

#### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Social media directly affects the mental health of adolescents and also plays a role in their use of various substances such as alcohol, tobacco and tramadol which could in turn affect their mental health. Sociodemographic factors such as age, sex, religion, presence and absence of parents as well as parental educational background play a role in the mental health of adolescents and their social media use.

**Objectives:** The aim of this study was to explore social media, substance use and mental health experiences among adolescents in the La Nkwantang Madina Municipality, Greater Accra Region.

**Methods:** A qualitative research approach was carried out with 12 purposively selected adolescents- 6 males and 6 females. Face-to-face in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide was used for data collection. Data was transcribed and then analyzed using thematic analysis.

**Results:** The study revealed that participants had good control over their social media environment regardless of whether they were high or low social media users. Adolescents who had ever engaged in substance use acknowledged the harmful nature of substances. Also, peer pressure and curiosity led to their use of substances and not necessarily parental use of substances. Advertisements seen on social media concerning substances were seen as unwarranted among adolescents as they could entice them to use these substances. Overall, participants said they were happy with their mental health. The results show that

sociodemographic factors - religion and presence of parents boosted these adolescents mental health outcomes.

**Conclusion:** Using social media in the right ways helps adolescents to avoid the negative effects that could arise from social media use. Even though advertisements could entice adolescents into social media use, the decision to use substances is solely a decision of an individual. Frequent use of social media, presence of parents and religiosity improve the mental health of adolescents.