

WIU CENTENNIAL HONORS COLLEGE
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Abstract

Poster

Major: Psychology

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Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Their Relationship with Body Image in College-Age Adults

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Research on ACEs and mental health on college students has shown that the more adverse experiences a student has paired with a large number of stressful events indicate a higher risk for worsening mental health (Karatekin, 2018). Lamis et. al. (2010) examined risk factors for self-injury proneness as a depressive symptom of declining mental health and found an indirect effect with body dissatisfaction. The current study consisted of N = 132 college students from a rural public University measuring Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and looking at the relationship with body image and body-harming behaviors. The study explored differences and the interaction between ACEs and self-injury on body investment and body appreciation. Results indicated there was a statistically significant difference between those who have experienced trauma in childhood and a lower body investment and lower body appreciation. There was also a statistically significant difference between experiencing ACEs in childhood and a higher reporting of body-harming behaviors. Although, there was no significant difference in the interaction between high ACEs and high self-injury groups. A previous study conducted by Buchanan et. al. 2013 investigated the objectification theory which this study supported and expanded on. According to the theory, ACEs are internalized and distort individuals' self-image. These results indicated that ACEs can differentiate between an individual's body investment, appreciation, and the likelihood of self-injury. This research may help survivors build awareness of ACEs' impact on adult body well-being and care. Limitations and future directions will be discussed in light of the study findings.