

Childhood Adversity as Predictor of Substance Abuse among Adolescents in Rivers State: Implications for Counselling

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated childhood adversity as a predictor of substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State. Three research questions were answered while three corresponding null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a correlational research design using a sample of 540 adolescents. Simple random sampling was used to compose the sample. Two instruments titled Adverse Childhood Experiences International Questionnaire (ACEIQ) and the Drug Habit Inventory (DHI) were used for data collection. The instruments were face validated by experts in Psychology, Measurement and Evaluation, University of Port Harcourt. The internal consistency reliability coefficients of 0.78 and 0.89 were obtained for Adverse Childhood Experiences International Questionnaire (ACEIQ) and Drug Habit Inventory (DHI) respectively using Cronbach alpha. Research questions were answered using simple regression while their corresponding null hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with regression. Findings revealed among others that loss of parents or guardians accounts for 60.9% of substance abuse among adolescents. The implication for counselling was also considered. Therefore, the paper concludes that adolescents who lost their parents or guardian at childhood or experienced parents or guardian neglect are at risk of indulging in substance abuse while adolescents who witnessed household violence are at lower risk of indulging in substance abuse. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that parents should ensure their children's basic needs are met; adolescents should be encouraged to seek professional support from counsellors or therapists who will provide them with skills and strategies to cope with substance use issues and their emotions in healthier ways.

Keywords: Childhood Adversity, Substance Abuse, Adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse among adolescents is a global problem affecting both developed and underdeveloped nations of the world. Nigeria and Rivers state are not exempted. Most Nigerian adolescents face serious problems with substance abuse issues in recent times. According to Modupe as cited in Isiguzo and Brown (2020), adolescents are young persons who are developing into adults. These adolescents experience forms of sudden change and transformation as they develop due to the influence of their period of adolescence described as that of 'storm and stress'. Their passage through this critical phase of human development make them become more independent in thinking and decision making as they transit into adulthood. This exposes them to increased adventurous tendencies, peer influence and risk taking behaviours. These behaviours usually anchor on the experiences of these adolescents at childhood period, some positive and some of adverse effects to the child's later life. This can make the adolescents susceptible to substance use and abuse. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime-UNODC (2018) noted that the extent of drug and substance use and abuse among young people remains much higher than that of older people.

The alarming evidence in the prevalence of substance abuse and its consequences among Nigerian adolescents has called for concern to all. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, 5th Edition (DSM-5) described the term substance abuse as that which involves the continued use of substance despite personal, professional and health related problems caused by the usage that negatively affects a person's daily life

(American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The World Health Organization as cited in Ugboha et al. (2023) defined substance abuse as a maladaptive pattern of use indicated by continued use despite knowledge or having a persistent or recurrent social, occupational and psychological or physical problem. These substances not only alter the functions of the body and the mind but also affect the dimension of health. This is not a new trend rather a menace that is growing at an alarming rate due to various reasons. This chronic use of substances can lead to adverse and sometimes irreversible damage to adolescents' physical and psychological development. Substance is considered as an abuse if it is deliberately used to induce physiological effects for a purpose other than for therapeutic purposes (Obiechina & Isiguzo, 2016).

Despite the tremendous negative consequences of substance abuse on the health and well-being of adolescents, studies continue to report high rates of substance use among adolescents. Different rates and patterns of different substances have been reported depending on the country or region of the country where such a study was carried out (Adeloye et. al., 2019; Feinstein et al., 2012; Idowu et. al., 2018). For example, in the US, alcohol was reported as the most commonly used substance with 72.5% users, followed by cigarettes (46.3%) and marijuana (36.8%). In Ethiopia on the other hand, the lifetime prevalence of any substance was 65.4% while current substance use among high school students was 47.9%. Alcohol was the commonest drug used with a lifetime and current prevalence of 59% and 40.9% respectively. In Nigeria, varying rates had been reported. In the South-East part, for example, the prevalence rate of substance use among adolescents was 32.9%, with alcohol being the most commonly used substance (with 29.0% users), and cocaine being the least with 2.1% users. In the south-West parts, from 15.0% to 69.3% adolescents reported to have used any psychoactive substances, more importantly, when local psychoactive substances like kola nut were included (Adeloye et. al., 2019). Alcohol remains the most consumed substance followed by cigarette. However, this pattern seems to be changing as the most common substances abused in Nigeria include marijuana, amphetamines, mandrax, parlous, harbiturates and codeine that have negative effects on the adolescents, their immediate family, community and Nigeria at large (Aklunta cited in Ugboha, 2023). With this, many adolescents got hooked -up with substance abuse.

