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Examining the Impact of Social Media Exposure and Adverse Childhood Experiences (Aces) On Substance Abuse Susceptibility among Out-Of-School Adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis A Study of Risk Factors and Vulnerabilities in Youth Development

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Abstract: *The study examines the impact of exposure to social media and the presence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on susceptibility to substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria. A cross-sectional research design was adopted to select 60 participants, which were drawn from Ibadan North, Ibadan North East, and Ibadan Southwest local government areas. The survey instruments were used to collect data on social media exposure, ACEs, and substance abuse susceptibility among out-of-school adolescents. Correlation and regression analyses were used in testing the hypotheses. Results showed that both social media exposure and ACEs significantly and positively related susceptibility to substance abuse. Furthermore, the combined effect of these predictors explained a very substantial percentage of variance in substance abuse, with their contributions being significant. It was then concluded that social media exposure and ACEs combinedly emerged as important predictors of substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents. Interventions could include trauma-informed care and social media education in preventive initiatives. This study contributes to the understanding of how substance abuse plays among adolescents in Nigeria but will shed more light on what psychological mechanisms are at play.*

Keywords: Social media exposure, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Substance abuse, Out-of-school adolescents

1. INTRODUCTION

Substance use remains a worldwide public health issue that affects millions of adolescents worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (2022), it has become a growing concern among adolescents whereby early onset leads to long-term health, psychosocial, and economic impacts. The prevalence of substance use by young people is mostly higher in developed countries, where alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use is associated with psychosocial problems. Nevertheless, developing countries are increasingly beginning to face the same problems as adolescent substance abuse is growing at an alarming scale in the countries. Patterns are set by many factors, most of them social, psychological, or environmental which vary by region.

The health consequence of substance use among adolescent has now become a very important public health issue in Africa because countries are reporting very high rates of substance use. It is clear from the statistics of the World Health Organization (2021) that adolescent substance use disorders in African countries are characterized by social-economic difficulties, inadequate access to mental health services, and socio-cultural phenomenology towards substance use. Furthermore, rapid urbanization and global media exposure have aggravated the artefacts. African adolescents are highly at risk for factors that lead to substance use, yet very few countries have programs that can address the burgeoning problem. All of these call for analyzing local factors encouraging substance abuse among African adolescents.

Sub-Saharan Africa, specifically, faces unique challenges regarding substance abuse among young people. According to a study by Abubakar et al. (2022), in Sub-Saharan Africa, substance use is often compounded by issues like poverty, lack of education, and inadequate healthcare systems. The prevalence of alcohol and drug use in this region is rising steadily, particularly among adolescents who are out of school, a group that faces increased vulnerabilities due to lack of structure and guidance. In many Sub-Saharan African countries, there is limited research on the causes and consequences of adolescent substance abuse, making it difficult to develop effective strategies to mitigate the issue. This highlights the need for focused studies on the factors that influence substance abuse within the region, particularly in urban settings like Ibadan. In addition to this, Omopo and Odedokun (2024) emphasize the role of therapy and cognitive-behavioral interventions in reducing addictive behaviors among incarcerated individuals, showing the potential of similar approaches for addressing substance abuse in adolescent populations.

In Nigeria, the situation mirrors that of many other African nations, where substance abuse has become a significant concern. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2021), Nigerian adolescents face numerous challenges, including high

unemployment, exposure to peer pressure, and limited educational opportunities. Among the out-of-school youth, these risk factors contribute to higher rates of substance use and abuse. The Nigerian government and various organizations have recognized the importance of addressing adolescent substance abuse, but effective interventions are still limited. Recent studies, such as those by Adeyemi and Olorunsola (2023), have begun to explore the factors influencing substance abuse among Nigerian adolescents, pointing to the need for a more nuanced understanding of local predictors. In a similar vein, Omopo (2024) delves into the psychosocial impacts of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) on individuals, an issue that often intersects with substance abuse in adolescents who have faced significant trauma.

