

The Effects of Parental Substance Abuse on Perceived Family Well-Being in a Selected Rural Area in South Africa

Zanelle Frans

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7081-2045>

Badisa, South Africa

zanellep8@gmail.com

Glynnis Dykes

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9668-1597>

Department of Social Work, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

gdykes@uwc.ac.za

Shernaaz Carelse

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9171-9082>

Department of Social Work, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

scarelse@uwc.ac.za

Abstract

In this study, we focused on the effects of parental substance abuse on family well-being in a selected rural area in the Western Cape province of South Africa, because of the lack of research in this community. The farm workers in this community were paid partially with alcohol, which is historically associated with the tot system. In this study, we used a qualitative approach to conduct semi-structured individual interviews with six known substance-abusing parents and six family members of substance-abusing parents. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to recruit the participants from farms in the rural community. The themes centred on the effects of parental substance use on intimate relationships, parenting, children and family functioning. The findings confirm that parental substance abuse in the selected rural area seemed no different to the effects in an urban setting. We therefore suggest that the sociocultural setting of the rural area underscore the ways in which these effects play out. This is because rural settings make the effects substantially more significant with regard to available resources, geographic distances, the enduring effects of the tot system, and norms regarding alcohol, which feed into risk factors. We recommend that a substance abuse framework redress the obstacles which influence the kinds of support and resources that people have access to and partnerships with farm owners for multilevel and appropriate services. We also recommend that the existing policies be amended to focus more strongly on rural areas.

Keywords: children; family well-being; parenting; rural; substance abuse

UNISA 

Southern African Journal of Social Work and Social Development
<https://unisapressjournals.co.za/index.php/SWPR/index>
Volume 34 | Number 2 | 2022 | #9788 | 21 pages

<https://doi.org/10.25159/2708-9355/9788>
ISSN 2708-9355 (Online)
© Unisa Press 2022

Introduction

Substance abuse in rural areas is a worldwide phenomenon (Ramlagan, Peltzer, and Matseke 2010). There are sufficient studies done internationally on the extent of substance abuse in rural areas, which indicate that worldwide, rural alcohol usage patterns are increasing at an alarming rate (Brumby, Kennedy, and Chandrasekara 2013; Cucciare and Scarbrough 2018; Sharma et al. 2017; Ziaaddini, Ziaaddini, and Nakhaee 2013). In Africa, alcohol abuse seems to dominate in rural areas and remains the substance of choice (Cubbins et al. 2012; Nalwadda et al. 2018; Walt, Kinoti, and Jason 2013). In South Africa, and specifically in the Western Cape rural context, alcohol consumption seems to be more prevalent when compared to other substances. A study about alcohol abuse by farm workers on farms in the broader Cape Winelands region revealed that most participants did not see their alcohol consumption as a problem and that alcohol abuse was a norm in the community (Lesch and Adams 2016). These authors argue that their study on the way in which the participants perceived alcohol abuse was one of the very few qualitative studies conducted with farm workers in the Cape Winelands. The need for qualitative studies focusing on alcohol abuse by farm workers in the area was highlighted by Kühn (2016) and Lesch and Adams (2016).

There appears to be insufficient qualitative research on the topic in the selected rural area in the Cape Winelands (Gossage et al. 2014; Jackson 2012; Kühn 2016; Lesch and Adams 2016). The lack of research about substance abuse and its effects on family well-being in rural South Africa makes it difficult to formulate helpful interventions and policies (Gossage et al. 2014). Consequently, a concern is that in the selected rural area, the effects of parental substance abuse on family well-being are under-researched, which has a further impact on an already vulnerable and under-resourced population. In this study, we focused on the effects of parental substance abuse on family well-being in a selected rural area, because of the lack of research in this community which has been historically associated with the *tot* or the “*dop*” system as it is commonly known in the South African context.

Literature Review

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2014) found alarming alcohol consumption levels in the sub-Saharan region of Africa. Uganda in particular was listed as one of the African countries with the largest proportion of hazardous drinkers owing to risky alcohol consumption (WHO 2014). Previous studies (Choi et al. 2015; Kühn 2016; Lander, Howsare, and Byrne 2013; Lubbe, Van Walbeek, and Vellios 2017) underscored the possible impact and effects of alcohol abuse on family well-being. The impact on the family will vary according to the substance being used, which family member abuses the substance and their level of usage (Kühn 2016). Studies have indicated that parents who have a substance abuse problem were likely to have been exposed to substance abuse by their family or other related social issues such as domestic violence (Hughes 2014; Parolin et al. 2016). In addition, the impact of parental

substance abuse may vary depending on whether one parent or both parents abuse substances, the quality of attachment between family members, and the availability of support systems resources for the family (Straussner and Fewell 2011). Suikkanen and Virtala (2010, 8) therefore assert that “parental substance abuse creates conflict and violence as well as a decrease in cohesion and parenting within a family”.

Although the impact may vary, the following are common aspects owing to parental substance abuse: family communication problems, conflict, chaos, unpredictability, inconsistent discipline of children, abuse, and breakdown of family rules or tradition (Straussner and Fewell 2011). Furthermore, parental substance abuse has a direct impact on the parents’ emotions and their behaviour and results in poor and inconsistent parenting (Miles 2010). Owing to parents’ often volatile emotions and moods, substance abuse interferes with their ability to develop secure attachments with their children (Suikkanen and Virtala 2010). Parental substance abuse clearly has diverse effects on the family’s well-being and the matter therefore needs scrutiny.

