

# Exploring The Impact of Childhood Trauma on Mental Wellbeing, Self Esteem and Attachment Styles Among Young Adulthood

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research looks at how childhood stress affects young adults' mental health, self-esteem, and bonding styles in many different ways. The study uses ideas from developmental psychology, trauma theory, and attachment research to look into how bad events in childhood affect mental health during a very important stage of development called young adulthood. Through a thorough study of the literature and analysis of real-world data, the dissertation aims to show how childhood stress affects people's mental health, self-esteem, and bonding patterns. The study also looks at the influencing and moderating factors that affect the link between traumatic events in childhood and psychological performance. These include perseverance, social support, and coping techniques. The dissertation uses a mixed-methods study approach that includes both quantitative surveys and qualitative review to look at the different experiences and points of view of young people who have been through traumatic events as children. The study's results have implications for professional practice, intervention methods, and policy efforts that aim to help trauma patients become more resilient and heal while they are still young adults.

**Keywords;** Childhood trauma, young adulthood, mental well-being, self-esteem, attachment styles, developmental psychology.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Trauma experienced in childhood is a complex and widespread problem that may impact people for the rest of their life. It includes a wide variety of traumatic events, like as neglect, abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual), and dysfunction in the home. Experiencing trauma as a kid may have long-lasting effects on an individual's mental health, sense of self-worth, and attachment style, especially during the formative years of adolescence and early adulthood. This research aims to explore the complex relationship between childhood trauma & its effects on these important areas of young adults' psychological functioning.

According to studies conducted in this area, the impacts of childhood trauma upon mental health are substantial and long-lasting. Researchers have shown that those who have suffered trauma as children are more likely to develop mental health issues such PTSD, depression, and anxiety (Brown et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2019). Further exacerbating mental health issues are maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as drug misuse and self-harm, which have been associated to childhood trauma (Johnson & Smith, 2018).

Childhood trauma has far-reaching effects on people's sense of self-worth, even beyond its obvious effects on mental health. The negative effect of traumatic events on one's sense of self-worth and self-perception has been highlighted by writers such as Jones and Johnson (2016). Low self-esteem and poor self-appraisals in early adulthood might be a result of childhood trauma, which can impair one's feeling of competence, worthiness, & lovability (Garcia & Martinez, 2020). As a result, people who have experienced trauma in childhood could have problems with self-esteem, guilt, and inadequacy, which makes it hard for them to handle changes in their social lives and relationships.

Additionally, attachment theory offers a helpful framework for comprehending how traumatic experiences in infancy impact the development of attachment patterns in the early years of adulthood. Attachment behaviors & interpersonal dynamics are shaped by an individual's internal working model of relationships, which in turn are shaped by their early experiences involving caregivers (Bowlby, 1980). According to studies conducted by Thompson as Davis (2018), individuals who experienced trauma as children may struggle to create secure attachment ties. As a result, they may have insecure attachment styles, which are marked by traits like distrust, fear of being abandoned, and difficulty in establishing close relationships.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

According to nine Irish clinical practitioners, childhood trauma may have long-lasting effects on a person's mental health and conduct as an adult. By looking at the ways in which victims of childhood trauma dealt with hardship, the book shows how physical, sexual, and emotional abuse may ruin a person's life. Determine if survivors of childhood trauma are more likely to engage in coping techniques such denial, self-isolation, substance misuse, and excessive drinking. Similarly, this study seeks to answer the question of whether or not traumatic experiences in childhood are associated with symptoms such as anxiety, depression, disturbed sleep, and poor self-esteem. The last goal is to look for links between socioeconomic status and resilience capabilities.

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By making this choice, the authors recognize that victims' experiences with abuse and subsequent post-traumatic symptoms might differ due to a multitude of reasons. We used snowball sampling and convenience selection to find participants. They were involved in many forms of social assistance, psychotherapy, counseling, psychology, and support work. Nine people, including seven women and two men, took part in the recorded semi-structured interviews. Three of the interviews took place in person, while six took place over the phone.

