

The Role of Confabulation in the Correlation Between Dissociation and OCD

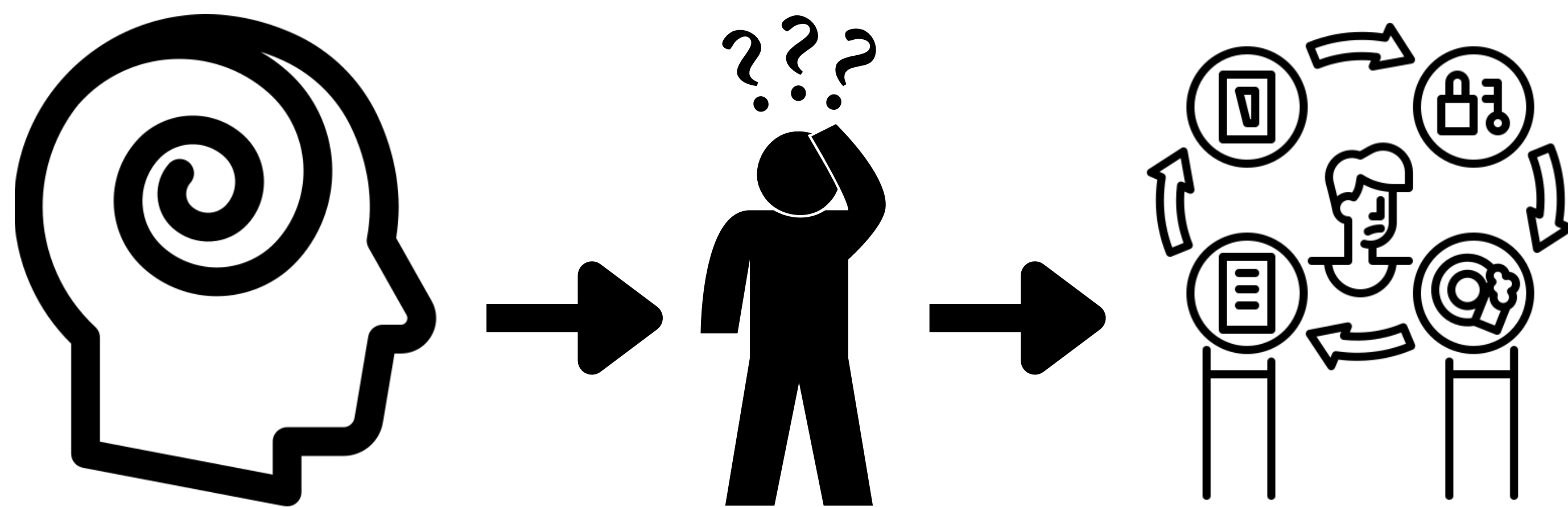


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Introduction

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) involves recurrent intrusive thoughts or urges (obsessions) and excessive repetitive behaviors (compulsions) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). OCD may be linked to dissociation, as individuals with OCD report higher dissociative experiences (Tatlı et al., 2014). One proposed mechanism is that dissociation narrows attention, reducing confidence in memory and prompting compulsive checking (Soffer-Dudek, 2014). Indeed, people with OCD often report lower memory confidence (Dar et al., 2022). These processes may relate to confabulation, which is the filling in of memory gaps with fabricated but believed information (American Psychological Association, 2018). This study investigates whether confabulation mediates the relationship between dissociation and OCD, hypothesizing that dissociation predicts confabulation, which in turn predicts OCD.



Participants

349 students were sampled for the study, two were excluded for not completing the survey. The final sample included 347 students.