Substance abuse is referred to as the harmful or wrong use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs (Idowu et. al., 2018). It is an increasing global problem that affects high income, middle income and low-income countries worldwide. The physical, oral, psychological, social and economic consequences of substance abuse among youths are becoming more disturbing. Young people who regularly abuse substances often experience a plethora of problems, including poor academic performances, health related problems (including mental health), poor peer relationships and involvement in social crimes such as stealing, bullying, domestic violence, etc. All these have negative consequences for family members, community and the entire society (Adenugba & Okeshola, 2018). Young people often start by taking substances like cigarette and alcohol from which they gradually progress to other substances to such a degree that fully control their behaviour. Complications of substance abuse by young people and adults include personality disorders, sexual violence, criminal tendencies, drug dependence, mental illness, liver and kidney related diseases, low productivity, child abuse, sexual abuse, loss of individual integrity, financial mismanagement, withdrawal symptoms, untimely death, traffic violations, mental disorder, depression, social violence, gang formation, lack of respect for elders, rape, domestic violence, and others (Teferra, 2018; Olurishe, 2019; Jumbo et al., 2021).

In addition, the effects of substance abuse among adolescents highly correlate with anti-social behaviours such as armed robbery, prostitution, rape and gang formation and others that negatively constrain the economy of a nation thereby slowing down national development in the long run. Substance abuse and delinquency often share the common factors of school and family problems which ranges from negative peer groups, lack of neighbourhood social controls, to a history of physical or sexual abuse (Wilson & Howell as cited in Tafida et al., 2023). It is commonly seen that it is during the adolescence period that many adolescents initiate themselves into the use of substances like cigarette, alcohol, indian hemp; however, the experimentation of substances by older adolescents is common. Observation and researches have shown that adolescents discourteously depend on one form of drug or the other, such as tobacco, Indian hemp, cocaine, morphine, heroine, alcohol, epherdrine, caffeine, glue, barbiturates for their various daily activities, is it social, educational, political, or moral. Oshikoya and Alli (2006) study on perception of Drug Abuse amongst Nigerian undergraduates identified dependence and addiction as one of the major consequences of drug abuse, characterized by compulsive drug craving seeking behavior. This behaviour persists even in the face of negative consequences as it paves way to maladaptive

changes that are inappropriate to the social or environmental setting. This may place the individual at a risk of harm.

With the establishment of a sense of identity, all the developmental changes that these adolescents experience prepare them to experiment with new behaviours. Sue et al. as cited in Akanbi et al. (2015) noted that this experimentation results in risk-taking which is a normal part of these adolescents' development. This engagement in risk-taking behaviour helps them to shape their identities for more development of skills and respect among peers. However, some of the risks that these adolescents take may get them into problems of cigarette smoking, excessive alcohol consumption and drug abuse that threaten their health and general wellbeing. Drug is said to be abused when it is not pharmacologically needed or used in the face of legal prohibition or when used excessively (Oladeji, 2010). This excessive use of substances can lead to serious and sometimes irreversible damage to the adolescents' physical and psychological development which at this developmental stage may make them to be particularly susceptible to the negative effects of childhood adversity. This can manifest in different forms such as abuse, neglect, or family dysfunction.

