

Dissociative Disorders in the Indian Society: Possession or Psychopathy

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Abstract

Dissociative Identity Disorders (DID) are one of the most underreported mental disorders in India. According to the DSM-5, dissociative disorders are marked by disruptions in memory, identity, or perception. Historically, dissociation is understood as spiritual possession or black magic. This mislaid social understanding highlights prejudice, alternative beliefs and lack of mental health awareness aided by cultural and societal norms, and not the disorder's absence. Fear of societal judgment, exclusion and shame are some reasons why individuals refrain from seeking help, adding to the suffering of many. Awareness and destigmatization can save lives by promoting timely treatment and the crucial need for culturally sensitive awareness campaigns. Dissociative disorders in India are underreported due to cultural differences and misinterpretations like possessions and superstition often overlooking accurate diagnoses. The study aims to understand these cultural, superstitious, societal stigma roles and underreporting across India of DID. The paper employs conceptual integration of existing literature using thematic analysis of case studies in India. Findings highlighted a lack of literature on DID, which is as prevalent in the India as in West, but is under-recognized due to stigma, lack of awareness, and cultural practices. The study further aims integrating mental health awareness with traditional beliefs and practices can reduce stigma and improve care access.

Keywords: dissociative disorders, cultural differences, indian context, stigma, exorcism