

EDUCATION MODULATES THE EFFECT OF CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY ON LIFETIME SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR AND MAJOR DEPRESSION

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Introduction: Childhood adversity is a major risk factor for life-time various psychiatric disorders. The vulnerability for psychiatric disorders appears to be modulated by cognitive reserve (CR).

Objectives: We wanted to examine the impact of childhood adversity on lifetime suicidal behavior and major depression and its modulation by education, a CR proxy.

Method: 1494 non-institutionalized individuals without dementia from a cohort of community-dwelling persons aged over 65 years (the ESPRIT study) were randomly selected from electoral rolls and rated for childhood adversity (e.g., emotional abuse and neglect). Life-time major depression and suicidal behavior were assessed according to DSM-IV criteria.

Results: Exposure to adversity in childhood increased the risk of life-time suicidal behavior and major depression ($p < 0.0001$ OR=1.75 [1.34-2.28]) but there was no significant effect of education alone ($p=0.276$). Subjects with a low level of education were observed to be at higher risk ($p < 0.005$; OR=2.19 [1.26-3.80]) and subjects with the higher level of education showed a non significant risk ($p=0.244$).

Conclusion: Our results suggest high education level as a protective factor to counteract the effects of childhood adversity on the onset of mental disorders in adulthood.