

Introduction

Research Idea:

It is known that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) contribute to a variety of adverse health outcomes for example substance use, poor mental health, physical illness, and risky behavior. Additionally, women and mothers present as a uniquely vulnerable population. The link between ACEs and homelessness among this vulnerable population raised interest in to what extent a correlation exists and what nursing interventions and treatment exists for this group.

Purpose Statement

The aim of this integrative review was to analyze what research is currently available regarding the lifelong experiences that lead mothers into homelessness. The focus is on the predictability of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) as a contributing factor of homelessness during adulthood.

Research Question

What is known from the existing literature about the occurrence of ACEs predicting homelessness in adult women with children?

Methods

1. Identify research question
2. Identify relevant studies

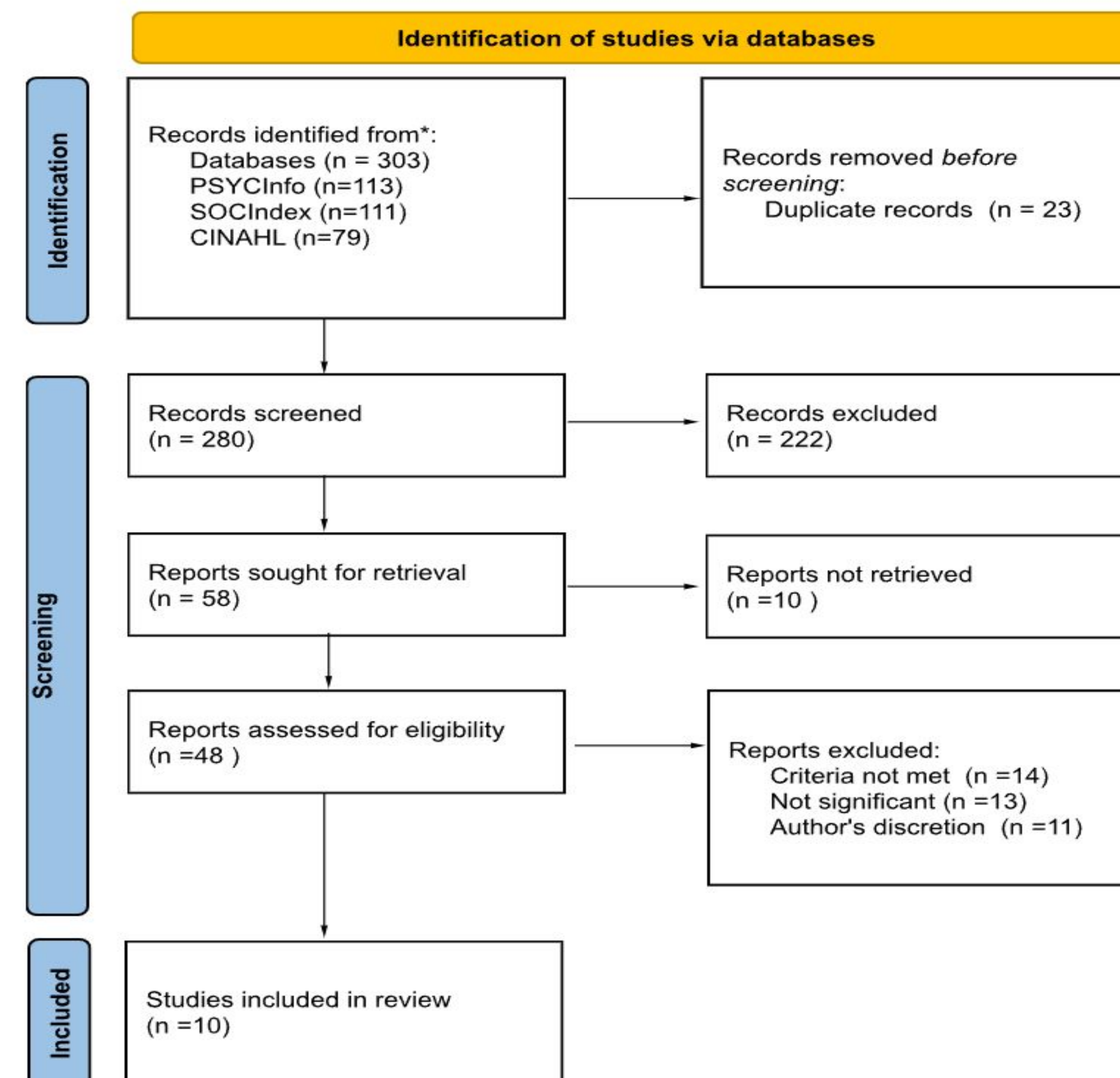
Keywords

Sample search strategy (PSYCInfo, SOCIndex, and CINAHL):

("ACE" "childhood adversity" or "sexual abuse" or "emotional abuse" or "family dysfunction") AND ("homeless" or "precarious housing" or "transitional housing" or "homelessness") AND ("mother" or "motherhood" or maternal"))

3. Study selection: Of 303 studies, 10 met inclusion criteria
4. Charting the data: author and publication year, location, data collection period, goal & focus, methodology, source of data/population, findings related to ACEs in homeless mothers, and recommendations.
5. Collating, summarizing, and reporting the results: next step in this project.

Methods



Results

Main results

- Women's childhood experiences contributed to feelings of guilt and shame, which they carried with them and with which they struggled to cope.
- Findings suggest the need to develop policy and practice that address the mental healthcare needs, considering the history of affection and safety deprivation during early childhood.
- An important link emerged between women's relationships with their families (particularly their mothers/maternal figures), their sense of self, their relationships with others, and their decision-making processes.
- Abuse was a major theme coloring all of the women's experiences as the abuse they endured as children shaped the women they became, how they related to others, and how they framed their choices and experiences.
- Findings contextualized the developmental timeline of homeless women with children, especially how fragmentation, abusive relationships in the family environment, and lack of resources during their pre-adulthood and adulthood forced them into early motherhood and homelessness. Moreover, the results contribute to the research on ACEs by showing childhood trauma to be a dominant theme in the women's narratives around their development trajectories into homelessness. Early environment and relationships played an essential role to most of the women's parenting and housing outcomes.

Conclusions

Discussion

- The current research exploring ACEs as a predictor of homeless mothers is predominantly located in the United States. Further research is needed to examine this phenomenon through a Canadian context.
- Future research should be conducted regarding nursing intervention and prevention measures to reduce the likelihood of mothers becoming homeless.
- Understanding ACEs as a predictor of adult mothers experiencing homelessness can assist nurses in tailoring their care when working with homeless mothers to be trauma informed.

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