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# WHY DIVORCES COULD SPIKE AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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### Abstract

It is evident that the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic have been and remain dire across the world in many sectors. While many businesses have felt the brunt of this virus, there is another field that has equally suffered and continued to suffer. Everywhere, discussions seem to be ending with conversations on Coronavirus. So far, this virus has disrupted lives, exposing institutions of marriage to a myriad of challenges. Family attorneys and relationship experts have warned that as soon as the courts are opened and begin operating, it is likely that cases of divorce are bound to increase. Following restrictions on movement, many families have had to spend their time together, something that many of them were not used to. In this condition, they have had to confront stressful situations brought about lack of enough finances, tensions, and other events they were missing due to business and other work related activities. In some families the increase in tensions and family wrangles is likely to make the subject of several divorce cases in many places.

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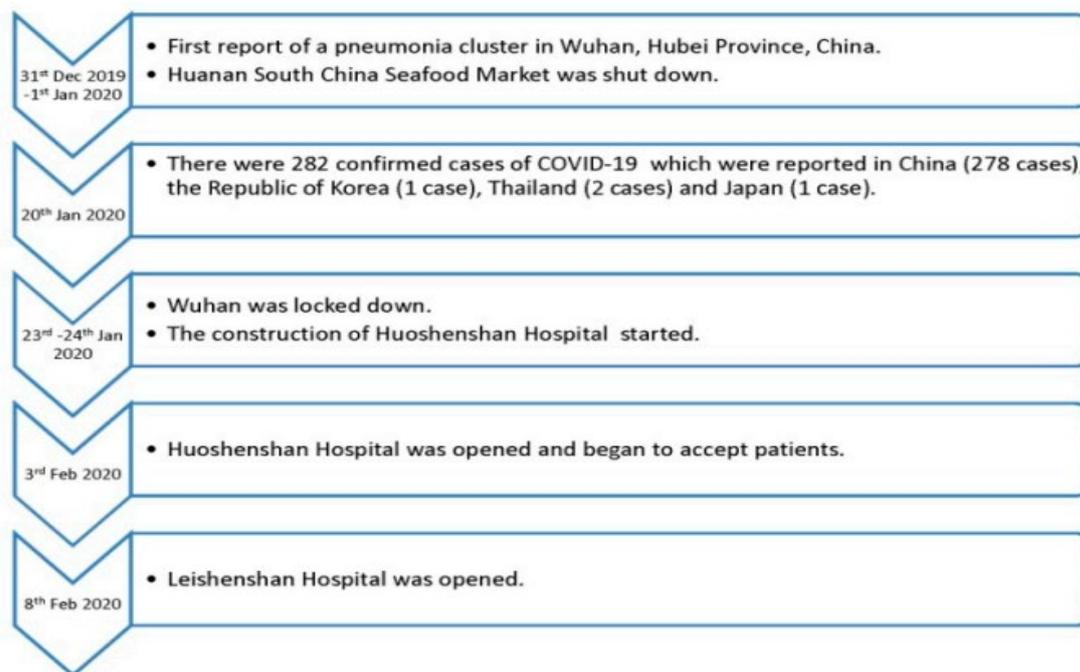
*Keywords:* Divorce, Family Attorneys, Family Experts, COVID-19



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## 1. Introduction

The world has witnessed one of the most devastating pandemics in so many years. The covid-19 era took the world by storm. What started in Wuhan China as a negligible virus soon became an epidemic, causing the deaths of thousands of people in China. The virus started spreading fast, and soon reached to parts of America and Europe. Within a few months, the virus has led to the death of thousands of people across the world and has ruined businesses, economies, and other aspects of life.



**Figure 1.** The spread of COVID-19 pandemic (Zhang & Ma, 2020)

Schools closed in many countries and children have had to remain at home (Alvi & Gupta, 2020). According to the UNICEF (2020), children have been the most affected and going forward, they will face more problems if families become unstable. One of the hardest hit institutions is that of the family. According to UNFPA (2020), the physical and economic disruptions occasioned by the virus have vast consequences on the rights of women and girls. The report released by the UNFPA and its associated partners also projects an increase in cases of divorce post covid-19. This is based on the reports projection that if violence has to increase in families by about 20% in these times of restrictions, it is likely to lead to about 15 million cases of partner violence (UNFPA, 2020). This is quite alarming; something that can be the cause of separation by divorce when the courts become functional post-COVID-19.

In families, increase in the level of stress is a major concern. In their research, Spinelli et al. (2020) found seven items based on the stress subscale of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale–Short form (DASS). The results indicated that irritation and agitation as some of the manifestations of stress in families resulting from the pandemic. According to Spinelli et al. (2020), Cronbach's alpha score in the study was 0.88, 90% CIs [0.88–0.89]. This is an indication of the challenges that parents are facing in families.

