

# Typologies of Attachment Styles and Tendency to Substance Abuse Among Adolescents in Rivers State

Ohanugo, Obiageli Josephine<sup>1</sup>, Isiguzo, Blessing Chioma<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Corresponding author: Isiguzo, Blessing Chioma Ph.D.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijhsr.20250208>

## ABSTRACT

The study investigated typologies of attachment styles and tendency to substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State. A sample of 480 adolescents was used for the study drawn from a population of all adolescents within the age range of 13-19 in Rivers State. Cluster and simple random sampling techniques were used to draw the sample. Four research questions were answered while four corresponding null hypotheses were tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance. Two instruments were used for the study which includes the Substance Abuse Questionnaire (SAQ) and Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ). The instruments were validated by experts Counselling Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation. A reliability coefficient of 0.69 was obtained for SAQ, 0.78 for Secure attachment, 0.81 for avoidant attachment and 0.77 for ambivalent attachment style respectively using Cronbach alpha. Research questions 1-3 were answered using simple regression while their corresponding null hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with regression. Research question 4 was answered using multiple regression while its corresponding null hypothesis was tested with ANOVA and t-test associated with multiple regression. Findings revealed among others that secure attachment style significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State. It was also revealed that avoidant attachment style avoidant attachment style to a moderate extent predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that schools and communities should implement programmes that identify attachment behaviours early and provide proactive support to adolescents at risk of substance abuse, parents should create a supportive home environment that deters substance abuse, and Counselors should help adolescents to develop emotional resilience and make positive decisions. It was concluded that adolescents with high level of avoidant attachment style have high likelihood to indulge in substance abuse.

**Keywords:** Attachment styles, Substance abuse, Adolescents

## INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse among adolescents is a major public health issue with profound implications for individuals, families and

societies across the globe. In Nigeria, the incidence of substance abuse among young people has risen, leading to severe health, social and economic consequences. The

National Drug Use Survey conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) revealed that approximately 14.4% of Nigerians aged 15-64 had used drugs at least once in the past year, with a majority of this number being adolescents (UNODC, 2018). Although research has indicated that alcohol, tobacco and cannabis are the most commonly abused substances among Nigerian adolescents, prescription medications such as codeine, tramadol and inhalants like glue and petrol are also frequently misused. A study by Eneh and Stanley (2004) found that many adolescents in Nigeria begin experimenting with substances as early as 12 years old, increasing the risk of long-term dependency and adverse health outcomes.

Substance abuse may be defined as the “arbitrary” over dependence or miss-use of one particular drug/substance with or without a prior medical diagnosis from qualified health practitioners (Lakhanpal & Agnihotri, 2007). Substance abuse is the harmful use of mind-altering substances; the term usually refers to problem with illegal drugs, which also include harmful use of legal prescription drugs, such as in self-medication (Oluremi, 2012). Majority of the Nigerian adolescents ignorantly depend on one form of substance or the other daily in social, educational, political, moral and other activities. Such substances include: Tobacco, Indian hemp, cocaine, morphine, Heroin, Alcohol, ephedrine, Madras, Caffeine, Glue, Barbiturates, and Amphetamines (Oshikoya & Alli, 2006). The recent world drug report-2019 of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated that 271 million (5.5%) of the global population (aged between 15 and 64 years), had used drugs in the previous year (UNODC, 2019). With this, the burden of substance (usage, abuse and trafficking) has been commonly related to four areas of global concern, namely. organized crime, illicit financial flows, corruption and terrorism/insurgency. This has led Nigeria which is the most populous country in

