



**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES AND
RISK- SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG YOUNG ADULTS**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between hardships in childhood and risky behavior, drawing on theories from public health, sociology, and psychology as well as existing research. It seeks to understand the psychological processes, social contextual factors, and long-term effects that mediate or worsen this association. It seeks to enhance our comprehension of the intricate dynamics that influence behavioral outcomes in persons with a history of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) via a thorough literature survey, empirical analysis, and also theoretical synthesis. In order to help vulnerable groups overcome difficulties in early life and thrive, this study's results should be considered when designing and implementing intervention and preventative programs.

Keywords: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Risk-Seeking Behavior, Young Adults, Intervention, Developmental Trajectories

INTRODUCTION

The term Adverse Childhood Experiences represents the whole spectrum of traumatizing events that can occur in a child's life, varying from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to house dysfunctions such as substance abuse, mental illness, or the parental separation. Awareness of the link between ACEs and the risk-taking behavior has multifold effects concerning the intervention strategies geared towards reducing the negative outcomes and ensuring healthy life course trajectories of human development.

This research attempts to build upon the current theories, scientific evidence, and methodologies in an effort of providing a thorough definition of the intricacies shaping the behavioral outcomes of those who experienced adverse childhood events.

According to the Centers for Prevention and Control of Diseases (2011), the most common causes of death and disability among young adults are health-risk behaviors such as drug abuse, delinquency, and acts of violence. These behaviors and their negative consequences are more common among young adults who have been victims of abuse or who are in foster care (Fang & Corso, 2007; Jonson-Reid & Barth, 2000; Ryan & Testa, 2005; Stephens et al., 2011; Widom, 199; Widom et al., 2006). Recent estimates indicate that nonfatal child maltreatment victims incur an average lifetime cost of risk behaviors over \$210,000. This amount is equivalent to that of other expensive health-care illnesses such type 2 diabetes and stroke (Fang et al., 2012). Investigation of variables linked to risky behaviors in this demographic may aid in the identification of children who would derive the most benefit from

intervention programs that aim to mitigate the detrimental effects of child maltreatment on health-related behavior.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse childhood experiences are potentially painful occurrences that happen throughout childhood or adolescence. These experiences include dysfunctional households, different types of abuse, neglect, and other traumatic or stressful situations.

Risk-Seeking Behaviours

Risk-seeking behaviours are actions that demonstrate a preference for uncertainty and potential negative outcomes over safer options. Examples include extreme sports, reckless driving, impulsive decisions, high-risk investments, social conflict, non-conformity, and reckless behaviour in relationships. These behaviours can lead to harm or negative consequences.

Rationale of the Study

Understanding the connection among Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as well as risk-taking behavior among young people is critical for a variety of reasons. First, ACEs like abuse, neglect, and problems in the home are believed to have a long-term impact upon people, changing many parts of their lives, such as their mental health and the way they act. Second, childhood and early adulthood are important times in a person's growth when they are more likely to do risky things. Looking into how ACEs affect risk-seeking behaviors at this age can help us understand the long-lasting effects of having a hard childhood. Learning about this connection can also help in creating focused programs that aim to lessen the adverse impacts of ACEs and stop young adults from doing risky things.

Research Gap

The negative impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on a person's development is well-known, but how exactly ACEs cause young adults to seek out for risky behaviors is less well understood. Current research often ignores the intricate relationship between early life adversity and various patterns of risk-taking behavior by concentrating on the frequency and factors associated with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) or specific risk-taking behaviors in isolation. In addition, most studies on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and risk-taking behavior have used retrospective measures of self-report, which may be skewed by memory bias and don't account for how people's experiences and actions change over time.

While there are therapeutic approaches and preventative programs designed to help people who have experienced adverse childhood events (ACEs), it is not yet known whether they are successful in decreasing risk-seeking behavior. Consequently, this study aims to shed light on the connection between ACEs and risk-taking behavior in young adults by investigating psychological processes, social contextual factors, while long-term effects of this relationship. The study's overarching goal is to promote better developmental trajectories for those impacted by early life trauma by filling this knowledge gap in the literature and providing guidance for the creation of more focused intervention and preventive initiatives.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Engels (2006) conducted study with the aim to compile and analyze data collected over the previous fifteen years about the demographics and drinking habits of targeted youths (i.e., those between the ages of ten and twenty-five). The researchers found 82 studies in the computer-assisted search of the relevant literature. As far as personality traits go, there are two

distinct patterns to be found: one for enhancement motivations, which is characterized by extraversion and sensation-seeking, and another for coping motives, which is characterized by neuroticism and anxiety. Regarding contextual variables, the reasons people drink varies among nations, but within the same culture, they do not differ across ethnic groups. These findings suggest that preventative measures should target boys' (and other adolescents') social and enhancement-oriented drinking motivations in addition to their more generic, undifferentiated drinking motivations in late childhood. According to the results of the personality test, it would be beneficial to target extroverted, thrill-seeking guys who drink for enhancing purposes and neurotic, nervous girls who consume for coping purposes.

