



# Contributions of Selected Family Factors to Drug Abuse Among Adolescents in Secondary Schools in Manyatta Sub-county, Embu County, Kenya

**Milcah Njoki Nyaga<sup>1</sup>, Kimu Mwai<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Department of Mathematics, Kigari Teachers Training College, Embu, Kenya<sup>2</sup>Department of Science, Kigari Teachers Training College, Embu, Kenya**Email address:**

milcanyaga@yahoo.com (M. N. Nyaga), mwaikimu2003@yahoo.com (K. Mwai)

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**Abstract:** The aim of this research is to investigate the contributions of selected family factors to drug abuse among adolescents in Kenyan secondary schools. To achieve this, the study sought to investigate the role of parental monitoring, residence, employment and parenting behaviours in predisposing the adolescent in the development to drug use. In addition, the study established the significance of associations between family factors and drug abuse among adolescents. The data were collected from form two students and deputy principals in secondary schools. The findings revealed that lack of parental supervision, parental employment, authoritarian style of parenting and lack of open discussion with adolescents contributed to drug abuse as well as most parents do not take active roles in schools. The study further revealed that not residing with the biological parents was not significantly associated with drug abuse. This was contrary to the view held by most scholars that the adolescents who do not reside with their biological parents were prone to drug abuse. To avoid drug abuse, parental monitoring should be given to all children regardless of the birth order, absence of aggression at home, parental quality time, open discussions with adolescents, authoritative parenting and parental involvement in school activities. Majority of the children born after the first child portrayed antisocial behaviours; hence the further the birth position in the family the higher the engagement in drug abuse. Based on these findings, there is need to give all children as much supervision as that given to the first born children. Thus, the schools should organise sessions for parents and educate them on effective ways of parenting adolescents. Parents need to be encouraged to take active role in schools. Therefore, schools must create partnerships by providing an open and accommodative environment with their wider community. This would help in forming a link between the school and the home as well as the school and the family.

**Keywords:** Adolescents, Drug Abuse, Students, Parents, Schools, Children

## 1. Introduction

Internationally, there has been a growing trend of drug abuse among adolescents (USA Census Bureau, 2001). Drug abuse is caused directly or indirectly by parental drug abuse, low level of education in parents, stress in the family and single parenthood status (Stratton & Reid, 2008). Lack of parental involvement and warmth increases the risk of the child engaging in drug abuse (Rugg, 2013). Nash, McQueen and Bray (2005) argued that lack of parental supervision and provision of opportunities to abuse drugs were predictors to substance use. Further, Wiese and Freud (2011) suggested

that lack of parental involvement, as well as poor monitoring and supervision of children activities strongly predicted drug abuse. Jacobson and Crockett (2000) found out that parental monitoring was important in preventing antisocial behaviours such as drug abuse. Erikson's (1968) theory argues that every significant person encountered in the cause of development helps to shape the behaviour of adolescents. Other factors are poor parenting processes, poor student's performance and early childhood aggression (Gary, Bowen, Rose & Powers, 2005). Clark (2013) observed that students' involvement in drug abuse was a major challenge to policy makers because it disrupted teaching and learning in schools. Scaggs (2009) further pointed out that students who engaged in drug abuse

became a burden to school authorities due to indiscipline which interferes with school processes, academic performance and interpersonal relationships. Conversely, parents who did not monitor the activities and associations of their children might cause them to engage in drug abuse at adolescence (Chassin, Ritter, Trim & King, 2003). This was supported by Siziba, Rudatsikira and Mvula (2003) who reported that factors associated with drug abuse, were indicators of lack of parental supervision. Drug abuse leads to poor academic performance, aggression, poor social relationships and truancy [6]. The findings of the study indicated that most parents did not give quality time to the children especially during the school holidays. Furthermore, most parents go back to universities and colleges while others go for business trips during the school holidays. In fact some respondents reported that they crisscrossed with the parents at the gate as they got home from school.

According to Weiser and Freud (2011), and Bruce, Ana, Denise and Keith (2009), parental supervision of children was uniform and as such first born children received more supervision than middle born children and thus first-borns reported fewer cases of drug abuse. Blodgett, Salafia, Gondoli & Grundy (2009) observed that parental-adolescent residential status served to protect adolescents from developing antisocial tendencies due to the social controls associated with it. Baque and Roche (2007) found that children who lived with their biological parents were healthier and had better social skills than their counterparts who did not. Parents who lived with their children enjoyed parental involvement which was associated with lowered behavioural problems, deviant behaviours, poor performance and poor social skills [19].