Africa to be a center for drug trafficking and usage mostly among the adolescent population. In support of this view, a UNODC report stated that one in seven persons (aged 15-64 years) had used a drug in the past year in Nigeria (UNODC, 2018). Adolescents have been known to use these substances for many reasons, including curiosity and desire to find out the effectiveness of a particular substance, to feel good, to reduce stress or to feel grown up. This was shown in one of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) and the World Heart Foundation’s data which revealed that in Nigeria, 22.1 percent of in-school adolescent between 12 to 17 years use tobacco, despite the risk of these substance. Most of these adolescents who indulge in substance abuse end up suffering from life threatening diseases like Cardio Vascular diseases (CVD), lung cancer and other tobacco related diseases. (Giade, 2011). Although the Government of Nigeria has established some regulatory agencies to control the use of these substances, a common scenario these days shows that some adolescents are being offered cigarettes through promotions and musical concerts. Some teens will experiment and stop, or continue to use occasionally without significant problems, while others develop addiction, moving on to more dangerous and hard substances and causing considerable harm to themselves and the society at large. Despite the effort of many concerned individuals and organizations to curb this menace, many individuals still present these drugs as though they are harmless. They give them slogans such as “for greatness” “for brighter life”. This behaviour of these adolescents goes with the period of adolescence which is known for curiosity, adventure-seeking, and risk-taking. During this period, the developing brain of adolescents has been shown to predispose them to impaired decision-making abilities such as delaying pleasure or gratification and inhibiting negative behaviours causing them to tend toward risky ventures such as experimenting with

substances (Whitesell et al., 2013). This has paved way to increased use and abuse of substances among many adolescents

Several factors have been revealed as responsible for substance use among adolescents. They include non-modifiable risk factors such as genetics or having a parent or family member using substances, and behavioural issues such as peer pressure, curiosity and the need to experiment (Atilola et al., 2013). Others include socioeconomic characteristics, particularly neighbourhood/environment, increased access to drugs, association with gangs and deviant characters, need to belong or be popular, coping with bullying and the need to cope with academics and other pressures (Igwe et al., 2009; Fatoye & Morakinyo, 2012). The growing use of substances among young people has also been traced to easy accessibility to substances in the neighbourhood (Eneh & Stanley, 2004).

It is a known fact that relational attachment in the family plays a key role in the psychoactive substance use of children, not only in its onset but also in the progression toward abuse and dependence (Velleman & Templeton, 2007; Velleman et al., 2005). This is because affective experiences in the early stage of life often impact the kind and quality of relationships that one eventually develops as an adult. In the same vein Cassidy and Shaver as cited in Sagone et al. (2023) noted that a corpus of attachment theories gives framework for considering the quality of close relationship across an individual's lifespan. It is for this reason that much of the research on risk and protective factors for drug use have focused on family variables that can influence this type of behaviours by adolescents and youths (e.g., Lilja et al., 2003; Poikolainen, 2002). One of the variables that has attracted most interest due to its influence on the individual's life from birth, is attachment to the family in general or attachment to parents in particular.

According to classical approaches, attachment is defined as the emotional bond

the child develops with caregivers which provides the emotional security that is essential for sound development of the personality (Bowlby as cited in Iglesias et al., 2014). Such security depends largely on the availability or accessibility and responsiveness of the primary attachment figure, usually the mother. This kind of emotional relationship which is special is seen expressed in exchange for comfort, care, and pleasure (Cherry, 2023). This concept attachment emerged from Freud's theories about love although John Bowlby has been credited as the major proponent of attachment theory, followed by Psychologist Mary Ainsworth as researches have been carried out from the 1960s and 1970s. With this, attachment styles were further described as those patterns characterized by varying ways of interaction and behaviour in relationships. At the early childhood, these typologies of attachment styles revolve on how children and parents interact while at adulthood these styles are seen in romantic relationships. Subsequent work by Ainsworth et al. as cited in Iglesias et al. (2014) noted the development of a classification of types of attachment (secure, resistant and avoidant) among individuals. As children begin to have more and more contact with the outside world and learn about the accessibility and responsiveness of their attachment figure, they begin to build their internal working behaviours. These behaviours are representations about self and about others, which will permit individuals to make decisions about their behaviours. In short, they are guidelines for the interpretation of experiences and for orienting attachment behaviours that tend to persist over time and operate unconsciously. There are four attachment typologies but this study focused on three (secure, avoidant and ambivalent attachment types) which seems to be the most influential.

