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The Association Between Household Members' Substance Use and Substance Use Among Adolescent Boys in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh: An Analysis of Longitudinal Data

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Abstract

The increase in substance use among adolescents posed a significant public health challenge in India. Parental substance use negatively impacted children, while family support helped reduce substance use. Existing evidence linking household members' substance use to adolescent substance use primarily relied on cross-sectional data. This study addressed this gap by utilizing longitudinal data. Two waves of the UDAYA study provided the data, focusing on 2,716 adolescent boys aged 15 to 19 years. The dependent variables included substance use among adolescents at Wave-2, specifically substance use in the last three years and the use of substances more than once a week in the past month. All explanatory variables were derived from Wave-1. The results indicated that the lifetime prevalence of any form of substance use among adolescent boys rose from 21% at Wave-1 to 46% at Wave-2. The multivariate analysis showed that the substance use of household members affected substance use among adolescent boys. The findings suggest enhancing health education on substance use among adolescent boys through mass media and school health programs. Furthermore, interventions aimed at discouraging substance use engage elders. Steps should be taken to strengthen the rehabilitation system for those seeking to quit substance use.

Keywords

Adolescents, Bihar,
Health education,
Substance use, Uttar
Pradesh

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Introduction

Adolescence is a critical stage of development between childhood and adulthood, physically, emotionally, socially, and behaviourally. Substance abuse among adolescents poses a serious concern globally (Gore et al., 2011) and significantly contributes to premature death and diseases (Nyhlen et al., 2011; Kumar et al., 2014). Early substance use is a strong predictor of later substance use and disorders (Moss et al., 2014; Jordan and Andersen, 2017). In India, the prevalence of substance abuse among adolescents is steadily rising, posing significant challenges for public health professionals, policy makers, and stakeholders (Patel et al., 2007). Existing studies link adolescent substance use with factors such as age, education, socioeconomic status, employment, peer influence, and drug culture (Jiloha, 2017; Gibbs et al., 2018; Saikia & Debbarma, 2020). The household plays a crucial role in preventing substance use among adolescents. The substance use of family members is a significant factor affecting substance use among adolescents in both developed and developing countries (Lynskey et al., 1994; Leonardi-Bee et al., 2011; Srivastava et al., 2021). The literature indicates that parental substance use can negatively impact children (Peleg-Oren & Teichman, 2006). Kapoor et al. (1995) found that smoking by friends or siblings influences adolescent smoking behavior. A study conducted in the U.S. (Mayberry et al., 2009) demonstrated the impact of parents, peers, and communities on adolescent substance use behavior. Research has shown that substance use negatively affects behavioral and emotional patterns, ultimately leading to poor outcomes for both children and adults

(Lander et al., 2013). Evidence suggests that family support plays a significant role in reducing substance use (Jiloha, 2017; McCoy et al., 2020).

However, the available evidence comes primarily from other countries, revealing a lack of research on the family dimension in India, a nation recognized for its strong family values. Nevertheless, studies examining the association between family members' substance use and adolescent substance use have primarily relied on cross-sectional data (Srivastava et al., 2021). Longitudinal data is preferred to establish the temporal order of events, which is essential for assessing causality. It is also noted that research has predominantly focused on tobacco and/or alcohol use in India, with less emphasis on other forms of substance use (Singh & Ladusingh, 2014; Arora & Reddy, 2005).

So, the study aims to look at the association between household members' substance use and substance use among adolescent boys using UDAYA longitudinal data.

Data and Methods

The UDAYA survey aimed to study the levels and patterns affecting younger adolescents (ages 10-14) and older adolescents (ages 15-19), as well as to assess the factors influencing the quality of their transitions (Population Council, 2017). Data for the UDAYA study were collected in two rounds: a population-based survey of over 20,000 adolescents conducted in 2015-16 (Wave 1) to document their transition from adolescence to adulthood. Wave-2 was carried out among the same respondents in 2018-19, achieving an 80 percent follow-up rate with about 16,000 adolescents in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. However, this paper

focused on 2,716 adolescent boys aged 15–19 years.

The outcome variables were substance abuse among adolescents aged 15–19 years at Wave-2, specifically those who had experienced substance abuse in the last three years and had used substances more than once a week in the past month. All explanatory variables were from Wave-1. Substance use includes the use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs during the specified time periods.

