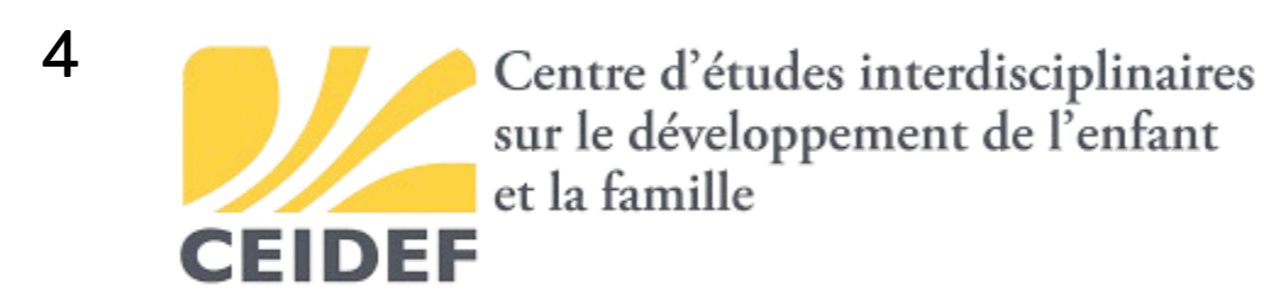


Is the ACE Questionnaire the best option for trauma research? Large effect size differences in the association between childhood adversity and outcomes when using the ACE and a broader measure of interpersonal trauma

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INTRODUCTION

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study popularized the 10-item ACE questionnaire (ACE-Q), now one of the most widely used instruments in trauma research and clinical practice. Despite its popularity, the ACE-Q omits several types of interpersonal trauma important for long-term health and well-being outcomes.

OBJECTIVE

This study aims to evaluate whether a broader trauma instrument like the Childhood Interpersonal Trauma Inventory (CITI) provides stronger associations with psychological functioning compared to the ACE-Q.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

A sample of 294 expecting parents ($M_{\text{age}} = 30.41$, $SD = 4.87$, 85.3% women, 83.6% White) completed self-reported measures during the 2nd trimester.

The sample was recruited at pregnancy-related medical appointments and can be considered at low risk (e.g., 82.9% with post-secondary education, and 91% in a relationship with the other parent). **84.2%** of the participants experienced at least one interpersonal trauma during childhood according to the CITI.

MEASURES

- ✦ **Childhood trauma** : Adverse Childhood Experience Questionnaire (ACE-Q; Felitti et al., 1998) and the Childhood Interpersonal Trauma Inventory (Lemieux & Berthelot, 2018)
- ✦ **Personality impairments** : Self and Interpersonal Functioning Scale (SIFS; Gamache et al., 2019).
- ✦ **Negative affect** : Positive And Negative Affect Scale – Negative affect subscale (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988)
- ✦ **Depression** : Center for the Epidemiological Studies of Depression Scale (CES-D; Furher & Rouillon, 1989; Radloff, 1977)
- ✦ **Anxiety** : Generalized Anxiety Disorder Questionnaire (GAD-7; Spitzer et al., 2006)
- ✦ **Sleep** : Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI; Buysse et al., 1989)
- ✦ **Well-being** : Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEBWBS; Tennant et al., 2007)
- ✦ **Emotional regulation capacities** : Difficulties in Emotional Regulation Scale (DERS-18; Dan-Glauser & Scherer, 2013)
- ✦ **Couple functioning** : Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS-7; Spanier, 1976)

