

Examining the Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Cases of Violence Against Women: An Evaluation Through Media News

COVID 19 Pandemisinin Kadına Yönelik Şiddet Olgularına Etkisinin İncelenmesi: Medya Haberleri Üzerinden Bir Değerlendirme

Şehbal YEŞİLBAŞ, Emine TİRİÇ, Metin PIÇAKÇIEFE, Bahadır DEDE, Merve SAVAŞ AKSAKAL

Mugla Sıtkı Kocman University, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Public Health, Mugla, Turkey

Öz

Bu çalışmada ülkemizde COVID-19 pandemisinin kadına yönelik şiddet olgularının sıklığına etkisinin medya haberleri üzerinden değerlendirilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Retrospektif tanımlayıcı bir çalışmadır. Anahtar sözcükler kullanılarak tirajı en yüksek beş ulusal gazetenin haberleri pandemi öncesi iki yıl ve pandemi dönemi iki yılı kapsayacak şekilde retrospektif olarak incelenmiştir. Veri toplama formunda ki bilgiler her medya haberi için ulaşılabildiği kadarı ile SPSS dosyasına kaydedilmiştir. Veriler 1-31 Ağustos 2022 tarihleri arasında toplanmıştır. Etik kurul izni alınmıştır. Veri analizinde SPSS 22.0 paket programı kullanılmış, tanımlayıcı istatistikler; sayı, yüzde, ortalama, standart sapma olarak verilmiştir. İncelenen şiddet haberlerinin %29.5'i pandemi öncesinde, %70.5'i pandemi döneminde meydana gelmiştir. Şiddet mağduru kadınların yaş ortalaması 33.67±12.25, uygulayıcılarının yaş ortalaması 38.11±11.94'dür. Pandemi döneminde Marmara bölgesinde, kış mevsiminde, gündüz saatlerinde, ev ortamında ve evli olanlarda şiddet sıklığı artmıştır. Ayrıca darp, boğma şeklinde gerçekleşen şiddet olgularının sıklığının arttığı, şiddet sonrası ölüm sıklığının ise azaldığı görülmüştür. Kadına yönelik şiddetin önlenmesi için toplumsal düzeyde farkındalık çalışmaları yapılması, ulusal çapta düzenli kayıtların tutulması, yakın partner şiddeti için risk gruplarını tanımlayan (risk odaklı yaklaşım), sosyal ve demografik faktörleri sorgulayan ayrıntılı çalışmalar yapılarak daha etkili ve çözüm odaklı önlemler planlanması önerilebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: COVID-19 Pandemisi, Fiziksel Şiddet, Haberler, Kadına Yönelik Şiddet, Yakın Partner Şiddeti

Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the frequency of violence against women cases in our country through media news. It is a retrospective descriptive study. Using keywords, the news of the five national newspapers with the highest circulation were examined retrospectively, covering two years before and during the pandemic. The information in the data collection form was recorded in the SPSS file as much as available for each media news. Data were collected between August 1-31, 2022. Ethics committee permission was obtained. SPSS 22.0 package program was used in data analysis, and descriptive statistics were given as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Of the violence news examined, 29.5% occurred before the pandemic, and 70.5% occurred during the pandemic. The mean age of the victims of violence was 33.67±12.25 years, and the mean age of the perpetrators was 38.11±11.94 years. During the pandemic, the frequency of violence increased in the Marmara region, in the winter season, during daylight hours, in the home environment and among married women. In addition, it was observed that the frequency of violent cases in the form of beating and strangulation was increased while the frequency of death following violence was decreased. In order to prevent violence against women, it may be recommended to conduct awareness-raising activities at the societal level, keep regular records on a national scale, identify risk groups for intimate partner violence (risk-oriented approach), and plan more effective and solution-oriented measures by conducting detailed studies questioning social and demographic factors.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Physical Violence, News, Violence Against Women, Intimate Partner Violence

Introduction

In the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women issued by the United Nations Organization in 1993, violence against women is defined as any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (1). Violence against women is

classified as physical, sexual, psychological, economic, cyber violence and unilateral persistent following (2).

