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【論 文】

# Living Under COVID-19 in Asia: Tackling the Challenges of the ‘Shadow Pandemic’ in Japan and Indonesia

CHI Naomi \* and Dias PABYANTARA \*\*

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 has been proven to increasing risk factors for violence against women globally. According to UN Women, this so-called "shadow pandemic" manifested in one in three women subjected to intimate partner violence in 2020. The number is increasing globally ever since strict measures against COVID-19 were enacted worldwide. For example, France reported increasing violence against women by 30% at the beginning of the lockdown policy on 17 March 2020<sup>1)</sup>. In addition, Argentina also experienced the same pattern, as violence against women report by 25% since lockdown on 20 March 2020. The same goes with Canada, Germany, Spain, United Kingdom, and the United States that have also experienced a drastic increase in emergency shelters related to violence against women. In many of the cases around the world, the increase in violence is due to the increase in tensions in households, increased perpetrator's risk factors for violence, economic burden and survivors' limited access to support services available pre-lockdown<sup>2)</sup>.

The mentioned cases are happening worldwide, including in Japan and Indonesia. Countries have tried to contain the virus in various ways, from governments encouraging people to “stay at home” and in some cases a severe “lockdown”. These strategies have had an unintended impact on the most basic social institution in society, the family, and has led to the increase in

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- 1) UN Women (2021), “The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19,” <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19> (last accessed August 9, 2021).
- 2) Jinan Usta, Hana Murr, and Rana El-Jarrah (2021), “COVID-19 Lockdown and the Increased Violence Against Women: Understanding Domestic Violence During a Pandemic,” *Violence and Gender* (8:3) <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/vio.2020.0069> (last accessed Jan. 3, 2022).

interpersonal violence at home. The World Health Organization (WHO) has also reported that there is an increase of domestic violence globally amid the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>3)</sup>. In both Japan and Indonesia, where there are still considerable structural gender inequalities, together with the economic instability caused by the pandemic has led to the somber reality of higher incidences of not only domestic violence, but also child abuse and sexual exploitation.

Against this backdrop, this article will execute the following: 1) examine the current social and economic circumstances of the two societies under COVID-19, 2) analyze the various factors causing the increase in domestic violence and its long-term implications, 3) explore possible measures and policies to counter the violence and abuse against women attentive to the context of the ongoing crisis.

## 2. The “Shadow Pandemic” under COVID-19

### (1) Case of Japan

Ever since the initial breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic in the beginning of 2020, the Japanese government did not resort to strict measures, such as a full lockdown. Instead, the government encouraged its people to “stay at home” and switch to teleworking or working from home. With the increase of people staying home or working from home, combined the social stress caused by the pandemic, the number of domestic violence consultations in May 2020 hit a record high of more than 190,030 cases, compared to the 110,000 cases in May 2019<sup>4)</sup>. Moreover, according to the “Survey on Violence against Men and Women” released by the Japanese Cabinet Office reported that overall 22.5% responded that they were victims of violence from their spouse, while 25.9% of women and 18.4% of men responded they were victims of violence from their spouse, respectively<sup>5)</sup>. In addition, one in four women responded that they have been a victim of domestic violence<sup>6)</sup>.

In terms of sexual violence and crime, the number of consultations also hit a record high at

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3) World Health Organization (2020), “Levels of domestic violence increase globally, including in the Region, as COVID-19 pandemic escalates” <http://www.emro.who.int/fr/violence-injuries-disabilities/violence-news/levels-of-domestic-violence-increase-as-covid-19-pandemic-escalates.html> (last accessed July 27, 2020).

4) 「コロナ禍 DV相談1.6倍：20年度過去最多、在宅など影響か」 (“DV Consultation under COVID 19 increases 1.6 times: Record high in 2020, Working from Home a Factor”), *Nikkei Shimbun* (May 24, 2021) <https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXZQOUE21C9Z0R20C21A500000/> (last accessed Dec. 2, 2021).

5) Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office(2020), “Challenges to Gender Equality under COVID-19,” *Gender Equality White Papers* [https://www.gender.go.jp/about\\_danjo/whitepaper/r03/zentai/html/honpen/b1\\_s00\\_02.html](https://www.gender.go.jp/about_danjo/whitepaper/r03/zentai/html/honpen/b1_s00_02.html) (last accessed Dec. 2, 2021).

6) *Ibid.*

51,151 cases in 2020, compared to 41,384 cases in 2019<sup>7)</sup>. According to the “Survey on Violence against Men and Women,” one in fourteen women responded that they have been a victim of sexual violence and/or crime<sup>8)</sup>. Furthermore, when asked about the perpetrator, 10% of the women responded that the perpetrator was a stranger, while 30% of the women responded that it was someone they knew (current and/or former intimate partner)<sup>9)</sup>.

Lastly, according to the survey conducted during the state of emergency declared in April to May 2020, in terms of the time spent on domestic work and child rearing in a household with a child under the age of 8 under COVID-19, 37.5% of women responded that they feel a heavier burden and responsibility to execute domestic work and child-rearing under the state of emergency, compared to 19.8% of men.

## (2) Case of Indonesia

The Indonesia Women National Committee (Komnas Perempuan), which has annually released a national report of violence against women, published that nationally 299,911 cases were reported in 2020<sup>10)</sup>. It is suspected that the actual number is much more significant because they were able to only collect 31% of the total data due to the pandemic. In order to compensate for the lack of data, the committee combined the data from the 291,677 domestic violence cases handled by the District Court and Religious Court, the 8,234 cases handled by their organization partner and the rest coming from those who reported directly to the Komnas Perempuan.

Of the 8,234 cases Komnas Perempuan's partner reported, 79% (6,480) were cases of domestic violence. The breakdown of that number consists of violence against wives at 49% (3,221) and violence against intimate partners at 20% (1,309). Furthermore, violence against daughters in the family was 14% (954). The rest consists of violent conduct by ex-husband, ex-intimate partner, and violence towards housemaids<sup>11)</sup>. These numbers could double or triple, judging by the trajectory of cases that have increased in the last five years.

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7) Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office (2020), “Figure of Number of Consultations concerning Sexual Violence and Crime,” *Gender Equality White Papers* [https://www.gender.go.jp/about\\_danjo/whitepaper/r03/zentai/html/zuhyo/zuhyo01-00-29.html](https://www.gender.go.jp/about_danjo/whitepaper/r03/zentai/html/zuhyo/zuhyo01-00-29.html) (last accessed Dec. 2, 2021).

8) Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office (2020), “Survey on Violence against Men and Women,” [https://www.gender.go.jp/policy/no\\_violence/e-vaw/chousa/h11\\_top.html](https://www.gender.go.jp/policy/no_violence/e-vaw/chousa/h11_top.html) (last accessed on Dec. 2, 2021).

9) *Ibid.*

10) Komnas Perempuan (2021), “Catatan Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan Tahun 2020,” <https://komnasperempuan.go.id/uploadedFiles/1466.1614933645.pdf> (last accessed August 9, 2021).

