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Challenges Facing Teenagers in Secondary Schools and Proffered Solutions

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Abstract:

This paper explores the multifaceted challenges faced by teenagers in New Jersey's High school system and proposes comprehensive solutions to address these issues. The study highlights the stark contrast within New Jersey's educational landscape, where predominantly white populations enjoy a high-quality education in top public schools, while students of color, immigrants, and those from low-income backgrounds endure a noticeably declined school system. Among the myriad of challenges confronting secondary school students are violence, sexual assault, poverty, and social anxiety. Strangely enough, the high use and rate of drug addiction among teenagers highly impair their cognitive and social adjustment. To do away with these problems, the paper proposes that social workers should be incorporated into school settings. Social workers will identify and work with students in need of support facing various kinds of difficulty, thus promoting a safer and more supportive school climate. It advocates for the government and educational institutions to implement stricter regulations on two things: the use of social media by teenagers and the use of drugs and alcohol. This would not only make students keen on developmental activities, both at school and outside school, but would also lead to adherence to other school rules and regulations, respectively. By leveraging the support of parents, schools, communities, and government agencies, the proposed solutions aim to create a more equitable and conducive educational experience for all teenagers in New Jersey. This approach underscores the need for a holistic effort to address the systemic disparities and enhance the overall well-being and academic success of secondary school students.

Keywords: Teenagers, challenges, secondary school, violence, educational system, United States, Newark - New Jersey

1. Introduction

Many times, in areas of education, educational policies, and theory, the United States has been looked upon by other nations as a model. Education has been used in particular not only as tool for technological innovation, but also for social mobility, and the absorption of various immigrants into a united community. American global economic and military ascendancy after World War II was accompanied by respect for and replication of its educational system (Shaughnessy & Code, 2015).

The largest city in New Jersey, Newark, went from being a major economic force to a failing metropolitan centre where the majority of the white people had emigrated in the course of a few decades. The causes were many. Many people blamed the 1967 riots for the white exodus. However, this phenomenon—white flight—began long before the riot, and its causes were more varied and intricate than simple racism.

After World War II, the state's major city saw a significant exodus of residents. The suburbs of New Jersey were expanding, and marketing portrayed them as lovely locations with greater room and lush lawns that were accessible by car. Veterans might easily get a mortgage thanks to government assistance. Real estate salesmen fostered anxieties that properties would lose value as blacks migrated from the South into areas like Newark, causing whites to sell and leave. "Redlining" prevented blacks from leaving cities while discouraging whites from relocating there.

While whites could go to the suburbs, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) policy kept blacks out of the suburbs. Blockbusting, redlining and other tactics were used by real estate dealers. By blockbusting, they convinced whites to sell off their houses for a low price with the reason that blacks were moving into the neighborhood, and such would reduce the values of their (the whites) homes. On the other hand, they sold those same houses at a high price to middle-class black families at a high mortgage rate (redlining), given that it is considered a hazardous venture when an area has a larger percentage of black families.

In the words of Max Herman, a professor of sociology and anthropology at New Jersey City University, "That part of the story really is the federal government subsidized the growth of suburbs while neglecting cities, and it was racialized in the sense that low-interest mortgages were made available to white people and new housing was made available to white people, and those opportunities were not available for black people." For these motives, among others, Newark went from being one of the biggest cities in the country and the economic engine of New Jersey to a floundering urban area with

a high crime rate, failing schools, and extreme poverty in the course of just a few decades. In 1910, it was the 14th most populous city in the country.

Teenagers spend more waking time in school than in any other context (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). With Newark's failing school system coupled with a high crime rate, teenagers in this town are faced with quite a number of challenges in school, especially in high school. High school, which is basically grades seven (7) to twelve (12), is a secondary education which represents the school years after primary education (elementary school) and before tertiary education (university or college) (Rieff, 1998).

Transitioning to high school is not only stressful but often complex. During this process, many students experience physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and moral changes (Parker, 2013). Teenagers are not only confronted by the changes they experience in high school but also with the problems already existing in high schools. Thus, this paper presents the challenges teenagers face in high school (secondary school) and also proffers solutions to tackle these problems.

2. Public Educational System in the United States

In the United States, state and local governments are primarily responsible for supporting and overseeing the operation of public schools for students in kindergarten through grade 12. The majority of the public education system's operations take place in school districts with superintendents and school boards that are locally elected. In 2013, there were 49,771,118 pupils enrolled in 98,454 schools in 18,093 school districts in the United States. In the public schools, there were 3,109,101 instructors or nearly one for every 16 pupils. Every 295 pupils had around one administrator. In 2013, the average cost per student was \$10,700, and the average graduation rate was 81.4 percent. States and local communities are in charge of running their educational institutions; the federal government has no direct control over the country's educational system.

