

**An investigation to understand the role of social determinants in influencing
substance among teenagers living in the UK: A Systematic review**

by

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DECLARATION

I, Yagneshkumar Pumbhadiya declare that this dissertation has been composed by myself, that the work contained herein is entirely my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification, in whole or in part, except as specified.

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Abstract

To better understand how social determinants—such as peer pressure, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), family dynamics, and socioeconomic status—affect substance use among teenage boys and girls in the UK, this dissertation examined these relationships. Ten quantitative studies that offered numerical data on these drivers were included in the systematic review, adhering to PRISMA principles. The results of the analysis showed that as teens get older, peer pressure becomes more important and frequently takes precedence over parental supervision. More precisely, the analysis showed that adolescents' rising independence and preference for peer approval are linked to the decreasing impact of parental monitoring. It was discovered that ACEs were crucial, with early trauma being closely linked to substance use later on. Parental supervision is important during the early stages of adolescence, but as peer-centered socialisation takes over, parental involvement declines and its influence diminishes. Risk factors are further complicated by socioeconomic status and family structure, particularly for marginalised and single-parent households. The review revealed gaps in the research, notably the paucity of studies addressing the relationship between numerous social variables and systemic inequities. It concluded that while current programs, such as the SBIRT model, are helpful, they still require improvements to fully address all pertinent variables. To better support at-risk adolescents, recommendations include incorporating preventative strategies into more comprehensive health interventions.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

Teenage substance use is a major public health issue that puts their prospects, health, and well-being in grave danger (WHO, 2024). The issue is especially urgent in the UK because of alarming trends in the substance use patterns of young people. Creating successful preventative and intervention plans requires an understanding of how socioeconomic variables shape these behaviours. The purpose of this study is to look into how different social factors affect teenage boys' and girls' substance use habits in the UK. This study looks at things including family dynamics, peer pressure, educational settings, socioeconomic level, and cultural norms to try and identify the root causes of substance abuse. The knowledge gathered from this research will help disadvantaged people by identifying the most important socioeconomic variables and offering focused preventative and intervention techniques. The ultimate goal of this research is to improve knowledge about adolescent substance use and aid in the creation of more efficient laws and procedures to deal with this pressing problem.

1.2 Social determinants for substance use and its impact

Teenage years are a critical developmental stage characterised by profound changes in physical, emotional, and social aspects. It is also a time when people are more likely to experiment with drugs, alcohol, and tobacco use (NHS, 2023; Islam et al, 2023). A complex interaction of biological, psychological, and social elements leads to this experimentation. Social determinants—the circumstances of a person's birth, development, life, employment, and ageing—are crucial among them (Stewart et al., 2023). According to Halladay et al. (2020) and Stewart et al. (2023), these drivers include educational contexts, peer influence, family dynamics, socioeconomic position, and general societal norms and policies.

Access to resources, stress levels, and exposure to situations where substance use is common can all be significantly impacted by one's socioeconomic standing (Obadeji et al, 2020; Settapani et al, 2018). Teens from worse socioeconomic situations, for example, could experience more stress and have fewer opportunities for extracurricular activities, which raises the risk of substance use. The attitudes and behaviours of parents, together with other family dynamics, have a big impact on

teens' decisions about using drugs. According to Obadeji et al. (2020) and Halladay et al. (2020), teenagers are more likely to use drugs if their parents use drugs themselves or if they feel that their parents are not watching over and supporting them.

Another important aspect of juvenile substance usage is peer pressure. Teenagers frequently look to their social groups for approval and validation, which causes them to imitate the actions of their peers, including abusing drugs (Henneberger et al, 2021; Siraj et al, 2021). Educational settings are also important; schools can help lower student drug use by promoting healthy behaviours and offering robust support networks. On the other hand, greater rates of substance use may be a result of schools that receive insufficient assistance and experience high levels of stress (Vitoria et al., 2020).

The problem is made more difficult by media portrayals of substance abuse and the conventions surrounding it. Teenagers may become desensitised to the dangers of alcohol and drug use if they are constantly exposed to these representations in media, including movies, TV shows, and social media, and may even come to view these actions as desirable or even normal (Motyka and Al-Imam, 2021; Bilgrei et al, 2022). It is imperative to address these socioeconomic variables through focused policies and interventions to enhance young people's well-being and reduce the hazards associated with teen substance use (Bilgrei et al, 2022).

1.3 Social Determinants of Teenage Substance Use

The literature now in publication emphasises the intricate interactions between these socioeconomic variables. According to studies, teens from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to use drugs because of things like stress levels that are higher and fewer opportunities for extracurricular activities (Ghelbash et al, 2023). Parenting practices and parental substance use are important aspects of family dynamics. Teens, for example, are more likely to take drugs if they believe their parents are not watching over them or if their parents use drugs (Vitoria et al, 2020; Meza et al, 2023).

One of the most powerful indicators of adolescent substance use is peer pressure. Teenagers who aspire to blend in and gain acceptance from their peers may emulate their friends' actions, including doing drugs. Substance usage habits are also greatly

impacted by educational settings, such as schools (Watts et al., 2024). Schools can contribute to a decrease in student substance use by offering strong support networks and encouraging healthy lifestyles. On the other hand, schools with low levels of support and stress might be a factor in the increased prevalence of drug use (Hoffmann, 2024).

The problem is made more difficult by the normalisation of substance use in the media and societal standards. Films, TV series, and social media frequently depict alcohol and drug use, which might desensitise teenagers to the dangers and make these actions seem normal or even desirable (Caluzzi et al, 2022; Cristello et al, 2024). Addressing these variables requires the implementation of public health policies and programs. However, there is continuous discussion regarding the most effective ways to reduce adolescent substance use, and the efficacy of current policies and programs differs (Caluzzi et al., 2022).

1.4 Narrowing Down the Focus

This study focuses on comprehending the particular socioeconomic characteristics that influence substance use among teenage boys and girls in the UK, given the complexity of the issue. It attempts to investigate how these factors interact and influence substance use behaviours as a whole. The research aims to identify any gender-specific characteristics that may require specialised measures by taking into account both boys and girls. The effectiveness of present policies and therapies will also be assessed, along with how well they address the underlying reasons for substance use. By use of this assessment, the study will propose possible improvements or substitute tactics to elevate current endeavours. With a focus on the needs of teenage boys and girls in the UK, this method guarantees a thorough grasp of the social dynamics at play and offers practical insights for more effective prevention and support measures.

1.5 Research Questions

The primary research question guiding this study is:

What is the role of social determinants in influencing substance use in teenage boys and girls in the UK, and what policies and interventions are currently enforced to

address the determinants associated with substance use in teenagers, and how successful are they at addressing these factors?

1.6 Aim and Objectives

Aim:

This study's primary goal was to understand how social factors influenced drug-related behaviours in teenagers living in the United Kingdom. The study aimed to give insights that could direct preventative efforts and support strategies targeted at helping these vulnerable individuals based on their age and gender by exploring the factors that influenced substance use habits.

Objectives:

1. To examine the factors that influence substance use behaviours among teenagers in the UK.
2. To explore how various social determinants interact with each other and collectively affect teenage substance use patterns.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of policies and interventions to tackle determinants linked to teenage substance use and suggest potential enhancements or alternative approaches.

1.7 Overview of the Dissertation Structure

This dissertation's structure is set up to methodically handle the goals and research issues. In the first chapter, the study topic is introduced, pertinent background information is provided, the emphasis is narrowed, the research questions and objectives are stated, and the dissertation structure is briefly reviewed. In Chapter 2, the body of research on the social determinants of teen substance use is reviewed. Research gaps are highlighted, different studies and their conclusions are discussed, and the research context is established. To answer the research objectives, the study's methodology, including the systematic review strategy, data sources, selection criteria, and analytical procedures, are described in Chapter 3. The results of the systematic review are presented in Chapter 4, which also assesses the efficacy of current treatments and policies by offering a thorough examination of the various socioeconomic factors that affect drug use among adolescent boys and girls in the UK.

In Chapter 5, the findings are interpreted within the framework of the larger literature. The significance of the results for policy and practice is discussed, the study's contributions to the field are highlighted, and potential directions for future research are suggested. Chapter 6 concludes by summarising the key findings of the study, discussing its limits, offering suggestions for legislators, educators, and medical experts, and outlining future research.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 Introduction

Alcohol and illegal drugs are examples of psychoactive chemicals that can be used harmfully or dangerously. This is known as drug abuse (Nawi et al, 2021). It includes using practices that cause a great deal of impairment or distress. Addiction, bodily injury, mental health problems, and unfavourable social outcomes are all possible outcomes of drug usage (Nawi et al, 2021; Ceceli et al, 2022). An extensive assessment of the literature on the impact of social determinants on drug usage among teenage girls and boys in the UK is given in this chapter. The review addresses definitions of drug misuse, drug abuse prevalence in the UK and around the world, variables that contribute to substance addiction, and interventions designed to prevent substance abuse.

2.2 Prevalence of Drug Abuse

2.2.1 Global Prevalence

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) World Drug Report 2023, which estimated that 275 million individuals took drugs in the previous year, drug usage is a serious global problem that affects millions of people worldwide. Globally, cannabis is the most widely used drug, with opiates, amphetamines, and cocaine following closely behind. While exact patterns of usage and substance kinds differ, this prevalence is present in both industrialised and developing nations. Alcohol use disorders, which impacted 100.4 million people worldwide in 2016, present a significant public health concern in addition to problems associated with opiates, amphetamines, cannabis, cocaine, and other substances (Degenhard et al., 2018).

Not considering alcohol and tobacco, about 1% of people worldwide suffer from some kind of drug dependency (Ritchie et al, 2022). This encompasses addictions to drugs like cocaine, amphetamines, opiates, and cannabis. Opioid use disorders impact about 26.8 million persons worldwide (Shen et al, 2023). Measuring deaths and disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), the burden of drug use disorders is rising, particularly among young males and in wealthy nations. According to a recent cross-sectional study by Olanrewaju et al. (2022) among undergraduate students at a few southwestern universities in Nigeria, 45.7% of participants reported abusing drugs or

other substances. The most often reported substance abuses were cigarettes (54.5%) and alcohol (61.5%).

2.2.2 Prevalence in the UK

Drug misuse is a serious public health issue in the United Kingdom. In the UK, teen substance use is a serious public health concern (Castel Pietra et al., 2022). Regarding substance usage, teenage males and girls may have diverse experiences and influences (Leban et al., 2020). The incidence of drug usage among teenagers in the UK is remarkable, according to NHS England (2022). 21% of girls aged 15 reported using e-cigarettes at the time, indicating a rising trend in the usage of vaping products to consume nicotine (NHS, 2022). Teenagers are known to experiment with alcohol and accept it widely; over 40% of adolescents report having had an alcoholic drink at some point in their lives. Furthermore, almost 18% of adolescents reported using drugs, a statistic that includes a variety of substances and indicates a high level of exposure to illicit or regulated substances (NHS, 2022). According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), 1 in 11 adults between the ages of 16 and 59 reported using drugs in the previous year; rates were higher for younger adults between the ages of 16 and 24. The most often-used substance is cannabis, which is followed by ecstasy and powder cocaine. Males are more likely than females to use drugs, and this gender disparity is especially noticeable in younger age groups.

