

A Dual Disaster: COVID-19 and Increasing Rates of Intimate Partner Violence

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Since December 2019, COVID-19 has presented the worst pandemic that the world has seen in decades. Beyond the obvious physical health consequences, the pandemic has also had devastating impacts on other aspects of life, such as finances, education, and mental health. One of the more sinister ramifications of this virus has been an increase in rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) around the world.¹

This increase has been for several reasons related to the far-reaching effects of the pandemic. Previous research has shown that when families spend more time together, IPV incidences increase.² Due to the stay-at-home orders enacted around the world, many families have been spending far more time together than they previously did.³ The numerous quarantine orders have thus left many people vulnerable to abusive people within their own homes.

In addition to this, social isolation has been a consequence of stay-at-home orders. Social isolation is a tactic that abusers often use to gain control of their victims.⁴ The increase of social isolation with the advent of widespread quarantining has left many people without access to resources and relationships they may have previously used as respite from the violence they face at home.

Another factor that has been strongly linked to IPV is poverty. Past research has found that rates of IPV increase as the income of a family decreases.⁵ It has been estimated that approximately 49 million people globally will be plunged into extreme poverty due to the economic impacts of COVID-19.⁶ This increase in poverty has undoubtedly fueled an increase in IPV incidences across the world.

Because of the increased time with potential abusers, increased social isolation, and extreme economic consequences of COVID-19 lockdowns, the increase in IPV rates was not unpredictable. Since future pandemics are inevitable, it is important to understand the factors that led to this increase so that future pandemic responses alleviate these factors in order to protect the most vulnerable members of the population.

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