

Summary of Proposed Study

**The Interplay of Adverse Childhood Experiences and the Learning Environment:
Assessing Resiliency and General Mental Health Among Medical Students in Rwanda**

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Medical school is demanding, and the mental health status of medical students is a source of concern in both developing and developed countries (Jacob et al., 2020; Jia et al., 2022; Quek et al., 2019; Sattar et al., 2022; Sender et al., 2004). Furthermore, a majority of the students studying at ASOME come from Rwanda, which still has a significant proportion of the population that is struggling with the mental health consequences of the 1994 genocide (Musababaganwa et al., 2020) in which 1,000,000 people were killed in 100 days.

Research has shown that medical students around the world struggle with unusually high levels of burnout, depression, and anxiety (Montgomery, 2019; Quek et al., 2019) and that they benefit from the availability of mental health services (Jacob et al., 2020). While it is likely that medical students studying at ASOME experience mental health problems similar to those in other medical schools, the extent and nature of their challenges has not been examined.

The purpose of my research is to assess the mental health status of the medical students studying at ASOME and provide insight into causal factors. One factor being in the past, childhood adversity, and another in the present, the learning environment. Given that medical students around the world struggle with high levels of burnout and mental health concerns, I hypothesize that this research will provide the basis for recommending appropriate mental health services along with other interventions that could be implemented by the school or students. See figure 1 for a visual representation of the research design.

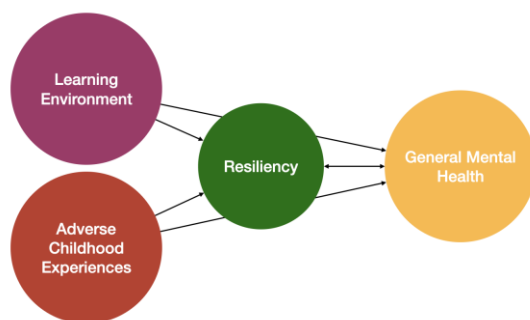


Figure 1

Research Questions

In the wake of Rwanda's tumultuous history, it is crucial to assess the impact on the resiliency and mental health of the nation's future medical practitioners. This study delves into the interplay between adverse childhood experiences and the learning environment to better understand the resiliency and well-being of medical students at ASOME.

This research aims to answer the following questions:

1. How does the capacity for resiliency and adaptability, relate to the mental health of the medical students?
2. How do adverse childhood experiences including exposure to community violence shape the resiliency and general mental health of the medical students?
3. How does the learning environment such as the competition for grades and the amount of time the students spend helping each other affect the resiliency and well-being of medical students?
4. How do adverse childhood experiences and the learning environment interact to influence the resiliency and mental health of the medical students?

By addressing these research questions, the study seeks to shed light on two important environmental conditions, childhood adversity and the learning environment, that contribute to the mental health of the Rwandan medical student population and to provide a foundation for the development of effective and culturally sensitive interventions. The results of the research will not only inform the medical school and its students but also contribute to a broader understanding of the mental health needs of medical students in the African context.

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