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Association Between Type of Trauma and Type of Juvenile Criminal Charges

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Abstract
ACE’s scores have become an index of trauma, quantifying traumatic experiences for youth. Many families and by extension children, are deeply affected by trauma, which then increases the likelihood of this continuing through the generations. Certain score numbers and types can be related to specific behavioral and social issues, which in turn, can lead to a number of prolonged repercussions. One way of seeing these long-term results can be through the study of generational trauma, in which there are repeated repercussions such as incarceration, repeated abuse and unfinished education. According to current studies, trauma can be passed on to children from parents, even without the children incurring the same type of traumatic symptoms (Abrams, 1999). The purpose of this project is to explore whether certain types of traumatic experiences (categorized as Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs) are associated with certain types of criminal offenses. The data in this project will be from a recent program evaluation conducted by Boise State researchers associated with the Center for Health Policy for the Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections. Among the data points collected are detained juveniles’ ACEs (both the aggregate number of ACEs and the specific types of trauma experienced) and the charges for which they were booked into juvenile detention. Although this research is exploratory in nature, certain hypotheses may be drawn from it. For example, it is hypothesized that juveniles who report having been raised by at least one parent who abused drugs or alcohol will be more likely to be booked for what is categorized as a “drug/alcohol offense” than juveniles who did not report being raised in such a circumstance. Also, it is hypothesized that juveniles who report having been physically abused as a child will be more likely to be booked for what is categorized as a “crime against persons” than juveniles who did not report being raised in such a circumstance. Knowing what types of traumatic experience exposure may predispose juveniles to engage in what types of criminal activity may be valuable in guiding early intervention or treatment strategies for juveniles known to have experienced certain types of ACEs. This can help in the long term by changing the dynamic of our current incarceration system in the United States. If less children enter our judicial system due to early intervention, then it goes to reason that less adults will be entering into that same system.

This student presentation is available at ScholarWorks: https://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/under_showcase_2021/
ACE's scores have become an index of trauma, quantifying traumatic experiences for youth. Many families and by extension children, are deeply affected by trauma, which then increases the likelihood of this continuing through the generations. Certain score numbers and types can be related to specific behavioral and social issues, which in turn, can lead to several prolonged repercussions. One way of seeing these long-term results can be through the study of generational trauma, in which there are repeated repercussions such as incarceration, repeated abuse and unfinished education. According to current studies, trauma can be passed on to children from parents, even without the children experiencing the same type of traumatic events (Abrams, 1999). This makes intervention in generational trauma exceptionally important for the health of society.

INTRODUCTION

RESULTS

Some of the expected findings will help to corroborate studies in trauma and criminal behavior in youth and how this can continue into adulthood. Also, this is related to how and when early intervention could be successful. There is likely to be a connection between the type of charges a juvenile is booked for and what type of trauma they have experienced.

DISCUSSION

Although this research is exploratory in nature, certain hypotheses may be drawn from it. For example, it is hypothesized that juveniles who report having been raised by at least one parent who abused drugs or alcohol will be more likely to be booked for what is categorized as a “drug/alcohol offense” than juveniles who did not report being raised in such a circumstance. Also, it is hypothesized that juveniles who report having been physically abused as a child will be more likely to be booked for what is categorized as a “crime against persons” than juveniles who did not report being raised in such a circumstance. Knowing what types of traumatic experience exposure may predispose juveniles to engage in what types of criminal activity may be valuable in guiding early intervention or treatment strategies for juveniles known to have experienced certain types of ACEs.

METHOD

The data in this project will be from a recent program evaluation conducted by Boise State researchers associated with the Center for Health Policy for the Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections. Among the data points collected are detained juveniles’ ACEs, both the aggregate number of ACEs and the types of trauma experienced, and the charges for which they were booked into juvenile detention. These variables will be coded and analyzed by the researcher.