[16] and [18] observed that healthy family management practises including monitoring of adolescent behaviour, clear family social values and consistent consequences for violating rules were related to decreased drug use. The current study demonstrated that not residing with biological parents did not affect the students' social skills that were needed in order to abstain from substance use. This was because the administration in most schools organised families of at most fifteen students under a teacher and a parent. This organisation may have helped the students to learn life skills necessary to adapt to life and thus to abstain from drug abuse.

Parenting has been identified as a protective factor against adolescent's drug use (Tebes, Emily, Vanderploeg, Feinn, Chinman, Shepard, Brabham & Connell, 2010). Foley, Atman, Durant, Wolfson (2006) observed that parental drug use is linked with greater likelihood of drug use by the adolescents. Parental habits of drug use and involvement of the children in their use have been strong predictors of substance use (Hair, Park, Ling & Moore, 2009). The research has observed that healthy parenting behaviours such as spending quality time with the adolescents, monitoring adolescents' activities, involvement in school activities and giving them opportunities to disclose their challenges themselves also prevent the adolescents' involvement in drug

abuse. The research has also established that adolescents who do not experience warmth and support and who are exposed to negative emotional attitude, characterized by lack of parental involvement and warmth, increase the risk of the child engaging in drug abuse. The predisposing factors may include poor social relationships, aggression, truancy and poor academic performance. Thus, it is necessary for the parents to be involved in the lives of their children especially actively involved in school activities. This will help the children to freely share personal and school issues. Thus, the study established that there is need for parents to be close to their children regardless of the birth order since children require the guidance of the parents on how to negotiate on their developmental tasks. This will give them an opportunity to counsel their children on the challenges they are experiencing. This may help in preventing the adolescent from engaging in drug abuse and become more productive in the society.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

Wholesome psychological development during adolescence is related to the realization of positive outcomes in many areas of the lives of individuals. Healthy interpersonal relations, good academic achievement, positive emotions, self-esteem and healthy habits are some of the benefits of healthy psychological development among adolescents. For adolescents to realize healthy psychological development they need to be supported by family structures and provided with services. These will help the adolescents to negotiate the milestones and finally realise their potential and to be provided with enabling environmental conditions. This study has singled out the role played by family factors. Adolescents raised in families that offer protective factors are less likely to engage in substance abuse while in school unlike their counterparts who lack these protective factors. Family factors associated with adolescent substance use may include parental education and occupation, parenting behaviours such as aggression, failure to spend quality time with the adolescent, parental substance use, parental neglect and permissiveness. Adolescents exposed to these factors are likely to suffer from insecurity which may manifest in negative behaviour like drug use. This study therefore investigated the contributions of family factors to drug abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Manyatta sub-county, Kenya. The study has specifically focused on parental monitoring, residence, employment and parenting behaviours. Since the students come from diverse backgrounds they are likely to interact with their parents differently. Adolescents engaging in drug abuse are likely to display poor academic performance, poor social relationship with peers, parents and school authorities all translating to poor adjustment in life.

### **1.2. Study Objectives**

The study investigated how selected family factors have contributed to drug abuse among adolescents in secondary

