

The longitudinal impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences upon rural Australian youth

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Background:

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are events occurring in childhood that can have significant long-term impacts on health and well-being. This study explores the impact of ACEs on the outcomes of 4,893 Australian children using data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC). This research aims to assess whether higher ACE scores are associated with poorer health, educational, and social outcomes among rural young people.

Methods:

Data from LSAC Wave 9, a nationally representative study of Australian children aged 4-21, were analysed using a longitudinal design. Inferential statistics examined the relationship between ACEs and adolescent outcomes, including mental health, academic performance, and social integration. Multiple regression analyses accounted for confounding variables like socioeconomic status and parental education levels.

Results:

The analysis revealed significant relationships between ACEs and various adolescent outcomes. Adolescents with higher levels of ACEs had poorer mental health, lower academic performance, and reduced social integration. Multiple regression analyses confirmed that ACEs remained significant predictors of these outcomes, even after controlling for socioeconomic factors. Additionally, the analysis showed that living in rural and remote areas significantly affected adolescent outcomes.

Conclusions:

The rural urban health divide in Australia has long been documented. These results suggest that exposure to ACEs significantly affects the health and well-being of young people in rural Australia. These findings emphasise the need for targeted interventions to mitigate ACEs' negative impacts and support rural young people's health, social, and educational development. The study highlights the importance of early detection and intervention for ACEs and addressing the unique challenges of rural living to improve young people's overall well-being in these communities.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

No interests to disclose