



# Ripple Effects -The impact of substance abuse on families and communities

**Dr JA Chetty**

**Specialist Psychiatrist**

**Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Memorial Hospital**

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# Family

- family remains the primary source of attachment, nurturing, and socialization for humans in our current society
- Building blocks of communities



# Substance use in South Africa

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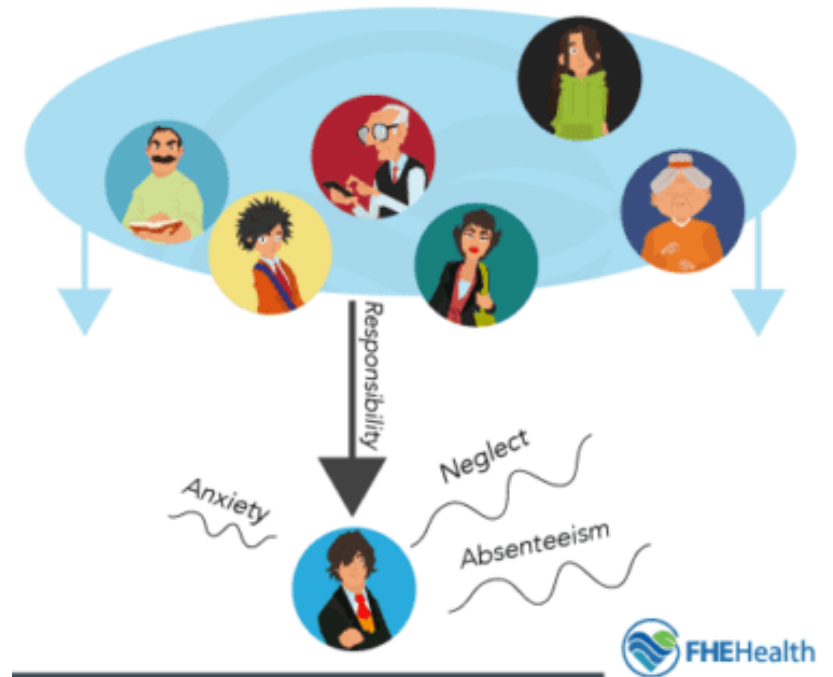
- Almost 20% of South Africans – 1 out of every 5 adults – abuse mind-altering substances, with alcohol, pain-killers (codeine) and dagga the worst offenders
- The SA National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) found that 15% of pupils admitted to using over-the-counter drugs to get high. 11.5% of pupils had tried at least one drug, such as heroin, Mandrax, sugars (a mix of residual cocaine and heroin) or tik.
- Huge economic cost
- Massive social and societal costs



# Effects of substance use on the family

- The impact will vary depending on the role and gender that the individual with the substance use disorders (SUD) has in the family. Eg adolescent vs parent
- Attitudes and beliefs of family about addiction
  - Stress reduction/behavioural model
  - Moral- volitional model
  - Personality model
  - Disease model
  - Alcoholics anonymous (Bio-psych-social-spiritual)

## The Family Disease of Addiction



# Theory - attachment

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- John Bowlby (1988)
- **primary relationship** serves as the template for all subsequent relationships throughout the life cycle
- The way in which the primary caretaker responds their child's cues will establish the quality of the attachment.
- **Responsive** parent- **secure attachment**
- **unresponsive** or inconsistently responsive, an **insecure attachment** may form that can result in a variety of problems including anxiety, depression, and failure to thrive.
- relational attachment system provides **protection** against psychological problems and illness.
- Without a healthy attachment system, a child is much **more vulnerable** to stress and therefore more susceptible to having problems with trauma, anxiety, depression, and other mental illness.

# Theory- Family systems theory

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- The individual cannot be fully understood or successfully treated without first understanding how that individual functions in his or her family system
- their pathology can be viewed as an attempt adapt to their family system so as to maintain homeostasis
- **Homeostasis** refers to the idea that it is the tendency of a system to seek stability and equilibrium (Brown & Christensen, 1986). Even if it is unhealthy for them to do so.
- **Feedback** which is the circular way in which parts of the system communicate with each other.
- **Boundaries** which are the internal and external limits of a system

# Impact of Parental Substance Abuse on Children(Lipari and Van Horn, 2013)

- Direct effects, such as parental abuse or neglect, or indirect effects, such as fewer household resources.
- research has shown that children of parents with a SUD were found to be of lower socioeconomic status and had more difficulties in academic, social, and family functioning when compared with children of parents who do not have an SUD.
- more likely to have higher rates of mental and behavioural disorders.
- more likely to develop SUD symptoms themselves



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# Mental health of children of parents with SUDS



- Because of **mood dysregulation** in parents that may have preceded or resulted from their substance use. Development of healthy mood regulation will be difficult for children and adolescents to achieve.
- This increases their risk for problems such as depression, anxiety, oppositional behaviour, conduct problems (stealing, lying, and truancy), anger outbursts, aggressivity, impulsivity, and again substance abuse

# “Parentified children.”

- caretaker is unable to meet the developmental needs of the child, and the child begins to parent themselves and perhaps younger siblings earlier than developmentally appropriate.
- “reversal of dependence needs” the child actually begins to parent the parent
- parent’s needs are placed before the child’s, this sets the child up for a potential lifetime of inability to set healthy boundaries in relationship



# Substance use and child abuse

- Studies indicate that between one third and two thirds of child maltreatment cases involve some degree of substance use (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 1996)
- Parents with a SUD is 3 times more likely to physically or sexually abuse their child.
- The sequelae of this is that these children are more than 50% more likely to be arrested as juveniles, and 40% more likely to commit a violent crime (USDHHS, 1996).