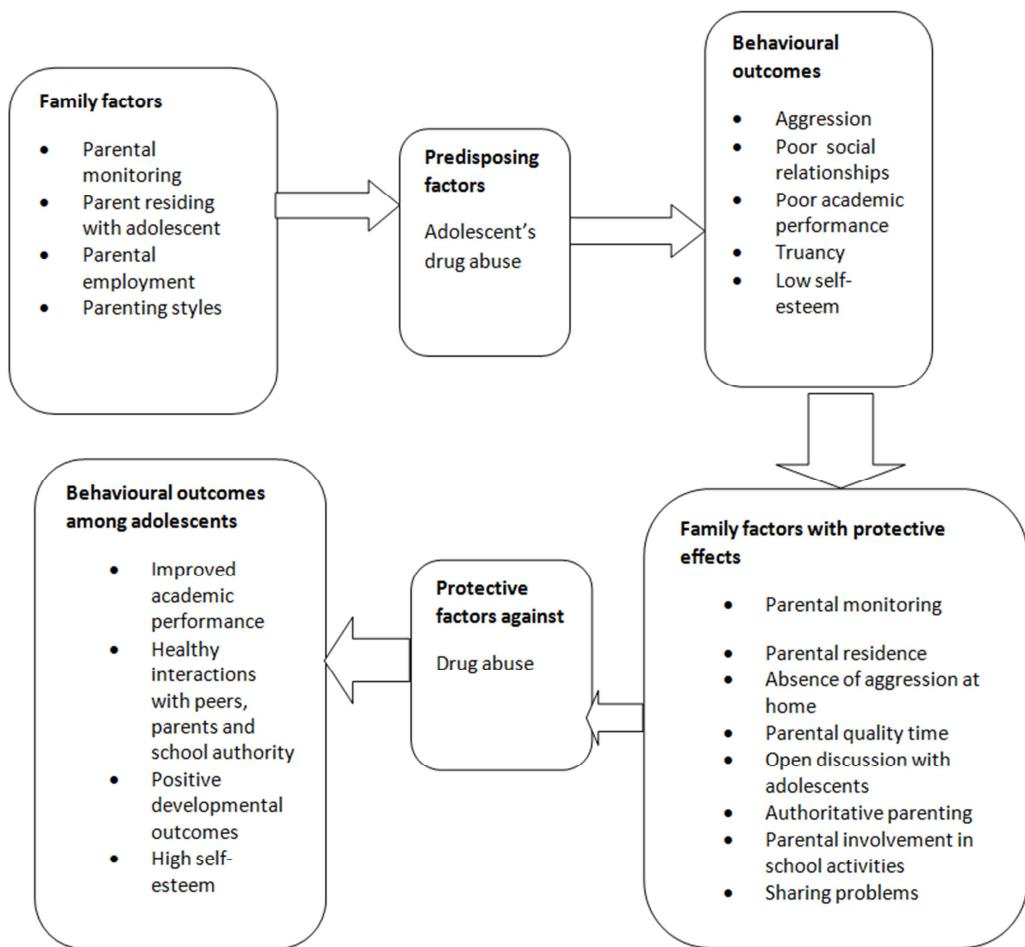
schools by specifically investigating parental monitoring, residence and employment as well as parenting behaviours to support the study in Manyatta sub-county, Kenya.

### 1.3. Theoretical Framework

The study was grounded by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory which looks at a child's development within the context of the system of relationships that form his or her environment. The theory identifies complex layers of environment, each having an effect on a child's development. According to this theory, each person is significantly affected by the interactions among a number of overlapping ecosystems namely, micro-systems, meso-system, exo-system and macro-system. The Microsystems are important during the developmental process because they have a direct effect on immediate and proximal factors that shape human

development. The primary Microsystems for the individual include family, classroom interactions, peer group, neighbourhood and religious settings. The theory identifies the family as a microsystem that has profound influence on development since it is the immediate environment in which an adolescent lives. It is also within this system that the individual encounters the most social interactions with parents and other family members. The individual observes and actively participates in creating and constructing the experiences they have. The thesis of this study is that parents may provide optimum conditions which are protective against development of drug abuse among adolescents. On the other hand parents who fail to provide conditions tenable to optimum adolescent development risk development of drug abuse among their adolescent children [7].

### 1.4. Conceptual Framework of the Study



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework: Interaction between family factors and drug abuse.

The conceptual framework of the study is based on the tenets that certain preconditions are necessary for the development of psychological health among adolescents. These include parental supervision, parental residential status, parental employment, authoritarian parenting, which are crucial determinants of behavioural outcomes among adolescents. Parents who monitor the activities of adolescents are more likely to help them steer away from drug abuse than

their counterparts who do not. In addition, parents who live with their adolescent children are more likely to develop bonding relationships and daily guidance which would be a protective factor against drug abuse. Parents who give their children money and monitor its use may protect their children against drug use unlike their counterparts who do not. The study further suggests that parents who employ healthy practices like authoritative parenting, availability,

healthy involvement and creation of environments that allow for open discussion with adolescents further protect them from engaging in drug abuse. It is the proposition of this study that when parents assure adolescents of protective conditions, then the cases of drug abuse are minimized and the adolescents are better able to focus on productive behaviours like focussing on academic performance, positive engagement with parents, peers and school authorities for positive future outcomes.

