolonged isolation created additional psychological, social or household difficulties. Mental health and domestic violence are related but distinct concerns. The consequences of mental health include anxiety, depression, loneliness and stress. However, it is vital not to assume that psychological disruption

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automatically leads to violence. Domestic violence involves patterns of abuse, power and control. This all cannot be explained simply by stress or confinement. It is therefore important to examine domestic violence alongside social isolation and mental health rather than assuming that same patterns occurred in every community. The post-COVID-19 period provides an opportunity to examine whether social and psychological challenges associated with pandemic remain relevant after emergency phase. Mental health concerns and domestic violence may be influenced by multiple social, economic and interpersonal factors. The present study examines the relationships among social isolation, mental health and domestic violence with particular attention to mental health and domestic violence in the post-COVID-19 period.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Pandemic lockdown created multiple sources of stress. The fear of infection and situation of the lockdown leads to the emotional security employment disruptions and financial difficulties among different families. Social distancing reduced all opportunities for face-to-face interaction and this situation increased household violent.

An investigation was done during 2020 COVID lockdown and its effects on household ordinary life of the residents of New Jersey, domestic violence and other serious concerns were highlighted in this research studies. This research study is also identified the multiple pathways through which anatomy conditions could increase vulnerability to violence. Also, this study examined the post lockdown situation which is equally important. The lifting of restrictions did not necessarily remove financial insecurity, psychological distress, relationship difficulties and other kind of the abuse.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Now the COVID-19 lockdown was implemented as public health measures. The lockdown social and psychological consequences were not experienced equally. Individuals differed in their living conditions social networks prior mental health and exposure to the violence. These difficulties may have shaped both the severity of psychological distress and inability to get support. This research study addressed to understand how lockdown related social and economic disruption intersected with mental health and domestic violence in New Jersey and addressed the barriers after the restrictions in post COVID.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to examine the association between COVID-19 lockdown, mental health issues and domestic violence in New Jersey, USA, during and after the lockdown. Specifically, the study seeks to explore the association between lockdown-related social and psychological stressors, mental health problems and the occurrence of domestic violence, as well as to examine how these factors may be interconnected during and following the lock period.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To examine the relationship between lockdown related isolation in mental health.

To find out the relationship between lockdown and domestic violence.

To investigate continuing mental health conditions and domestic violence associated with post Lockdown period.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research study is very significant because it brings together two important public health and social concerns. This study may help to identify how mental challenges and domestic violence were associated with lockdown experience. By understanding these issues together, the study may provide more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by individuals and families during and after lockdown. Moreover, this research study will help the researcher's policy policymakers an academician with similar research background. Also, this paper may also contribute to the discussions about social inequality in relationships and long-term consequences of public health restrictions. Finally, this study may

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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the social and psychological consequences of the lockdown. The findings may also help inform future research and preparedness strategies aimed at supporting mental well-being, strengthening family relationships and addressing domestic violence during and after similar emergencies.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is a significant relationship between isolation and mental health?
What is the significant relationship between isolation and domestic violence?
What are the major mental health concerns that are continuing to disrupt a real after post COVID?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mental health become a major concern during COVID-19. Due to the social disruptions and isolation increase limitation to the home staying disturb the mental health of the individuals. This not only threats the mental health but the physical health, financial stability and social connection. This sudden disruption change the daily routines of the people and it leads to the disruption of the mental health. Zion, (2020) reviewed the studies that the general populations during the pandemic become more stressed, sad, and worried due to the lack of the social connections many people lead towards anxiety, depression, stress, and post-traumatic stress. Another study reflected that the level of the anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic were high then the post COVID-19 due to the social interactions were disturbed. Major concern about the COVID-19 pandemic were how the people live their life with that economic condition. (Pfeffer Baum & North, 2020).