Childhood adversity is also referred to as those experiences of maltreatment, neglect, or traumatic events during childhood, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, parental separation or divorce, parental substance abuse, parental mental illness, and exposure to violence or traumatic events in the family or community context (Benjet et al., 2019). These adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are also described by Deighton et al. (2018) as stressful and/or traumatic experiences that occur during childhood. It deals with a range of negative experiences and stressors during childhood, especially those of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional), neglect (physical, emotional), parental loss or separation, parental mental illness, parental substance abuse, exposure to domestic violence, and socioeconomic adversity (Green et al., 2010). In the same vein, Oladeji et al. (2010) opined that these experiences also consist of other forms of trauma. Fatima et al. (2024) described this concept further as not only significant global public health concern but those experiences that have adverse effects on all determinants of health. This adversity with varying forms of family dysfunction becomes a significant factor which affects the wellbeing of an adolescent when a child is exposed to this traumatic event in the first 18 years of life; it impacts negatively on the child's health and wellbeing (Anda et al., 2010). Adverse experiences during childhood can profoundly impact an adolescent's development, thereby paving the way for maladaptive coping mechanisms, including substance abuse. These conditions can disrupt a child's sense of safety, stability and well-being. Each type of adversity consists of special and overlapping effects on a child's development, as it influences their risk for engaging in substance abuse later in life.

The loss of a parent or caregiver is one of the most profound and distressing experiences that an individual can endure, particularly during childhood or adolescence. This loss can be death, abandonment, divorce, or separation. Regardless of the cause, the impact of such a loss can be devastating for children and adolescents, as it disrupts their sense of security, attachment, and identity. The grieving process comes with overwhelming range of emotions such as sadness, anger, guilt, and confusion. Brent et al. (2022) showed in a longitudinal study that parental loss, particularly due to suicide, was associated with increased risk of adolescents' substance abuse, highlighting the impact of bereavement on substance use behaviors. The developmental stage at which the loss occurs can also influence its impact on substance abuse. For example, children who experience the loss of a parent during early childhood may struggle to develop secure attachments, regulate emotions, and form healthy relationships, increasing their vulnerability to substance abuse later in life. Bereaved youths are at greater risk for alcohol and substance abuse than their non-bereaved counterparts, especially adolescent boys with disruptive behaviour disorders (Hamdan et al., 2013). Similarly, adolescents who lost a parent or caregiver during adolescence may face unique challenges related to identity development, peer relationships, and autonomy, which can contribute to substance use as a form of identity exploration or rebellion.

Child neglect refers to the failure of parents and/ or caregivers to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional or developmental needs, often due to inadequate supervision, resources, or attention. Isiguzo and Igwe-Ofoekwe (2021) defined also defined the concept as when you fail to give attention to something or someone. Neglect of a child was described by Spencer (2000) as failure to provide for the child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, supervision, education and medicare. It can take various forms, including physical neglect (failure to provide food, shelter, or medical care), emotional neglect (failure to meet a child's emotional needs for love, support, and validation), and educational neglect (failure to ensure access to education and learning

opportunities). In the absence of adequate support and nurturing from caregivers, neglected children may turn to maladaptive coping mechanisms to manage their emotional pain and distress. Thompson et al. (2019) revealed in their study that there is a strong association between experiences of child neglect and substance use among adolescents in foster care, underscoring the impact of early adversity on later substance abuse outcomes.

Exposure to household violence involves observing or being aware of acts of physical, verbal, or emotional abuse perpetrated by a parent or one caregiver against another within the household. This form of exposure to violence can occur in various forms, including intimate partner violence, parental abuse, or sibling abuse. Fang et al. (2014) stated that witnessing this type of violence is a risk factor for adolescents' substance abuse, underscoring the global significance of this relationship across diverse cultural contexts. Regardless of the specific dynamics, witnessing domestic violence can lead to feelings of fear, helplessness, and insecurity in children and adolescents. Children and adolescents who witness domestic violence may experience a range of psychological and emotional consequences, including anxiety, depression, Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and disordered attachment. The chronic exposure to violence and trauma within the family environment can disrupt the development of neural circuits involved in emotion regulation, stress response, and interpersonal relationships, predisposing individuals to substance abuse as a maladaptive coping mechanism. Exposure to domestic violence during childhood predicted subsequent involvement in violent relationships and substance abuse during adolescence and young adulthood (Kelly & Thornberry, 2018)