## **2. Research Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the contributions of family factors to drug abuse. The survey design was used to collect the data through questionnaire, interview schedule and observation schedule. The research was conducted in secondary schools in Manyatta sub-county in Embu County, Kenya. The research involved adolescents who were between 15 – 19 years. The sample consisted of 160 boys and 160 girls. The sample of 320 form two students who were randomly selected from two girls' boarding, two boys' boarding schools and four co-education schools. In each category of school 40 students were randomly selected. The schools were selected through stratified sampling to ensure that each category had equal chance. In addition eight deputy principals were purposefully selected from the sampled schools. The study was motivated by the fact that Embu County had a relatively high number of student unrest compared to the rest of the country. The form two students were preferred because they were rated as the ring leaders of strikes within the county. A structured questionnaire which was developed by the researcher was used to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The instrument for measuring drug abuse was adapted from Denise Juneau, Superintendent of Public Instruction in Montana, University Addiction Centre and Rigby and Slee (1993). The instruments were customised to this study.

## **3. Findings of the Study**

This section presents the findings of the contributions of parent's supervision, residing with the parents, parent's employment, students' opinion on parenting style and sharing problems with the parents.

### **3.1. Parental Supervision**

The study observed that the first born received more parental supervision compared to the middle child and the last born. It is important to note that most parents with only one child were very keen on supervision. [1] explained that first born children were less involved in delinquent behaviour compared to last born children. Thus, this study wanted to examine this claim and hence conducted a cross tabulation of birth order of the student and limited social skills among adolescents in secondary schools. This therefore showed that, the further the students were on the birth line in their families, the less the parental supervision, hence the poorer

the social skills they had to negotiate their challenges on drug abuse. It is important to note that, parental supervision is paramount whether the child is living with other siblings or is the only child. These findings supported the claim made by [26] in their study on birth order and adolescent delinquent behaviour. They found out that first born children were less involved in delinquency than middle born children. The current study also observed that parental control of children depended on their ordinal position. Therefore, the first born children were less likely to be involved in drug use compared to subsequent siblings.

### **3.2. Residing with the Biological Parents**

The study sought to find out whether not residing with the parents contributed to drug abuse. In addition, majority of the students who did not reside with their parents lived with guardians, while others reported that the parents were separated or died and hence lived on their own. A cross tabulation between students not residing with parents and drug use demonstrated that not residing with parents did not affect the students' social skills that were needed to abstain from drug use. This observation, however, refutes the claim made by [1] that children residing with their biological parents were twenty to thirty percent healthier and had better social skills to help them from abstaining from drug use than children from homes without biological parents present. [19] explained that the parent's involvement was important in lowering behavioural problems, deviant behaviours and poor performance as well as promoting better social skills. This observation was against the findings of this current study which explained that majority of the students who did not reside with their parents disagreed with the claim that they had limited social skills that would help them to abstain from drugs. The reason for the disparity can be explained by the fact that while past studies were conducted from the perspective of parents and teachers, this current study was conducted from the perspective of students, who were likely to answer in favour of their current living conditions, such as living alone in rented rooms, sharing rented rooms or living with other people in their residences.

### **3.3. Parent's Employment**

The study wanted to explore whether the parent's employment contributed to drug use. This was done by cross-tabulation of parent's employment and drug abuse. These findings showed that when the parents were unemployed the students were highly unlikely to abuse drugs as compared to students from employed parents. This may be due to limited resources and finances. The study observed that poor parental supervision, parents' involvement in drug abuse and easy availability of drugs promoted drug use. These findings supported the observation made by Humensky (2010) and Sher, Grekin, & Williams (2005) who claimed that higher parental income was associated with binge drinking and marijuana use. He suggested that students with more money to spend were more likely to engage in substance use. Thus, a

closer monitoring of allowances and other forms of spending money is important for parents and guardians to supervise.

Suniya (2013) supported the claim made by [14] as well as this current study. She explained that previously it was argued that youths in poor families were a population at risk for engaging in drug use. She reported that, it has been widely accepted that low family income was a major determinant of protracted stress which leads to social, emotional, and behavioural problems. However, the current study showed that children from high income homes had even more problems, only that the antisocial behaviours varied. The study observed that the most common antisocial behaviour among children in high income families were widespread cheating, random acts of delinquency such as vandalism, selling of illegal drugs and stealing from parents or peers.