Substance abuse among adolescents is becoming a significant problem in Southwest Nigeria, specifically in Ibadan Metropolis. Research by Olabode and others (2022) showed that most adolescents beset with social and environmental pressures often turn to substance abuse; many of them are out of school, creating a major problem to the community at large. That region has a youthful population, and they very quickly urbanize, which ultimately is bringing about social disruptions. This has increased their exposure to substances like alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco. Even with this growing concern, there is scarce literature that exclusively examines the predictors of substance use among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan. The findings further necessitate the need for a comprehensive investigation of the factors accounting for the demography. It becomes more evident given that there are no such interventions meant to address these peculiar challenges, which makes a case for a localized approach, informed by studies such as that of Ibrahim et al. (2024), focusing on the wider impacts of parental substance abuse on youth behavior in Nigeria.

The exposure of adolescents through social media would be another contributing factor that plays a defining role in modulating their behaviors, attitudes, and even influencing their social interactions. Cohen et al. (2023) reports that high exponents of social media have a greater risk of being involved in such risky behaviors as the abuse of illicit substances. They are avenues through which peer pressures and glorification of substance use reach adolescents to try out drugs and alcohol. The impact of this form of media is felt more by out-of-school adolescents as they are now left with more unsupervised time. There are studies that prove that social media is an avenue to expose an adolescent to material that normalizes or even promotes substance use.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are another critical factor in understanding substance abuse among adolescents. ACEs, including physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction, have been consistently linked to a higher likelihood of substance abuse in adolescence (Felitti et al., 2019). According to Omopo *et al.* (2024), adolescents who experience negative experiences often use substances as a coping mechanism to manage the trauma they have faced. In Ibadan Metropolis, many adolescents, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are likely to have experienced some form of childhood adversity, which may increase their susceptibility to substance use. The link between ACEs and substance abuse underscores the need for early interventions to address trauma and its long-term impacts on adolescent behavior. Studies such as those by Omopo (2024) on PTSD can help illuminate the ways in which traumatic experiences may contribute to substance abuse, offering valuable insights for interventions.

There are critical gaps in understanding the factors influencing substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan concerning social media exposure and adverse childhood experiences from existing literature. Whereas studies have been carried out on substance abuse among adolescents in general, so little has focused on the way these two predictors influence substance abuse among adolescents in Ibadan. The research also lacks localized attention, considering the specificity of the innumerable social, cultural, and economic factors that shape and define the lives of adolescents living in this metropolitan locality. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how social media exposure and ACEs contribute to substance use among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis. In so doing, this research contributes to knowledge on how the above-mentioned factors interact and how they contribute to an understanding of developing targeted interventions that address this increasing problem in the area.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of social media exposure and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as predictors of substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. Specifically, this study aims to explore how these two factors contribute to the likelihood of substance use, with a focus on understanding the mechanisms through which social media and ACEs shape adolescents' behavior. By examining the relationship between social media usage, adverse childhood experiences, and substance abuse, this research seeks to highlight the unique vulnerabilities faced by adolescents in urban Nigerian settings and contribute to the development of targeted interventions for this population.

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the relationship between social media exposure, ACEs, and substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis.
2. To determine the combined effect of social media exposure and ACEs on substance abuse susceptibility among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis.
3. To assess the relative contributions of social media exposure and ACEs to substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis.

1.2 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between social media exposure, ACEs, and substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis.
2. There is no significant combined effect of social media exposure and ACEs on substance abuse susceptibility among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis.
3. There is no significant relative contribution of social media exposure and ACEs to substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis.

2. METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed to investigate the influence of social media exposure and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. The methodology is divided into six sections: Research Design, Population, Sampling Technique and Sample Size, Instrumentation, Method of Data Collection, and Method of Data Analysis.

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive survey design, which enabled the researcher to gather data from a sample and make inferences about the broader population. This approach was appropriate for exploring the relationships between social media exposure, ACEs, and substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents. It allowed for the collection of empirical data and its subsequent analysis using statistical tools to draw conclusions about the target group.

