

Adolescent Health Risk Behaviors and the Mediating Effects of Family Dynamics and Socio-Demographic Factors

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Abstract : Background: Dramatic physical development, socioemotional adjustment, and cognitive changes highlight adolescent development. Adolescent brains are susceptible to emotional reactivity, making them likely to engage in risk-taking and impulsive behaviors. The family is crucial in laying the foundations of good health. Aims: This study determined the degree of family cohesion, quality of father-child and mother-child relationships, and degree of academic pressure across cultures, age groups, and sexual orientations. Further, it sought the prevalence of adolescent health concerns, including suicide risks, risk-taking behaviors, social media engagement, and self-care deviations. Finally, the correlations between health risk behaviors and the elements of family dynamics were unraveled. Methods: The descriptive-correlational design served as the blueprint for this study. Data were collected from 1095 adolescents aged 12-21 in two high schools and two universities in Baguio City using self-report questionnaires. Data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel Toolpak and IBM SPSS Statistics to identify significant differences and relationships among variables through descriptive statistics (frequency, %, means and figures) and inferential statistics (ANOVA and logistic regression). Results and Discussion: Adolescents generally have strong family cohesion (FC), high-quality father-child relationships (F-CR), very high-quality mother-child relationships(M-CR), and experience high academic pressure (AP). Cultural affiliation does not influence the 4 elements of family dynamics; the higher the age, the stronger the family cohesion; males score significantly higher on family cohesion and mother-child relationship while significantly lower in perceived academic pressure compared to their female and LGBT counterparts. Suicide risk is prevalent among 29-63% of the population, safety issues have the lowest prevalence for having an abusive relationship (8.22%) and the highest for encountering major family changes (53.52%). Substance use was highest for vaping (22.74%), sexual engagement occurs in 14.61% of the population, while 63% are engaged in social media for >5 hours/day. The self-care deviation is highest for weight concerns (63.39%), lack of visits to health care professionals (64.65%) and lack of exercise (49.94%). All 4 elements of family dynamic (FC, F-CR, M-CR and AP) are significantly associated with safety concerns, suicide risks and social media engagement, while M-CR significantly influences cigarette smoking, alcohol drinking, rugby use and engagement in sex. Conclusion and Recommendations: Strong family cohesion and quality parent-child interactions improve emotional and behavioral outcomes. Sexual orientation has a significant impact on academic pressure and social media use, demanding targeted treatments. The link between family dynamics and health-risk behaviors emphasizes the importance of promoting positive family relationships and encouraging safer behaviors, which are critical for increasing adolescents' well-being.

Keywords : adolescent health, family cohesion, health risk behaviors, suicide risk

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