JETIR.ORG ISSN: 2349-5162 | ESTD Year : 2014 | Monthly Issue
JOURNAL OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATIVE RESEARCH (JETIR)
An International Scholarly Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

EFFECT OF CHILDHOOD TRAUMA IN SHAPING PERSONALITY

Divya Poduval
[Department of Psychology / JAIN(Deemed-to-be Univesrity), Bengaluru, India]

ABSTRACT
Childhood adversity may be associated with later emotional functioning, self-perception and interpersonal behaviour, although individual outcomes vary and personality is shaped by multiple influences. This paper examines questionnaire responses from a dataset of 153 records concerning childhood experiences and personality-related statements among young adults. The supplied dataset contained 28 childhood-experience items and 62 personality-related items. Pooled item-response frequencies were summarised, and an exploratory association was examined using provisional childhood-adversity and negative-emotionality indices. “Never True” was the most frequent response across childhood-experience items (1,150/4,284; 26.84%), while “Neutral” was the most frequent response across personality-related items (3,159/9,486; 33.30%). The exploratory Pearson correlation was small and negative ($r = -.132$, $p = .103$; 95% CI [−.285, .027]); Spearman’s correlation was also non-significant ($\rho = -.120$, $p = .140$). The negative-emotionality index showed low internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .215$), and the item groupings were not verified against official instrument scoring manuals. Therefore, these findings do not provide a definitive test of the relationship between childhood trauma and validated personality traits. The paper highlights the need for verified instruments, transparent scoring procedures and cautious interpretation.

Keywords: *childhood trauma, childhood adversity, personality development, young adults, negative emotionality, resilience*

INTRODUCTION
Childhood is a formative period in which individuals develop expectations about safety, relationships, emotional expression and their own abilities. Supportive caregiving may foster confidence and security, while experiences such as abuse, neglect, persistent conflict, bullying or loss may be associated with difficulties in emotional and interpersonal functioning. The consequences of adverse experiences are not uniform: their nature and duration, developmental timing, individual coping resources and access to supportive relationships can all matter.

Personality refers to relatively enduring patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving. It develops through the interaction of biological characteristics, temperament, family and peer relationships, culture, learning and later life experiences. Childhood adversity may be relevant to personality-related characteristics such as trust, emotional stability, self-confidence and interpersonal behaviour, but it should not be treated as the sole cause of a person's personality or as a predictor of a fixed outcome.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences study reported associations between childhood abuse and household dysfunction and several adult health risks (Felitti et al., 1998). Attachment theory also offers a framework for considering how early caregiving experiences may inform expectations in later relationships (Bowlby, 1988). At the same time, resilience research emphasises that positive relationships and adaptive processes can support development despite adversity (Masten, 2001).

Aim and objectives

The broad aim is to examine the relationship between self-reported childhood adversity and personality-related responses among young adults. Specifically, the paper describes response patterns

in the two questionnaire sections and reports an exploratory statistical examination of the association between a provisional childhood-adversity index and a provisional negative-emotionality index.

METHOD

Research design

The source project describes a quantitative, descriptive-correlational design. The analysis reported here is based on 153 response records in the supplied dataset. Because the design is observational, it can examine associations but cannot establish that childhood experiences cause particular personality characteristics.

Participants and data

The dataset contained 153 records. The childhood-experience section included 28 items answered on five ordered categories from "Never True" to "Very Often True." The personality-related section included 62 items answered on five agreement categories from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Demographic variables were not present in the supplied analysis file, so participant characteristics beyond the record count cannot be reported.

Measures and scoring caution

The source project proposed the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire and a Big Five or NEO-based personality measure; however, the exact versions, item wording, item-to-trait mappings, reverse-scoring rules and official scoring manuals could not be verified from the supplied dataset. Accordingly, item-level frequency summaries are descriptive only. For an exploratory correlation, the project constructed a provisional adversity index from 28 recoded items and a provisional negative-emotionality index from 11 selected personality-related items. These indices are not presented as validated psychometric scores.

Analysis

Frequencies and percentages were calculated for pooled item responses in each section. Pearson correlation was used to examine the linear association between the two provisional indices, and Spearman rank correlation was reported as a sensitivity check. The nominal significance threshold was

.05. Cronbach's alpha was considered only as an exploratory internal-consistency indicator. Given the unverified scoring and low reliability of the negative-emotionality index, inferential results require substantial caution.

RESULTS

Response patterns for childhood-experience items

Across 28 items and 153 records, there were 4,284 item responses. The most frequent category was "Never True" (26.84%), followed by "Rarely True" (22.22%). These are pooled item-response proportions, not the percentage of participants who experienced trauma.

