

## **Protection and Prevention Against Adolescent Substance Abuse: An Evaluation of Interventions and Parenting Strategies**

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### **Abstract**

The abuse of drugs and substances is a key health concern that affects a huge population across the world. The inception and prevalence of substance abuse is highly recognized among adolescents, thereby making it a relevant area of investigation. The purpose of this review is to study the impact of parenting style on the behaviour of adolescents towards substance abuse. It is found that authoritative parenting style has a most positive influence on adolescents, and on the other hand, neglected parenting style leads to higher incidence of substance abuse among youth. The study provides valuable information on different prevention and intervention strategies against adolescent substance abuse and addiction.

**Keywords:** Adolescent substance abuse, parenting style, intervention strategies

### **1. Introduction**

Substance abuse and its use among the population across the world have been acknowledged as an essential public health concern that widely affects the morbidity and mortality rates (Liu et al., 2017). The patterns of substance abuse vary from person to person, and knowledge in this domain, especially on the risk factors that affect such behaviour among individuals will provide valuable inputs with which effective prevention and treatment strategies can be developed. Globally, the inception of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana or heroin and other drug use initiates during early age and rapidly increases from early to late adolescence (Ainslie, 2018). In the recent years, the consumption of different substances and drugs among the younger generation has become a part of day to day life. Such a trend has become the major cause for most of the social problems in many developing countries. It is stated by (Shakya, Christakis & Fowler, 2012) that, people mostly consume substances for various reasons and in unique cultural and social contexts such as, religious observance, cultural participation, sociability, peer influence, mood alternation, relaxation, pleasure, intoxication, improved creativity and boredom, addiction, to overcome inhibitions, to drown sorrows or forget or escape. According to Stewart & Bolland (2002), these reasons would be closely associated with culture, age and socioeconomic grouping. Reason no matter what it may be, but it is an indispensable truth that, harmful substance consumption affects a huge range of people, irrespective of cultural background, race, religion, education, age or gender. Such a substance consumption phenomenon not only affects others but also the health of the people who consume.

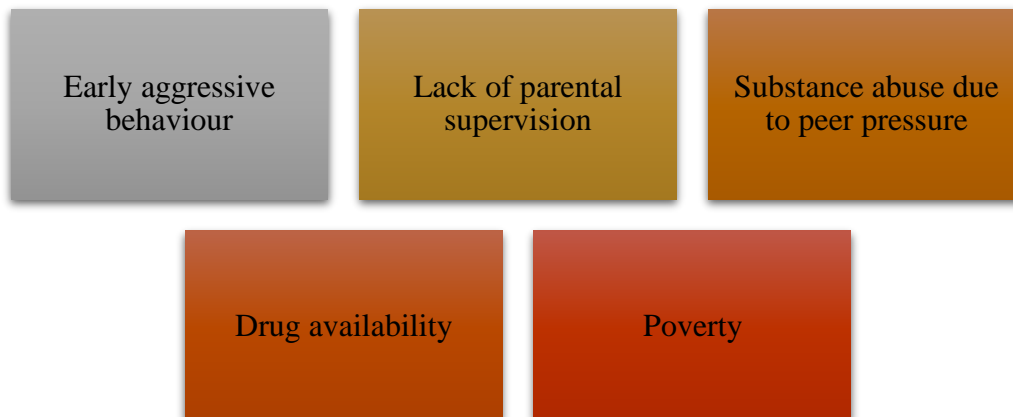
It is claimed by McLaughlin, Campbell & McColgan, (2016), substance abuse causes critical impacts on the cardiovascular system; increases the blood pressure; maximizes the shortness of breath; causes haemorrhagic stroke, and risks of arrhythmias, other kinds of failure in cardiac and other circulatory issues; and increased risk of cancer. Further, it is also claimed that a lower consumption of drugs may increase high-density lipoprotein cholesterol; minimize arteries' plaque accumulations and also have effect of mild anti- coagulating (Minaie et al., 2015). Thus, in order to make people overcome their addiction, a number of self-management programs have been introduced by the government of India as well as by various non-governmental organizations. The

awareness and policies taken by the government mainly focuses on substance abuse-related problems and it also creates the conditions for an epidemic rise in drug issues in social and economic development.