2.3 Factors Influencing Substance Abuse

2.3.1 Media and Advertising Influence

Teenagers' views and behaviours can be greatly influenced by media and advertising portraying substance use in a good way. According to Jackson et al. (2020), media messages that normalise drug use can encourage youth experimentation by normalising drug usage. Teens' views can be shaped and their understanding of the risks connected with substance use is reduced when they are exposed to media that frequently glamorises substance use and associates it with success, attractiveness, and social acceptance. For example, drug use may seem less harmful if it is portrayed in television series, films, and social media posts without emphasising the negative effects. Furthermore, teens are more likely to perceive substance use as normal and acceptable behaviour as a result of the subtle influences of targeted advertising from tobacco and alcohol firms (Capasso et al., 2021).

2.3.2 School Environment

The school setting has a significant influence on how teenagers behave when using drugs. According to Jones et al. (2020), several important influences include the school climate, peer norms, and the accessibility of drugs on campus. A school environment that fosters safety, support, and engagement among kids can serve as a barrier against substance abuse. Schools can lessen the possibility of substance misuse by enforcing explicit regulations against drug use and encouraging healthy practices. On the other hand, colleges that foster a permissive environment or provide easy access to drugs on campus may put students at greater risk of using drugs. Strong social norms that forbid drug use in schools can also act as a deterrent, while peer groups that condone or support drug use can increase teenagers' rates of experimenting and regular usage (Jones et al, 2020).

2.3.3 Family Dynamics

The home environment is a significant component in predicting teenage substance use. Adolescent behaviour is greatly impacted by parental substance use, family cohesiveness, and supervision. According to Luo (2023), teens who witness their parents using drugs are more prone to try drugs themselves as a result of both learnt behaviours and genetic predispositions. On the other hand, open communication and supportive connections within a strong family unit serve as a barrier against substance abuse. Teens are less likely to participate in such behaviours when parents actively participate in their lives and establish clear expectations around substance use. Furthermore, parental supervision and monitoring are essential; teenagers who believe that their parents are keeping an eye on their peer relationships and activities typically report lower rates of substance use (Jones et al., 2020).

2.3.4 Peer Relationships

Peer interactions play a significant role in shaping teenage conduct, including drug usage. Teens are especially vulnerable to social pressure and the need to blend in with their peers. According to Henneberger et al. (2021), peer pressure and acceptance are important factors that influence teenage substance use. Teens who hang out with their peers who use drugs are more prone to use drugs themselves because they feel the urge to fit in and are afraid of being alone. Peer norms have the power to both lessen and increase substance use behaviours. For example, when

drug usage is accepted among peers, individuals in that group are more inclined to act in similar ways. On the other hand, peers who are against substance use can act as a deterrent, preventing friends from trying drugs or alcohol (Grummitt et al., 2021).

According to Bugbee et al. (2019), teens' substance use behaviours are significantly influenced by their level of schooling. Studies repeatedly demonstrate that higher rates of substance use, both at the initiation and ongoing stages, are correlated with lower levels of educational attainment. Teenagers who experience academic disengagement and low motivation in the classroom may look for other socialisation opportunities, frequently within peer groups where substance abuse may be accepted or even encouraged. Awareness of juvenile substance use trends requires an awareness of the impact of peer networks. The norms of peer groups are crucial in determining how people behave when using drugs. The attitudes and actions of their peers have a significant impact on adolescents, and those who believe that substance use is normal in their social circles are more likely to engage in similar behaviours themselves (Bugbee et al, 2019).

2.3.5 Socioeconomic Status

Teenage substance usage is also significantly influenced by socioeconomic position (SES). Teens from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to take drugs because of several interrelated reasons, such as having less access to resources, experiencing more stress, and being in contexts where drug use is more common. Socioeconomic disadvantages like poverty, unemployment, and low educational attainment have been linked to greater rates of substance use among teenagers, according to research by Halladay et al. (2020). These kids may turn to drugs as a coping strategy since they frequently experience higher amounts of stress. Furthermore, youths may have higher access to and opportunity for substance use in communities with high crime rates and social disarray (Shariat et al., 2023). The issue is made worse by the dearth of recreational centres and after-school activities in low-income neighbourhoods, which leaves teenagers with less constructive things to do in their spare time.

2.3.6 Cultural and ethnic Influences

Different aspects of understanding juvenile substance use are contributed by cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Adolescent views and behaviours connected to substance

use are influenced by cultural norms and attitudes towards substance use, which vary greatly among ethnic groups (Bo et al., 2023). Cultures that prioritise moderation or abstinence from substances, for example, may offer protective factors against the initiation of substance use among youths. Ethnic differences in the prevalence of substance use, on the other hand, emphasise the intricate interactions that exist between cultural norms, socioeconomic variables, and resource availability. The acculturation processes that immigrant communities frequently go through can affect their substance use behaviours (Miller et al, 2019). Due to exposure to new social norms surrounding drug and alcohol consumption as well as changes in cultural identity, adjusting to a new cultural setting may cause attitudes towards substance use to change (Bo et al., 2023).

2.3.7 Neighbourhood Characteristics

As per the Booth et al (2023) study, community variables also strongly impact teenage substance use behaviours. Adolescents who reside in impoverished areas marked by deprivation, criminal activity, and restricted resources are more susceptible to substance abuse. The pressures in the environment brought on by a poor neighbourhood can lead to substance abuse as a coping strategy or way to connect with others. Furthermore, teenagers' exposure to and chances for substance use are significantly influenced by the availability of substances in their immediate surroundings. Teenagers' likelihood of continuing their substance use can be increased and perceived obstacles to experimentation lowered when drugs or alcohol are easily accessible in their communities (Wen, 2017).

On the other hand, areas with high levels of social capital and cohesiveness within the community can offer protective factors against drug use. According to Zimmerman et al. (2017), norms that discourage substance use and encourage healthy options for teenagers are fostered by positive social networks and supportive community environments. According to Zimmerman et al. (2017), community-based treatments that foster positive adolescent development and improve social relationships have the potential to lower teen substance use rates by fostering circumstances that encourage good youth development.

2.3.8 Interventions for Substance Abuse

Adolescent substance addiction interventions comprise a range of tactics designed to target the various aspects that impact their actions. Public awareness initiatives and advertising rules are two ways to lessen the impact of media and advertising on adolescent substance use (Evans et al, 2020). Public awareness initiatives emphasise the dangers and repercussions of drug usage to counter pro-substance messaging. These advertisements frequently inform youngsters about the possible risks linked with substance use by using gripping narratives and statistical data (Das et al, 2016). More restrictions on advertising, especially for youth, can also greatly lessen the amount of pro-substance messaging that they are exposed to. Limiting the promotion of alcohol and tobacco products on websites that teens visit, for example, can help reduce the normalisation of drug use in the media (Dunn et al, 2018).

Reducing access to drugs on campus, fostering healthy peer norms, and improving school atmosphere are the main goals of school-based treatments (Babor et al., 2023). Peer education initiatives, in which students receive training to inform their classmates about the dangers of substance use, have demonstrated promise in changing attitudes and actions (Tremblay et al., 2020). By utilising the influence of peers, these initiatives increase the relatability and effectiveness of the message. Restrictions on the availability of narcotics on campus are also very important since they lessen the chances that students may use drugs. To preserve a secure atmosphere, schools can put in place measures including frequent checks, surveillance, and strong enforcement of drug-free zones (Tremblay et al, 2020).

The goals of family-based interventions are to lessen parental substance use and increase family cohesion. Programs that teach parenting techniques and offer family therapy can enhance family relationships and foster a nurturing atmosphere that deters drug use (Shay-Wallace, 2020). These programs highlight how crucial it is for parents and teenagers to have honest conversations about the dangers of substance use (Shay-Wallace, 2020). By providing a family atmosphere where teenagers feel understood and supported, parents can effectively dissuade their children from turning to drugs. Furthermore, family therapy can address underlying problems like parental addiction or familial conflict that may be linked to substance use, which can help to create a more stable and supportive environment (Houtepen et al, 2020).

Peer-based therapies employ the power of peers to encourage positive behaviour and lower drug usage. Positive peer norms can be established through initiatives like peer mentorship, in which senior students guide junior ones (O'Connell et al., 2020). This strategy makes use of the inherent influence that peers have on one another, which makes it an effective tool for reducing drug usage. Teenage participation in peer-led activities that promote healthy lifestyles, including clubs or sports, can also help lower the risk of substance abuse. These activities give alternate pathways for socialisation and stress alleviation, lowering the appeal of substance use (O'Connell et al, 2020).

To address the larger socioeconomic drivers of substance use, problems including poverty, illiteracy, and unfavourable neighbourhood circumstances must be addressed. Reducing the risk factors linked to substance use can be accomplished by policies that improve socioeconomic conditions, such as granting access to education and work possibilities (Gerra et al, 2020). Scholarship programs and job training initiatives, for instance, can provide a road to success for kids from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, thereby lessening the attraction of substance use as a means of escape. Effective community-based initiatives that provide low-income families with resources and support can also be found (Parthasarathy et al., 2023). These initiatives could include mentorship, after-school activities, and healthcare access. All of these things work together to give teenagers a supportive atmosphere. Such interventions can dramatically reduce the prevalence of teen substance addiction by addressing these underlying reasons (Parthasarathy et al., 2023).

2.4 Theoretical framework

2.4.1 Social Determinants Theory and its Relevance to Substance Use

Teenage substance use habits are shaped by a variety of societal, economic, and environmental circumstances, and Social Determinants Theory provides a critical lens through which to examine these relationships. We can gain a greater understanding of these factors' interactions in a young person's surroundings by incorporating them into a conceptual model, especially when viewed through the lenses of social learning theory, ecological systems theory, and gender socialisation theory (Blair and Saddiqi, 2022). These theoretical frameworks explain the significant influence that various social factors, namely those related to gender, have on adolescent substance use (Shahram, 2016).

According to Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), social circumstances serve as a teaching tool for behaviours, including substance use. Examining peer pressure, familial dynamics, and media representations as social factors of adolescent substance use makes this theory especially pertinent. During their formative years, adolescents are highly impressionable and frequently emulate the behaviours of others in their close social networks. For example, a youngster who witnesses their family or friends using drugs or alcohol regularly is more likely to accept this behaviour as normal and use drugs themselves (Gong et al, 2020). Given the context of gender, boys may be more likely to use drugs because their peer groups encourage them to take risks, whereas girls may be more impacted by relational or emotional dynamics (Vitoria et al., 2020).

The focus is further expanded by Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), which looks at how several facets of an adolescent's environment interact to affect their behaviours, including substance use. Substance use behaviours are influenced by every environmental layer, from macrosystems (cultural norms) to microsystems (family, peers) (Mayberry et al, 2009). Gender dynamics play a critical role in these systems, as girls are more perceptive of family interactions while males are influenced by peer dynamics.