### **3.4. Student's Opinions on Parenting Styles**

The study sought to establish the student's opinions on parenting styles. The researcher approached this question by asking the students how they viewed their parents' parenting style. A cross - tabulation of parenting styles and communication breakdown between home and school observed that communication breakdown contributed to drug abuse among the adolescents. Majority of the students, 62% (197) indicated that their parents practised authoritative style of parenting, while only 11% (35) of the students reported that the parents were practising authoritarian and permissive style of parenting respectively. The rest 15% (45) of the students reported that the parents were practising negligent or uninvolved style of parenting. The study observed that majority of the students, 49% (17) from permissive parenting style reported that there was communication breakdown between home and school. At the same time, 47% (21) of the students from uninvolved or negligent parents indicated that there was communication breakdown between home and school.

The findings showed that 48% (95) of the students who viewed their parents as authoritative reported that they engaged in drug abuse. In comparison, 57% (20) of students who viewed their parents as authoritarian reported that they engaged in drug abuse. Erikson's theory (1963) argued that every significant person encountered in the cause of development helps to shape the individual's behaviour [8]. Sailor (2010) pointed out that much of learning that occurred during development of children was acquired through observation and imitation. This therefore showed that children grew up imitating their parents. In fact, Wiese and Freud (2011) in their study found out that children and adolescents observed their parents gender-related behaviour regarding work and family. So, their parents' behaviours had direct bearing on them. Hence, this experience influenced the students' attitudes towards what was right and wrong. Thus, the parents need to be positive role models for this would help the children to develop prosocial behaviours. According to the findings the adolescents desired to have quality time with their parents and they yearn to have free discussions

with their parents. The adolescents reported that they were perturbed when they found their parents very busy with issues of development and leaving no time to be together with them.

The findings showed that 57% (21) of the students who were raised by authoritarian parents reported that they experienced communication breakdown. This was in line with the claim made by [24], who explained that children raised in authoritarian families did not experience enough freedom. This resulted in children who were undersocialized, inhibited and unhappy, and as a consequence, they did not know how to express themselves. They might also become reactively angry rebels who engaged in dangerous behaviour as a means of getting back at their parents. They further explained that students raised in authoritarian families were not encouraged to develop their own independent judgments and therefore ran the risk of becoming overly dependent adults who could easily fall victim in later life to various abusive predators. Thus, in order for children to learn how to make successful decisions on their own, they have to be granted both the proper amount of freedom and the proper amount of limitations. The adolescents reported that they desired to be treated with dignity and also to be given opportunity to explore the world around them. The study observed that those who engaged in drug abuse did so ignorantly since they did not get guidance from parents on the dangers of the vice. Majority regretted that the parents did not have open discussions with them as they were growing up. Some reported that they felt as strangers as they interacted with their parents. Hence they did not receive maximum attention when they were growing up.

An important aspect of parenting associated with protective factors against development of antisocial behaviours among adolescent was parental knowledge which referred to the awareness of where the adolescent was, the activities he/she engaged in and the people he/she was associating with [3] Healthy parenting behaviours such as spending quality time with the adolescents, monitoring adolescents' activities and giving them opportunities to disclose challenges themselves were also protective factors. Research has established that adolescents who do not experience warmth and support were exposed to negative emotional attitude. This was characterized by lack of parental involvement and warmth which increased the risk of the child engaging in deviant behaviour.

### **3.5. Sharing Problems with the Parents**

The findings showed that 53% (169) of the students did not freely share what they were going through with their parents, although majority, 77% (245) of the students felt that their parents' parenting styles were effective. Majority, 69% (221) of the students reported that they discussed school matters with parents while 77% (247) of the students reported that parents attended school events. The study observed that 71% (226) of the students spent quality time with parents. On the other hand, the study reported that 43% (137) of the students experienced aggression at home, while

49% (157) of the students indicated that the parents were not available for them. It is important to note that though majority of students, 71% (226) spent quality time with their parents, only 47% (151) of the students shared freely with their parents. The majority of the students who spent quality time with their parents indicated that 77% (247) of the students reported that parents attended school events, while 69% (221) of the students reported that they discussed school matters with their parents.

The findings showed that several parents attended school events. This could be attributed to the fact that several schools make academic clinics and annual general meetings compulsory. Some students complained that their parents come late for these meetings while others are in a hurry to leave the school compound. From these findings the study observed that it was necessary for the parents to be involved in the lives of their children. This would help the children to freely share personal and school issues. There was need for parents to be close to their children. This would give them an opportunity to guide and counsel their children on the challenges they were experiencing. This might help in preventing delinquent behaviour such as drug abuse. Parenting styles as explained by [19] tended to have a distinct effect on the student's behaviour. When parents were inconsistent in their parenting approach it was very damaging to children because they did not know what to expect (Zhou, King, & Chassin, 2006). For instance, parents who practised negligent parenting brought up children with minimal rules. Such were usually ignored or lived with hostility, noncompliance and aggression [6]. They also had low self-esteem and displayed anger toward others. Majority of these children exhibited antisocial behaviours and they ended up as criminals. These children are usually frustrated in school and they end up performing poorly in academics and interpersonal relationships.

