

# Relationship between Being Raised by Single Parent and Drug Abuse among Young People: Insights from Bloomingdale Suburb, Harare in Zimbabwe

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## ABSTRACT

The study centred on investigating the relationship between being raised in single parent households and drug abuse among the young people in Harare's Bloomingdale suburb in Zimbabwe. Other factors beyond single parenthood, which are social and economic were factored in to give a more rigorous explanation of such a behavioural outcome, i.e., drug use and abuse among the young people. Thus, the principal objective was to investigate whether or not single-parenthood leads to drug use and among the youth. Subsidiary objectives entailed investigating whether factors that are social and, economic lead young people in single parent households to abusing drugs. The study used a questionnaire as the research instrument for collecting data from a sample size of 35 participants who fell in the youth group age range (15 to 35 years). Results from descriptive statistics revealed that youths raised in single parent households were at a higher risk of drug use and abuse than those raised in other family structures. Inferential statistics made use of regression models such ANOVA as well as correlation analysis. The results from the regression analysis showed a statistically insignificant influence from single parenthood on drug use and abuse among the youth at the 5% level. The study also identified and proposed possible mitigation measures to curb drug abuse among young people.

**Keyword:** Drug; Abuse; Single-parent Household, young people, Parenthood.

## INTRODUCTION

This A single-parent family is formed of a primary caregiver and one or more dependents without the aid of a partner who is shouldering parenting responsibilities. In the last several decades, the amount of "conventional" two-parent households has declined while the amount of single parent units has grown, Oshi et al. (2018). Single parenting is a factor that determines the propagation of social conformity and non-conformity among children throughout the world, particularly in African countries, and Zimbabwe is no different. The configuration of the home habitat may be a decisive factor in one's growth, as the experience may cause a profusion or deficiency of protection, an episode that has an impact on their quality of life.

A diversity of elements can catalyze single parenthood, some intentional, others stemming from difficult conditions, like mortality, dissolution, unmarried partners, absent guardians, and numerous others. The Zimbabwean news website Pindula noted a rise in divorce filings from 1117 couples in year 2020 to 1351 couples in year 2021. In 2022, the tally of cases augmented to 2735, in contrast to 13436 sanctioned

weddings. All these failed unions prompt a grave contemplation about the fate of the young ones, with the sudden surge of substance abuse among the young people. Evidence suggests that absence of father-figures to children in single-parent families is associated with emotional disconnection and weak social connectivity in such children. It has also been argued that single-parent families find it more challenging to provide the required parental support necessary for shaping the future of the adolescents Sarah et al. 2018. A study by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017) has revealed that single parents tend to spend less time with their children and are not usually as involved in their educational pursuits.

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) (2021) published a document which revealed that drug and substance use in Zimbabwe has been on a steep rise in the last ten years and is now one of the top ten risk factors for health in the nation. The Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drugs Network (2019) have reported, as per Rwafa et al. (2019), that the rate of young people involving in drug and substance abuse had augmented from 43% in 2017 to 57% in 2019 and roughly 45% of admitted mental health patients were young people misappropriating drugs and substances. How have the young people weathered the Covid pandemic when so many families have been ravaged and left with single parenthood? Is there a correlation between the hardships of single parenting and the struggles of the young people during this time? Despite cultural distinctions, being a single parent has never been straightforward, as they must provide both financial and psychological support, yet the missing part of the family still leaves a gap. Hence, it is significant to contemplate how single parents can be supported to bring up their children in the absence of their partner.

Various authors seem to agree that it is an arduous mission for a single parent to raise a child with all the support needed. Nonetheless, a great deal of researches has been studying the travails single parenting faces in raising children unaccompanied. Very little is known about how young people navigate through the different struggles they face after one of their parents leave, which leaves them in substance abuse and this research aspires to be one of the few to uncover the experience from the young people's point of view. With research increasingly suggesting that single parenting is the source of young people substance abuse, rather than the young people themselves, interventions can be more effective in considering both sides of the issue.

