



Influence of Family Dynamics on Adolescent Substance Abuse among Secondary Schools in Abeokuta South Local Government, Ogun State

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Abstract

Despite the growing prevalence of adolescents' substance abuse and multiple awareness campaign aimed at curbing substance use, the prevalence continues to rise in Nigeria, indicating that these interventions may be overlooking a vital social determinant- the role of the family. This study explored the impact of family dynamics on adolescent substance abuse among secondary school students in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. The survey took a descriptive survey research design and utilised a multi stage sampling method to sample out respondents. A sample of 424 participants was used. The collection of data was conducted through a structured questionnaire, followed by analysis utilising both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The findings revealed that teenagers who indicated lack of communication with their parents were more than three times as likely to engage in substance abuse compared to those who had open and supportive dialogues with their parents. Moreover, it was observed that neglectful and permissive parenting styles notably heightened adolescents' vulnerability to substance use, whereas authoritative parenting was identified as the most protective approach. Additionally, adolescents residing with guardians or relatives exhibited the greatest likelihood (OR = 2.88), indicating diminished supervision and emotional connection. On the other hand, robust family support systems were identified as significantly lowering adolescents' engagement in substance abuse. The findings revealed that family dynamics play a crucial role in adolescent substance abuse and suggest the implementation of family-focused preventive measures, parenting education, and policy initiatives designed to enhance family relationships.

Keywords: Family dynamics, assessment, adolescents, substance abuse, secondary school students

1. Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2014), adolescence is the time between the ages of 10 and 19, a developmental stage characterised by rapid physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes that mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. It is an important time in a person's life when they go through big changes in their bodies, minds, emotions, and relationships. During this transitional period, individuals begin to explore their identities, seek independence, and become more profoundly influenced by their environment, including family, peers, and society. This heightened susceptibility makes adolescents particularly inclined to partake in hazardous behaviours, including substance abuse. Adolescence according to Sawyer, S. M. et al. (2018) describe adolescence as a developmental period extending from 10 to 24 years, while National

Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (2019) defined it as the developmental period generally covering ages 10-19, during which period young people experience significant changes in health, identity formation, behaviour and social relationship. Substance abuse is characterized by a persistent pattern of drug use resulting in significant impairment or distress, including health complications, academic failures, and challenges in fulfilling social or familial responsibilities (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Substance abuse has become an increasing global public health problem among teenagers, with serious consequences for individuals. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2023), drug use disorders affect more than 36 million people around the world, and a large number of them are teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) says that there are many reasons why teens abuse drugs, including peer pressure, family problems, and not enough parental supervision. This is especially worrying in sub-Saharan Africa, where drugs like cannabis, tramadol, codeine, and methamphetamine are becoming easier to get and more expensive. According to National institute on Drug Abuse (2024), substance

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abuse is characterized by the recurrent misuse of alcohol or drugs despite adverse consequences, including health problems, poor academic performance, legal difficulties and family conflict. It is harmful and excessive psychoactive use of substances in a way that results in negative, physical, psychological social and occupational consequences. This is different from substance use which refers to the consumption of psychoactive substances such as alcohol, tobacco legally or illegally. Substance use does not necessarily indicate addiction or disorder, it may be occasional, experimental, prescribed or socially acceptable drug use without causing impairment.

It's worrying that so many teenagers in Nigeria are abusing drugs. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2021) says that about 14.4% of people between the ages of 15 and 64 have used drugs in the past year. A large number of these people are teenagers. Cannabis, codeine, tramadol, and inhalants are some of the drugs that people often abuse. Many studies have linked substance abuse among teenagers in Nigeria to things like broken homes, lack of parental supervision, family conflict, and exposure to domestic violence (Adewumi & Owolabi, 2020). The consequences of adolescent substance abuse are intricate and diverse. From an academic standpoint, substance use impairs memory, concentration, and overall cognitive functions, often resulting in diminished academic performance, elevated absenteeism, and an increased probability of educational discontinuation. From a health standpoint, adolescents who abuse drugs are at an elevated risk of respiratory complications, hepatic damage, mental health disorders including depression and anxiety, and in extreme cases, may suffer from drug-induced psychosis or overdose (WHO, 2022). The problems that families face cause both financial and emotional stress, which has a bigger effect on society as a whole, including higher healthcare costs, legal problems, and lower national productivity. Peer pressure and social media are frequently identified as major factors in adolescent substance abuse; however, the family's role as the primary agent of socialization is a critical element that requires further examination. The dynamics within a family, including parental supervision, communication patterns, family structure, and socioeconomic conditions, profoundly affect an adolescent's behaviour, values, and coping mechanisms (Brook et al., 2018).