The risk of acquiring the habit of substance abuse occurs during the major transition periods in a child’s life. The transitions can be varied throughout the development of a child, for example, through physical development, puberty, or social situations (parents divorcing, transitioning to a new school). The transitions can be vulnerable and lead to problem behaviours among the children, especially when they leave the security of their families to enter school (Mansoer et al., 2019). Another big transition is entering high school where new experiences pertaining to academics and social situations (need to gain attention and popularity among peers) are encountered by the adolescents, where they are also expected to have greater academic performances. During this stage of early adolescents, there lies higher risk of encountering drug abuse. Furthermore, the exposure to drugs and their availability in adolescence is a factor that can lead to substance abuse. Considering this, the current review is focused on evaluating the risk and protective factors that affect the adolescent substance abuse phenomenon. The review explores the preventive and intervention strategies so as to treat the addiction of substance abuse among the adolescents.

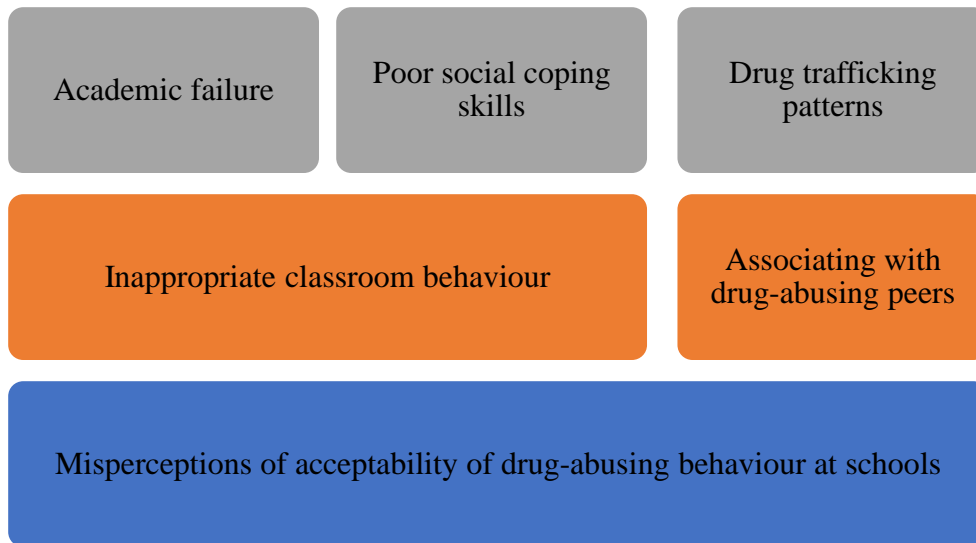
**2. Risk Factors Affecting Adolescent Substance Abuse**

Various researches in the domain of substance abuse among youths have determined the causes of such behaviour and origins of addiction to understand how it starts and what affects it (Chakravarthy, Shah, & Lotfipour, 2013). The different risk factors studied in the literature provides insight into the behaviour of individuals and helps differentiate between those who are likely to abuse drugs from those who are less vulnerable to addiction. The factors that most likely lead to substance abuse or addiction among people are referred to as the risk factors. According to (Beyers et al., 2004), some of the major risk factors are:



The risk of becoming a substance abuser depends on the association between the number of risk factors such as deviant behaviour and attitude and the protective factors that can be parental support. It is acknowledged in the literature (Schindler & Bröning, 2015), that a more prominent impact of risk factor is associated with age, wherein the family environment (substance abuse or smoking behaviour among parents), parental behaviour, support, and parenting strategies has a greater influence on a younger child. In adolescents, a lack of parental control and more association with drug-abusing peers are significant risk factors. The impact of risk factors is also dependent on other variables such as gender, ethnicity, culture, and social background (Howenstein et al., 2015). Depending on the personality and unique traits of an adolescent, there may be different impact of risk factors. As an example. Serious risks such as aggressive behaviour and poor academic performance can represent the negative development path of the adolescent.