In order to take care of these adverse childhood experiences, it is commonly believed by these 'abusers' that substance abuse can provide temporary relief from feelings of emptiness, loneliness, or worthlessness, numbing painful emotions and creating a sense of euphoria or escape. Moreover, for them the substance use may also serve as a way to self-soothe, regulate emotions, or cope with stressors in the absence of healthier coping strategies. In the absence of adequate support and nurturing from parents and caregivers, neglected children may turn to maladaptive coping mechanisms to manage their emotional pain and distress. Substance abuse can provide temporary relief from feelings of emptiness, loneliness, or worthlessness, numbing painful emotions and creating a sense of euphoria or escape. Moreover, substance use may serve as a way to self-soothe, regulate emotions, or cope with stressors in the absence of healthier coping strategies. It has been demonstrated that parental neglect was associated with increased substance use among adolescents, mediated by mental health problems and peer substance use (Chung et al., 2020). The family environment can serve as a primary context for the transmission of attitudes, beliefs and behaviours related to substance use. Stress-coping models posit that adverse experiences during childhood can trigger physiological and psychological stress responses, leading individuals to seek relief through substance use as a coping mechanism (Oluremi, 2012). It should be known that positive portrayals of substance use in the media or endorsement by influential figures may contribute to the normalization and acceptance of this substance use behaviours by these adolescents (Ennett, 2006).

Indeed, it should be known that counsellors can help individuals identify behaviours and problems related to their abuse of substance. This can be done both on individual or group counselling. Some of the goals of counselling are to assist individuals to overcome life in their environment, not only their psychological, but also social and economic adjustment. Therefore, counsellors also help people to learn how to deal more effectively with situations in their lives such as addiction, neglect, exposure to traumatic experience, grief/loss and other issues related to mental and emotional health. Therefore, counselling as an essential tool in substance abuse treatment through the application of many therapies certainly can help reduce the issue of substance abuse, motivate clients to change to healthy and acceptable life, becoming economically and socially reformed.

The alarming evidence in the prevalence of substance abuse, the effects and consequences of substance abuse among adolescents have called for concern and challenge to all helping professions to mount strategies of equipping adolescents with skills of living devoid of substance abuse. In Rivers State today, the consequences of substance abuse are diverse, including acute and chronic health, social as well as psychological problem. There is disruption of interpersonal relationships particularly within the family, marginalization, criminal behaviour, school failure, vocational problems and failure to achieve normal adolescent milestones, yet these adolescents are expected to be the leaders of the country in the future when they do not even have any focus for the future. There is growing evidence to suggest that exposure to childhood adversity may serve as a potent risk factor for the development of substance abuse and related problems during adolescence. With this problem, the

study therefore sought to investigate childhood adversity as predictors of substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

This study was guided by three research questions.

1. To what extent does loss of parents predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does child neglect predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does household violence predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State?

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance to guide this study.

1. Loss of parents does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.
2. Child neglect does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.
3. Household violence does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study consisted of all adolescents identified as substance abusers in Rivers State. A sample of 540 adolescents drawn using multi-stage sampling procedure was used in the study. This sample represents about 2% of the entire adolescent population in Rivers State. At stage one of the sampling, simple random by ballot technique was used to draw two Senatorial Districts (Rivers-East and River-West) in Rivers State. This was achieved by writing the names of the three Senatorial Districts in a piece of paper folded with blindfold, the researcher handpicked two pieces which revealed the names of the two districts that were used. At stage two, non-proportionate sampling method was used to select two Local Government Areas (L.G.As) from each of the two Senatorial Districts. This gave a total of 4 L.G. As (Obio-Akpor, Port Harcourt, Asari-Toru and Degema). At stage three the researchers used systematic sampling technique to focus on adolescents from organized institutions like churches and schools. Two churches were selected while two schools were selected in each of the L.G.As. At stage four, snowball sampling technique was also used to administer the Drug Habit Inventory (DHI) to two hundred (200) adolescents from each L.G.A. This gave a total of eight hundred questionnaire administered. From this, the researchers applied census sampling technique to identify and use all those who were identified as drug abusers. This means that only those who scored up to average in the DHI were used for the study. Two instruments used for the study were the Adverse Childhood Experiences- International Questionnaire (ACEIQ) and the Drug Habit Inventory (DHI) (Fayombo, 2000). The ACE-International Questionnaire (ACEIQ) is a World Health Organization (WHO, 2018) 43-item questionnaire that measures all aspects of direct and indirect Adverse Childhood Experiences. The domains of the ACE-IQ include: relationship with parents or guardians (e.g. having enough food to eat, parents being too drunk or intoxicated to provide adequate care), family environment (substance misuse, divorce, incarceration or death of family member, abuse and neglect), domestic violence (witnessed parent fighting) etc. The DHI contains 30 items based on the rating 4, 3, 2, and 1. In order to limit respondent bias, the DHI was redesigned as a scale which limited respondents' bias in the response process. Again, in order to handle cultural bias, the instruments were validated by experts in Psychology, Measurement and Evaluation in the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. A reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained for ACEIQ while DHI was a correlation coefficient of 0.89 respectively using Cronbach alpha. Research questions were answered using simple regression while their corresponding null hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with regression.