Even in the face of the world's manifold cultural differences, this project was spurred by the abundance of substance abuse among young people raised in single-parent households in the international arena. Griffin et al (2000) undertook a study to investigate the correlation between parenting factors and adolescent problem behaviors among urban minority young people, and to what degree such associations were moderated by family structure and gender. The results of the study conducted in the United States of America revealed that boys and those from single-parent households exhibited the most serious problem behaviors. Another research by Oshi et al 2018 in Jamaica concluded that family structure is an independent predictor of alcohol use among high school students in Jamaica. The research affirmed that parental closeness had a protective effect against adolescent substance use. This research sought to establish as well the relationship between single-parenting and alcohol abuse among young people in Zimbabwe.

Asiseh et al (2017) conducted research in the region, in Ghana, to examine the protective power of parental closeness on adolescent substance use, and the outcomes demonstrated that girls in single-parent families experienced the most benefit while boys had less, and the data showed that parental involvement and monitoring outside of school had a moderating effect on the amount of health risk behaviors students participated in. Subsequently, Rich et al (2023) conducted a thematic data analysis in South Africa, and the findings exposed an assortment of family-related hazards such as family formation (single motherhood and fatherlessness), and other adverse family operation and practices such as troubled parent-child associations, inadequate family interaction/interaction, parental/family drug abuse, and conflict-filled, stressful and often violent and oppressive family circumstances. It was made evident by the results that prevention strategies should advocate for both live-in and non-live-in fathers to take part in their children's lives and should strive to minimize parental/caregiver drug abuse. This research, however, attests that the issue of substance misuse

is not a Zimbabwean one alone, thus, it must join the global community in safeguarding the generation that is on the cusp of failure, and this research seeks to advance the comprehension of the link in Zimbabwe between single parenting and young people's substance abuse.

Nonetheless, research akin to this which analyzed the association between single parenting and young people substance abuse is still to be conducted and this will be one of the few investigations that will bring a solution to the research scarcity in Zimbabwe. To create effective treatment plans for single parents, a population whose social standing is regularly disparaged in society, further studies need to be conducted to explore if any correlations are present. The escalating drug and alcohol consumption in Zimbabwe requires the formation of proactive interventions to avert the impending disaster and protect the current generation.

## Objectives

1. Explore Social factors leading to drug use and abuse among the young people in single parent Households.
2. Establish economic factors leading to drug use and abuse among young people in single parent households.
3. Propose measures to mitigate abuse among the young people.

## METHODS

The research utilised the mixed method approach, which implies that it is both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitatively the research will be engaged in the social context in which the problem is encountered to obtain an in-depth view, Brough (2018). Quantitatively the research will test whether there is a connection between drug abuse and single parenthood. Embedded mixed method design was used. The qualitative data was embedded in quantitative data. This means that qualitative data was secondary to quantitative data, (George, 2022).

Since the study embedded the qualitative approach, data saturation was used to determine the sample size. Data saturation is when data collection and/ being obtained in the, Saunders et al (2018). The point at which the researcher realized that data is saturated was when data collection stopped thus the sample size. The study used snowball sampling. According to Brough (2018), snowball sampling is a method where participants already selected provide the researcher with potential participants. The researcher used already known drug users to obtain a considerable number of participants. The study incorporated the socio demographic characteristics of the respondents, that is, sex, age, marital status, parental status, occupational status, religion and ethnicity of the 35 respondents 60% of them were male and 40% were female.

The study made use of a questionnaire as the data collection instrument. The research used the embedded mixed method research design that is embedding the qualitative approach the questionnaire that were used are both closed ended and open ended.

Having obtained permission and individual consent, the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. The young people were the only active respondents that were involved in the filling of the questionnaire. The raw data from the questionnaires was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics entailed the use of measures of spread, measures of spread and basic numerical measures such as percentages and frequencies. Inferential statistics entailed the use of correlation and regression analysis. Quantitative data was processed using Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 26. Qualitative data was qualified by assigning commensurate scores/ratings and dummy variables as instructed by Gujurati (2004). Permission to collect the data was obtained from relevant parties. Individual consent was obtained after participants were informed of the nature and objectives of the research. Also, anonymity of respondents and the confidentiality of the information given was maintained.