The Tot System

The origins of the tot system can be traced to the establishment of the slave society in the Cape of Good Hope in 1658, the Liquor Laws Commission of 1890, and the Labour Commission of 1893/1894 (Setlalentoa et al. 2010; Williams 2016). The tot system was used by farm owners to control their workers and to persuade them to work on farms and was used as a means of paying farm workers for their labour (Daniels 2017; Gossage et al. 2014). The impact of the tot system led to public drunkenness, increased social problems and health impairments. In time, farm workers developed a keenness and dependency for alcohol (Williams 2016). The tot system was abolished in 1928 and has been illegal since 1963 (Williams 2016) as it created a sense of oppression and powerlessness particularly among the farm workers in the Western Cape (Cloete and Ramugondo 2015). However, the South African government controlled the consumption and distribution of alcohol among black people; this in turn contributed to the creation of illegal shebeens as a form of resistance against oppressive laws. In this regard, the legacy of the tot system seems to still have an influence on the behaviour and lifestyle of people (Dykes 2010), especially in rural farming areas (Gossage et al. 2014). This is evident in the form of generational substance abuse still prevalent in the community in which the study was conducted.

The Effects of Parental Substance Abuse on Family Well-Being

Parental substance abuse precipitates other social issues such as child neglect, abuse and domestic violence, with dire consequences to the overall family well-being (Kühn 2016; Lander, Howsare, and Byrne 2013). For instance, parental substance abuse negatively affects parents’ ability to implement consistent parenting styles. For example, the parent uses excessive means of disciplining children, often out of the parent’s substance-

related anger (Neger and Prinz 2015). A study conducted by Kühn (2016) in a rural area in the Western Cape found that a father's alcohol abuse often leads to his being a poor role model to his children owing to negative behaviour, such as anger outbursts and violence when under the influence of alcohol. Similarly, parental substance abuse can lead to absent parents and can result in parentification (Tedgård, Råstam, and Wirtberg 2019); meaning role swapping between children and their caregivers, where the child assumes adult roles such as cleaning and cooking (Sang, Cederbaum, and Hurlburt 2014).

Studies (Louw and Louw 2009; Straussner and Fewell 2011) have indicated that children who are reared by parents who abuse substances are at greater risk of abusing substances themselves. Children of substance-abusing parents are therefore more prone to psychological and mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and externalising behaviour problems such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Tsavoussis et al. 2014). It appears that children of parents who abuse illegal substances tend to demonstrate impulsive or irresponsible behaviour, which in turn places the child more at risk of developing a substance abuse problem. Children who are constantly exposed to negative family dynamics such as domestic violence tend to experience more psychological challenges.

Parental substance abuse also predisposes children to child neglect and abuse (Lander, Howsare, and Byrne 2013). Studies on parental substance abuse (Kühn 2016; Marinus 2015) indicate that parental substance abuse is often the underlying cause of child neglect and abuse as these parents are frequently pre-occupied with their substance abuse; consequently, they are emotionally unavailable for their children (Kühn 2016). Another form of neglect as a result of parental substance abuse is the lack of supervision of children. A study by Freisthler, Johnson-Motoyama and Kepple (2014) has found that parents who abuse substances often leave their children alone or with an older sibling, thereby placing the children at risk of sexual abuse. The neglect of physical needs such as food, clothing and healthcare (Tamutiené 2018; Yaghoubi-Doust 2013) was also evident in studies.

The substance abuse of a parent also affects the immediate and wider family (Lander, Howsare, and Byrne 2013). The substance abuse of any family member can cause stress in the household, which in turn may negatively affect the family's relationships and functioning (Straussner and Fewell 2011). Financial strain, marital relationship problems, communication, conflict and domestic violence in the household are just some of the effects of parental substance abuse (Kühn 2016). In addition, parental substance abuse can lead to weak family bonds (Kumpfer 2014) owing to the level of conflict that can occur between family members, the negative moods of the substance-abusing parent and the lack of quality time being spent between family members. As a consequence, greater involvement of extended family members occurs when children are found vulnerable in such families and then placed in the care of relatives (Böning and Ferreira 2013).

Family Systems Theory

The family systems theory (FST) provided a framework for the current study to make sense of the ways in which parental substance abuse affect the family systems and the ways in which a family deals with the changes necessary to maintain a state of homeostasis (Lander, Howsare, and Byrne 2013). The FST was therefore useful as it allowed a better understanding of the research findings of this study.

Methodology

The research setting was a selected rural area in the Cape Winelands of the Western Cape, South Africa. A qualitative research approach was used to gather thick and rich information to answer the research question and to obtain information on people's subjective realities (Creswell 2014). The case study research design was used which focuses on the study of a phenomenon by making use of one or more cases bounded by time and within a specific context (Babbie 2016; Denscombe 2014). In this study, the issue was parental substance abuse using a single instrumental case of a specific rural area. This study reflects the findings of two population groups, namely, substance-abusing parents (the majority living and working on farms) and family members of substance-abusing parents. Non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling and snowball sampling was used to select six adult substance-abusing parents and six adult family members (living with an adult substance user). The substance-abusing parents and their families working on different farms were recruited from the case files of the organisations.

The researcher made a written request to the management of the non-profit organisation (NPO) for permission to recruit participants to participate in the study. The NPO made overtures on behalf of the researcher and therefore the researcher did not handle any of the case work files of the participants. Only once the participants gave their agreement to participate did the researcher make contact with each one. Some were referred by farmers who knew about the study through word of mouth (snowball sampling). Here the researcher asked that the farmer first obtained permission from the participant. Mindful of the power differential inherent in this relationship, the researcher ensured numerous times through the introductory session that the participants were satisfied to participate. Information letters were disseminated to the prospective participants that explained the purpose of the study, their rights, access to a professional counsellor for debriefing if the need should arise, and the responsibility of the researchers. Fortunately, none of the participants required debriefing.

Owing to the sensitive nature of the topic, individual face-to-face interviews (pre-covid) were used as the main data collection method to gather in-depth data. A semi-structured interview schedule featuring a list of open-ended questions as a guideline and email responses from social work participants were used to collect data. The findings were analysed by making use of thematic analysis as proposed by Boyatzis (1998).