RESULTS

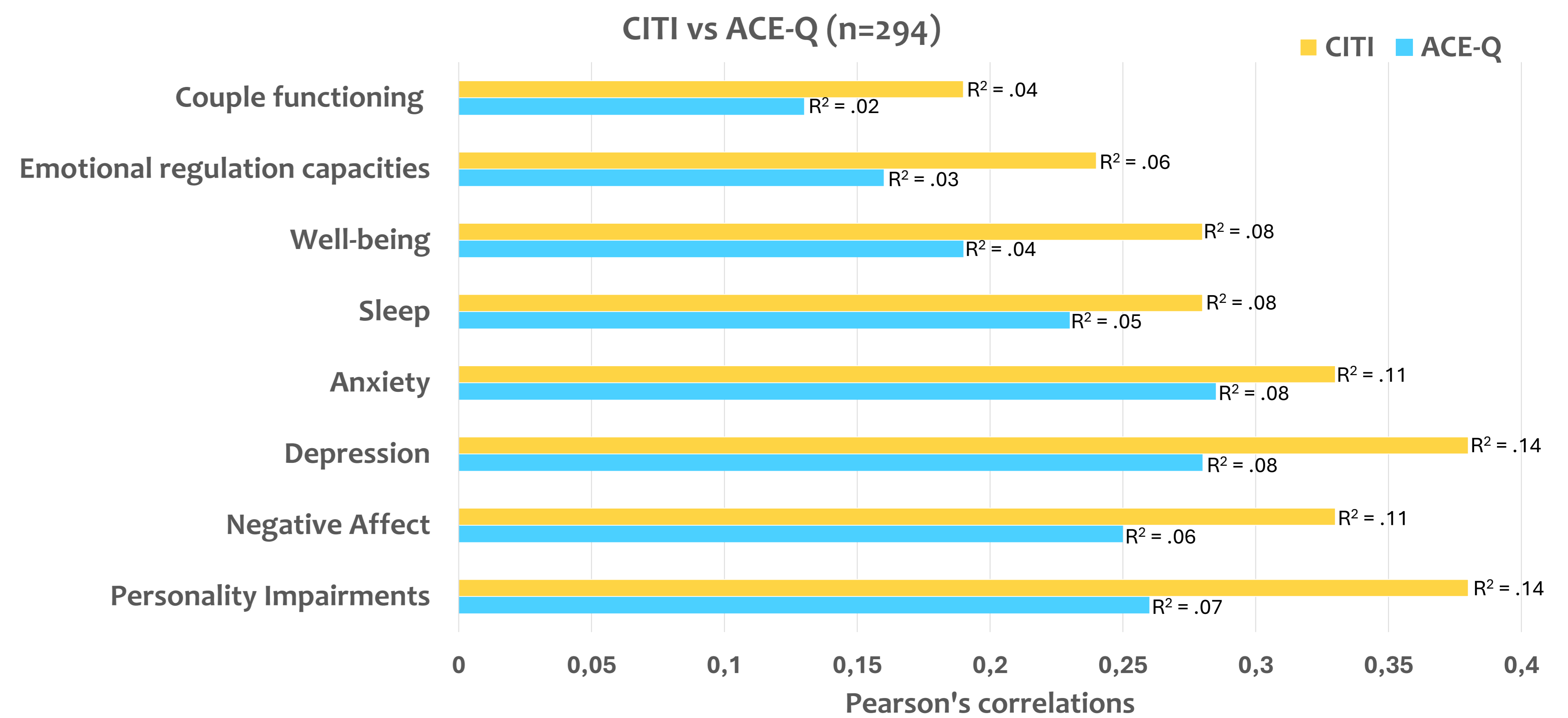


Figure 1. Pearson's correlations and explained variance for the associations between two measures of childhood trauma and eight indicators of psychological functioning.

The CITI showed consistently stronger associations with psychological outcomes than the ACE-Q and **explained almost twice as much variance** in psychological functioning.

DISCUSSION

The study offers additional support to previous findings that types of interpersonal trauma which are not assessed by the ACE-Q have substantial contributions to poor outcomes (Finkelhor et al., 2013).

The findings call for further studies comparing the predictive validity of the ACE-Q to other existing measures. If the reduction in statistical power to detect associations between childhood adversity and numerous outcomes observed here with the ACE-Q is confirmed by other studies, this should prompt researchers to re-evaluate the utilization of this measure.

Limitations : Modest sample size, expecting parents with low diversity, measures did not consider systemic and cultural trauma.

SCAN THIS FOR REFERENCES



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