## RESULT

### Demography of Participants

#### Social factors

#### Family Structure

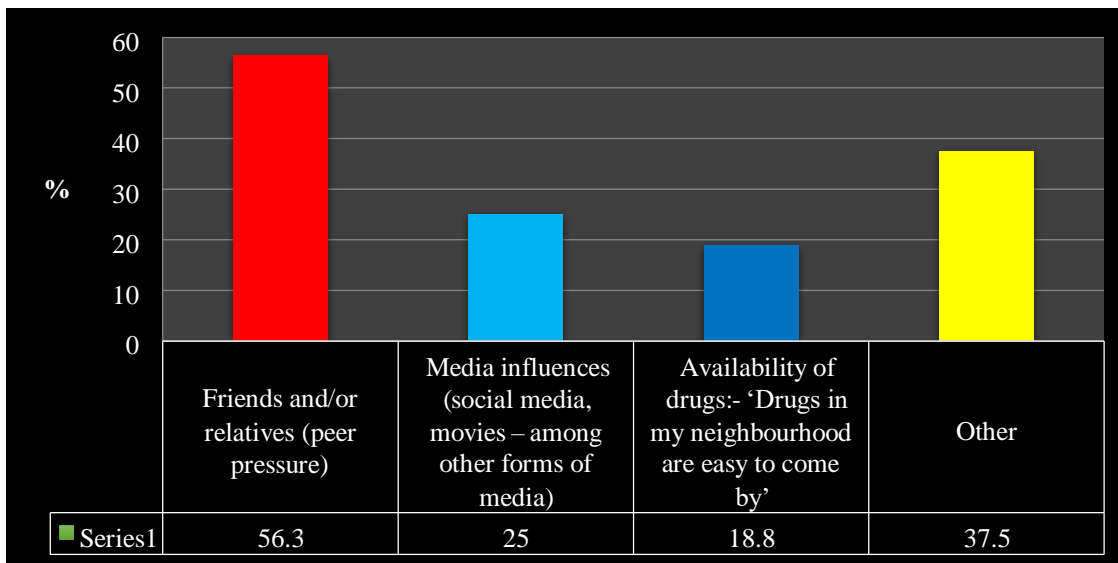
Of the 35 respondents involved in this study from Bloomingdale’s young people community, those raised in single parent households (that is single mother or single father households) made up 45.7%. Statistics for other family structures are summarised in table 4.3. Of the single parent households single mother households made up 75% while single father households made up 25%

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Mother and father	17	48.6	48.6	48.6
	(nuclear)				
	Single parent – mother	12	34.3	34.3	82.9
	Single parent – father	4	11.4	11.4	94.3
	Other	2	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	35	100.0	100.0	

#### Other Social Factors

These are multiple-select categorical variables, which means respondents could identify with one or more factors. Among the other social factors driving drug abuse in this subgroup of the Bloomingdale community, peer pressure from friends and/or relatives was identified as a major factor – making up 56.3% of respondents in this subgroup. More statistics for this factor are captured in the bar chart in Fig. 4.6.

