

Substance Use and Association of Adverse Childhood Experience and Mental Health in Young Adults

Authors : Sreelekha Prakash, Yulong Gu

Abstract : Background: About 61% of adults surveyed across 25 states reported they had experienced at least one type of Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) before 18 years of age. Relationships between ACEs and a variety of substance-related behaviors and behavioral health have been reported in previous studies. ACEs can have lasting, negative effects on health, well-being, as well as life opportunities such as education and job potential. Objectives: For the current research, the aim was to assess the factors affecting substance use behavior in young adults. The further onset of drug use and its association was analyzed with ACEs and mental health. Method: The young adults from a county in the north-eastern United States were invited to participate in an online questionnaire survey with prior consent through an IRB approved study. The Survey included questions related to social determinants of health, 10 item ACE questionnaire, and substance use related to Alcohol, Marijuana, Opioids, Stimulants, and other drugs. PHQ-9 questionnaire was used to assess cognitive health. Results: Data was analyzed for the 244 completed surveys {68% (165) were females, and 78% (190) were Whites}. The average age of the participants was 26.7 years, and approximately 80% were lifelong residents of the county or year-round residents. Of the respondents, 50% (122) were high school graduates with some college education, and 56% (136) had a full-time jobs. Past 30-day usage for alcohol was 76% (72), and marijuana was 28.4% (27). The data showed that the higher the ACE scores, the younger they start using any substance ($p < 0.0001$). The data for PHQ-9 and ACE scores showed that the higher the ACE score, the higher the PHQ-9 score, with a significant p-value ($p 0.0001$). The current data also showed a significant association with other drugs; marijuana use showed significance for 30 days of use ($p 0.0001$), stimulant use (0.0008), prescription drug misuse (0.01), and opioids (0.01). Conclusion: These findings further support the association between ACEs and initiation of drug use and its correlation with mental health symptoms. Promoting a safe and supportive environment for children and youth in their earlier ages can prevent the youth and young adults from the effects of drug use and create healthy living habits for young adults.

Keywords : substance use, young adults, adverse childhood experience, PHQ-9

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