Violence is an essential public health problem that adversely affects women's physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health, continues to exist as a reflection of gender inequality and is a violation of women's human rights. Its frequency and appearance vary between countries. Estimates published by the World Health Organization (WHO) show that approximately one in three (30%) of women worldwide have been exposed to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence throughout their lives (3). According to the results of the "Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey" conducted in 2014, the proportion of women who stated that they had been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence at any time in their lives was 38% and 11% in the last 12 months. It was stated that 68% of married women were subjected to physical or sexual violence by their husbands or intimate partners (4).

	ORCID No
Şehbal YEŞİLBAŞ	0000-0002-2308-1187
Emine TİRİÇ	0009-0005-9621-4250
Metin PIÇAKÇIEFE	0000-0002-2877-7714
Bahadır DEDE	0000-0003-3985-5973
Merve SAVAŞ AKSAKAL	0009-0007-4409-903X

Başvuru Tarihi / Received: 02.02.2024
Kabul Tarihi / Accepted : 30.07.2024

Adres / Correspondence : Şehbal YEŞİLBAŞ
Mugla Sıtkı Kocman University, Faculty of Medicine,
Department of Public Health, Mugla, Turkey
e-posta / e-mail : sehbalyesilbas@mu.edu.tr

WHO recognized the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), which emerged in China and affected the whole world, as a pandemic on March 11, 2020, and announced on May 5, 2023, that the pandemic is no longer a global emergency. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only caused a health crisis but also had significant social and economic impacts. During the pandemic, restrictions, isolation measures and economic uncertainties have been faced worldwide. There is information in the current literature that the public health measures implemented globally to control the spread of COVID-19 have created conditions that can have a profound impact on crime trends and have increased violence against women as well as in many areas of social life (5,6). Challenging conditions such as quarantine measures, economic uncertainties, difficulties in health systems and social isolation have been defined as situations that pave the way for an increase in violence against women (7). In these cases, spending more time in close contact with family members, spending less time with family and friends who can provide support and protection against violence, the stress caused by the burden of care work, which increased with the closure of schools during the pandemic, decreased livelihoods, decreased access to basic needs and services, decreased access to health services and psychosocial support services with restrictions are the factors that increase violence (3,8). In the report published by U.N. Women in 2021, there was an increase in the risk factors of violence against women with the COVID-19 pandemic, and it was reported that 45% of women had been exposed to violence themselves or a woman they know since the beginning of the pandemic (9).

The media is a mirror of social events, problems and changes. Although physical violence against women is mainly covered in the media news, our study will provide a perspective to develop effective combating strategies for measures that can be taken to protect women and prevent violence by reflecting on the dynamics of violence before and during the pandemic, revealing descriptive characteristics such as the characteristics of victims of violence, perpetrators of violence and cases of violence, and the consequences of violence. This study aims to evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the frequency of violence against women cases in our country through media news.

Material and Method

In this retrospective descriptive study, the news of the five national newspapers with the highest circulation were retrospectively examined for two years before the pandemic (11.03.2018-10.03.2020) and two years during the pandemic period (11.03.2020-10.03.2022) by using the keywords "kadına yönelik şiddet", "kadına yönelik aile içi

şiddet", "kadın cinayeti", "öldürülen kadınlar", "namus ve töre cinayeti", "kadın kurban", "kadın istismarı", "darp edilen kadın", "şüpheli kadın ölümü", "kadın intiharı" in the news section of the Google search engine. 343 news links were accessed before the pandemic and 525 news links were accessed during the pandemic. The news about the same event found with different keywords used, the news about the same event in different newspapers, the news of the same event published on different days of the week were handled once and the re-evaluation of the news about the same event was prevented. There are no other inclusion or exclusion criteria. Ultimately, 156 news before the pandemic and 373 news during the pandemic period constituted the study population and was included in the analysis (Figure 1).