People who took part in the study spoke about their encounters with clients. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, a pseudonym was issued to them. Rather than isolating themselves, survivors of childhood trauma exhibit symptoms of alcohol and drug abuse, ignore the detrimental effects of their hardships on their health (particularly if they were inflicted on them by their parents), and establish an inaccurate self-image. Feelings of inadequacy and poor self-esteem may manifest as sadness and anxiety in those who experience trauma at a young age. The results of this research did not indicate that traumatic experiences in childhood may lead to sleep disturbances. No significant relationship was found between social class and the types of traumatic events that people from diverse backgrounds encountered. The availability of support services was, however, significantly affected by financial conditions. Improving resilience, halting the development of harmful behavior and mental health issues became apparent as requiring interventions, treatment programs, and social support.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **AIM OF THE STUDY**

The goal of the study was to investigate the impact of childhood trauma on mental wellbeing, self-esteem and attachment styles in young adulthood.

### **VARIABLE OF THE STUDY**

#### **Independent Variable**

**Childhood Trauma:** Traumatic events or experiences that happen to a person as a child that they see as scary, risky, or upsetting are classified as childhood trauma. Some of these situations are being abused physically, emotionally, or sexually, being ignored, seeing domestic violence, or losing a loved one or being separated from them. Childhood trauma is the independent variable in this study. It refers to being exposed to stressful events when you were young.

#### **Dependent Variables**

**Mental Wellbeing:** The term "mental wellbeing" describes a person's general psychological state of contentment, pleasure, and life satisfaction. It includes a number of elements, including resilience, emotional stability, positive affect, & life satisfaction. One of the dependent variables in this study is mental health, which represents the degree of psychological wellness that young people have, impacted by the trauma they suffered as children.

**Self-Esteem:** Self-esteem is the term used to describe people's subjective assessment and view of their own value, competence, and worth. It shows how much people believe they are competent, self-assured, and worthy of acceptance and respect. Another dependent variable in this study is self-esteem, which measures how young adults' sense of self-worth and confidence is affected by their past experiences with childhood trauma.

**Attachment Styles:** The term "attachment styles" describes how people behave emotionally and relationally in intimate relationships. These patterns are influenced by early experiences that they had with caregivers. Secure attachment, anxious attachment, as well as avoidant attachment are examples of common attachment types. Additional dependent variables in this study include attachment styles, which represent the distinctive ways that young people establish and preserve relationships in response to their experiences with childhood trauma.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To explore the influence of childhood trauma on mental wellbeing in young adulthood.
- To investigate the influence of childhood trauma on self-esteem in young adulthood.
- To assess the influence of childhood trauma on attachment styles in young adulthood.

### **HYPOTHESIS**

- There is no significant influence of childhood trauma on mental well-being of young adults.
- There is no significant effect of childhood trauma on self-esteem of young adults.
- There is no significant impact of childhood trauma on attachment styles of young adults.

### **PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY**

The sample consisted of 127 individuals and was carefully selected through random and purposeful sampling to include both male and female participants. Most of the people in the group were between 18 and 25 years old.

### **DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

The data for this study were gathered using the "Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale, Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, Rosenberg Self Esteem & Adult Attachment Scale," as well as a demographic questionnaire.

### **DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

The "Childhood Trauma Questionnaire, Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale, , Rosenberg Self Esteem & Adult Attachment Scale," were the three questionnaires used to collect the data. Participants were provided with a

questionnaire packet with details regarding the study, privacy issues, the researcher's contact information, and other measures after the study's aims were explained. Participants were then asked to participate in the study. The description of the instruments took ten minutes.

### **CHILDHOOD TRAUMA QUESTIONNAIRE**

A 28-item self-report questionnaire called the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire-Short Form (CTQ-SF) has been employed to quantify childhood trauma. It is a condensed form of the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ), which consists of 70 items. There are three validity items and 25 clinical items in the CTQ-SF. Each of the five subscales on the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire-Short Form (CTQ-SF) comprises five items on a 5-point Likert scale. On the scale, 1 represents "never true" and 5 represents "very often true."

### **RELIABILITY**

This test's Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value is 0.852 for the whole CTQ-SF. For each of its five parts, it's 0.857 for emotional neglect, 0.755 for sexual abuse, 0.713 for physical abuse, 0.666 for emotional abuse, and 0.491 for physical neglect.

### **THE WARWICK-EDINBURGH MENTAL WELL-BEING SCALE**

The 14-item Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) was employed to assess the psychological well-being of individuals aged 16 and above. The measure was developed in 2006 by the Universities of Warwick and Edinburgh to assist in the creation of mental health measures for people in Scotland.

### **RELIABILITY**

Test-retest reliability and internal consistency reliability scores for the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) are 0.79 and 0.87, respectively.