[26] in their study introduced a new concept by claiming that while parental involvement was important towards student's behaviour, it differs from family to family, depending on the level of marginalization. For instance, students who come from rich families can be affected by parents not spending time with them; the same does not apply to the poorer families (Rangarajan & Kelly, 2006). The study pointed out that the unequal distribution of economic, human, cultural and social capital as well as devaluing of resources constrains parents' involvement in their students schooling.

### **3.6. Associations of Family Factors and Drug Abuse Among Secondary School Students**

The researcher conducted a Chi-square test of the family factors on drug abuse. Drug abuse considered problems with parents, lost friends, neglected school work, absence from school, suspension, illegal activities and those undergoing treatment programmes. The findings showed that most of the family factors, namely: parents' supervision ( $\chi^2=0.04$ , df=3, p < 0.05), parents' employment ( $\chi^2=0.00$ , df=2, p < 0.05), students' opinion on parenting style ( $\chi^2=0.00$ , df=3, p < 0.05) and sharing problems with parents ( $\chi^2=0.00$ , df=3, p <

0.05), were significantly associated with drug abuse among secondary school students. Not residing with parents ( $\chi^2=0.95$ , df=1, p > 0.05) was not significantly associated with drug abuse. These findings on not residing with parents, refuted [19] who reported that there was a greater chance for manifestation of drug abuse in children who had failed to develop social bonds with parents or guardians. The findings supported [21] who reported that factors associated with truancy, bullying and drug abuse were indicators of lack of parental monitoring. Accordingly, parents play a key role in contributing to drug abuse among the adolescents. They should avoid exposing their children to the environment which can promote drug abuse. Parental monitoring was key in preventing drug abuse hence it was the responsibility of every parent to have close monitoring of their child while in school and out of school. Most boys reported that the bonding between them and the fathers was very weak and they had very little or nothing to discuss with the fathers. Most students reported that fathers were rarely at home and any time they happened to be present they seemed harsh and in most cases they wore a stone face which made them not to interact with them. Most students reported that they would be delighted if their parents took active roles in school. In case they are invited in school they should be punctual and they should also not be in a hurry to leave the school compound. Thus, parents and guardians needed to create quality time to interact with their sons and daughters. This would help in inducting prosocial behaviours among the children. This will make them to become productive in the society.

## **4. Conclusions of the Study**

In conclusion, the findings of the study revealed that there was a relationship between the birth position of a child and drug abuse. The study showed that the lower on the birth rank a student was, the more likely they were to be involved in drug abuse. From the study it was evident that residing with other individuals other than the student's biological parents did not have a negative effect on the student's behaviour. In addition students with employed parents were more likely to abuse drugs than students without. The study also revealed that majority of the students felt that the parenting styles were effective and their parents were good role models. Hence they were likely to be a reflection of their parents' characteristics. The study revealed that the protective factors against drug abuse were parental monitoring, open discussion with adolescents, parents' involvement in school activities, parents being present and having quality time with their children. These protective factors would assist the adolescents not to engage in drug abuse and the result would be improved performance, positive developmental outcomes and healthy interactions with peers, parents and school authority,

## **5. Recommendations of the Study**

Based on the findings as well as the conclusions drawn,

this study recommended that there is need to give all children as much supervision as that given to the first born children. The study also recommended that parents and guardians should provide life skills to their adolescents as well as spending quality time with them. The study further recommended that the parents should treat their adolescents with dignity and guide them on how to explore the world around them and invest in them before they invest for them. Fathers should take up the role of modelling the boy child who felt neglected by the society and have open discussions with their adolescents. Thus the schools should organise sessions for parents and educate them on effective ways of parenting.

In addition the study recommended that the parents should take active roles in schools. Thus schools should educate parents on the benefits of partnering with the school. Further schools need to create partnerships by providing an open and accommodative environment with its wider community forming a link between the school and the home as well as the school and the family. The study encouraged parents to gain more knowledge on parenting through reading relevant books as well as attending seminars offered by professional counsellors and psychologists.

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