

Associations Between Perceived Stress and Dissociative Experiences in Adult Women: A Cross-Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Perceived stress has been shown to be a crucial psychological construct linked with dissociative experiences. In this study, we attempted to explore the relationship between perceived stress and dissociative experiences amongst adult women and to test whether perceived stress can predict dissociative experiences. We used a cross-sectional quantitative research design with a sample of **120 adult women** (60 married and 60 unmarried). Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Dissociative Experiences Scale-II (DES-II) scales were used for data collection. We conducted descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation and simple linear regression analyses using IBM SPSS Statistics. The results showed a strong positive relationship between perceived stress and dissociative experiences ($r = .651$, $p < .001$). Further, regression analysis showed that perceived stress predicted dissociative experiences, accounting for **42.4%** of the variance.

Aim: The current study sought to investigate the relationship between adult women's dissociative episodes and felt stress.

Method: Quantitative cross-sectional research design was adopted. This study involved adult female subjects in the age range of 18-50 years old. The DES-II scale was utilized to gauge dissociative experiences while the PSS scale was employed to assess the level of perceived stress among the subjects. In order to examine the relationship between the two variables, the following statistical tests were applied: descriptive statistics, regression, and Pearson correlation analysis.

Keywords- Perceived stress; Dissociative experiences; Adult women; Psychological stress; Dissociation; Cross-sectional study.

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INTRODUCTION

It is obvious that everyone experiences stress at some point in their lives. The distinction is in how individuals perceive and respond to stress. A person's belief that life is chaotic, stressful, and beyond his control is known as perceived stress. Perceived stress focuses on the individual's perception and has been connected to a bigger impact on mental health than the actual experience, whereas objective stress solely refers to the circumstance that generated the stress. Numerous mental illnesses, including anxiety and depression, can result from high levels of perceived stress.

Dissociation is just one form of psychological response to stress that has been gaining more popularity in clinical settings and scientific studies. Consciousness, memory, identity, emotions, perceptions, and behaviors are normally integrated in the psyche; however, dissociations interrupt such integration. Examples of normal behavior are

daydreaming and absorption, while depersonalization, derealization, and dissociative amnesia can be regarded as more extreme cases. From the perspective of contemporary theorists, dissociation occurs on a continuum with varying intensities.

Dissociation has always been considered in the context of trauma. Yet recent theory and empirical research suggest that chronic psychological stress may actually contribute to the emergence of dissociation. Cognitive and affective overload resulting from chronic psychological stress could possibly give rise to temporary alterations in consciousness, memory, and identity. In accordance with this model, dissociation is a psychological defense mechanism through which individuals can detach themselves from their negative internal feelings when other mechanisms fail.

When investigating the relationship between

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perceived stress and dissociation, one group of people that becomes increasingly important is adult women. Stress factors such as family issues, work issues, childcare, interpersonal relationships, and social pressures can affect women. Women have been found to have more perceived stress and discomfort compared to their male counterparts in all phases of adulthood. The stress could potentially increase susceptibility to dissociative reactions if not adequately managed.

Correlations have been established in past studies between the variables of stress and dissociation, but the great majority of the current information deals specifically with individuals who have suffered from either trauma or certain psychological disorders. The few studies which exist using psychometric instruments to study the correlation between dissociations in adult females and stress are limited. The importance of knowing about this phenomenon is not just theoretical but practical as well because it might help us gain a better understanding of the effects of stress on psychological functioning.

In order to achieve the objective stated above, the present research study has adopted a cross-sectional research methodology that is expected to help explore the association between dissociative experiences and the perception of stress in adult women. The purpose of the research study under discussion is to contribute to the growing body of literature associated with stress-related psychological phenomena.

RIVIEW OF LITRATURE

Perception of Stress and Mental Functioning

Stress has always been known to play an important role in the psychological well-being of individuals. As explained by current stress theories, the effect of stress does not only lie in the occurrence of stressful situations but also in the way people think and evaluate them. People's evaluation of their living conditions as hard and unpredictable and in the difficulty they encounter coping with those conditions constitutes their level of stress. Excessive levels of stress can affect mental functioning adversely.