According to the Gender Socialisation Theory (Eagly, 1987), boys are socialised to be assertive and risk-takers, whilst girls are encouraged to be more risk-averse. This theory looks at how cultural expectations about gender roles impact behaviours. This may result in different drug use patterns, where ladies take drugs to deal with emotional stress and boys use drugs for social dominance (John et al., 2017). The relationship between these frameworks and socioeconomic status (SES) emphasises how teenagers from lower SES homes could mimic substance use behaviours because of their surroundings (Kirkbride et al., 2024).

2.4.2 Intersectionality and its Application in Understanding Substance Use Disparities

According to Mereish et al. (2014) and Vu et al. (2019), the intersectionality paradigm offers a nuanced perspective on how different social identities overlap and interact to create distinct experiences and outcomes related to substance use. Intersectionality, as defined by Mereish et al. (2014) and Vu et al. (2019), examines the intersections of

many aspects of identity, including gender, socioeconomic class, race, and cultural background, to assist in identifying differences in substance use behaviours among teenage boys and girls in the UK. Gender variations in substance usage patterns, for instance, might be a reflection of wider inequalities impacted by socioeconomic conditions, cultural norms, and resource accessibility. According to Mereish et al. (2014) and Vu et al. (2019), intersectionality also emphasises how marginalised identities or experiences of discrimination may exacerbate substance use vulnerabilities among specific groups of teenagers. This emphasises the need for focused interventions that address these intersecting factors.

2.4.3 Ecological Models of Health Behaviour

By analysing the relationship between people and their settings, ecological models of health behaviour provide a comprehensive framework for comprehending teen substance use (Barati et al., 2021). These models propose that several levels of influence, such as individual characteristics, interpersonal connections, community settings, and wider societal issues, have an impact on substance use behaviours. For example, teenagers' views towards and involvement in substance use are shaped by the interaction of individual characteristics, such as personality traits or coping mechanisms, with interpersonal connections typified by peer dynamics and parental influences (Votaw, and Witkiewitz, 2021). Communities, like local communities or schools, offer environments where social interactions and environmental cues both affect and normalise substance use behaviours. Adolescents' drug use behaviours are further shaped by broader societal elements such as cultural norms, legislation, and economic structures, which impact their exposure to substance-related hazards, their access to resources, and their potential for positive development. (Et al., Babies, 2021).

To sum up, a comprehensive comprehension of the social determinants that impact substance use in teenage girls and boys in the UK necessitates a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates intersectionality theory, ecological models of health behaviour, social determinants theory, and an investigation of particular social, economic, and environmental factors. Researchers and legislators may create focused interventions and policies that address the underlying causes of substance use and support good health outcomes for teenagers by looking at how these factors interact and overlap. This method not only recognises the complexity of drug-using

behaviours but also highlights the significance of all-encompassing, contextually-aware solutions to assist teenagers in making healthy decisions and gaining access to essential support networks.

2.4.4 Strengths of Studies

The literature on drug usage among teenagers in the UK has several strengths that add to a thorough knowledge of the problem. First off, the studies offer a comprehensive analysis of the prevalence rates of substance use worldwide as well as in the UK. Statistical data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the National Health Service (NHS) provides empirical evidence, for example, about the prevalence of substance use across various age groups (NHS, 2022; Office for National Statistics, 2023). These studies not only describe the scope of the issue but also lay a solid basis for more research.

Furthermore, the understanding of the dynamics of substance misuse is enhanced by the incorporation of theoretical frameworks including intersectionality, ecological models of health behaviour, and social determinants theory. The social determinants hypothesis highlights how substance use behaviours are influenced by elements including family dynamics, socioeconomic status, and community features (Blair and Saddiqi, 2022). By taking into account the individual, interpersonal, community, and societal aspects that contribute to substance addiction, ecological models of health behaviour offer a comprehensive perspective (Barati et al., 2021). On the other hand, intersectionality theory investigates how distinct vulnerabilities or protective variables surrounding substance use are created by intersecting identities (such as gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background) (Mereish et al., 2014).

A multidisciplinary approach that incorporates viewpoints from public health, education, psychology, and sociology is also beneficial to the literature. An in-depth examination of teenage drug misuse is made possible by this multidisciplinary viewpoint, which takes into account social effects, educational environments, psychological aspects, and public health ramifications (Jones et al., 2020; Henneberger et al., 2021). Studies looking at peer pressure or how school environments affect drug use habits, for example, shed light on how social and educational circumstances affect teenagers' attitudes and drug-related behaviours.

The literature also addresses the useful ramifications for practice and policy. Actionable methods to prevent and address teen substance use are highlighted by recommendations for interventions such as public awareness campaigns, school-based programs, family-centred approaches, and community-level tactics (Babor et al., 2023; Parthasarathy et al., 2023). These interventions, which attempt to reduce risk factors and increase protective ones found in the literature, are based on empirical data and theoretical frameworks. Overall, the extensive breadth, empirical basis, theoretical integration, multidisciplinary viewpoints, and practical policy suggestions of the literature on drug addiction among teens in the UK are its strongest points. These advantages work together to create a comprehensive understanding of the many variables impacting teens' substance use behaviours and to provide useful information for preventative and intervention programs.

2.4.5 Limitations of Studies

There are several limitations to the research on drug usage among teenagers in the UK that should be carefully taken into account. A significant methodological issue that has been noted in several studies is the use of self-reported data. Due to social desirability effects and underreporting, this method can introduce significant bias, particularly when discussing sensitive topics like substance usage. For instance, youths may underreport their drug use due to fear of penalties or social shame, leading to possibly erroneous prevalence numbers (Bugbee et al., 2019; Luo, 2023). These biases have the potential to erode the validity of the data gathered and make it more difficult to understand the results.

Another important restriction is the findings' generalisability. Although the research offers insightful information about drug abuse among teenagers in the UK, it's possible that these conclusions won't apply to other cultural or socioeconomic circumstances. Since Western populations make up the majority of studies, particular factors impacting substance use in other cultural or ethnic groups may be overlooked. Bo et al. (2023), for instance, highlight the significance of cultural norms and ethnic disparities in substance use, suggesting that there may be notable differences in the factors influencing substance use in non-Western cultures. This lack of generalisability emphasises the need for more inclusive research that takes socioeconomic background and a range of cultural backgrounds into account.

Another crucial issue with the examined studies is temporal relevance. The relevance of some of the cited studies to current trends and challenges in teen substance misuse may be limited because it is based on data that is many years old. For example, Shen et al. (2023) and Ritchie et al. (2022) emphasise that current data is necessary to accurately reflect the current status of teenage drug usage due to the dynamic nature of substance use patterns. Studies on drug use trends must employ recent data to be accurate and relevant because changes in policy and legislation, the introduction of new substances, and social norms can all have an impact.

There is another drawback to this research's theoretical application. Although theoretical frameworks that offer useful insights into substance use, such as the social determinants theory, intersectionality, and ecological models of health behaviour, their implementation may differ throughout studies. This variance may result in different interpretations of the data or the omission of important elements not addressed by the selected hypotheses. According to Vu et al. (2019), while intersectionality theory is important for comprehending the complex nature of substance use, it might not be used uniformly in all research. A thorough understanding of how different social identities and variables interact to shape substance use behaviours may be hampered by this discrepancy.

Data availability is yet another important issue that has been brought up in the literature. There could not be much complete and current data on particular subpopulations, like LGBTQ+ youth and racial minorities. There are gaps in our knowledge of how substance abuse impacts these varied groups as a result of this scarcity. Miller and colleagues (2019) emphasise the significance of conducting inclusive research that spans a broad spectrum of demographic categories to guarantee that interventions are suitably customised and efficacious. Without appropriate data on these subpopulations, it becomes impossible to build focused initiatives that address the distinct needs and challenges they confront.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the evaluated research provides insightful information and advances our knowledge of teen substance misuse. They draw attention to important elements like the impact of the media, the educational setting, family dynamics, peer connections, socioeconomic status, influences from different cultures and ethnic groups, and neighbourhood features. For example, Jackson et al.

(2020) and Capasso et al. (2021) underline the substantial importance of media and advertising in moulding teens' views towards substance use, whereas Jones et al. (2020) emphasise the impact of the school environment and peer norms.

Future research must address these limitations, though, to advance the field. This can be done by using more reliable methodologies, making sure that findings can be applied to a variety of contexts, making use of recent data, consistently applying theoretical frameworks, and enhancing the availability of data for under-represented subpopulations. By doing this, scientists may create more extensive and nuanced understandings of teen substance usage, which will help them create therapies and policies that work better.

2.4.6 Study Gaps in the Literature

The literature analysis on teen substance use identifies several knowledge gaps that need to be filled to develop a thorough grasp of this complicated problem. The paucity of longitudinal research that monitors adolescent substance use behaviours over an extended period is one important restriction. Because it sheds light on the elements that affect substance use's developmental trajectories, such as start, escalation, and cessation, longitudinal research is essential (Kirkbride et al., 2024). Through these investigations, researchers would be able to track changes in substance use patterns throughout several developmental stages and pinpoint the ideal times to intervene. Furthermore, longitudinal data can be used to better understand the long-term consequences of early drug use and the efficacy of preventative interventions.

The literature currently in publication only touches on the cultural and ethnic influences on substance use; however, a deeper investigation of how these elements interact with other determinants, such as socioeconomic status, is required. Research comparing several ethnic groups in the UK may reveal differences and protective variables particular to each group (Bo et al., 2023). This study may reveal societal norms, customs, and available resources that either lessen or increase teen substance use. Through an awareness of these dynamics, interventions can be designed to better meet the unique requirements and assets of various ethnic groups, leading to more equitable health outcomes.

It is necessary to investigate how intersecting identities—such as gender, social background, and ethnicity—contribute to differences in substance use. Targeted

interventions and a more detailed knowledge of vulnerable subgroups could be facilitated by intersectional studies (Mereish et al., 2014). According to intersectionality theory, different social identities come together to produce distinct experiences and results. By using this approach, researchers studying drug use may be able to better understand how combined societal advantages or disadvantages affect substance use risks and behaviours. This method would be especially helpful in locating and assisting teenagers who experience numerous forms of marginalisation.

The majority of the material that is now available is based mostly on quantitative data, which is useful but might not fully represent the range of experiences and reasons why youth use drugs. Incorporating qualitative research could provide greater insights into the lived experiences, motivations, and perspectives of youth (Kock et al., 2017). Qualitative research, utilising techniques like focus groups and interviews, may reveal human stories and hidden variables that quantitative measurements could overlook. Qualitative data, for instance, may show how decisions about substance use are influenced by interpersonal interactions, personal coping strategies, and subjective risk assessments. This comprehensive, rich data would improve knowledge about substance abuse and guide the creation of more successful, culturally appropriate interventions.