### **ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE**

A tool for measuring self-esteem is the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSS), with ten items. It is considered the gold standard in the psychological world for assessing self-esteem. For questions with an asterisk (\*), the scores are as follows, in reverse order: strongly agree (SA) = 0, agree (A) = 1, disagree (D) = two, and severely disagree (SD) = 3. Every one of these responses is part of the scoring system. Once the scores of all 10 elements have been reversed, the total score is calculated.

### **RELIABILITY**

The Cronbach's alpha value for the second sample is 0.84, and the value for the first sample is 0.86. These values show that the materials are very consistent with each other. In the new edition, the mean scores for each item were between 2.95 and 3.36, while in the old edition, they were between 2.23 and 3.31. The factor loadings as well as communalities in the first version ranged from 0.077 to 0.661 as well as 0.277 to 0.808. In the new version, on the other hand, factor loadings varied between 0.361 to 0.814, as well as communalities were determined to be between 0.149 and 0.672.

### **VALIDITY**

Correlation investigation between the updated version and outside evaluations proved concurrent validity of the anticipated outcomes. More specifically, the avoidance sub-scale ( $r=-0.17$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and the attachment anxiety sub-scale ( $r=-0.23$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) demonstrate negative correlations that corroborate the findings from the initial version. Similar patterns were also seen with the TDI depression scale, which had a high negative correlation ( $r=-0.30$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

### **ADULT ATTACHMENT SCALE**

There are 18 questions on the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) that measure different types of attachment in adults, such as safe, worried, and avoidant attachments. The scale is scored using a 5-point Likert scale, and it is split into 3 subscales, each containing six items. The subjects rate each thing on a 5-point scale, with 1 meaning "not at all characteristics" and 5 meaning "very characteristic."

### **RELIABILITY**

In the normal groups, the AAS's Cronbach's alpha values were more than 0.7, indicating sufficient reliability.

### **STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

The regression method was used in the study with the help of SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were also employed.

### **RESULT & DISCUSSION**

Childhood trauma, which includes things like abuse, mistreatment, and problems in the home, can have long-lasting effects on a person's mental health, self-esteem, and bonding styles as they become young adults. These bad events during formative years can change how people see themselves, how they relate to others, and how emotionally strong they are generally. To deal with the long-term effects and encourage healing and resiliency, it is important to know how childhood trauma affects the mental health, self-esteem, as well as attachment styles of young people. The goal of this study is to look into how traumatic events in childhood affect young adults' mental health, self-esteem, and bonding styles. This study tries to explain the complicated relationship between things that happened in childhood (like physical abuse, neglect

of emotions, as well as family problems) and how people later on in life by looking at the links between these types of traumas and mental health. This study will use a wide range of research methods, such as questionnaires and psychology tests, to look into the mental health, self-esteem, as well as attachment styles of young people who have been through traumatic events as children.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of all variables**

	<b>Childhood Trauma</b>	<b>Mental Well being</b>	<b>Self esteem</b>	<b>Attachment Styles</b>
<b>Mean</b>	74.92126	46.51969	20.66142	53.80315
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	15.25581	9.152023	3.821868	8.565378
<b>N</b>	127	127	127	127

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 provide insight into the variables of interest in the study. The mean childhood trauma score was found to be 74.92 (SD = 15.26), indicating that, on average, participants experienced a moderate level of childhood trauma. Mental well-being scores averaged at 46.52 (SD = 9.15), suggesting a moderate level of mental well-being among the participants. Self-esteem scores had a mean of 20.66 (SD = 3.82), indicating a moderate level of self-esteem. Finally, attachment styles had a mean score of 53.80 (SD = 8.57), suggesting that participants, on average, reported a moderate level of attachment style. These findings provide a baseline understanding of the variables under investigation, which will be further explored in subsequent analyses.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of the regression analyses that looked at how childhood trauma affected different psychological aspects of young people's lives offer important new perspectives on the intricate relationship between early experiences & adult well-being.

First, the findings of the study of the impact of childhood trauma on mental health indicate that, among young people in this dataset, childhood trauma might not have a substantial effect on mental health. The non-significant ANOVA findings and minimal R-squared value suggest that variables other than childhood trauma may have a greater impact on a person's mental health in their early adult years.

Analyzing how childhood trauma affects self-esteem also produces results that are comparable. The study's young adults' self-esteem may not be significantly impacted by childhood trauma, as indicated by the low R-squared value & non-significant F-statistic.

