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I have not used AI throughout my assignment.

Literature review

This literature review will focus closely on trauma and how it effects children in the early year's settings. Trauma in early years has been found to be caused by a variety of Adverse Childhood Experiences, also known as ACE's, this is where the child has unfortunately experienced a tragic event or has been exposed to something negative during their early years (Mosher,2025). It has been stated in previous research that the percentage of children that have experienced at least one tragic adverse experience within their early years is over half at 55% and the percentage for children that have experienced more than three separate adverse experiences is currently at 12%, this is a large amount of children within early years that have been effected by something negative at such an early stage in life (Sun, Yihan et al. 2024). It has been found that in early years settings practitioners often see children that have experienced different kinds of adverse experiences, these could be caused from intentional acts of harm or from natural disasters such as a medical problem within their family or themselves, a loss of a loved one, war or even a tragic accident that may have caused the child long-term effects. The intentional acts of harm could be from sexual abuse at a young age, neglect, witnessing negative conflict or violence in the community or at home (NCTSN, no date). Trauma can have a significant effect on children long-term and it is crucial that the adults that work closely with the child support the child to feel safe and heard in their environment.

Experiencing trauma in childhood can cause significant effect to the child's well-being and development, the trauma attacks the brain in various ways, it changes the brains structure, the way the child thinks and causes the child's emotions to be unstable due to the child being unable to handle or recognise their stress, this could then lead them onto developing bad mental health as they grow older, the child may live with the feeling of shame each day causing them anxiety and depression, some children may mask this well but others may not (Anxious minds, no date). The child that has experienced trauma during their early years is likely to show negative behaviours physically or verbally. They may also develop attachment issues and struggle to build relationships with those in their environment, this can be a difficult time for the child to understand why they are feeling a certain way and why they may

stand out to be 'different' to other children in their environment (Nationwide Children's, 2023).

However, it is significant to state although the child may face many effects and challenges during their difficult time within their early years, it is the adult's role to support the child through their time of healing from their tragic events, some may call this 'Early Intervention'. Early intervention programmes can be delivered to a child at any stage during their childhood; however, it is beneficial to get the support as soon as possible to prevent the child from being at risk from developing new negative behaviours and prevent them from not being able to understand their state of mind, some children even start to put the blame on themselves for whatever their trauma may be. Early intervention programmes can be suitable to support the child and the network around them, including their caregivers to build relationships and trust and see a bigger picture of homelife, not just viewing the child for who they are in setting (NSPCC Learning, 2023). Although there are many agencies to support early interventions, such as CAHMS, Early help hubs, Doctors and community events, it can also be fostered within setting by following suitable programmes such as 'Thrive' and 'ELSA', some practitioners within setting will have training to support children within this area (Sun, Y. et al, 2023). However, other practitioners within the setting can also support regulation and well-being by creating safe spaces and nurturing environments, they can also build up positive relationships with the child, this can be done by showing understanding and always listening to the child but also identifying their needs to ensure they continue to be the best they can be (Action for Children, 2025). Some children may struggle with transition due to their trauma and inconsistency in their life, it is then the adult's role to ensure a smooth transition for the child throughout their journey. To ease transitions for the child the practitioner's may create visual timetables to prepare the child for what is coming next, the child may be able to start and finish their day at a different time to others and have a key adult to greet and support them through their day, again this would be due to the child being unable to deal with stressful situations and uncertainty (Moore, 2020). Each support strategy is different for each child dealing with trauma and it is put in place for the child that has experienced a traumatic event, the strategies are designed to enable the child an understanding of their world and past events,

allowing them to move forward, recognise and deal with emotions, become resilient in all aspects of their life and most importantly supporting them to heal.

Some may think that with support and early interventions the child will forget about their past and move forward and become fully healed with no challenges along the way, however, it is believed that some children would deny support due to navigating away from building relationships due to attachment issues. The trauma the child has experienced as mentioned previously can interrupt the brain's structure and cause the child to struggle with regulating their emotions which can then cause further disruptions for the child during their development journey and classroom time, they may need to leave the learning environment because they are unable to concentrate due to their emotions (Cook et al., 2005). Furthermore, the child being unable to recognise or regulate their emotions could cause them to lack in friendships as they are unable to form relationships with their peers or adults, they will lack in social cues and the child may begin to isolate themselves from social interactions causing loneliness for the child, this could then result in aggression and meltdowns which may cause conflict and a negative image in their surroundings (Department for education, 2023). It is important to note that the professionals working consistently around the child to support them will need to have effective communication skills with the caregivers and agencies working alongside to ensure the child's support is relevant to the child's tragic experiences they have faced in their early years. Therefore, this study is going to look further into trauma in the early years and how Trauma affects children academically.

Methodology

How does trauma effects children academically in early years?

