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Childhood Trauma and Cognitive Decline in Women: An Empirical Analysis of Alzheimer's Disease Risk

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Abstract

Childhood trauma has lasting consequences for women's cognitive health and may contribute to memory decline and the development of Alzheimer's disease (AD). This cross-sectional study examined the association between childhood trauma and cognitive status among 55 women aged 40–75 years recruited from the Departments of Psychiatry and General Medicine at Tanta University Hospital, Egypt. Cognitive performance and global clinical staging were assessed with the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) and the Global Deterioration Scale (GDS), respectively, and childhood adversity with the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ). Emotional abuse had the highest mean CTQ subscale score, indicating widespread exposure to this form of trauma. Spearman correlations and multiple linear regression models (controlling for age) showed that emotional neglect ($\beta = -0.0877$, $r = -0.85$, $p < 0.01$) and physical neglect ($\beta = -0.0100$, $r = -0.80$, $p < 0.01$) were the strongest predictors of poorer MoCA performance, with similar patterns for GDS scores. The regression model for MoCA explained 72.5% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.725$). These findings suggest that childhood neglect, particularly emotional neglect, may play a critical role in later-life cognitive vulnerability and underscore the importance of early trauma-informed interventions to reduce AD risk in women.

Keywords: Childhood Trauma; Adverse Childhood Experiences; Alzheimer's Disease; Cognitive Health; Moca; Neglect; Women