Secure attachment consists of warmth and loving bond between parent and child (Bowlby as cited in Baruah & Sutar, 2024). This style goes with trust and emotional responsiveness in caregiver-child

relationships. Children with this type of attachment feel safe to confidently explore their environment, express their emotions and seek comfort from caregivers when needed. This secure- base increases emotional resilience and provides a foundation for healthy socio-emotional development. Fairbairn et al. (2018) noted that adolescents who are securely attached developed effective emotional regulation skills through their positive interactions with caregivers. They can manage stressors and negative emotions better without resorting to substance use as a coping mechanism. With this, secure attachment style promotes the development of strong social support networks among family members, friends and mentors. Adolescents with this secure attachment style have access to supportive relationships, reducing feelings of loneliness and the need to seek solace in substances. They have a strong sense of self-worth and autonomy which makes them less susceptible to peer pressure. They are more likely to resist engaging in substance use behaviours endorsed by peer groups and prioritize their well-being (Levitt & Leonard, 2015). This is shown in Owino et al. (2021) study on attachment styles as predictors of substance use among secondary school students in Nairobi County, Kenya which indicates that attachment styles predicted substance use among secondary school students as secure attachment style specifically predicted less substance use. Becoña et al. (2014) in a conceptual and methodological study on attachment and substance use in adolescence revealed that secure attachment or stronger attachment between parents and children acts as a protective factor against drug use, even though there is a great variability in relation to the concept of addiction and its assessment.

Avoidant attachment style is described by Bartholomew as cited in Sagone et al. (2023) as that relationship associated to difficulty in interpersonal relationships and worry of trusting people but with emphasis on autonomy and independence. This style

of relationship emerges from experiences of emotional neglect, rejection or inconsistent caregiving during infancy and childhood. This leaves children to resort to learning how to suppress their emotions and develop self-reliant coping strategies to cope with distress. Cömert and Ögel (2014) noted that they usually feel reluctant to look out for comfort or support from caregivers rather prefer to deal with problems independently. This avoidant attachment style has the features of emotional detachment, self-reliance and a reluctance to seek support from caregivers. This may make them resort to substances as a means of self-medication to numb their emotions or alleviate distress, as they lack healthier coping mechanisms. Those adolescents with this style of relationship may resort to seek gratification and validation from other sources, such as substance use, to fill the gap created by emotional needs. Furthermore, Cömert and Ögel (2014) noted that the use of substance provides a temporary escape from emotional discomfort and offers them a sense of control and pleasure. Adolescents with avoidant attachment may gravitate towards peer groups that endorse substance use as a means of fitting in and gaining acceptance. Ambivalent attachment style, characterized by anxiety, insecurity and an inconsistent sense of trust in relationships, often stems from inconsistent caregiving experiences during infancy and childhood. Adolescents with ambivalent attachment exhibit heightened anxiety and insecurity in relationships, oscillating between seeking proximity to caregivers and resisting their attempts at comfort (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). They often struggle with trust, fear abandonment and exhibit emotional volatility which make them to experience chronic feelings of anxiety, insecurity and emotional volatility in relationships. Ambivalently attached adolescents may lack effective coping mechanisms to manage stressors and regulate emotions as substance use serves as a maladaptive coping strategy to cope with emotional pain, alleviate feelings of loneliness and temporarily

escape from distressing thoughts and memories. These adolescents often seek validation and reassurance from others, including peers, to alleviate their insecurities.

