

Examining the Self-Reported ACE Scores and Anxiety Levels in Student Teachers

An Action Based Pilot Study

Alicia K. Green
Dr. Jamie Doronkin

Research Questions

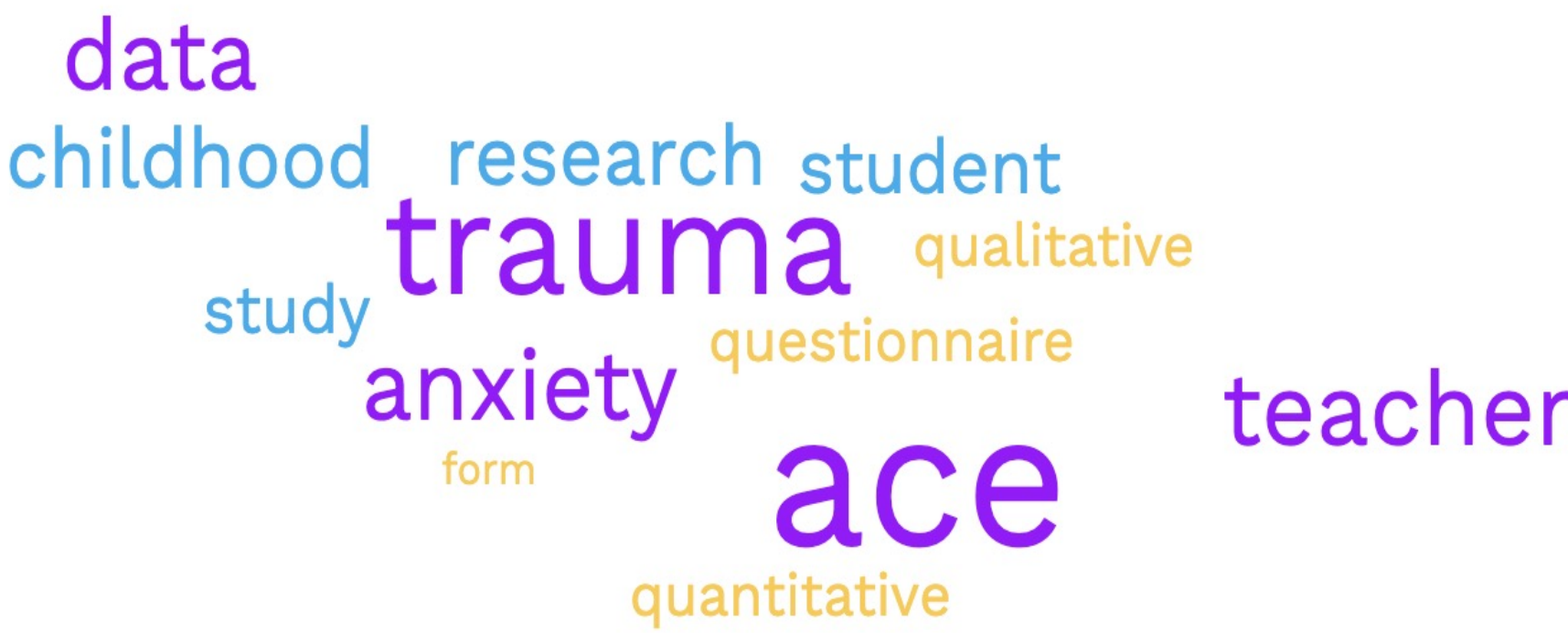
"If I review the self-reported Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) scores and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS21) anxiety levels of two student teachers, in what ways, if any, will I learn more about possible anxiety for student teachers? If I survey two student teachers about their perspectives on anxiety, in what ways, if any, will I learn more about possible anxiety for student teachers?"

Abstract

This mixed-methods pilot study examined Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and anxiety in student teachers. Data were collected electronically using the ACE questionnaire, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale-21 (DASS21), and six open-ended questions. Results indicate that participants report anxiety and ACEs. This study implies further research is needed on student teachers.

What's an ACE?

A potentially traumatic events that happen in childhood before the age of eighteen that includes abuse, neglect, substance abuse of household members, mental illness of household members, incarceration of a household member, and parent's divorce (Centers for Disease Control, 2021).



67% of adults in the U.S. report at least one ACE with 15% reporting 4 or more (Anda et al., 2006).

31% of adults in the U.S. reported anxiety symptoms in 2022 versus just 8% in 2021 (National Center for Health Statistics, 2022).

Results

This mixed-methods pilot study examined Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and anxiety in student teachers. Data were collected electronically using the ACE questionnaire, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale-21 (DASS21), and six open-ended questions. Results indicate that participants report anxiety and ACEs. This study implies further research is needed on student teachers.

Introduction

In the United States, the average teacher impacts more than 3,000 students throughout their career (McCain, 2022). Unsurprisingly, to those who know and understand the educational field, this impact is both a privilege and a challenge. Teacher burnout in the United States hit an all-time high (Liss-Levinson, 2021). The cause of burnout could have several causes. This current action research pilot study looked at Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and anxiety in student teachers. The problem to be addressed by this pilot study was that the perspectives of student teachers who have anxiety or experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) while growing up are not thoroughly explored in research and literature. Understanding their perspectives may bring awareness to the problem of anxiety and ACEs and their effect in college classrooms, specifically in teacher prep programs. This study was designed to begin revealing important information for instructors of student teachers, teachers, hiring teams, and many others in the education field.

Methodology

This action research pilot study was conducted at a small university in the St. Louis area. A convenience sample of student teachers was used, and the study was conducted in the Spring of 2023. Email and Google forms were used for informed consent and all data collection.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative Data were collected by two Google forms and included the ACE Questionnaire and the DASS21. Only the Anxiety portion of this form was scored. Directions on scoring the data appears on the forms available freely. The information collected provided the ACE scores and the anxiety levels of each participant.

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data were collected with six open-ended questions in order to understand the perspectives of student teachers. This data were scrubbed to remove identifying information and was examined for patterns, similarities, and differences, in the small amount of data available, using an inductive approach.

Conclusion

The data from this action based pilot study revealed that the participants had both ACEs and anxiety. A need for continued research on ACEs and anxiety in student teachers has been demonstrated. Anxiety and ACEs have not been commonly studied in student teachers; therefore, this study would add to the literature and have some implications for future organizational change. These implications could include changing how student teachers learn to cope with stress in and out of the classroom, providing more mental health support, and making changes to the instructional strategies of those leading student teachers.

Contact and References

Alicia K. Green
agreen03453@Fontbonne.edu
Scan the QR code for a link to my website for more information.