#### Other Social Factors Affecting Young People in Single Parent Households (5.7%)

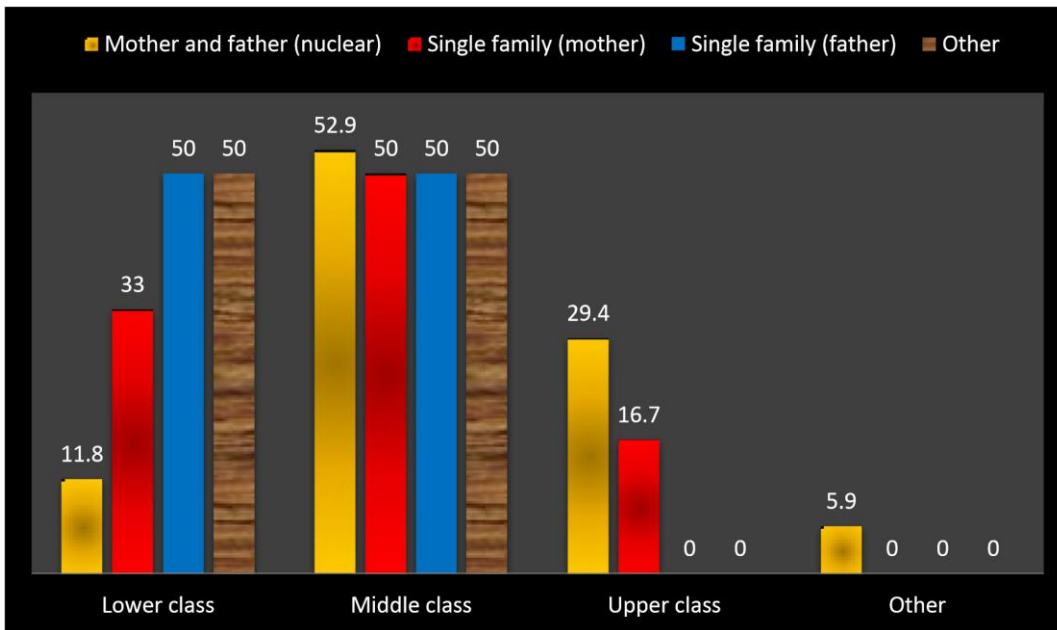


#### Economic Factors – Economic Status of Upbringing

The main economic status of single mother family units from which Bloomingdale young people are/were raised is middle income, registering a 50% majority. The same goes for other young people groups who are/were raised in in a household with a mother and a father, making up 52.9%.

These statistics are visualized in the bar chart in Fig.4.5.

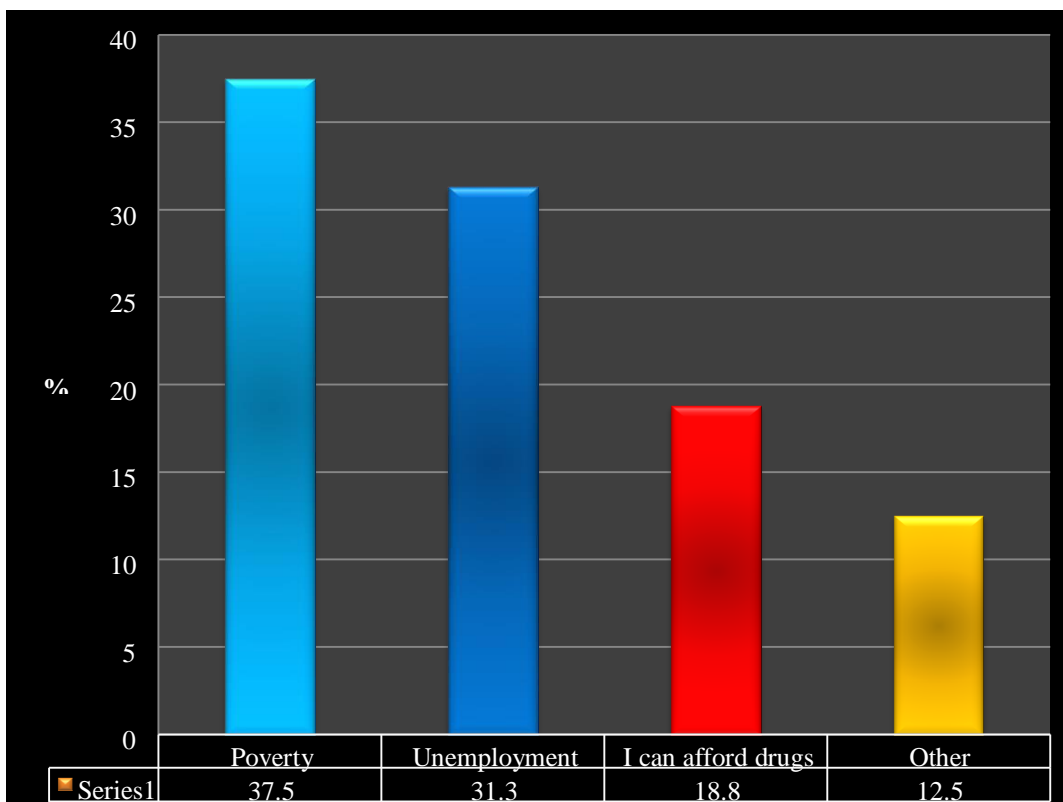
### Economic Factors – Economic Status of Upbringing



### Other Economic Factors

These are multiple-select categorical variables, which means respondents could identify with one or more factors. For the other economic factors that drive drug abuse among Bloomingdale’s young people, the most popular was poverty for single parent groups, registering 37.5%. More statistics on such factors are presented in the bar chart in Fig. 4.6.