2.2. Population

The population for this study consisted of out-of-school adolescents aged 13 to 19 years within Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria. These adolescents were considered vulnerable to substance abuse due to a variety of socio-environmental factors, including exposure to social media and negative childhood experiences. The study aimed to understand how these factors contributed to substance abuse in this demographic.

2.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study consisted of 60 out-of-school adolescents, selected using a two-stage sampling technique.

Stage 1: Three local government areas (LGAs): Ibadan North, Ibadan Northeast, and Ibadan Southwest were randomly selected from the existing LGAs within Ibadan Metropolis. This ensured that the sample covered diverse areas within the metropolis.

Stage 2: A snowball sampling technique was employed to identify 20 out-of-school adolescents from each of the three selected LGAs, resulting in a total sample size of 60 respondents. Snowball sampling was selected due to its ability to identify hard-to-reach populations, such as out-of-school adolescents, who may not have been easily accessible through conventional sampling methods. Initial respondents were asked to refer others from their communities who met the study's criteria.

2.4 Instrumentation

The instruments used for this study were designed to assess the key variables of interest: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Social Media Exposure, and Substance Abuse. Below are the details of the scales used to measure each of these variables.

2.4.1 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Scale

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Scale was adapted from the original scale developed by Felitti et al. (1998). This scale was designed to assess the extent to which respondents had experienced childhood trauma, including abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. The ACEs scale consists of 10 items that reflect common childhood adversities, such as physical or emotional abuse, parental separation, and substance abuse within the family. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had experienced

each of the listed adversities, with response options of "Yes" or "No." The scale's reliability coefficient, reported by Felitti et al., was found to be high, with a Cronbach alpha of 0.88, indicating strong internal consistency.

2.4.2 Social Media Exposure Scale

The Social Media Exposure Scale was adapted from the Social Media and Academic Influence Scale (SMAIS) developed by Ahmad et al. (2017). This scale was originally designed to measure students' social media engagement in relation to academic activities but was modified for the purpose of assessing its influence on substance abuse behaviors among adolescents. The scale consists of 14 items, covering four key dimensions: Access to Social Media, Academic Communication, Exposure, and Behavioral Influence. Respondents rated each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (SD) to "Strongly Agree" (SA). Example items include: "I access social media via my phone, tablet, or computer" and "I use social media to engage in behaviors that I would not do offline." The reliability of the scale has been reported with Cronbach alpha coefficients of 0.71 for Access to Social Media, 0.70 for Academic Communication, 0.70 for Exposure, and 0.70 for Behavioral Influence, showing satisfactory internal consistency.

2.4.3 Substance Abuse Scale

The Substance Abuse Scale was adapted from the Substance Use Risk Profile Scale (SURPS) developed by Sher et al. (2005). This scale was designed to assess adolescents' tendencies toward substance abuse, specifically focusing on alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use. It consists of 20 items rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Never" to "Very Often." The scale measures various dimensions of substance use, including frequency of use, patterns of consumption, and perceptions of substance-related risk. Example items include: "I have used alcohol or drugs to escape my problems" and "I have been involved in activities where alcohol or drugs were used." The scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with a reported Cronbach alpha of 0.85, indicating reliable measurement of substance abuse tendencies.

2.5 Method of Data Collection

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to participants across the selected LGAs. The data collection process took place in community centers and other accessible locations. Each participant was provided with instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, and the researcher was available to clarify any questions. The average time for completing the questionnaire was approximately 30 minutes. The completed questionnaires were collected immediately after they were filled out.

2.6 Method of Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize the demographic data and responses to the various scales. Inferential statistics, including Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis, were employed to examine the relationships between the independent variables (social media exposure and ACEs) and the dependent variable (substance abuse). Pearson's correlation was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationships, while multiple regression analysis was applied to determine the combined effects of the independent variables on substance abuse. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 significance level.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the participants and the results of hypothesis testing.