3. Challenges Facing Teenagers in Secondary Schools

3.1. Substance Abuse (Drug/Alcohol abuse)

Substance use, abuse and addiction are a major problem faced by today's teens. This affects both their grades and academic drive. A lot of teenagers who are addicted to the use of substances such as drugs and alcohol start by experimenting just to know what or how it feels to consume such substances. Sadly, a number of them will continue to become addicted to these substances.

Alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco are substances most commonly used by teenagers. Approximately two-thirds of students have tried alcohol by the time they get to the last year of senior high (Johnson et al., 2014). About half of 9th through 12th grade students reportedly used marijuana at one time or another (The Partnership TM, 2012). About four in ten students from 9th to 12th grade reported to have tried cigarettes (Kann et al., 2013). Among 12th graders, close to 2 in 10 reported using prescription medicine without a prescription (Johnson et al., 2014).

Despite the fact that it is illegal for those not up to 21 years of age to take alcohol, people between the ages of 12 and 20 years drink 4 percent of all alcohol consumed in the United States (National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2019). The earlier teens are exposed to using substances, the higher the likelihood of them continuing to use substances, which may result in addiction or persistent substance abuse in the future (CDC, 2020).

3.2. Social Anxiety

One out of every three teenagers between the ages of 13 and 18 suffers from social anxiety disorder (SAD). Social anxiety disorder (SAD) affects more than 19 million individuals in America today. It is the third most prevalent mental health illness in the nation and the most prevalent anxiety disorder.

Social phobia, another name for social anxiety disorder, is characterized by a persistent and pervasive dread of social contact and/or circumstances where humiliation could occur. While some anxiety in unfamiliar social circumstances is normal, people with social anxiety disorder suffer excessive self-consciousness, misery, and fear of rejection in normal social situations. SAD stops people from engaging in typical conversations and relationships. It may also have a detrimental impact on routine everyday tasks. Furthermore, SAD patients often feel great concern about forthcoming social interactions (causing distress days or even weeks in advance). Some teenagers who skip school do not do so to escape the work; rather, they do it out of fear of the social contact that comes with attending. Teens who struggle with social anxiety often fear being the focus of attention, upsetting someone unintentionally, being judged, seeming foolish, and being humiliated. At school, any or all of these may occur; therefore, persons who have the condition may decide not to go, may skip some courses, and may choose not to complete assigned presentations and reports (Feldman, 2020).

Anxiety when among others, particularly strangers; difficulty conversing and/or having "normal" discussions with others; encountering social awkwardness or self-consciousness; being embarrassed while conversing with other people; fear of seeming foolish; following social contacts, self-criticism and fear of other people's judgments; dread the days or weeks leading up to a public event; avoiding social settings or public spaces; difficulty establishing ties and developing acquaintances; Blushing, perspiration, trembling, or an accelerated heartbeat in social circumstances; Having stomach pains and feeling nauseous while around other individuals (other physical symptoms may include – confusion, diarrhoea, muscle tension) (Higuera, 2022).

3.3. Bullying

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. It is a recurrent and detrimental form of violence among teens. Bullying is defined alongside harassment and

intimidation in the Newark, New Jersey Policy (file code: 5131.1) as "conduct that disrupts both a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its students in a safe environment." Teenagers are mostly exposed to bullying in the first year of middle school (Baly, Cornell & Lovegrove, 2014). Teens, who are bullied, in most cases, are confronted with long-term challenges such as anxiety and depression, which can continue into adulthood.

Bullying can be of several forms. It could be direct (e.g., name-calling, teasing, hitting), indirect (e.g., social exclusion) or cyber-bullying (e.g., sending embarrassing or offensive text messages, e-mail or photos/video to the teen or to others about the teen). Bullying often has serious consequences, which can be long-term, as well as detrimental to a student's physical, social and emotional well-being. As a result, bullying can disrupt the learning environment for not only the victims but also other students in the school.