Methodology is a key part when undertaking research, the researcher will need to focus on the different types of methods that can be used and narrow down which research methods are best suited to the study that they are undertaking, this may be primary research (personally delivered by the researcher, may contain interviews, surveys...), primary research also allows the researcher to choose a qualitative approach, this is a language based approach or a quantitative approach, this is a number based approach, the researcher may use a mixed method approach if they wish. Secondary (books, articles, podcasts...). For the researcher to access a variety

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of views and opinions they will need to undertake a series of methods, this is also known as 'Triangulation', this could be two or more methods used during their time researching, again this is useful because it allows quality research and credible results (Research Tube, 2021).

Whilst undertaking these methods of research on the child, it is important that the researcher does not judge the child by one trait that may have been picked up on initially, this could have a negative impact on the research and lead to inconclusive results, however, it is fine to factor in the trait whilst doing your research but do not allow the trait to control the whole research process, this is also known as the 'Halo effect' (Psychology Exposed, 2023). Sometimes focusing on what you already know about the child's background and the child's consistent behaviours could steer your research results to be biased. It is also believed that the Halo effect may occur during group discussions, some participants may jump on the bandwagon and follow other participants opinions rather than their own views. This could cause a negative impact on the researchers results due to lack of views or evidence, however, if this issue occurs during a grouped research method it may be better to trial a different method to provide the participant with confidentiality, this may enable them to discuss further details and opinions on the child.

There are many types of research methods that can be used to identify the results of the chosen research, these may include: Case studies, an experiment, Observations (these can be done once or over a period of time), focus groups, Interviews and Questionnaires (these are usually structured around your research), each method will have pros and cons, so it is advised to use the triangulation technique.

Although there are many research methods, focusing on two to begin with may scaffold your research, the researcher will also need to focus on what their question is before deciding what methods they are going to use.

Focusing on this current question 'how does trauma effect a child academically in early years', the researcher producing the results will be a student practitioner within the early years, the final results will be to support other practitioners within the children's education and care sector to understand the effects trauma can have on a child and to have an in-depth understanding on how to support the child further.

The researcher may decide to observe the child over a period of time, this is also called a 'longitudinal study'. Longitudinal study is an observation that takes place

over time, allowing the researcher to observe the child in various circumstances, different environments, around different individuals and record each outcome, the observations can take place in various locations allowing different results each time. When the multiple observations have taken place they will be analysed by the researcher before shared with the adults working with the child, they can then make changes if necessary to benefit the child. Longitudinal observations are believed to have a positive outcome to support the child, their learning and what is right for them (Care Learning 2024). The researcher may choose to do this type of method for their research because it is believed to have an effective change of pattern overtime so the adults will be able to identify the child's changes of behaviour, triggers and what works for the child and what does not throughout the observation, observations are flexible and can be done in any natural environment, the adult will be able to adapt things during the observations to see how the child reacts to the changes (Miller,K., 2025). However, longitudinal observations have some negative points, due to the various observations taking place, this method can be time consuming, it takes time to gather the evidence required due to it taking some time before different patterns begin to happen, this could be because the observer is not being discreet and the child has acknowledged they are being observed, this is also known as a 'Hawthorne effect', the child's behaviours will not be natural, they will mask their negative behaviours with positive behaviours, this could cause a significant effect on the observation results (Practical Psychology 2021). Then finally, analysing and preparing adaptations for the child this can also be time consuming. Another con of observations is not everything can be observed by a practitioner, from the time the child is at home or out of setting they are not being observed by the researcher, there could be many things missed during this time that may be a cause to the child's actions (Prasanna, 2024).

Another method that may be chosen within the triangulation methods is 'Interviews', this is a common method used as a primary research method to communicate with others in relation to the current study. Interviews are a qualitative piece of research as they enable a wide range of views and opinions, for this current study the researcher would interview teachers and practitioners that work with the child directly (academically). Interviews are conversations that can happen face-to-face, over the phone or on an online platform, there are different types of interviews, semi-

structured, these interviews have set topic related questions to be answered, they are usually at least 30 minutes long and unstructured, this is more of a conversation (Jamshed, S, 2014) in this instance, relating to the current study the teachers and practitioners will undertake a semi-structured interview, this allows the researcher to direct the interview by presenting questions linked to their study. Here are some example questions the researcher may ask when conducting their interview method; 'How many hours of learning time does the key child miss due to dysregulation?', 'What are the common differences in the child's ability to a child that has not experienced trauma?', 'How often does the key child withdraw from learning experiences?', 'Does the key child benefit from learning experiences being delivered indoors or outdoors?', 'Does the key child participate more in learning experiences if they have 1:1 access to a member of staff or working within a small group rather than a large group?' and 'What strategies are used to support the key child during their learning time?'. These questions may help the researcher find a balance between how support strategies help the child during their academic development and how much of an impact overall trauma has on a child's development academically.