3.1 Demographic Representation of the Participants

The sample comprised 60 out-of-school adolescents from three local government areas (LGAs) in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria. Below is the demographic breakdown of the participants.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	35	58.33
Female	25	41.67

Age		
14-16 years	15	25.00
17-19 years	45	75.00
Family Type		
Nuclear Family	38	63.33
Extended Family	22	36.67
School Type		
Public School	48	80.00
Private School	12	20.00
Local Government Area		
Ibadan North LGA	20	33.33
Ibadan North East LGA	20	33.33
Ibadan Southwest LGA	20	33.33

The sample consisted of 58.33% male and 41.67% female adolescents. The majority of participants (75%) were aged 17–19 years, which indicates that older adolescents are more likely to be out of school. Regarding family structure, 63.33% of participants came from nuclear families, while 36.67% had extended families. Most of the participants (80%) had attended public schools before dropping out, with 20% attending private schools. The participants were equally distributed across the three selected LGAs in Ibadan Metropolis: Ibadan North, Ibadan North East, and Ibadan Southwest, each representing 33.33% of the sample.

3.2 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between social media exposure, ACEs, and substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis.

A Pearson's Product-Moment correlation was computed to assess the relationships between social media exposure, ACEs, and substance abuse.

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation between Social Media Exposure, ACEs, and Substance Abuse

Variable	Social Media Exposure	ACEs	Substance Abuse
Social Media Exposure	1.00	0.45	0.51 ($p < 0.01$)
ACEs	0.45	1.00	0.52 ($p < 0.01$)
Substance Abuse	0.51 ($p < 0.01$)	0.52 ($p < 0.01$)	1.00

The correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between social media exposure, ACEs, and substance abuse ($p < 0.01$). Both social media exposure and ACEs were positively correlated with substance abuse, suggesting that adolescents with higher levels of exposure to social media and adverse childhood experiences were more likely to engage in substance abuse. This result indicates a significant relationship between these factors and substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis, thus rejecting the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant combined effect of social media exposure and ACEs on substance abuse susceptibility among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis.

To test this hypothesis, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the combined effect of social media exposure and ACEs on substance abuse susceptibility.

Table 4.3: Multiple Regression Analysis of Social Media Exposure and ACEs on Substance Abuse Susceptibility

Variable	B	t-value	p-value
Social Media Exposure	0.38	3.35	0.002
ACEs	0.42	3.72	0.001
R^2 (Adjusted)	0.49		
F-value	23.67		0.001

The regression analysis showed a significant combined effect of social media exposure and ACEs on substance abuse susceptibility, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.49 ($p < 0.01$). Both social media exposure ($\beta = 0.38$, $p = 0.002$) and ACEs ($\beta = 0.42$, $p = 0.001$) significantly contributed to the model, suggesting that these two factors together explained 49% of the variability in substance abuse susceptibility. This result indicates a strong combined effect, and therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relative contribution of social media exposure and ACEs to substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis.

To evaluate the relative contribution of each predictor (social media exposure and ACEs), a stepwise regression analysis was conducted.

Table 4.4: Stepwise Regression Analysis of Relative Contribution of Social Media Exposure and ACEs to Substance Abuse

Variable	β	t-value	p-value
Social Media Exposure	0.39	3.29	0.003
ACEs	0.45	3.87	0.001

The stepwise regression analysis revealed that both social media exposure and ACEs were significant predictors of substance abuse. Social media exposure ($\beta = 0.39$, $p = 0.003$) and ACEs ($\beta = 0.45$, $p = 0.001$) each contributed significantly to the model. ACEs showed a slightly stronger contribution to substance abuse than social media exposure, but both factors played critical roles in predicting substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, as both variables made significant relative contributions.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Hypothesis 1: The Relationship between Social Media Exposure, ACEs, and Substance Abuse

