

The association between cognitive disengagement syndrome and symptoms of dissociation in college students.

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Background

- Cognitive disengagement syndrome, formerly known as sluggish cognitive tempo, is characterized by excessive daydreaming, mental “fogginess”, being lost in one’s thought, and hypoactivity (Becker, 2021).
- These symptoms may also be characterized with trauma responses, and appear similar to dissociation, lack of self-awareness or derealization, anxiety, and depression.
- Previous research found that college students who had higher levels of CDS also had elevated clinical levels of depression and anxiety; however, additional research has shown that CDS and anxiety and depression are separate clinical entities (Smith et al., 2019).

Methods

- Participants were 217 college students who were evaluated using self-report measures assessing for CDS in adulthood (the adult concentration inventory).

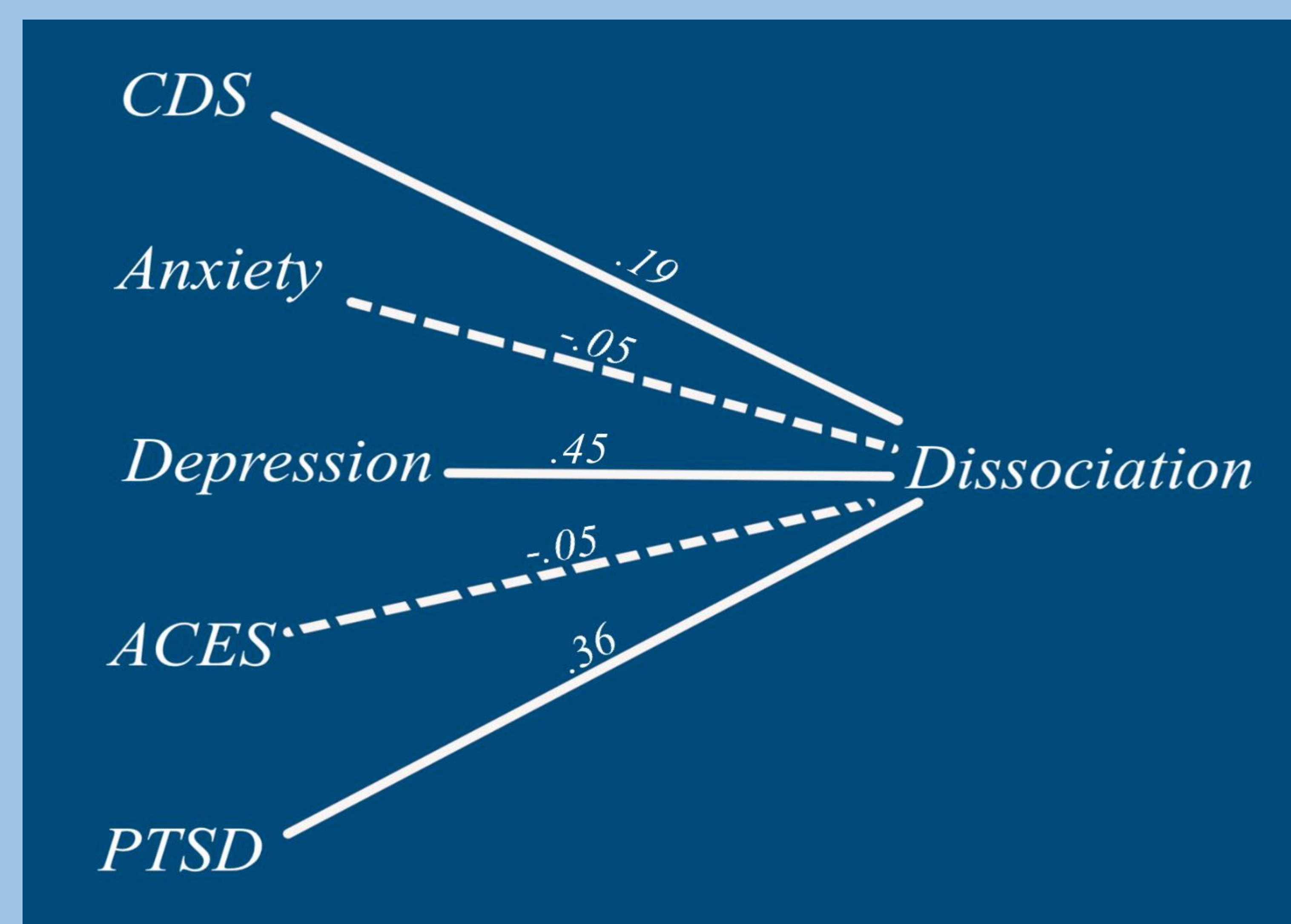
Results

- Cognitive Disengagement Syndrome is responsible for about 1% (0.7) of the variation in dissociation when accounting for variables of PTSD, ACES, Depression, and Anxiety.
- Higher levels of CDS ($\beta = .19$), PTSD ($\beta = .36$), and Depression ($\beta = .05$) were associated with more symptoms of dissociation, while ACES and anxiety were not significantly associated with disassociation.