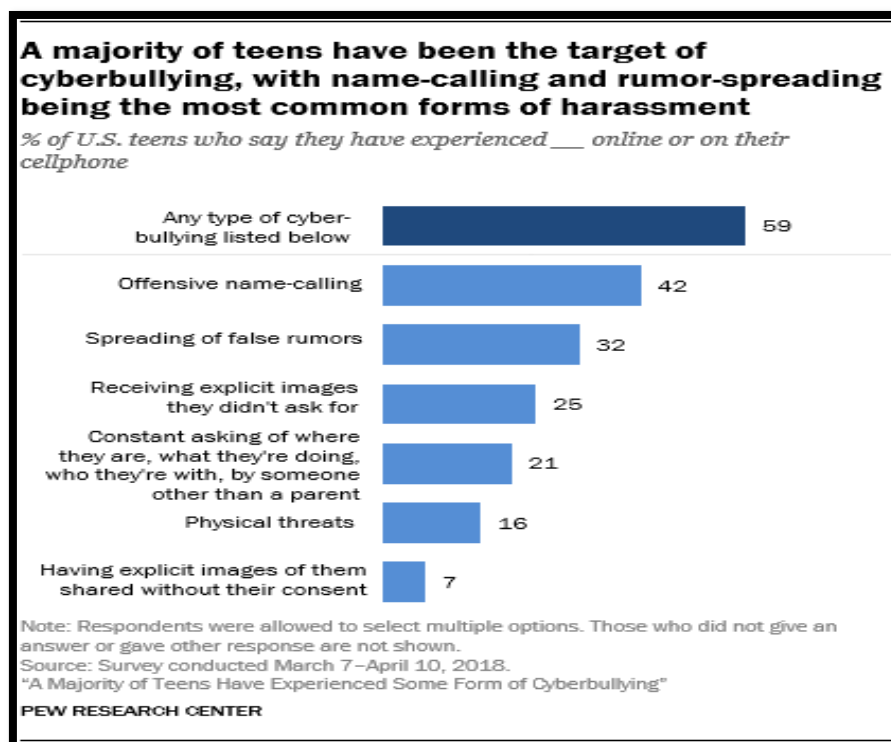


Figure 1: A Majority of Teens Have Experienced Some Form of Cyber Bullying

A survey carried out by Pew Research Center (2017) reported that "59% of US teens have personally experienced at least one of six types of abusive online behaviors." Other forms of harassment include physical threats, offensive name-calling, spreading false rumours, constant asking of their whereabouts, receiving explicit images not requested, and having explicit images of them shared without their consent.

On a long-term basis, bullying is detrimental not only to teens who are bullied but also to those who bully others. It is rampant during high school years (which often start from the first year of middle school and may extend to the last year of senior high) and worsened by access to technology and the avenue to effortlessly spread hurtful information online. Bullying is a serious challenge faced by teenagers in high school, and its long-term effect is disastrous to the social, physical and mental health of the bullied.

3.4. Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities/disorders (LD) impair a person's capacity to receive, retain, process, retrieve, or convey information due to neurological variations in brain structure and function. While the precise cause of these brain-based illnesses is still not fully known, significant progress has been made in tying some of the LD's defining challenges to certain areas and components of the brain.

The assessment requires ongoing challenges with reading, writing, math, or mathematical thinking throughout the formal education years. Signs might include incorrect or laboriously slow reading, unclear writing, trouble recalling numerical facts, and incorrect mathematical understanding. The range of results on reading, writing, or arithmetic examinations that are culturally and linguistically acceptable must be substantially below the level of current academic proficiency. The person's challenges must considerably impede academic performance, occupational performance, or daily living activities and cannot be explained by developmental, neurological, sensory (vision or hearing), or motor abnormalities. A clinical evaluation of the patient's "developmental, medical, educational, and family histories, test results, teacher observations, and responsiveness" to academic treatments is used to determine if the patient has a specific learning condition (Specific Learning Disorder fact sheet, American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Learning disabilities may include dyslexia (where a teen has difficulty reading), dyscalculia (difficulty in carrying out mathematical calculations), dysgraphia (which affects a teen's ability to write), dyspraxia (which affects movement and coordination), and ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, which affects teens' behaviour; teens with ADHD are likely to be restless and have difficulty concentrating).