Research shows that when parents are involved and communication is clear, teens are less likely to use drugs. Parents who monitor their children's activities, establish explicit expectations, and encourage candid discussions regarding substance use are likely to develop adolescents with enhanced decision-making skills and resilience (Steinberg, 2001). On the other hand, families that are neglectful, strict, bad at communicating, or unstable, like those going through a divorce or separation, tend to make it more likely that teens will turn to drugs to find comfort or escape (Lobo

et al., 2022; Hoffman & Cerbone, 2019). The absence of parental figures, emotional neglect, and erratic discipline substantially weaken the family's protective structure. Conversely, familial settings characterised by emotional warmth, stable regulations, and the promotion of transparent communication serve as significant protective factors against substance abuse (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2021).

Given the rising prevalence of adolescent substance use in Nigeria, there exists a significant deficiency of empirical evidence concerning the influence of family dynamics within specific cultural and regional contexts. In Abeokuta South, Ogun State, the existing literature inadequately examines the influence of variables such as family structure, parenting style, and home environment on adolescent drug use, either as contributing factors or protective influences. This study seeks to assess the impact of family dynamics on adolescent substance abuse among secondary school students in Abeokuta South. The study aims to identify significant family-related factors that either facilitate or inhibit substance use, intending to inform the development of effective, family-centred interventions and policies tailored to the specific local context.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 13 million teens between the ages of 15 and 19 use drugs, and cannabis is the most common illegal drug among this group (WHO, 2021). UNICEF (2020) says that a number of risk factors that are linked to each other can lead to substance abuse in teenagers. These include peer pressure, exposure to violence, poverty, family problems, and limited access to mental health services. In many low and middle-income countries, like Nigeria, economic instability, parents being away from home for work or migration, and poor communication between parents and children make teens much more likely to use drugs. The lack of strong preventive systems and enough family support structures makes these problems worse. The situation is especially troubling in Africa, which is expected to see the biggest rise in drug abuse in the world over the next ten years. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2021) says that drug use in Africa will rise by 40% by 2030. This is because the number of young people is growing quickly and prevention strategies are not getting enough support. You can already see this trend in Nigeria. This worrying trend can be seen in Ogun State, especially in the Abeokuta South Local Government Area. Local studies and anecdotal evidence suggest a rising incidence of drug use among secondary school students, who are increasingly encountering substances such as cannabis, alcohol, tramadol, and codeine-based syrups (Adebayo et al., 2021). It is alarming that many of these adolescents begin to experiment with drugs as early as primary school. While environmental and societal factors play a role, family dynamics remain a significant factor in either exacerbating or mitigating these behaviors. Disrupted family structures,

inadequate parental supervision, tenuous emotional bonds, and ineffective communication patterns within households are consistently recognized as significant contributors to the early initiation and continued use of substances among youth. This underscores the importance of examining the influence of familial factors, such as parental engagement, family composition, socioeconomic status, and parenting methodologies, on adolescent substance abuse. The objective of this study is to assess the impact of family dynamics on the drug use patterns identified among adolescents in secondary schools in Abeokuta South.

1.2 Research Questions

1. Investigate the influence of family dynamics on adolescent drug abuse among secondary school students in Abeokuta South?
2. What is the relationship between parent-child communication patterns and the likelihood of drug abuse in adolescents?
3. How do different parenting styles and disciplinary practices affect adolescents' susceptibility to drug abuse?
4. To what extent do family support systems and interventions mitigate the risk of drug abuse among adolescents in Abeokuta South?