According to Sussman, Skara, & Ames (2008), strong parental support and involvement can most likely reduce the impact of other risks such as the influence from substance-abusing peers. Some other risk factors emerge from external settings such as in schools or community. Issues and challenges faced in such settings can result in emotional upheaval for the adolescents. Few risk factors in social settings are:



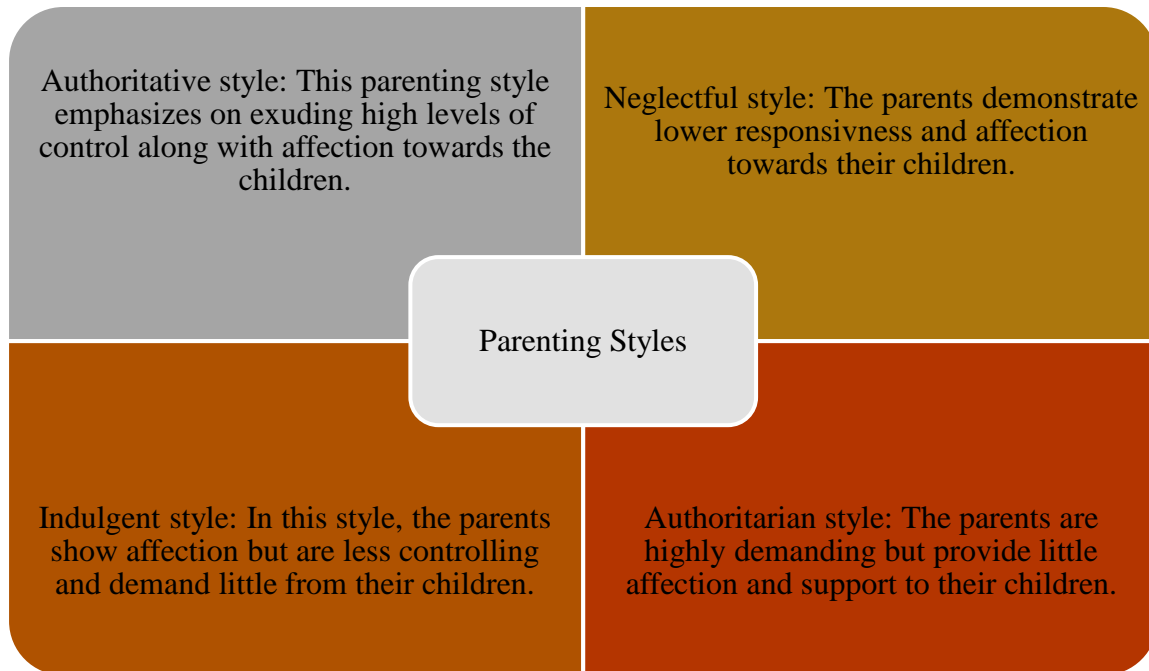
The social (peers, family, advertisements), developmental (transitioning stages, independence, and maturity), and individual (cognitive, attitudinal, social, personality,) risk factors, if not identified can lead to substance abuse among the adolescents. An early intervention of the risk factors pertaining to aggressive behaviour among adolescents and lack of self-control is essential in affecting their life path towards a positive trajectory (Kaluliyana, 2017). With identification of risk factors, it is easier to develop more effective intervention and preventive strategies.