Lejuez (2008) conducted a study which shows that there is a lot of evidence linking emotional, sexual, and physical abuse in childhood to risky behaviors connected to HIV in adulthood, but not much research have looked at disinhibition as a potential risk factor. In this cross-sectional study, 96 African American teenagers from inner cities were surveyed on their impulsivity, risk-taking tendencies, and sensation seeking. The researchers looked for mediators between a history of maltreatment and participation in risk behaviors associated to HIV. The results showed that self-reported participation in risk behaviors related to HIV ($B = .027$, $SE = .008$, $\beta = .32$, $sr^2 = .105$, $p = .001$), risk-taking tendency ($B = .35$, $SE = .11$, $\beta = .30$, $sr^2 = .090$, $p = .003$) or sensation seeking ($B = .17$, $SE = .05$, $\beta = .35$, $sr^2 = .124$, $p = .0004$) were also positively related to abuse history. Impulsivity has nothing to do with abuse history. Additionally, impulsivity was not a mediator in this association, but sensation-seeking and risk-taking tendency were.

Brannon (2011) conducted a study on young people often act hastily and recklessly. This conduct has contributed to the widespread belief that this is the age at which risk-related decision-making dysfunction is most severe. But it's hard to draw conclusions on changes in risky choices over development since different research have used different definitions of risk.

Using the coefficient for variation (CV) of reward as an indicator of risk, we created a non-symbolic financial decision-making task that is applicable across a broad age range. We discovered that when comparing risky and sure bet alternatives with the same anticipated value, young children favored the former, teenagers were in the middle, and young adults were the most risk averse. In addition, as CVs became bigger, kids favored the riskier choice more often, whereas teens and young adults exhibited the inverse trend, selecting the safe bet more frequently. Lastly, when presented with a risk-return tradeoff involving two gambles, individuals across all three ages tended to choose the choice with a greater risk and reward. This preference was even more pronounced as the difference in risk among the two alternatives widened. These results show that economic risk preferences alter with choice set and risk and are clearly age-related. Instead of being a time of increased inclination for economic risk, it seems that adolescence is a decision-making phenotypic that occurs between childhood and maturity.

McCurdy (2019) comprehended the many paths taken by young people who encounter intense stress, Kerig's (2019) review and framework for posttraumatic risk-seeking are significant advancements. According to her, there is proof that being exposed to trauma may lead to dangerous and self-destructive actions. In addition, according to certain views, these actions have a purpose in the traumatic stress response on a biological and psychological level. Nevertheless, a multitude of outcomes might occur, and new outcomes can even develop in the future. In my view, the concept and model of posttraumatic risk-seeking emphasize the importance of tracing the ways in which traumatized youth exhibit internalizing, externalizing, and resilient behaviors. It also sheds light on the elements that put individuals in jeopardy for experiencing any of these undesirable consequences. The advantages of viewing pediatric PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder) from a neurodevelopmental network viewpoint are further shown by the posttraumatic risk-seeking construct. By placing it within a

neurodevelopmental network perspective, this commentary explains the paradigm of posttraumatic risk-seeking.

Kerig (2019) analyzed the lack of clarity on the processes that underlie this link, a large amount of research has shown that exposure to trauma is a predictor of juvenile engagement with the legal system. The most current DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, the year 2013, Washington, D.C DC) classification of PTSD added a new symptom, "self-destructive or risky behavior," which could be especially useful for comprehending adolescent posttraumatic reactions and the ways in which trauma is linked to criminal behavior. This article provides a comprehensive overview of the research connecting trauma to risky behaviors like self-harm or recklessness, as well as theories that explain the possible psychological and biological reasons behind these actions. These behaviors can be seen as a form of posttraumatic risk-seeking. We talk about what this means for the future of trauma-informed adolescent research and therapies.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose is to study the relationship between bullying and emotional eating among young adults.

Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is negative relationship between Adverse childhood experiences and Risk-seeking behaviour among young adults.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is positive relationship between Adverse childhood experiences and Risk-seeking behaviour among young adults.