To ensure trustworthiness, the researchers used Guba's model (Shenton 2004) which involves credibility (using triangulation that refers to the use of more than one data collection method from two or more data sources); transferability (providing a detailed description of the research setting and locating literature in similar settings); dependability (using an audit trail which refers to a written account of what happened during the research process); and confirmability (using rich, thick quotes to demonstrate that the findings emerged from the data and were not personal opinion or bias). Numbers were used instead of names to protect the privacy of the participants, for example, substance-abusing parent 1 (SAP1) and family member 1 (FM1).

Discussion of Findings

Four themes emerged from the data. The narratives of the participants reflected the opinions and experiences of substance-abusing parents and their family members.

Theme 1: Effects on Intimate Relationships

Substance abuse has diverse effects on people's intimate relationships. Intimate relationships refer to the interpersonal relationship traditionally between two people that is characterised by intimacy, attachment and love (Louw and Louw 2009). The extent of the effects will depend on whether one or both partners are abusing substances (Lander, Howsare, and Byrne 2013). This subtheme explains the effects of substance abuse on intimate relationships from the participants' viewpoint.

Subtheme 1.1: Avoidance and Lack of Communication

The lack of communication in this context refers to the difficulty of communicating effectively and efficiently about an issue to reach a peaceful, mutual agreement (Galvin et al. 2018). According to Duggan and Molineux (2013), substance abuse often increases the likelihood of communication problems in a relationship. A variety of communication problems were mentioned and included the frequent use of expletives and aggressive language, avoidance of one another, inability to peacefully discuss issues, and refusal to talk about problems that occurred:

He [referring to her partner] just comes home at night, then he sits, drinks coffee or watches tv. He does not speak to me. (SAP6)

To be honest, we do not talk about our problems, because when I talk to him [referring to her partner] then he does not respond. (FM5)

This finding confirms the assertions by Woolf-King et al. (2019) in their study on the effect of alcohol abuse on intimate relationships in rural South Africa. These authors found that alcohol usage in relationships was linked to poor communication patterns. Similarly, according to Mattoo et al. (2013), frequent arguments constrain communication patterns in intimate relationships. In the present study, substance-

abusing parents explained that they were unable to have a conversation with their partner regarding issues that they were unhappy about. The issues therefore remained unresolved as they could not speak about what was troubling them or about household issues. These unresolved issues tend to surface when the individuals are under the influence, especially the influence of alcohol.

Subtheme 1.2: Jealousy and Infidelity

Jealousy refers to a negative emotional reaction that is triggered by a perceived or actual threat to the self-esteem or self-worth of the person (Ortigue and Bianchi-Demicheli 2011). It is specifically linked to a person in the context of an interpersonal relationship.

He [referring to her partner] had a relationship with another women . . . and I got involved with another man. (SAP1)

With the drinking he [partner of the substance-abusing parent] became jealous of her [the substance-abusing parent]. He fought with her and gave her men [to sleep with]. (FM4)

It seems that substance abuse increases the paranoia of both the user and the family member about real or imagined infidelity. Such paranoia indicates insecurities in intimate relationships. Similar findings emerged from the study by Woolf-King et al. (2019) which suggested that alcohol abuse has a negative influence on trust between intimate partners. Having said this, most substance-abusing parents admitted to having had an affair. In addition, some substance-abusing parents also indicated that their partners had affairs with others.

Subtheme 1.3: Conflict and Domestic Violence

Substance abuse is generally associated with conflict between people that can lead to domestic violence (Slabbert and Green 2013). Conflict and domestic violence therefore generally occurs at the same time. Conflict refers to disagreements, struggles or arguments between two or more people with opposing beliefs or values (Thakore 2013). Domestic violence refers to physical, emotional, sexual, verbal, economic and psychological abuse (Republic of South Africa 1998). All participants in this study mentioned conflict and domestic violence as a common occurrence.

With my husband, when I drink there's always conflict. We fight and we argue every time. (SAP1)

He [referring to partner] fights when he does not get his way in the house. (FM6)

Physical and emotional abuse often occur together when people engage in arguments. Studies indicate that a correlation exists between substance abuse and domestic violence in families (Crane et al. 2014; Slabbert 2015). From the participants' narratives, it seems that women are often the victims of domestic violence at the hands of their male

partners. The South Africa Demographic and Health Survey (Stats SA 2016) confirms that one in every five females older than 18 years has experienced physical violence.

Theme 2: Effects on Parenting

Parenting is regarded as a difficult task and the abuse of substances places an extra strain on the existing parenting skills (Kühn 2016). This subtheme focuses on the effects that substance abuse has on the parenting skills of substance-abusing parents.

Subtheme 2.1: Absent Parents and Parental Roles

This subtheme refers to the absence of a parent in a child's upbringing and the effects on a parent's ability to fulfil parental roles. Parental absence can be a result of separation of parents, abscondment, or the death of a parent. In the current study, most participants spoke of growing up without their biological fathers and said that the substance abuse of the remaining parent had a negative effect on the fulfilment of parental roles.

My father did not live with us. (SAP3)

The father [referring to the substance-abusing parent] is absent, we do not know where he is. (FM2)

Substance abuse interferes with the ability of the parent to fulfil their role. The participants explained that some parents, when under the influence of alcohol, might prioritise the use of alcohol by not fulfilling their daily tasks such as cleaning, and washing and feeding the children. When a parent abuses substances, they often spend more time away from the children, leaving children feeling abandoned, traumatised and sad (MacMillan et al. 2013). Children are therefore left vulnerable and at risk.

Subtheme 2.2: Poor Role Models

A poor role model refers to a person looked to or admired by others as an example to be imitated but who behaves in a negative manner (Matshabane 2016). It is clear that parents who abuse substances are often poor role models for their children. This is owing to their destructive behaviour when they are inebriated and their lack of interest in their children.