Stress is associated with various psychological outcomes that have been confirmed in previous research. Those who perceive themselves as being under high levels of stress usually experience increased emotional distress, difficulties concentrating, poor judgment, and lack of psychological resilience. One's ability to appropriately respond to internal and external stimuli may be affected by altered self-perception and cognitive processing due to chronic exposure to stress.

Dissociative Experiences and Fragmentation of Consciousness

Disturbance in the normal interplay between consciousness, memory, identity, perception, emotion, and action characterize dissociation, a multifaceted mental disorder. The dissociative disorders can be broadly categorized from simple forms, including daydreaming, trance states, to severe forms, such as depersonalization, derealization, and dissociative amnesia. All of them vary depending on the level of fragmentation of conscious experience and identity.

Theories related to dissociative disorders have emphasized the concept of fragmentation of consciousness. This fragmentation affects memory, perception, and identity. It is defined as a process in which brain functions that are interrelated become isolated from each other. Through minimizing awareness regarding overwhelming thoughts, emotions, and sensations, it may serve as a mental mechanism to temporarily relieve emotional suffering. Severe or chronic dissociation often co-occurs with emotional distress or dysfunction despite the fact that dissociation may occur in normal individuals.

Relationship between Stress and Dissociation

It appears there is an increasing body of research that points to the fact that stress plays a major role in the occurrence of dissociative experiences. Alterations in the areas of attention, consciousness, and emotional perception occur as a result of psychological stress that is higher than the individual's coping capabilities. Dissociation could occur in such situations as a form of protection, which helps individuals deal with unwanted emotional experiences internally.

Positive associations between the elements of stress and dissociation have been demonstrated in several studies conducted by researchers. High depersonalization, emotional numbness, and attention absorption are commonly found among stressed individuals. Such findings support the argument that dissociation acts as a method of reducing stress, thereby facilitating separation from psychological danger or pressure.

Women and Vulnerability to Stress-Related Dissociation

Given the multitude of tasks women have to complete, they are likely to be vulnerable to the effects of stress on their psyche. As many women balance a lot of different tasks related to social life, work, and family relations, they tend to become victims of constant stress. Another consequence of increased psychological burden might be associated with societal expectations connected to relationships and emotional labor.

Empirical evidence shows that, regardless of age, women tend to experience significantly more stress compared to males. Dissociation might happen not only due to increased stress but because of the

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emotional and interpersonal aspects of female experience. This is why it is important to understand the link between women's experience of stress and dissociation.

The relationship between perceived stress and dissociation among patients undergoing psychological outpatient treatment was studied by **Schwab, King, and Milner (2022)**. The aim of the study was to find out whether increased dissociative symptomology would correlate with elevated levels of perceived stress. Indeed, there is a very strong positive correlation between the two constructs, which means that the more stressed participants felt, the higher their level of disconnection from emotions, depersonalization, and other dissociative symptoms. As noted by the authors, the phenomenon of dissociation can be considered an adaptive psychological response to chronic stress and emotional overload. These findings lend support to the theory that dissociation may occur as a reaction to prolonged psychological stress and trauma.

According to **Vonderlin et al. (2021)**, the link between adults' emotional regulation and functioning, their perceived stress, and stress-related dissociation was examined. Vonderlin et al.'s research focused on identifying if emotional dysregulation played any role in explaining the link between dissociative tendencies and perceived stress. Perceived stress turned out to be a predictor of dissociative tendencies regardless of demographic characteristics, while the link between stress perception and dissociative tendencies was partly mediated by emotional dysregulation. Emotional dysregulation can make individuals prone to dissociative states under stressful circumstances. Thus, it could be assumed that dissociation is a complex psychological process dependent on emotional dysregulation and stress exposure. It is essential to consider emotional functioning in studying dissociative tendencies related to stress.