- Mean age (SD): 23.81 (1.72)

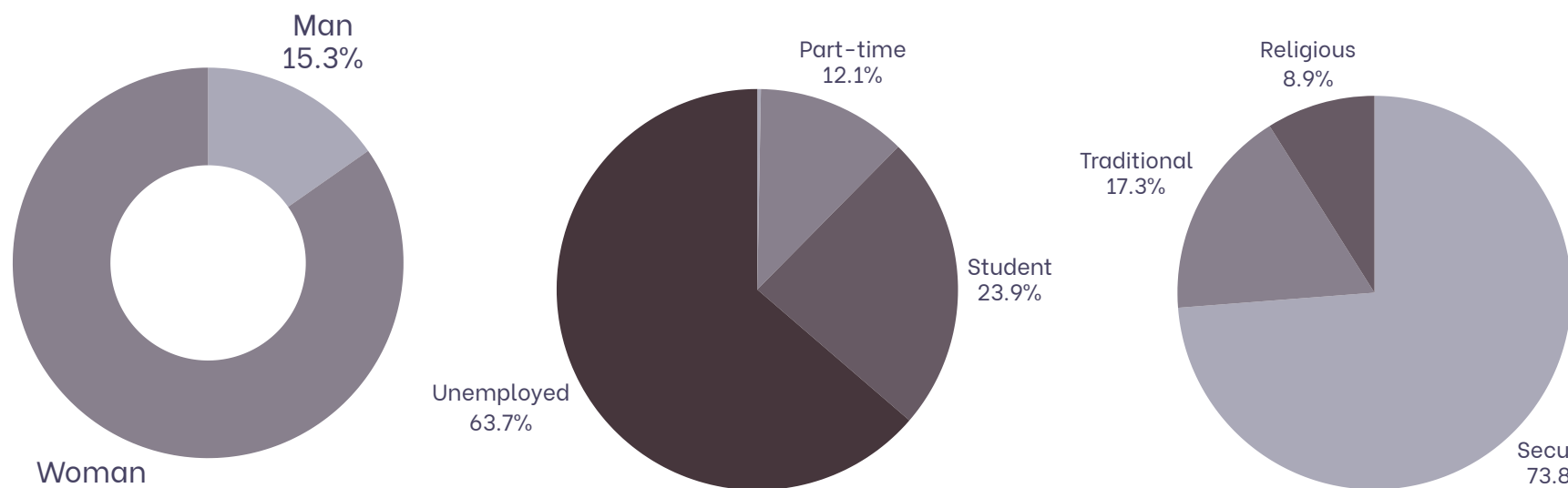


Figure 1. Descriptive Statistics.

Measures

- Obsessive-Compulsive Inventory-Revised (OCI-R; Foa et al., 2002): 18 items across 6 subscales; scores range between 0–72. Higher scores reflect greater OCD symptoms.
- Dissociative Experiences Scale (DES-II; Carlson & Putnam, 1993): 28 items rated from 0–100%. Higher scores indicate more frequent dissociative experiences.
- Confabulation Experiences Questionnaire (CEQ; Meidan & Soffer-Dudek, 2025): A new 9-item self-report measure; score range- 0–72.

Results

In a multiple regression analysis, both dissociation and confabulation significantly predicted OCD, with positive correlations. In a mediation analysis, both the direct and indirect effects were significant.

