

Family Management, Relations Risk and Protective Factors for Adolescent Substance Abuse in South Africa

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Abstract : An increasingly recognised prevention approach for substance use entails reduction in risk factors and enhancement of promotive or protective factors in individuals and the environment surrounding them during their growth and development. However, in order to enhance the effectiveness of this approach, continuous study of risk aspects targeting different cultures, social groups and mixture of society has been recommended. This study evaluated the impact of potential risk and protective factors associated with family management and relations on adolescent substance abuse in South Africa. Exploratory analysis and cumulative odds ordinal logistic regression modelling was performed on the data while controlling for demographic and socio-economic characteristics on adolescent substance use. The most intensely used substances were tobacco, cannabis, cocaine, heroin and alcohol in decreasing order of use intensity. The specific protective or risk impact of family management or relations factors varied from substance to substance. Risk factors associated with demographic and socio-economic factors included being male, younger age, being in lower education grades, coloured ethnicity, adolescents from divorced parents and unemployed or fully employed mothers. Significant family relations risk and protective factors against substance use were classified as either family functioning and conflict or family bonding and support. Several family management factors, categorised as parental monitoring, discipline, behavioural control and rewards, demonstrated either risk or protective effect on adolescent substance use. Some factors had either interactive risk or protective impact on substance use or lost significance when analysed jointly with other factors such as controlled variables. Interaction amongst risk or protective factors as well as the type of substance should be considered when further considering interventions based on these risk or protective factors. Studies in other geographical regions, institutions and with better gender balance are recommended to improve upon the representativeness of the results. Several other considerations to be made when formulating interventions, the shortcomings of this study and possible improvements as well as future studies are also suggested.

Keywords : risk factors, protective factors, substance use, adolescents

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