A look at these typologies of attachment styles in relationship indicate that individuals can develop a stable attachment with adequate amount of self-esteem, emotional stability, and a favourable perception of both themselves and others if there are positive attachment-related mental representations. They positively impact on peoples cognition, emotion control and behavior which consequently positively impact on their general well being (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2013). Several authors such as Chopik and Edelstien (2014) noted that adolescents and young adults tend to experience more attachment anxiety more than the adults after the development of enduring intimate relationships. In addition, Chopik (2013) et al as cited in Sangone et al, (2023) noted that higher level of avoidant attachment may accompany changes in young adult. This made Asghari et al. (2015) to note that the average level of students' substance abuse could be attributed to attachment styles in the family or to parents.

Substance abuse in recent times has become a societal menace among adolescents especially in Rivers State. It has become more worrisome that most of these adolescents who majority of them had lived and some still living with their family or parents now abuse these substances publicly unlike it used to be when such was done in secret without being seen by the public nor family members. Many are seen in most Neuropsychiatric wards in many hospitals. This has reduced their chances of becoming relevant members of their respective families and the society at large. In addition, substance abuse has become a cankerworm that seems to have eaten deeply into the fabrics of adolescents in and out of schools. There is no day that passes without references to these problems of substance abuse in the press, radio and television.

Most of these adolescent's educational aspirations have been cut short as a result of substance abuse and the researchers begin to ponder what could be necessitating this habit which has ravaged the lives of adolescents on daily basis. The problem of the study therefore is to investigate the typologies of attachment types and tendency to substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of the study was to investigate attachment styles and tendency to substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

1. To determine the extent to which secure attachment style predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.
2. To examine the extent to which avoidant attachment style predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.
3. To find out the extent to which ambivalent attachment style predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.
4. To find out the extent to which attachment styles of secure, avoidant and ambivalent jointly predict substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

This study was guided by four research questions as follows:

1. To what extent does secure attachment style predict substance abuse among adolescents?
2. To what extent does avoidant attachment style predict substance abuse among adolescents?
3. To what extent does ambivalent attachment style predicts substance abuse among adolescents?
4. To what extent does extent to which attachment styles of secure, avoidant and ambivalent jointly predict substance abuse among adolescents?



The following null hypotheses which guided the study were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. Secure attachment style does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents.
2. Avoidant attachment style does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents.
3. Ambivalent attachment style does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents.
4. Attachment styles of secure, avoidant and ambivalent jointly does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents.

## MATERIALS & METHODS

The researchers adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study consisted of all adolescents within the age range of 13-19 in Rivers State. The estimated population of adolescent is placed on 842,937 from the 2006 population census for Rivers State at 5,185,400 million. A sample of 480 adolescents was used for the study. Cluster sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to draw the sample for the study. The three senatorial districts (Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers South East Senatorial District, Rivers West Senatorial District) were used as the clusters. The instruments used for the study were the Substance Abuse Questionnaire (SAQ) and Attachment Styles Questionnaire (ASQ). The SAQ was adapted from the Drug Use Questionnaire (DAST-20) by Harvey A. Skinner (1982) while the ASQ was adapted from Relationship Questionnaire (RQ) by Kidd, Hamer & Steptoe (2011). The instruments were validated by experts in Counselling psychology, Measurement and Evaluation. A reliability coefficient of 0.69 was obtained for SAQ, 0.78 for secure attachment, 0.81 for avoidant attachment and 0.77 for ambivalent attachment style respectively using Cronbach alpha. Research questions 1-3 were answered using simple regression while their

corresponding null hypotheses were tested using t-test associated with regression. Research question 4 was answered using multiple regression while its corresponding null hypothesis was tested with ANOVA and t-test associated with multiple regression.

## RESULT

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does secure attachment style predict substance abuse among adolescents?