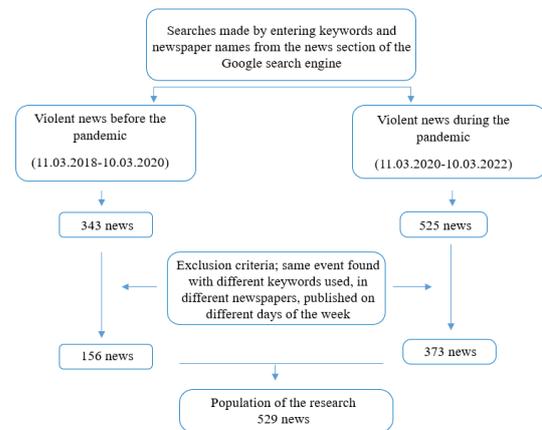


Figure 1. Selection of Media News

The information in the data collection form, created by reviewing the existing literature on the subject during the research planning phase, was recorded in the SPSS file as much as available for each media news. The data collection form includes information about the age and marital status of the victim of violence, previous exposure to violence by the same person, age and gender of the perpetrator of violence, proximity to the victim, previous criminal record, date of violence, region, province, season, time, place, cause, type, patterns of occurrence, result of violence, people affected by violence, and the status of the perpetrator after violence. Data were collected between August 1 and 31, 2022. The variables of the study were age, gender, marital status, proximity status, previous experience of violence by the same person, the criminal record of the perpetrator, region, province, season, time, place, causes, types, ways of violence, the outcome of violence, people affected, and the status of the perpetrator after the violence. Ethics committee permission was obtained from The Medical and Health Sciences Ethics Committee of the Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University (Date:19.07.2022, No:52).

Statistical analysis

SPSS 22.0 package program was used in data analysis, and descriptive statistics were given as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

Results

Of the examined violent news, 29.5% (n=156) occurred before the pandemic, and 70.5% (n=373) occurred during the pandemic period. The average age of female victims of violence was 33.67±12.25 (32.83±11.71 before the pandemic, 34.05±12.50 during the pandemic). When age groups were examined, it was determined that the victims were 19 years of age or younger in 6.8% of the news articles, between the ages of 20-29 in 37.2%, between the ages of 30-39 in 31.4%, between the ages of 40-49 in 15.6% and 50 years and older in 9.0%. The mean age of the perpetrators was 38.11±11.94 (37.40±11.22 before the pandemic, 38.72±12.26 during the pandemic). When age groups were examined, it was determined that the perpetrators were 19 years of age or younger in 1.9%

of the news articles, between 20-29 years of age in 23.2%, between 30-39 years of age in 31.8%, between 40-49 years of age in 26.4% and 50 years of age or older in 16.7%. Considering the marital status of women victims of violence, more than half of them were married (60.5%) (98.6% before the pandemic, 98.3% during the pandemic). 98.4% of the perpetrators of violence were male (56.1% before the pandemic, 62.5% during the pandemic), and 70.3% of them were husbands, lovers, fiancés (71.8% before the pandemic, 69.7% during the pandemic). 17.2% of women victims of violence had previously experienced violence perpetrated by the same person (12.8% before the pandemic, 19.0% during the pandemic). In 15.1% of the examined newspaper articles, it was stated that the perpetrator had a previous criminal record (16.7% before the pandemic, 14.5% during the pandemic). Information on the occupation of the victim (15.7%), the educational level of the victim (5.5%), the occupation of the perpetrator (15.3%), and the educational level of the perpetrator (2.3%) could be reached at low rates in the violence news (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of victims and perpetrators of violence

Characteristics	Before the pandemic		During the pandemic		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age groups of women victims of violence (N=411)						
≤19 age	10	7.7	18	6.4	28	6.8
20-29 age	52	40.0	101	35.9	153	37.2
30-39 age	40	30.8	89	31.7	129	31.4
40-49 age	20	15.4	44	15.7	64	15.6
≥50 age	8	6.1	29	10.3	37	9.0
Age groups of perpetrators of violence (N=311)						
≤19 age	2	2.1	4	1.9	6	1.9
20-29 age	25	25.8	47	22.0	72	23.2
30-39 age	27	27.8	72	33.6	99	31.8
40-49 age	29	29.9	53	24.8	82	26.4
≥50 age	14	14.4	38	17.8	52	16.7
Marital status of women victims of violence (N=387)						
Married	69	56.1	165	62.5	234	60.5
Single	49	39.8	83	31.4	132	34.1
Religiously married	5	4.1	16	6.1	21	5.4
Gender of perpetrators of violence (N=492)						
Male	144	98.6	340	98.3	484	98.4
Female	2	1.4	6	1.7	8	1.6
Proximity of perpetrators of violence to the victim (N=529)						
Husband, Lovers, Fiancé	112	71.8	260	69.7	372	70.3
Relatives	14	9.0	19	5.1	33	6.2
Friends	5	3.2	14	3.8	19	3.6
Other	25	16.0	80	21.4	105	19.9
Previous exposure to violence by the same person (N=529)						
Exposure	20	12.8	71	19.0	91	17.2
No information	136	87.2	302	81.0	438	82.8
Violence perpetrators' criminal record (N=529)						
Yes	26	16.7	54	14.5	80	15.1
No information	130	83.3	319	85.5	449	84.9