The influence of digital media on teens' attitudes and behaviours related to substance use is another important topic that needs more investigation. Given social media's and online platforms' growing influence, it's important to comprehend both their advantages and disadvantages for attitudes towards substance use (Capasso et al., 2021). Digital media has the potential to normalise dangerous behaviours, glamorise substance use, and make drugs and information regarding their usage easily accessible. On the other hand, digital platforms can also be used to spread instructional materials, support systems, and messages on prevention. Studies ought to investigate how adolescents engage with digital content associated with substance abuse and ascertain methods for utilising digital media for the objectives of prevention and intervention.

Although these gaps point to areas that require more investigation, the body of current research offers a useful starting point for comprehending the social factors that influence teen substance use. Research continually demonstrates the critical impact

that socioeconomic status (SES) plays in shaping substance use behaviours. Teenagers from lower SES homes suffer higher vulnerability to substance use due to economic challenges, stress, and limited access to resources (Blair and Saddiqi, 2022; Kock et al., 2017). These results highlight how crucial it is to address socioeconomic inequality by implementing programs and policies that attempt to lower poverty and increase access to work and education.

Another important factor that influences adolescent substance use is family dynamics. While parental substance use and familial dispute enhance the likelihood of substance use among teenagers, strong family coherence and supportive relationships serve as protective variables (Shahram, 2016; Kirkbride et al., 2024). These revelations highlight the necessity of family-centred interventions that fortify family ties and give parents the knowledge and tools they need to encourage the growth of their kids.

Another important component influencing how people use substances is peer pressure. Adolescents may experiment with substances due to peer pressure and the need for social approval, but substance use can be discouraged by supportive social networks and good peer norms (Blair and Saddiqi, 2022). The prevention of substance use requires interventions that provide supportive school and community environments and encourage positive peer interactions.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the approach used to look into how social determinants affect teenage boys' and girls' substance use in the UK. To assess the efficacy of present policies and interventions as well as comprehend how different social factors influence substance use behaviours, the research will conduct a comprehensive assessment of the body of literature. To provide a thorough overview of the subject, this systematic review will use a quantitative approach to examine and synthesise data from several studies. The research guarantees that the study is thorough, objective, and grounded in current empirical data by concentrating on a systematic review. This is crucial for offering precise and useful insights into the impact of social variables on adolescent substance use. (Muka et al, 2020; Linares-Espinós et al, 2018).

3.2 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy supporting this study is positivism. According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), positivism is a philosophy that places a strong focus on the value of objective knowledge and the application of quantitative data to identify universal truths about social processes. A positivist approach is especially appropriate in the context of this systematic review since it makes it easier to find and evaluate empirical data about how social variables affect teen substance use (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). The study attempts to offer objective insights into the efficacy of current policies and interventions by concentrating on quantifiable and observable data (Tamminen et al, 2020). The reliability and validity of the research conclusions are enhanced by the positivist philosophy, which guarantees that the findings are based on objective facts rather than subjective interpretations (Tamminen et al, 2020).

3.3 Research Approach

This study is using a strictly quantitative research design. To investigate the connections between social variables and teen substance use, this entails concentrating on numerical data and statistical analysis (Harris et al, 2014). The systematic review will include studies that provide quantifiable measures of variables such as socioeconomic position, family dynamics, peer impact, and educational

contexts (Harris et al, 2014; Stamatakis et al, 2019). The study will be able to find patterns and connections in the data by using a quantitative method, which will add to a solid understanding of how social variables affect substance use (Stamatakis et al, 2019). To make generalisable conclusions on the factors influencing substance use among teens in the UK, this approach enables the objective assessment of variables and the statistical testing of hypotheses (Stamatakis et al, 2019). The reliability and validity of the study's conclusions are improved by the use of quantitative data, which guarantees that the conclusions are supported by empirical evidence (Stamatakis et al, 2019).

3.4 Research Strategy

To direct the review process and guarantee a targeted investigation into the role of social determinants in adolescent substance use, the research strategy used in this study comprised a systematic review of quantitative studies (Guetterman et al., 2018). Subsequently, inclusion and exclusion criteria were created to ascertain the research that would be included in the review, taking into account variables including methodological quality, significance, and the utilisation of quantitative data (Smith and Hasan, 2020). Following the establishment of these criteria, pertinent data were methodically retrieved from the included papers and statistically analysed to synthesise findings and detect significant patterns (Smith and Hasan, 2020). Evaluating the studies' rigour and quality was a crucial part of the plan to guarantee the validity of the findings and recommendations (Guetterman et al., 2018).

To find studies on social determinants and adolescent substance use, the research also entailed a comprehensive search of pertinent databases, such as PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science (Page et al., 2016). Following the identification of possible studies, a screening and selection procedure was carried out, in which the inclusion criteria were verified by reviewing the titles and abstracts (Linares-Espinós et al., 2018; Muka et al., 2020). Quantitative data were then extracted from the chosen research and full-text publications were evaluated for eligibility. This contained information about the study's design, sample makeup, social determinants looked at, and results related to substance use (Muka et al., 2020). By using a methodical approach, the review was guaranteed to be thorough, objective, and centred on addressing the research objectives (Guetterman et al., 2018).

3.5 Study Design

This research used a systematic review as its study methodology, offering a thorough and organised method of analysing prior research (Page et al., 2016). A protocol outlining the review procedures, including search tactics, inclusion and exclusion criteria, data extraction techniques, and analytic plans, was developed at the start of the process (Page et al., 2016). According to Page et al. (2016), this approach ensured that the review was carried out in an orderly and transparent manner. To find patterns, correlations, and trends, the extracted data were then combined and evaluated (Linares-Espinós et al., 2018; Muka et al., 2020). To evaluate the overall effect of socioeconomic variables on substance use, results from several research were combined using statistical techniques like meta-analysis. Lastly, a report summarising the review's findings, outlining their consequences, and offering evidence-based policy and practice recommendations were published (Linares-Espinós et al., 2018; Muka et al., 2020).

3.6 Method of Data Collection

A systematic strategy for this systematic review was taken in the data collection process, guaranteeing a thorough and exacting procedure. Gathering a wide range of quantitative research on social determinants and teen substance use, started with the meticulous selection of pertinent academic databases (Li et al., 2015). A thorough search strategy was created utilising particular keywords and Boolean operators, including terms like "socioeconomic status," "peer influence," "substance use," and "adolescents," after the right databases had been identified. This method made sure that the search results contained all pertinent studies.

After the search, studies were filtered using a two-stage screening procedure (Kurniawan, 2018). First, studies that might be relevant were found by screening abstracts and titles. The eligibility of the full-text articles was then verified by reviewing them by predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Only studies that satisfied the study requirements were taken into consideration for the evaluation, thanks to this stringent screening procedure (Kurniawan, 2018).

Data extraction was done using a standardised extraction form when the studies that qualified were found. Important data were gathered using this form, including study

parameters (author, year, sample size, etc.), socioeconomic determinants investigated, methods of measurement, and conclusions regarding substance use (Li et al., 2015). Only high-quality research was included in the review since the methodological quality of each study was evaluated using recognised quality assessment instruments, preserving the review's integrity (Mathes et al., 2017). To find recurring themes and patterns in the connection between social variables and teen substance use, the extracted data were finally combined and examined. This meticulous approach to data collection made sure the review was thorough, impartial, and in line with the study questions. (Mathes et al., 2017).

3.7 PICOS search terms

Component	Descriptions	Search Terms
Population (P)	Teenage boys and girls in the UK	"teenagers" OR "adolescents" OR "youth" AND "boys" OR "girls" AND "UK" OR "United Kingdom"
Intervention/exposure (I)	Influence of Social Determinants	"Social determinants" OR "socioeconomic factors" OR "family background" OR "peer influence" OR "educational status"
Comparison (C)	Gender comparison	"Gender differences" OR "sex differences" OR "boys vs girls"
Outcome (O)	Substance use	"Substance use" OR "drug abuse" OR "alcohol use" OR "tobacco use"
Study design (S)	Quantitative study	"Quantitative study" OR "Cross-sectional study" OR "cohort studies" OR "randomised controlled trials (RCTs)"

3.8 Inclusion Criteria of Study

The following were the inclusion criteria used in this systematic review: Research has to concentrate on how social variables affect teenage boys' and girls' substance use in the UK. Adolescents living in the UK between the ages of 13 and 19 were the target demographic. Only quantitative research, such as cross-sectional studies, cohort studies, and randomised controlled trials (RCTs), that offered unambiguous gender

comparisons in substance use patterns were taken into consideration. To guarantee relevance, the studies had to be published in English and within the previous ten years. The study was mandated to furnish particular information regarding social determinants, including but not limited to socioeconomic status, family structure, peer influence, educational background, and neighbourhood environment, and their respective effects on substance use in boys and girls. Furthermore, research that presented pertinent statistical analyses comparing gender differences in substance use and elucidating the influence of social variables was given priority.

3.9 Exclusion Criteria of Study

Research that did not specifically target the adolescent population or that was not carried out in the United Kingdom was disqualified. To uphold the rigorousness of the review, case studies, reviews, comments, qualitative studies, and non-peer-reviewed articles were omitted. Research on substance abuse without a connection to socioeconomic variables or without a comparison between males and girls was also disregarded. Furthermore, studies that included participants beyond the stated age range (13-19 years) or covered geographic regions outside the UK were not examined. Studies published in languages other than English or older than 10 years were eliminated to ensure the data's contemporary relevance and accessibility. Furthermore, studies with unclear quantitative data—such as those with inadequate datasets or missing statistical tests—were not included in the review.

3.10 Ethical Considerations for Systematic Review

Ethical considerations are crucial in performing a systematic review, even when the study does not entail direct interaction with human beings. Ensuring data privacy and confidentiality is one of the most important ethical challenges (Vergnes et al, 2010). Only aggregated data from secondary sources were utilised, and all data from the included studies were published in a way that protected the privacy of individual participants (Vergnes et al, 2010). This methodology guarantees the preservation of participants' confidentiality. Furthermore, informed permission is a crucial factor to take into account (Vergnes et al, 2010). It is important to make sure that the research included in the review has complied with ethical standards and gained the necessary agreement from their subjects, even though the primary data will come from published studies where consent was previously obtained (Pressman et al, 2024). Another

crucial ethical factor is avoiding bias and upholding integrity. Lastly, to preserve credibility and transparency, conflicts of interest must be disclosed (Pressman et al., 2024). To guarantee that the results are impartial and trustworthy, any possible conflicts of interest between the study team and the included studies were declared (Pressman et al., 2024).

3.12 Data Analysis and Critical Appraisal

The narrative synthesis methodology was utilised for the data analysis in this systematic review because the included research varied widely in terms of the populations, methodologies, and social factors that were investigated. Without depending on statistical meta-analysis, this approach allowed for a thorough comparison and integration of results (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The main conclusions were distilled and outlined, with an emphasis on how substance use among teenage boys and girls in the UK was influenced by social variables such as family structure, peer pressure, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment. The synthesis found similarities and patterns in the research, paying special emphasis to variations in gender in the ways these characteristics affected the behaviours related to substance use (Dawadi, 2020). Thematic analysis was able to provide a nuanced understanding that statistical aggregation was unable to do by revealing recurrent patterns and interactions between social variables and substance use across genders (Braun and Clarke, 2022). To emphasise these ideas, the results were presented in a structured narrative fashion.