11) *Ibid.*

### 3. Factors and Long-Term Implications

#### (1) Factors Causing Domestic Violence in Japan

The increase in domestic violence and abuse in Japan under COVID-19 stem from two main factors: 1) socio-cultural factor: deep-rooted gender inequality and gendered stigma in Japan; 2) structural-economic factor: ineffective and fragmented measures to balance the economy and disease control. The topic of gender equality continues to make headlines in Japan, but as news about Japan ranking 121<sup>st</sup> out of 153 countries, and 120<sup>th</sup> out of 156 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum in 2020 and 2021 <sup>12)</sup>, respectively, gender inequality is beyond a mere economic issue. These results come despite the well-publicized policies aimed at promoting women's representation in society. One of the major reasons is the way traditional gender roles still prevail, significantly undermining the path to gender equality in Japan. Moreover, the prevailing domestic violence and abuse also arise from gender stratification, which is the result of longstanding discourse of “good wife and wise mother (良妻賢母 or ‘ryosaikennbo’),” or “housewife (専業主婦 or ‘sengyoshufu’)” as well as the Japanese concept or unspoken rule of “self-responsibility (自己責任論 or ‘jikosekininron’).” Moreover, the economic stagnation caused by the pandemic also has a dire effect on not only women themselves but also their safety and well-being, as victims are literally “trapped” inside with their abusive partners. The following section will examine the socio-cultural and structural-economic factors that lead to the “shadow pandemic.” This section will also convey that even though COVID-19 has had detrimental consequences to the safety of women, the perpetuation of domestic violence and abuse was already a serious problem in Japan before the pandemic. The current COVID-19 crisis has highlighted, revealed and made the “shadow pandemic” visible to the eyes of the public.

#### a. Patriarchy and Traditional Gender Roles in Japan

Japan is regarded as a conservative patriarchal society, and many refer to the influences of traditional Buddhist and Confucian values as the basis of such culture. While there is no denying that the culture is influenced from such traditional values, the manifestation of gender relations in Japan stems from the era of rapid modernization after the Second World War (WWII) through the implementation of a state system that promoted a gendered division of labour as a key factor

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12) “Japan ranks 120th in 2021 gender gap report, worst among G-7,” *Kyodo News* (March 31, 2021) <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2021/03/1ba0fea560c2-japan-ranks-120th-in-2021-gender-gap-report-lowest-among-g-7.html> (last accessed Dec. 1, 2021); Makiko Eda, “Wanted: A Strategy to Narrow Japan’s Widening Gender Gap,” *The Japan Times* (March 6, 2020). <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2020/03/06/commentary/japan-commentary/wanted-strategy-narrow-japans-widening-gender-gap/> (last accessed on Dec. 1, 2021).

for the country's success<sup>13</sup>). This system enforced the notion of women as housewives and men as the breadwinners. The resulting androcentrism<sup>14</sup>) has created a myriad of difficulties for women in Japan, such as limited self-determination due to cultural pressures and a lack of significant opportunities for participation in society<sup>15</sup>).

Even before Japan's rapid modernization, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, contributions to society by men were measured in productive capacity and military service, while women were recognized for their domestic support of their husbands' activities and raising the next generation<sup>16</sup>). Moreover, the promulgation of the *ie* (家 meaning family)<sup>17</sup>) system further enforced the gendered roles of men and women. Japan's androcentric culture has promoted specific perceptions of women's roles in marriage and motherhood.

Marriage in Japan continues to be a rigid institution that is strongly influenced by traditional elements such as gender role division and the vertical generational ties from the *ie* family system<sup>18</sup>). For women, marriage comes with implicit obligations including childbearing, childrearing and caring for the elderly, and once in a marriage they are expected to commit themselves to such obligations<sup>19</sup>).

The role of motherhood in Japanese society is one of self-sacrifice and devotion. There is still a strong belief that whether a child can build successful relationship in society solely depends on how the mother prepares her child for socialization in the first three years, which "reinforces the notion that a child will not develop normally without a mother that dedicates herself to her child."<sup>20</sup>) This can make mothers feel guilty about wanting to work and it pressures

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- 13) Luisa Fernanda Villa (2019), "Classic Patriarchal Values and Their Effects on Working Japanese Women," *Revista Mundo Asia Pacifico* (8:14), pp. 60-75.
- 14) Androcentrism is defined as the assumption that the male experience is the norm of humanity, while the female experience is a negative deviation from that alleged neutral standard. See Peter Hegarty and Carmen Buechel (2006), "Androcentric Reporting of Gender Differences in APA Journals: 1965-2004," *Review of General Psychology* (10:4), pp. 377-389; M. Christina Luera (2004), "No More Waiting For Revolution: Japan Should Take Positive Action To Implement The Convention On The Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women," *Pacific Rim Law and Policy Journal* (611) <https://digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/wilj/vol13/iss3/5/> (last accessed Jan. 4, 2022).
- 15) Villa, *op. cit.*
- 16) Ana Micaela Araújo Nocado (2012), "The 'Good Wife and Wise Mother' Pattern: Gender Differences in Today's Japanese Society," *Crítica Contemporánea - Revista de Teoría Política* (2), pp. 156-169.
- 17) *Ie* refers to a family's lineage, including property, business, and the family name. The *ie* is maintained by the succession of the eldest son. Yoshihiro Sakane (2017), "The Characteristics and Global Position of the Japanese *ie* System," *Studies in Humanities and Sciences* (57:2), pp. 47-64. 1
- 18) Fumie Kumagai (1995), "Families in Japan: Beliefs and Realities." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* (26:1), pp. 135-163.
- 19) Ronald Rindfuss, Minja Choe, Larry Bumpass, and Noriko Tsuya (2009), "The Institutional Context of Low Fertility: The Case of Japan," *Asian Population Studies* (5:), pp.215-235. See also James M. Raymo, Hyunjoon Park, Yu Xie, and Wei-jun Jean Yeung (2015), "Marriage and Family in East Asia: Continuity and Change," *Annual Review of Sociology* (41:1), pp. 471-92.
- 20) Mariko Fujita (1989), "It's All Mother's Fault: Childcare and the Socialization of Working Mothers in

women into having to choose between motherhood and having a career.

Such traditional gender roles still prevail and significantly reduce women's participation in society as well as leadership roles in business and politics. "Historically, after the second World War, the combination of a hardworking husband who devotes his life to his company, and a stay-at-home mother, was encouraged."<sup>21)</sup> This encouragement has led to a norm in which husbands work very long hours, unscheduled overtime and holiday work in return for a lifetime employment and seniority-based salary, while housework and childrearing fall heavily on wives<sup>22)</sup>. The government's latest national survey in 2020 reported that mothers still do 3.6 times more housework than fathers<sup>23)</sup>. Because of these norms – as well as hiring biases in some companies, and the change-resistant working culture – many women stop working after having a child or opt for part-time or contract work that generally does not lead to promotions<sup>24)</sup>.

Patriarchy and traditional gender roles subjugate women in the family and put them in an inferior position, not to mention that these factors remain as one of the major obstacles for gender equality in Japan. The next section will explore how gender stratification is created through unique Japanese discourse, which result in domestic violence and abuse.

#### b. Gender Stratification, Unspoken Rule and Domestic Violence in Japan

The above section examined how patriarchy and traditional gender roles subjugate women and hinder gender equality in Japan. This section will analyze in further detail how the discourse of "good wife and wise mother", or "housewife" subjugate women and the Japanese unspoken rule of "self-responsibility" put women at a higher risk of becoming victims of violence and abuse.

The ideal of "good wife and wise mother" can be traced back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the idea evolved in the early twentieth century as a result of the state policies and campaigns over the education system<sup>25)</sup>. The idea itself is a modern phenomenon of state policies designed to retain and reinforce women's profile of stay-home mothers in the middle and upper classes<sup>26)</sup>. They were also referred to as "education mothers" who dedicated their life in children's success

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Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* (15:1), pp. 67-91.