I drank every weekend and sometimes I felt that I should just leave my children. (SAP1)

That time when she [referring to a substance-abusing parent] sat at the shebeen, we went to fetch the children at the shebeen. (FM2)

These narratives reveal a lack of parenting skills. Substance-abusing parents are often negative role models for their children owing to their intoxicated behaviour and this predisposes their children to similar types of behaviour. Children who are constantly exposed to parental substance abuse and the various commensurate behaviours often form a negative view of their parents. In this study, the older children are usually the

ones who distance themselves from their parents and show antipathy towards them. The findings are concurrent with Kühn's (2016) study about alcohol abuse by fathers in the Western Cape, in which the findings suggest that negative parental role models for children can result from parental alcohol abuse.

Subtheme 2.3: Inconsistent Parenting

Inconsistent parenting refers to unstable parenting practices in which parents often change their parenting styles and employ different forms of parenting; this includes varying means of discipline (Sandstrom and Huerta 2013). In the current study, substance-abusing parents often display inconsistency when fulfilling their parental roles and responsibilities, following family rules and disciplining their children.

I would hit them [referring to his/her children] because I am under the influence of alcohol. (SAP6)

When she [referring to the substance-abusing parent] is drugged, then she does not worry. (FM4)

When parents are inebriated, they make use of inconsistent and sometimes harsh means of disciplining their children. This is because the substance they use influences their mood and temperament. This study found that when parents are inebriated, the family rules are often flouted. Children are therefore allowed to stay out later, and they tend to take more chances. In a study by Lippold et al. (2016), the findings suggest that inconsistent parenting can create stressful parent and child relationships, especially during the adolescent stage. Furthermore, when parents are intoxicated, their means of disciplining their children may not be the same as when they are sober. The common form of discipline used by substance-abusing parents involves hitting the children and yelling.

Theme 3: Effects on Children

Substance abuse by one or more parents in a household can have diverse effects on children (Reiter 2015). Studies by Haefele and Ovens (2013) and Kühn (2016) have indicated that parental substance abuse has various negative effects on children, and this can have long-term negative effects on the children's development.

Subtheme 3.1: Exposure to Volatile Family Dynamics

Family dynamics in this context refers to unhealthy patterns of interaction in a family (Härkönen, Bernardi, and Boertien 2017). This category therefore refers to the various difficult circumstances to which children are exposed as a result of their parents' substance abuse.

When he [referring to partner] starts hitting me, then they [referring to the children] start to cry. He smacked Cindy [pseudonym] before. When Mandy [pseudonym] was a baby, he accidentally hit her. (SAP3)

The night they [referring to both parents] fought, my word, the children. They [referring to the children] ran to the bathroom and locked the door because they were so nervous due to the parents' fighting. (FM4)

Studies by Daniels (2017), Haefele and Ovens (2013) and Kühn (2016) have found that children of parents who abuse substances are often exposed to negative family dynamics such as domestic violence between parents, frequent arguments and conflict, and the use of foul language by parents. Children are often exposed to incidents where their parents physically fight and/or where they throw objects at each other, and ultimately the police (or other external source) are contacted for help (Lander, Howsare, and Byrne 2013). These types of incident have devastating emotional effects on the children who witness them. The constant exposure to these negative family dynamics has a detrimental impact on the emotional well-being and the development of the children (Wathen and MacMillan 2013). In this regard, children who constantly witness domestic violence may experience dysfunction later in life (Habib et al. 2014). Furthermore, parental substance abuse causes family chaos and children are at risk as they are likely to be exposed to dysfunctional behaviour and traumatic incidents (Daniels 2017).

Subtheme 3.2: Effects on Attachment

Parental substance abuse can have a negative effect on the attachment bond between the parent and the children (Lander, Howsare, and Byrne 2013). In the current study, it appears that substance-abusing parents spend less time with their children, which in turn contributes to weak attachment with children.

My children started to lose respect for me, because their mother [referring to herself] is drunk every day and she doesn't worry about them. (SAP1)

They [referring to the children] say that she isn't their mother and they want nothing to do with her. (FM2)

The narratives depict the ways in which the children have lost respect for their parents, the ensuing estrangement, and their feelings of being unwanted. Studies by Choi et al. (2015) and Daniels (2017) found that parental alcohol abuse creates an emotional distance between the parent and the child. Children who do not have a secure attachment with parents are more vulnerable to negative influences (Järvinen 2013; Lander, Howsare, and Byrne 2013). The findings of the current study also suggest that children with weak attachments with their parents often viewed their parents negatively. The conclusion can be drawn that parental substance abuse hinders healthy parent-child attachments.

Subtheme 3.3: Effects on Children's Schooling

This subtheme focuses on the effects that parents' substance abuse has on their children's school performance. When a child experiences rejection, their sense of connectedness with the parent is negatively influenced, which in turn can have a

negative influence on their emotional and academic functioning (Cottee and Roman 2014). The following narratives reveal the ways in which parental substance abuse has a direct effect on children's schooling:

Last week my daughter was sent home due to her actions at school. (SAP6)

It will affect their [referring to children of the substance-abusing parent] schooling. They will not be able to focus. The schoolteacher already made appointments for the eldest one as he does not want to learn. (FM5)

The participants saw a clear link between the parents' substance abuse and the effects on their children's schooling. According to Lander, Howsare and Byrne (2013), chaotic home environments, unstructured routines and exposure to domestic violence can increase learning difficulties and can cause the children to have behavioural problems at school. In a study by Kühn (2016) conducted in the Western Cape about the effects of fathers' alcohol abuse, the findings indicated that the father's alcohol abuse influenced his children's ability to function at school and could also lead to behavioural problems at school. It can be concluded that substance-abusing parents spend less time providing learning-based stimulation for their children. Also, parental substance abuse not only affects the emotional development of a child, but also affects their children's school performance because their focus and concentration are severely compromised.