3.5. Violence

Violence is a significant and expanding public health concern. The deliberate use of physical force or power, whether threatened or used, against oneself, another person, a group, or a community is defined as violence by the World Health Organization (WHO), and it carries a significant risk of resulting in physical harm, death, psychological harm, or deprivation. Violence results in more than 1 million fatalities and many nonfatal injuries each year (Krug et al., 2002). Violence also has a negative impact on one's quality of life, in addition to causing illness, death, and disability. Violence is a risk factor for lifetime health issues and social issues because it has a long-term impact on the lives of millions of people (WHO, 2014). The group of people most prone to violence is adolescents as a whole. Additionally, one of the most overt types of violence that exists in society is violence committed by teenagers (Krug et al., 2002). Adolescence is defined by WHO as the age range of 10 to 19, which is the stage between childhood and adulthood. This is a dynamic time when tasks, responsibilities, and behaviors unique to adulthood are learned and physical, psychological, and social maturation is completed. Generally speaking, this age group is in good health. Contrarily, teenage violence impacts not only the offenders and victims but also the families, friends, and society in which they live. Combative behavior, bullying, and gun ownership are significant risk factors. Additionally, it is typical to use deadly weapons like firearms or knives (Krug et al., 2002; WHO, 2014). Every day, over 565 persons between the ages of 10 and 29 pass away as a result of violence (Krug et al., 2002). Homicide is the second leading cause of death in the United States for persons between the ages of 15 and 24 in 2010, according to statistics from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Additionally, a gunshot caused 82.8% of deaths in persons aged 10 to 24. The School Crime and Safety Indicators report revealed that 33 fatalities associated with school violence occurred in the 2009–2010 school year among students aged 5–18 years, according to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (2012). A WHO research that was carried out in 133 countries found that violence was seen among 26.0% of teenagers (WHO, 2014). Violent deaths and shootings at schools are rare but tragic events with far-reaching effects on the school population and surrounding community. Based on the most recent data released by the School-Associated Violent Death Surveillance System (SAVD-SS), "There were a total of 39 school-associated violent deaths in the United States in the 2018–19 school years. This included 29 homicides and 10 suicides. Of these 39 school-associated violent deaths, 10 homicides and 3 suicides were of school-age youth (ages 5–18)" (Irwin et al., 2022:3).

In the K–12 School Shooting Database (K–12 SSDB), school shootings are defined as incidents in which a gun is brandished or fired on school property or a bullet hits school property for any reason, regardless of the number of victims, time of day, day of the week, or reason.

3.6. Peer Pressure

When kids start secondary school, it is normal for them to be impacted by their peers as they learn how to navigate new frameworks for friendships, values, and belonging. Due to peer pressure, students may behave or talk in ways that they otherwise would not. It is not always bad when kids are pressured by their peers to do better in class or stand up to bullying. On the other hand, certain influences may be harmful, such as peer pressure to belittle others or participate in unsafe behavior like binge drinking. This kind of peer pressure may affect a student's sense of self-worth and self-concept and may cause them to become socially isolated from their family and friends.

3.7. Dropping out (Teenage Pregnancy, Life on the Street, Job Absorption)

Teenagers drop out of secondary school for a number of reasons, such as lack of interest, insufficient family support, and poor academic performance. However, for other kids from low-income households, the decision to leave is solely financial. Many people go to work to begin earning money to support their families (Douglas-Gabriel, 2015).

There is overwhelming evidence from all around the globe that adolescent pregnancies and births significantly increase the likelihood that a student will drop out of high school, particularly in underdeveloped nations. Research has also shown that adolescent moms who continue their education may decrease the long-term detrimental societal effects of teenage pregnancy.

3.8. Poverty

One of the biggest issues in the US is poverty. The social divide between the top class and poor class is growing. Even in a nation that takes pride in giving everyone the same opportunities and treating everyone fairly, the financial position of children and their families has a significant impact on how well they are educated.

In the United States, there is an uneven distribution of wealth. 12% of the nation's income goes to the 40% of Americans with the lowest incomes. In contrast, 51% of the nation's income goes to the richest 20% of people. More than 36 million Americans live in poverty. Although White people make up the majority of the impoverished, poverty rates are greater among racial and ethnic minorities. More than 17% of American children, or 35% of the poor, live in poverty. The vast majority of households with disadvantaged children only have one female parent. Many people who are working but yet live in poverty do so because of unemployment.

Contrary to popular belief in the past, education has not made poverty disappear. Poor students are not appropriately served by schools because of their design. They represent and support a middle-class lifestyle. What additional difficulties do kids in poverty face? They often originate from inadequately sheltered households, and they may reside in unsafe neighborhoods. They can be exposed to narcotics, violent crime, and prostitution in their community, and they might get involved in these kinds of activities themselves as children.

Poor parents often find it difficult to provide their children with enough healthy food and access to medical care. Poor children often do not get sufficient sleep or eat breakfast before going to school. They usually deal with issues including mistreatment, domestic violence, passive smoking, and inadequate clothing. They may not have the money to

participate in field trips and other extracurricular activities that might extend their experience base. This is the horrible reality that many children must accept. As a teacher, you will likely have underprivileged students in your class (Lynch, 2016).