To examine the association between dissociation and psychological factors in diverse groups of individuals diagnosed with a range of mental disorders, as well as healthy volunteers, **Lyssenko et al. (2018)** conducted a systematic meta-analysis. The research indicated high positive associations between dissociation, stress perception, emotional regulation problems, and a variety of unpleasant psychological states. According to Lyssenko et al. (2018), dissociative symptoms including feelings of depersonalization, derealization, and memory disturbances tend to be more prevalent among people experiencing higher levels of stress and being unable to regulate their emotions. Thus, it was possible to support the assumption that dissociation is a complex psychological phenomenon that may be influenced by different

emotional and cognitive factors. The paper emphasized the importance of considering stress and emotional regulation processes while trying to explore the nature and development of dissociation. The authors **Schäfflein et al. (2018)** have explored the link between adult depersonalization disorder and perceived stress. This study had a goal to examine the influence of the feeling of detachment from oneself and the surrounding world by the means of the experienced stress. It was revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between depersonalization and perceived stress which implies that the higher one's level of perceived stress, the more likely it is that he or she will experience feelings of unreality, emotional detachment, and distorted self-experience. According to the hypothesis, the disturbance of normal self-consciousness and perceptions may occur because of increased psychological stress.

Dorahy et al. (2014) conducted research to identify the relationship between dissociative symptoms and psychological stress in patients having high dissociation levels. The primary objective of this research was to explore the impact of psychological stress on the mental functions of individuals vulnerable to dissociative experiences. In line with this aim, the results revealed that psychological stress contributed significantly to the development of dissociative experiences by increasing dissociation symptoms in highly dissociated participants. Moreover, individuals with high dissociation levels faced difficulties in experiencing their emotions due to reduced emotional awareness and self-reality perceptions. The findings of this research suggested that dissociation can function as a form of psychological defense strategy, which helps individuals cope with emotionally stressful events. The psychological response known as dissociation caused by chronic stress was studied by **Farina and Liotti (2013)**. It analyzed how the constant stress may interfere with the natural integration of cognitive, emotional, and perceptual mechanisms on a theoretical and clinical level. Their results indicate that, regardless of whether people have any extremely stressful events in their lives, chronic psychological stress may lead to disruptions within consciousness, memory, and sense of self, leading to dissociative experiences. The article shows that chronic stress alone might be enough for vulnerable individuals to develop dissociative experiences, going against the traditional assumption that dissociation is associated with experiencing a trauma. Farina and Liotti concluded that a new stress-response model must be developed to better understand dissociation; thus, chronic psychological stress should be considered when addressing this disorder.

The influence of gender on stress reactions,

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emotions, and psychological functioning was examined in the work of **Nolen-Hoeksema (2012)**. In particular, it was established that in diverse conditions, women tend to experience greater stress and emotional distress than men. It is believed that under stress, women tend to focus on their feelings and reflect on them; hence, they are at increased risk for various psychological complications associated with stress. At the same time, negative health effects including depression, anxiety, and emotion regulation problems were associated with heightened perceived stress among women. Ultimately, it became clear that there exist specific differences in the way men and women respond to stress depending on social, psychological, and biological factors, making it important to recognize stress vulnerability in women.

By looking at the definition, criteria for diagnosis, and symptoms associated with dissociation, especially those which cause dissociation to develop, **Spiegel et al. (2011)** described how dissociative disorders evolve. According to Spiegel et al., there is a great importance of heightened emotions and psychological stress as the major causes leading to the onset of dissociative experiences. Dissociation can also be seen as an effective mechanism of coping with oneself in order to protect yourself from emotions, thoughts, or stress, as mentioned by Spiegel et al. Also, it has been found that dissociation symptoms can vary from mild disturbances of awareness to difficulties in forming one's identity and memory. Since stress-related dissociation is a frequent phenomenon in people undergoing mental distress, this aspect should be considered.

Giesbrecht, Lynn, Lilienfeld, and Merckelbach (2008) investigated the cognitive and emotional elements related to dissociation experiences. This investigation focused on the role played by individual differences in emotional functioning, attention and its components, as well as stress sensitivity with regard to dissociative symptoms. Strong correlations between high stress sensitivity, absorption tendency, and dissociation experiences were observed. Attention disruption, awareness disturbances, and memory integration problems appeared more frequently among individuals who had highly intensified experiences with stress. Besides, the researchers found a positive relationship between increased perception of stress and cognitive fragmentation characterized by problems with self-coherence. This research stressed the importance of processes related to stress for dissociation symptoms and revealed that emotional and cognitive vulnerabilities are essential in the process of formation of such symptoms.

Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson (2002) did a meta-analysis on gender differences in coping

styles and stress reactions. According to the results obtained by Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson (2002), there existed differences between men and women in terms of attitude, perception and reaction towards stress. As reported by Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson (2002), while men were more inclined to use problem-solving coping strategies to cope with stress, women used emotion-focused coping strategies which included social support, emotional processing and rumination. Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson (2002) argued that gender differences in the way people cope with stress may affect a person's vulnerability or resilience to stress problems. Women were reported to be more vulnerable to stress related psychological issues due to emotional reactivity to stress.

RESEARCH GAP

The topic of perceived stress and dissociation has been well researched in both the clinical and health psychology fields based on the reviewed literature. Past literature suggests a relationship between emotional dysregulation, dissociative experience, and perceived stress problems. However, there are a number of limitations present within the current knowledge base.

First, much of the research carried out in this area has been on individuals that have gone through trauma, psychiatric clients or individuals suffering from dissociative disorders; few studies have looked into the role played by perceived stress in the formation of dissociative experiences.

Secondly, few studies have focused on the relationship between dissociation and perceived stress among adult women even though they are reported to have more emotional distress and perceived stress than other groups.

Thirdly, very few studies have investigated the link between the two variables among women by making use of standardized scales, such as the Dissociative Experiences Scale-II (DES-II) and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS).

Moreover, little data is available in the context of India, highlighting the importance of conducting culturally relevant research in this area. To address these lacunae, a cross-sectional quantitative approach was adopted in this study to examine the link between perceived stress and dissociative experiences among adult females. It is expected that findings will contribute to understanding the link between stress and dissociation and help guide psychological assessment and interventions among women.

RATIONALE OF STUDY

The perception of stress has already been proven to be an important psychological construct associated with numerous effects on emotions, cognitions, and behaviors. While there is sufficient information

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indicating that stress may influence psychological well-being, it is still unknown how the perception of stress can be connected with dissociation. All of the previous studies focused mainly on the examination of dissociation in relation to traumatic experiences, PTSD, and other severe mental disorders. It implies that relatively few studies examined the effect of the perception of stress on dissociation among healthy adults.

Adult women are one group that may be subjected to a variety of chronic stressors because of things like family responsibilities, work commitments, interpersonal relationships, care-giving responsibilities, and sociocultural expectations. The combined impact of these stresses may make people more vulnerable to the emergence of psychiatric disorders and may have an impact on alterations in awareness, memory, and self-consciousness that show up as dissociation. However, there is no empirical support for this.

Accordingly, this study uses the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and the Dissociative Experiences Scale-II (DES-II) to examine the association between perceived stress and dissociative experiences in adult women. In other words, the study aims to enhance the understanding of the psychological processes underlying dissociative experiences and contribute to the existing research on stress-induced dissociation through the collection of quantitative data. This will help mental health practitioners identify signs of dissociative experiences related to stress and facilitate the creation of evidence-based approaches to diagnosis and treatment of stressed women.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The following objectives informed the conduct of the present study:

1. To assess levels of stress and dissociation experienced by adult women.
2. To explore the link between dissociation in adult women and stress.
3. To determine whether dissociation in adult women can be significantly predicted based on stress.
4. To explore the link between stress and the three facets of dissociation in adult women: absorption, depersonalization, and dissociative amnesia.
5. To generate empirical evidence for the advancement of knowledge about the link between dissociation in adult women and stress.

VARIABLE OF STUDY

Perceived Stress

The independent variable of this study is perceived stress. This term implies a subjective evaluation of stressful, unpredictable, uncontrollable, or overwhelming situations that the individual experiences in his or her life. It reflects the extent

to which people feel that the demands are greater than their ability to cope with them. In this study, the measurement tool used is the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS).

Experiences of Dissociation

The dependent variable of this study is dissociative experiences. They may involve depersonalization, dissociative amnesia, and absorption and are defined as disruptions in the normal integration of consciousness, memory, identity, perception, and awareness. In this study, the tool used to measure the dissociative experiences is the Dissociative Experiences Scale-II (DES-II).

HYPOTHESIS

H1: In adult women, the relationship between subjective stress and dissociation will be significantly positive.