Ethical considerations in the study included seeking informed consent of the respondents, assuring them of utmost confidentiality as well as right to withdraw their responses.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: To what extent does loss of parents predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State?

Table 1: Regression Analysis of the extent loss of parents predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.782	.612	.609	.38997

a. Predictor (Constant) Loss of parent

Table1 revealed that loss of parents or guardian and substance abuse obtained a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.78$ indicating a high positive relationship. In answer to the research question, an R Square of 0.612 was obtained and an adjusted R^2 value of 0.609. Based on the adjusted R^2 value of 0.609, it shows that 60.9% (0.609×100) variations in substance abuse among adolescents is predicted by loss of parent or guardian while the remaining 39.1% are beyond its prediction.

Research Question 2: To what extent does child neglect predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State?

Table 2: Regression Analysis of the extent child neglect predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.734	.538	.535	.42523

a. Predictor (Constant) Child neglect

Table2 revealed that child neglect and substance abuse obtained a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.73$ indicating a high positive relationship. In answer to the research question, an R Square of 0.538 was obtained and an adjusted R^2 value of 0.535. Based on the adjusted R^2 value of 0.535, it shows that 53.5% (0.535×100) variations in substance abuse among adolescents is predicted by parents or guardian neglect of the child while the remaining 46.5% are beyond its prediction.

Research Question 3: To what extent does household violence predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State?

Table 3: Regression Analysis of the extent household violence predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.588	.351	.346	.53577

a. Predictor (Constant) Household violence

Table 3 revealed that household violence and substance abuse obtained a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.58$ indicating a moderate positive relationship. In answer to the research question, an R Square of 0.351 was obtained and an adjusted R^2 value of 0.346. Based on the adjusted R^2 value of 0.346, it shows that 34.6% (0.346×100) variations in substance abuse among adolescents is predicted by household violence while the remaining 65.4% are beyond its prediction.

Hypothesis 1: Loss of parents does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

Table 4: T-test Analysis of Loss of parents and substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.916	.182		4.997	.000
	Loss of parents	.323	.025	.735	13.526	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Substance abuse

From table 4 above, it could be seen that $\beta = 0.323$, with a standard error value of 0.25. The t test value of $t = 13.526$ with a Sig. of .000 was obtained. The Sig. of .000 is significant at 0.05 alpha level ($t = 13.526$, $p > \text{Sig. .000}$) therefore, the null hypothesis which states that loss of parents does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents is rejected and the alternative is accepted. Therefore, loss of parents or guardian significantly predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: Child neglect does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

Table 5: T-test Analysis of Child neglect and substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.638	.257		-2.478	.014
	Child neglect	1.274	.016	.956	78.075	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Substance abuse

From table 5 above, it could be seen that $\beta = 1.274$, with a standard error value of 0.16. The t test value of $t = 78.075$ with a Sig. of .000 was obtained. The Sig. of .000 is significant at 0.05 alpha level ($t = 78.075$, $p > \text{Sig. .000}$) therefore, the null hypothesis which states that child neglect does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents is rejected and the alternative is accepted. Therefore, child neglect (by parents or guardians) significantly predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3: Household violence does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

Table 6: T-test Analysis of Household violence and substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	15.583	.376		41.458	.000

Household violence	.498	.022	.690	22.914	.000
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a. Dependent Variable: Substance abuse

From table 6 above, it could be seen that $\beta = 0.498$, with a standard error value of 0.22. The t test value of $t = 22.914$ with a Sig. of .000 was obtained. The Sig. of .000 is significant at 0.05 alpha level ($t = 22.914$, $p > \text{Sig. .000}$) therefore, the null hypothesis which states that household violence does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents is rejected and the alternative is accepted. Therefore, household violence significantly predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study are discussed as follows.