The explanatory variables included household members' substance use (i.e., at least one family member, excluding the respondent, using substances (measured as yes or no), completed years of education (categorized as 5-7, 8-9, 10-11, and 12 and above), religion (Hindu, Muslim, and others), caste (general, scheduled caste/tribes, and other backward castes), wealth quintiles (poorer, medium, richer, and richest), engagement in paid work (yes or no), residence (urban or rural), gender role attitude (<4 statements and 4 out of 6 statements), number of friends (0, 1-2, 3-4, and 5 and above), attendance in family life education (yes or no), independent decision-making on all three items (yes or no), freedom of movement in at least two out of three places (yes or no), and parental communication regarding friends (yes or no).

An independent decision-making agency referred to individuals who had a say in all three decisions, such as the number of years of schooling they should pursue, major household purchases, and the choice to work or stay at home. Freedom of movement was defined as being allowed to visit unescorted in two out of three locations: either a shop or market or a friend

or relative within their village or ward, a shop or market or a friend or relative outside their village or ward, and a program (such as a mela, sports event, or adolescent group meetings) within their village or ward. The egalitarian gender role attitude was assessed using six statements. Those who had responded in an egalitarian manner to four out of six statements were classified as having an egalitarian gender attitude. The six statements included: fathers and mothers sharing responsibility for childcare; a girl having a male friend; girls' interest in being teased by boys; girls' right to be involved in decisions regarding the timing of their marriage; fathers' or husbands perceived right to decide how to spend household money; and the right of a husband to beat his wife. The study employed bivariate analysis to examine different types of substance use among adolescent boys, as well as their substance use in relation to the substance use of any household member. Lagged logistic regression analysis was utilized to assess the effect of household members' substance use at Wave 1 on substance use among adolescent boys at Wave 2, while controlling for other confounding factors present at Wave 1.

Results

Profile of the study sample

Table 1 presents the profile of the study sample. The sample adolescent boys are predominantly Hindu (85%) and rural (82%), with a notable representation of Other Backward Castes (56%), followed by Scheduled Castes/Tribes (27%). The mean wealth index score is 21 on a scale from 0 to 57, indicating a moderate economic status. About 69 percent of respondents reported that at least one family member uses some form of substance. Less than half (47%) of

respondents have parents who discuss their friends with them. In terms of education, more than one-third (38%) of adolescent boys have received education up to 10 years or more, and 31 percent were engaged in paid work in the year preceding the survey. Sixty-three percent of adolescent boys have more than three friends. Only 8 percent of

the boys reported having ever attended family life education in their schools or colleges. While most respondents support egalitarian gender role attitudes (74%) and possess mobility (97%), only 41% indicated having independent decision-making ability in all three measured areas.

Table 1 Profile of the study sample

Characteristics (Wave-1)	Percent
Household characteristics	
Religion (%)	
Hindu	85.2
Muslim	14.3
Others	0.46
Caste (%)	
Scheduled caste/tribes	27.0
Other backward castes	56.1
General	16.9
Wealth index (mean, range 0-57)	21.3
Rural residence (%)	82.4
At least one family member, excluding the respondent, is using some form of substances (%)	69.2
Parental communication regarding friends (%)	46.8
Individual characteristics	
Completed years of education (%)	
0-4	5.6
5-7	13.6
8-9	42.4
10-11	25.2
12 and above	13.2
Engaged in paid work in the last 12 months (%)	30.8
Number of friends (%)	
No friends	2.6
1-2	34.4
3-4	29.8
5 or more	33.2
Ever attended family life education (%)	7.9
Agency	
Egalitarian gender role attitude - 4 out of 6 statements (%)	74.1
Independent decision-making in all three items (%)	40.7
Have freedom of movement in at least 2 out of 3 places (%)	97.0
N	2,716

Use of substances among adolescent boys

The results shown in Table 2 indicate that all forms of substance use have increased among adolescents between the two survey rounds. From Wave 1 to Wave 2, the percentage of individuals who have ever consumed tobacco products rose from 19

percent to 45 percent; the percentage who have ever consumed alcohol increased from 7 percent to 25 percent; and the percentage of drug users grew from 1 percent to 4 percent. The rate of substance use among adolescent boys more than doubled from 20

percent at Wave-1 to 49 percent at Wave-2. The increase in recent substance users among adolescent boys who used substances in the past month reflects about a 16-percentage point increase in tobacco

product use. Over the inter-survey period, approximately 46 percent of adolescent boys reported using some form of substance in the past three years.