**Table 1: Simple regression analysis of the extent secure attachment style predicts substance abuse among adolescents**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
1	-.680	.510	.507

Table 1 revealed that secure attachment style and substance abuse obtained a correlation coefficient of  $r = -0.68$  indicating a moderate negative relationship. In answer to the research question, an  $R^2$  of 0.510 was obtained and an adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.507. Based on the  $R^2$  value of 0.510, it shows that 51% ( $0.510 \times 100$ ) variations in the substance abuse of adolescents is predicted by secure attachment style while the remaining 49% are beyond its prediction.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does avoidant attachment style predict substance abuse among adolescents?

**Table 2: Regression analysis of the extent avoidant attachment style predict substance abuse among adolescents**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
1	-.711	.541	.538

Table 2 revealed that avoidant attachment style and substance abuse obtained a correlation coefficient of  $r = -0.711$  indicating a strong negative relationship. In answer to the research question, an  $R^2$  of 0.541 was obtained and an adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.538. Based on the  $R^2$  value of 0.541, it shows that 54% ( $0.541 \times 100$ ) variations in the substance abuse of adolescents is predicted by avoidant attachment style

while the remaining 45.9% are beyond its prediction.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent does ambivalent attachment style predict substance abuse among adolescents?

**Table 3: Regression analysis of the extent ambivalent attachment style predict substance abuse among adolescents**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
1	-.600	.590	.584

Table 3 revealed that ambivalent attachment style and substance abuse obtained a correlation coefficient of  $r = -0.60$  indicating a moderate negative relationship. In answer to the research question, an  $R^2$  of 0.590 was obtained and an adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.584. Based on the  $R^2$  value of 0.590, it shows that 59% ( $0.590 \times 100$ ) variations in the substance abuse of adolescents is predicted by ambivalent attachment style while the remaining 41% are beyond its prediction.

**Research Question 4:** To what extent does attachment style of secure, avoidant and

ambivalent jointly predict substance abuse among adolescents?

**Table 4: multiple regression analysis of the extent attachment style of secure, avoidant and ambivalent jointly predict substance abuse among adolescents.**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
1	-.801	.711	.709

Table 4 revealed that attachment styles of secure, avoidant and ambivalent jointly and substance abuse obtained a correlation coefficient of  $r = -0.80$  indicating a strong negative relationship. In answer to the research question, an  $R^2$  of 0.711 was obtained and an adjusted  $R^2$  value of 0.709. Based on the  $R^2$  value of 0.711, it shows that 71% ( $0.711 \times 100$ ) variations in the substance abuse of adolescents is predicted by attachment styles of secure, avoidant and ambivalent jointly while the remaining 28.9% are beyond its prediction.

**Hypothesis 1:** Secure attachment style does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents

**Table 5: t-test analysis of secure attachment style on substance abuse among adolescents**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1 (Constant)	.917	.183		4.998	.000
Secure attachment	.324	.026	.736	13.527	.000

Table 5 revealed that unstandardized  $\beta = 0.324$ , with a standard error value of 0.26. The t test value of  $t = 13.527$  with an Sig of .000 was obtained. The Sig. of .000 is significant at 0.05 alpha level ( $t = 13.527$ ,  $p > \text{Sig. } .000$ ) therefore, the null hypothesis which states that secure attachment style does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents is rejected and the

alternative is accepted. Therefore, secure attachment style significantly predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

**Hypothesis 2:** Avoidant attachment style does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents

**Table 6: t-test analysis of avoidant attachment style on substance abuse among adolescents**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1 (Constant)	10.463	.849		12.322	.000
Avoidant attachment	.742	.042	.626	17.560	.000

Table 6 revealed that unstandardized  $\beta = 0.742$ , with a standard error value of 0.042. The t test value of  $t = 17.560$  with a Sig of .000 was obtained. The Sig. of .000 is significant at 0.05 alpha level ( $t = 17.560$ ,  $p > \text{Sig. .000}$ ) therefore, the null hypothesis which states that avoidant attachment style does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents is rejected and the

alternative is accepted. Therefore, avoidant attachment style significantly predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

