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Violence and well-being

Domestic violence and mental health: Correlates and conundrums within and across cultures

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Abstract

Gender-based violence, only recently emerging as a pervasive global issue, contributes significantly to preventable morbidity and mortality for women across diverse cultures. Existing documentation suggests that profound physical and psychological sequelae are endemic following intimate partner violence. The presentation of domestic violence is often culture specific. A new lexicon, prompted by the expansion of human rights analysis, describes particular threats to local women including dowry deaths, honor murder, *sati*, and disproportional exposure to HIV/AIDS as well as globally generic perils including abuse, battering, marital rape, and murder. While still fragmentary, accruing data reveal strengthening associations between domestic violence and mental health. Depression, stress-related syndromes, chemical dependency and substance (ab)use, and

suicide are consequences observed in the context of violence in women's lives. Emerging social, legal, medical, and educational strategies, often culture specific, offer novel local models to promote social change beginning with raising the status of women. The ubiquity, gravity, and variability of domestic violence across cultures compel additional research to promote the recognition, intervention, and prevention of domestic violence that are both locally specific and internationally instructive.



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Keywords

domestic violence; gender-based violence; spouse abuse; pregnancy; cross-cultural studies; dowry death; HIV/AIDS; rape; mental health; human rights; ethics

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