Interviews are frequently used across the world as a method for research, many people like to use them because it enables an in-depth conversation on the topic and allows further questioning if necessary, it can also be accessed in multiple ways, so it can be more flexible for the person being interviewed and the interviewer (Peters, K. and Halcomb, E. 2015). There may be many practitioners involved with the child, including outside agencies that the researcher may think it is relevant to interview them, so being flexible opens more opportunities for extended views and cooperation.

However, there are negative points for interviews, interviews can be time consuming, in early years there are many practitioner's involved with the child, the researcher would benefit from organising an interview with most if not all of the agencies involved for an accurate record of the child, this alone can take some time, the interviewer would then need to prepare questions in relation to the topic, in this instance, 'how trauma effects children academically in early years', when all the preparation is complete, it is then to discuss how the interview is going to take place (face-to-face, online platform or over the phone). When the interview takes place it is

important that all answers are noted ready to be analysed by the interviewer, overall, it is a lengthy process for a final result. Some early years practitioners may avoid being interviewed due to not being anonymous, some would prefer to complete and survey/questionnaire (sociology group, 2019).

Overall, each type of research will create an image on how the child has been affected during their early years and what signs are shown during their time in education, it is an important study for practitioners to identify triggers and how to put necessary extra support in place to boost the child academically.

Ethics

Finally, when undertaking research, it is necessary that the ethical standards are considered to ensure the individuals involved are protected from harm and have a right to their privacy. Many researcher's may use a checklist to support them within the ethics part of their study, as it is vital that all guidelines, policies and legislations are followed correctly.

In relation to the current study, it is vital that the researcher takes consent from the child's caregivers to undertake research on the child. This may be done by having a meeting to explain the reasons for the research and moving onto what methods are going to be used and make it clear that they do not have to agree if they feel uncomfortable with the process. It is then important to create a paper copy consent form stating all information with a section for the caregivers to sign and give consent, this will then be stored appropriately in accordance to this study. In this case the research involves a child, the child will be aged between 3-7 so the consent will be required from the child's caregivers, however, the researcher will make the child aware that they will be working closely with them for a period of time and advise them of why they are working with them so they can feel at ease when being observed, ensure to inform the child that they have an important role within your research. Additionally, if the child is uncomfortable at any stage of the research, then it will need to come to an end to avoid any distress to the child (Department for Education, no date). In relation to this study, the child may need some transition time to feel comfortable with the researcher and build a trusting relationship before participating in anything related to the research.

Whilst researching it is vital that the participants are kept anonymous, this is to avoid anyone being at risk from being identified or at harm. If the researcher uses videoclips, photos or names then the participant is at risk of being identified. There are benefits of the research being anonymous, there are minimum risks of the data being released to external individuals, especially if the research can benefit professionals across the sector and help further support children in need, it can also be useful if a participant decides to withdraw, there will be no data breaches if no personal data is held, participants may also feel at ease so they can discuss freely on their views (GOV UK, 2018).

It is important to reduce risk to the participant, researcher and university whilst undertaking the research relating to the topic. In this study, to minimise the risks it would be beneficial to prepare a risk assessment including the safeguarding risks when undertaking each method. The safeguarding risk assessment would be in place to ensure the participant is not going to be emotionally unstable due to the topic being 'trauma', the participant may get upset and find the chosen method a tricky thing to participate in. It is also important to understand that there may be new information disclosed during the research, this would need to be reported and noted for the safeguarding of the child but also to ensure University policies are followed (Department for Education, no date). To protect yourself as a researcher and the university during the time of planning and undertaking the research, it is beneficial for the researcher to document everything they can in line with the university guidelines, any research that has been taken or participant information should be documented as this can then be hard evidence if any issues were to arise during the course of the study, it is important that the researcher protects themselves and the university at all times to avoid any data breaches or disputes.

When the research has taken place, the participants may want feedback regarding their participation in your chosen methods. The researcher should also advise the participants of where the research results will be recorded and where/if they will be shared with third parties, if the research is shared with third parties then the participant should be allocated a copy of the results for their records. When the participant receives their copy of the results, they still have the right to withdraw from the research project.

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Collecting and storing data within the guidelines and legislation of UWTSD is vital when undertaking research on any individual to protect yourself and the participants from harm. Firstly, any participation in the research needs to have consent prior to the methods taking place, in this instance the caregiver for the child will need to give consent on their behalf, this is crucial evidence for the researcher that the participant understands what they are taking part in, they understand the terms and conditions and their right to withdraw at any time. Any information held on the participant is not to be held for any longer than needed, the documentation will need to be destroyed, if the documentation holds personal data or the participant can be identified in any aspect then the document needs to be shredded to avoid a GDPR breach, it important to add that if the information is held it needs to be for a relevant purpose and have documented evidence to support this. All documentation and information needs to be securely stored so it is only accessible to the individual organising the research, this avoids any unnecessary leaks of data. If technology is used for research it is also important that all information is password protected and stored away from third parties access. In relation to photographs or videos it is important that a second consent form is prepared for the participant so they can advise whether they wish to stay anonymous or if they are happy to proceed (UWTSD, 2024).

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