**Hypothesis 3:** Ambivalent attachment style does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents

**Table 7: t-test analysis of ambivalent attachment style on substance abuse among adolescents**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	22.345	.929			24.045	.000
Ambivalent attachment	.036	.051	.033		.711	.002

Table 7 revealed that unstandardized  $\beta = 0.036$ , with a standard error value of 0.051. The t test value of  $t = 0.711$  with a Sig of .002 was obtained. The Sig. of .002 is significant at 0.05 alpha level ( $t = 0.711$ ,  $p > \text{Sig. .002}$ ) therefore, the null hypothesis which states that ambivalent attachment style does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents is

rejected and the alternative is accepted. Therefore, ambivalent attachment style significantly predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State.

**Hypothesis 4:** Attachment styles of secure, avoidant and ambivalent jointly does not significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents.

**Table 8: Summary of ANOVA on the prediction of attachment styles of secure, avoidant and ambivalent jointly on substance abuse among adolescents.**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	1263.276	3	420.922	8.465	.000
Residual	17382.454	476	285.803		
Total	18645.73	479			

Table 8 revealed that an  $F$ -value of 8.465 was obtained at degree of freedom of 3 and 476 at .000 level of significance ( $p = .000 \leq 0.05$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis which states that attachment styles of secure, avoidant and ambivalent jointly does not significantly

predict substance abuse among adolescents is rejected. In other words, attachment styles of secure, avoidant and ambivalent jointly significantly predict substance abuse among adolescents.

**Table 9: Relative contribution of attachment styles of secure, avoidant, ambivalent and disorganize jointly on substance abuse among adolescents**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	49.965	27.087			.438	.004
Secure	.662	.168	.166		4.685	.000
Avoidant	1.549	.421	.037		1.107	.012
Ambivalent	.151	.173	.069		1.418	.004

From Table 9, the beta value in relation to the relative contribution each of the attachment styles have on substance abuse revealed avoidant attachment style

contributed highest (1.549), followed by secure attachment style (0.662) then ambivalent attachment style (0.151). It was also revealed that all the attachment styles



made a significant impact on the prediction of adolescence substance abuse independently.

## **DISCUSSION**

Results from hypothesis one showed that secure attachment style to a moderate extent predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State. This finding indicates that as secure attachment increases, the likelihood of substance abuse decreases. This finding was envisaged by the researchers as persons with secure attachment style tend to have better emotional regulation skills, allowing them to cope with stress and negative emotions in healthy ways. This can invariably reduce the need to experiment substances. This finding is in agreement with Levitt and Leonard (2015) where they stated that adolescents are more likely to resist engaging in substance use behaviours endorsed by peer groups and prioritize their well-being.

Result from hypothesis two revealed that this finding indicates that as avoidant attachment increases, the likelihood of substance abuse decreases. This finding was not envisaged by the researcher as individuals with avoidant attachment may use substances as a coping mechanism to manage emotional discomfort or to avoid dealing with their suppressed feelings. This finding is in agreement with Cömert and Ögel (2014) where they revealed that avoidantly attached adolescents may seek gratification and validation from external sources, such as substance use, to fill the void left by unmet emotional needs. Substance use provides a temporary escape from emotional discomfort and offers a sense of control and pleasure, albeit fleeting. Results from hypothesis three showed that ambivalent attachment style to a moderate extent predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State. This finding indicates that as ambivalent attachment increases, the likelihood of substance abuse decreases. This finding was envisaged by the researchers as individuals with ambivalent attachment style usually exhibit

confusing and contradictory behaviours toward caregivers, reflecting both a desire for closeness and fear of it. This finding disagreed with Mikulincer and Shaver (2013) where they stated that adolescents often struggle with trust, fear abandonment and exhibit emotional volatility. Adolescents with ambivalent attachment style experience chronic feelings of anxiety, insecurity and emotional volatility in relationships.