Results from hypothesis one showed that loss of parents or guardian significantly predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State as loss of parents accounts for 60.9% variation in substance abuse among adolescents. This finding was envisaged by the researchers because most adolescents depend on their parents and when death occurs, they feel devastated and frustrated. This finding was expected by the researchers as most adolescents admitted to taking substances after the death of their parents to help relieve them of their disturbing thoughts. The finding of the current study is in agreement with Hamdan et al. (2013) study which revealed that bereaved youths are at greater risk for alcohol and substance abuse than their non-bereaved counterparts, especially adolescent boys with disruptive behaviour disorders. Furthermore, this finding also agreed with that of Brent et al. (2022) study which revealed that parental loss was associated with increased risk of adolescent substance abuse, highlighting the impact of bereavement on substance use behaviours.

Results from hypothesis two revealed that child neglect significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State. Child neglect by parents/guardian accounts for 53.5% variation in substance abuse among adolescents. This indicates that parental and guardian neglect significantly predicts substance abuse among adolescents. This finding was also envisaged by the researchers because most adolescents depend on their parents for basic needs and when these needs are not met, they may easily be influenced by peers and invariably turn to substance use. Although the researchers never observed this from the adolescents during field work, the current finding is in agreement with Thompson et al. (2019) study which revealed that there is a strong association between experiences of child neglect and substance use among adolescents in foster care, underscoring the impact of early adversity on later substance abuse outcomes. Furthermore, this finding also agreed with that of Chung et al. (2020) where they revealed that parental neglect was associated with increased substance use among adolescents, mediated by mental health problems and peer substance use.

Results from hypothesis three showed that household violence moderately predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State. Household violence accounts for 34.6% variation in substance abuse among adolescents. This finding indicated moderate positive relationship which is contrary to the findings of Fang et al. (2014) study which revealed that exposure to household violence is a risk factor for adolescents' substance abuse, underscoring the global significance of this relationship across diverse cultural contexts. This disparity could be as a result of difference in research area or other factors not accounted for. Furthermore, the finding of this current study is also contrary to that of Kelly and Thornberry (2018) where they revealed that exposure to household violence during childhood predicted subsequent involvement in violent relationships and substance abuse during adolescence and young adulthood. This disparity could also be as a result of difference in research area or other factors not accounted for.

Implications for Counselling

The significant predictive relationship between childhood adversity like the loss of parents and substance abuse underscores the need for more counselling awareness which embraces targeted investigations and support services for vulnerable youths. Schools, healthcare providers and social service agencies must work together with the counsellors to identify and provide early intervention for adolescents who have experienced childhood adversity in order to mitigate the risk of substance abuse and promote healthy development. Again, policy makers

and community leaders must prioritize investment in programmes and services that support family stability, mental health and substance abuse prevention, in order to break the grip of trauma and adversity on adolescents. This might reduce the rate at which substances are abused by the adolescents today especially Rivers state.

CONCLUSION

The paper concluded that adolescents who lost their parents or guardian at childhood are at risk of indulging in substance abuse. Furthermore, adolescents who experienced child neglect by their parents or guardian are also at risk of indulging in substance abuse. Finally, adolescents who witnessed domestic violence are at moderate risk of indulging in substance abuse.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Parents should ensure their children get basic needs, including food, shelter, safety and access to healthcare and provide a conducive home atmosphere for members of the family.
2. Adolescents should be encouraged to seek professional support from counsellors or therapists on substance abuse.
3. Counsellors or therapists should provide adolescents with skills and strategies to cope with their emotions in healthier ways, process their grief and address substance use issues effectively.
4. Parents should ensure provision of conducive home environment as they serve as role models for family members
5. Adequate counselling services in substance control awareness should be established at all levels of education.

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