

“It was almost as if it was not a priority with COVID going on”: Help-Seeking in Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence and Housing Insecurity During COVID-19

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Introduction

- 30% of women worldwide experience intimate partner violence (IPV) at some time in their lives¹
- Women experiencing IPV are four times more likely to experience housing insecurity, both of which increased during the pandemic²
- Women’s experience of IPV during COVID-19 was called the “shadow pandemic”³
- Providing support virtually raised fears that abusers could overhear conversations or have control over digital devices⁴
- The pandemic eliminated external sources of support, such as friends or family, which can significantly enable a woman’s ability to end abuse⁵
- Essential services for survivors of IPV, such as housing, were either full or closed due to the pandemic⁶

Research Questions

- 1 How did COVID-19 affect help-seeking in young woman and mother’s experiencing IPV and housing insecurity?
- 2 What barriers did COVID-19 create when accessing services?

Methods

Participants

- 13 female identifying IPV survivors, aged 21-58
- 54% were unemployed, and 62% had an income of less than \$20,000
- Ethnicity of participants included White/European, South Asian, East Asian, Latin American, and Black/African/Caribbean
- In-depth interviews were conducted covering topics about access to IPV-related services and housing experiences during COVID-19

Analysis

- Secondary thematic analysis of data from a larger study with 29 women

Data Analysis Figure



Data Analysis: Themes

- **Fear in Accessing Services:** Participants described fear of contracting the virus and fear of their abuser finding out that they were accessing services, stopping them from seeking help
“I was afraid to call anybody or contact because my ex-husband had like, me on surveillance.”
- **Lack of Accessibility to Services:** Participants discussed significantly long wait lists, inability to afford services due to economic stress of the pandemic, and complete service closures preventing them from accessing support
“It’s really impossible to access anything because the waiting lists no matter where you go.”
- **Lack of Access to Informal Supports:** Responses reveal the inability to access informal supports due to lockdowns and social distancing
“Like there’s nothing else to do like I couldn’t go enjoy swimming or going to the library or meeting up with friends for a coffee. None of those services were accessible neither.”

Discussion

Findings

- The results of this study support other findings on IPV survivors’ experiences during COVID^{4,7,8}
- Participants’ experiences created a better understanding of how the pandemic impacted their help-seeking and created barriers to support for IPV and housing
- Responses highlighted that fear influenced their ability to access services; therefore, this needs to be addressed not only in the context of the pandemic, but also in current service delivery

Limitations

- A limitation of this study is that it is a secondary analysis, therefore I was not a part of the research process and had to create a research question that appropriately fit the data

Contributions

- With these findings, we might assume that more IPV issues may arise as a result of service disruption during the pandemic, and women who did not receive service may still be struggling
- These findings can inform government measures in the event of another pandemic and identify existing gaps in services

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For references scan here



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