H2: The dissociative events in adult women will be significantly predicted by stress perception.

H3: In adult women, high stress perception will be associated with high dissociative events.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study adopted the cross-sectional quantitative research methodology to investigate the association between adult females' dissociation episodes and their stress experience. A cross-sectional design proved appropriate due to its ability to enable the measurement of both variables at a single point in time and make it possible to establish an association between them without manipulation of any research variables. The quantitative method makes it possible to systematically collect and analyze data from psychometric tests.

Participants

The participants in this research were adult females ranging in age from 18 to 50 years old. For this research, purposive sampling technique was used in order to select the participants for this research according to its purpose and criteria. The selected participants were those who could understand the instructions, give their consent and complete the questionnaires. It was ensured that all respondents were well aware of the objectives of the research, confidentiality of their responses and the freedom to withdraw from the research anytime.

Inclusion Criteria

1. Female adults between ages 18–50 years.
2. Capacity to comprehend and answer questionnaires.
3. Voluntary participation.

Exclusion Criteria

1. Serious cognitive deficiency.
2. Acute psychiatric instability preventing

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involvement.

3. Incomplete questionnaire completion.

TOOL USED

1. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

The Perceived Stress Scale is an empirical self-report instrument developed to measure the extent to which people feel that their lives have been stressful. It measures the level of subjective perception of stress from recent events in life. Higher scores show higher perceived stress.

2. Dissociative Experiences Scale-II (DES-II)

The Dissociative Experiences Scale-II is a popular self-report scale for measuring dissociative symptoms along dimensions like depersonalization, derealization, amnesia, and absorption. Higher scores represent more dissociative symptomatology.

PROCEDURE

Ethical permission as well as all the necessary permissions were obtained from the relevant agencies before data gathering started. Subjects who qualified for the study were personally contacted and thoroughly briefed regarding the nature, procedures, and objective of the research process. The subjects were assured that taking part in the research is entirely voluntary and that their responses will remain anonymous and confidential and that they can withdraw at any point in time without incurring any form of penalty. Informed consent was obtained from the subjects prior to data collection.

The data collection process was conducted in a serene environment so as to enhance confidentiality and minimize distractions. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Dissociative Experiences Scale – II (DES-II) were applied on participants following completion of their demographics survey sheet. Without impacting the responses of the participants in any way, the researcher remained available to provide any procedural clarification needed. All the completed questionnaires were assigned codes to maintain their confidentiality, checked for completeness and then entered into the statistical

software for analysis. The collected data was subsequently analyzed using appropriate statistical methods so as to address the research objectives and test the hypotheses.

Ethical Considerations

The study was done in adherence to the ethical principles governing psychological studies. Approval was granted to all the necessary approvals before conducting the experiment. Before obtaining written consent from participants, they were briefed on the aims, procedures, potential benefits, and voluntariness of the experiment. Confidences and anonymity were guaranteed through the allocation of unique identification numbers to each participant while ensuring that the participant's identity did not appear in the dataset or report of the experiment. The subjects were assured that their involvement in the experiment was entirely optional, and they could opt out of the experiment at any point without suffering any consequences or repercussions.

The collected information was stored securely to ensure privacy and was only used for research purposes. Beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and dignity of persons were upheld throughout the experiment to safeguard the rights and welfare of each participant.

Analysis of Statistics

1. In order to present the descriptive statistics of the variables and the demographics, mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values have been calculated.
2. A correlation between the stress level perceived and dissociative episodes experienced by adult females was determined through Pearson's product moment correlation.
3. In order to determine whether the stress level perceived was a predictor of dissociative episodes, simple linear regression analysis was conducted. IBM SPSS Statistics (Version XX) was used in all analysis, and $p < .05$ (two-tailed) was considered to be the statistically significant level.

RESULTS

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Perceived Stress (PSS)	120	14	44	26.075	6.431
Dissociative Experiences (DES-II)	120	22	58	42.242	7.755
Valid N (listwise)	120				

The descriptive statistics of the dissociative experiences and the levels of stress among 120 adult women are presented in Table 1 below. The participants had varying levels of stress with the

perception of stress ranging between 14 and 44, with an average of 26.08 (SD = 6.43). The sample had varying levels of dissociative experience, ranging between 22 and 58, with an average of 42.24 (SD = 7.75).

