Childhood Adversity and Resilience among RCMP Cadets

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Why study the effect of childhood adversity on the resilience of RCMP Cadets starting training?

Public safety personnel (PSP) are frequently exposed to potentially psychologically traumatic events (PPTEs) during their work, but there is less understanding regarding adverse experiences that PSP may have faced before entering the profession. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are acknowledged to contribute to negative, long-lasting outcomes and include child maltreatment, household challenges, and peer victimization.

ACEs may hinder integral resilience processes for coping with and overcoming PPTEs, limiting their ability to function and adapt to their work requirements.

Background

Emotional suppression (as a behavioural and cognitive strategy in response to challenging situations) worsens the relationship between child maltreatment history and resilience. This suggests that individuals who prefer to suppress their emotions may refrain from establishing close bonds with others and may have an increased risk of experiencing a mood disorder.

The current study was designed to understand how specific ACEs, including child maltreatment, household challenges, peer victimization, and their combination, may impact resilience among Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Cadets starting training to become RCMP members.

The Current Study

The current research draws on data from the larger 10-year RCMP Study, a part of a Federal Framework on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.

Study participants were Cadets (n=597; 75.0% men) who completed a Full Assessment before the Cadet Training Program (CTP) as part of the Standard Training Program. Inclusion in the current study required Cadet respondents to have completed all items on the Brief Resilience Scale, the Life Events Checklist for the DSM-5, the 10-item Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, and the Childhood Stressor Screen.
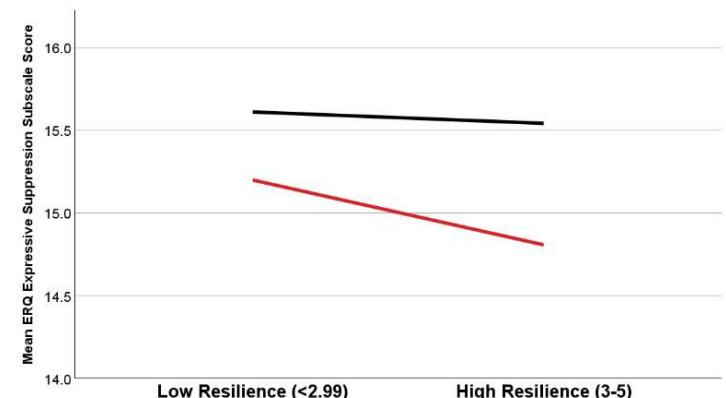
Conclusions

The results support that:

1. ACEs are associated with decreased resilience in Cadets before training;

2. Child maltreatment, particularly physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, intimate partner violence, and experiences of peer victimization, are statistically significantly associated with decreased resilience among Cadets; and,

3. Emotional suppression (as a behavioural and cognitive strategy in response to challenging situations) worsens the inverse relationship between child maltreatment history and resilience among Cadets.

The current results underscore the critical importance of mitigating the adverse impact of child maltreatment ACEs on resilience among Cadets before or during the training to become RCMP members. The emotional resilience skills training provided during Cadet training is designed to support more constructive engagement with emotions, which is expected to be helpful.

Highlights

Two-way interaction slopes of Child Maltreatment (CM) ACEs and ERQ Subscale of Emotional Suppression on Resilience:

Note. Slopes indicating the moderation analysis results of the emotional suppression subscale on the association of child maltreatment ACEs and resilience. The axis of the figure has been truncated to visually maximize the plotted interaction effect. Subscale range = 0-28. Y-axis = Mean scores of ERQ Expressive Suppression. X-axis = resilience is measured as low resilience or high resilience. Black-coloured slope = No child maltreatment ACEs. Red-coloured slope = Yes, child maltreatment ACEs.

*The original wording of the study was changed and condensed for the current research infographic.

Read the full study here:
Garces-Davila, I., Teckchandani, T. A., Jamshidi, L., Caissie, D. M., Taillieu, T., McCarthy, J.-A., MacGowan, L., Lix, L. M., Stewart, S. H., Sauer-Zavala, S., Kratzig, G. P., Carleton, R. N., & Afifi, T. O. (2025). The Relationship between Childhood Adversity and Resilience among RCMP Cadets: Evidence from The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Study. Journal of Traumatic Stress. https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.23177

The RCMP Longitudinal PTSD Study

University of Regina