



Abstract

- Children are at a higher risk of experiencing abuse, which affects the way they regulate their needs and emotion.
- Exposure to traumatic experiences causes long-lasting effects on the development of emotional skills during childhood and adulthood.
- Adults exposed to childhood trauma were likely to isolate themselves from others, hold grudges, argue with others, or easily lose their temper.
- Exposure to childhood maltreatment caused adults to have a difficult time managing their impulse control when provoked negatively.



Introduction

Significance of Study:

- Nearly six million children in the United States are experiencing or have experienced childhood trauma (Friedman & Billick, 2015).
- When children's brain development is impaired, they show atypical coping behaviors such as recurrent outbursts, difficulty learning in school, and constantly causing fights (Friedman & Billick, 2015).
- Exposure to trauma causes children to experience impairment in their cognitive and emotional needs as they have a challenging time regulating their emotions, interacting with others, and forming attachments (Children's Bureau, 2015).

Purpose of Study:

- To increase knowledge related to the emotional regulation of adults who have experienced childhood trauma.

Research Question:

- What is the relationship between childhood trauma and emotional control in adulthood?

Hypothesis:

- It is hypothesized that adults who experienced childhood trauma have less control over their emotions.

Literature Review

Attachment Theory:

- Attachment formulates through early experiences with parents and is later maintained through emotional connections and empathetic relationships in adulthood (Hutchinson, 2016).
- Insecure attachments causes individuals to use maladaptive strategies, such as suppressing or avoiding negative emotions in order to survive (Huh et al., 2017).

Impacts of Childhood Trauma

- Exposure to trauma causes children to demonstrate impairment in emotional expression, recognition, and communication (Powers, Etkin, Gyurak, Bradley, & Jovanovic, 2015).
- Exposure to violence influence children to exhibit increase aggressive behaviors towards their peers (Holmes, 2013).

Childhood Trauma and Emotion Regulation in Adulthood

- Childhood trauma contributes to impulsive delays during adulthood such as emotional regulation and patterns of behavior (Infurna et al., 2015).
- Adults experience behavioral problems due to the inability of self-control, impulsivity, and affective instability (Lee et al., 2019).

Gaps in Research

- Limited data exploring whether adults were or were not able to have self-control over their emotions.

- 1,044 participants, 475 (45.5%) male and 569 (54.5%) female. Ethnicity demographics for the participants were 972 (93.1%) White, 27 (2.6%) African American, and 45 (4.3%) some other ethnicity.
- Participants who experienced emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional neglect significantly experienced higher measures of internal and external anger ($p < .05$).
- Participants who experienced emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional neglect experienced significantly and negatively measures of anger control and emotional control ($p < .05$).



Methods

Research Design:

- Secondary analysis of the data from Midlife in the United States (MIDUS 2) study, 2004-2006.
- Focus on the relationship between childhood trauma and managing emotions in adulthood.

Sampling Method:

- Respondents in this study were between 35 to 86 years old.
- Final sample size was 1,044 respondents; which were included in the study as they provided complete answers associated with physical and mental/emotional health

Measures and Data Collection:

- The independent variable is child maltreatment, identified as emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, and physical neglect.
- The dependent variable is emotional control.
- Analysis is based on the one-point of data collection obtained in the MIDUS 2 Study.
- Structured questionnaires were administered by a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) technology to collect data on demographics, childhood trauma, and emotion regulation.
- Original study approved by the Institutional Review Board at National Institute of Health.
- All statistical analyses were conducted utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