Table 2 Substance use among adolescent boys aged 15-19 years in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh

Substance use	Used any substance in the last month		Ever use of any substance		Any substance use in the last three years before
	Wave-1, 2015-16	Wave-2, 2018-19	Wave-1, 2015-16	Wave2, 2018-19	Wave-2, 2018-19
Ever consumed tobacco products	10.9	26.7	19.1	45.3	41.7
Ever had alcohol	0.2	1.6	6.6	24.8	21.7
Ever had drugs	0.1	0.7	0.9	3.7	3.3
Any substance use	10.9	27.2	20.4	49.3	45.8
N	2,716	2,716	2,716	2,716	2,716

The association between substance use by household members and substance use among adolescent boys

Table 3 shows the relationship between substance use among adolescent boys and substance use by any household member. The results indicate that the percentage of adolescent boys using any substance, regardless of the reference period, is significantly higher when any household member is using substances compared to other households where no family members use any substances. The table demonstrates

that 52 percent of adolescent boys use any substance if at least one family member is using any form of substance, compared to 43 percent where no family members use any form of substance.

Similarly, 48 percent of adolescents are influenced by their family member's substance use, as opposed to 40 percent from households with no family members using any forms of substances in the last three years. A similar pattern is observed for any substance use in the last one month.

Table 3 Substance use among adolescent boys aged 15-19 years by substance use among any members of the household

HH members' substance use	Ever used any substance among adolescent boys in wave 2015-16 and 2018-19**	
	No	Yes
No	56.7	43.3
Yes	48.0	52.0
	Ever used any substance in the last three years, wave 2, 2018-19**	
No	60.0	40.0
Yes	51.7	48.3
	Used any substance more than once in a week in the last one month, Wave 2, 2018-19***	
No	79.5	20.5
Yes	69.9	30.1
N	1,383	1,333

Note: ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$

Multivariate Results

Table 4 examine the net effect of household members' substance use on substance use among adolescent boys. The findings from the logistic regression also align with the results of the bivariate analysis. The results indicate that the likelihood of substance use among adolescents is 27 to 48 percent higher if at least one household member uses substances compared to other

households. Specifically, the odds ratio for ever having used substances among adolescent boys, if at least one household member uses substances, is 1.293 ($p < 0.050$); the odds are 1.479 ($p < 0.100$) for using substances in the last month; and 1.271 ($p < 0.050$) for ever having used substances in the last three years, compared to households where no one uses any substances.

Table 4 Results of logistic regression on any substance use of adolescent boys in wave 2

	Ever used substances	Ever used substances in the last three years	Used any substance more than once in a week in the last one month, Wave 2, 2018-19***
Household characteristics			
Religion (ref = Hindu ¹)			
Muslim	1.331	1.256	1.638*
Castes (Ref=General)			
Scheduled caste/tribes	1.487*	1.433	0.953
Other backward castes	1.071	1.037	0.786
Wealth quintiles (ref = Poorest)			
Poorer	0.793	0.882	0.736
Medium	0.858	0.911	0.591*
Richer	0.951	1.007	0.658
Richest	0.856	0.923	0.614
Rural residence (ref=Urban)	1.132	1.078	1.099
At least one family member, excluding the respondent, is using substances (Ref=no)	1.293*	1.272*	1.474**
Parental communication regarding friends (Ref=No)	0.879	0.832	0.940
Individual characteristics			
Completed years of education (Ref = 0-4)			
5-7	0.744	0.598	0.709
8-9	0.356**	0.323***	0.486*
10-11	0.330***	0.293***	0.359***
12 and above	0.327**	0.271***	0.274***
Engaged in paid work in the last 12 months (Ref=no)	2.608***	2.545***	3.237***
Number of friends (Ref=No friends)			
1-2	1.603	1.535	0.984
3-4	1.499	1.426	0.961
5 or more	2.353**	2.111*	1.205
Ever attended family life education (Ref=no)	0.664*	0.644*	0.606
Agency			
Gender role attitude - 4 out of 6 statements: (ref= <4 statements)	1.041	1.087	0.906
Independent decision-making in all three items (Ref=No)	1.128	1.101	1.095
Have freedom of movement in at least 2 out of 3 places (Ref=no)	2.187*	2.434*	2.767*
Constant	0.348	0.335	0.222*
N	2,716	2,716	2,716

Note: * $p < 0.050$; ** $p < 0.010$; *** $p < 0.001$. ¹Includes 12 boys of other religion.

Other confounding factors also showed a significant influence on substance use among adolescent boys. The results indicate that years of education is an important factor influencing substance use among this group. The odds of using substances decrease with each level of education, with the lowest odds ratio among adolescents with 12 or more years of education.