The results indicated a significant positive relationship between social media exposure and substance abuse. This suggests that increased exposure to social media is associated with a higher likelihood of engaging in substance abuse among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis. One possible explanation for this finding is that social media platforms often glamorize substance use, presenting it as a desirable or normal activity. Such portrayals may influence adolescents to imitate these behaviors, especially when they are in the process of forming their identities. Social media also exposes adolescents to peer pressure, as many may engage in risky behaviors, such as substance use, to fit in or gain approval within online communities. Social comparison, the tendency to measure oneself against others seen online, can further reinforce these behaviors, especially when adolescents compare themselves to influencers or celebrities endorsing certain lifestyles (Levine & Murnen, 2009).

Prior research has also found that adolescents exposed to substance-related content on social media are more likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol. Kuss and Griffiths (2017) highlighted that social media platforms serve as a medium for peer influence, often reinforcing unhealthy behaviors. Furthermore, the rise of "influencers" who share lifestyle content including partying and substance use can lead to normalization, potentially encouraging substance abuse. This finding is consistent with studies showing that social media can exacerbate adolescent vulnerability to risky behaviors, especially in environments where real-life guidance and social support may be lacking (Moreno et al., 2016). This emphasizes the need for educational programs to address media literacy

and the harmful effects of social media, enabling adolescents to critically engage with online content and reduce the influence of harmful portrayals of substance use.

Similarly, the study found a positive relationship between ACEs and substance abuse, suggesting that adolescents with higher levels of adverse childhood experiences are more likely to engage in substance use. ACEs include a variety of childhood traumas such as emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. These experiences can have long-term negative effects on emotional regulation, mental health, and behavior, often leading adolescents to turn to substances as a form of coping. Adolescents with ACEs may lack the necessary emotional coping mechanisms and may seek drugs or alcohol to numb the pain of past trauma (Dube et al., 2003). Additionally, ACEs can impair the development of healthy relationships and attachment, leading adolescents to engage in risky behaviors, such as substance abuse, as they seek acceptance from peers in maladaptive social groups (Hughes et al., 2017).

These findings align with existing literature, which consistently demonstrates that individuals with higher ACE scores are at a greater risk for substance use and other behavioral problems. For example, Anda et al. (2006) showed that people who experienced multiple ACEs were significantly more likely to use illicit substances. The physiological and psychological toll of ACEs on the brain, particularly in areas responsible for emotional regulation and stress response, may contribute to an increased tendency to engage in substance use (Felitti et al., 1998). This highlights the importance of addressing childhood trauma in prevention programs to mitigate its long-term effects. Furthermore, trauma-informed interventions that focus on healing emotional wounds and teaching healthy coping strategies are essential in preventing substance abuse among adolescents who have experienced ACEs.

4.2 Hypothesis 2: The Combined Effect of Social Media Exposure and ACEs on Substance Abuse Susceptibility

The findings from the regression analysis indicated that social media exposure and ACEs have a significant combined effect on substance abuse susceptibility among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis. This outcome suggests that both factors, when considered together, explain a substantial portion of the variability in adolescents' likelihood to engage in substance abuse. Social media exposure, with its pervasive influence, and ACEs, which can have long-lasting psychological effects, work synergistically to increase the risk of substance abuse. The combined presence of these factors presents a heightened vulnerability to maladaptive coping mechanisms, such as substance use, which may serve as a means of escaping emotional distress triggered by past trauma or social pressures encountered on social media.

Social media platforms, through the constant sharing of images, videos, and posts that often glorify substance use, create an environment where adolescents are more likely to normalize such behaviors. Social media serves as a conduit for peer influence, as adolescents observe and may try to replicate behaviors they see online. This exposure, coupled with ACEs, creates a potent risk factor for substance abuse. Adolescents who have experienced traumatic events in their childhood may be more susceptible to the negative impacts of media, as they may lack the emotional resources or coping strategies to deal with the pressures and challenges presented in both real life and the digital world. The interaction between these factors shows that both emotional vulnerability due to trauma and external influences from media can significantly increase the likelihood of substance abuse.