Results

Table 2

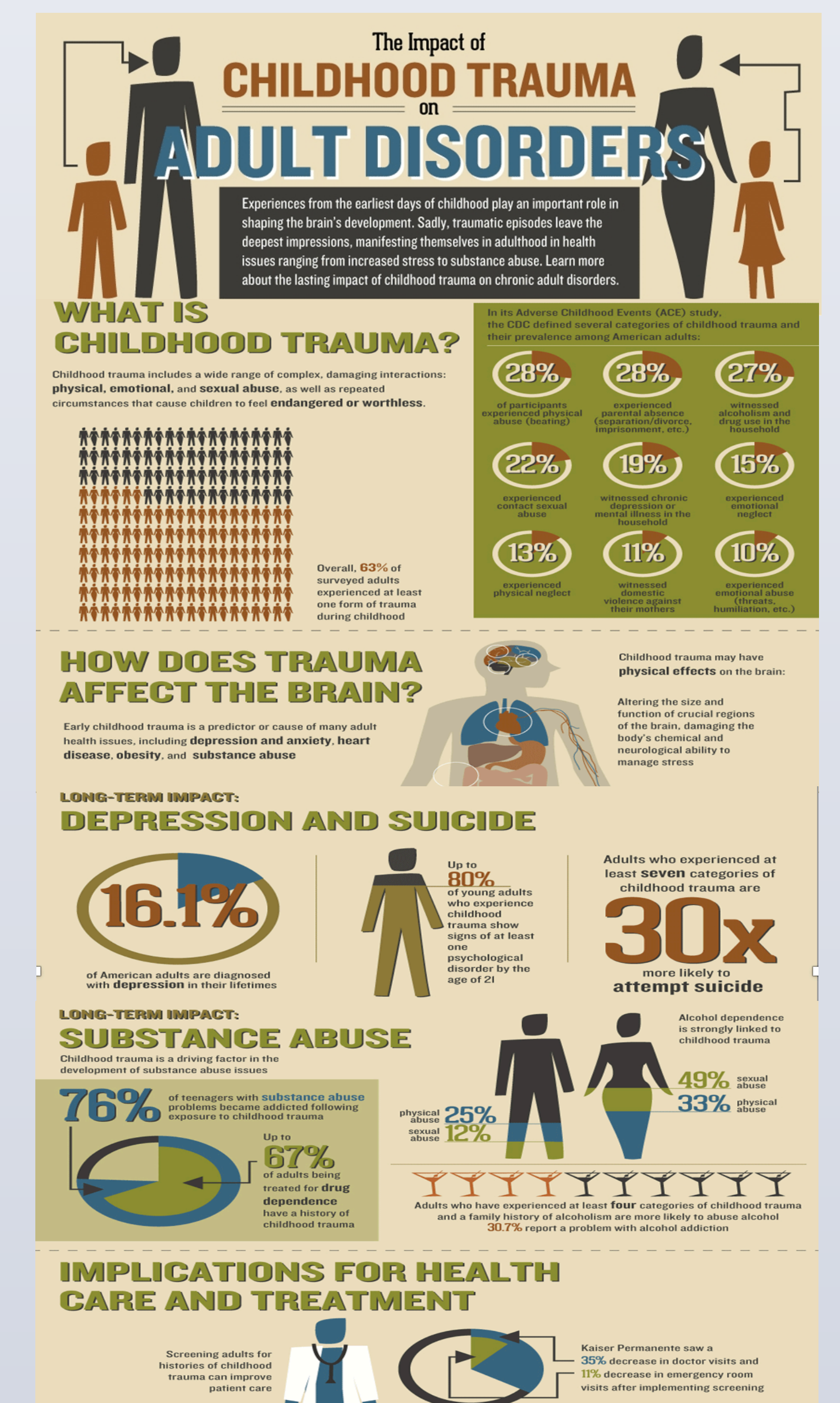
Correlation Matrix for Childhood Trauma and Anger and Emotional Control

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1 Emotional Abuse	1								
2 Physical Abuse	.657**	1							
3 Sexual Abuse	.378**	.352**	1						
4 Emotional Neglect	.701*	.536**	.314**	1					
5 Physical Neglect	.536**	.520**	.330**	.613**	1				
6 Anger Internal	.181**	.071*	.084**	.163**	.070*	1			
7 Anger External	.235**	.168**	.067**	.130**	.050	.200**	1		
8 Anger Control	-.118**	-.071*	-.070*	-.201**	.122**	.157**	-.301**	1	
9 Emotion Control	-.104**	-.030	-.062*	-.092**	-.012	.007	-.350**	.284**	1

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Conclusion

- Adults who experienced childhood maltreatment exhibited higher levels of internal and external anger.
- Study supported the hypothesis: increased exposure to childhood trauma impacts emotion regulation in adulthood.
- Childhood trauma negatively impacts the different factors of emotional functioning as it influences adults to construct abnormal strategies when coping with emotional experiences (Karagoz & Dag, 2015).
- Adult's emotional regulations were affected by abuse (physical and sexual) and emotional neglect as they coped with their emotions negatively.
- Adults are not easily able to regulate their emotions as they feel angrier, keeping things inside or expressing their anger by saying nasty things to others, and losing their temper or striking whenever they feel enraged.
- Utilizing coping/grounding techniques would help adults regulate and manage their emotions positively.



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