21) Statement by Hiroki Komazaki, founder and CEO of Florence, a non-profit organisation which advocates for solutions that help working parents. See Mariko Oi, "Why Japan Can't Shake Sexism," *BBC* (April 9, 2021) <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210405-why-japan-cant-shake-sexism> (last accessed Jan. 4, 2022).

22) Yanfei Zhou (2015), "Career Interruption of Japanese Women: Why Is It So Hard to Balance Work and Childcare?" *Japan Labour Review* (12:2), pp. 106-123.

23) Oi, *op. cit.*

24) Zhou, *op. cit.*

25) Kathleen Uno (1993). "The Death of 'Good Wife, Wise Mother'?" in *Postwar Japan as History* Andrew Gordon ed. (Berkeley, CA, University of California Press).

26) *Ibid.*

in education<sup>27</sup>). This ideal of social model has been entailed for the scope of national development and still remains as the way gender roles are seen<sup>28</sup>).

Furthermore, in Hendry's study of housewives or *sengyoshufu*, she asserts that housework and the care of the children has undoubtedly always been a part of the working life of Japanese women, as it is part of the lives of most women, but in few parts of the world have these roles been granted the importance and status they have acquired in Japan<sup>29</sup>). Such kind of social model has a direct effect on gender stratification in Japan, as women are socially expected and often feel pressure to abide by such social model. Evidence to this, the labour supply of married women across childbirth is one of the lowest compared to the rest of the developing countries. One of the factors that it is more influential in inducing the M-shaped curve specific to Japan is childrearing.

Against this backdrop, as aforementioned, many women opt to quite their job after childbirth and return as part time or contract workers after their child/children start grade school (thus the Japanese female labour M-shaped curve). The implication of such behaviour is that women become dependent on their husbands, or the breadwinner, for financial and economic stability. Thus, even if the women is in an abusive relationship, often times many feel obliged to stay in the relationship because they do not have the means to support themselves and their children should they decide to get a divorce or terminate the relationship.

Moreover, many abused women and victims of domestic violence feel hesitate to raise their voice. Sachiko Nakajima, from the NPO Resilience<sup>30</sup>), explains that there seems to be a strong tendency to "self-blame" by Japanese victims, in this case, for female victims of domestic violence to blame themselves for the violence perpetrated upon them and further explains that when women confide in others about their abusive partners, they are often told that the abuse is her fault or that she is to blame for having chosen that partner<sup>31</sup>). In the Survey on Violence Against Men and Women conducted by the Gender Equality Bureau of the Japanese Cabinet Office in 2020, out of the 582 people who responded that they had been harmed in some form, 47.4% replied that they did not consult anyone about the abuse they were experiencing<sup>32</sup>).

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27) *Ibid.*

28) Nocedo, *op. cit.*

29) Joy Hendry (2003), *Understanding Japanese Society* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge). See also Aya Ezawa (2009), "Motherhood and Class: Gender, Class, and Reproductive Practices among Japanese Single Mothers," in *Social Class in Contemporary Japan* Hiroshi Ishida & David H. Slater eds. (London: Routledge).

30) NPO Resilience is a Japanese non-profit organization that aims to spread awareness of domestic violence and the effects of trauma as well as provide support and care for victims of domestic violence and abuse.

31) Rei Ando (2020), "Domestic Violence and Japan's COVID-19 Pandemic," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* (18: 18: 7), pp. 1-11.

32) Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office (2020), "Survey on Violence against Men and Women,"



Moreover, when asked why they did not consult anyone, 47.8% responded that they did not think the incident merited consultation, 32.6% thought they were also to blame, 23.6% thought it would be pointless and 20.3% thought they could get through the situation alone<sup>33)</sup>. The notion of self-responsibility is reflected in such reactions by the respondents<sup>34)</sup>.

The next section will explore the relations between economic security and Japan's COVID-19 measures and how this relation also affects the worsening of domestic violence in Japan.

### c. Economic Security and Japan's "Fragmented" COVID-19 Measures

Sylvia Chant states that, "gender inequalities occur in 'public' arenas such as the labour market and formal politics, as well as the nominally 'private' sphere of home and household."<sup>35)</sup> This is also true in Japan, and as mentioned above, such gender inequalities provide a breeding ground for abuse and violence. This section will explore how Japan's "fragmented" COVID-19 measures not only undermine economic security but also has resulted in the increase in domestic violence during the pandemic.

During the first year of the outbreak of COVID-19, more than 700,000 women and 390,000 men were not in the labour force<sup>36)</sup>. Moreover, while 80% of men were working full-time, more than 50% of women were working part-time or on contract basis<sup>37)</sup>. For women, working hours fell 15.5% and monthly income fell 8.8%<sup>38)</sup>.

One of features of the Japanese response to the COVID-19 crisis has been the inability of the central government to impose its pandemic policies on prefectures and cities, even during a state of emergency. Japan's 2012 Act on Special Measures for Pandemic Influenza and New Infectious Diseases Preparedness and Response (hereafter, Pandemic Special Measures Act) gives the prime minister the power to declare a state of emergency in any or all prefectures, however, enforcing instructions on disease control has proven extremely difficult.<sup>39)</sup> Since the

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[https://www.gender.go.jp/policy/no\\_violence/e-vaw/chousa/pdf/r02/r02danjokan-12.pdf](https://www.gender.go.jp/policy/no_violence/e-vaw/chousa/pdf/r02/r02danjokan-12.pdf) (last accessed Jan. 20, 2022).

33) *Ibid.*

34) Ando, *op.cit.*

35) Sylvia Chant (2004), *Urban Livelihoods, Employment and Gender in Latin America Transformed: Globalization and Modernity* Robert N. Gwynne and Cristóbal Kay eds. (United Kingdom: Hodder Education).

36) Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office (2020), "Figure Concerning Labour Force and Employment," *Gender Equality White Papers* [https://www.shugiin.go.jp/internet/itdb\\_gian.nsf/html/gian/gian\\_hokoku/20210611danjogaiyo.pdf/\\$File/20210611danjogaiyo.pdf](https://www.shugiin.go.jp/internet/itdb_gian.nsf/html/gian/gian_hokoku/20210611danjogaiyo.pdf/$File/20210611danjogaiyo.pdf) (last accessed Dec. 2, 2021).

37) *Ibid.*

38) Yanfei Zhou (2021), "How Women Bear the Brunt of COVID-19's Damages on Work," *Japan Labor Issues* (5:28), pp.2-8.

39) Harutaka Takenaka, "Japan's Fragmented COVID Response: A Systemic Failure of National Leadership," *Nippon.Com* (April 8, 2021) <https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/d00695/#> (last

prime minister nor the Minister of Health have any coercive powers vis-à-vis the local authorities that bear actual responsibility for implementation, it is up to the governors to decide whether to follow the central government's instructions<sup>40</sup>). By the same token, governors have little power to impose their decisions on the cities or special wards in their jurisdictions<sup>41</sup>). Due to such Japanese government's inability to impose strict pandemic policies, the government never implemented a full lockdown policy, and left much of the decision to the local government's discretion. Therefore, compensations for the self-employed and safety net measures for non-regular workers remain weak and fragmented<sup>42</sup>).