**3. Role of Parenting Styles and Strategies**

The factors including family environment, parenting styles and parental support, are most crucial during the early development of a child as a child’s earliest interactions are within a family (Kimani, 2019). The environment during early childhood can affect the positive or negative behaviour of children when transitioning to adolescence. Adolescents are most likely to experience risks that affect their intentions towards substance abuse; these are (Calafat et al., 2014):

- Lack of mutual attachment and nurturing by parents
- Ineffective parenting style
- A chaotic and stressful home environment
- Lack of a significant relationship with the parents
- Parents who abuse substances, suffer from mental illness, or engages in criminal behaviour.

The above experiences can affect the healthy development of children and adolescents, thereby threatening their feelings of security and creating behavioural issues. If mutual attachment and bonding with the parents fails to occur during development stages of adolescents, then the probability of a strong parental relation decreases and chances of substance abuse increases. Parental style is one of the most crucial factors that affect the behaviour and intentions of the adolescents towards their divulgence in substance abuse, alcoholism, and smoking tobacco (Calafat et al., 2014). Four parenting styles are defined in the literature: authoritative, neglectful, indulgent and authoritarian.



It is evident from the existing researches (Griffin, & Botvin, 2010) that the adolescents are most motivated to use drugs when their parents neglect them, are highly demanding, and show less affection. According to Benchaya et al. (2019), when adolescents felt that they are not supervised and are not understood well by their parents, then they indulged in illicit drug use. The monitoring of the parents was an important predictor for the prevention of drug abuse among adolescents. Neglectful parenting style is considered as a risk factor that leads to substance use and abuse among adolescents (Becoña et al., 2012). Authoritative style is observed to be most effective in developing positive behaviour among the adolescents and helping in preventing substance abuse.

According to Brewer (2017), parental closeness is a crucial variable that plays an important role. There is a significant link between a child’s delinquency and how close they are to the parent (i.e. parental involvement and positive parenting). An adolescent’s level of attachment to a parent is a good indicator of whether or not he will engage in substance abuse. The adolescents who do not trust their parents and felt that they cannot go to them for advice had a higher rate of substance abuse. Another study by Kaluliyana, (2017), determined that there is a correlation between a parents’ control, monitoring, and discipline and an adolescent’s level of substance use. The parents having poor control, monitoring, and inconsistent discipline had adolescents who had elevated use of alcohol as well as high levels of other drug abuse. The researchers found that parents becoming more aware of what their child was doing and paying closer attention to his/her whereabouts and actions was associated with decreases in substance use and delinquent activities by the teen.

**4. Interventions and Prevention Strategies for Substance Abuse**

Prevention programs and intervention strategies are crucial in addressing all forms of drug abuse (including tobacco or alcohol); the use of illegal drugs such as marijuana; and the inappropriate use of prescribed medications or over the counter drugs (Compton et al., 2019). Interventions and prevention strategies must reduce the risk factors. Universal prevention programs focus on the general population, that aims to deter or delay the prevalence and growth of substance abuse, alcoholism, or smoking tobacco (Jackson et al., 2012).

Prevention strategies are created and developed for those who demonstrate early danger signs, such as the initial stages of engaging in a high-risk behaviour or other related behaviours. This is why it is imperative to first identify the risk factors. There are different interventions that are majorly categorized under school-based, family-based and community-based interventions.

**5.1. School-based interventions**

School-based interventions are focused on intervening as early as possible, during preschool, to recognize and then address the risk factors for drug abuse. Academic difficulties, poor social skills and risk-taking behaviour can be identified first via school-based intervention (Botvin & Griffin, 2007). Furthermore, the interventions and prevention strategies in schools are emphasized on building conducive environment for social-emotional

learning among the students, and also improving academic performances. School-based efforts are efficient in that they offer access to large numbers of students. School-based interventions work on the following skills:

- Self-control
- Emotional awareness
- Communication
- Social problem-solving
- Academic support

The above are most likely focused for elementary students. For adolescents, the intervention strategies work towards building social competence with focus on different skills including peer relationships, communication, self-efficacy, assertiveness, drug resistance skills, reinforcement of antidrug attitudes, and strengthening of personal commitments against drug abuse (Onrust et al., 2016).