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Generally, the analysis indicates that there was variation in the level of stress and dissociative experiences among the participants. Variation

among these two aspects provides a good basis for studying whether variations in dissociative experiences are related to variations in stress. To establish the relationship, other inferential tests were done such as Pearson correlation and simple linear regression.

2. Pearson Correlation

Table 2: Correlation Between Perceived Stress and Dissociative Experiences

	PSS	DES-II
PSS Pearson Correlation	1	.651
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	< .001
N	120	120
DES-II Pearson Correlation	.651	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001	—
N	120	120

The Pearson product-moment correlation between the 120 adult women's dissociation experiences and their stress perception is illustrated in Table 2. It was found that stress perception and dissociation experiences were positively correlated with $r(118) = .651$ and $p < .001$. The positive correlation indicates that people with high stress perception experienced dissociation experiences as well. There is a strong positive correlation between

the two research variables according to the value of correlation. The findings show that the dissociation experiences of the sample were varying based on the variation in stress perception. The relationship cannot be explained as due to sample variation only since the relationship was statistically significant. The findings provide empirical evidence in support of H1 and the directionality of the relationship between the variables.

3. Simple Linear Regression

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.651	.424	.419	5.909

The simple linear regression analysis of the model determining the impact of perceived stress on the dissociative episodes experienced by the 120 adult women is presented in Table 3. Perceived stress accounted for 42.4% of the variance in dissociative experiences, based on the values of R and R² obtained from the model (0.651 and 0.424, respectively). Despite the adjustment of the model to account for sample size, the model still provided an equally good explanatory power, as

demonstrated by the adjusted R² value of 0.419. The model provides a reasonable prediction of the variance explained since there is a slight difference between R² and adjusted R². Thus, the results indicate that a considerable portion of the variation in dissociative experiences can be explained by perceived stress, hence motivating more studies on the significance of the regression model and its predictor. This gives some preliminary support for H2, which is further tested in the following tables.

Table 4: ANOVA for Simple Linear Regression

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3036.086	1	3036.086	86.960	< .001
Residual	4119.905	118	34.914		
Total	7155.992	119			

The ANOVA results for the linear regression

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model examining whether there is a significant prediction of dissociative experiences using perceived stress are given in Table 4. $F(1,118)=86.96$, $p<.001$ shows that the regression model was statistically significant. In this case, it means that when compared to a regression model without any predictor, the regression model that uses perceived stress explains a considerable proportion of the variability of dissociative Experiences. The total regression model is a

statistically significant predictor of dissociative episodes as shown by the significant F ratio. It clearly shows that the dissociative experiences in the sample population are significantly predicted by perceived stress. The finding provides more statistical support for H2 that predicts that adult women's dissociative episodes will be significantly predicted by perceived stress.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	21.763	2.261	—	9.624	< .001
PSS	0.785	0.084	.651	9.325	< .001

Regression coefficients of perceived stress as an independent variable on dissociative episodes have been shown in Table 5. Positive correlation between dissociative episodes and perceived stress has been revealed ($B = 0.785$, $SE = 0.084$, $\beta = .651$, $t = 9.33$, $p < .001$). The positive regression coefficient implies the correlation between higher dissociative experience and higher perceived stress. For instance, one unit increase in perceived stress led to 0.785 points increase in estimated DES

score. Beta coefficient ($\beta = .651$) also implied that perceived stress is a significant predictor of dissociative events. The regression equation ($DES-II = 21.763 + 0.785 (PSS)$) also shows the correlation in the favorable direction.

Thus, the results confirm ****H2**** and provide additional evidence that dissociative episodes among adult women are significantly predicted by perceived stress.

