

Dr. Gabriëlle Mercera | Senior researcher at Koraal
Kiki Bruidegom, MSc | PhD candidate iHUB and Erasmus University Rotterdam
Jessica Vervoort-Schel, MSc | Professor of Applied Sciences (Care Dynamics: Behaviour in Context) at Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences and Centre for Consultation and Expertise (CCE)

Assessing Positive Childhood Experiences: Translation, Adaptation, and Prevalence in Dutch Residential Care

Introduction

- Many children with emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties in residential care (85.8%) have experienced Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (Vervoort-Schel et al., 2021).
- Protective childhood experiences (PCEs) have an important role in buffering against the negative effects of ACEs. Examples of PCEs: supporting relationships with caregivers, friendships, belonging in school, involvement in organised sports groups.
- A higher number of PCEs is associated with better overall health outcomes across the lifespan.
- Mapping PCEs is essential for identifying strengths and resilience factors in children, and screening instruments can provide a practical tool to achieve this. However, in the Netherlands no Dutch screening instruments for PCEs were available for children and their caregivers.
- This study aimed to translate existing PCEs questionnaires from English into Dutch. Additionally, prevalences of ACEs and PCEs are presented among children with emotional, behavioural, and learning difficulties in residential care.

Results

- Cognitive interviews with children and parents revealed that several items required substantial cultural adaptation to fit the Dutch context (e.g., community projects and traditions).
- This underscores that translation is not merely linguistic, but demands careful attention to cultural and conceptual meaning.
- Cognitive interviews revealed the importance of replacing difficult words with more understandable ones for children with emotional, behavioural, and learning difficulties.
- A number of parents indicated that it was nice that, for once, a questionnaire did not focus on the negative aspects of their lives.

"I didn't mind filling out this questionnaire. For once, it wasn't about unpleasant things, but about the positive ones." - mother



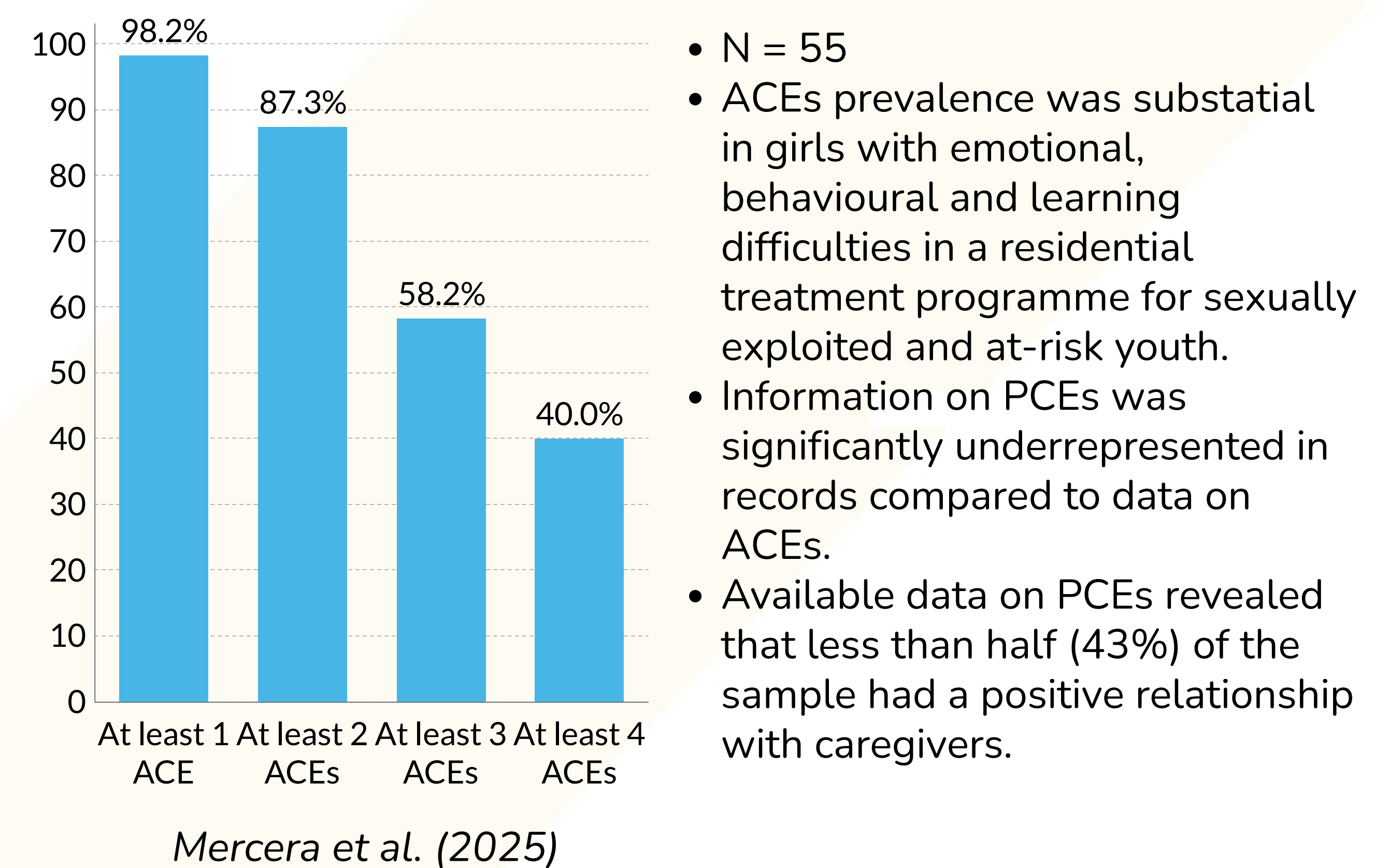
- Students from Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences collaborated in **transprofessional teams** (nursing, social work, physiotherapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy).
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- They explored how *Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)* support resilience in children and caregivers.
- Working across disciplines helped them see that **every professional can contribute in unique ways** to small protective experiences that make a big difference in a child's life.