For women experiencing domestic violence or intimate partner violence, remaining at home could increase exposure to an abusive partner while simultaneously reducing access to family members, friend, workplaces, shelters, health care providers and other sources of assistance. (Turnbull, P., Hunt, I. M., Woodhouse, T., Monk, H., Kapur, N., & Appleby, L. 2025). The world health organization identified stress, economic disruption, reduced social support and restricted access to services as factors that could increase women's vulnerability during pandemic.

Moreover, Byrne & Lim (2021), find out that social isolation also reduces the excess of emotional reassurance and practical assistance. Isolations affect different people with different ways. Volume of confliction arises, and that research prevailed that high level of the abuse arises during this isolation, normal household remained not normal during this lockdown. Also, Gavin & McNicholas, (2020) examined that the consequences of the lockdown cannot be measured through the number of days of the restrictions. Family relationships were totally disturbed and lead to the bad mental health condition. The isolation increased the financial insecurity due to the degree of the business and reduce working hours. Family income was disturbed, and these disruptions produce uncertainty among the marriage life such type of the pressure could increase the anxiety, disturbed sleep and difficulties meeting family responsibilities.

Mental health was a major area of concern during the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes in daily routines, uncertainty about the future, fear of infection, economic insecurity, and reduced social interaction created circumstances associated with psychological distress. Anxiety, depressive symptoms, sleep disturbances, and stress were among the psychological difficulties examined in research on quarantine and pandemic-related restrictions.

Rajkumar et al. (2022), in a systematic review of the psychological impact of quarantine, examined 74 studies addressing psychological outcomes, risk factors, protective factors, and interventions. Their review identified anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress symptoms, and sleep-related difficulties among the reported psychological consequences. The review also identified a lack of social support and financial difficulties as relevant risk factors, while coping skills, maintaining social relationships through

JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDIES
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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

digital communication, and access to mental health services were identified as potentially protective factors.

These findings suggest that social isolation should be examined within a broader context of psychological and social circumstances. Reduced social interaction may limit opportunities for emotional expression, practical assistance, and timely access to support. However, the relationship between isolation and mental health may also depend on individual coping strategies, living arrangements, economic resources, and the quality of existing relationships.

During lockdown domestic violence arise with the different number of the shapes, physical assault, threats and emotional abuse causes the impact on interpersonal behaviour and another study showed that violence not only occurred against the woman but all the genders in the among the all group of the ages from children to older people although the violence against the women during COVID-19 were high in different countries Major methodological issues was reliance in some reports on helpline activities media accounts and other indirect indicators in other studies shows that violence incidents were increased during the pandemic and their result indicated in overall increase in reported with the stronger effects on US focused analysis. (Kegler,2022).

Moreover, a study shows that mental health and domestic violence are closely connected. Experience of the abuse may contribute to the fear anxiety and depression during lockdown these difficulties could be compounded by isolation. In other studies, shows that the easing of restrictions marked a transition rather than immediate return to pre pandemic conditions as if it affect the employment education healthcare and social activities were gradually resumed. the timing and the extent of the recovery differed among individuals and communities. one of the research projects shows that the people uh have experienced improved mental well-being as social contact increased while in other store studies shows that uh it is very hard to improve mental health after the long lockdown this study shows that post lockdown. Also required a separate investigations and longitudinal studies repeated service interviews over the time a particularly valuable for understanding recovery. Buil-Gil, D., Zeng, Y., & Kemp, S. (2021).

Hoeboer & Kitselaar (2024) found that:

"Studies on domestic violence often found increased crime rates, and this was particularly true for studies based on call data rather than crime records. Studies on intimate partner violence reported mixed results. We found an immediate impact of COVID-19 restrictions on almost all crime rates except for homicides, cybercrimes and intimate partner violence." (Hoeboer & Kitselaar 2024).