3.9. Homelessness

Another rung on the poverty ladder is homelessness. It is a very serious issue that 1.5 million kids deal with. In rural or urban locations, there are a lot of shelters for homeless families. Many families are just one emergency away from catastrophe since they only have one income and have exorbitant rent and living expenditures.

Even though they are often hungry and exhausted when they arrive at school each morning, homeless children nevertheless need to get an education. Homeless kids travel around a lot and are exposed to drugs, violence, crime, and other things like that, just as many poor kids are. Some homeless kids may have transportation issues, which causes them to miss a lot of school. When they are able to go to school, they could face jeers for their attire and for dozing off in class. They can have trouble forming friendships or worry about taking part in an activity in front of the class. Older homeless children could be runaways or may have been forcibly removed from their homes, even though many of them are with their families. Many people have experienced physical or sexual abuse (Lynch, 2016).

3.10. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is when an individual is taken advantage of. It is an abuse of power. Teen sexual abuse is extremely common and, sadly, to an undesirable extent, underreported. In sexual abuse, a teen is either tricked, coerced or persuaded into sexual activity. It includes but not limited to:

- Taking advantage of a teen by giving drugs and/or alcohol in exchange for sexual touching,
- Forcing teens to watch movies or videos with explicit content,
- Disrespect for one's privacy.

4. Proffered Solutions to the Challenges Faced by Teenagers

4.1. Role of Parents

Parents have a crucial role in their children's lives, and they worry about potential hazards that may arise as their children develop into preteens and teenagers. One such risk is the use of drugs, including "alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes, and other narcotics". It is beneficial for parents to communicate with their children about their feelings about drug usage and underage drinking. Teen's medicines should be locked up or otherwise kept out of their reach. This is especially crucial if they use a painkiller that might be misused. Also, parents should be aware of where and what their teenagers are doing. They should ask their teen's doctor about rehabilitation programs if they have a reason they are abusing drugs or alcohol. The sooner a kid can get addiction treatment, the better. Parents may help by inquiring about drug testing with their teen's doctor.

Early detection of LD risk in youngsters may help save years of struggle and self-doubt. As they get older, understanding the specifics of their LD, accepting that it is not who they are but rather what they have, and planning the services, accommodations, and supports they require to be successful will help them get past learning obstacles and develop into independent, self-assured, contributing members of society.

Some concrete ways to support students include fostering a climate of diversity and inclusivity, encouraging candid conversations with parents and students about peer pressure, developing critical communication abilities to aid in managing challenging peer pressure situations, and fostering resilience.

4.2. Role of Teachers, Schools and Educational Boards

Teachers and the school have a crucial role in helping teens deal with the fast changes in their development, mood disturbances, and other issues they may face, particularly in school. The provision of an atmosphere that is conducive to the greatest amount of growth and development is one of the key tasks that educators and schools perform. Primary and secondary sexual organs rapidly develop throughout this teenage period. The unique traits of teenagers and their immaturity make it easier for them to adopt sexually risky behaviours, such as laxity in the use of barrier contraceptives or the use of toxic substances, alcohol, or narcotics during sexual interactions, rising rates of STIs, and unintended births. All demand that the schools and the instructors who will disseminate pertinent knowledge on this topic provide proper sex information and sex education. Psychological guidance and counselling should be readily available to teenagers in schools.

4.3. Role of the Communities

The teenage years may be difficult for parents. The good news is that they do not have to do it alone. Many people overlook the fact that raising a teenager also requires a community, despite the perception that raising a kid requires a village. For youngsters, the value of a community may be crucial, particularly as they approach adolescence. However, a community may not be dependent on a physical location. An adolescent must acquire honesty, openness, emotional maturity, trust, and emotional control. Community helps meet emotional needs; parents have an obligation to assist one another as parents within a community, both in good times and bad. In addition to being there for people in our community, we also need to have the guts to seek help when we need it and reach out to others.

In general, it is crucial for kids to see their parents participating in the community. When adolescents are old enough, they may see their parent(s) doing a particular task in the community and then try it out for themselves. When they are a member of a supportive group, teenagers may also learn a lot about compassion. Many parents claim that when their

children approach puberty, they seem to be aloof or selfish. Fortunately, this is prevented by belonging to a strong community. Our sense of community helps us see the needs of others around us. A teenager's behaviour may be encouraged by the community by allowing them the freedom and chance to think about others.

Engaging adolescents in volunteer work is one approach that provides them with new possibilities that may have a positive effect. The best method to convey the value of belonging is through working together on a project for the community. Teens who participate in community service get advantages for themselves and the people they help. The general growth of the young person and the support he or she will receive via continued community participation are two factors that determine how successful adolescent volunteers are.