Subtheme 3.4: Parentification

Parentification refers to roles that are switched between the parents and a child, where the child performs all of the parents' roles and responsibilities (Dykes 2014; Engelhardt 2012). In the current study, the participants spoke of the ways in which the children often had to do household chores when their parents were under the influence of substances. Some of the participants explained that the substance-abusing parents raised their children in a manner in which they were given many household responsibilities, including cleaning, laundry and childcare of younger siblings.

When I am drunk, then they [referring to the children] have to make their own food. (SAP1)

When Candy [pseudonym] was in grade 1, then they had to clean the place and wash the dishes. Some days Candy had to do the laundry. (FM1)

The narratives detail duties and responsibilities that go beyond what would be considered conventional household chores. In a similar study by Kühn (2016), the findings also suggest that when a father drinks excessively, the child tends to take on the role of the parent. A child who is catapulted into the adult role in this way will also be compelled to provide emotional or instrumental caregiving towards other siblings or even towards the parents in the household (Jankowski and Hooper 2014). Parentification results in the suppression of the child's own developmental needs and this can disrupt their future development (Hooper et al. 2012). Furthermore,

parentification can create an over-awareness of others' needs (Lander, Howsare, and Byrne 2013). Although Van der Mijl (2017) found that parentification can have positive effects on children such as empathy and resilience, it also has to be argued that this would depend on the level of parentification taking place. Parental substance abuse therefore has a diverse impact on the child's emotional, physical and educational development.

Theme 4: Effects on Family Functioning

Family functioning is a multidimensional concept that indicates the way in which family members interact and collaborate with one another in achieving a common goal and outcome (Botha and Booysen 2013). In this theme, the focus is on the effects that parental substance abuse has on family functioning.

Subtheme 4.1: Misuse and Lack of Money

The misuse of money is a form of financial strain where finances are not utilised in the best interests of the family. A lack of finances in a household can influence the ability of the family to buy basic necessities such as food (Adams, Meyers, and Beidas 2016). Parental substance abuse therefore places strain on the family's finances. In the current study, most of the participants explained that the substance abuse of the parent had a negative impact on their finances and resulted in a shortage of basic necessities.

My beer debt is R150 [US\$10] almost every week. (SAP5)

Lizzy [pseudonym] used her whole salary to buy alcohol. (FM1)

These narratives indicate that substance abuse has a negative impact on the family's finances and results in a shortage of basic necessities. The current findings are in accordance with a similar study conducted by Kühn (2016) on alcohol abusing fathers in the Western Cape, in which the findings suggest that alcohol abuse leads to the inability of parents to ensure that basic necessities, such as regular (and nutritious) food, are available in the house. Substance-abusing parents therefore also find it difficult to save money for the future, as most of the money is used for buying the basic necessities and supporting their substance abuse (Radebe 2015). Parental substance abuse has a negative impact on the family's finances and increases the risk of the family remaining in the cycle of poverty.

Subtheme 4.2: Lack of Quality Time

The lack of quality time refers to the inability of a person to spend time with their family by giving them their full attention, without the unwanted presence of substance abuse (Ellington 2011). This would include doing activities together or merely spending time talking. Parental substance abuse has a negative effect on the parent's ability to spend quality time with their family, as they often spend more time using substances than with their families. In the instances when they are sober, they are often moody, sleepy or

emotionally unavailable. In the current study, most of the participants indicated that the substance-abusing parents did not spend quality time with their families, especially with their children.

I don't make effort to walk to her [referring to their child] and sit and talk to her. (SAP5)

Since March (3 months ago), she [referring to the substance-abusing parent] hasn't been with the children. (FM4)

These narratives show the inattentiveness of substance-abusing parents where time with children is neglected. By not spending time with their children, the parents neglect their children emotionally (or physically) and, importantly, leave their children to their own devices or to the care of others. The parents are absent from their children during weekends when the children themselves are free. No time is therefore made for family activities. Similar trends were indicated in a study by Ellington (2011) which suggested that the lack of quality family time can have a detrimental effect on the attachment between the parent and the child. Ellington's (2011) study also revealed that a lack of family time can hinder a child's emotional and social development and make them more vulnerable to negative influences. The study by Radebe (2015) also referred to the way parental substance abuse disrupts social and recreational life in families and can result in a change in the communication patterns between family members. Parental substance abuse therefore hinders the parents' ability to spend quality time with their family members.

Conclusion and Implications

At first glance, the findings confirm that parental substance abuse in the selected rural area seemed no different to the effects in an urban setting. This similarity is mainly owing to the fact that parental substance abuse affects every facet of family life because in a traditional sense the parents are responsible for every aspect of the care and well-being of their family.

The four themes and concomitant subthemes had revealed important effects of parental substance abuse on family members. The significant effects of alcohol abuse on the intimate relationship between parents overflow into the family sphere especially when conflict, aggression and violence become uneasy partners with the abuse of alcohol. Consequently, gender-based violence is a common occurrence. Parents who abuse alcohol find it difficult to focus on their responsibilities as their levels of concentration are severely compromised. The consequences of being emotionally and physically absent are that children often have to resort to raising themselves and other siblings in the home. Often parentification arises as children are compelled to assume the tasks and responsibilities of their parents, especially when there are children who are distressed and traumatised. The effects can often be perceived in the disconnect of the attachment between children and parents and in the incomplete schooling of their children.

Parental absence in the family also result in parent absences from their places of employment, with the consequent loss of employment. The substantial financial strain in the family often causes the involvement of extended family members to help with caregiving of children and/or fulfilling the parents' financial obligations. Concerningly, parental substance abuse also appears to give rise to other social issues such as child neglect and domestic violence. The intervention of formal and non-formal helping occurs at these volatile points of entry. What makes these findings meaningful is that they establish firstly the extent of the effects on the family but secondly that these effects do not occur in a vacuum and that the sociocultural setting of the rural area underscores the ways in which these effects play out. The setting and characterisation of rural settings make the effects substantially more significant with regard to available resources, geographic distances, the prevalence and effects of the tot system, and norms regarding alcohol usage, which feed into risk and protective factors.