3.13 Critical Appraisal

Critical appraisal was undertaken using defined tools to assess the quality and rigour of the included studies. The Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Checklist was utilised for cross-sectional studies, and the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (NOS) was used for cohort studies (Luchini et al., 2017). According to Lo et al. (2014), these instruments assessed several study quality criteria, such as statistical analysis, measurement of results, comparability of study groups, and participant selection.

Three primary domains were evaluated by the NOS: participant selection, research group comparability, and outcome evaluation. This instrument assessed the cohorts' representativeness, the degree of group comparability, and the outcome assessment

technique (Luchini et al., 2017). For cross-sectional studies, the JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist concentrated on factors such as the study question's clarity, the sampling strategy, the response rate, and the statistical analysis employed (Luchini et al., 2017). By using this checklist, researchers may make sure that the studies used valid and reliable measuring procedures, proper sample strategies, and a well-defined research question. To guarantee accuracy and reduce bias, each study was evaluated separately. Inconsistencies in the evaluations were settled by more examination and conversation. The risk of bias was also evaluated as part of the assessment process, with a special focus on selection, performance, detection, and reporting biases, all of which have the potential to seriously impair the validity of the results (Lo et al., 2014).

The rate (Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation) approach (Gierisch et al., 2015) will be used to rate the strength of the evidence. By taking into account variables including study design, consistency of findings, directness of evidence, and estimate precision, GRADE will enable researchers to assess the overall quality of the evidence (Luchini et al., 2017). Sensitivity analyses can be used to assess the influence of studies with small sample sizes or high risk of bias on the overall results (Gierisch et al., 2015). To provide insight into the efficacy of present policies and interventions targeted at reducing teenage substance use, the findings of the theme analysis and critical appraisal will finally be interpreted within the larger context of the body of existing literature (Luchini et al, 2017). This interpretation will serve as a basis for recommendations based on evidence for next studies and public health campaigns (Gierisch et al, 2015).

CHAPTER 4

4.1 Introduction

The results of the systematic review that was done to determine how social variables affect drug use in adolescent boys and girls in the UK are presented in this chapter. To give readers a thorough grasp of the disparities in substance use across genders and the societal factors that influence them, the review synthesises data from several research. The findings are arranged by the major themes found in the literature, with an emphasis on contrasting the behaviours and experiences of adolescent boys and girls. An overview of the data extraction procedure utilised to obtain pertinent information from the chosen research opens this chapter.

4.2 Data Extraction Process

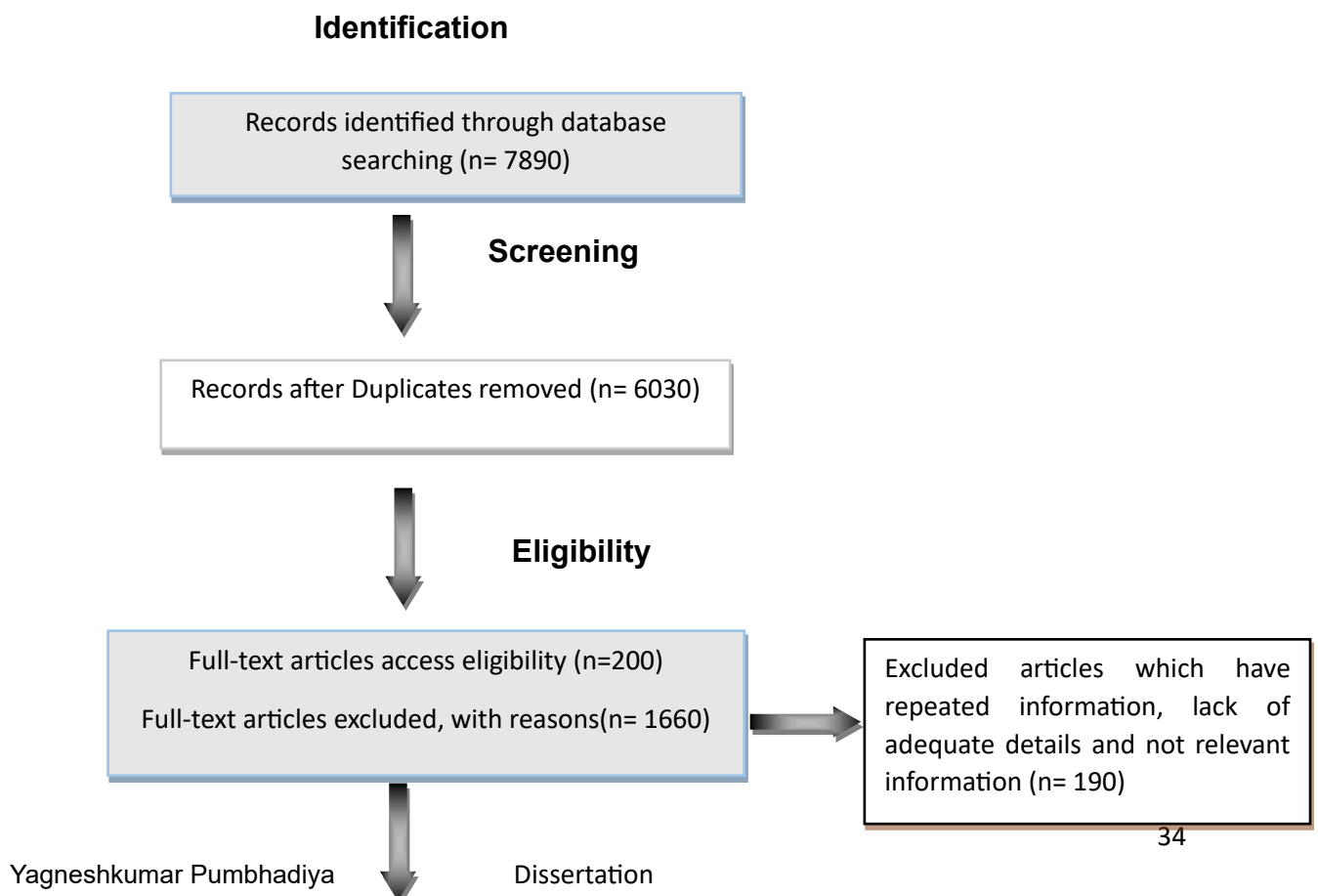
The process of extracting data from the chosen research was meticulously planned to guarantee that pertinent information was gathered and examined methodically. After screening and choosing the studies that satisfied the inclusion criteria, a systematic data extraction form was established to gather critical details from each study (Munn et al, 2014). The following actions were made when extracting the data:

1. **Identification of Key Variables:** Important factors about substance abuse and social influences were found and extracted. These comprised demographic data (age, gender, etc.), the kind of substance used (alcohol, tobacco, drugs, etc.), the frequency and intensity of use, and a variety of social determinants (family history, peer pressure, socioeconomic status, school setting, and community factors), among other things (Schmidt et al, 2020).
2. **Review of Full-Text Articles:** To extract pertinent data, the full-text publications of the chosen research underwent a thorough evaluation process. This required closely examining each study's methodology, findings, and discussion sections to find data that supported the goals of the investigation (Jonnalagadda et al, 2015).
3. **Data Abstraction:** Using the prescribed form, data were extracted from the research projects. The process involved the extraction of both quantitative and qualitative data, such as statistical relationships and themes about social

determinants and gender disparities in substance use experiences (Lunny et al., 2017).

4. **Quality Assessment:** The quality of the studies was verified during the data extraction procedure. Studies were assessed according to standards such as the robustness of the results, study design, sample size, and data-gathering techniques. The dependability of the extracted data was ascertained in part thanks to this assessment (Lunny et al, 2017).
5. **Data Synthesis:** To make it easier to compare findings across studies, extracted data were arranged into tables and narratives. To find patterns, trends, and differences in adolescent male and female substance use, as well as to comprehend how different socioeconomic determinants affect these patterns, the data were synthesised (Jonnalagadda et al, 2015).
6. **Handling Missing Data:** In instances where information was lacking or ambiguous, efforts were undertaken to seek clarification from the original authors. The influence on the overall findings was taken into consideration and the missing data were indicated if no answer was obtained (Schmidt et al, 2020).

4.3 PRISMA chart



Included

Article meeting inclusion criteria (n=10)

The final sample of the systematic review on the impact of social variables on substance use among teenage boys and girls in the UK had ten papers in total. This choice was made after a thorough screening procedure to guarantee the calibre and applicability of the papers that were part of the evaluation.

Table 4.1 Social Determinants Influence Substance Use in Adolescents

Study	Study Author's name/ year	Objective /purpose	Setting/sample	Methodology /Study design	Social Determinants Influencing Substance	Results /outcomes
The relative importance of perceived substance misuse use by different peers on smoking, alcohol and illicit drug use in adolescence	Era et al. (2019)	To test the relationship between perceived substance use by five types of peers and adolescents' use of illicit drugs, smoking, and alcohol consumption.	1285 students aged 12–13 from a pilot cluster randomised controlled trial in the UK (2014-2016).	Quantitative; used self-reported data and logistic regression to analyse peer influence on substance misuse.	Perceived substance misuse by friends outside school, siblings, and online friends were key determinants.	Peer substance misuse was significantly associated with adolescents' lifetime drug use, smoking, and alcohol consumption.
Adverse childhood experiences and adolescent drug use in the UK: The moderating role of socioeconomic position and ethnicity	Karamanos et al. (2022)	To explore the relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and adolescent drug use, and how this relationship is moderated by socioeconomic position and ethnicity.	9,476 adolescents from the UK Millennium Cohort Study.	Longitudinal study using sex-stratified survey logistic regression models to assess drug use at ages 14 and 17.	Socioeconomic status and ethnicity were examined as potential moderators in the relationship between ACEs and drug use.	ACEs were associated with higher drug use at age 14 than at age 17, particularly for girls. Socioeconomic position and ethnicity did not significantly buffer this effect.
Age-Varying Associations of Parental Knowledge and	Mak et al (2019)	To examine the age-varying associations of parental	Data from the PROSPER study, with a final sample of	Time-varying effect modelling (TVEM) was used to examine the associations	Parental knowledge, antisocial peer behaviour,	Low parental knowledge and antisocial peer behaviour were