# South African statistics

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- Murphy et al. (1991) reviewed 206 cases of child abuse, and determined that 43% of these cases involved a parent with a documented alcohol or drug problem.
- In more recent years, Jones (2004) found this link to be around 68%,
- McNichol and Tash (2001) determined that 76% of children in foster care had been affected by substance use in some way.
- In South African court record research has indicated that substance use is the most important factor underlying child maltreatment (Makoae et al., 2008)

# Child abuse

- Children who have experienced **abuse** are more likely to have the **externalizing disorders** such as anger, aggression, conduct, and behavioural problems
- children who experience **neglect** are more likely to have **internalizing** disorders (depression, anxiety, social withdrawal, poor peer relations).
- Incest has a very high association with parental substance abuse as do all types of sexual abuse. About two thirds of incest perpetrators report using alcohol directly before the offending incident (USDHHS, 1996).



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## Effect on schooling

- **unexcused absences** in childhood can turn into more serious truancy problems in adolescence and culminate in school dropout.
- parents **read less** and provide less learning-based stimulation to their infants and toddlers
- school-age years, parents are less available to provide **assistance with homework**, monitor school performance, and track assignments
- difficult for children to focus on higher order thinking and learning when **basic survival** needs are not met



# Impact on family at different developmental stages

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Developmental Tasks</i>	<i>Impact of SUD on Developmental Tasks</i>
Married without children	Establish healthy marriage with boundary from family of origin.	Poor communication, impairment of emotional and physical intimacy, increased conflict.
Childbearing families	Create safe, loving home for infant and parents. Establish secure attachment with child.	Home not physically or emotionally safe due to impairment and labile mood. Insecure attachment with infants.
Families with preschool children	Adapt to needs of preschool children and promote their growth and development. Cope with energy depletion and lack of privacy.	Inconsistent parenting, possible abuse, neglect, Child Protective Services involvement, removal of children, marital conflict.
Families with school-age children	Fitting into the community of school-age families. Encourage children's education.	Educational needs of children not met. Possible domestic violence, conflict at home.
Families with teenagers	Balancing freedom with responsibility. Establish healthy peer relationships. Develop educational and career goals.	Teens may follow model of parent with SUD. Children have difficulty forming healthy peer relationships due to impaired early attachment. School/legal problems and family conflict. Anxiety, depression, or oppositional disorders.
Families launching young adults	Release young adults with appropriate assistance. Maintain supportive home base. Young adults develop careers.	Failure to launch due to adult children being unable to support themselves, relationship conflict.
Middle-age parents	Rebuild the marriage. Maintain ties with younger generations.	Marital conflict, adult children may disconnect from parents and not want them to be around their young children.
Aging family members	Coping with bereavement and living alone. Closing the family home or adjusting to retirement.	Isolation, depression can lead to SUD or vice versa.

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## Maternal substance use

- 5,2% of pregnant women reported substance use (SAMHA)(Suchman et al., 2013)
- Alcohol and tobacco being commonest
- In South Africa (SA), use of multiple substances during pregnancy is common.
- In a survey of 5 232 pregnant women visiting midwife obstetric units in Cape Town, it was found that 36.9% used alcohol and drugs, 34.9% alcohol only, and 1.6% drugs only.(Brink et al., 2022)
- Regular use of some drugs can cause neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS), in which the baby goes through withdrawal upon birth.





# Maternal substance use

- **Effects of using some drugs could be long-term and possibly fatal to the baby:**

birth defects

low birth weight

premature birth

small head circumference

sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)

- **Fetal alcohol syndrome**

According to the Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR), about 6 million individuals are affected by FASD in South Africa

estimated to range from 29 to 290 per 1000 live births in 2016


Fetal alcohol syndrome



# It's Father's Day — but South African society suffering profound absence of father figures



By Garth Japhet

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14 Jun 201

## Fathers and substance abuse

- According to the Human Sciences Research Council, most children in South Africa over 60% don't live with their biological fathers. And 20% only have contact with their biological father twice a week.
- Fathers are considered to be important for the development of the child's autonomy, the shaping of gender identity, and the development of the moral system of the child.
- Fatherlessness is a risk factor for substance use disorders in adolescents

# Adolescent substance use

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- According to the World Drug Report 2021 the population most at risk of using drugs, young people aged 15–34, is projected to grow in the next decade, in particular in low-income countries.
- The average age for drug dependency in South Africa is a staggering 12 with 50% of South African teens drinking alcohol. (SADAG)
- In South Africa the prevalence of recent drug use increased from 1.5% to 10.0% from 2002 to 2017, driven by increases in cannabis use (1.5% to 7.8%) and use of opioids (0.01% to 1.6%), cocaine (0.02% to 1.8%), or amphetamines (0.1% to 1.5%). (K.K. Mutai et al. International Journal of Drug Policy 125, 2024)
- Drug use is associated with sexual risk behaviour, violence, and mental health and suicide risks.