Recommendations

The intersection of the specific effects of parental substance abuse and the rural setting characterisation influence the kind of assessments and collaborative therapeutic services by social workers and other helping professions from both the public sectors and NPOs. A useful framework for rural areas should contain the obstacles and surmounting of physical distances which influence the kinds of support and resources that people have access to. Examples of these kinds of support and resources are other farm workers who live and work on the farm and the effects of this kind of community on drinking patterns or as support. The drinking patterns and norms with regard to the tot system and weekend binge drinking are also vital assessment indicators. Another imperative is that farm owners should be engaged and involved in the provision of support and skills programmes to their farm workers. Partnerships with farm owners are necessary to facilitate multilevel and appropriate services, especially regarding generational substance abuse. Existing policies should focus more strongly on dealing with substance abuse in rural areas, generally for all rural areas and then specifically in the areas where the tot system has played a substantial role in current generational or binge drinking. Policies should deal with resource constraints and creative funding models that do not restrict needed services.

Social work education is also a significant role player in interventions. It is crucial for specific institutions to be more focused on substance abuse (as stand-alone modules) so that graduating students are able to intervene skilfully in substance abuse situations, both in urban and rural settings. This might also add to the generic versus specialisation debate in undergraduate programmes of social work. Research opportunities for post-graduate students on substance abuse in rural areas should focus on specific and localised interventions for education and practice. Further research could also include multilevel and collaborative interventions in rural settings to bring the sociocultural and demographic contexts into sharp focus.

References

- Adams, D., S. Meyers, and R. Beidas. 2016. "The Relationship Between Financial Strain, Perceived Stress, Psychological Symptoms and Academic and Social Integration in Undergraduate Students." *Journal of American College Health* 65 (5): 362–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2016.1154559>.
- Babbie, E. 2016. *The Basics of Social Research*. 7th ed. Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Böning, A., and S. Ferreira. 2013. "An Analysis of, and Different Approach to, Challenges in Foster Care Practice in South Africa." *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* 49 (4): 519–69. <https://doi.org/10.15270/49-4-42>.
- Botha, F., and F. Booysen. 2013. "Family Functioning and Life Satisfaction and Happiness in South African Households." *Social Indicators Research* 119 (1): 163–82. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-013-0485-6>.
- Boyatzis, R. 1998. *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Brumby, S., A. Kennedy, and A. Chandrasekara. 2013. "Alcohol Consumption, Obesity and Psychological Distress in Farming Communities: An Australian Study." *Journal of Rural Health* 29 (3): 311–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jrh.12001>.
- Choi, K., M. Watt, D. Skinner, S. Kalichman, and K. Sikkema. 2015. "'Wine You Get Every Day, but a Child You Can't Replace': The Perceived Impact of Parental Drinking on Child Outcomes in a South African Township." *Journal of Child and Adolescent Mental Health* 27 (3): 173–87. <https://doi.org/10.2989/17280583.2015.1113974>.
- Cloete, L. G., and E. L. Ramugondo. 2015. "'I Drink': Mothers' Alcohol Consumption as Both Individualised and Imposed Occupation." *South African Journal of Occupational Therapy* 45 (1): 34–40. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2310-3833/2015/v45no1a6>.
- Cottee, G., and N. Roman. 2014. "Perceptions of Parental Practices which Place Children at Risk for Abuse and Neglect." *Child Abuse Research: A South African Journal* 15 (2): 26–34. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC161328>.
- Crane, C., R. Schlauch, M. Hawes, and D. Easton. 2014. "Legal Factors Associated with Change in Alcohol Use and Partner Violence among Offenders." *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* 47 (1): 151–59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsat.2014.03.008>.
- Creswell, J. 2014. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Cubbins, L., D. Kasprzyk, D. Montano, L. Jordan, and G. Woelk. 2012. "Alcohol Use and Abuse Among Rural Zimbabwean Adults: A Test of a Community-Level Intervention." *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 124 (3): 33–339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2012.02.002>.

- Cucciare, M., and C. Scarbrough. 2018. "Opportunities for Identifying and Addressing Unhealthy Substance Use in Rural Communities: A Commentary on Cucciare et al. (2017)." *Substance Abuse: Research and Treatment* 12 : 1–4.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1178221818805980>.
- Daniels, A. 2017. "Exploring Experiences of Adult Children of Perceived Problem Drinkers in a Low-Income Community in the Western Cape." Master's thesis, University of the Western Cape.
- Denscombe, M. 2014. *The Good Research Guide for Small-Scale Social Research Projects*. 5th ed. Open University Press.
- Duggan, A., and B. Molineux. 2013. "The Reciprocal Influence of Drug and Alcohol Abuse and Family Members' Communication." In *The Routledge Handbook of Family Communication*, edited by A. Vangelisti. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Dykes, G. 2010. "Addiction." In *Introduction to Social Work*, edited by L. Nicholas, J. Rautenbach and M. Maistry. Cape Town: Juta.
- Dykes, G. 2014. "An Inquiry Into the Role of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Teaching and Learning in Social Work." PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University.
- Ellington, A. 2011. "The Role of Family Time on a Young Child's Overall Development." Master's thesis, University of Alabama.
- Engelhardt, J. 2012. "The Developmental Implications of Parentification: Effects on Childhood Attachment." *Graduate Student Journal of Psychology* 14 (1): 45–52.
- Freisthler, B., M. Johnson-Motoyama, and N. J. Kepple. 2014. "Inadequate Child Supervision: The Role of Alcohol Outlet Density, Parent Drinking Behaviors, and Social Support." *Children and Youth Services Review* 43: 75–84.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2014.05.002>.
- Galvin, K., D. Braithwaite, P. Schrodtt, and C. Bylund. 2018. *Family Communication: Cohesion and Change*. 9th ed. New York: Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315228846>.
- Gossage, J., C. Snell, C. Parry, A. Marais, R. Barnard, M. de Vries, J. Blankenship, S. Seedat, J. Hasken, and P. May. 2014. "Alcohol Use, Working Conditions, Job Benefits and the Legacy of the Dop System among Farm Workers in the Western Cape Province South Africa: Hope Despite High Levels of Risky Drinking." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 11 (7): 7406–24.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph110707406>.