4.4. Role of the Government

Teenage drug abuse may have a serious negative impact on their health and well-being. The American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP) and the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed a protocol for implementing drug use screening in paediatric clinics to aid physicians in managing substance use issues. The AAP suggests that screening children for drug use should start as early as 9 years. The government should limit the risk factors associated with teen violence; this could entail the games they play, the videos and movies they access, and their use of social media should be regulated. Additionally, programs and initiatives to empower teenagers should be provided by the government.

4.5. The Need for Counselling

As they learn to deal with and resolve issues in their daily lives, children and teenagers go through stressful times. Many children and teenagers are also dealing with the effects of trauma. Through counselling, our young people may develop a better understanding of their emotions, acquire healthy stress-reduction techniques, raise their self-esteem, forge solid connections, and pursue their future aspirations. The period between childhood and adolescence is both incredibly thrilling and quite perplexing.

5. Case Study of Teenagers in Secondary Schools in Newark, New Jersey, USA

New Jersey is widely renowned for having a much-divided educational system. Anyone who feels that schooling is becoming a landmark in the state should be sobered up by the fact that two systems are operating side by side. First and foremost, there is the mostly white population, which attends the top public schools and has access to the greatest educational opportunities in the region. In these towns and areas, education is seldom ever a problem. The school system, on the other hand, is in serious disrepair and is giving children who are either poor, children of colour, or immigrants a lower-than-expected education system. It is quite probable that the community of Newark is greatly impacted by this issue (Flaxman et al., 2013).

Currently, less than 10 percent of white children, nearly 50 percent of black and 40 percent of Latino students attend the highly segregated schools. There are also several schools with reversed segregation where almost no black or immigrant students attend. Therefore, it may be said that the quality of education in these segregated institutions is quite poor. Few of the youngsters continue their education through high school in order to earn a college degree. They thus land in low-paying occupations or are even jobless, which exacerbates the issues in this neighborhood. One of the most segregated towns in New Jersey is Newark, where the majority of children come from low-income families (regardless of race), further reducing their chances of succeeding in school. It is clear that no approaches exist that are better than those used at the wealthier schools in the state's outlying districts.

The state's attempts to provide low-income children, particularly those of color, with high-quality education have been entirely undermined by these figures. Things are becoming worse by the day because of an isolated educational system. These isolated schools, which are doing nothing more than destroying the prospects of the school education in neighborhoods like Newark, are known to perform worse in all areas (even the average performance of individual pupils). Newark's state-run school takeover is now having the same negative effects. You may get a sense of the poor state of education in Newark by visiting the district's central office, which is run down and resembles a ghost town due to drastic personnel reductions. Research was carried out in Newark, NJ, to ascertain the views of teens on the challenges they face and possible solutions. The challenges and solutions were drafted in a 5-Likert scale questionnaire with ratings of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. This was tailored to the subject of this paper. 420 respondents responded to our questionnaire, and the use result was presented in tables represented by means and standard deviations.

	Challenges Facing Teenagers in High Schools Include:	N = 420		Decision
		Mean	SD	
1	Teenagers in high school use substances such as drugs and alcohol	2.998	1.219	#
2	Violence is a major challenge faced by teens in high school	3.398	1.161	#
3	Teenagers are bullied one way or the other in high school	3.014	1.127	#
4	Sexual abuse is a problem faced by teens in high school	2.886	1.223	#
5	Poverty and homelessness are major challenges teens in high school face	2.819	1.259	#
6	Social anxiety affects teenagers in high school	2.891	1.138	#
7	Learning disabilities (LD) among teens	2.779	1.197	#
8	Peer pressure	2.991	1.336	#
	Grand Mean	2.972	1.208	#

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) on the Challenges Facing Teenagers in High Schools in Newark Decision: # (Agree) = ≥ 2.50 ; * (Disagree) < 2.50

Table 2 shows the mean rating and standard deviation on the Challenges Facing Teenagers in High Schools in Newark. It further shows that the difficulties teens generally experience in the study area (Newark) include: violence among teenagers in high school ($X = 3.398$) in item 2, teenagers are bullied one way or the other in high school ($X = 3.014$) in item 3, teenagers in high school use substances such as drugs and alcohol ($\bar{X} = 2.998$) in item 1, peer pressure ($X = 2.991$) in item 8, social anxiety affects teenagers in high school ($X = 2.891$) in item 6, sexual abuse is a problem faced by teens in high school ($\bar{X} = 2.886$) in item 4, poverty and homelessness are major challenges teens in high school face ($X = 2.819$) in item 5, while the least was learning disabilities among teens ($X = 2.779$) in item 7. Furthermore, the grand mean score of 2.972 showed the challenges teenagers face in high schools in the study area.