Table 2. Characteristics of violence cases

Characteristics	Before the pandemic		During the pandemic		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Period of violence (N=529)	156	29.5	373	70.5	529	100.0
Regions where violence occurred (N=529)						
Marmara Region	41	26.3	136	36.5	177	33.5
Mediterranean Region	30	19.2	66	17.7	96	18.1
Central Anatolia Region	36	23.1	55	14.7	91	17.2
Aegean Region	31	19.9	44	11.8	75	14.2
Black Sea Region	5	3.2	33	8.9	38	7.2
Southeastern Anatolia Region	7	4.5	24	6.4	31	5.8
Eastern Anatolia Region	6	3.8	15	4.0	21	4.0
Provinces where violence occurred (N=529)						
İstanbul	22	14.1	89	23.9	111	21.0
Ankara	13	8.3	24	6.4	37	7.0
İzmir	12	7.7	21	5.6	33	6.2
Adana	6	3.8	24	6.4	30	5.7
Other	103	66.1	215	57.7	318	60.1
Season in which cases of violence occurred (N=529)						
Winter	40	25.6	144	38.6	184	34.8
Autumn	44	28.2	90	24.1	134	25.3
Spring	32	20.6	85	22.8	117	22.1
Summer	40	25.6	54	14.5	94	17.8
Time of occurrence of violence (N=145)						
Daytime	15	53.6	66	56.4	81	55.9
Night	13	46.4	51	43.6	64	44.1
Place of occurrence of violence (N=520)						
At home	79	51.3	204	55.7	283	54.4
Out of home	75	48.7	162	44.3	237	45.6

The top two regions with the highest number of violence against women news are the Marmara region 33.5% (26.3% before the pandemic, 36.5% during the pandemic) and the Mediterranean region 18.1% (19.2% before the pandemic, 17.7% during the pandemic). At the same time, the city is Istanbul 21.0% (14.1% before the pandemic, 23.9% during the pandemic), Ankara 7.0% (8.3% before the pandemic, 6.4% during the pandemic) and Izmir 6.2% (7.7% before the pandemic, 5.6% during the pandemic). Violence against women was most common in winter 34.8% (25.6% before the pandemic, 38.6% during the pandemic), daytime 55.9% (53.6% before the pandemic, 56.4% during the pandemic) and home 54.4% (51.3% before the pandemic, 55.7% during the pandemic) (Table 2). The most common causes of violence against women were jealousy 15.2% (13.9% before the pandemic, 15.6% during the pandemic), 15.0% of the victim's desire for divorce (24.1% before the pandemic, 12.2% during the pandemic) and 6.7% of the victim's desire to separate from her lover (10.1% before the pandemic, 5.7% during the pandemic). Among the types of violence reflected in newspaper news, physical violence ranks first with 93.6% (96.1% during the pandemic period, 92.6% during the pandemic). Considering the way violence occurred, it was determined that it was most common with firearms 34.5% (42.1% before the pandemic, 31.3% during the pandemic) and 30.1% with cutting, piercing and crushing tools (35.5%

before the pandemic, 27.8% during the pandemic) (Table 3).

Considering the results of violence cases, 85.2% of women lost their lives (93.3% before the pandemic, 81.3% during the pandemic). Approximately one-third (31.8%) of the violence cases contained information about the affected persons, and it was determined that the children of the victims were affected in approximately half (48.8%) of these news reports (53.2% before the pandemic, 47.1% during the pandemic). In addition, 8.3% of them were informed that the victim was pregnant (8.5% before the pandemic, 8.3% during the pandemic). It was observed that 38.4% of the perpetrators of violence were under arrest (48.7% before the pandemic, 33.9% during the pandemic), 36.8% were under investigation (33.1% before the pandemic, 38.4% during the pandemic), 8.5% were free (3.2% before the pandemic, 10.7% during the pandemic) (Table 4).