Antisocial Peer Behaviour With Adolescent Substance Use		knowledge and antisocial peer behaviour with adolescent substance use (cigarette use, drunkenness, and marijuana use).	8,222 adolescents followed from Grade 6 to Grade 12 (ages 11 to 18.9).	between the variables across adolescence.	economic disadvantage, family structure.	significantly associated with substance use across adolescence, though the magnitude decreased with age, except for the association between peer risk and marijuana use.
	Graham et al (2018)	To examine how family, peer, and school relationships independently and interactively influence adolescent substance use, subjective well-being, and mental health symptoms among 11–16-year-olds in Wales.	The study used data from the 2013 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey, including 9,055 young people aged 11–16 years in Wales.	A cross-sectional study utilising multilevel logistic regression analyses to explore associations between family communication, family support, relationships with school staff, school peer connectedness, and support from friends, with substance use and mental health outcomes.	- Family Relationships: Family communication and support were generally associated with lower substance use and better mental health. - Peer Relationships: Support from friends was linked to higher substance use but better mental health outcomes among those with higher family support. - School Relationships: Connectedness to school and support from school staff were associated with better subjective well-being and fewer mental health symptoms.	- Positive relationships with family and school staff are linked to better mental health and lower substance use. - Support from friends was linked to higher substance use but better mental health outcomes in the context of high family support. - Higher school peer connectedness is associated with better well-being and mental health. - Relationships with school staff were notably important for students with less family support.
Parents Modelling, Peer Influence, and Peer Selection Impact on Adolescent Smoking Behaviour	Vitória et al. (2020)	To examine the impact of parent modelling, peer influence, and peer selection on adolescent smoking behaviour.	Two Portuguese cohorts (younger: 13.17 years; older: 16.20 years). Total of 656 students.	Longitudinal study with autoregressive cross-lagged model (ARCL) analysing data collected three times over three years.	Parental smoking, peer influence, and peer selection. Differences in impact based on age and type of peers.	Significant increase in smoking over time, with peer influence and peer selection playing key roles. Parental modelling had limited longitudinal effect. The older cohort

						showed higher variance explained in smoking behaviour.
Associations of Adverse Childhood Experiences with Educational Attainment and Adolescent Health	Houtepen et al, (2020)	To explore associations of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) with educational attainment and adolescent health, and the role of family and socioeconomic factors in these associations	Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC), UK; n = 9,959 for educational outcomes, n = 4,917 for health outcomes.	Prospective cohort study assessing ACEs from birth to age 16 and their impact on educational attainment and health outcomes at ages 16 and 17.	Family factors (home ownership, parental education, social class, etc.) and socioeconomic factors.	84% reported at least one ACE; higher risk of lower educational attainment, depression, drug use, and smoking; associations with educational attainment were reduced but remained significant after adjustment; ACEs strongly associated with health outcomes like depression and drug use.
Family Structure, Unstructured Socialising, and Heavy Substance Use among Adolescents	Hoffmann (2022)	To investigate whether unstructured socialising mediates the association between family structure and heavy alcohol or substance use among adolescents.	Data from 30 nations; n = 65,737.	Generalised structural equation modelling and mediation tests.	Family structure (single-parent, stepparent, no-parent families) and unstructured socializing.	Unstructured socialising mediated the relationship between single-parent family structure and heavy substance use; less support for mediation among stepparent or no-parent families.
Illicit Drug Use in English Adolescent Students	Wilkhu (2016)	To evaluate whether social learning (SL) factors explain drug use in English adolescents using the Social Structure Social Learning (SSSL) theory, and to identify the strongest SL pathway to drug use.	Data from the Smoking Drinking Drug Use Survey 2016 (N = 12,051), adolescents aged 11–15 years across England.	Quantitative research using secondary data from a cross-sectional national survey. Cumulative mediation analyses were conducted.	Imitation, parental reinforcement, attitudes, peer association, age, gender, and region.	Imitation, peer association, attitudes, and parental reinforcement mediate drug use for ages 12-14; regional differences were observed but not for gender.
Alcohol	Pedroni et	To investigate	Setting:	Gender-stratified	Migration status,	Prevalence of early

Consumption in Early Adolescence	in al, (2021)	gender differences in the association between alcohol use and sociodemographic and psychosocial characteristics among 10-14-year-olds.	French-speaking schools in Belgium; Sample: 4,364 adolescents aged 10-14 years from the Walloon Region	multivariable logistic regression modelling on survey data.	family affluence scale (FAS), school satisfaction, family support, peer support, life satisfaction	alcohol consumption was 14% (boys: 16%, girls: 12%). Migration status and FAS-affected boys; positive association with age and negative with school satisfaction and family support. No significant associations with family structure, peer support, or life satisfaction.
Drug misuse, tobacco smoking, alcohol and other social determinants of tuberculosis in UK-born adults in England	Nguipdop-Djomo et al (2020)	To measure the association between socioeconomic status and intermediate social determinants of health (SDHs) like drug misuse, tobacco smoking, and alcohol with tuberculosis (TB) in a low-incidence setting, while considering the clustering of these factors in individuals.	The study was conducted in England. The sample included 681 UK-born White adults aged 23-38 years with a first episode of tuberculosis (TB) and 1183 age and sex-frequency-matched community controls.	A community-based case-control study was used. Data was collected on education, household overcrowding, tobacco smoking, alcohol and drug use, homelessness, and prison history. Logistic regression models, informed by a Directed Acyclic Graph (DAG), were employed for analysis.	Key social determinants include socioeconomic status (education level), household overcrowding, tobacco smoking, drug misuse (especially injectable drugs), homelessness, and area-level deprivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education below GCSE O-levels associated with higher TB odds (OR = 3.94; 95% CI: 2.74, 5.67). - Tobacco smoking and drug use, especially injectable drugs (OR = 5.67; 95% CI: 2.68, 11.98), are independently associated with higher TB risk. - Homelessness and area-level deprivation are also linked to increased TB risk. - Tobacco and class-A drug use were estimated to contribute to 18% and 15% of TB cases, respectively.

4.4 Critical/ risk appraisal of the included study

Table 4.2 Critical Appraisal of the Studies

Study Author's name/ year	Methodology /Study design	Strength	Weaknesses
Era et al. (2019)	Quantitative; used self-reported data and logistic regression to analyse peer influence on substance misuse.	- Large sample size (1285 students). - Utilised self-reported data to capture peer influence. - Quantitative approach with logistic regression allows for clear analysis of peer effects.	- Reliance on self-reported data can introduce bias. - The cross-sectional design limits causal inference. - Focused only on a specific age group (12–13 years).
Karamanos et al. (2022)	Longitudinal study using sex-stratified survey logistic regression models to assess drug use at ages 14 and 17.	- Large sample size (9476 adolescents) and longitudinal design enhance validity. - Explored moderating effects of socioeconomic position and ethnicity, adding depth to understanding of ACEs.	- Moderating effects of socioeconomic position and ethnicity were not significant, limiting the scope of findings. - Data may not account for all potential confounding factors.
Mak et al. (2019)	Time-varying effect modelling (TVEM) was used to examine the associations between the variables across adolescence.	A large sample (8222 adolescents) with a longitudinal design provides insights across developmental stages. - Used time-varying effect modelling to assess changes over time.	- The magnitude of associations decreased with age, which might complicate interpretation. - Results may not be generalisable beyond the studied cohort.
Moore et al. (2018)	A cross-sectional study utilising multilevel logistic regression analyses to explore associations between family communication, family support, relationships with school staff, school peer connectedness, and support from friends, with substance use and mental health outcomes.	- Utilised a large, diverse sample (9055 adolescents). - Multilevel logistic regression analyses capture the complex interactions between family, peer, and school relationships. - Findings provide a nuanced understanding of different relationship impacts.	- Cross-sectional design limits causal inference. - Possible overlap or interaction effects between types of relationships not be fully explored. - Focused only on Wales.
Vitória et al.	Longitudinal study with	Longitudinal design with	- Limited impact of parental modelling

(2020)	autoregressive cross-lagged model (ARCL) analysing data collected three times over three years.	autoregressive cross-lagged modelling provides insight into temporal effects. - Examined differences based on age, offering a detailed understanding of developmental impacts.	might not capture all relevant factors. - The sample is restricted to Portuguese cohorts, which might affect generalisability.
Houtepen et al. (2020)	Prospective cohort study assessing ACEs from birth to age 16 and their impact on educational attainment and health outcomes at ages 16 and 17.	- Large sample size (9959 for educational outcomes, 4917 for health outcomes). - Prospective cohort study design provides strong evidence for the long-term effects of ACEs. - Examined multiple outcomes (educational attainment and health).	- Although ACEs are strongly associated with outcomes, the study does not fully account for all confounding variables. - Potential residual confounding by unmeasured factors.
Hoffmann (2022)	Generalised structural equation modelling and mediation tests.	- Extensive international sample (65,737) enhances generalisability. - Used structural equation modelling and mediation tests to explore complex relationships. - Mediation analysis provides insights into mechanisms.	- Cross-sectional data limits causal inference. - Complexity of family structure might require more nuanced categorisation. - Limited longitudinal data.
Wilkhu (2016)	Quantitative research using secondary data from a cross-sectional national survey. Cumulative mediation analyses were conducted.	- Large sample size (12,051) with a national scope. - Utilised social learning theory to frame analysis. - Identified multiple pathways influencing drug use.	- Cross-sectional design limits causal interpretations. - Data might not fully capture all social learning factors. - Regional differences may not generalise across all contexts.
Pedroni et al. (2021)	Gender-stratified multivariable logistic regression modelling on survey data.	- Gender-stratified analysis provides insights into gender differences. - Used multivariable logistic regression for a detailed examination of sociodemographic factors.	- Focused only on Belgian adolescents, which might limit generalisability. - Some factors (like peer support) showed no significant associations, which may require further exploration.
Nguipdop-Djomo et al. (2020)	A community-based case-control study was used. Data was collected on education, household overcrowding, tobacco smoking, alcohol and drug use,	- Comprehensive analysis of various social determinants and their interaction with tuberculosis risk. - Utilised a large sample with case-control design and advanced statistical models (DAG).	- Limited to a specific demographic (UK-born White adults), which may affect generalisability. The cross-sectional nature of data collection might limit the understanding of causal pathways.

	homelessness, and prison history. Logistic regression models, informed by Directed Acyclic Graph (DAG), were employed for analysis.	Findings provide strong evidence for the impact of socio-economic factors on TB risk.	
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4.5 Thematic Analysis

Substance use habits among teenagers are influenced by a complex interaction of numerous factors, as revealed in recent studies from the UK. These studies highlight the need for efficient policies and treatments by offering insights into the complex social variables that influence substance use patterns.

Objective 1: To Examine the Factors that Influence Substance Use Behaviours Among Teenagers in the UK

Peer influence is generally identified as a crucial element affecting substance use behaviours among adolescents. According to Era et al. (2019), teenagers' use of alcohol, illicit drugs, and smoking was significantly influenced by their perceptions of peers' substance abuse, including friends from outside of school, siblings, and online friends. This implies that peer groups, particularly in the early stages of adolescence, are very important in influencing substance use behaviours. In a similar vein, Vitória et al. (2020) investigated how peer selection, peer influence, and parental modelling affected teenage smoking behaviour. As they grew older, their research showed that parental modelling had a minimal longitudinal effect, despite peer influence and peer selection being important factors.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have been shown as a significant determinant of teenage substance use. According to Karamanos et al. (2022), ACEs were substantially linked to increased drug use among teenagers, especially after the age of 14. This demonstrates the persistent influence of early-life stress on the behaviours associated with substance use. This was further developed by Houtepen et al. (2020), who looked at the relationship between ACEs and health consequences, such as drug use, as well as educational attainment. Regardless of family and socioeconomic

background, their research revealed a connection between ACEs and higher drug use, smoking, and worse educational attainment.

