

## The Relation between Physical Health and Mental Health in Women of Reproductive Age

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**Abstract :** During reproductive age (between 15 and 44), women are particularly susceptible to psychiatric illness. Depression and anxiety disorders are especially common for women during reproductive age. Women of reproductive age are also at greater risk for multiple physical conditions during this time. Existing literature focuses on the impact of mental health on physical health, showing that people with anxiety and depression repeatedly show greater physical health risk among those with developing chronic medical illness. However, there is limited research on the impact physical health has on mental health in women of reproductive age, a large and vulnerable population. For this reason, the current study seeks to ask the following questions: are women of reproductive age with a diagnosis of a chronic physical condition more likely to experience symptoms of mental illness than women without a diagnosis of a chronic physical condition? Does the type of physical illness relate to signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety? A quasi-experimental research design was implemented to compare the mental health outcomes of women with the diagnosis of chronic medical conditions and women without the diagnosis of a chronic medical condition. Quantitative data was collected through an anonymous ten-minute Qualtrics survey. The survey was sent out through multiple online platforms. The sample includes two groups of women: one group with the diagnosis of a chronic medical illness, and one group without a diagnosis and/or symptoms (N = 541). Participants identify as a woman and are between the ages of 15 and 44. A comparison of women with a diagnosis of a chronic physical condition and those without a diagnosis will be conducted to explore differences in depression and anxiety symptoms between women with and without a chronic medical diagnosis. The impact race, SES, and occupation will also be addressed in relation to anxiety and/or depression in women of reproductive age. This study will further the understanding of the relationship between mental illness in women of reproductive age with chronic medical conditions. The results of this study will have implications for the integration of mental health care in women's health centers and perhaps training of clinicians and physicians providing psychological and medical care to women of reproductive age.

**Keywords :** mental health, physical health, reproductive age, women

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