

## Locked in Abuse: Intimate Partner Violence against Women During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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### Abstract

The whole world has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic that has held the health and livelihoods of people in its grip since 2020. In initial response to this pandemic, governments throughout the world implemented social distancing restrictions, also referred to as lockdown, that required people to remain at home to prevent the spread of the virus. Intimate partner violence is a persistent challenge in South Africa and the COVID-19 crisis and lockdown measures have caused great concerns about their impact on women and domestic issues, more especially on those who reside with violent partners. This paper attempts to explore the impact of intimate partner violence on women during the COVID-19 lockdown period in South Africa. A qualitative method was used to elicit the data from earlier studies, news reports, and two social media platforms. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, data from 2020 and 2021 data were collected from Facebook and Twitter. Keywords such as "gender-based violence", "GBV during lockdown", "intimate partner violence", "abused women", and hashtags with the words "stopkillingwomen", "menaretrash", "justiceforwomen", and "GBV" were used to find information. To augment the findings of the study, data were also collected from reports by the government of South Africa that were issued since the beginning of lockdown in March 2021 as well as peer reviewed scholarly articles. The findings showed that most victims of gender-based violence (GBV) were those that lived with abusive partners during the lockdown period. The Minister of Police also supported the findings in a media briefing by mentioning that the number of gender-based violence complaints continued to remain high during lockdown. People on social media posted emotional messages about this topic and generally shared their anger that victims of GBV do not get justice as the perpetrators do not get sentenced. The study recommends that the issue of GBV in South Africa should be addressed more practically. Laws should be more rigorously enforced to bring perpetrators to book and to protect any potential female victims from any form of abuse, but particularly GBV.

**Keyterms:** COVID-19, femicide, intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, GBV, lockdown, quarantine.

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