Existing literature supports these findings, with studies highlighting the influence of social media on adolescent behavior. Research has shown that exposure to substance-related content on social media correlates with increased substance use in adolescents, as they are more likely to adopt behaviors that they see being normalized by their peers (Moreno et al., 2016). Additionally, ACEs have been consistently linked to an increased risk of substance use, as individuals who have experienced childhood trauma may use substances to cope with feelings of powerlessness, shame, or emotional pain (Anda et al., 2006). The combination of these two factors thus enhances the susceptibility to substance abuse in a way that each factor alone may not. The compounded effect of ACEs and social media exposure underscores the complexity of substance abuse among adolescents and highlights the need for targeted interventions that address both psychological and environmental risk factors.

The significance of the combined effect of social media exposure and ACEs on substance abuse susceptibility also suggests that interventions aiming to reduce substance use in adolescents should not focus solely on one factor. For instance, efforts to reduce the harmful influence of social media should be complemented by trauma-informed interventions that address the psychological and emotional needs of adolescents who have experienced ACEs. Research by Masten and Cicchetti (2010) has emphasized the importance of understanding how different risk factors interact in shaping adolescent behavior, pointing to the need for multifaceted interventions. These interventions could include media literacy programs, which help adolescents critically evaluate the content they encounter online, alongside therapeutic support that helps them process and cope with past traumatic experiences.

The findings also align with the biopsychosocial model, which suggests that multiple factors biological, psychological, and social interact to influence behavior (Germain and Paquette). The combination of social media and ACEs can create a vulnerable psychological state, where adolescents may be more likely to turn to substance use as a coping mechanism. This model emphasizes the complexity of adolescent substance use, where both internal emotional struggles and external social pressures can influence

behavior. Future research should further explore the interplay between these factors and examine how different types of social media content or specific types of ACEs (e.g., physical abuse, neglect) may have varying levels of impact on substance abuse susceptibility.

The significant combined effect of social media exposure and ACEs on substance abuse susceptibility highlights the complex interaction of psychological and social risk factors in adolescent substance use. The result suggests that interventions targeting only one of these factors may not be sufficient to reduce substance abuse risks. A holistic approach, incorporating both media literacy and trauma-informed care, may offer a more effective strategy for addressing substance abuse in adolescents. Continued research on the interaction between these factors will be essential in developing more nuanced and effective prevention and intervention programs.

4.3 Hypothesis 3: The Relative Contribution of Social Media Exposure and ACEs to Substance Abuse

The stepwise regression analysis demonstrated that both social media exposure and ACEs significantly contributed to substance abuse susceptibility among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis. Both factors were found to be critical predictors of substance abuse, with ACEs having a slightly stronger relative contribution than social media exposure. This indicates that, although both factors play substantial roles, childhood adversity may have a deeper, more lasting impact on adolescents' likelihood of engaging in substance abuse. The findings highlight the importance of addressing these dual influences in efforts aimed at reducing substance abuse in this population.

Social media exposure has been identified as a key risk factor for substance abuse, especially when adolescents encounter content that glamorizes or normalizes drug use. Social media platforms often serve as venues where peers promote substances, whether directly or indirectly, making them accessible to vulnerable adolescents. This exposure can influence adolescents' attitudes toward substance use, increasing their susceptibility to engaging in such behaviors themselves (Moreno et al., 2016). The pervasive nature of social media ensures that adolescents are constantly exposed to these messages, further amplifying the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors such as substance abuse. Thus, the significant contribution of social media exposure to substance abuse can be attributed to its role in shaping adolescents' perceptions and behaviors through continuous and often unchecked content.

