

Social Distancing and Domestic Violence: An Exploratory Study on the Impact of Social Distancing during COVID-19 on Domestic Violence Victimization in South Korea

The impact of COVID-19 on domestic violence has been examined worldwide, and most of the research findings show an increasing trend of domestic violence during COVID-19 although some mixed findings have been reported as well. Our focus is on examining whether the introduction and termination of social distancing order during the pandemic affected the trend of domestic violence in South Korea. Using the interrupted time-series analysis method, we analyze monthly time-series domestic violence rates from January 2016 to October 2023 (N=94), drawing on official reports to law enforcement agencies. Prior to the occurrence of COVID-19, domestic violence rates had no significant change during the period between January 2016 and February 2020. This was followed immediately by a significant increase in domestic violence when a social distancing order was first implemented in March 2020. Since the first implementation, however, the trend of domestic violence followed a significant decreasing pattern until the termination of social distancing order in November 2022. We also found that domestic violence has greatly increased through October 2023 since the termination of social distancing order. We discuss implications of the findings and provide suggestions for domestic violence prevention policies.