Like many other countries around the world, being unemployed makes the female more financially dependent and more susceptible to domestic violence<sup>43</sup>). In patriarchal societies where the male is expected to be the provider of the household, financial and psychological stressors are thought to increase domestic violence by threatening the male's authority at home making him more aggressive in an attempt to regain his authority<sup>44</sup>). The economic burden leaves female dependent on the male partner making it harder to leave a violent relationship.

Lastly, the author would like to share few of the stories of the victims obtained through a series of interviews. In order to ensure the safety of the victims, their names remain anonymous.

i) Ms. A (aged 35): "My husband and I got married 10 years ago when we found out that I was pregnant. In order to put our daughter through school we needed to increase the household income, so 5 years ago he quit his day job as a mechanic and decided to own and run a guesthouse. The guesthouse was doing quite well, but when COVID-19 broke out and inbound tourists stopped coming to Japan, we had to suspend the operation of the guesthouse, and my husband had to look for a temporary job. It was difficult to find anything during the first year of the pandemic, and he started to spend more time at home. He would drink alcohol from irritation, and started to lash out on me and my daughter. At first I tried to understand him and hoped that the situation would get better, but it didn't. The violence got worse day by day, but I was too ashamed to tell anyone. One day he tried to hit my daughter and while defending her he broke my rib and I was taken to the hospital. With COVID-19, many of the hospitals would not accept new patients, but finally I was admitted to a hospital. Since this incident, my daughter got very

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accessed Jan. 9, 2022).

40) *Ibid.*

41) *Ibid.*

42) Magdalena Osumi, "For Japan's nonregular workers, a weaker safety net as COVID-19 spreads," *The Japan Times* (March 31, 2020) <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/03/31/national/nonregular-workers-japan-coronavirus/> (last accessed Dec. 10, 2021).

43) Jinan Usta, Hana Murr, and Rana El-Jarrah, "COVID-19 Lockdown and the Increased Violence Against Women: Understanding Domestic Violence During a Pandemic," *Violence and Gender* (8:3) <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/vio.2020.0069> (last accessed Jan. 20, 2022).

44) *Ibid.*

scared and told her teacher at school, and the teacher called the local ward office and support centre for victims of domestic violence. If it weren't for my daughter, her teacher, officer from the ward office and the staff from the support centre, I think I would have been in a serious situation. Since then, I have divorced my husband and now live with my daughter at my parent's house, but I still fear that he may come find me and my daughter."

ii) Ms. B (aged 40): "My husband was a very nice and decent man. When COVID-19 hit, he had to voluntarily take leave from his job, and spent most of the time at home. In the beginning he said he enjoyed his time off, but it was only a matter of time until his stress level started to rise and he became irritable and aggressive. When I think of it now, his irritation most likely came from his insecurity of whether he would actually be able to return to his job and provide for the family. It started from shouting insults, hours and hours of preaching about how I didn't do the dishes properly or how dirty the house was. The situation got worse and he would not even allow me to go grocery shopping or go to the dentist because he was afraid that I may catch the virus and bring it inside the house. I was literally trapped in my own house. Day in and day out, he would scold me for hours about what I didn't do right. One day, when the local restaurants and bars reopened, he left the house to have a drink with his friends. I finally got the chance to call my family and tell them my situation. I packed my bags that day and left my husband."

## 2) Factors Causing Domestic Violence in Indonesia

As in the case of Japan, the increasing number of violence against women in Indonesia, especially in times of the pandemic, can be traced to two main factors: 1) socio-cultural factor: how society perceives gender relations; 2) structural-economic factor: how the indecisive response of the government to the pandemic helps deepen the root of the problem. The cultural aspect shows how Indonesian culture is instilled with hegemonic masculinities due to the long period of colonialism. It results in male superiority over women in present day Indonesia. Tragically, it helps prolong the story of domestic violence against women in the age of the pandemic. On the other hand, the indecisive response of the government to the pandemic and the pseudo-science-based policy implemented to counter COVID-19 have negatively affected the situation. Both factors go hand in hand to undermine gender equality in Indonesia under COVID-19. The following section will look at the genealogy of hegemonic masculinities, the effect of such masculinities on marriage and how the inadequate action by the government is worsening the "masculinity crisis" in Indonesia.

### a. The Genealogy of Hegemonic Masculinities in Indonesia

The cultural aspect deals with the dominant patriarchal perspective of Indonesian society toward family and marriage. A recent study suggested that the conception of masculinity in

Indonesia dwell in two parts: steady worker and reliable provider for the family<sup>45</sup>). In other words, men often conflate their fatherhood role as with that of being the breadwinner<sup>46</sup>).

There is a massive gap between how western society perceives masculinity compared to Indonesia. The west favors masculinity as the need to distinguish males from others through personal expression<sup>47</sup>). On the other hand, what happened in the eastern society is that masculinity resembled domination. Referring to the work by Connell<sup>48</sup>), “it manifested in conquering those who lack masculine characteristics, such as a female and colonized subject.”

It is impossible to detach the effect of Dutch colonial era to the manifestation of masculinity in Indonesia, amidst the 300 years of colonialization<sup>49</sup>). Recent studies have identified an active effort by the Dutch administration to construct a juxtaposition between native chief and the Dutch by comparing their clothes. This act indicated that they wanted the community to think that the Dutch is the ideal form of masculinity, despite the native chief<sup>50</sup>).

The predominant narrative of masculinity continued in the era of the first two Indonesian leaders, Sukarno and Suharto. The Sukarno era constructed a Javanese “alpha male” leader close to a “wealthy polygamy practitioners’ icon.”<sup>51</sup>) As a President from 1945-1966, Sukarno became the role model of Indonesian men to perceive masculinity. Although there is a backlash from the women empowerment movement in this era<sup>52</sup>), the predominantly masculine narrative prevailed until the end of the Sukarno era.

The next important figure in the construction of Indonesia masculinities is in the shadow of the authoritarian Suharto “New Order,” which remained unchallenged for 32 years from 1966-1998. He successfully imposed a hegemonic masculinity logic where the men perpetuated gender inequality and later took advantage of the unjust relations<sup>53</sup>). This regime normalized the

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45) Pam Nilan, (2009), “Contemporary Masculinities and Young Men in Indonesia,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* (37:109), pp. 327-344.

46) Michael S. Kimmel (2011), *The Gendered Society* 4th ed. (Oxford University Press; Oxford, UK).

47) Michael S. Kimmel (1994), “Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity,” in Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman, eds. *Theorizing Masculinities* 2nd ed. (London: Sage), pp. 119-141; G. Lloyd, (1993), *The Man of Reason: ‘Male’ and ‘Female’ in Western Philosophy* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge).

48) Raewyn W. Connell (2005), *Masculinities* 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press).

49) Desi Dwi Prianti (2019), “The Identity Politics of Masculinity as a Colonial Legacy,” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* (40:6), pp. 700-719.

50) Frances Gouda (2007), “From Emasculated Subjects to Virile Citizens: Nationalism and Modern Dress in Indonesia 1900-1949,” in Stefan Duddink, ed. *Representing Masculinity: Male Citizenship in Modern Western Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 235-257.

51) Sonja Van Wichelen (2009), “Polygamy Talk and the Politics of Feminism: Contestations over Masculinity in a New Muslim Indonesia,” *Journal of International Women's Studies* (11:1), pp. 173-187.