Method

This study followed the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for the translation and adaption of instruments.

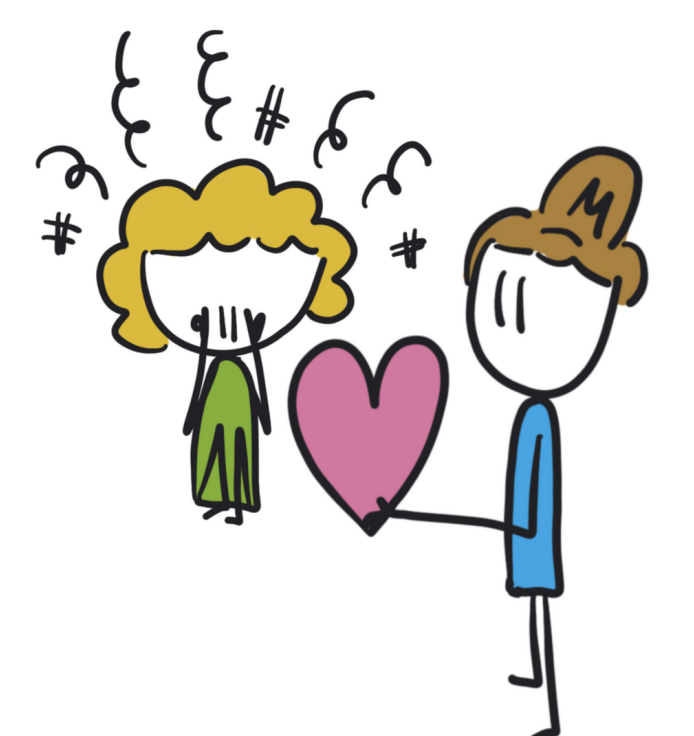
- Forward translation of three English PCEs questionnaires into Dutch (Bethell et al., 2019; Hays-Grudo & Morris, 2014; Narayan et al., 2015).
- Review of the translation by a bilingual expert panel.
- Back translation and review by the authors of the original English questionnaires.
- Cognitive interviewing of children with emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties, children in the general population and caregivers to tailor the questionnaire to their needs.
- Using the Dutch method Language for all (Moonen, 2021) to develop the final versions of the inclusive PCEs questionnaires.

Case-file study ACEs and PCEs



Conclusions and recommendations

- High ACE prevalence and limited supportive relationships among children in residential care highlight the need for professionals to understand the role of both ACEs and PCEs.
- Accordingly, culturally appropriate PCEs questionnaires should be available incorporating the voices of children and caregivers to ensure meaningful translation and adaptation.
- Tools to assess PCEs enable professionals, together with children and caregivers, to explore, identify, and build upon PCEs throughout care trajectories.
- By recognizing and reinforcing PCEs, professionals have an important role in fostering supportive environments that nurture children's and caregiver's strengths and resilience.



We are finalizing the Dutch PCE questionnaires and invite professionals working with, or interested in, PCEs to connect with us. Together we can strengthen support for children and caregivers.