On the other hand, ACEs, which include experiences of abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction, have been well-documented as strong predictors of substance abuse. Adolescents who have experienced traumatic events are more likely to turn to substances as a coping mechanism to manage the emotional pain and psychological scars left by those experiences. The significant contribution of ACEs to substance abuse susceptibility in this study aligns with extensive research linking childhood trauma with a higher risk of later substance misuse (Anda et al., 2006). Such traumatic experiences can disrupt emotional regulation and make it more difficult for adolescents to manage stress without external aids, such as drugs or alcohol. The stronger relative contribution of ACEs in this study suggests that these early-life experiences may create a more entrenched vulnerability to substance abuse than social media exposure alone.

Both social media exposure and ACEs are powerful but distinct factors that shape adolescents' risk for substance abuse. While social media exposure represents an ongoing and external influence, ACEs are deeply ingrained, long-lasting experiences that shape adolescents' emotional and psychological resilience. The combined effect of these two factors is compounded, creating a heightened risk environment where adolescents are more likely to seek substances as a means of escape or coping. This is consistent with studies suggesting that multiple risk factors, especially when experienced together, significantly increase the likelihood of substance abuse in young people (Masten & Cicchetti, 2010).

The findings underscore the need for interventions that address both external and internal factors influencing adolescent substance abuse. Preventive programs should focus on educating adolescents about the dangers of substance use and teaching them how to critically engage with content they encounter on social media. Additionally, trauma-informed care is essential for adolescents with ACEs, as these individuals may require specialized support to cope with the emotional and psychological challenges associated with their past experiences. By addressing both the external influences of social media and the internal vulnerabilities created by ACEs, interventions can be more effective in preventing substance abuse.

The results of this analysis confirm the importance of considering both social and psychological factors in addressing substance abuse among adolescents. While social media exposure and ACEs individually contribute to substance abuse, their combined effect represents a complex interaction that requires multifaceted prevention strategies. The dual influence of these factors highlights the need for interventions that are both preventive and therapeutic, addressing not only the external influences that adolescents face but also the internal emotional struggles that may drive them toward substance use.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of social media exposure and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on substance abuse susceptibility among out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis. The findings revealed that both social media exposure and ACEs significantly contributed to substance abuse risk, with ACEs having a slightly stronger impact. The combined effect of these two factors accounted for a substantial portion of the variability in substance abuse susceptibility, confirming the importance of addressing both external and internal influences in adolescent behavior. These results highlight the complex interplay between environmental and personal factors, emphasizing the need for comprehensive intervention strategies.

5.1. Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between social media exposure, ACEs, and substance abuse, there are several limitations. First, the use of self-reported data may have introduced biases, as participants might have underreported or overstated their social media exposure and experiences of ACEs. Second, the study focused solely on out-of-school adolescents in Ibadan Metropolis, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other populations or geographical regions.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that interventions targeting substance abuse among adolescents consider both social media exposure and ACEs. Programs should educate adolescents about the potential risks associated with social media, including exposure to harmful content that normalizes substance use. Additionally, trauma-informed care should be integrated into prevention and treatment programs to address the psychological effects of ACEs. Schools, community centers, and other institutions should collaborate to create safe spaces for adolescents to discuss their experiences and receive support, with a focus on building resilience and healthy coping mechanisms.

5.3 Contributions to Knowledge

This study contributes to existing knowledge by highlighting the significant role of both social media exposure and ACEs in shaping substance abuse susceptibility among out-of-school adolescents. It adds to the growing body of literature that recognizes the multifaceted nature of adolescent substance abuse, incorporating both external (social media) and internal (ACEs) risk factors. By examining these factors in a specific context Ibadan Metropolis this research provides valuable insights into the unique challenges faced by Nigerian adolescents, which can inform localized intervention strategies.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

Further studies should explore the underlying mechanisms through which social media exposure and ACEs influence substance abuse, particularly focusing on the psychological and emotional processes involved. Longitudinal research could provide a deeper understanding of how these factors evolve over time and lead to substance abuse in adulthood. Additionally, future research could examine the effectiveness of specific intervention programs that address both social media exposure and ACEs, to evaluate their impact on reducing substance abuse among adolescents. Expanding the sample to include both in-school and out-of-school adolescents across different regions would enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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