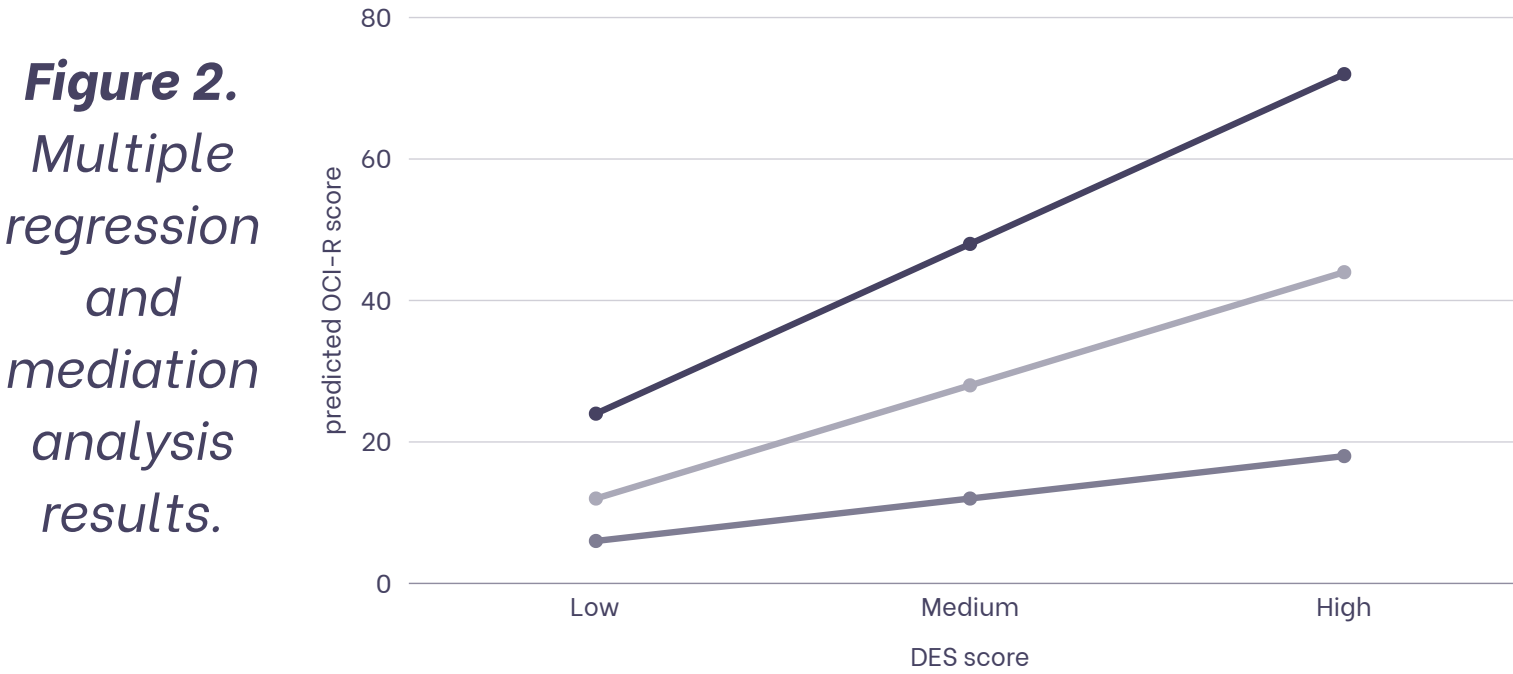


Figure 2. Multiple regression and mediation analysis results.

Discussion

The current study replicates the positive correlation between dissociation and OCD shown in past literature (Soffer-Dudek, 2014; Tatlı et al., 2014). Additionally, building on previous findings (Dar et al., 2022; Giesbrecht et al., 2008) a significant positive correlation was found between dissociation and confabulation, as well as between OCD and confabulation. Lastly, confabulation partially mediated the relationship between dissociation and OCD, in line with the study's hypothesis. These results provide a look into the mind of a dissociative person who also struggles with OCD. Such a person is likely to become so invested in one stimulus that they do not pay attention to other details or commit them to memory. In order to make up for this missing information, they may unconsciously invent a fictitious scenario, but be so unsure about the realness of it that they begin to obsess over it, and proceed to repetitively and ritualistically check if it is true. While the mediation is significant, a p-value of 0.014 is not very high. One possible explanation may concern the direction of the mediation – perhaps OCD better predicts confabulation, which is in turn more strongly related to dissociation, as Radomsky et al. (2006) found that asking participants to perform repetitive checking behaviors leads them to report more memory distrust. In conclusion, The current study serves to provide a better and more in-depth understanding of the relationship between dissociation and OCD, and the role of confabulation in it. Future research should strive to utilize manipulations in order to investigate the directionality within this model.