Results from hypothesis four revealed that attachment styles of secure, avoidant and ambivalent jointly to a high extent predicts substance abuse among adolescents in Rivers State. This finding indicates that as the joint attachment styles increases, the likelihood of substance abuse decreases. Adolescents who receive higher levels of attachment from parents/guardians are less likely to engage in substance abuse. This finding was envisaged by the researcher as most persons who receive high level of attachment from their caregivers usually exhibit decent behaviour. This finding agreed with Asghari et al. (2015) study which revealed that the average level of students' substance abuse was attributed to attachment styles in the family among others. This will help to prevent possible damage in adulthood.

## **CONCLUSION**

It was concluded that adolescents with high level of avoidant attachment style have high likelihood to indulge in substance abuse. Adolescents with moderate level of secured and ambivalent attachment styles respectively have low likelihood of indulging in substance abuse. Adolescents with high level of all the attachment styles are less likely to indulge in substance abuse.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Schools and communities should implement programs that identify attachment issues early and provide

proactive support to adolescents at risk of substance abuse.

2. Government and non-governmental organizations should launch campaigns to raise awareness about the influence of attachment styles on substance abuse, emphasizing the importance of emotional support for adolescents.
3. Parents should develop strong relationship with their children, promote open communication, and create a supportive home environment that deters substance abuse.
4. Counselors should help adolescents recognize harmful behaviours, develop emotional resilience and make positive decisions.

#### **Declaration by Authors**

**Ethical Approval:** Not Applicable

**Acknowledgement:** None

**Source of Funding:** None

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

#### **REFERENCES**

1. Asghari, F., Sadeghi, A., & Sadati, S. M. R. (2015). The relationship between attachment styles and parenting styles with tendency to substance abuse among university students. *Indian Journal of Fundamental and Applied Life Sciences*, 5(2), 144-149.
2. Atilola, O., Ayinde, O., & Adeitan, O. (2013). Beyond prevalence and pattern: Problematic extent of alcohol and substance use among adolescents in Ibadan southwest Nigeria. *African Health Sciences*, 13(7), 77-84.
3. Baruah, R. & Sutar, D (2024). Attachment style dynamics and wellbeing in romantic relationships among young adults. *International Journal of Health Sciences and Research* 14(4), 449-460
4. Becoña, I. E., Fernández, del Río, E., Calafat, A., Fernández, H. & José, R. (2014). Attachment and substance use in adolescence: A review of conceptual and methodological aspects. *Adicciones* [en línea]. 26 (1) 77-86
5. Cherry, K. (2023). 4 Types of attachment Styles. *Theories>Social Psychology*. Verywellmind.com. <https://www.verywellmind.com>
6. Chopik, W. J. & Edelstien, R. S. (2014). Age differences in Romantic Attachment around the world. *Soc. Psychology. Personal. Science*. 5:892-900 doi:10.1177/1948550614538460.
7. Cömert, I. T., & Ögel, K. (2014). Attachment styles of adolescent substance users. *The Turkish Journal on Addictions*, 1(1), 26-40.
8. Eneh, A. U., & Stanley, P. C. (2004). Pattern of substance use among secondary school students in Rivers State. *Nigerian Journal of Medicine*, 13, 36-39.
9. Fairbairn, C., Briley, D., Kang, D., Fraley, R., Hankin, B., & Ariss, T. (2018). A meta-analysis of longitudinal associations between substance use and interpersonal attachment security. *Psychological Bulletin*, 144. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000141>
10. Fatoye, F. O., & Morakinyo, O. (2012). Substance use amongst secondary school students in rural and urban communities in South-western Nigeria. *East African Medical Journal*, 79, 299-305.
11. Giade, A. (2011). How Nigeria's latest substance abuse defies legislation. *Daily Trust Newspaper*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/daily/old/index.php/feature/42852-how-nigerias-latest-drug-abusedefies-legislation>
12. Iglesias, E. B., Fernández del Río, E., Calafat, A., & Fernández-Hermida, J. R. (2014). Attachment and substance use in adolescence: A review of conceptual and methodological aspects. *ADICCIONES*, 26(1), 77-86.
13. Igwe, W. C., Ojinnaka, N., Ejiofor, S. O., & Emechebe, G. O. (2009). Socio-demographic correlates of psychoactive substance abuse among secondary school students in Enugu, Nigeria. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 12, 1-7.
14. Kidd, T., Hamer, M., & Steptoe, A. (2011). Examining the association between adult attachment style and cortisol responses to acute stress. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 36(6), 771-779.
15. Lakhanpal, P., & Agnihotri, A. K. (2007). Substance abuse an international problem: A short review with special reference to the African continent. *Journal of Medicine and Toxicology*, 1(1), 1-11.