Final Hypothesis Testing Table

Hypothesis	Analysis	Statistical Result	Decision
H1: The relationship between subjective stress and dissociation will be significantly positive.	Pearson correlation	$r(118) = .651$, $p < .001$	Supported
H2: Dissociative events will be significantly predicted by stress perception.	Simple linear regression	$\beta = .651$, $F(1,118) = 86.960$, $p < .001$	Supported
H3: High stress perception will be associated with high dissociative events.	Pearson correlation	$r(118) = .651$, $p < .001$	Supported

The results of testing of the above hypotheses are shown in Table 6. It has been established that dissociation is positively associated with subjective stress, and Pearson's correlation coefficient revealed a strong positive correlation between these variables ($r(118) = .651$, $p < .001$). Thus, H1, suggesting that dissociation is substantially positively correlated with subjective stress, was confirmed. With the normalized regression coefficient $\beta = .651$ and statistically significant overall regression model ($F(1, 118) = 86.960$, $p < .001$), simple linear regression revealed that felt stress strongly predicted dissociative experiences. Therefore, H2 was confirmed as it suggests that the prediction of dissociative experience scores is significantly affected by perceived stress. The stronger the felt stress, the more likely the individual had dissociative experiences ($r(118) = .651$, $p < .001$), and thus, H3 was confirmed with its suggested positive trend. The results in the current sample of adult women reveal that

dissociation and subjective stress are strongly and positively correlated with each other. However, one should interpret the results as statistical predictions or associations and not proof of any causal relationship as the study used the cross-sectional design.

Descriptive statistics were carried out for the sample of 120 adult women in terms of felt stress and dissociative episodes. The mean value of the felt stress score in the range of 14 to 44 was 26.08 ($SD = 6.43$). Dissociative episodes score values were from 22 to 58, and their mean score was 42.24 ($SD = 7.75$).

The correlation between perceived stress and dissociative episodes was estimated with the help of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. A statistically significant positive correlation was found between perceived stress and dissociative episodes ($r(118) = .651$, $p < .001$). Thus, high dissociative episodes were associated with higher values of reported stress. The result is consistent

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with H3 and supports H1.

In order to determine whether the perceived stress was a statistically significant predictor of dissociative episodes, a simple linear regression was conducted. 42.4% of variance of dissociative episodes was accounted for by the statistically significant regression model ($F(1, 118) = 86.96$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .424$; adjusted $R^2 = .419$). Dissociative episodes were significantly positively predicted by the perceived stress ($B = 0.785$, $SE = 0.084$, $\beta = .651$, $t = 9.33$, $p < .001$). The regression equation is $DES-II = 21.763 + 0.785 (PSS)$. The results confirm H2.

In general, the results show a strong positive correlation between stress and dissociation among adult females. The variable of stress was found to be a statistically significant predictor of dissociation and it explained 42.4% of the variation in DES-II scores.

DISCUSSION

In the present study, the association of dissociative experience and perceived stress among adult women and the role played by perceived stress as an important factor in predicting dissociative experiences has been evaluated. It was found that there exists a significant positive association between dissociative experience and perceived stress. Also, dissociation support was found during the course of the research.

This is evident from the results of the descriptive study as per the descriptive findings of the descriptive findings. The diversity observed in both of these variables proves that adult females vary greatly when it comes to their perception of stress and tendency to have dissociation. These results validate the theory that stress is a subjective experience of the mind which is affected by environmental stresses, coping measures, and individual's appraisals. Similarly, there are clinically significant dissociation experiences as well.

This is evident from the results of the descriptive study as per the findings. The diversity observed in both of these variables proves that adult females vary greatly when it comes to their perception of stress and tendency to have dissociation. These results validate the theory that stress is a subjective experience of the mind which is affected by environmental stresses, coping measures, and individual's appraisals. Similarly, there are clinically significant dissociation experiences as well.

The researchers discovered that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between perceived stress and dissociative experiences. Based on this study, more dissociative experiences are reported by women who feel more stressed. These results add weight to the concept that

dissociation can be used as a mechanism for coping psychologically with severe or chronic stress. Short-term disruptions in one's consciousness or emotions may help decrease the immediate impact of the emotional stress experienced, but using this as a way of coping will eventually result in psychological problems.

The findings of this study correspond to previous empirical findings. Specifically, Schwab, King, and Milner (2022) found that individuals experiencing higher stress levels demonstrated increased depersonalization and emotional detachment. After controlling for demographic variables, Vonderlin et al. (2021) found that the stress experience had a strong association with dissociative symptoms, which demonstrates the role of emotional dysregulation in this association. The findings of the current study also correspond to the findings of the meta-analysis conducted by Lyssenko et al. (2018) and showed that stress and emotional dysregulation were among the most important psychological correlates of dissociation.

