

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) & College Success

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Abstract

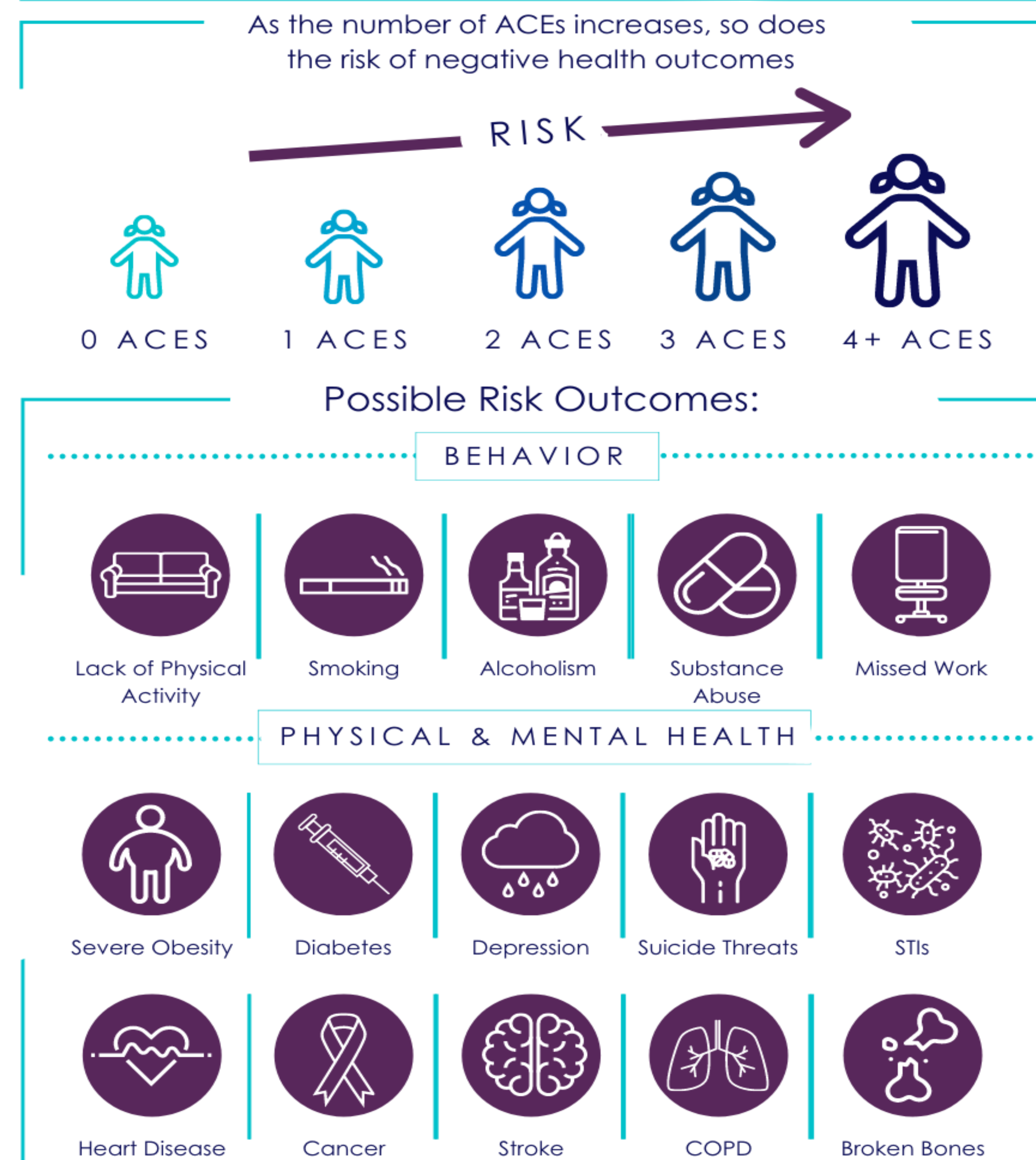
College students face many challenges when it comes to discovering their identity, establishing independence, developing a routine, adjusting to a new lifestyle, handling stress and social interactions. Furthermore, students that have been exposed to chronic Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can experience negative impacts on their mental health and academic performance. ACEs are childhood experiences of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, and/or household dysfunctions such as substance abuse, mental illness, suicide, or incarceration (Felitti et al., 2019). Felitti et al. (1998) found that ACEs are linked to many different health risk factors such as declining health, smoking, alcohol abuse, depression, and substance abuse. College students that have been exposed to ACEs are more likely to struggle with their mental health, depression, and anxiety (Hatton-Bowers et al., 2023). The purpose of this research is to examine how ACEs impact a college students' performance. I would like to learn how students define academic success and if they believe they fit that definition. I would like to discover how ACEs influence students' overall ability to learn and retain information, focus on academic work, develop study habits, and have successful social interactions with peers. I theorize that students who have been exposed to four or more ACEs will struggle more with the demands and pace of college life than students who have 3 or fewer ACEs. This research is essential for universities to be able identify students with ACEs to better understand and support these students.

Introduction

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are childhood exposures to emotional, physical, sexual abuse, and/or household dysfunctions such as substance abuse, mental illness, suicide, or incarceration (Felitti et al., 1998). Felitti (1998) found that ACEs have been linked to many different health risk factors such as declining health, smoking, alcohol abuse, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, death, etc. During the college years, students can face many challenges when it comes to work life balance, studying, stress, depression, social anxiety, etc. College students who have experienced four or more ACEs have added challenges if they had an early exposure to chronic toxic stress environments which can lead to mental health illnesses and depression (Hatton-Bowers et al., 2023). This can affect students' mental health as well as their overall academic success.

Goal: To increase the awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences within the university setting and to provide the necessary resources for those who have experienced ACEs to help them obtain their definition of academic success.

What Impact Do ACEs Have?



Methods

Participants will be recruited on campus via email, posters, and flyers posted around the campus. Participants must be a TCU student enrolled in classes between the ages 18- 65 years old.

Measure:

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Procedure:

- Students will take a Qualtrics survey online on the SONA portal.
- Students will receive 1 SONA credit for their participation in completing the survey in full.

Results (expected)

- I theorize that students who have been exposed to four or more ACEs will struggle more with the demands and pace of college than a student who has been exposed to less than four ACEs.
- Students who have experienced more childhood ACEs will have lower GPA's than students who have fewer ACEs. Furthermore, students with a higher ACEs score will seek more support from the university's resources than students with lower scores.

Discussion (expected)

In this study, I expect to learn whether Adverse Childhood Experiences can influence a student's academic success in college. As well as, to determine how students define academic success and see if they believe they fit that definition. I theorize that students with higher ACEs scores will define their academic success differently than students who have lower scores. One expected outcome is while examining the relationship between college success and ACEs; I expect to learn how this can influence a student's overall ability to learn, retain information, focus, retain good study habits, and positive social interactions with peers.

Future research could

- Explore the relationship between a student's health challenges, their environment, and what role that plays in a student's academic success.
- Examine how to improve a college student with a higher ACEs score's self-efficacy.
- Investigate interventions targeted to help students with higher ACE scores achieve their academic goals.

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