



Report of the event -- Webinar-Cries behind the closed rooms: Covid 19, Domestic violence and mental health

Dr. Nilanjana Bagchi, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Psychology at Bethune College, Kolkata, West Bengal was invited as a resource person on 25.09.2020 for a state level webinar on 'Cries Behind the Closed Rooms-Covid 19, Domestic Violence and Mental Health'. The webinar was organized by the Department of Political Science in collaboration with IQAC of the college. The principal of the college, 23 faculties and 100 students of the college attended the webinar. Dr Bagchi spoke on several important gendered issues of the society in light of the then ongoing pandemic.

Dr Bagchi argued how COVID-19 pandemic had brought about unprecedented changes in our daily lives, and one of the most significant impacts was on domestic violence. With lockdowns and quarantine measures in place, victims of domestic violence found themselves trapped with their abusers, leading to an increase in reported cases of domestic violence. She mentioned how World Health Organization (WHO) reported a significant increase in the number of calls to domestic violence hotlines in countries affected by the pandemic. This was not only a physical issue but also a mental health issue as the prolonged stress and isolation led to long-term mental health problems for mostly female victims. In addition to physical abuse, domestic violence also included emotional and psychological abuse, which can be just as damaging.

The isolation and lack of social support during the pandemic made it even harder for female victims to seek help. Dr Bagchi stressed on how Mental health professionals expressed concern about the negative effects of prolonged stress and isolation on victims of domestic violence. The trauma of domestic violence led to depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), all of which had long-term effects on a person's mental health. The government and civil society organizations took steps to address the issue of domestic violence during the pandemic. Many countries set up hotlines and online resources for victims to seek help and support. She concluded by saying how the COVID-19 pandemic brought a new dimension to the issue of domestic violence and how it was essential to recognize the problem, provide support and resources to victims, and work towards creating a society where domestic violence was not tolerated. Her talk was followed by an interaction session with our students and faculties where Dr. Bagchi shared useful resources and helpline numbers across West Bengal that could provide help to victims of violence.

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