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The experiences of domestic violence survivors among migrant women during the COVID-19 lockdown period of 2020- 2021 in Gauteng

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ABSTRACT

Although historically, men have been the dominant gender in migration, over the past years, there has been a global increase of independent women migration. Women migrate for various reasons including, seeking economic empowerment or independence, escaping conflicts or persecutions, and abuse. But migration offers a variety of opportunities, risks, and vulnerabilities for women migrants. Research shows that in their receiving communities they face challenges such as domestic violence, xenophobia, language barriers, discrimination, and sexual violence. Moreover, global statistics show that among women migrants there was an increase in cases of domestic violence during the COVID-19 induced lockdown period of 2020-2021. The current study explored the experiences of domestic violence survivors among migrant women during the COVID-19 induced lockdown period of 2020-2021 in Gauteng province (GP), South Africa. This qualitative study was conducted in Rosettenville, Johannesburg, at Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in GP. Initial participants were selected from a database of previous migrant women who accessed services through the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) programme at JRS. Participants were further accumulated using a snowball sampling method, ultimately 17 migrant women were recruited, whom the youngest was aged 18, and the oldest 50 years. A case study was used to explore and understand migrant women survivors' experiences of domestic violence. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews that were accumulated using an interview guide. Thematic data analysis was used for analysing the data for this study. The feminist theory was the framework that informed the study. It is anticipated that the findings from this study, may add to social work knowledge in guiding appropriate interventions to help alleviate domestic violence among migrant women through social workers. Key findings indicate that lack of legal documentation, unemployment, gender, and unequal power relations increase migrant women's vulnerability to domestic violence. The study concludes that attempts to address domestic violence among migrant women should include different stakeholders of whose interests are in supporting migrant communities.

Keywords: Migrant women, domestic violence, survivors, COVID-19, lockdown