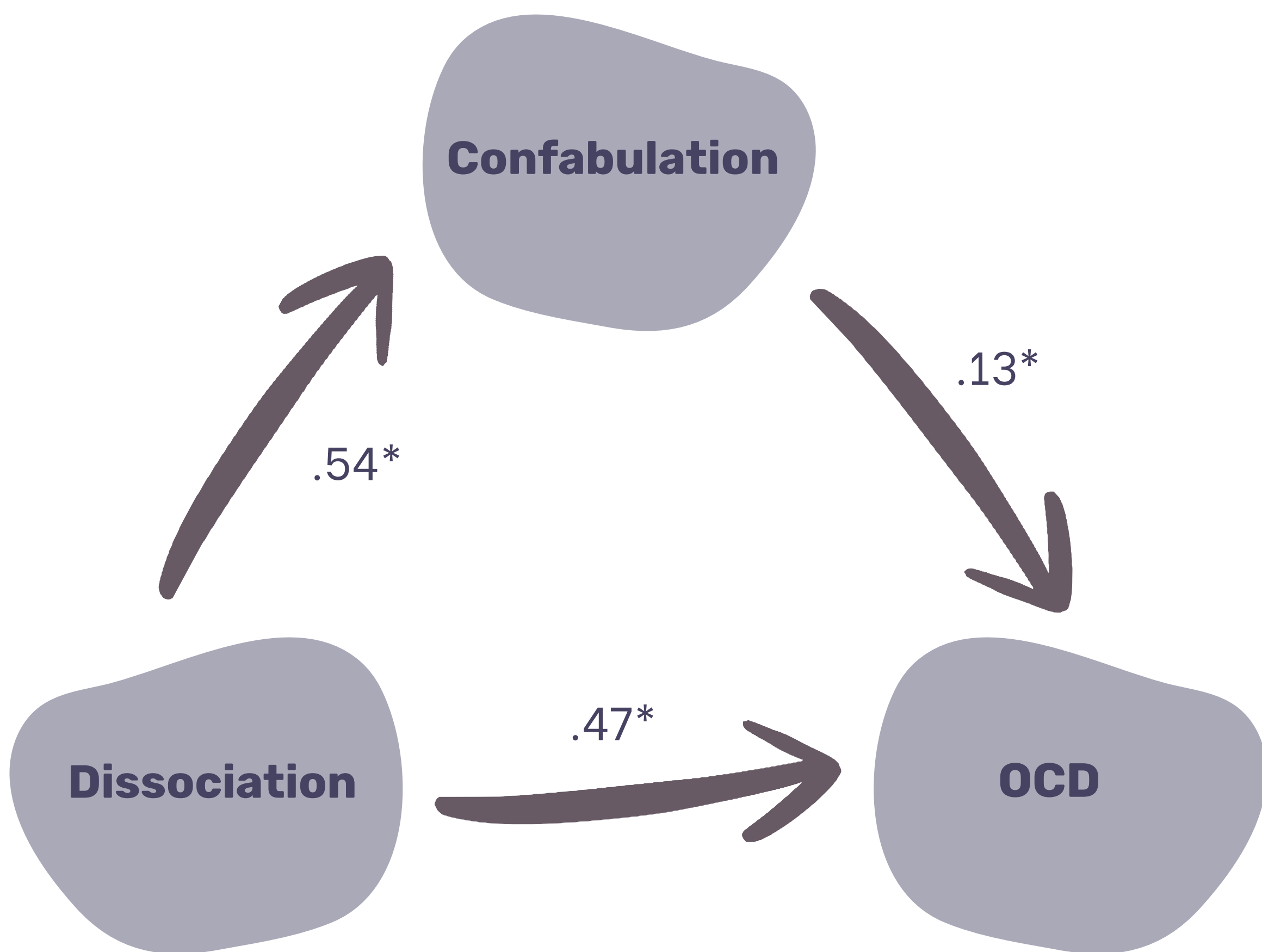


Figure 3. Mediation analysis results. Coefficients standardized.

Related Literature

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