

Emotion dysregulation and body dissociation in infertile women: an exploratory study

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Introduction

The relationship between emotion dysregulation and somatoform dissociation was documented in several works on both clinical and non-clinical samples ^[1]. However, despite the literature reporting experiences of disintegration and loss of control over one's body ^[2], no studies investigated the association between these constructs in the specific context of infertility.

Objectives

The aim of this work is to clarify the role of emotion dysregulation in relation to aspects of bodily disconnection involved in assisted reproductive technology procedures, where experiences of somatoform dissociation may arise. The current study recruited 79 women from an Assisted Reproduction Treatment (ART) center at the start of procedures. A socio-demographic questionnaire and two self-report questionnaires were administered: the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) for the assessment of emotion dysregulation and the Scale of Body Connection (SBC) for the measure of body disconnection in the two dimensions of dissociation and body awareness. Correlational and regression analyses were conducted to test the predictive role of overall emotional dysregulation on dissociation and body awareness.

Results

Higher levels of emotion dysregulation were positively associated with dissociative processes and negatively with body awareness. Specifically, all DERS subscales and total score correlated with the dissociation subscale of the SBC, while only the total score of non-acceptance, awareness, strategies, and clarity subscales of the DERS correlated with the body awareness subscale of the SBC. Furthermore, overall levels of emotion dysregulation were predictive of high levels of dissociation and low levels of body awareness, explaining, respectively, 40% and 17% of the variance.

Conclusions

Results suggest that difficulties in emotion regulation may be involved in mind-body disconnection processes, which can manifest in women undergoing fertility treatments and may interfere with their ability to attend to their body signals while going through these processes.

Bibliography

- 1 Bruno S, Tacchino C, Anconetani G, Velotti P. Unravelling the associations between dissociation and emotion (dys)regulation: A multidimensional meta-analytic review. *J Affect Disord.* 2025;380:808-24.
- 2 Bell AV. "I'm not really 100% a woman if i can't have a kid": infertility and the intersection of gender, identity, and the body. *Gender & Society.* 2019;33(4):629-51.