16. Levitt, A., & Leonard, K. E. (2015). Insecure attachment styles, relationship-drinking contexts, and marital alcohol problems: Testing the mediating role of relationship-specific drinking-to-cope motives. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 29(3), 696–705. <https://doi.org/10.1037/adb0000064>
17. Lilja, J., Larsson, S., Wilhelmsen, B. U., & Hamilton, D. (2003). Perspectives on preventing adolescent substance use and misuse. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 38, 1491-1530. <https://doi.org/10.1081/JA-120023395>
18. Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2007). *Attachment in adulthood: Structure, dynamics, and change*. New York, NY: Guilford.
19. Mikulincer, M. & Shaver, P. R. (2013). *The Oxford Handbook of close relationships*. Oxford University Press.
20. Oluremi, D. F. (2012). Substance abuse among Nigerian adolescents: Strategies for counselling. *Journal of International Social Research*, 5(20), 342-347.
21. Oshikoya, K. A., & Alli, A. (2006). Perception of substance abuse amongst Nigerian undergraduates. *World Journal of Medical Sciences*, 1(2), 133-139.
22. Owino, W. O., Mwanja, J. M. & Asakhulu, N. M. (2021). Attachment styles as predictors of substance use among secondary school students in Nairobi County, Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice*. 12 (30) 102-111
23. Poikolainen, K. (2002). Antecedents of substance use in adolescence. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 15, 241-245.
24. Sangone, E., Comodari, E., Indiana, M. L. & La Rosa, V. L. (2023). Exploring the association between attachment style, psychological well-being, and relationship status in young adults and adults- A Cross-sectional study. S. Fernandez-Saliner, M. D. C. Perez-Fuentes, A. M. Martinez. *J. Investigating: Health Psychology Education* 24(13)3:525-539 doi.10.3390/ejihpe/3030040
25. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2018). *The drug problem and organized crime, illicit financial flows, corruption and terrorism*. Vienna, Austria: United Nations.
26. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2019). *World drug report 2019*. <https://wdr.unodc.org/wdr2019/en/exsum.html> (Accessed 12/07/2024).
27. Velleman, R. D. B., Templeton, L. J., & Copello, A. G. (2005). The role of the family in preventing and intervening with substance use and misuse: A comprehensive review of family interventions, with a focus on young people. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 24, 93-109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09595230500167478>
28. Velleman, R., & Templeton, L. (2007). Substance misuse by children and young people: The role of the family and implications for intervention and prevention. *Current Paediatrics*, 17, 25-30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paed.2006.12.002>
29. Whitesell, M., Bachand, A., Peel, J., & Brown, M. (2013). Familial, social, and individual factors contributing to risk for adolescents' substance use. *Journal of Addiction*, 57(9), 3-10.

How to cite this article: Ohanugo, Obiageli Josephine, Isiguzo, Blessing Chioma. Typologies of attachment styles and tendency to substance abuse among adolescents in rivers state. *Int J Health Sci Res.* 2025; 15(2):61-71. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijhsr.20250208>

\*\*\*\*\*