1.3 Hypotheses

H₀₁ There is no significance influence of family dynamics on adolescent drug abuse among secondary school students in Abeokuta South Local Government Area, Ogun State.

H₀₂ There is no significance influence of communication quality and frequency between parents on adolescents' risk of drug abuse in Abeokuta South Local Government Area, Ogun State.

H₀₃ There is no significance difference in parenting styles and disciplinary strategies on adolescents' vulnerability to drug abuse in Abeokuta South Local Government Area, Ogun State.

H₀₄ There is no significance difference in family support systems and interventions in mitigating drug abuse among secondary school students in Abeokuta South Local Government Area, Ogun State.

2. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. We used multi-stage sampling methods. Stratified random sampling techniques was used to find the different kinds of schools in Abeokuta South, both public and private. After that, proportionate sampling was used to figure out how many students came from each school. Students aged 13 to 16 years were selected from the chosen schools using simple random sampling based on the class attendance list. Only students who agreed to take part and met the requirements were selected

A questionnaire was utilized for data collection. The scoring method used a Likert-type scale, so Strongly Agree (SA) got a score of 4, Agree (A) got a score of 3, Disagree (D) got a score of 2, and Strongly Disagree got a score of 1. Three experts in Testing and Measurement confirmed the validity of the instrument's face and content by giving their thoughts and suggestions. The questionnaire was carefully put together and divided into five separate parts. The first part asked about the respondents' socio-demographic information, such as their age, gender, education, and whether or not their parents were working. The next section answered questions about family structure, including things like single-parent, two-parent, and extended family arrangements. Part C: How parents raise their kids and keep an eye on them; Part D: How families interact with each other. The items assessed the quality, frequency, and transparency of communication between adolescents and their parents or guardians, while the concluding section concentrated on enquiries regarding Drug Use Behaviour, encompassing the types of substances utilised, frequency of use, and potential influencing factors. Using a split-half method, the instrument was validated, and the reliability coefficient was 0.75.

3. Results

3.1 Research Questions

Research Question One: Investigate the influence of family dynamics on adolescent drug abuse among secondary school students in Abeokuta South?

The results indicate that adolescents from single-parent, polygamous, and guardian-led households are significantly more likely to engage in drug abuse compared to those from two-parent families. Adolescents living with guardians or relatives showed the highest likelihood (OR = 2.88), suggesting reduced supervision and emotional attachment.

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between parent-child communication patterns and the likelihood of drug abuse in adolescents?

The results indicate that adolescents who reported poor communication with parents were over three times more likely to abuse drugs compared to those with open communication. This demonstrates the critical role of effective parent-child dialogue in preventing substance use.

Research Question Three: How do different parenting styles and disciplinary practices affect adolescents' susceptibility to drug abuse?

The results indicate that neglectful and permissive parenting styles significantly increased adolescents' susceptibility to drug abuse, while authoritative parenting emerged as the most protective style.

Table 1: Logistic Regression Analysis of Family Dynamics and Adolescent Drug Abuse

Family Structure	Drug Abuse (%)	Odds Ratio (OR)	Std. Error	Wald χ^2	p-value
Two-parent family (Ref.)	18.4	1.00	–	–	–
Single-parent family	32.7	1.96	0.31	11.84	.001
Polygamous family	38.9	2.41	0.36	15.62	.000
Guardian/others	41.3	2.88	0.44	18.73	.000

Table 2: Logistic Regression Analysis of Parent-Child Communication and Drug Abuse

Communication Pattern	Drug Abuse (%)	Odds Ratio (OR)	Std. Error	Wald χ^2	p-value
Open communication (Ref.)	16.9	1.00	–	–	–
Moderate communication	28.5	1.87	0.29	10.26	.001
Poor communication	44.1	3.12	0.47	21.98	.000

Table 3: Logistic Regression Analysis of Parenting Style and Drug Abuse

Parenting Style	Drug Abuse (%)	Odds Ratio (OR)	Std. Error	Wald χ^2	p-value
Authoritative (Ref.)	14.8	1.00	–	–	–
Authoritarian	29.6	2.01	0.33	12.14	.001
Permissive	35.4	2.54	0.41	16.82	.000
Neglectful	48.7	3.67	0.58	16.82	.000

Table 4: Logistic Regression Analysis of Family Stressors and Drug Abuse

Level of Family Support	Drug Abuse (%)	Odds Ratio (OR)	Std. Error	Wald χ^2	p-value
High support (Ref.)	12.3	1.00	–	–	–
Moderate support	22.8	1.69	0.27	8.41	.004
Low support	40.6	3.05	0.49	20.87	.000

Research Question Four: To what extent do family support systems and interventions mitigate the risk of drug abuse among adolescents in Abeokuta South?