On the other hand, different findings emerge from the research looking at the connection between adult attachment and childhood trauma. Young people's adult attachment patterns are significantly impacted by childhood trauma, as seen by the low p-value and significant F-statistic. This shows that traumatic experiences in early life may mold people's attachment styles as adults, affecting their interpersonal connections and social interactions.

These results highlight how crucial it is to take into account a variety of psychological aspects when analysing the long-term impacts of childhood trauma. Although the results of this study suggest that childhood trauma might not have a direct effect on mental health and self-esteem, it does appear to have a substantial influence on adult attachment patterns. Future studies should investigate possible treatments to lessen the detrimental impacts of childhood trauma on adult relationship and social functioning, as well as the processes by which it shapes attachment types.

## **CONCLUSION**

In summary, the present study examined the influence of childhood trauma upon numerous psychological variables in young adults. The results point to complex connections between several facets of psychological health and early trauma.

First off, the investigation did not uncover any compelling data to suggest that childhood trauma had a direct impact on young people's mental health and sense of self. This suggests that in early adulthood, variables other than childhood trauma may be more important in predicting mental health and self-esteem.

Nonetheless, the research did discover a strong correlation between young adults' adult attachment types and childhood trauma. This shows that traumatic experiences in early life may mold people's attachment styles as adults, affecting their social interactions and interpersonal connections.

These results underline the significance of taking into account a variety of factors in order to fully comprehend the impacts of childhood trauma upon psychological well-being. In order to assist people who have suffered childhood trauma in forming healthy attachment patterns and relationships in adulthood, future research should investigate the mechanisms behind these links in more detail and provide tailored therapies. All things considered, this study advances our knowledge of the long-term effects of childhood trauma upon psychological functioning and emphasizes the significance of early intervention as well as assistance for those who have suffered trauma during their early years.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **Early Intervention Programs:** To avoid long-term detrimental psychological effects, put early intervention programs into place that are designed to recognize and address childhood trauma. These initiatives could include mental health screening programs, community-based support services, and trauma-informed education in schools.
- **Therapeutic treatments:** Create and advance therapeutic treatments with an emphasis on resilience-building, coping mechanisms, and healthy attachment patterns for those who have suffered childhood trauma. Group therapy sessions, mindfulness-based therapies, and trauma-focused cognitive-behavioural therapy may be some of these interventions.
- **Supportive Environments:** Establish supportive conditions in communities, families, and schools to promote resilience and offer secure areas where people may process and recover from trauma they experienced as children. This might entail developing peer support networks to assist people going through comparable situations as well as educating educators, caregivers, & community leaders on trauma-informed methods.
- **Longitudinal Research:** Conduct longitudinal research to learn more about the long-term impacts of childhood trauma upon psychological functioning at various stages of development. Insights into the paths of rehabilitation and resilience after childhood trauma may be gained from longitudinal research, which can also help guide focused treatments at different phases of life.
- **Recommendations for Policy Changes:** Push for policies that give priority to the prevention and treatment of childhood trauma. These might include measures to lower the incidence of adverse childhood experiences, more financing for mental health services, and trauma-informed training for professionals who work with children and families.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- **Sample Size & Generalizability:** The study's small sample size may restrict how far the results may be applied. To guarantee that the findings are representative, future studies should strive for bigger and more varied sample sizes.
- **Self-Report Measures:** Data subjectivity and bias may be introduced when evaluating adult attachment, mental health, self-esteem, and childhood trauma using self-report measures. The validity of the results might be improved by using a variety of data gathering techniques, such as clinical conversations and observational measurements.
- **Cross-Sectional Design:** The study's cross-sectional design makes it more difficult to determine the exact causes of the links between psychiatric outcomes and childhood trauma. In order to investigate the long-term consequences of childhood trauma across time and take any confounding variables into account, longitudinal studies are required.
- **Measurement issues:** It's possible that the study's measurements of adult connection, mental health, self-esteem, and childhood trauma don't fully account for the complexity of these concepts. The precision and dependability of the results might be increased by using thorough and verified measurements.
- **Potential Confounders:** The study could not have taken into consideration all factors that potentially confuse the association between psychological outcomes and childhood trauma, such as family environment, socioeconomic position, and coping mechanisms. To further understand the processes behind the observed relationships, future research should take these aspects into account and control for them.

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