- Habib, C., J. Toumbourou, M. Mcritchie, J. Williams, P. Kremer, D. Mckenzie, and R. Catalano. 2014. "Prevalence and Community Variation in Harmful Levels of Family Conflict Witnessed by Children: Implications for Prevention." *Prevention Science* 15 (5): 757–66. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-013-0416-4>.
- Haefele, B., and M. Ovens. 2013. "Effect of the Substance Related Disorder on Family Dynamics and Subsequent Child Abuse." *Child Abuse Research in South Africa* 14 (2): 26–36. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC144995>.
- Härkönen, J., F. Bernardi, and D. Boertien. 2017. "Family Dynamics and Child Outcomes: An Overview of Research and Open Questions." *European Journal of Population* 33 (2): 163–84. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10680-017-9424-6>.
- Hooper, L., K. Doehler, P. Jankowski, and S. Tomek. 2012. "Patterns of Self-Reported Alcohol Use, Depressive Symptoms, and Body Mass Index in a Family Sample: The Buffering Effects of Parentification." *Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families* 20 (2): 164–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480711435320>.
- Hughes, J. 2014. "Parental Substance Abuse and Child Neglect: Findings from a Family Treatment Drug Court." PhD thesis, University of California.
- Jackson, S. 2012. "Coping Methods: Primary Caregivers of Adults Who Are Dependent on Illegal Substances." Master's thesis, University of the Western Cape.
- Jankowski, P., and L. Hooper. 2014. "Parentification and Alcohol Use: Conditional Effects of Religious Service Attendance." *Counselling and Values* 59 (1): 174–91. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-007X.2014.00050.x>.
- Järvinen, M. 2013. "Understanding Addiction: Adult Children of Alcoholics Describing Their Parents' Drinking Problems." *Journal of Family Issues* 20 (10): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X13513027>.
- Kühn, J. 2016. "The Functioning of Nuclear Families Affected by Alcohol Abuse of a Father: The Views of Social Workers. Master's thesis, Stellenbosch University.
- Kumpfer, K. L. 2014. "Family-Based Interventions for the Prevention of Substance Abuse and Other Impulse Control Disorders in Girls." *International Scholarly Research Notices* 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2014/308789>.
- Lander, L., J. Howsare, and M. Byrne. 2013. "The Impact of Substance Use Disorder on Families and Children: From Theory to Practice." *Social Work Public Health* 28 (3–3): 194–205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19371918.2013.759005>.
- Lesch, E., and A. R. Adams. 2016. "Couples Living with and around Alcohol Abuse: A Study of a Farmworker Community in the Cape Winelands, South Africa." *Social Sciences & Medicine* 156: 167–74. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.03.030>.

- Lippold, M., K. Davis, K. Lawson, and S. McHale. 2016. "Day-to-Day Consistency in Positive Parent–Child Interactions and Youth Well-Being." *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 25 (12): 3584–92. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-016-0502-x>.
- Louw, D., and A. Louw. 2009. *Adult Development and Ageing*. Bloemfontein: University of the Free State, Psychology Publications.
- Lubbe, M., C. van Walbeek, and N. Vellios. 2017. "The Prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Its Impact on a Child's Classroom Performance: A Case Study of a Rural South African School." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 14 (896): 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14080896>.
- MacMillan, H., M. Tanaka, E. Dukua, T. Vaillancourt, and M. Boyle. 2013. "Child Physical and Sexual Abuse in a Community Sample of Young Adults: Results from the Ontario Child Health Study." *Child Abuse and Neglect* 37 (1): 14–21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2012.06.005>.
- Matshabane, O. 2016. "Exploring the Influence of Role Models on the Career Development Process of School-Going Adolescents from a Low-Income Community in South Africa." Master's thesis, Stellenbosch University.
- Mattoo, S., N. Nebhinani, B. Kumar, D. Basu, and P. Kulhara. 2013. "Family Burden with Substance Dependence: A Study from India." *Indian Journal of Medical Research* 137 (4): 704–11. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23703337>.
- Marinus, D. R. 2015. "Adolescents' Experiences and Coping Strategies with Parental Substance Addiction Within a Rural Farming Community: A Social Work Perspective." Master's thesis, University of South Africa.
- Miles, A. 2010. "Substance Use, Parenting Stress and Child Maltreatment: Exploring These Relationships in a Sample of At Risk Mothers." Master's thesis, University of Cape Town.
- Nalwadda, O., S. Rathod, J. Nakku, C. Lund, M. Prince, and F. Kigozi. 2018. "Alcohol Use in a Rural District in Uganda: Findings from Community-Based and Facility-Based Cross-Sectional Studies." *International Journal of Mental Health Systems* 12 (12): 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-018-0191-5>.
- Neger, E. N., and R.J. Prinz. 2015. "Interventions to Address Parenting and Parental Substance Abuse: Conceptual and Methodological Considerations." *Clinical Psychology Review* 39: 71–82. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2015.04.004>.
- Ortigue, S., and F. Bianchi-Demicheli. 2011. "Intention, False Beliefs and Delusional Jealousy: Insights into the Right Hemisphere from Neurological Patients and Neuroimaging Studies." *Medical Science Monitor* 17 (1): RA1–RA11. <https://doi.org/10.12659/MSM.881314>.