In addition to above, Ravindran, S., & Shah, M. (2023) found that:

"We find similarly large increases in cybercrime complaints. However, rape and sexual assault complaints decrease in districts with the strictest lockdowns, consistent with decreased female mobility in public spaces, public transport and workplaces where they might be at greater risk for rape and sexual assault. Medium-term analysis shows that increases in domestic violence complaints persist 1 year later, while other complaints related to rape, sexual assault and cybercrimes return to pre-lockdown." (Ravindran, S., & Shah, M. 2023)

The post-COVID-19 period provides an important opportunity to examine whether social and psychological challenges associated with the pandemic remain relevant after the relaxation of emergency restrictions. Although everyday activities and opportunities for social interaction resumed in many settings, the consequences of financial hardship, disrupted relationships, psychological distress, and experiences of violence may not have disappeared immediately.

Research reviews have emphasised the need to understand the longer-term consequences of the pandemic for people experiencing domestic violence and for the services intended to support them. A systematic synthesis of reviews on domestic violence during COVID-19, published in 2023, identified continuing gaps in research,

JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDIES
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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

policy, and intervention evidence. The review also highlighted the need for more robust primary studies to inform future prevention and support strategies.

The post-pandemic context should therefore not automatically be regarded as a complete return to pre-pandemic social and psychological conditions. The persistence, duration, and severity of difficulties may differ across individuals and communities. Some people may recover as social networks and services become accessible again, while others may continue to experience psychological or social challenges.

Examining mental health and domestic violence in the post-COVID-19 period can contribute to an understanding of these concerns beyond emergency restrictions. However, claims about long-term effects require careful interpretation, particularly when a study does not include repeated measurements of the same participants over time (Turnbull, P., Hunt, I. M., Woodhouse, T., Monk, H., Kapur, N., & Appleby, 2025).

Methodology

Research Design

For this study, quantitative research design was used to examine the relationship between COVID-19 lockdown and domestic violence and mental health during and after the pandemic in New Jersey. Online Survey design was used to collect the information from the participants. In cross-sectional survey was adopted to get the information from the participants about their experience during pandemic and its lasting effects after the lockdown. Online questionnaire was developed to get the information from the participant survey technique is favourable for this kind of the research.

Population and Sample

Population of this study is USA, and the target population is consisted of resident of the New Jersey, who experienced or witnessed domestic violence during COVID-19 pandemic. 200 participants were voluntary participated in survey. For this study the simple random sampling technique was used. Questionnaire was adopted to collect the data from the appropriate sample that can be determined through the research objectives. Closed ended questions structured to obtain the information from the participant.

Data analysis

Data was analysed in SPSS and excel that describe descriptive in statistics including frequencies percentages mean the standard deviations summarise the participants demographic characteristics and responses in reported experiences from the participants. For this research, Pearson correlation test was used to examine the relationship between the categorical variables such as the isolation levels and the domestic violence. Also, to examine the factors of pandemic that leads to the mental health disturbance.

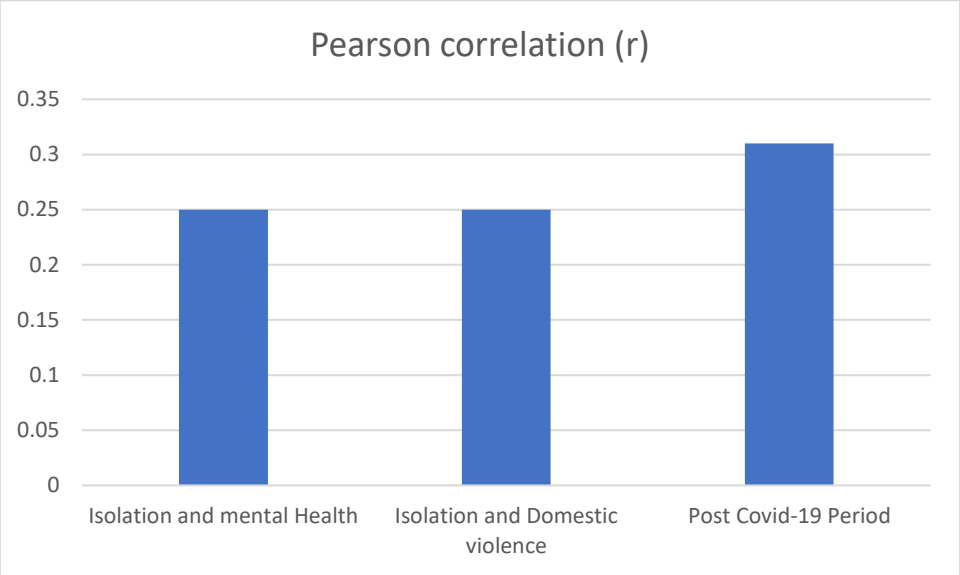
Table No. 1 Correlation between Social Isolation, Mental Health, Domestic violence and Post covid factors