Objective 2: To Explore How Various Social Determinants Interact with Each Other and Collectively Affect Teenage Substance Use Patterns

Numerous research have demonstrated how different socioeconomic variables interact to influence adolescent substance use. Low parental understanding and antisocial peer conduct were found to be important risk factors throughout adolescence by Mak et al. (2019), who looked at the age-varying relationships between these behaviours and adolescent substance use. Except for marijuana usage, where peer influence did not change with age, the intensity of these connections did.

Socioeconomic position and ethnicity were also studied as mitigating factors in the link between ACEs and substance use. According to Karamanos et al. (2022), there was no discernible effect of these factors on the impact of ACEs on drug use, indicating that the influence of childhood trauma on substance use is widespread and unaffected by socioeconomic status or ethnicity. Hoffmann (2022) examined how family structure affects substance use and how unstructured socialising functions as a bridge between heavy substance use and family structure. The study indicated that adolescents from single-parent families engaged more in unstructured socialising, which in turn led to increased substance use.

Objective 3: To Evaluate the Effectiveness of Policies and Interventions to Tackle Determinants Linked to Teenage Substance Use and Suggest Potential Enhancements or Alternative Approaches

The intricate interaction of social variables must be taken into account by effective interventions. Moore and colleagues (2018) underscored the significance of fostering healthy interactions with family and school personnel in mitigating substance abuse and enhancing mental health consequences. According to their research, peer support can be beneficial for mental health, but it can also lead to an increase in drug use, especially in young people who have less family support. This research suggests that while being mindful of the possible negative impacts of peer support, interventions should concentrate on enhancing the bonds between the home and the school.

Pedroni et al. (2021) have provided additional support for the necessity for focused therapies by examining gender variations in early alcohol intake. Their study indicated that sociodemographic factors including migration status and family affluence were significant predictors of alcohol consumption among boys, while factors like school satisfaction and family support were more relevant for girls. This argues that public health programs should be targeted to meet specific sociodemographic and psychosocial characteristics.

Lastly, Nguipdop-Djomo et al. (2020) emphasised how substance abuse and socioeconomic disadvantage raise the risk of tuberculosis (TB) in England. To address the socioeconomic determinants of substance use, their study advocates for the integration of health and social services. It also raises the possibility that interventions like drug abuse treatment centres and programs for quitting smoking could also lower the prevalence of tuberculosis.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Introduction

Substance use habits among teenagers represent a substantial public health concern, driven by a combination of social, environmental, and psychological factors. A variety of factors, including peer pressure, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), socioeconomic position, family dynamics, and the effectiveness of interventions, have been examined in the previous chapters as they relate to adolescent substance use in the United Kingdom. In Chapter 5, these findings will be critically discussed. The effectiveness of present policies and interventions will be assessed, and the interaction between these factors and substance use behaviours will be examined. This debate will explore both the broader social background and individual-level effects, presenting potential ideas for more effective prevention methods and interventions tailored to the specific needs of adolescents.

5.2 Discussion of results

Objective 1: Factors Influencing Teenage Substance Use

Numerous studies identify parental variables, peer influence, and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as important predictors of substance use among teenagers. The body of research has continuously shown how important peers are, as evidenced by the studies of Era et al. (2019) and Vitória et al. (2020). According to both research, peer groups—friends, siblings, and internet acquaintances—have a significant impact on teenagers, particularly during the early stages of adolescence. As teenagers get older and strive for independence, peer approbation starts to take precedence over parental influence. Khalil et al. (2019) examined research that emphasised the social influences on teenage substance use, and their findings are in line with our results. Malek's analysis also highlights how psychological and environmental factors raise the risk of substance use, including stress from life events, curiosity, and experimentation. These combined results show that peer relationships and social pressures have a significant influence on substance use behaviours during adolescence, making it a susceptible time.

Trucco (2020) examines how adolescence is marked by a decrease in time spent with parents and an increase in peer socialisation, which serves as additional evidence for the value of peers. Trucco emphasises how teenagers are especially vulnerable to social benefits and new experiences, which can involve using drugs. This is consistent with research by Era et al. (2019) and Vitória et al. (2020), which showed that as adolescents grew, peer influence much surpassed parental modelling. Trucco's bioecological approach highlights that the social context surrounding adolescents, including peers, family, and school, contributes collectively to substance use behaviour. These findings underline the necessity for interventions that target not just individual characteristics but the broader social context of teenagers.

Adolescent substance use behaviours are also greatly impacted by ACEs. According to Karamanos et al. (2022), early-life trauma is linked to a higher chance of drug use during adolescence, especially by the age of 14. Houtepen et al. (2020), discovered that ACEs are connected to lower educational attainment and poorer health outcomes, including smoking and drug use, reinforcing the long-lasting effects of early trauma. Since ACEs and substance use are related, early interventions are necessary to lessen the impact of childhood trauma on future substance use behaviours. According to Khalil et al. (2019), stressful life events like the death of a loved one can lead teenagers to turn to drugs as a coping method. These findings corroborate this theory. This highlights even more how critical it is to address the psychological issues that lead young people to use drugs.

Early in adolescence, parental supervision is still quite important, even if it becomes less significant than peer pressure as teenagers grow older. Robust empirical data supporting the causal association between parental knowledge and teenage substance use is shown by Pelham et al. (2023). Their long-term investigation revealed a considerable correlation between changes in teenage substance use and variations in parental surveillance and knowledge. Teenagers who thought their parents were not watching over them as much were more likely to start using drugs, but teens who thought they were were more likely to stop. This result is consistent with previous findings by Vitória et al. (2020), who observed that parental influence increased throughout early adolescence but decreased with time. The research by Pelham et al. confirms that parents must continue to provide constant supervision, particularly throughout the formative years, to lower the risk of substance use.

Khalil et al. (2019) emphasise the need for health education and supervision in shielding teenagers from substance use problems. As a crucial developmental stage, adolescence necessitates focused treatments that offer structure and education in order to prevent substance use. To provide a thorough approach to substance use prevention, Trucco (2020) emphasises that interventions should take into account the larger social ecology, which includes the family, peer, school, and neighbourhood contexts. These studies indicate that a mix of peer education, organised surroundings, and significant parental involvement is crucial in lowering the likelihood of substance use among teenagers.

Objective 2: Interaction of Social Determinants and Their Collective Influence on Substance Use Patterns

Adolescent substance use patterns are influenced by a complex interplay of social determinants, which include peer pressure, parental involvement, socioeconomic position, and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Research like those conducted by Mak et al. (2019) and Karamanos et al. (2022) shows how peer behaviour, parental supervision, and ACEs all work together to affect substance use. The diminishing relevance of parental oversight as adolescents develop, particularly with substances like marijuana, shows a shift in the impact of diverse social variables across time.

According to Amaro et al. (2021), vulnerability to substance use is influenced by social factors at different levels, including individual, interpersonal, community, and societal. They emphasise how this sensitivity is made worse by socially driven stressors such as racism, discrimination, and exposure to harmful settings. This is consistent with the findings of Mak et al. (2019), who discovered that exposure to unfavourable surroundings and peer behaviours continue to be significant factors, especially in marijuana use, even as parental knowledge declines in influence as adolescents age. In addition, Amaro et al. (2021) make the case for a top-down strategy to address these social vulnerabilities, highlighting the crucial role that systemic injustices play in influencing substance use behaviours among various demographic groups.

To elaborate, Henneberger et al. (2021) make a distinction between peer socialisation and peer selection. Even while the precise processes of peer selection and socialisation differ depending on the substance, their comprehensive review indicated that peer influence is still a major element in teenage substance use, especially with

alcohol and tobacco. This intricacy is consistent with the findings of Mak et al. (2019), who noted that some peer behaviours—particularly those involving marijuana—remain influential even as other social variables, including parental supervision, become less significant.

Camacho and Henderson (2022) offer further perspectives on the relationship between socioeconomic status and ACEs, highlighting the additional challenges faced by marginalised groups as a result of structural inequity. They provide the Intersectional Nature of ACEs Framework, which demonstrates how the effects of ACEs are amplified in high-risk situations when they are combined with racism, poverty, and social exclusion. This concept aligns with the findings of Karamanos et al. (2022), who found that regardless of socioeconomic background, ACEs strongly predict substance use. However, Camacho and Henderson (2022) believe that marginalised populations endure the compounding effects of ACEs due to structural constraints, significantly confounding the social determinants of health.

Hoffmann (2022) notes that teenagers from single-parent households are more likely to engage in unstructured socialising, which increases their risk of substance use. This further highlights the importance of family structure in this regard. This result is consistent with Camacho and Henderson's (2022) conclusion that children from marginalised populations, in particular, are frequently placed in unstable, unregulated contexts, which increases their exposure to harmful habits like drug use.

Objective 3: Effectiveness of Policies and Interventions

The research underscores the intricate network of determinants impacting teenage substance use, emphasising that interventions need to be broad and multifaceted. A customised approach to treatments is stressed by Moore et al. (2018) and Pedroni et al. (2021), who highlight the significance of gender-sensitive policies, school ties, and families in lowering substance use. This agrees with Akseer et al. (2020), who urge for multi-sectoral approaches to address non-communicable disease (NCD) risk factors such as smoking and alcohol consumption throughout adolescence. Akseer's research indicates that the burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) among adolescents, including substance abuse, is greatly influenced by structural, community, and household variables. This underscores the necessity of policies that comprehensively tackle these social determinants.

By outlining the efficacy of Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT), a paradigm that combines early intervention and treatment services for people at risk of substance use disorders (SUDs), Babor et al. (2023) provide more evidence in favour of this viewpoint. When it comes to treating alcohol and drug abuse in primary healthcare settings, the SBIRT model works well. This is in line with the recommendation of Akseer et al. (2020) for interventions that can be scaled up. To address the more general social and health determinants of substance use, such as mental health and NCD risk factors, both research emphasise how critical it is to integrate health care.

Furthermore, Nguipdop-Djomo et al. (2020) underscore the significance of adopting a comprehensive strategy by integrating drug abuse treatment and tobacco cessation programs into more comprehensive health initiatives, such as tuberculosis prevention. This underscores the increasing demand for multifaceted health approaches. This is in line with Volkow and Blanco's (2023) recommendation that SUDs be treated using a Chronic Care Model, in which preventative and intervention techniques are customised for each patient according to the severity of their disease. To provide comprehensive therapy, Volkow and Blanco also stress the significance of addressing social risk factors and combining SUD interventions with psychiatric and medical therapies.

5.3 Implications of the Study

The results of this study are consistent with other studies on the impact of socioeconomic variables on drug use among teenagers. The findings highlight the intricate interactions of peer pressure, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), family dynamics, and socioeconomic variables that shape the behaviours associated with substance use. This study supports theories about adolescents' susceptibility to social influences by emphasising the critical roles played by peers and family in the early stages of adolescence and the increasing significance of peer influence in later stages. The finding that negative childhood experiences have a substantial impact on substance use supports earlier studies and emphasises the significance of treating early trauma in preventative efforts.