These findings are consistent with the results obtained by other scholars such as Schäfflein et al. (2018), which reported that the levels of depersonalization were positively associated with the degree of perceived stress. Similarly, Farina & Liotti (2013) argued that continuous stress is capable of causing problems with cognitive integration even among people with no history of serious trauma, while the study conducted by Dorahy et al. (2014) revealed the fact that the dissociative symptoms usually intensify during periods of stress.

Stress is an important determinant of dissociative symptoms among adult women, since the regression analysis revealed that perceived stress accounted for 42.4% of the variance in dissociative symptoms. There was more variance unexplained (over half of the variance), suggesting that dissociative experiences could be affected by other psychological and environmental variables as well. Subsequent research should consider exploring the other potential determinants of dissociative symptoms, including early adversity, history of trauma, anxiety, depression, emotional regulation, personality factors, coping strategies, and social support.

However, the conclusions drawn from the research also have important theoretical implications. In particular, the conclusions support the theory of cognitive evaluation models of stress according to which the impact of stress is not determined only by stressors but also by individual interpretation of stressors. At the same time, the conclusions are consistent with modern concepts of dissociation, where dissociative states are regarded as adaptive responses to overwhelming emotional or psychological pressure. Chronic dissociative states

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can affect the ability to regulate emotions, integrate memories, and generally function psychologically. From a practical point of view, the findings demonstrate that the assessment of perceived stress on a regular basis is an important step to take while conducting psychological evaluation of adult women. The early identification of elevated stress levels will allow timely steps to be taken so as to reduce the risk or severity of dissociation symptoms. Perceived stress and dissociative experiences can be reduced using psychological interventions such as stress management training, cognitive-behavioral therapy, mindfulness interventions, and emotion regulation interventions. Here are some limitations. First, there is no possibility of making any inferences on the causality between dissociative experiences and subjective stress level since it is a cross-sectional study design. Second, the study employed self-reporting tools only, and therefore results may be biased by social desirability effect. Third, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to men or other populations since the sample was made up of adult females only. Fourth, the study failed to assess important variables that might influence the relationship under examination, namely trauma, anxiety, depression, or coping.

To increase the understanding of the temporal relationship between perceived stress and dissociative experiences, future research should apply the prospective and longitudinal research designs. The factors that underlie the stress-induced dissociation may become clearer through the use of studies involving more diverse samples along with other psychosocial factors. The study of mediating and moderating factors like emotion regulation, resilience, social support, and trauma background would offer more insight into the factors that affect dissociative experiences.

In conclusion, this current study contributes further to the growing body of evidence which indicates that there is a clear relationship between the dissociation experience in adults and the level of perceived stress. The findings emphasize the importance of early evaluation and treatment in order to maintain psychological health, emphasizing the importance of psychological stress management.

Conclusion

In the current study, a cross-sectional quantitative research design was employed to assess the association between perceived stress and dissociation episodes among adult females. The findings from this study indicate a significant positive correlation between dissociative experiences and perceived stress such that females who had high perceived stress experienced dissociation. Moreover, the dissociative experiences were significantly predicted by

perceived stress, implying that perceived stress is one of the determinants of variations in dissociation intensity.

With the provision of factual information regarding the relationship between stress perception and dissociation experiences in adult females, a group of people who have received limited attention compared to others within studies that are not focused on trauma, the paper enriches the existing literature. The findings highlight the importance of interventions aimed at reducing stress levels from an early stage to prevent the development of dissociative problems.

The findings contribute to the existing literature through providing real information on the relationship between perceived stress and dissociative phenomena in adult women—a group of individuals who have received less attention in previous studies that were not focused on trauma. The importance of early intervention efforts aimed at decreasing stress is highlighted by the study outcomes, which stresses the importance of incorporating stress assessment in regular psychological evaluations.

In conclusion, the current research underscores the significance of stress perception as a psychological factor and predictor of dissociation among adult women. The results of the research are significant in providing information about the process of stress-related dissociation among adult women from psychological perspectives.

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