	Role of Teachers, School and Education Board	N = 420		Decision
		Mean	SD	
1	Bullying and victimization should be addressed, and appropriate measures should be taken against the offender	3.126	1.111	#
2	Directly engaging teens in preventing violence helps them	2.912	1.218	#
3	Provision of an atmosphere that is conducive to growth and development	3.152	1.183	#
4	Provide proper sex information and sex education to teenagers	3.045	1.137	#
5	There is a need for active counsellors in school	3.102	1.137	#
	<i>Grand Mean</i>	3.067	1.157	#
	Role of Parents/Guardians			
6	Teenagers should be encouraged to report any form of bullying to their parents or guardians	3.021	1.203	#
7	Parents should establish open communication with their teenage children.	3.257	1.179	#
8	Parents/Guardian should be role models to their children/wards	3.100	1.133	#
9	Parents/guardians should make an effort to know the friends their children/wards keep and the family they are from.	3.169	1.049	#
10	Early detection of LD in teens would help save them from years of struggle	3.217	1.172	#
11	Parents should inquire about drug testing with their teen's doctor.	3.248	1.189	#
12	Parents should consciously regulate the video games played, the movies watched and the use of social media by their teens at an early age	3.276	1.148	#
	<i>Grand Mean</i>	3.184	1.153	#
	Role of the Community			
13	The community should encourage and reward moral behavior	3.067	1.244	#
14	Teenagers should be engaged in volunteer work, working together with others on a project for the community	3.098	1.223	#
15	Creation of a prevention programme tailored for teens, as starting early is necessary to reduce and perhaps prevent	3.157	1.198	#

	youth violence			
	<i>Grand Mean</i>	3.107	1.222	#
	Role of the Government			
16	Screening teens for drug use at an early stage (AAP suggests at 9 years old)	3.269	1.163	#
17	The government should limit the risk factors associated with teen violence	3.076	1.174	#
18	Teenagers' use of social media should be regulated	2.907	1.166	#
	<i>Grand Mean</i>	3.084	1.168	#

Table 2: Proffered Solutions to Challenges Facing Teenagers in High Schools
Decision: # (Agree) = ≥ 2.50 ; * (Disagree) < 2.50

In tackling the challenges that befall teenagers in high school, a synergetic effort from parents, teachers, the community, and the government is necessary. Parents can play a role in combating the difficulty faced by teens in high school. This includes:

- Encouraging their teenage children to report any form of bullying ($\bar{X} = 3.021$);
- Establishing open communication with their teenage children ($\bar{X} = 3.257$); Parents/guardians should not only condemn ill behaviour but should also be role models to their children/wards ($\bar{X} = 3.100$);
- Parents should inquire about drug testing with their teen's doctor ($\bar{X} = 3.248$); this is to discourage substance use such as drugs or alcohol.

In cases of learning disabilities, early detection of LD in teens would help save them from years of struggle ($\bar{X} = 3.217$), as well as parents should consciously regulate the video games played, the movies watched and the use of social media by their teen at an early age ($\bar{X} = 3.276$).

Since most teenagers spend most of their waking time at school, teachers, schools and the educational board have a huge role to play in fixing the challenges faced by teens in school. Some actions that can be taken by teachers include:

- Addressing bullying and victimization and taking appropriate action against offenders ($\bar{X} = 3.126$);
- Teachers should directly engage teens in preventing violence ($\bar{X} = 2.912$);
- Providing an atmosphere that is conducive to growth and development ($\bar{X} = 3.152$);
- Providing proper sex information and sex education to teens ($\bar{X} = 3.045$);
- There is a need for active counsellors in school ($\bar{X} = 3.102$).

The engagement of the community in the moral upbringing of children is vital to the general sanity and kindness of teens in such a society. Thus, the community must encourage and reward moral behavior ($\bar{X} = 3.067$), teenagers should be engaged in volunteer work, working together with others on a project for the community ($\bar{X} = 3.098$) as this would promote the spirit of oneness amongst teens, and also there is need for the creation of prevention programs tailored for teens, as starting early is necessary to reduce and perhaps prevent youth violence ($\bar{X} = 3.157$) in the future.

The role of government in savaging the situation that poses problems for teenagers includes but is not limited to screening teens for drug use at an early stage (3.269), limiting the risk factors associated with teen violence ($\bar{X} = 3.076$), and regulating teenagers' use of social media ($\bar{X} = 2.907$).