Interventions for building social resistance skills among adolescents are designed with the purpose of increasing their awareness towards social influences that support substance use. The students are taught with skills for resisting peer pressures and media pressures to use drugs and other forms of substances (Stormshak et al., 2009). Resistance skills training programs teach adolescents ways to recognize and avoid high-risk situations where they are likely to experience peer pressure to smoke and use drugs. Apart from increasing their awareness levels, the students are taught techniques for formulating counter-arguments to the appealing but misleading messages used in television or other advertisements. Normative education and competence-enhancement programs are other intervention strategies that focus on organizing activities for the adolescents where their incorrect perceptions towards substance abuse are corrected. Competence-enhancement programs work on improving social skills of the students so as to avoid and prevent any negative behaviour (Konishi et al., 2013).

### **5.2. Family -based interventions**

Family-based intervention programs focus on building family bonding and strong harmonious relationships between parents and their children. They focus on enhancing parenting skills and styles that enforce family policies on substance abuse; and also provide training in drug education (Chakravarthy, Shah, & Lotfipour, 2013). Family bonding is the bedrock of the relationship between parents and children. Bonding can be strengthened through skills training on parent supportiveness of children, parent-child communication, and parental involvement (Giannotta et al., 2014).

For drug abuse prevention, parental monitoring and supervision are most essential and these skills can be improved with trainings in how to develop rules for adolescents that are controlling and yet appropriate (Schinke, Fang & Cole, 2009). Furthermore, interventions and training on how to praise appropriate behaviour among adolescents, and placing consistent discipline for understanding and respecting the enforced family rules. Education and knowledge on drugs for parents, assists in the learning of their teens towards the harmful impacts of substance use and abuse. An open family discussion in this topic is encouraged for initiating a better communication and generating higher awareness among the children. Family-focused interventions for the general population can positively change specific parenting behaviour that can reduce later risks of drug abuse (Latimer et al., 2000). Such programs are organized for parents alone or with both parents and children, depending on the specific needs and situations. Family Matters, Creating Lasting Family Connections, and Brief Strategic Family Therapy are few of these programs (Griffin, & Botvin, 2010).

### **5.3. Community-based interventions**

Community programs are focused on substance abuse prevention in a community. Community-based interventions include strategies and programs that has the participation of families, and parenting components, school-based components and public policy initiatives (Griffin, & Botvin, 2010). Different stakeholders from all sectors of the community participate for developing community-based interventions. Community Trials Intervention to Reduce High-Risk Drinking is one such universal intervention that is in place for providing information and knowledge on drug abuse and alter community-wide substance use patterns (Kazemi et al., 2017).

## **6. Drug Prevention Programs**

The social and government programs that help in the prevention of substance abuse among the adolescents are encouraged by government and non-government authorities. The universal programs by National Institute on Drug Abuse, The Street Outreach Program, and Alcoholics Anonymous and self-management programs are developed for drug prevention. These programs are available everywhere and is established as an unofficial

society, self-supporting, non- professional, apolitical and multiracial program. It is determined (Xie et al., 2005) that the programs are effectively and widely serving its members maintain sobriety and stop drinking and abusing drugs. But, since it is a well-known fact that gender differences exist in every aspect, the consumption of alcohol and its recovery in addition to the progression to alcoholism and drug abuse, response to treatment and impact of drugs are also determined based up on the gender of the individual. It is also that there lies a strong difference between girl and boy regarding the factors correlating or motivating them to seek for treatments to recover from the behaviour of substance abuse. According to McGorry et al. (2001), women are more liable when compared to men, in terms of seeking treatments, as they are influenced by the family problems and are encouraged by their parents to do so.