Discussion

This study aims to analyze the relationship between violence against women and the COVID-19 pandemic through media news. In order to control the spread of the disease during the pandemic, various measures such as social distancing and isolation and, in some cases, quarantine have been implemented in our country and the world. With these challenging conditions that emerged during the

COVID-19 pandemic, how the frequency of violence against women, the characteristics of victims, perpetrators and cases of violence, and the consequences of violence are affected constitute the main focus of our study.

First of all, the number of media reports on violence against women during the pandemic was found to be approximately 2.5 times higher than before the pandemic. The We Will Stop the Femicide Platform reported that the number of violence in March, April and May 2020, when women stayed at home due to the pandemic, increased by 44%, 55.4% and 78%, respectively (10). According to the results of a survey conducted by the Socio-Political Field Research Center with the participation of 1873 women living in 28 cities between April 3-8, 2020, violence against women increased by 27.8% (approximately three times) during the pandemic (11). United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported that the number of murders of women and girls occurring globally in 2022 was the highest recorded in the last twenty years (12). This information is consistent

with the results of our study, and it is known that violence against women increases in pandemics and emergencies.

When we look at the average age of victims and perpetrators of violence, it has been observed that the average age of the perpetrators is approximately five years more than before and during the pandemic. Violence was mostly experienced by women between the ages of 20-29. This feature has not changed before and during the pandemic. When we look at the age groups of the perpetrators, it is seen that men in the 30-39 age group have committed violence the most. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified individual risk factors, such as young age, low education, and income status, as factors that contribute to the occurrence and persistence of intimate partner violence (13). In the Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey, violence in the last 12 months was found to be higher among young women, and it was stated that young and married women were the most disadvantaged group in terms of the risk of exposure to violence (4).

Table 3. Causes, types and occurrence patterns of violence cases

Characteristics	Before the pandemic		During the pandemic		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Causes of violence (N=341)						
Jealousy	11	13.9	41	15.6	52	15.2
Victim's request for divorce	19	24.1	32	12.2	51	15.0
Victim's desire to break up with her lover	8	10.1	15	5.7	23	6.7
Other	41	51.9	174	66.5	215	63.1
Types of violence cases (N=517)						
Physical violence	146	96.1	338	92.6	484	93.6
Physical and psychological violence	2	1.3	17	4.6	19	3.6
Psychological violence	2	1.3	6	1.7	8	1.6
Sexual violence	2	1.3	4	1.1	6	1.2
Patterns of occurrence of violence (N=519)						
Firearms	64	42.1	115	31.3	179	34.5
Cutting, piercing, crushing tool	54	35.5	102	27.8	156	30.1
Beating attempts	21	13.8	77	21.0	98	18.9
Strangulation attempts	7	4.6	29	7.9	36	6.9
Other	6	4.0	44	12.0	50	9.6

Table 4. Results of violence cases

Characteristics	Before the pandemic		During the pandemic		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Outcome of violence (N=418)						
Death	125	93.3	231	81.3	356	85.2
Injury	9	6.7	53	18.7	62	14.8
Affected people as a result of violence (N=168)						
The baby in the victim's womb	4	8.5	10	8.3	14	8.3
Children of the victim	25	53.2	57	47.1	82	48.8
Victim's friends	3	6.4	10	8.3	13	7.7
Relatives of the victim	9	19.1	22	18.2	31	18.5
Victim's spouse	1	2.1	3	2.5	4	2.4
Other	5	10.6	19	15.7	24	14.3
Status of the perpetrator after the violence (N=508)						
Under arrest	75	48.7	120	33.9	195	38.4
Under investigation	51	33.1	136	38.4	187	36.8
Release	5	3.2	38	10.7	43	8.5
Fugitive	9	5.9	27	7.6	36	7.1
Dead	14	9.1	16	4.5	30	5.9
Other	0	0.0	17	4.9	17	3.3