Response category	Frequency	Percentage
Never True	1,150	26.84%
Rarely True	952	22.22%
Sometimes True	738	17.23%
Often True	795	18.56%
Very Often True	649	15.15%
Total	4,284	100.00%

Response patterns for personality-related items

Across 62 items and 153 records, there were 9,486 item responses. "Neutral" was the most frequent category (33.30%), followed by "Agree" (23.75%). Pooled response counts cannot establish individual Big Five trait levels without verified item mapping and scoring.

Response category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	924	9.74%
Disagree	2,200	23.19%
Neutral	3,159	33.30%
Agree	2,253	23.75%
Strongly Agree	950	10.01%
Total	9,486	99.99%*

**Percentages may total 99.99% because of rounding.*

Exploratory indices and correlation

The provisional childhood-adversity index had a mean of 1.902 (SD = 0.384; observed range = 1.18–3.11; α = .862). The provisional negative-emotionality index had a mean of 3.011 (SD = 0.359; observed range = 2.00–4.09; α = .215). The latter alpha indicates low internal consistency and limits interpretation of the index.

Analysis	N	Coefficient	95% CI	p	Decision at α = .05
Pearson correlation	153	r = −.132	[−.285, .027]	.103	Not significant
Spearman rank correlation	153	ρ = −.120	Not reported in source	.140	Not significant

The Pearson association was small, negative and not statistically significant. The confidence interval included zero, and the Spearman result was likewise non-significant. The null hypothesis was therefore not rejected for this exploratory test. This does not demonstrate that childhood adversity and personality are unrelated; it means that this analysis did not detect a statistically significant association between these specific provisional indices.

DISCUSSION

The descriptive findings summarise how responses were distributed across the questionnaire items. The childhood-experience section contained a plurality of "Never True" responses, while neutral answers were most frequent in the personality-related section. Because the response counts are pooled across items, they should not be interpreted as individual-level trauma prevalence or as evidence that respondents possess a particular personality profile.

The exploratory correlation did not show a statistically significant association between the provisional adversity and negative-emotionality indices (r = −.132, p = .103). The observed negative direction should not be interpreted as a protective effect of adversity or as evidence that greater adversity improves emotional outcomes. The coefficient was small, the test was non-significant, and the negative-emotionality index had low internal consistency. In addition, the item groupings were selected without confirmation against official instrument scoring instructions.

The broader literature suggests that childhood adversity can be associated with later psychological and health outcomes, while also recognising variability and resilience (Felitti et al., 1998; Masten, 2001). The present exploratory result neither confirms nor refutes that wider literature. It does not test all Big Five dimensions, and it does not assess resilience or social support as measured variables.

Consequently, claims about specific personality traits, moderation effects or causal pathways would exceed the available evidence.

Limitations

Several limitations are important. First, the dataset lacked demographic variables, limiting description of the sample and subgroup analysis. Second, the exact questionnaire versions and official scoring procedures were not verified. Third, the indices used in the correlation were exploratory, and the negative-emotionality index showed low internal consistency ($\alpha = .215$). Fourth, pooled item frequencies do not provide participant-level prevalence estimates. Fifth, the correlational design cannot establish causation. Finally, the sampling and recruitment details available in the source material do not support generalisation to all young adults in Bengaluru or India.

CONCLUSION

This paper presents descriptive response patterns and an exploratory test of the association between childhood adversity and negative-emotionality-related responses in 153 questionnaire records. The correlation was small and not statistically significant, but the result is limited by provisional scoring and low internal consistency of the negative-emotionality index. It should not be taken as evidence that childhood trauma has no relationship with personality development.

Future research should confirm and document the exact validated instruments used, follow official scoring and reverse-coding instructions, report participant demographics and sampling procedures, and analyse individual personality dimensions using appropriate participant-level scores. Resilience and social support should be included only when measured with suitable tools. A careful, non-deterministic approach can support a more accurate understanding of how early experiences may relate to later development.

REFERENCES

Bowlby, J. (1988). A secure base: Parent-child attachment and healthy human development. Basic Books.

Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 14(4), 245–258.

Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. American Psychologist, 56(3), 227–238.

Masih, S. (2024). Young adults uncovered: The psychological impact of childhood trauma contextualizing trauma theory. International Journal of Indian Psychology, 12(4), 1727–1735. https://doi.org/10.25215/1204.163

AUTHOR NOTE

Before submission, replace the author and affiliation placeholders; verify the exact instruments and scoring manuals; confirm the study's ethics/consent details and recruitment procedure; and ensure all references and journal formatting requirements are checked. This manuscript is a draft adapted from the supplied research project and is not a guarantee of acceptance or publication.