## 2. Methodology

The research will use literature reviews where the researchers will analyse journals from different sources to examine their findings on the impacts of covid-19 on families. Getting this insight will be vital in ensuring that answers to the research questions are answered. In this entire process, the focus will be on examining what other authors and researchers have studied on the pandemic and projected an increase in divorce cases post-covid-19. The journals to be examined will comprise of those from recognized institutions such as WHO, UN, and even those from the National Health Services (NHS).

The choice of these articles was based on the richness of their research findings on the impacts of the covid-19 pandemic on families. A summary analysis of the articles is shown Table 1 below;

**Table 1.** A summary analysis of the articles

Author	Title of journal article	Date of Publishing	Brief Summary	Url/doi
UNICEF	Children in Lockdown: Rapid Assessment of the Impact of Coronavirus on Children in the UK	2020	The article examines the impacts that covid-19 has had on children in the United Kingdom	<a href="https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/UnicefUK_ChildrenInLockdown_RapidAssessment.pdf">https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/UnicefUK_ChildrenInLockdown_RapidAssessment.pdf</a>
WHO	Mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak	2020	The article examines some of the mental and psychosocial challenges that have been brought about by the coronavirus. The analysis of these impacts presents an understanding of how families are suffering	<a href="https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf">https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf</a>
Prime, H., Wade, M., & Browne, D. T.	Risk and resilience in family well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic	2020	The authors, in this research focuses on the risks and resilience that families are experiencing during the lockdown. Some of the risks include possible increase in divorce cases due to misunderstanding emerging in families	<a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000660">http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000660</a>
Kalmer, S. M., & Kratcha, K. R.	The Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Impact on Employers and Plan Sponsors	2020	This article provides an understanding of some of the responses to covid-19 I its initial days and the impacts of such actions on the affected persons	
Nora S, Sara M, Jennifer K	Families “Safe at Home”: The COVID-19 Pandemic and Parenting in Canada	2020	The authors of this study looked at the conditions in homes for families staying at home due to the covid-19 lockdown measures	<a href="https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2020/06/COVID-19-Pandemic-and-Parenting-in-Canada-Nora-Spinks-Vanier-Institute-of-the-Family-.pdf">https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2020/06/COVID-19-Pandemic-and-Parenting-in-Canada-Nora-Spinks-Vanier-Institute-of-the-Family-.pdf</a>
Zhang, Y & Ma, Z, F,	Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Health and Quality of Life among Local Residents in Liaoning Province, China: A Cross-Sectional Study	2020	In this research, there is a focus on how covid-19 has impacted the quality of life in families. Some of the factors addressed include finances, stress, and a new normal that people have never been accustomed to.	<a href="https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17072381">doi:10.3390/ijerph17072381</a>
Peterman, A., Potts, A., O'Donnell, M.,	Pandemics and Violence against Women and Children	2020	The article address how pandemics tend to affect women and children in terms	<a href="https://www.cgdev.org/publication/pandemics-and-violence-">https://www.cgdev.org/publication/pandemics-and-violence-</a>

Thompson, K., Shah, N., Oertelt-Prigione, S., & van Gelder, Sabine O, and Nicole, V. G			of increased violence. The findings are able to make a projection of how the coronavirus pandemic could cause an increase in divorce cases when the courts finally open up.	against-women-and-children
Carroll, N., Sadowski, A., Laila, A., Hruska, V., Nixon, M., Ma, D. W. L., Haines, J., & on behalf of the Guelph Family,Health Study.	The Impact of COVID-19 on Health Behavior, Stress, Financial and Food Security among Middle to High Income Canadian Families with Young Children	2020	The authors in this research found out that void-19 has affected the level of income in families, something that has affected the relationship therein. This is a finding that could have a direct link to divorce cases in the coming months post covid-19	<a href="https://www.cgdev.org/publication/pandemics-and-violence-against-women-and-children">https://www.cgdev.org/publication/pandemics-and-violence-against-women-and-children</a>
Ghosh, R, Dubey, M, J, Subhankar C, &, Souvik D,	Impact of COVID-19 on children: special focus on the psychosocial aspect,	2020	Children have been some of the highly affected by the virus. This research explains about the plight of children as one of the probable causes of divorce cases in many families	<a href="https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341214452_Impact_of_COVID-19_on_children_Special_focus_on_psychosocial_aspect">https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341214452_Impact_of_COVID-19_on_children_Special_focus_on_psychosocial_aspect</a>
Yerkes, M. A, Katherine, R, Pettes, R, J, Rense, N, Lawthorn, R, Languilaire, J, Fisher, J	Community, work, and family in times of COVID-19	2020	Researchers in this study examine how social workers are helping families to manage the pandemic and reduce cases of divorce at the end of the virus	<a href="https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13668803.2020.1756568">https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13668803.2020.1756568</a>

### 3. Research Questions

- 3.1. What have been the effects of the covid-19 pandemic on families?
- 3.2. Are the effects of the pandemic likely to lead to an increase in divorce case among families?
- 3.3. How can these challenges be resolved amicably to avoid cases of divorce?

