

Cognitive-Affective Disintegration in Women with Complex Developmental Trauma


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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The sentence “Recent findings suggest that this disintegration is particularly severe in women...” would benefit from clarification on whether the referenced studies specifically compared male and female trauma responses, or whether the sample compositions led to gendered findings. Please expand or qualify the source interpretations.

While alexithymia is appropriately emphasized, the paragraph lacks a theoretical definition grounded in neurobiological or developmental models (e.g., Taylor et al.). Adding such context would enrich the conceptual framing.

The authors cite Zusta and Çevik (2024) noting alexithymia in IPV survivors. However, the claim that “alexithymia was significantly higher...” needs clarification about statistical significance and control variables. Was childhood trauma separated from IPV statistically?

Please clarify the linguistic handling of interviews. Were transcripts translated into English for analysis? If so, how was linguistic equivalence verified, and were any translators involved?

The sentence “Transcripts were imported into NVivo 14...” is solid. However, the authors should state who coded the data, how many coders were involved, and whether intercoder reliability (e.g., Cohen’s Kappa) was calculated to ensure consistency.

The quote “I look in the mirror and don’t know who’s staring back...” is powerful but may need additional narrative around its psychological interpretation (e.g., derealization vs. identity diffusion) to connect more directly to theory.

This section describes introspective difficulties, but it would be useful to compare it briefly with mentalization-based theory or reflective functioning scales for conceptual anchoring.

The quote “I feel like I’ve turned to stone” illustrates hypoarousal well. However, consider drawing a clearer parallel between this phenomenon and trauma-spectrum disorders like complex PTSD or dissociative subtype of PTSD.

The phrase “wearing masks” is evocative. For enhanced scholarly rigor, relate this metaphor to established psychological constructs such as “false self” (Winnicott) or identity fragmentation in trauma literature.

The integration of participant narratives with empirical literature is commendable. However, the link between “emotional flooding and numbing” and polyvagal theory or window of tolerance could enhance interpretive depth.

The line “encoded in the body due to insufficient emotional processing...” would benefit from referencing theories of embodied cognition or neurovisceral integration to ground the somatic symptoms in scientific models.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The claim “These findings support a growing view that alexithymia may not merely represent a ‘lack’ of emotional awareness...” is compelling. However, integrating a neurodevelopmental framework (e.g., structural or functional neural correlates of alexithymia) would strengthen the argument.

The line “women may articulate feeling ‘emotionally empty’ while simultaneously overwhelmed by bodily affect...” is insightful. However, it would be stronger with a direct citation from trauma phenomenology literature to ground these contradictions empirically.

The criteria for “self-reported history of complex developmental trauma” are vague. Please specify whether participants completed a screening instrument (e.g., CTQ or ACE) or whether trauma history was self-disclosed informally.

The use of “purposive sampling” is appropriate but would benefit from further explanation of how maximum variation or homogeneity was ensured. Were specific trauma types or demographic strata targeted?

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.