### Other Economic Factors Affecting Young People in Single Parent Households



For young people groups raised in other family structures, the affordability of drugs is the leading economic factor driving drug abuse – making up 66.7%.

**Linking Single Parent and Drug Abuse among young people.**

Table 4.1 below shows that the aggregate average drug dependence for Young People raised in single parent households is 6.06 with a standard deviation of 3.26. Compared to other family structures (nuclear and others) whose mean and standard deviation are 5.76 and 2.67 respectively (shown in table 4.2 together with other statistics).

**Drug Dependence of Young People in Single Parent Households Descriptive Statistics**

	N Statistic	Range Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Sum Statistic	Statistic	Mean Std. Error	Std. Deviation Statistic	Varian cue
Drug abuse (scale)	16	9.00	1.00	10.00	97.00	6.0625	0.81378	3.25512	10.596
Valid N (listwise)	16								

**Drug Dependence of Young People in Other Family Structures (Nuclear and Others)**

**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Ran ge	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation Statistic	Variance Statistic
			Statistic	Statistic	Statistic			
Drug Abuse (scale)	18	9. 00	1.00	10.00	5.7778	0.62912	2.66912	7.124
Valid N (listwise)	18							

Based on the findings the research concluded that Young People raised in single parent households have (on average) a higher drug dependence than those raised in other family settings.

**DISCUSSION**

**Demographic Profile**

**Factors behind drug abuse**

Social and economic factors were found to be the factors behind the abuse of drugs by the young people in Bloomingdale suburb. On family structure as one of the factors the study revealed that, of the 35 respondents, those raised in single parent households made up 45.7. Findings of the study indicate that Young People who were raised in a single parent household were more susceptible to abusing drugs compared to those who were raised in other family structures. Such revelations are peculiar to the broader consensus shared by theories on one’s relationship to others, such as Stanton (1978) and Barmore (2016) in the Family Theory of Drug Abuse, which showed that young people in single mother households are more vulnerable to drug abuse and abuse. Empirical findings by Renes and Strange (2012), and Aposhi (et.al,

2019), showed the influence of single parenthood on drug abuse to be statistically significant at the 5% level as opposed to the findings of this research. Notwithstanding the differing statistical significance of the impact of single parenthood on drug abuse among the young people, the consensus is that Young People raised in single parent households are at a higher risk of drug abuse.

Peer pressure has been identified as one of the leading factors of drug abuse by the young people. Findings of this study indicate that 56.3% of respondents raised by single parents attributed their drug abusing habits to peer pressure. 63.2% of the Young People raised from other family structures also concurred with the findings that peer pressure was the leading cause of drug abuse.

The impact of other social factors such as availability of drugs, and media influences on drug abuse by the young people in single parent households was found to be insignificant at the 5% level. The results concur with Dari (2017) and Barasa (2013) that social factors such as peer pressure had a statistically significant influence on drug abuse among the Young People. Findings of this study also agree with those recorded by Sauda (2019), where social factors such as the availability of drugs were shown to have a weak impact on drug abuse.

Findings of this research indicate that the aggregate average drug dependence for Young People raised in single parent households is 6.06 with a standard deviation of 3.26. Compared to other family structures whose mean and standard deviation are 5.76 and 2.67 respectively. Based on the findings, young people that are raised in single parent households have a higher drug dependence than those raised in other family settings. This, therefore, means that there is a positive relationship in being raised by a single parent and tendencies of drug abuse.

According to this research's findings, the level of drug dependence among Young People raised in single parent households led by fathers is higher than that of those raised by single mothers. Single father households have drug dependence values concentrated between moderate and very high with a median value of 7. For single mother households, the values are spread across low and high drug dependence with a median of 6. Thus, young people raised by single mothers are less likely to indulge in drug abuse compared to their counterparts raised by single fathers. Bloomingdale's young people raised in single father households are at a higher risk of drug dependence than those raised in single mother households.

On economic factors, findings of this research indicate that 37.5% of the Young People from single parent headed families and 33.3% of respondents raised in other family structures highlighted poverty as one of the causes of drug abuse. 66.7% of respondents raised in other family structures cited availability of excess disposable income as the major leading factor in drug abuse by the Young People.

