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Donna R. Erwin

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Do Adverse Childhood Experiences Affect Rates of Depression?

Donna R. Erwin

Department of Psychology, Cleveland State University

Abstract

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) classified as traumatic events that occur during the first eighteen years of life and range emotional neglect to sexual abuse. A bulk of literature addresses that gender differences can attribute to higher rates of depression/anxiety in adolescent females. However, the current literature lacks information about how identifying as a minority affects exposure to ACEs and how it contributes to rates of depression/anxiety in comparison to White participants. The present study investigated whether experiencing ACEs during adolescence affect rates of depression/anxiety, and whether gender differences increase the chances of depression/anxiety as well as examine whether race can be a moderator between ACEs and depression/anxiety. It is hypothesized that experiencing ACEs heightens one's chance of developing depression/anxiety as opposed to experiencing none. We also hypothesize that identifying as a minority will increase an individual's chances of developing depression/anxiety during adolescence. To investigate this, secondary data was analyzed based on responses to an online survey given to United States adolescents aged 14-18 (N=103), which assessed ACE exposure and symptoms of anxiety/depression. Analysis indicated that the mean score for anxiety was higher for those who experienced ACEs ($M=28.60$, $SD = 7.47$) in comparison to those who did not ($M= 25.33$, $SD = 7.16$). Similarly, the mean score for depression was higher for those who experienced ACEs ($M =10.53$, $SD = 3.56$) than those who did not experience ACEs ($M= 8.40$, $SD= 2.45$). Additionally, 70% of or non-white sample experienced ACEs, while the other 30% did

not. As for the white sample 58% experienced ACEs, while the remaining 42% did not. within this sample there were no differences between white & ethnic minority youth who experienced ACEs and who had not experienced ACEs The implications for the research are to see if the rates of depression/anxiety can be reduced in adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescents. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Minority