52) Nur Janti (2019), “Angka Poligami dari Masa ke Masa” <https://historia.id/kultur/articles/angka-poligami-dari-masake-masa-vgXwV/page/1> (last accessed August 9, 2021).

53) Raewyn W. Connell (1987), *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Palo Alta:

“Bapakism” ideology. Bapak originated from the term “father” in Bahasa. The ideology defined that the Bapak as the family leader, the business, the town, and the nation-state. Moreover, the superior quality of Bapak came from God-given wisdom, self-control, and mastery of emotion<sup>54</sup>). Suharto's calm, friendly and passive attitude reflected the glory of Akal (rationality and self-control) over emotions<sup>55</sup>). Due to his long regime, this was internalized and became a traditional Indonesian value.

#### b. Hegemonic Masculinities and Marriage

These trajectories of the concept of masculinity also shape the nationwide construction over family. The family is a manifestation of a masculine leader and other's identity as a member. As per institutionalized in the Point 3, Article 31 of the Indonesian Marital Law of 1974, “the husband is the family leader and the wife is the housewife.” Although the implementation is relatively weak, it is accepted as a common understanding nationwide<sup>56</sup>). The government adopted the trajectory of masculinity laid by the Dutch back in the colonial era. Moreover, the primary value is also intertwined with Islamic teaching about the roles in the family, which was later adopted by the state through the Compilation of Islamic Laws back in 1991<sup>57</sup>).

According to state political perspective intersecting with Islamic teaching, the laws laid the fundamental approach towards the ideal Indonesian family. In this law, marriage is regarded as *Ibadah*, a religious term for observance. In this sense, the sole purpose of marriage is to create a peaceful, calm, and loving family as a form of obedience to God<sup>58</sup>). The structure is a nuclear family, with the husband as the breadwinner and the wife as the household manager. The conception throws back to the long-standing masculinities which preserve the male-dominated culture.

In addition, the deep-rooted and institutionalized family conception and masculinities contribute as a push factor for Indonesians to get married. Research conducted by Himawan<sup>59</sup>) found that marriage in Indonesia is a socially-expected event. One of the reasons is pressure from the larger community. It is common for a single who prioritize their education or career to

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University of California Press).

54) Pam Nilan (2009), “Contemporary Masculinities and Young Men in Indonesia,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* (37:109), p. 327-344.

55) Michael G. Peletz (1995), “Neither Reasonable nor Responsible: Contrasting Representations of Masculinity in a Malay Society,” in A. Ong and M. Peletz (eds), *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 76-123.

56) Lyn Parker et al. (2016), “The Stigmatisation Of Widows And Divorcees (Janda) In Indonesia, and the Possibilities for Agency,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* (44:128), pp. 27-46.

57) *Ibid.*

58) *Ibid.*

59) Karel Karsten Himawan (2018), “Either I Do or I Must: An Exploration of The Marriage Attitudes of Indonesian Singles,” *The Social Science Journal* (56:2) pp. 220-227.

be scoffed by their surroundings because their efforts for self-development are deemed selfish<sup>60</sup>. From this point of view, one may conclude that proper knowledge is lacking in most marriages. Furthermore, many marriages come from social pressure instead of one's need, making it a fragile social foundation.

These aspects mentioned above contribute to the increased tension among family members while forced to confinement, as many relationships are already abusive<sup>61</sup>. The most affected are those confined in the same space with one's husband, intimate partner, ex-husband, and other family members<sup>62</sup>. The unjust relations between family members create a fertile zone for abusive attitude in social distancing.

### c. Inadequate Action by the Government and the "Masculinity Crisis"

Indonesia also faces an indecisive and miscalculated government response toward COVID-19. In the beginning of 2020, when COVID-19 first outbreaked in Wuhan, the Indonesian government did not take this matter seriously<sup>63</sup>. The first case in Indonesia was declared on March 2, 2020<sup>64</sup>, yet the task force to respond to it was not established until March 13, 2020<sup>65</sup>. Many criticized that had the World Health Organization not declared the pandemic on March 11, 2020,<sup>66</sup> the Indonesian government would have not responsibly taking action towards COVID-19. The government's political gesture, statement and attitude tended minimize the problem's scale and even asked the public to not take the pandemic so seriously<sup>67</sup>.

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60) Augustina Situmorang (2007), "Staying Single in a Married World: Never-Married Women in Yogyakarta and Medan," *Asian Population Studies* (3:3), pp. 287-304.

61) Jones, Balawyn. 2020. "Home Is Not Safe": Domestic Violence Increases as COVID-19 Pandemic Takes Hold," <https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/home-is-not-safe-domestic-violence-increases-as-covid-19-pandemic-takeshold/> (last accessed August 9, 2021).

62) Komnas Perempuan (2021), "Catatan Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan Tahun 2020," <https://komnasperempuan.go.id/uploadedFiles/1466.1614933645.pdf> (last accessed August 9, 2021).

63) Dumilah Ayuningtyas et al. (2021), "Questioning the Indonesia Government's Public Policy Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Black Box Analysis for the Period of January-July 2020," *Frontiers in Public Health* (9:612994).

64) Ihasnudi (2020), "Fakta Lengkap Kasus Pertama Virus Corona di Indonesia," <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2020/03/03/06314981/fakta-lengkap-kasus-pertama-virus-corona-di-indonesia?page=all> (last accessed August 10, 2021).

65) Egi Adyatama (2020), "Jokowi Tunjuk Doni Monardo Pimpin Tim Reaksi Cepat Atasi Corona," <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1319171/jokowi-tunjuk-doni-monardo-pimpin-tim-reaksi-cepat-atasi-corona/full&view=ok> (last accessed August 10, 2021).

66) World Health Organization (2020), "WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 11 March 2020," <https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-oncovid-19---11-march-2020> (last accessed August 10, 2021),

67) Dumilah Ayuningtyas et al. (2021), "Questioning the Indonesia Government's Public Policy Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Black Box Analysis for the Period of January-July 2020," *Frontiers in Public Health* (9:612994).

After being sharply criticized, the government later enacted Pembatasan Social Berskala Besar (PSBB), a lockdown-like policy that the government had chosen to perform instead of locking down the country entirely. The approach also generated criticism for Indonesia, which had already ratified a Health Quarantine Law (UU Karantina Kesehatan Number 6 2018) that detailed a lockdown in case of a widespread infectious disease. Yet, the government chose to implement an alternative policy like PSBB to dodge responsibility to fulfill the basic need of the community even though there were enacting *de facto* lockdown<sup>68</sup>). The critics match with the President's statement that the lockdown will hardly affect the economy<sup>69</sup>). In accordance, the Chief of the Task Force for COVID-19 Response clearly stated that it is hard to fulfill the nation's basic needs during lockdown due to the economic situation<sup>70</sup>).

After more than a year, the lockdown-like policy has resulted in massive unemployment. The traditional family positions the husband as the breadwinner, meanwhile, the pandemic has had a detrimental effect on the Indonesian economy. According to Statistics Indonesia, approximately 19.10 million workers are affected by the pandemic; 1.7 million lost their jobs in February 2021<sup>71</sup>). The same source stated that 73.57% are men. These numbers excessively reveal how the government response towards COVID-19 have affected family structure by laying off the breadwinner.