These findings are significant because they imply that there is no one-size-fits-all strategy for teen substance use interventions. Rather, prevention tactics need to be

all-encompassing and diverse, addressing not just specific risk factors but also more general social determinants like family dynamics, community support, and structural injustices. The need for gender-sensitive and culturally appropriate policies that take into account the particular risk factors for various demographic groups is one of the practical ramifications. Furthermore, the significance of integrating families and communities into intervention initiatives is emphasised, given the pivotal role that family dynamics and parental participation play in moulding the conduct of adolescents. To address several variables at once, including mental health issues, poverty, and unstable families—which are the main causes of substance use—this study further emphasises the importance of combining health and social services. It draws attention to the possibility of early, consistent intervention in lowering the long-term dangers connected to substance use, which may have significant effects on public health policy.

5.4 Strengths of the Study

This study is notable for its extensive analysis, which looks closely at how many socioeconomic variables interact to affect the substance use behaviours of teenagers. Understanding the complex nature of teenage substance use requires a comprehensive understanding of the issue, which is provided by the research's integration of viewpoints from the health, education, and social sectors. The thorough systematic review methodology used makes use of an organised data-gathering strategy to capture a wide variety of quantitative studies. A thorough search approach combined with a careful selection of pertinent academic databases guarantees that the review includes important discoveries from the literature.

A focused assessment of the policies and initiatives that are currently in place in the UK is also beneficial to the research. The study offers useful information that helps educate public health stakeholders by evaluating the efficacy of current measures and pointing up potential avenues for more successful intervention. The findings are particularly useful for addressing teenage substance use at a systemic level because of their applicability to current policies.

The study's gender-sensitive methodology, which highlights the distinct risk factors that different demographic groups confront, is another feature. The research adds nuance to the analysis and improves its relevance to various groups by concentrating

on vulnerable individuals, such as those who have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) or who reside in poorer socioeconomic conditions. This emphasis on high-risk populations is in line with the rising understanding of the necessity for specialised therapies that take into account the unique environments that teens live in. Lastly, the study's multifaceted methodology emphasises how important it is for several sectors to work together to successfully address teen substance use. It supports the notion that, in addition to understanding individual actions, addressing adolescent substance use necessitates an understanding of the larger social variables that influence these behaviours. This is achieved by integrating results from multiple disciplines.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

Notwithstanding its merits, the research exhibits noteworthy limits that require careful examination. A noteworthy constraint is generalisability. The results might not apply to other nations with differing healthcare systems, legal systems, or societal structures due to the UK context's emphasis. The results may not be immediately transferable to overseas settings since teenage substance use might be greatly influenced by cultural, socioeconomic, and policy variations.

Furthermore, the total results may differ depending on the sample size and methodological limitations of the included research. The studies that were included in the review may not have fully captured the range of adolescent experiences in the larger community if they relied on small or localised samples. Furthermore, the study methodology used in these studies—surveys or interviews, for example—may add biases such as social desirability bias or self-reporting inaccuracies, which would further impede the validity of the findings. An additional constraint arises from the search methodology employed in the systematic review. Although a systematic method was used, it is possible that relevant studies that were published in languages other than English or that did not strictly follow predefined criteria were accidentally rejected by the inclusion criteria. This may lead to a void in the literature covering certain demographics or contexts.

Lastly, the study might not have included longitudinal data, which could shed light on long-term patterns or behavioural shifts over time. The study's capacity to accurately forecast the results of particular interventions or policies is hampered by the lack of

such data. Effective interventions that target the underlying reasons for teenage substance use can be developed by having a thorough understanding of how substance use habits change over time. Overall, even though the study offers insightful information, these limitations draw attention to the necessity of more research that might expand on its conclusions and more thoroughly address the intricacies of adolescent substance use.

CHAPTER 6

6.1 Conclusion

This study set out to evaluate the role of socioeconomic variables in affecting substance use among teenage boys and girls in the UK, as well as to analyse the policies and interventions currently enforced to address these drivers. The findings

emphasise that a complex interplay of social factors, including peer influence, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), family dynamics, and socioeconomic position, significantly impacts the drug use patterns of teenagers. Furthermore, there were clear gender disparities in substance use behaviours, with boys and girls being influenced by these social factors to differing degrees. According to the review, family and parental supervision have a greater influence throughout early adolescence, but peer pressure becomes more and more important as teenagers get older, especially in late adolescence. Adolescents who have suffered trauma or originate from lower-income families are more vulnerable to substance use due to socioeconomic issues and ACEs.

The study also looked at the treatments and regulations that are currently in place in the UK to combat teen substance use. The research demonstrated that although there are now in place policies aimed at addressing substance use—such as health treatments and school-based education programs—they frequently fall short of adequately addressing the larger social determinants at play. The effectiveness of interventions that only target changing an individual's conduct is limited because they fail to take into consideration the social and environmental elements that impact substance use. The study supports the need for more all-encompassing strategies that incorporate a variety of socioeconomic variables and offer teens who are at risk of substance abuse comprehensive help.

The general conclusion gained from this research is that social determinants—such as peer influence, ACEs, family dynamics, and socioeconomic status—play a significant role in influencing substance use behaviours among UK youths. Policies and interventions that address these drivers as a whole, as opposed to concentrating on individual factors, will be more effective. By doing so, governments can ensure more successful outcomes in reducing substance use among adolescents.

6.2 Reflecting on the Research Approach

The main research question was satisfactorily addressed by the systematic review that was used in this investigation. Through the analysis of numerous quantitative research, this method offered thorough insights into how socioeconomic variables impact the use of drugs by adolescents. The quantitative data made it possible to identify important trends, like how peer pressure becomes more powerful as teenagers become older and how ACEs continue to affect long-term substance use habits.

The research's capacity to include findings from a wide range of studies allowed for a deeper comprehension of the numerous social variables at work, which was one of its strong points. Utilising a positivist research philosophy made sure that the results were supported by measurable, objective data, which increased the validity and dependability of the findings. Additionally, the research effectively pointed out areas where present attempts to address the underlying causes of substance use are failing, by revealing gaps in policies and programs.

But the study also brought forth fresh issues. For example, the study found that ACEs and peer pressure are significant predictors of substance use; however, it also showed that the relationships between many social determinants are intricate and poorly understood. Although the quantitative technique proved successful in detecting correlations and patterns, it failed to delve into the fundamental mechanisms that underlie the interactions between these factors. Incorporating qualitative methodologies into future studies could yield valuable insights into the lived experiences of teenagers, particularly about navigating the obstacles presented by these social variables.

6.3 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Several policy and practice recommendations might be made in light of the findings:

1. **Adopt a Holistic Approach to Intervention:** The study emphasises the necessity of therapies that deal with all of the social factors that have an impact on substance use. This entails addressing the larger social, economic, and environmental variables that contribute to substance use in addition to concentrating on changing an individual's conduct. For instance, community-based programs that involve peers, schools, and families as well as mental health assistance are important components of interventions, particularly for teenagers who have experienced ACEs.
2. **Enhance Parental Involvement:** Parental supervision and involvement are still quite important in the early stages of adolescence, even though peer influence becomes more prevalent as teenagers get older. Policies ought to support parents in staying involved in their kids' lives, especially during the crucial period that separates childhood from adolescence. In this context,

parenting programs that offer advice on good communication and observation techniques may be helpful.

3. **Tailor Interventions to Gender Differences:** According to the research, there are differences in the influences that lead to substance use between males and girls. These gender-specific variations should be taken into account in policy and intervention measures. For example, programs addressing the growing trend of e-cigarette usage may be beneficial to girls, whereas specific treatments for alcohol and illicit substances like cocaine and cannabis may be necessary for boys.
4. **Address Socioeconomic Disparities:** Adolescent substance use is significantly influenced by socioeconomic status, with teens from lower-income families being more vulnerable. Policymakers should work on eliminating the social inequities that contribute to substance use. In underprivileged neighbourhoods, this can entail expanding access to extracurricular activities, mental health services, and educational materials. Reducing poverty and enhancing living conditions through social welfare programs would also assist reduce the risk factors linked to substance abuse.
5. **Implement Long-Term, Sustained Interventions:** Many of the interventions used today are brief and concentrate on changing behaviour right away. Nonetheless, the findings highlight how crucial early and ongoing intervention is, especially for traumatised youth. Long-term initiatives that offer continuing mental health services, mentorship, and support are more likely to produce long-lasting behavioural changes.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

The following areas should be investigated in future research to build on the findings of this study:

1. **Qualitative Studies on Adolescent Experiences:** Even though the study's primary focus was on quantitative data, qualitative research approaches should be used in the future to examine teens' individual experiences. This would offer a more profound comprehension of how social factors, such as family dynamics and peer influence, interact with one another personally. A more comprehensive

understanding of the intricacies of teenage substance use might be obtained by longitudinal qualitative research, which could monitor the changing impact of social factors over time.

2. **Explore the Role of Social Media and Online Communities:** The growing significance of social media in the lives of teenagers suggests that future studies look at the impact of online peer influence on substance use habits. The significance of internet platforms in moulding adolescent social norms, particularly the normalisation of substance use, merits additional examination.
3. **Evaluate the Long-Term Effectiveness of Existing Interventions:** To evaluate the long-term efficacy of the present drug use therapies, more study is required. Research ought to assess whether social determinant-focused interventions—like those focussing on peer groups and family dynamics—lead to long-lasting declines in substance use.
4. **Investigate the Impact of Policy Changes:** The efficacy of new policies aimed at combating substance use should be closely observed and assessed by governments as they are implemented. Future studies should evaluate how changes in policy, such as increased regulation of vaping goods or expanded mental health services, influence substance use trends among teenagers.

6.5 Emphasising the Contribution of the Study

Through a systematic analysis of the impact of social variables on substance use among teens in the UK, this study adds significant new knowledge to the area. It offers a thorough analysis of the major variables that drive substance use behaviours, emphasising the crucial roles that ACEs, socioeconomic position, and peer pressure play. Furthermore, the study adds to a more complex picture of teenage behaviour by shedding light on the gender-specific variations in substance use.

This study makes a significant contribution by emphasising the interplay of several social determinants rather than just one or two risk factors. This research shows that to be effective, drug use interventions need to take a holistic approach by synthesising data from several studies. The report also identifies the shortcomings of the policies and programs in place and offers suggestions for how to strengthen them to more effectively address the underlying causes of adolescent substance use. The

significance of the research findings lies in their ability to provide useful information for the development of future policies and interventions targeted at lowering teen substance use. By highlighting the significance of tackling social factors as a group, this research establishes the foundation for more efficacious preventive tactics that may have enduring effects on public health. Additionally, the study emphasises the necessity of consistent, long-term interventions that offer teens comprehensive assistance, especially those from underprivileged families or those who have suffered trauma.

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