

Feeling disconnected contributes to women's depression from domestic abuse

May 22 2015, by Jared Wadley



Women in abusive relationships feel depressed not only from the violence but from the loss of their sense of belonging, a new University of Michigan study finds.

In a new study published in *Violence Against Women*, researchers examined the relationship between [domestic abuse](#), belongingness and depression of 71 female patients in a Southeast primary care clinic.

Domestic abuse led to [women](#) having greater [depressive symptoms](#), but losing a connection with the spouse, family or home also factored into the depression, said Edward Chang, U-M psychology professor and study's lead author.

The study's respondents ranged in age from 46 to 64. When asked about the frequency of being abused by a partner, 32 percent reported some form of abuse. The women rated if they felt a sense of belonging, as well assessed their levels of depression.

The findings not only build on earlier research, but they go further to support the contention that one compelling manner in which domestic abuse may lead to the development of depressive symptoms in women is through a loss in belongingness, Chang said.

In other words, depressive symptoms increase if the women's fundamental need to belong "is violently rejected or explicitly thwarted by those they most hoped to regularly rely on, namely, their domestic partners," he said.

Future research, he said, will need to include depression in men who are domestic violence victims.

More information: "Understanding How Domestic Abuse Is Associated With Greater Depressive Symptoms in a Community Sample of Female Primary Care Patients: Does Loss of Belongingness Matter?" *Violence Against Women* June 2015 21: 700-711, first published on March 22, 2015 [DOI: 10.1177/1077801215576580](https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801215576580)

Provided by University of Michigan

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