

College Students Mental Health: The relationships between trauma, substance abuse, and COVID-19 stress

Katlyn Wilcox

INTRO

- Previous studies have found that exposure to potentially traumatic events has a positive relationship to levels of alcohol abuse (Weiss et.al., 2020)
- It has been found that there is a positive relationship between exposure to past trauma and levels of stress. Specifically, childhood trauma is linked to avoidant coping and greater stress levels (Amirkhan & Marckwordt, 2017).
- It is highly important to examine the relationship between exposure to potentially traumatic events and COVID-19 stress levels because it is a stressor all students have been exposed to.

HYPOTHESES

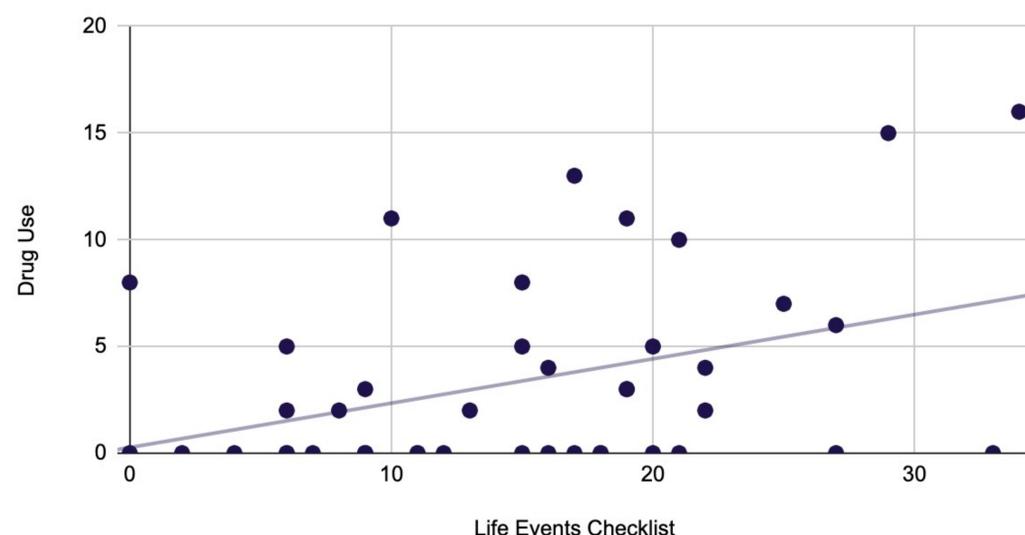
- **H1:** Those who have experienced higher rates of trauma may have more substance use than those with lower rates of trauma.;
- **H2:** Those with higher rates of trauma may experience higher levels of COVID-related stress than those with lower rates of trauma.;
- **H3:** Those with higher levels of COVID-related stress may have more substance use.

METHODS

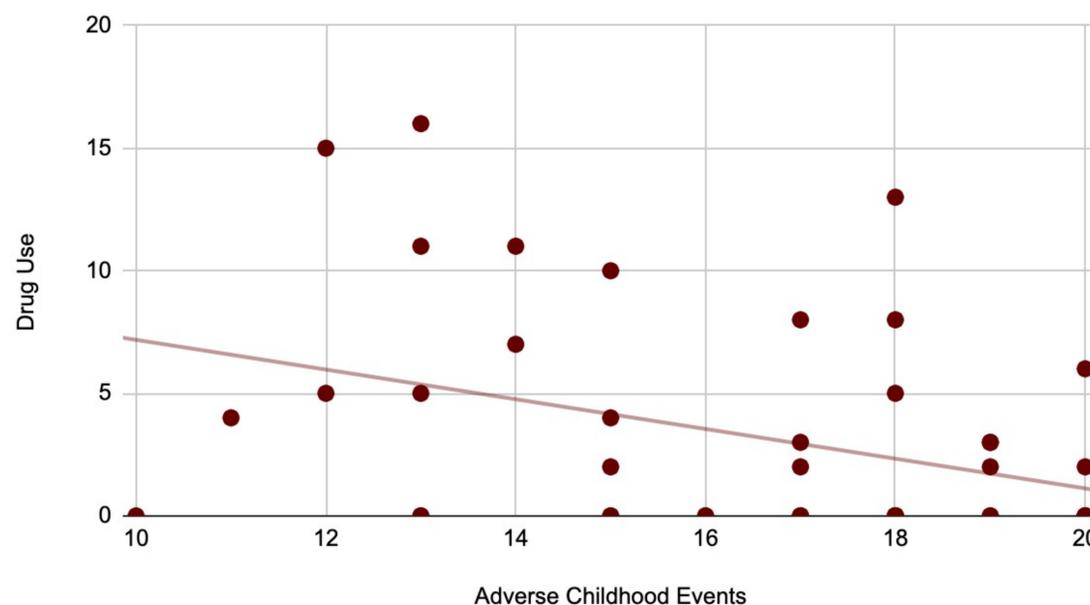
1. Using Convenience Sampling 51 participants (72.5% Cis-female, 13.7% Cis-male, 2% Non-binary)
 1. Race: White (56.9%), Black/African American (9.8%), Multiracial (9.8%), American Indian/Indigenous (3.9%), Asian(2.0%), Other race (5.9%)
 2. Age: 18-20(62.7%), 22-26 (21.6%), 27 and above (4%)
2. Measures Included: Life Events Checklist (LEC-5; Weathers et al., 2013), Adverse Childhood Events Checklist (ACE-SQ; Felitti et al., 1998), Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT; Barbor et al., 2001), Drug Use Disorders Identification Test (DUDIT; Berman et al., 2005) , Adapted Perceived Stress Scale for COVID Stress (PSS-12; Eubank et al., 2021)

Exposure to Potentially Traumatic Events Across Lifespan was Related to More Drug Use, but Exposure to Adverse Childhood Events Specifically was Associated with Less Drug Use.

Positive Relationship Between Lifetime Trauma History & Drug Use



Negative Relationship Between Adverse Childhood Events & Drug Use



wilcoxka@my.easternct.edu

RESULTS

Correlations

Scales	R-value	Sig.
ACEs & AUDIT	-.27	.07
ACEs & DUDIT	-.37	.012
LEC-5 & AUDIT	.29	.06
LEC-5 & DUDIT	.38	.011
PSS-12 & LEC-5	.30	.06
PSS-12 & ACEs	-.23	.14
PSS-12 & AUDIT	.21	.17
PSS-12 & DUDIT	.15	.32

DISCUSSION

- The Pearson *r* correlations that were run did not support my hypotheses. The only findings that partially supported Hypothesis 1 was the positive relationship found between the LEC-5 and Drug Use.
- The significant negative relationship between the ACEs and Drug Use was an unexpected finding that requires further exploration as it contradicts past research that shows experiencing adverse childhood events is a significant predictor of drug use (Villanueva & Pomares, 2020).
- Limitations of study include the diversity of the sample utilized. Because it was primarily female and White, the results cannot be generalized to other populations.
- As well as, due to the small sample size the correlations run may be subject to Type II errors. Specifically, the PSS-12 & LEC-5 along with the PSS-12 & DUDIT.