All economic factors registered a statistically weak influence on drug abuse at the 5% level of significance. However, economic factors such the economic status of one's upbringing was consistent with theoretical and empirical priori expectations, that is, higher income groups were less susceptible to drug abuse than lower income groups. Other economic factors such as poverty and the affordability of drugs showed a homogenous influence on the use and abuse of drugs by young people. Barasa (2013) and Maposa (et.al, 2003) both concur that economic pressures induce drug abusing behaviour among the young people at statistically significant level. From the perspective of descriptive statistics, however, the study showed that unemployment and poverty were leading economic factors driving the abusing of drugs by the young people in this community. This is consistent with the fact that 50 % of the young people from single parent households were raised in lower income households.

The final objective of this study was to identify interventions to combat drug abuse. Interventions should target individuals, families, and communities. Awareness campaigns targeting young people and parents educating them on causes and effects of drug abuse as well as ways to combat the vice. Parents may be

taught on the importance of developing close family ties with their children through creating leisure time together. These may include engaging in indoor or outdoor games with their children. Parents may need to be educated on the importance of spending more time with their children as this would allow them to identify challenges being facing their children.

Getting professional help: it was found that some individuals resort to drug abuse in an effort to cope with stressful issues of life such as illness or injuries while others indulge in the vice due to poverty driven low self-esteem. It is therefore, recommended that individuals, families, and communities should be educated on the importance of consulting mental health professionals when faced with life stressors than to resort to poor coping strategies.

Investing in community recreational facilities is one other way that may help to keep the unemployed young people occupied so that they will not have to resort to drugs for entertainment. Authorities responsible for community development should consider setting up entertainment and recreational facilities in the fight against drug abuse.

Parents and their children may also be encouraged to adopt healthy feeding habits and engage in regular physical exercises together. This promotes good physical and mental health and subsequently cause the young people to avoid risky behaviours.

## **LIMITATIONS**

The research was self-funded and a sample which could be covered by the researchers was made use of. Nonetheless, we managed to carry out my field work. The sample size used was reflective of the issues which young persons raised by single mothers present in major literature on this subject. With a bigger funding research is going to explore more on this subject.

## **CONCLUSION**

Various social and economic factors were found to be responsible for fuelling drug abuse by the young people in Bloomingdale. The study shows that young people who were raised in a single parent household were more susceptible to abusing drugs compared to those who were raised in other family structures. From the findings, Young People who were raised in single parent households have a higher drug dependence than those raised in other family settings. The study shows that the level of drug dependence among Young People raised in single parent households led by fathers is higher than that of those raised by single mothers. It shows that Young People who were raised by single mothers are less likely to indulge in drug abuse compared to their counterparts raised by single fathers. Pressure from friends has been identified as one of the leading factors of drug abuse by the Bloomingdale young people. Findings of this study shows that young people raised by single parents attributed their drug abusing habits to peer pressure. Findings indicate that the availability of excess disposable income as one of the leading factors in drug abuse by the Young People.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Awareness campaigns targeting young people and parents educating them on causes and effects of drug abuse as well as ways to combat the vice.
2. Parents may be taught on the importance of developing close family ties with their children through creating leisure time together. These may include engaging in indoor or outdoor games with their children. Parents may need to be educated on the importance of spending more time with their children as this would allow them to identify challenges being facing their children.



3. Getting professional help: it was found that some individuals resort to drug abuse in an effort to cope with stressful issues of life such as illness or injuries while others indulge in the vice due to poverty driven low self-esteem.
4. Individuals, families, and communities should be educated on the importance of consulting mental health professionals when faced with life stressors than to resort to poor coping strategies.
5. Investing in community recreational facilities is one other way that may help to keep the unemployed young people occupied so that they will not have to resort to drugs for entertainment. Authorities responsible for community development should consider setting up entertainment and recreational facilities in the fight against drug abuse.
6. Parents and their children may also be encouraged to adopt healthy feeding habits and engage in regular physical exercises together. This promotes good physical and mental health and subsequently cause the young people to avoid risky behaviours.
7. There is need to do this study on a large sample in different suburbs.

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