# Consequences of teenage substance use

- Academic
- Health increased risk of death through suicide, homicide, accident, and illness.
- HIV risk
- Mental health
- Peers
- Delinquency
- Family

# Substance abuse and intimate relationships

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- Trust issues
- Financial debt
- Arguments and volatile fights
- Intimacy issues
- Chronic stress and fear
- Family instability
- Divorce

# Domestic violence

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- Studies linking alcohol consumption and intimate partner violence (IPV) have found that 45% of men and 20% of women were drinking during episodes of IPV.
- In 2006 in South Africa, 70% of domestic violence cases were alcohol-related and a fifth of offenders arrested for rape reported that they were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the crime
- Research shows that intimate-partner violence (IPV) is five times higher in relationships where one or both partners abuses alcohol. (Freeman, M. And Parry, C. (2006) Alcohol Use Literature Review, Johannesburg: Soul City) (Gondolf, E. W. (1995) 'Alcohol Abuse, Wife Assault, and Power Needs', Social Service Review, 69(2): 274-284)



# Drug abuse and crime

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- There are strong correlations between substance use and violent crime in South Africa.
- Serious and chronic juvenile offenders are more likely to abuse substances than any other type of juvenile offender.
- People who abuse substances may engage in criminal activities in order to acquire drugs, and rates of criminal behaviour increase during periods of addiction.
- Substance abuse and addiction is also associated with parole violations and recidivism.
- Between 27% and 47% of intentional injuries are directly attributed to the use of alcohol.

# Homelessness and substance abuse

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- Bidirectional causation
- High rates of substance use among homeless
- **Financial strain:** Substance abuse often leads to financial difficulties due to the cost of obtaining drugs or alcohol, as well as the potential loss of income from decreased work productivity or job loss.
- **Strained relationships:** Addiction can cause rifts in relationships with family and friends, leading to a loss of support networks. As a result, individuals may find themselves without a place to live.
- **Co-occurring mental health issues:** Many people with substance use disorders also struggle with mental health problems, which can further contribute to housing instability and homelessness.



# Economy and health-care (Bello et al., 2024)

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- Substance abuse tends to deteriorate people's health, which in turn affects the future potential of young people and the productivity of the labour force.
- It also increases government spending in the health sector, which may result in economic losses.
- In South Africa, employers lose millions of Rand each year because of substance abuse.
- The losses are due to substance abuse among employees, which leads to low productivity, increased absenteeism and medical expenses, accidents, and criminal activities in the workplace.
- Mental health service impact of substance use. Patient non-adherence, revolving door, acute bed shortages, caregivers giving up- placement (RALUTHAGA, N., SHILUBANE, H. N. & LOWANE, M. P. 2023. )

# Conclusion- What do loved ones say?

*Literature Review/Concept Analysis*



## **Experience of Family Members of Relatives With Substance Use Disorders: An Integrative Literature Review**

Esther N. Monari <sup>1</sup>, Richard Booth<sup>2</sup>, Cheryl Forchuk<sup>2</sup>, and Rick Csiernik<sup>2</sup>

- **Parents of children who abuse substances**

- Delay in recognition of symptoms
- The demands of parenting their drug-abusing children were noted as very stressful and overwhelming, resulting in strained relationships with extended family, feelings of self-blame, and denial about their children's addiction (Jackson et al., 2007; Nelson et al., 2014; Ólafsdóttir et al., 2020).

- **Children of parents that abuse substances**

- Young family members living with parents who have SUDs are significantly impacted by their parents' ongoing SUDs, experiencing feelings of neglect, anger, hurt, and physical illness due to the stress and depression related to their parents' or caregivers' SUDs (Maina et al., 2021; Ólafsdóttir et al., 2020).

- **Violent and aggressive behaviour**

- Family members were constantly vigilant, using careful words and actions to prevent the escalation of these behaviours, demonstrating the challenging and stressful environment many families face when dealing with relatives suffering from SUDs

- **Difficult decisions**

- Parents expressed uncertainty as they felt torn between removing their challenging children from their homes for the safety of other family members and wanting to continue providing family support to them (Jackson et al., 2007). Maltman et al. (2020)
- caught between two choices: “holding on” or “letting go.”
- Dual roles

- **Social stigma**



Thank  
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