Discussion

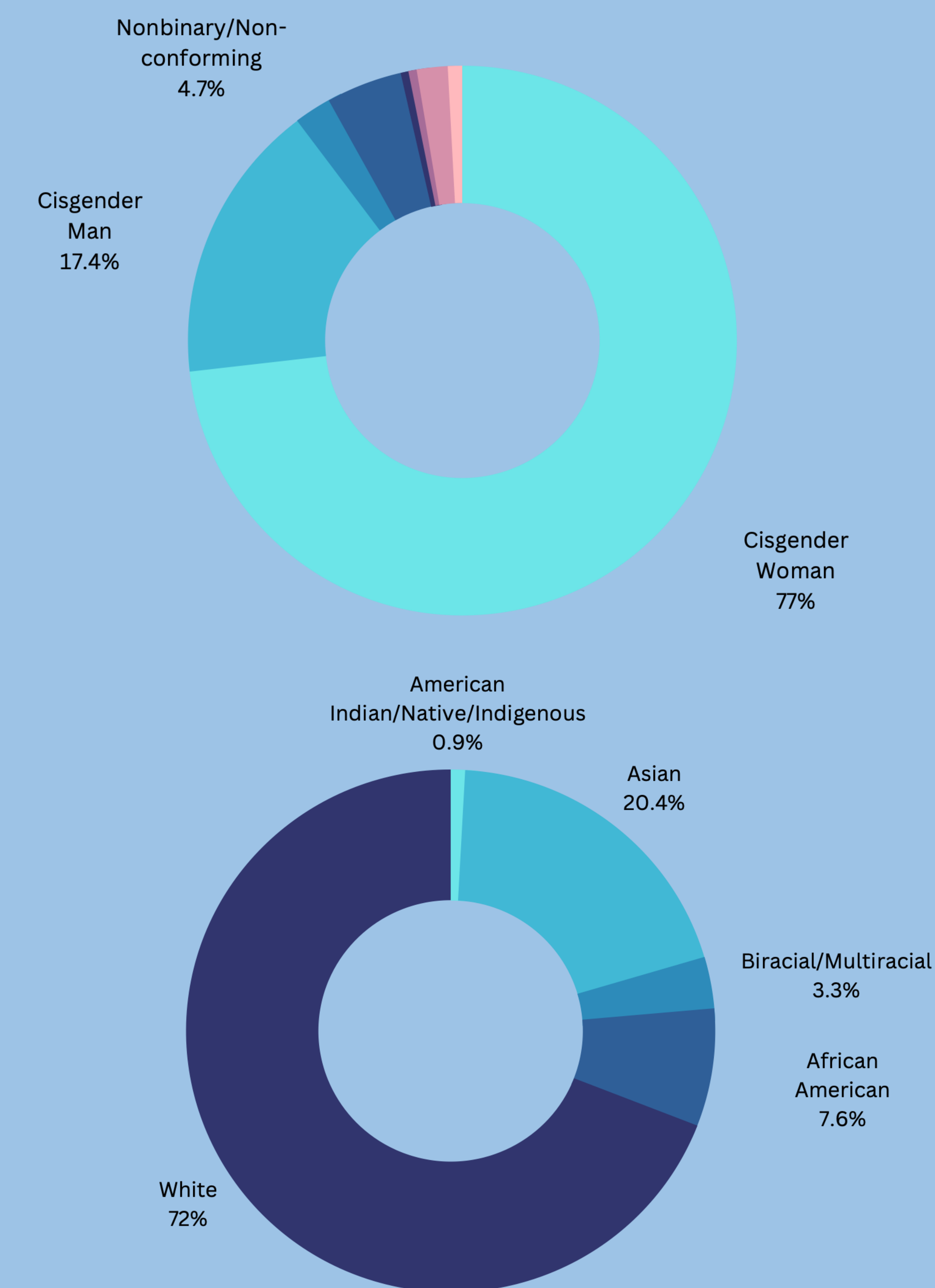
- Although dissociation is part of the symptomology for PTSD, BDI, and GAD and not an official symptom of CDS, CDS showed a significant association while accounting for these other symptoms
- PTSD is more strongly correlated with disassociation than CDS.
- When clients experience symptoms of disassociation, CDS should be evaluated for related impairment

Higher levels of cognitive disengagement syndrome (CDS) are associated with higher dissociation, even when accounting for anxiety, depression, ACEs and PTSD.



Variables	Standardized Beta	t	p-value
CDS	0.19	2.20	0.029
PTSD	0.36	6.74	<0.001
Depression	0.45	5.02	<0.001
ACEs	-0.05	-1.03	0.304
Anxiety	-0.05	-0.86	0.391

Table 3: Regression Coefficients; Dependent Variable: Cognitive Disengagement Syndrome



Model	R ²	R ² Change	F Change	df1	df2	p-value
Step 1	0.68	0.68	113.05	4	213	< 0.001
Step 2	0.69	0.07	4.83	1	212	0.029

Table 2: Model Summary; Step 1: Predictors: (Constant), PTSDmean, ACESmean, GADmean, BDImean; Step 2: Predictors: (Constant), PTSDmean, ACESmean, GADmean, BDImean, ACImean

Correlation	Dis	Anx	Dep	ACEs	PTSD	CDS
Disassociation	--					
Anxiety	0.59	--				
Depression	0.78	0.76	--			
ACEs	0.42	0.74	0.43	--		
PTSD	0.70	0.34	0.43	0.45	--	
CDS	0.73	0.73	0.89	0.49	0.58	--

Table 1: Bivariate Correlations

References

- Becker SP. Systematic review: Assessment of sluggish cognitive tempo over the past decade. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*. 2021 Jun;60(6):690-709. Epub 2020 Nov 6. PMID: 33166623; PMCID: PMC8099929. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2020.10.016>.
- Smith, Z. R., Eadeh, H.-M., Breau, R. P., & Langberg, J. M. (2019). Sleepy, sluggish, worried, or down? The distinction between self-reported sluggish cognitive tempo, daytime sleepiness, and internalizing symptoms in youth with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. *Psychological Assessment*, 31(3), 365–375. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pas0000671>