The latest empirical interests in behaviour therapy of the substance abusers in mindfulness and acceptance contributes to an additional way to offer treatments that are empirically supported that fit more willingly with the accessible practice base. According to Nelson et al. (2017), the treatments or recovery programmes, are reasonably friendly to the basic beliefs of numerous substance abuse providers. For instance, the 12-step recovery program emphasizes much on the God and such practices might hinder in the participation of the non-believers. Further, it is emphasized by Bowen et al. (2009) upon the acceptance, mindfulness, spirituality and behaviour change of the interventionists regarding the recovery program. It is stated that, the experiential avoidance or the attempts to regulate feelings, thoughts and other private behaviours, even when efforts are made to do so, cause critical behavioural harm in this area.

**7. Findings and Discussion**

In this study, the role of parenting styles and their impact on adolescent substance abuse is studied through a review of literature. The risk of becoming a substance abuser depends on the association between the number of risk factors such as deviant behaviour and attitude and the protective factors that can be parental support. The exposure of the adolescents towards the risk factors can aggravate their behaviour towards destruction and substance use. However, some risk factors prevail when there are other conditions such as environment affecting the overall perspectives of an individual. For example, in a family where parents or other relatives indulge in substance abuse, then the child is also at risk of developing the same habit. On the other hand, a family environment where parents pay attention, with no drug-abusive parents and peers, the probability of the child to attract towards drugs is less.

The different interventions and preventing strategies are studied to understand their effectiveness in protecting adolescents from substance abuse. The below table provide inputs gained from the review of literature on the parenting styles and impact made on substance abuse among adolescents.

Table 1: Role of parenting style on adolescent substance abuse

Authors	Role of parenting styles
Benchaya et al. (2019)	In the study, with adolescents that who are already presenting drug abuse problems, the parenting style seems to be of modest influence for adolescent’s drug use behavioural changes.
Berge, Sundell, Öjehagen, & Håkansson (2016)	Authoritative parenting style was associated with less frequent drinking, whereas, neglectful parenting style was associated with worse substance use outcomes across all substances.
Brewer (2017)	The more positive parenting behaviours (e.g., parental involvement) and fewer negative parenting behaviours (e.g., poor monitoring of youth) is associated with less substance use and related problems among these at-risk adolescents.
Posey (2014)	Adolescents with Authoritarian, Uninvolved, and Permissive parenting are more likely to use substances than youth with Authoritative parenting.

Apart from parenting style, other intervention strategies and prevention programs are in place that help in avoiding the treating the addiction of substance abuse among adolescents. Interventions are developed to address the type of drug abuse problem in the local community, target modifiable risk factors, and strengthen

identified protective factors. The development of such programs is customized as per the personalities of adolescents, their background, and demographics. Most school-based and family-based interventions focus on preventing such behaviour among youth by providing them with correct information on the matter and helping them acquire necessary resistance and communication skills. Forming family bonds and relationships are also crucial forms of intervention for protecting and preventing adolescent substance abuse. The intervention programs aim to improve family functioning, communication skills, and provide training to help families discuss and develop family policies on substance abuse.

## 8. Conclusion

Substance abuse is a key matter of concern that affects the mental and physical wellbeing of adolescents indulging in such risk-taking behaviour. It is found from this review that different risk factors such as aggressive behaviour, peer pressure, drug availability, and a lack of parental control widely affect and motivate the adolescents to use substances and drugs. The study recognizes the need to identify such risk factors and develop interventions that best assist families and adolescents to overcome the need to use drugs. Parental style is a crucial aspect that affects the behaviour and intentions of the adolescents towards their indulgence in substance abuse, alcoholism, and smoking tobacco. The authoritative parental style can be considered more protective and beneficial for the normal development of youngsters, resulting in good relationships, academic success, and positive psychosocial adjustment, and is therefore likely to prevent drug-related problems. Authoritative parenting style is observed to have a positive impact on the adolescents, and therefore, there is a need to develop interventions that help parents understand the parenting style and practice it for the benefit of their children.

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