The results indicate that strong family support systems significantly reduced adolescents' involvement in drug abuse, while low support increased the risk by over threefold

4. Discussion of finding

The fact that teens from single-parent, polygamous, and guardian-led households are more likely to abuse drugs than teens from two-parent families shows how important family structure is for teen behaviour. This finding aligns with theories of social control and family systems, emphasizing that stable family environments provide emotional support, supervision, and the transmission of values that protect adolescents from engaging in risky behaviours, such as substance abuse (Hirschi, 1969; Bowen, 1978). Families with two parents often offer greater stability in discipline, supervision, and emotional bonding, which may reduce adolescents' susceptibility to adverse peer influences and the likelihood of substance use. On the other hand, teenagers from single-parent families may experience reduced parental supervision due to financial difficulties, work obligations, and the stress of being the sole carer. These challenges may make supervision and emotional support less effective, which could lead to people using drugs or other unhealthy ways to deal with stress (Amato, 2010). Likewise, polygamous family structures can present challenges, including divided parental attention, sibling rivalry, and inconsistent disciplinary methods, which may impede

effective socialization and emotional regulation in adolescents (Adekeye et al., 2018). The present finding is consistent with prior empirical research conducted in Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African contexts, which have indicated heightened rates of substance use among adolescents from non-intact families (Oshodi et al., 2010; Adebisi et al., 2021). The results show that family problems often put teens under stress, make them emotionally unstable, and lower their parents' support, all of which are linked to a higher risk of drug abuse.

The fact that teens who said they didn't talk to their parents enough were more than three times more likely to abuse drugs than those who did shows how important it is for parents and teens to talk to each other in order to control their behaviour. Clear communication fosters emotional intimacy, trust, and mutual understanding, serving as protective factors against engagement in risky behaviours, including substance use. This finding is consistent with family process models that emphasize communication as a primary mechanism through which parents transmit values, expectations, and behavioural norms (Barnes & Olson, 1985). Poor communication between parents and kids is often a sign of bigger problems in the family, like emotional distance, unresolved arguments, or strict family rules. In these environments, adolescents may feel misunderstood, unsupported, or unable to articulate their personal challenges, increasing the likelihood of seeking acceptance and validation from peers engaged in substance use (Ryan et al., 2010).

The present findings corroborate previous research indicating that open, supportive, and reciprocal communication significantly diminishes the probability of drug use among adolescents. For instance, Stattin and Kerr (2000) demonstrated that parental awareness, arising from adolescents sharing information and resulting from effective communication, constituted a more substantial protective factor than parental control alone. In a similar context, research in Nigeria shows that teenagers who talk openly with their parents about their problems are less likely to use drugs and alcohol (Akanbi et al., 2015). From a developmental perspective, adolescence is characterized by an intensified quest for autonomy and a profound engagement in identity exploration. Open and respectful communication between parents and teenagers makes it more likely that teens will listen to their parents' advice and not give in to peer pressure to use drugs (Steinberg, 2014). On the other hand, when people don't talk to each other, it can create an atmosphere of secrecy, defiance, and reliance on ineffective ways to deal with problems, like using drugs. This finding underscores the imperative to improve communication skills within families as an integral aspect of drug abuse prevention strategies. Parenting programs, school-based family life education, and counselling interventions should emphasize active listening, emotional responsiveness, and constructive dialogue to enhance adolescents' resilience against substance use.

