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Equine assisted activities and therapy (EAAT) has increasingly been examined in determining its psychological benefits. This present study analyzes the impact of EAAT on the attachment security among women who have experienced domestic violence.

Although most research involving EAAT explores the impact of riding horses, unmounted activities have the potential to have therapeutic benefit as well. Some studies have shown positive benefits for those who have experienced PTSD and other mental health issues often associated with women who have experienced domestic violence.

The outcome of this intervention was measured through attachment security, which was assessed at three different points using the revised version of the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR-R). This scale measures two dimensions of attachment: attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. Proximity maintenance, a component of an attachment figure, was also analyzed through coded video data of the sessions between the horse and the participants at the meeting and goodbye phases. Five women who reported having experienced domestic violence were recruited for this study, and eighteen women who had not reported experienced domestic abuse were also included.

Although the sample size was small, results indicate that participants who have experienced domestic abuse or have higher scores than mean values of attachment anxiety and/or avoidance tend to spend more time engaging with the horse, which is something to be further examined. Results also show there were no overall significant changes in anxiety/avoidance scores, with the exception of one time frame. In addition, the study uncovers evidence that the horse spent much less time interacting compared to the participants, which requires further investigation to examine horses' engagement in EAAT.

Overall, the findings of this research indicate there is potentially a connection between attachment security of abused women and the impact of EAAT, but further investigation is required.