### 4. Literature Review

Covid-19 restrictions imposed worldwide remain a big challenge to many people's social and economic lives. Evidence has shown that COVID-19 is going to affect people in many ways many years to come. In their analysis, Prime et al. (2020) explain that inasmuch as this pandemic is going to have a major impact on businesses, schools, and the economy, there is one institution that seems to stand to suffer most; families that have dependent children are expected to face dire effects of the pandemic. Some of these impacts will be financial, physical, and emotional in nature. Parenting, in countries such as Canada has faced challenges due to the containment measures that were out in place (Nora, Sara, Jennifer, 2020). Following the imposition of lockdown measures in many countries, many families have extended times of spending together, something that could not have been the case in normal times. This view is held by Prime et al. (2020) who explain that spending time with families is important as it strengthens the bond between the family members. However, the circumstances under which these families have had to spend time together during this pandemic are likely to have more negative effects. This is due to the fact that the pandemic has come along with increased stress levels between couples. According to Kalmer and Kratcha (2020), many families are struggling with increased costs of living with limited streams of income. This is due to loss of jobs and failure of businesses during these times. This is one of the reasons that is likely to lead to increased cases of divorce in families.

One of the expected impacts of Covid-19 is breakup of families. In many places, the imposition of lockdown restrictions has already resulted in cases of divorce. In Luxemburg, the period between March 17 and May 11, 2020 already saw couples facing family challenges, something that is likely to escalate post-COVID-19 (Yerkes et al., 2020). On their part, Yerkes et al. (2020) argue that the novel coronavirus is having a major impact on everyone. In families, the impact is on the children and parents alike (Yerkes et al., 2020). This is something that is likely to have long term impacts if not properly checked out (Ghosh et al., 2020). In their research, Carroll et al. (2020) explain that it can have included additional stress on family incomes, something that is hard to bear for most couples and families with children. Job losses, which were the first response to the pandemic, remain to be a prime cause of divorce during and post-COVID\_19 times in many countries (Kalmer & Kratcha, 2020). Learning to cope with each other in the family is important in reducing chances of divorce in families. This is something that can be done when families agreed to solve their differences together and not running to courts as the last arbiter. Many family experts have reported an increase in calls from parents complaining of challenges affecting them during these times and contemplating divorce (WHO, 2020). In its advice, WHO (2020) recommends that parents should learn to work as a team in the parenting duties. Having shared responsibilities would be vital in ensuring that every parent accommodates the other one and the children in equal measure.

Marriage life always has its ups and downs. However, living in the new normal has come with huge challenges for most families. Violence against women has increased tremendously during the pandemic (Peterman et al., 2020). For a long time, parents had been busy running all day long with their economic activities to keep their families together. Many of the parents had spent little time together with their children. The process getting to understand each other and living normal lives is likely to result in cases of divorce. This view is supported by Krepelka (2020), who explains that seeking advice from family attorneys and family experts can be a reliable option for families. Zhang and Ma (2020) explain that the virus has affected the level of relationships across many family units. Increased cases of mental health have meant that families face the risk of divorce due to misunderstanding. Lockdown measures have forced people to live in more closely together than they had been used to. Zhang and Ma (2020) explain that this new way of life has its own challenges and triumphs, which need to be perfectly understood for a better stay, including finding solutions to mental health and other associated challenges.

## **5. Discussion**

From the foregoing discussion, it is worth acknowledging that COVID-19 is likely to lead to an increase in divorce cases in the near future. According to Krepelka (2020), many families have been put under an unexpected lockdown, having to stay close together, something they had not been used to. The United Nations (2020) has explained that children will be the biggest casualties of the pandemic. It is during these times that cases of domestic violence have escalated in many families. Part of the causes of these cases of violence is the stress that has come with limited finances amidst rising expenses. For many parents that had spent a majority of their active career years working, learning to stay with each other has come with a lot of challenges. Rahimi (2020) explains that a lot of blame game is being seen between parents on family responsibilities. With a lot of classes being made to family experts and attorneys, it is highly expected that court cases will be called in to separate some couples and families (Ones, 2020).

Besides stress from economic failures, some families are finding it hard to work from home due to disturbances from children and spouses. Here, a parent may feel very comfortable working from a place where they are at peace, devoid of disturbances from children. There are also cases of infidelity where a spouse has to try and communicate with their supposed lovers while neglecting their partners. On the realization of this trend, it is expected that divorce would be the only solution for such concerned parties. The matter is compounded for people that have a low-quality of relationship (Pieh et al., 2020). For such, they are likely to resort to divorce. Finally, everyone appreciates that the world is now in a new normal that had not been anticipated. It is in this environment that many families are facing imminent collapse with increased cases of divorce to be seen when systems open up. Family attorneys have reported an increase in the number of concerned couples who consider divorce as their only hope of a better life post COVID-19.

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