Adolescent boys who are externally exposed, such as those engaged in paid work and those with freedom of movement, are more likely to use substances than their counterparts. The odds for adolescent boys who have ever used substances and those who have abused substances in the past three years are 2.5 to 2.6 times higher than for adolescents who are not working. The agency for freedom of movement is also significantly associated with a higher likelihood of ever using substances compared to those without agency. Adolescents who have freedom of movement are 2.2 to 2.4 times statistically significantly more likely to have ever used any form of substance.

Lastly, family life education programs at schools and colleges have shown positive results. Adolescents who have attended any family life education programs are less likely to have ever used any form of substances (odds ratio: 0.64 to 0.66, $p < 0.050$).

Discussion

The study uses UDAYA survey data to examine the relationship between the substance use of at least one of the family members and substance use among adolescent boys. The study highlights an alarming trend of rapidly increasing substance use among adolescent boys as they transition into adulthood. Family

members can be both a risk factor for adolescents and a protective factor regarding substance use. A key finding of this study is that substance use within the family plays a significant role in influencing adolescents' own substance use patterns, emphasizing the intergenerational impact of such behaviors. In other words, family members' substance use is a risk factor for adolescents. This finding aligns with social learning theory, which posits that behaviours are learned through observation and imitation of close contacts. Adolescents living with family members who use substances may perceive such behavior as normative or acceptable, thereby increasing the likelihood of initiation. Earlier studies also supported this finding (Srivastava et al., 2021; Leonardi-Bee et al., 2011; Lynskey et al., 1994; Peleg-Oren & Teichman, 2006; Kapoor et al., 1995; Mayberry et al., 2009; Lander et al., 2013). On the positive side, the role of family members as a protective factor is recognized in family interventions aimed at reducing substance use among the youth (Foxcroft, 2012; Kumpfer et al., 2003; Kumar & Thomas, 2007).

Years of schooling and family life education emerge as strong protective factors, shielding adolescent boys from engaging in substance use. Adolescents who stay in school longer and receive structured guidance on health and well-being are less likely to initiate or continue substance use. Educational institutions serve as a good platform for early intervention regarding substance use among adolescents. Extended schooling may not only occupy adolescents' time and reduce opportunities for risky behaviors, but also increase their exposure to structured environments and adult supervision. Educational institutions also facilitate the development of critical thinking and coping skills, which are

essential for resisting peer pressure. Family life education, specifically, equips adolescents with the knowledge and emotional intelligence needed to navigate stress, relationships, and decision-making—factors that are often linked to the onset of substance use. The effectiveness of school-based life skills education lies in its ability to reach adolescents during formative years when they are most receptive to behavioral guidance. These programs can address the root causes of substance use, such as poor self-esteem, inability to manage peer pressure, and lack of awareness about consequences. A few studies have evaluated the effect of classroom interventions and life skills training on reducing substance use and found that early intervention is effective in mitigating such behaviors (Jensen et al., 2007; Buller et al., 2008; Elder et al., 2012; Foxcroft & Tsertsvadze, 2011; Castro et al., 2022; Moshki et al., 2014). The present study also supports implementing life skills education through schools and colleges.

However, external exposure and mobility—the ability to move freely and engage with the outside world—pose significant risk factors for substance use among adolescents. Peer pressure is one of the risk factors associated with substance abuse (Hall et al., 2016; Steinberg, 2014). Greater external interactions, especially in unregulated environments, may increase their likelihood of experimenting with substances. This underscores the critical role of structured socialization and supervised mobility in preventing early initiation into substance use.

Conclusion

Findings stress the urgent need to ensure that adolescents remain in regular schooling

and have access to quality education. Strengthening health education on substance use through mass media campaigns and school health programs is essential for raising awareness and fostering informed decision-making among adolescents. School-based intervention programs showed a significant reduction in substance use, especially during adolescence (Alasco-Rosales et al., 2021; Onrust et al., 2016; Mattoo et al., 2018). Additionally, interventions aimed at discouraging substance use should not focus solely on adolescents but also involve older family members, recognizing their influence on youth behavior.

Furthermore, for adolescents and adults seeking to withdraw from substance use, a well-structured rehabilitation system must be reinforced, ensuring confidentiality and accessible, effective support services for individuals striving to overcome dependency. Addressing these issues through a multi-faceted approach—including education, awareness, family involvement, and rehabilitation—will be critical in curbing the rising trend of substance use among adolescents. Mental disorders and substance use often co-exists. Given the significant increase in addiction-related social and health issues, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has developed and implemented the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR), under which the government is actively working to address substance use among youth (Government of India, 2022). This program is being executed in the most vulnerable districts across India. The District Mental Health Program also addresses aspects of substance use. Integrating various substance use programs can lead to better outcomes, considering the

alarming rise in substance use among youth.

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