Aside from the economic consequence, the inadequate government response also contributes to the increase in domestic violence. The layoff disrupts the assertion of masculinity ideology that lies in the very heart of the family. The layoff has forged a crisis-like sphere towards the common ideology of becoming a man on a day-to-day basis. The conditions blatantly exposed the unequal gender relations within society, with the number of increasing domestic violence conducted mainly by the male family member. The frustrating situation of lockdown-like policy without social safety net, the increasing number of people getting laid-off from their jobs and the predominant hegemonic masculinities mindset assemble the high number of domestic abuse during the current pandemic.

Study conducted by Hobbs states that violence is always and has been part of working-class

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68) Bachtiarudin Asfinawati in Alam (2021, "Pilih PPKM Dibanding Lockdown, Pemerintah Dinilai Mau Hindari Kewajiban Bansos," <https://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/pilih-ppkm-dibanding-lockdown-pemerintah-dinilai-mau-hindarikewajiban-bansos.html> (last accessed August 10, 2021).

69) Ihsanuddin (2020), "Jokowi Akhirnya Blak-blakan soal Alasan Tak Mau Lockdown," <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2020/04/02/05405561/jokowi-akhirnya-blak-blakan-soal-alasan-tak-maulockdown?page=all> (last accessed August 10, 2021).

70) Agung Sandy Lesmana (2021), "Pemerintah Akui Ogah Pilih Lockdown karena Berat Penuhi Kebutuhan Rakyat," <https://www.suara.com/news/2021/03/09/112337/pemerintah-akui-ogah-pilih-lockdown-karena-berat-penuhi-kebutuhanrakyat> (last accessed August 10, 2021).

71) Badan Pusat Statistik (2021), "Keadaan Ketenagakerjaan Indonesia Februari 2021," <https://www.bps.go.id/pressrelease/2021/05/05/1815/februari-2021--tingkat-pengangguran-terbuka--tpt--sebesar-6-26-persen.html> (last accessed August 10, 2021).

life<sup>72</sup>). It provides the construction of a way to earn respect from their male peers<sup>73</sup>). Most working-class men are embedded with the idea that taking part in a fight resembled the ideal conception of masculinities<sup>74</sup>). As a form of ideology, it needs to be exercised outside oneself. The most common place is in the neighborhood, giving a sense of territorial dignity and leadership through toughness and aggressive style<sup>75</sup>).

The need for peer approval comes from a homogenous workplace. The labour division is one of the most gender-segmented aspects. The most low-end position that men fill will likely have men-filled coworkers. It seldom has a diverse gender composition because women are most likely to get into the most domesticated line of work. Thus, there is a demanding peer pressure to be harsh and violent alongside the common masculinity values. In the context of Indonesia, the most severe layoff occurred in production assembly lines, manufacturing, transportation and logistics, as well as other blue-collar work, which are predominantly male workers<sup>76</sup>).

The main feature of the government's inadequate response toward COVID-19 is that it indirectly takes the neighborhood where the male working-class assess their ideological masculinities close to violence. The lockdown-like policy forces the male worker into confinement, separating the subject of ideology from the practice. One cannot exist apart from the other. The discourse and the activity must go hand in hand<sup>77</sup>). Otherwise, they will lose the gravity of who they are and how they are becoming a man. Hence, the male worker has to find another way to assert their ideology and, in this case, power. Unfortunately, the proximate circumstance is the family since the house becomes a solitary confinement. Therefore, it is paternally that the laid-off male worker often falls into committing domestic violence upon his family.

On the other hand, there is no safety net for the victim, most likely women from the domestic violence by the male family member. The absence of a law on abusive domestic violence plays a crucial role in the wide-open opportunity for a domestic abuser. It prepares the dominant aggressive male to go unchecked while expressing their ideology. Indonesia's gender movement

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72) Dick Hobbs (1988), *Doing the Business: Entrepreneurship, Detectives and the Working Class in the East End of London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

73) Simon J. Charlesworth (2000), *A Phenomenology of Working Class Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

74) Antony Whitehead (2005), "Man to Man Violence: How Masculinity May Work as a Dynamic Risk Factor," *The Howard Journal* (44:4), pp. 411-422.

75) Andrew Tolson (1977), *The Limits of Masculinity* (London: Tavistock).

76) Ruth Meiliana Ngadi and Yanti Astrelina Purba (2020), "The Impact of COVID-19 on Worker Layoffs and Income in Indonesia," *Jurnal Kependudukan Indonesia Edisi Khusus Demografi dan COVID-19* (July 2020), pp. 43-48.

77) F. Franco, V. Sarvar and Sherry Chand (1989), Ideology as Social Practice: The Functioning of Varna. *Economic and Political Weekly* (24:47), pp. 2601-2603, pp. 2606-2612.



faced a significant setback on domestic violence eradication since the last time the draft for Sexual Violence Bill had been drawn from the national legalization priority in the Parliament<sup>78)</sup>. The bill is set to cover other aspects of gender-based violence outside rape and sexual harassment<sup>79)</sup>.

#### 4. Possible Measures and Policies to Counter Domestic Violence

##### (1) Case of Japan

The surge of domestic violence under COVID-19 and the media coverage of the situation has gained some attention of the public. However, there is still a lack of measures and policies to respond to this “shadow pandemic.” This section will explore, short and long-term measure and policies that need to be considered in order to curtail domestic violence.

In the short-term, it is crucial to provide shelters and safe houses for the victims so that they can be removed from the violent environment. In Japan, there are both private and public shelters. Public shelters are commonly called the Spousal Violence Counseling and Support Centres (SVCSCs), and private shelters are provided by organizations such as DV Soudan+ and HELP (House in Emergency of Love and Peace) to name a few (there are also private shelters in major cities around Japan), but there is still a lack of shelters. Moreover, many shelters and consultation services are understaffed, thus, more human power needs to be put into place in order to provide the necessary services for the victims.

One of the problems during COVID-19 was that the shelters and consultation services were suspended due to the scare of the spread of the disease. Also, many shelters have a two-week temporary protection period, but during the pandemic it is important to have some flexibility in consideration of COVID-19 measures<sup>80)</sup>. Moreover, one of the issues that sparked a heated debate was the way in which residents received the 100,000 yen special cash payment as emergency aid money. Initially, the government sent out the notice to each household according to the residence registry and depositing it to the bank account of the head of the household. This system proved to be problematic for victims of violence and abuse, because in cases where the victim no longer lived in the house, she (and often times the child) could not receive the benefit.

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78) Hanif Gusman (2020), “Penarikan RUU PKS & Meroketnya Angka Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan,” <https://tirto.id/penarikan-ruu-pks-meroketnya-angka-kekerasan-terhadap-perempuan-fPpl> (last accessed August 10, 2021).

79) Amnesty International (2020), “Empat Urgensi Pengesahan RUU PKS,” <https://www.amnesty.id/empat-urgensipengesahan-ruu-pks/> (last accessed August 11, 2021).

80) Tomoko Suga (2021), “Response to Domestic Violence During the COVID-19 Outbreak in Japan,” *Violence and Gender* (8:3) <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/vio.2020.0043> (last accessed Jan. 21, 2022).

Thus, it is important to establish and implement special measures for victims of violence and abuse and provide some flexibility during times of emergency.