Factors	Pearson correlation ®	Sig. (p-value)	Mean
Isolation and mental Health	.250	0.001	3.31
Isolation and Domestic violence	.250	0.004	2.96
Post Covid-19 Period	.31	0.001	3.16

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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

Clustered Chart of Variables



Result And Interpretation:
The finding presented in the table indicate relationships between isolation, mental health, domestic violence and post COVID-19 period. The Pearson correlation coefficients, significance values and mean score provide an overview of the observed patterns.

1. **Isolation and mental health**

The results show a Pearson correlation coefficient of r= .250 with a reported significance value of p=.001 and a mean score of 3.31. the correlation coefficient indicates a positive relationship between isolation and mental health related outcomes. The magnitude of correlations relatively weak, suggesting that higher levels of isolation are associated with changes in a mental health related experience. Since the reported p-value is below .05, the relationship is statistically significant.

2. **Isolation and Domestic violence**

The relationship between isolation and domestic violence is reported as r= .250, with p = .004 and a mean score of 2.96. This indicates a positive association between two variables. The correlation is relatively weak, but statistically significant at the .05 level. The finding suggests that isolation and reported experiences of domestic violence are related within the study sample. Nevertheless, correlation alone does not establish that isolation causes domestic violence or that domestic violence necessarily results from isolation.

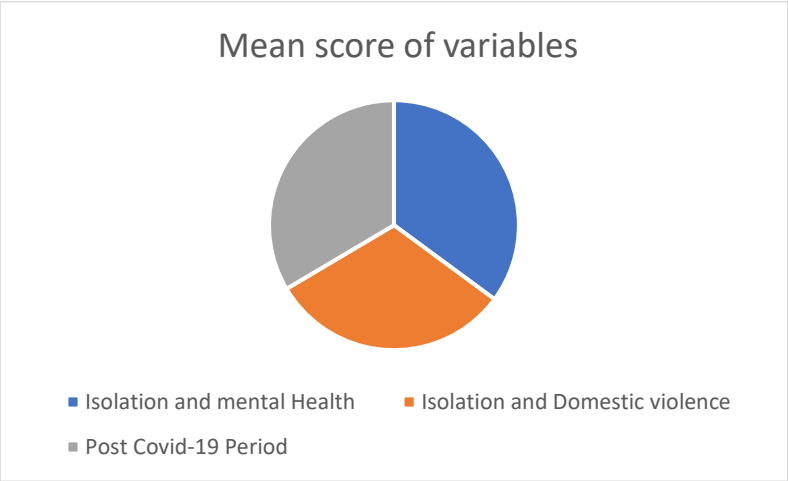
3. **Post-COVID-19 Period**

The table reports a Pearson correlation coefficient of.31 a significance value of p=.001, and a mean score of 3.16 for the post -COVID-19 period. The coefficient suggests appositive association between the post-COVID-19 variable and the outcome with which it was correlated. The relationship is statistically significant at .05 level. This finding may indicate that experiences during or following the COVID-19 pandemic were associated with the study's measured outcomes.

Overall, the results show that all the variables are positively correlated with each other. These findings provide highlights associations among isolation, mental health-related experiences, domestic violence and post pandemic circumstances in the study sample. This study provides the basis for further investigation into the social and psychological experiences of participants.

JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDIES
An International Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

Pie Chart of Mean Score



Pie chart shows the mean score. The mean scores were calculated to examine the average responses of participants regarding isolation, mental health, domestic violence and post-COVID-19 period. The result of mean sore show that isolation and mental health had the highest mean score of 3.31, followed by the post COVID-19 period with a mean score of 3.16 isolation a domestic violence had the lowest mean score of 2.96. Overall, the mean scores provide a descriptive summary of the participant's responses across the three factors.

Ethical consideration

As domestic violence is a highly sensitive research topic, participant safety, privacy, and confidentiality were considered essential throughout the study. Participation in the research was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from participants before their involvement in the survey. Participants were informed of their right to skip any questions they did not wish to answer and to withdraw from the study without penalty. Participants' names and identifying information were kept confidential, and personal data were handled securely to protect their privacy. Ethical considerations were considered before, during, and after data collection to ensure the responsible handling of participants' information and responses.

Data analysis and discussion

The present study examined the relationships between social isolation and mental health, and between social isolation and domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also investigated the relevant relationship in the post-COVID-19 period. The Pearson correlation analysis indicated positive relationships among the variables examined. These findings provide insight into the association between social isolation, mental health, and domestic violence during and after the pandemic. The results are discussed below in relation to previous research.

Social Isolation and Mental Health

The findings indicated a positive relationship between social isolation and mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. This finding is relevant to previous research highlighting the psychological challenges associated with the pandemic and the restrictions imposed to control its spread. Rajkumar (2020) reviewed the psychological impact of COVID-19 and highlighted concerns regarding stress, anxiety, and other mental health difficulties during the outbreak. Similarly, research on social isolation and psychological well-being has emphasised the importance of social contact and support for mental health. These studies provide a relevant context for understanding the relationship identified in the present research. However, the direction of the relationship should be interpreted according to how mental health was measured in the present study.

Social Isolation and Domestic Violence

The study also identified a positive relationship between social isolation and domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. This finding

JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE STUDIES
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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

can be considered alongside research examining domestic violence during pandemic-related lockdowns and restrictions. Piquero et al. (2021), in their systematic review and meta-analysis, examined changes in domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic and reported evidence of increases in domestic violence-related outcomes across the studies reviewed. Reduced opportunities for social interaction and limited access to external support may help explain why isolation was an important concern during this period. Financial difficulties and unemployment may also provide relevant context, as economic pressures can complicate household circumstances and access to support. Nevertheless, unless these factors were separately measured in the present study, they should be treated as possible explanations informed by previous literature rather than as findings established by the current analysis.

The Relationship in the Post-COVID-19 Period

The post-COVID-19 component of the study extends the investigation beyond the immediate period of pandemic restrictions. The findings indicated a positive relationship between the variables examined in this phase of the research. This is important because the end of emergency restrictions does not necessarily mean that all social and psychological challenges associated with the pandemic have disappeared. However, previous studies conducted during the pandemic cannot, by themselves, establish that the same relationship continued afterwards. The present findings therefore provide relevant evidence from the post-COVID-19 context, while further research is needed to examine how these relationships change over time.

Implications of the Findings

The findings have practical implications for mental health services, domestic violence prevention, and community support. Accessible counselling, confidential helplines, safe accommodation, and legal assistance may be important components of support for individuals experiencing domestic violence. Community education programmes may also help improve awareness of domestic abuse, its potential psychological consequences, and the services available to survivors.

In addition, emergency preparedness plans should consider how public health restrictions or other crises may disrupt access to essential support services. Ensuring that confidential communication channels and appropriate support options remain accessible may help individuals seek assistance when ordinary social and community networks are disrupted.

These implications should be understood as recommendations informed by the study findings and relevant literature, rather than interventions whose effectiveness was directly tested by the present research.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional survey design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among social isolation, mental health, and domestic violence. Second, the experiences reported by participants may not represent all individuals or communities, particularly if the sample was limited in size or diversity. Third, differences in living arrangements, financial circumstances, and access to support may have influenced participants' experiences and should be considered when interpreting the results.