The finding that neglectful and permissive parenting styles significantly increase adolescents' susceptibility to drug abuse, while authoritative parenting is identified as the most protective approach, provides substantial empirical support for Baumrind's framework on parenting styles. The approach to parenting embodies the emotional environment in which children are nurtured, significantly influencing adolescents' self-regulation, decision-making, and susceptibility to engaging in risky behaviours (Baumrind, 1991). Neglectful parenting, characterized by unresponsiveness and minimal expectations, deprives adolescents of vital emotional support and behavioural guidance. Young people who grow up in these environments often feel rejected and have low self-esteem, which may make them more likely to use drugs or alcohol to deal with their feelings (Hoeve et al., 2009). Similarly, permissive parenting, though emotionally supportive, lacks firm boundaries and consistent discipline, providing adolescents with excessive freedom and inadequate guidance. The absence of a structured environment may hinder the development of self-regulation and increase vulnerability to peer pressure and drug experimentation.

On the other hand, authoritative parenting, which is characterized by high responsiveness and high demanding, combines emotional warmth with clear expectations and regular supervision. Adolescents raised in this manner frequently demonstrate strong

self-regulatory skills, heightened self-esteem, and increased resilience to adverse peer influences (Steinberg, 2001). The results of this study regarding the protective effect of authoritative parenting align with extensive cross-cultural evidence that associates this parenting style with diminished rates of substance use and other maladaptive behaviours (Lamborn et al., 1991). Previous research in Nigeria has demonstrated that adolescents experiencing permissive or disengaged parenting display elevated rates of substance abuse relative to their counterparts who receive structured and supportive parental oversight (Adeyemo & Oluwole, 2001). This finding underscores that parenting practices, alongside family structure, substantially affect adolescents' behavioral outcomes.

The finding shows that strong family support systems significantly reduce adolescents' involvement in substance abuse, while inadequate support increases the risk by over threefold, highlights the crucial importance of fostering familial relationships in adolescent development. During adolescence, when teens are more likely to be influenced by their peers and try new things, having emotional warmth, open communication, active parental involvement, and steady supervision in the family is a very important way to protect against psychosocial risks. Adolescents who have families that support them have a stable emotional base that helps them deal with developmental problems. Teenagers who see their families as caring and supportive are more likely to develop good ways to deal with problems, boost their self-esteem, and improve their problem-solving skills. The traits make drugs less appealing as a way to deal with stress or pressure from society. This finding is consistent with attachment theory, emphasizing that strong emotional bonds with parents enhance psychological resilience and reduce engagement in risky behaviours (Bowlby, 1988).

Social control theory asserts that weak familial connections reduce adolescents' compliance with societal norms, thereby increasing their susceptibility to deviant behaviours, including substance abuse (Hirschi, 1969). In Nigeria, where family structures have traditionally played a pivotal role in socialization, the erosion of family support may result in particularly severe consequences. Urbanization, economic difficulties, and changing family structures can all make it harder for parents to be around, which can make teens more likely to use drugs and alcohol. As a result, prevention efforts should concentrate on strengthening family support systems through parental education, family counselling, and community-based interventions that foster nurturing and transparent communication within domestic environments.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that family dynamics play a significant role in shaping adolescents' involvement in drug abuse among secondary school students in Abeokuta South Local

Government Area. Specifically, unstable family structures such as single-parent, polygamous, and guardian led homes were associated with higher likelihood of substance abuse, while effective parent child communication, authoritative parenting style, and strong family support systems served as protective factors. Conversely, poor communication, neglectful and permissive parenting, and low family support significantly increased adolescents' vulnerability to substance use. Overall, the study establishes that a stable, communicative, and supportive family environment is critical in reducing the risk of substance abuse among adolescents.

6. Recommendations

1. Parents and guardians should be encouraged to maintain open, consistent, and supportive communication with their children to reduce the likelihood of drug abuse.
2. Parenting education programmes should be implemented to promote authoritative parenting practices that combine warmth with appropriate discipline and supervision.
3. Government and school authorities should develop family-based intervention programmes aimed at strengthening family support systems and reducing household conflict.
4. Counselling services should be made available in schools to support adolescents from high-risk family backgrounds and provide early intervention against substance abuse.

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