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AN INTEGRATIVE BIOPSYCHOLOGICAL MODEL TO EXPLAIN ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN TRAUMA HISTORY, PARANORMAL EXPERIENCE AND BELIEF: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

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Background: Noetic (paranormal) beliefs/experiences and dissociation can, respectively, be considered as non-clinical and clinical outcomes following psychological trauma.

Aims: Our project aims to develop an integrative model of psychological, molecular and neurophysiological function to explain the link between trauma history and noetic experience and belief. These preliminary, psychometric results map the relationship between trauma (adverse childhood experiences, negative life events), noetic beliefs/experiences and dissociation. Mediators included depression, hypersensitivity, and sensory anomalies. Covariates included age, sex and spirituality.

Method: Participants (students and general population; n=276; 194 females; mean/sd age 30/12.9 years) completed an online self-report questionnaire that included scales for adverse childhood experiences, adult negative life events, noetic experiences and beliefs, dissociative experiences, spirituality, unusual sensory experiences, depression, and hypersensitivity.

Preliminary results: Following path analysis, both childhood maltreatment and negative life experiences showed direct positive associations with depression, unusual sensory experiences, and dissociation. In addition, negative life experience (alone) was positively associated with hypersensitivity. The relationship between trauma and noetic beliefs/experiences, was fully mediated by hypersensitivity (both belief and experience) and unusual sensory experiences (belief alone). Depression was not significantly related to beliefs or experiences, but was positively associated with dissociation. Within the model, dissociation and noetic beliefs/experiences were not significantly correlated.

Conclusions: Findings support the idea of distinct clinical and non-clinical outcomes, differentiable by the presence of depression and direct associations with trauma. Childhood maltreatment and negative life-events appear in general to be additive in predicting some psychological outcomes.

Keywords: Noetic experiences and beliefs, Dissociation, Psychological trauma, Unusual sensory experiences, Depression

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