When the marital status of women who are victims of violence is examined, it has been determined that they are mostly married. The news during the pandemic is more than the news before the pandemic among married women. When the proximity of the perpetrators of violence to the victim was examined, it was determined that in seven out of ten news reports, the victim was his wife, lover or fiancée, and this situation did not change much with the pandemic. Hande Şahin et al. also reported that women were similarly subjected to violence by their husbands and intimate partners (14). CDC, regarding the prevalence of intimate partner violence, found that approximately 41% of women have experienced sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner and have reported an impact of intimate partner violence throughout their lives. More than half of femicide victims in the United States have been killed by a current or former male intimate partner (15). According to the WHO, globally, 38% of all femicides are committed by intimate partners (3). In the report of the UNODC, it has been reported that 55% of murders of women and girls are committed by intimate partners or family members (12). In foreign literature, individual, relationship structure, social risk factors and protective factors related to intimate partner violence have been identified (13). In our country, data on this subject are incomplete. More effective and solution-oriented measures can be planned by keeping regular records on a national scale, defining risk groups for intimate partner violence (risk-oriented approach) and conducting detailed studies questioning social and demographic factors.

It was found that in approximately one-fifth of the violence news examined, women who were victims of violence had previously been exposed to violence by the same person. This rate has emerged more clearly during the pandemic period. At the same time, it was determined that in 15.1% of the news, the practitioner had a previous criminal record. According to the data of The We Will Stop the Femicide Platform, in 280 femicides committed in 2021, it was reported that 33 of the murdered women had previously complained to the police or prosecutor's office or had a protection order (16). In our country, the penal execution law was enacted to ensure prison infection control during the pandemic. The fact that many criminals were released from prisons without taking measures in favor of women, children and disadvantaged groups may also have an impact on the increase in violence. Considering that violence against women is preventable, the importance of imposing deterrent punishments, especially for people who have committed violence and have a criminal record, draws attention.

In the violence news examined, information about the victim's profession (15.7%), the education level of the victim (5.5%), the perpetrator's

profession (15.3%), and the education level of the perpetrator (2.3%) could be accessed at a low rate. The information obtained belongs to the working group with a high level of education. In this respect, our study in defining risk groups for violence against women has not been sufficient. Gülsen Erden et al. (2018) also accessed this information at a low rate in their research with the news of femicides. They commented that the perpetrators and victims may not be working, their income and education level may be low in parallel, and these situations may pose a risk for violence (17).

In our study, violence against women was primarily experienced in the Marmara region and Istanbul. During the pandemic, it was observed that there was a decrease in violent incidents in Central Anatolia and the Aegean region and an increase in the Black Sea Region. In the study of Serpil Dündar et al, the Marmara region and in the study of Ayşegül Akgül et al, Istanbul were stated as the places where violence was experienced in the first place (18,19). The multinational structure of Istanbul and the Marmara Region may be related to this situation, as the population constitutes the majority of Turkey's population and receives much immigration.

Violence against women was most common in the winter season, during daylight hours and in the home environment. During the pandemic, there has been an increase in the news of violence in the winter season and the home environment. According to the report of The We Will Stop the Femicide Platform, 65% of the women killed in 2023 were killed in their homes. Homes, which are the places where individuals should feel safest, have become unsafe spaces for women (20). Long-term close contact within the family during events such as natural disasters and pandemics can increase domestic violence by reducing safe time (e.g., because a person goes to work), increasing interactions as more time is spent together, and uncovering various habits that may not be compatible with each other (21).

When the causes of violence were examined, while the victim's desire for divorce was at the forefront (24.1%) before the pandemic, jealousy (15.6%) was found to be at the forefront during the pandemic. In many studies in the literature, jealousy, request for divorce, or desire to break up have been stated as the cause of violence. In the study conducted by Gülsen Erden et al. on femicides, the top three reasons were arguing, jealousy and the woman's desire for divorce (17). During the pandemic, jealousy may have come to the fore due to increased close contact between family members and economic problems.

Looking at the types of violence cases, it was observed that physical violence was at the forefront of the news during the pandemic, and psychological violence was also reflected in the news, albeit at a low rate. The We Will Stop the Femicides Platform revealed that 37% of women were subjected to

psychological violence during the pandemic in the May 2020 Applicant Reception Report and that the applications for psychological violence increased by 51% compared to the previous month (10). Serpil Dünder et al, in their study conducted before the pandemic, found that physical violence ranked first and was accompanied by sexual and psychological violence (18). According to the Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey (2014), one in every two women in Turkey is exposed to psychological violence (4). Psychological violence may lead to physical, economic and sexual violence and may be the beginning of a pathological process leading to femicide (22). The fact that physical violence is more frequently covered in the news is because it is the concrete, visible face of violence. Making psychological violence visible and raising awareness at the social level that it is a form of violence that can have serious consequences may be necessary in terms of a proactive approach to violence.

