

Individual differences in attachment, adverse childhood experiences and mental health - online survey

Date of approval: 4th July 2023

Invitation to our study

If you are 18 years old or above, we would like to invite you to participate in this research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear, or you would like more information.

The Present Study

The present study aims to investigate how people's current mental health symptoms may be rooted in their past experiences and relationships with close others.

If you decide to partake in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey, with questions about yourself and your mental health symptoms, your current experiences of close relationships, any adverse childhood experiences you may have had and how those might still affect you today (post-traumatic stress).

Potential risks

Participating in the current online survey study may be risky for people who have experienced adverse childhood events such as physical or emotional abuse or neglect, and for those suffering from mental health conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, psychosis and dissociation. This is because you are asked to identify any adverse childhood experiences you have had and to indicate how much they may still affect you (post-traumatic stress), in addition to being asked about symptoms of anxiety, depression and dissociation. If you feel that indicating your childhood experiences or mental health symptoms may reduce your wellbeing, please consider carefully whether participating is the right thing for you at this time.

If you participate and you feel affected by the study in any way, you can refer to the mental health services offered by the University of Essex Student Services Hub, located in the Silberrad Student Centre (askthehub@essex.ac.uk or 01206 874000) if you are a student here. Alternatively, please contact your GP or a mental health charity like Mind for support:

Mid and North East Essex Mind

Tel: 01206 764600

mnessexmind.org

Samaritans UK

Tel: 116 123

Trauma Breakthrough

Tel: 01225 984637

<https://www.traumabreakthrough.org/contact/>

Informed consent

Informed consent will be obtained prior to the experiment online.

Withdrawal

Your participation is voluntary, and you will be free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without penalty. If you wish to withdraw during the online survey, simply close your browser. Any incomplete responses will be deleted. After you have completed the experiment, it will not be possible to withdraw because your data is collected anonymously, unless you provide your email address for the prize draw. We reserve the right to not grant credit / prize draw payment for participant who fail attention checks.

Data gathered

- We will collect the following data from each participant:
 - Survey data (demographics, mental health symptoms (depression, anxiety, dissociation), attachment and experiences of close relationships, adverse childhood experiences and post-traumatic stress), email address for entering prize draw (optional).
- We will collect optional email addresses from participants with a diagnosis of depersonalisation-derealisation for a follow-up study.
- We are using your data to understand links between people's past experiences and their current mental health symptoms.
- Your data will be gathered by Dr Helge Gillmeister (principal investigator), Ms Ishita Mathur (MSc Psychology student) and Ms Sarah Dunstan (DClin Psychology student).
- Your anonymous data may be published in scientific journal articles, and shared in permanent, publicly accessible archives accessible from any country.
- Your anonymous data will be used to complete an MSc student dissertation project and a Clinical Psychology doctorate thesis.

Ethical approval

This project has been reviewed on behalf of the University of Essex Sub-Committee 1 and has been given approval with the following Application ID: ETH2223-1827.

Concerns and complaints

If you have any concerns about any aspect of the study or you have a complaint, in the first instance please contact the Principal Investigator of the project (see contact details below). If you are still concerned or you think your complaint has not been addressed to your satisfaction, please contact the Director of Research in the Principal Investigator's department (see below). If you are still not satisfied, please contact the University's Research Governance and Planning Manager (see below).

Contact details:**Principal investigator(s)**

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Co-investigators

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