Future studies should use larger and more representative samples and consider longitudinal designs to examine how these relationships change over time. Researchers should also consider relevant demographic and socioeconomic factors and use appropriate, validated measures of social isolation, mental health, and domestic violence. Such approaches may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors associated with psychological well-being and domestic violence during and after public health emergencies.

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An International Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal
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Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

Overall, the present study contributes to the understanding of the relationships between social isolation, mental health, and domestic violence during COVID-19 and highlights the relevance of examining mental health and domestic violence in the post-COVID-19 context. The findings emphasise the importance of considering social support, economic circumstances, and access to services when interpreting these relationships and developing appropriate support strategies.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationships between social isolation, mental health, and domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, while also exploring the relationship between mental health and domestic violence in the post-COVID-19 context. The findings revealed statistically significant associations among the examined variables, highlighting the importance of understanding the psychological and social challenges experienced during and after the pandemic. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between social isolation and mental health-related concerns, as well as between social isolation and domestic violence. These findings suggest that social isolation may be an important factor to consider when examining individuals' psychological well-being and experiences of domestic violence during periods of crisis.

Furthermore, the post-COVID-19 findings underscore the continued relevance of mental health and domestic violence as interconnected social and psychological concerns beyond the immediate period of the pandemic. The results emphasize that the consequences of a global health crisis may extend beyond its acute phase, reinforcing the need for sustained mental health support, accessible psychosocial services, domestic violence prevention initiatives, and appropriate support systems for vulnerable individuals and families.

However, because this study employed a cross-sectional survey design, the findings establish associations rather than causal relationships. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that social isolation directly causes mental health difficulties or domestic violence, or that one factor necessarily leads to another. Future research using longitudinal designs and more diverse samples could provide a deeper understanding of these relationships over time. Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of the interconnected social and psychological challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and highlights the importance of integrated mental health and domestic violence support strategies in the post-pandemic period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the potential challenges identified in the literature and the objectives of the present study, the following recommendations are proposed.

First, state governments should ensure the continued availability of accessible shelters, confidential helplines, and legal assistance for individuals experiencing domestic violence. During public health emergencies, these essential services should remain accessible to all individuals who need support.

Second, survivors of domestic violence should have access to affordable counselling and psychological support during ongoing emergencies and in the post-emergency period. Continuity of mental health services is essential to address psychological distress and support survivors' long-term well-being.

Third, online counselling services should incorporate strong security and confidentiality measures. These services should include appropriate safety protocols for individuals whose electronic devices or online communications may be monitored or controlled by abusive partners.

Fourth, safe housing options and employment support should be strengthened to help survivors overcome financial and practical barriers to leaving abusive environments and rebuilding their lives.

ISSN (Online): 3006-2071 | ISSN (Print): 3006-2063
Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

Fifth, community education programmes should be promoted to improve public awareness of domestic violence and its potential psychological consequences. Such programmes should explain the warning signs of domestic abuse, available support services, and the potential effects of abuse on mental health. They should also provide information about where and how survivors can seek assistance safely.

Sixth, future studies should use larger and more representative samples, examine differences across demographic groups, and follow participants over time to develop a better understanding of long-term mental health outcomes and the relationships between domestic violence and psychological well-being.

Finally, public health authorities and domestic violence support organisations should incorporate survivor safety, confidential communication, access to shelters, and mental health services into future emergency preparedness plans. Ensuring the continuity of these essential services during crises may help protect vulnerable individuals and improve access to appropriate support.

Overall, coordinated efforts among governments, public health authorities, mental health professionals, and domestic violence organisations are recommended to strengthen survivor protection and promote psychological well-being during public health emergencies and beyond.

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ISSN (Online): 3006-2071 | ISSN (Print): 3006-2063
Volume 4 • Issue 6 • October 2026

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