- Parolin, M., A. Simonelli, D. Mapelli, M. Sacco, and P. Cristofalo. 2016. "Parental Substance Abuse as an Early Traumatic Event. Preliminary Findings on Neuropsychological and Personality Functioning in Young Drug Addicts Exposed to Drugs Early." *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 16 (7): 887. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00887>.
- Radebe, N. 2015. "Exploring the Effects of Substance Abuse on the Family in a Selected Ethekwini District." Master's thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Ramlagan, S., K. Peltzer, and G. Matseke. 2010. "Epidemiology of Drug Abuse Treatment in South Africa." *South African Journal of Psychiatry* 16 (2): 40–49. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajpsy psychiatry.v16i2.172>.
- Reiter, M. 2015. *Substance Abuse and the Family*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315758695>.
- Republic of South Africa. 1998. *Domestic Violence Act, 1998 (Act No. 116 of 1998)*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- Sandstrom, H., and S. Huerta. 2013. *The negative effects of instability on child development: A research synthesis*. Washington: Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/32706/412899-The-Negative-Effects-of-Instability-on-Child-Development-A-Research-Synthesis.PDF>.
- Sang, J., J. A. Cederbaum, and M. S. Hurlburt. 2014. "Parentification, Substance Use, and Sex among Adolescent Daughters from Ethnic Minority Families: The Moderating Role of Monitoring." *Family Process* 53 (2): 252–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12038>.
- Sharma, B., A. Arora, K. Singh, H. Singh, and P. Kaur. 2017. "Drug Abuse: Uncovering the Burden in Rural Punjab." *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care* 6 (3): 558–62. <https://doi.org/10.4103/2249-4863.222037>.
- Setlalentoa, B. M. P., P. T. Pisa, G. N. Thekisho, E. H. Ryke, and D. T. Loots. 2010. "The Social Aspects of Alcohol Misuse/Abuse in South Africa." *South African Journal Clinical Nutrition* 23 (3): 11–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16070658.2010.11734296>.
- Shenton, A. 2004. "Strategies for Ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research Projects." *Education for Information* 22 (2): 63–75. <https://doi.org/10.3222/EFF-2004-22201>.
- Slabbert, I. 2015. "The Role of Substance Abuse in Domestic Violence: A Social Work Perspective." *Journal of Humanities* 55 (4): 665–80. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2224-7912/2015/v55n4a11>.
- Slabbert, I., and S. Green. 2013. "Types of Domestic Violence Experienced by Women in Abusive Relationships." *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* 49 (2): 234–47. <https://doi.org/10.15270/49-2-67>.

- Stats SA (Statistics South Africa). 2016. *South Africa Demographic and Health Survey 2016*. Stats SA. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report%2003-00-09/Report%2003-00-092016.pdf>.
- Straussner, S., and C. Fewell. 2011. *Children of Substance-Abusing Parents: Dynamics and Treatments*. New York: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1891/9780826165084>.
- Suikkanen, A., and M. Virtala. 2010. "The Harmful Effects of Parental Substance Abuse on Children." Bachelor's thesis, Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences.
- Tamutienė, I. 2018. "Alcohol-Related Child Maltreatment: Reports to the Child Rights Protection Service in Kaunas Municipality." *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* 35 (1): 9–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1455072517749132>.
- Tedgård, E., M. Råstam, and I. Wirtberg. 2019. "An Upbringing with Substance-Abusing Parents: Experiences of Parentification and Dysfunctional Communication." *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* 36 (3): 223–47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1455072518814308>.
- Thakore, D. 2013. "Conflict and Conflict Management." *Journal of Business and Management* 8 (6): 7–16. <https://doi.org/10.9790/487X-0860716>.
- Tsavoussis, A., S. P. A. Stawicki, N. Stoicea, and T. J. Papadimos. 2014. "Child-Witnessed Domestic Violence and Its Adverse Effects on Brain Development: A Call for Societal Self-Examination and Awareness." *Frontiers in Public Health* 2 (178): 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2014.00178>.
- Van der Mijl, R. 2017. "The Positive Effects of Parentification: An Exploratory Study among Students." *Psihologijske teme* 26 (2): 417–30. <https://doi.org/10.31820/pt.26.2.8>.
- Walt, L. C., E. Kinoti, and L. A. Jason. 2013. "Industrialization Stresses, Alcohol Abuse and Substance Dependence: Differential Gender Effects in a Kenyan Rural Farming Community." *International Journal of Mental Health Addiction* 11 (3): 369–80. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-012-9421-2>.
- Wathen, C., and H. MacMillan. 2013. "Children Exposed to Intimate Partner Violence: Impact and Interventions." *Paediatrics & Child Health* 18 (8): 419–22. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/18.8.419>.
- Williams, G. 2016. "Slaves, Workers, and Wine: The 'Dop System' in the History of the Cape Wine Industry, 1658–1894." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 42 (5): 893–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2016.1234120>.
- Woelf-King, S., A. Conroy, K. Fritz, M. Johnson, V. Hosegood, H. van Rooyen, L. Darbes, and N. McGrath. 2019. "Alcohol Use and Relationship Quality among South African Couples." *Substance Use Misuse* 54 (4): 651–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10826084.2018.1531428>

WHO (World Health Organization). 2014. *Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2014*. Geneva: WHO.

Yaghoubi-Doust, M. 2013. "Reviewing the Association Between the History of Parental Substance Abuse and the Rate of Child Abuse." *Addiction and Health* 5 (3–4): 126–33.

Ziaaddini, H., T. Ziaaddini, and N. Nakhaee. 2013. "Pattern and Trend of Substance Abuse in Eastern Rural Iran: A Household Survey in a Rural Community." *Journal of Addiction* 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2013/297378>.