As for long-term measures, while Japan has its share of laws pertaining to domestic violence such as the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims Act of 2001, Japanese women remain vulnerable. The law stipulates that in the case of a claim made by a victim, the alleged perpetrator is required to vacate the site of primary shared residence for a two-month period from the day which the order goes into effect<sup>81</sup>). However, after that, the claimant (that is, the victim, not the perpetrator) must vacate the house, which means that the law “punishes” the woman with eviction from her own home for making a claim against a husband who is putting her life in jeopardy.<sup>82</sup>). The dangerous effects of this peculiar situation are particularly evident in the context of COVID-19, where women have to vacate their homes in a time of a global pandemic. Therefore, it is crucial to reinforce legal institutions to protect the victim, not the perpetrator.

## (2) Case of Indonesia

The grave liability of domestic violence during the pandemic in Indonesia demands special treatment. Having pointed out the predominant traditional masculinity as the root of the problem paves the road to working on an immediate and long-term solutions. The first step should be mitigating the physical risk of the violence, by providing a safe space for the victims structurally by removing them from the source of the violence.

In Indonesia, there are safe houses established by the government as well as civil society network that provide protection for women and children. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Indonesia has established twenty-five secure house services nationwide<sup>83</sup>). In addition, the civil society network led by the National Commission on Violence Against Women marked eighty-six establishments that provide protection for women and children<sup>84</sup>). Yet, the case filed to the authority through the safe house service is relatively low. Only 31% of total cases in 2020 have proceeded to legal action, 29% settled through dispute settlement forum facilitated by the civil society network and the rest of the cases are still unknown<sup>85</sup>).

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81) Ando, *op. cit.*

82) *Ibid.*

83) Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan Dan Perlindungan Anak Indonesia (2019), “Peta Persebaran UPTD PPA,” <https://www.kemenpppa.go.id/index.php/page/view/132> (last accessed August 11, 2021).

84) Komnas Perempuan (2021), “Mitra Pengada Layanan Komnas Perempuan,” <https://komnasperempuan.go.id/mitrakomnas-perempuan/pengada-layanan> (last accessed August 11, 2021).

85) Komnas Perempuan (2021), “Catatan Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan Tahun 2020,” <https://komnasperempuan.go.id/uploadedFiles/1466.1614933645.pdf> (last accessed August 11 2021).

There is, however, the protocol by the Ministry of Health to responding to gender-based violence during pandemics. However, the solution is to make victims report to the nearest facility<sup>86)</sup>. A survey conducted by the Indonesia Judicial Research Society (ICJR) asserted that 33.5% responded that they are afraid to seek help outside their circle. Furthermore, 29% responded that they feel shameful, 23.5% responded that they do not know where to report, and 18.5% responded that they feel guilty<sup>87)</sup>. The number does not come from a lack of safe house service but the reluctance of the victim to come to seek help. The conventional family traits in Indonesia make it harder to rationalize the need to seek professional help in terms of domestic violence. It is because they claim that domestic violence is a private family matter, and it will be shameful if the case is exposed.

Hence, it is crucial to link the rescuer and the victim by utilizing social networks. The neighbour next door must be the first to identify the problem and act accordingly. The social network in the grassroots Indonesia make this possible since there is a long-standing organization at the village level called Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga – PKK (Family Welfare Movement)<sup>88)</sup>. The PKK is a grassroots organization that is spread nationwide whose mission is to integrate family welfare into national development<sup>89)</sup>.

Such kind of movement can be utilized to tackle the problem of reluctant women to report domestic violence<sup>90)</sup> and enable them to talk about their personal affairs among neighbours. This way, the first aid to domestic violence can rely on the neighbourhood network rather than an

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86) Kemenkes (2020), “Protokol Penanganan Kasus Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan di Masa Pandemi COVID-19,”

[https://infeksiemerging.kemkes.go.id/download/Protokol\\_Penanganan\\_Kasus\\_Kekerasan\\_terhadap\\_Perempuan\\_di\\_Masa\\_Pandemi\\_COVID-19.pdf](https://infeksiemerging.kemkes.go.id/download/Protokol_Penanganan_Kasus_Kekerasan_terhadap_Perempuan_di_Masa_Pandemi_COVID-19.pdf) (last accessed August 11, 2021).

87) International Judicial Research Society (2020), “Mengapa Korban Kekerasan Seksual Enggan Melapor?” <http://ijrs.or.id/mengapa-korban-kekerasanseksual-enggan-melapor/> (last accessed August 11, 2021).

88) PKK became a mass organization in 1972 by the order of President Suharto. In this era, PKK was crucial in carrying out the idea of national development and harness women's support for the national agenda. In the post-Suharto era, PKK became a government partner in shaping the democratization process. Their role-shifting was maximized by incorporating protocol to reach out to the victims in the neighbourhood. The members primarily consist of poor women in the village and have regular meetings and routine activities. See also: Sharon Bessell (2004), “Women in Parliament in Indonesia: Denied a Share of Power,” Discussion Paper, Asia Pacific School of Economics and Governance, The Australian National University 04-07, [https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/10440/1170/1/Bessell\\_Women2004.pdf](https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/10440/1170/1/Bessell_Women2004.pdf) (last accessed August 11, 2021); Amaliatulwalidain and Novia Kencana (2019), “Peranan Politik Gerakan Perempuan Dari Masa Ke Masa,” (Studi: Tentang Sejarah Organisasi Pkk Di Indonesia) *Jurnal Pemerintahan Dan Politik Global* (4:1). <http://ejournal.uigm.ac.id/index.php/PDP/article/viewFile/679/831> (last accessed August 11, 2021).

89) PKK (2017), “Visi Misi PKK,” <https://tpkk-pusat.org/tentangkami/> (last accessed August 11, 2021).

90) Niken Kusumawardhani and Ana Rosyida Tamyis (2018), “Mengapa Perempuan Miskin Enggan Melaporkan KDRT Ke Pihak Berwenang?” <https://theconversation.com/mengapa-perempuan-miskin-enggan-melaporkan-kdrt-ke-pihakberwenang-106495> (last accessed August 11, 2021).

external actor, such as the government. Under COVID-19, grassroots solidarity tend to more effective than a government-led initiative that tends to be late and misplaced. The Warga Bantu Warga (residence helping each other) initiative has proven to help many people in need of health facilities, medical goods and daily basic needs when the government stays idle<sup>91</sup>). Judging by the current pattern, it is best to manifest the solution to grassroots or societal solidarity instead of a structural approach.

There is also a potential to develop religious communities (Mejelis Ta'lim) to be a safe cocoon for victims of domestic violence. In Indonesia, women's religious communities have a solid base in both rural and urban areas. The top-down culture from the teacher to the member that runs in the community makes it easier to assert ideas. For instance, research conducted on the women's religious community in Cinere, Depok<sup>92</sup>) demonstrated that they successfully developed awareness of cervical cancer from 2% to 86%, by socializing through their regular forum<sup>93</sup>).

The same goes for the women's religious community in Wiyung Surabaya, who successfully developed skills in making traditional jewelry<sup>94</sup>). It is tempting to imagine that the idea of "moderate" masculinity is resonating through that forum to start a change in every household. The bottom line is that the social hub to transmit the idea of first-aid for domestic violence is widely available. It is a matter of how to start activating them to create a chain of reform.

A similar government-led practice has been executed before on a small scale. Bandung<sup>95</sup>) local government started the initiative to bring back the father to get involved in the children's education and later share responsibility with the mother to develop children's character in 2020<sup>96</sup>). It is an initiative to reconstruct the masculinity perception toward being a father and a man—one of which we could revisit after knowing that hegemonic masculinities play a crucial role in domestic violence. Unfortunately, the programme has been suspended for the next year due to the pandemic and social distancing policy. However, the point that needs to be highlighted is the urgent need to deconstruct the masculinities on a large scale through a cultural approach to achieve gender equality and practically suppress domestic violence.