Considering how violence occurs, it has been observed that while the use of firearms and cutting-piercing-crushing tools decreased during the pandemic period, battering and strangulation attempts increased. In the study conducted by Erden et al. (2018) investigating femicides, firearms (51.9%), sharp/striking tools (35.8%), strangulation (6.9%), and beating (4.2%) were given as the tools used (17). As a result of the challenging conditions experienced during the pandemic period, the sudden increase in stress levels and the inability to control anger, battering and strangulation attempts may have increased.

When evaluated according to the results of the cases of violence, the news of violence resulting in death decreased during the pandemic. In contrast, the news of violence resulting in injury increased approximately three times. According to the data of The We Will Stop the Femicide Platform, while the number of femicides was 360 in 2019, it was 300 in 2020 and 280 in 2021 (20). In a study examining records between 2015 and 2020 in Spain, it was reported that women's deaths decreased during the pandemic period (23). We think that this decrease may be a relative decrease secondary to the decrease in homicides caused by reasons such as divorce/separation due to the closure measures taken during the pandemic period and the increase in violence resulting in fewer deaths in the home environment. In the news of violence recorded during the pandemic period, the arrest status of the perpetrators of violence decreased while the release status increased. In the study, which examined the applications made to a police station in the USA, while domestic violence service calls increased with the stay-at-home measures during the pandemic, the arrest rates did not change. They explained this situation because the calls for service included non-violent domestic unrest (24). Similarly, in our study,

crimes such as battering and strangulation attempts may have been considered lesser crimes during the pandemic period, and the perpetrators may have been released. However, considering that such crimes as psychological violence may be a harbinger of violence that will result in death, it is crucial to give deterrent punishments to the perpetrators, investigate the causes of violence and take precautions.

In approximately one-third (31.8%) of the news reports on violence, there was information about the people affected. In approximately half (48.8%) of these news reports, it was determined that the victim's children were affected. In addition, 8.3% of the news items contained information that the victim was pregnant. Violence against women negatively affects not only the women who are subjected to it but also their children. Studies reveal the link between domestic violence against women and physical abuse of children and the trauma and behavioural and emotional disorders caused by witnessing domestic violence in children. Research also reveals the intergenerational transmission of violence as one of the critical consequences of violence. In this framework, it is known that maternal exposure to violence in the family has an impact on the normalization of violence or exposure to violence by women and men in their future lives. According to research results, there is a positive correlation between women's exposure to violence by their mothers and their exposure to violence (2,3,13).

Conclusion

The most important result of our study is that violence against women news increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, the frequency of violence news increased in the Marmara region, in the winter season, during daylight hours, in the home environment and among married women. In addition, it was observed that the frequency of violent cases in the form of beating and strangulation was increased while the frequency of death following violence was decreased. The complex relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and violence against women should be an essential focus for both communities and policymakers. In order to prevent violence against women, it is necessary to carry out awareness studies at the social level, to keep regular records on a national scale, to plan more effective and solution-oriented measures by conducting detailed studies that define risk groups for intimate partner violence (risk-oriented approach) and question social and demographic factors. In addition, international regulations on violence against women should be adopted and necessary studies should be carried out for the implementation and supervision of these regulations.

Limitations: The limitations of our study include the possibility that not all news about violence against women could be reached, not all incidents of violence against women may have been reported in the press, social, economic and cultural risk factors that were not given in newspaper news could not be evaluated, and risk factors could only be obtained as much as they were reported in newspaper news. In addition, it is noteworthy that more information about victims of violence is included in media reports, and less information about perpetrators of violence is included. Although the analysis of media reports does not provide a complete picture of the cases of violence against women, it can be a guide for further studies.

Conflict of interest statement

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest between the authors of the article.

Ethics Committee Approval: The study was approved by the Medical and Health Sciences Ethics Committee of the Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University (Date:19.07.2022, No:52).

Funding: Authors declare that they did not receive any financial support in this study.

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