

Adverse Childhood Experiences and Its Impact on Children

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ABSTRACT

The research is a review of the literature on the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACE) on student learning. ACE is defined as traumatizing and household dysfunctions encountered by children (Crouch et al. 2019). Students are impacted by these experiences which hinders their progress in school. Three major categories are abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction.

INTRODUCTION

This research consists of an examination of the existing literature on adverse childhood experiences. Due to recent studies on schools nationwide, ACE has been a popular topic among leaders. First, ACE began by the Center for Disease Control by a study initiated by Kaiser Permanente. As a result this study concluded that childhood trauma negatively affected adult health. Adverse childhood experiences are the traumatic events that occur in a child's life from birth to 17 years of age. These experiences can impact children in many ways. Children who have multiple adverse experiences are at a high risk of developing mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and mental abuse (Crouch et al. 2019). Oftentimes it has a negative effect on the child's ability to learn in school. Adverse childhood experiences can also affect a child's ability to develop healthy decision-making skills. Attendance issues, behavior problems, and academic failure are common barriers faced by students with identified ACE. Once the signs of ACE-related trauma are identified an adult intervene to help lead the child to academic and overall success.

The most areas affecting a student's performance is absenteeism, behavior, and academic failure. Research indicated that trained staff who are capable of responding with compassion and protective protocols can improve student overall success. Preliminary findings includes research by Terrasi & Crain de Galarce (2017) which used the trauma checklist by the Lesley University Center for Special Education. Survey responses of 53,784 adults found that 41% had no evidence of trauma; 24% at least one; 13% reported two; 8% three; and 14% four or more.

TYPES OF ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Abuse

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Substance

Household Dysfunction

- Mental Illness
- Divorce or Separation
- Domestic Violence
- Incarceration

Adverse Childhood Experiences

LITERATURE

Research suggests that children who are exposed to trauma at an early age can experience toxic stress that can affect brain development and other organ systems. The result of this trauma also known as adverse childhood experiences is unhealthy stress management skills. Meaning the child's ability to respond and make decisions is altered. Not to mention, stress-related diseases and other health issues can develop in the child's adult years (Iachini et al., 2016).

School absenteeism, repeated grades, and non-engagement in school are related to adverse childhood experiences like economic hardship, divorce or separation, and abuse. In fact, one analysis found that children with 4 or more ACEs are more likely to experience these challenges in school than children with exposure to less than 4 ACEs.

According to the research, there is a strong correlation between childhood trauma and the accumulation of risk in life over time. These risks do not occur as rapidly by those of the same age who have experienced no trauma (Jackson et al., 2022). Results from the Jackson study reveal that the most common causes of grade retention are economic hardship, parental incarceration, neighborhood violence, and witnessing domestic violence. Therefore, having multiple ACEs puts a child at risk of repeating or failing a grade.

CONCLUSION

The proposed study will survey parents of children in a school district in Louisiana after review of IRB. Further research is needed to explore more on how ACE affects school children and supports to improve their learning. More research is needed on supports and resources that help families affected by ACE.

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