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91) Impian Nopitasari (2021), "Warga Bantu Warga, Negara Bantu Siapa?" <https://news.detik.com/kolom/d5647609/warga-bantu-warga-negara-bantu-siapa> (last accessed August 11, 2021).

92) Cinere, Depok is a satellite city of Jakarta.

93) Tiwuk Susatiningsih et al. (2020), "Pelatihan dan Penyuluhan mengenai Bahaya Kanker Serviks pada Kelompok IbuibuPengajian di Pangkalan Jati, Cinere, Depok," *Jurnal Pengabdian Pada Masyarakat* (5:2). pp. 554-563.

94) Wahidah Salsabila (2020), "Evaluasi Hasil Pelatihan Membuat Bros Anting Bagi Ibu-Ibu Pengajian Upkq Ai-Hikmah Di Wiyung Surabaya," *Jurnal Tata Busana* (9:9).

95) Bandung is the capital of West Java Province and is one of the major cities in Indonesia.

96) Humas Kota Bandung (2020), "Sekolah Ayah Seimbangkan Pendidikan Keluarga." <https://humas.bandung.go.id/layanan/sekolah-ayah-seimbangkan-pendidikan-keluarga> (last accessed August 11, 2021).

The cultural community-based solution is nothing without a good long-term and nationwide effort to impose change. The most realistic solution is to keep pressing the Parliament to pass the law of the Elimination of Sexual Violence Bill. The law is the rational and procedural way to comprehensively overcome domestic violence since it encompasses a broader concept of sexual violence and includes the rehabilitation for the victims, which is a drastic shift from Indonesia Criminal Code (KUHP), which focuses on the perpetrator rather than the victim's needs.

The bill is still situated between two major political ideologies, the Islam Conservative and the rest. The primary opponents are the Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera), the National Mandate Party (Partai Amanat Nasional) and the Indonesian Ulema Council, whose ideology rests in Islamic values<sup>97)</sup>. The proponent is the rest of the political parties and the executive. The opposition brought up a counter bill called the Family Resilience Bill (RUU Ketahanan Keluarga) carried out by the Islamic Civil Organization, which has a more Islamic nuanced chapters<sup>98)</sup>.

Nonetheless, most civil society movements that have formed alliance under the Civil Society Coalition have given their full support and continue to apply pressure to the Parliament to pass the law urgently<sup>99)</sup>. In accordance, a survey by IJCR and International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development (INFID) reported that 70.9% of the respondents from 34 provinces agree to pass the law, while 29.1% reject it<sup>100)</sup>. Although there is a need for a more structural approach to press the Parliament to reconcile their political dispute, there is a significant relief knowing that the public supports the bill. It is a heartwarming sign that the duty to activate public awareness about domestic violence in a particular and gender-based problem, in general, is on the right track. Lastly, it is always the combination of cultural and structural approaches that work best to deal with social-political problems. In the context of Indonesia's "shadow pandemic," there is a dire need to find the balance between imposing a solution structurally and approaching the grassroots culturally.

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97) Antara (2020), "MUI Berharap RUU PKS Ditolak DPR," <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1249426/mui-berharap-ruupks-ditolak-dpr> (last accessed August 11, 2021).

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## 5. Tentative Conclusion

Since the outbreak of COVID 19 from the beginning of 2020, the pandemic has brought about fundamental changes in the way we live, work and communicate. The responses and strategies to curtail COVID-19 have had an unintended impact on basic social institution in society, the family, and has led to the increase in interpersonal violence at home. Amidst the spread of the novel coronavirus, the shadow pandemic lurks underneath. In both Japan and Indonesia, where there are still considerable structural gender inequalities, together with the economic instability caused by the pandemic has led to the somber reality of higher incidences of violence and abuse.

Having identified the underlying causes, despite the difference in detail, Japan and Indonesia share similarities in terms of linkage between domestic violence in times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both are derived from deep-rooted gender inequality and ineffective and fragmented measures to balance the economy and disease control by the government. The traditional gender construction in both countries result from a long historical trajectory. Japan is a mixture of traditional Buddhist-Confucian values and rapid modernization. On the other hand, Indonesia has experienced colonialism, state-imposed gender role, and traditional Islamic values. Yet the results stay the same, a deep-rooted patriarchal culture.

The similarities above lead us to believe that the best remedy to inflate responses toward domestic violence in times of the pandemic is to provide various safe-shelter and consultation services for the victims and encourage them to report. Furthermore, in the long run, both countries need to strengthen the domestic violence bill; in the case of Indonesia, to erect one. In a patriarchal culture, where feminine identity remains vulnerable, it is obligatory that they have proper safe space to ensconce, especially amidst the pandemic.

In this article, two authors that specialize in gender issues in Japan and Indonesia, respectively, examined the current social and economic circumstances of the two societies under COVID-19, analyzed the various factors causing the increase in domestic violence and explored possible measures and policies to combat domestic violence and abuse attentive to the context of the ongoing crisis.

While this article examined in detail the situation of the rise in domestic violence and abuse of women under COVID-19 in Japan and Indonesia, however, there are limitations to this research as well. Domestic violence is often regarded as a gendered issue and while this article also provided statistical data that many of the victims are women subjected to violence by men, we must not forget that violence and abuse can occur in different forms and relationships. As stated by Vickie Skorji, director of TELL Japan, “We often think of this as the man being the abuser, but it could be the woman, or mother with their child, an older child with their aging

parent, in same-sex relationships and when one partner is foreign.”<sup>101)</sup> Violence and abuse does not only take the form of physical violence or abuse. Psychological and emotional abuse through verbal intimidation as well as sexual abuse in the form of unwanted sexual acts can be just as harmful and detrimental to one’s quality of life and health. The prolonged pandemic is causing serious economic setbacks and social repercussions, but use of violence against another human being (or animal for that matter) cannot be justified under any circumstances.

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# **Living Under COVID-19 in Asia: Tackling the Challenges of the ‘Shadow Pandemic’ in Japan and Indonesia**

**CHI Naomi and Dias PABYANTARA**

## **Abstract**

More than 400 million people have been infected by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) since its outbreak from the beginning of 2020. The pandemic has not only affected the way we live and work, but it has also brought about the spread of the “shadow pandemic”—domestic violence. Countries have tried to contain the virus in various ways, from governments encouraging people to “stay at home” and in some cases a severe “lockdown”. These strategies have had an unintended impact on the most basic social institution in society, the family, and has led to the increase in interpersonal violence at home. The World Health Organization has reported that there is an increase of domestic violence globally amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In both Japan and Indonesia, where there are still considerable structural gender inequalities, together with the economic instability caused by the pandemic has led to the somber reality of higher incidences of not only domestic violence, but also child abuse and sexual exploitation.

In this article, two authors that specialize in gender issues in Japan and Indonesia, respectively, will attempt to execute the following: 1) examine the current social and economic circumstances of the two societies under COVID-19, 2) analyze the various factors causing the increase in domestic violence and its long-term implications, 3) explore possible measures and policies to counter domestic violence and abuse attentive to the context of the ongoing crisis.

## **Keywords**

COVID-19, Domestic violence, Abuse by intimate partner, Gender inequality, Gender roles, Patriarchy, Masculinity