Sample

There was a total of 100 participants in the research, which consisted of men and women. The selection of participants was accomplished by a deliberate combination of purposive and random sampling strategies. The individuals ranged from 18 to 30.

Measures

The following scales were used to measure Adverse Childhood Experiences and Risk -seeking behavior among young adults. The measures used were reliable and valid.

- **Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACE-Q)** : Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACE-Q) is a brief 10-item questionnaire developed in 1998 by doctors from Kaiser Permanente. It is a reliable tool for assessing ACEs and the environments in which they occurred. Psychological, physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse are all part of these experiences. The total number of "Yes" answers to each question determines the ACE-Q score. A score of 0 is assigned to a "No" answer and 1 point is awarded to each "Yes" answer.
- **The Risk-Taking Questionnaire-18 (RT-18)** : The Risk-Taking Questionnaire-18 (RT-18) serves as a screening tool tailored to evaluate risk-taking tendencies among young adults. Comprising 18 items drawn from various personality questionnaires focusing on risk-related traits, it offers a comprehensive assessment of such behaviours. The total number of "Yes" answers to each question determines the RT-18 score. A score of 0 is assigned to a "No" answer and 1 point is awarded to each "Yes" answer.

Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research, their consent was taken

before proceeding and then the questionnaires were filled offline. Each participant was thanked for their cooperation. Standardized psychological tests were administered to the participants.

RESULTS

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of all Variables

	Adverse childhood Experiences	Risk-seeking Behaviour
Mean	2.07	9.2
Standard Deviation	2.060965	3.581659
N	100	100

Table 2

Pearson correlation analysis of Adverse childhood experiences and Risk-seeking behaviour among young adults aged 18-30 years

	Adverse childhood Experiences	Risk-seeking Behaviour
Adverse childhood Experiences	1	
Risk-seeking Behaviour	0.295025**	1

**Correlation significant at 0.01 level

Table 3

Regression analysis of impact of Adverse childhood experiences on Risk-seeking behaviour among young adults aged 18-30 years

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.295025
R Square	0.08704
Adjusted R Square	0.077724
Standard Error	3.439654
Observations	100

ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	1	110.5404	110.5404	9.343114	0.002885
Residual	98	1159.46	11.83122		
Total	99	1270			

Discussion of Results

The findings from the analysis shed light on the intricate relationship between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and risk-seeking behaviour among young adults aged 18-30 years. Our study aimed to explore how traumatic events during childhood could influence the emergence of risk-taking habits in young adulthood, thereby contributing to the understanding of factors driving such behaviours and aiding in the design of tailored interventions to mitigate their negative impacts.

The descriptive statistics provided insight into the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences and risk-seeking behaviour within our sample. We observed an average of 2.07 ACEs per participant, with considerable variation among individuals, indicating a diverse range

of formative experiences. Additionally, the average score on risk-seeking behaviour was 9.2, suggesting a propensity towards engaging in dangerous behaviours among the study group.

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a positive correlation coefficient of 0.295025 between ACEs and risk-seeking behaviour, signifying a significant association between these two variables. This correlation supports the notion that individuals who have experienced more adverse events during childhood are more likely to exhibit risk-taking tendencies in young adulthood. By rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis, our findings confirm the presence of a positive relationship between ACEs and risk-seeking behaviour among young adults.

Further substantiating our results, the regression analysis demonstrated that ACEs have a significant impact on risk-seeking behaviour among young adults. The statistically significant F statistic and associated p-value underscore the validity of the regression model, reinforcing the conclusion that ACEs influence the propensity for engaging in risky behaviours during young adulthood.

Conclusion

A non-negligible prevalence of negative childhood events was shown by descriptive statistics, which showed that individuals reported an average of 2.07 experiences. The wide variety of formative experiences that people go through as children is shown by this diversity, which in turn may impact their adult behavioral patterns. The results of the correlation study showed that there is a clear association between risk-seeking behavior and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), with a positive correlation value of 0.295025. This conclusion, which is supported by statistical significance at the 0.01 level, suggests that the likelihood of

participating in dangerous behaviors throughout young adulthood increases in correlation with the amount of unfavorable childhood events.

Regression research confirmed that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are strong predictors of risk-seeking behavior in young adults, lending credence to the existence of this association. The strong correlation between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and a propensity to take risks is supported by the statistically significant regression model and the low p-value linked to the F statistic. These results show that traumatic events in childhood significantly impact the development of risk-taking behaviors in young adults. The health and happiness of individuals and communities are profoundly affected by actions like drug addiction and careless decision-making.

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