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

According to this study, there are many people who may assist teenagers in overcoming the difficulties they face in secondary school, including their parents, the school, their community, and even the government. The study also reveals that secondary school students face a variety of difficulties and issues, including violence, sexual assault, poverty, social anxiety, and more. This paper placed special emphasis on the risks associated with teenage drug use and addiction, which may cause them to get intoxicated to varying degrees and impair their ability to connect socially with their classmates as well as their ability to think clearly and express themselves.

Addressing the issues facing teenagers and adolescents in terms of their health and general development is one of the most important contributions a nation can make to its future economic, social, and political progress and stability. The main requirement is to recognize the diversity of youth age groups spanning from 12 to 18 years old, which vary by age, schooling, residence, family size, and socio-economic status. To meet the needs of this target group of boys and girls who are in school and experiencing diverse problems, parents, teachers, the community, and the government must work together.

6.2. Recommendations

In order to lessen the impact of adolescent dysfunction, social workers should be included in the school system to detect pupils who are experiencing any kind of difficulties. Teenagers' use of social media and its content, as well as their use of drugs and alcohol, should be regulated by the government and schools. Doing so would help them concentrate on more things that will improve their lives and will also make it easier for them to follow school rules and regulations.

The importance of having active counsellors in schools cannot be overstated since they will not only assist in identifying teenagers in the school who are having difficulties but will also direct these teens in the proper direction. Teenagers should be taught kindness and empathy from a very young age.

For a teenager to grow healthily, the connection between parents and teenagers must be developed. The teenage years may be stressful and difficult for individuals, and dealing with these teens can be very difficult for parents. Therefore, it is essential to create an interventional package for improved teen-parent relationships to enhance adolescent growth and support students in overcoming obstacles they may face in school.

Parents and teachers should identify gateway behaviours (such as eye-rolling, name-calling, prolonged staring, stalking, and the like) and correct them before they become part of a teenager's behaviour. Parents should also be intentional about the type and family of friends their teens keep.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of the community's role in assisting teenagers as they navigate the various difficulties they face in school. They must also support parents by offering necessary encouragement, support, and advice when required and assist teenagers in maintaining healthy and positive relationships with others. Also, the government should work to strengthen economic support by giving tax credits to families with children. This would help reduce the income gap between varying households, thus helping alleviate the effect of poverty and homelessness and, at the same time, helping with violence prevention. More programs tailored for adolescents to help them build up their skills and aid in healthy social and emotional development should be created and made available to teens at an early age.

Furthermore, the government should ensure that they provide education that teens can attend/access early in life. This would help shape them at an early age. Regarding the use of guns and other weapons, the government should work to reduce firearms access to adolescents. The gun industry should be held accountable and ensure that there is sufficient supervision over the marketing and sales of arms.

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Appendix

Name of Institution/Organisation

Survey Cover Letter

21st October, 2021

Dear Participant,

My name is Tony Agwa. I am working on a paper on the challenges teenagers face in high school and proposing solutions to tackle these problems. As one in this town, Newark, I crave your indulgence in participating in this survey by completing the survey questions/statements attached to this cover letter.

The attached questionnaire would require about 20 minutes to complete. There is neither any compensation nor known risk in competing with these survey questions. To maintain confidentiality, you need not include your name or other personal details. If you choose to take part in this study, please answer each statement presented in the questionnaire as honestly as possible, as your response would go a long way in proffering solutions to the challenges facing high school teenagers.

Thanks for taking the time to assist in this paper. The data collected will present/reinstate the challenges facing teenagers in high school. It will also help proffer solutions to the challenges faced by teenagers.

Sincerely,

Tony Agwa

Signature/Date

Survey Question

Below is a list of challenges facing teenagers in high school and likely solutions. Please kindly answer the question by marking a tick (v) in the appropriate box. Key: SD – Strongly Disagree; D – Disagree; N – Neutral/Indecisive; A – Agree; SA – Strongly Agree.

	RESPONSE	SD	D	N	A	SA
A	Challenges Facing Teenagers in High Schools					
1	Teenagers in high school use substances such as drugs and alcohol.					
2	Violence is a major challenge faced by teens in high school.					
3	Teenagers are bullied one way or the other in high school.					
4	Sexual abuse is a problem faced by teens in high school.					
5	Poverty and homelessness are major challenges teens in high school face.					
6	Social anxiety affects teenagers in high school.					
7	Learning disabilities (LD) among teens.					
8	Peer pressure.					

B	Solutions to Challenges Facing Teenagers in High Schools				
(a)	Role of Teachers, School and Education Board				
1	Bullying and victimization should be addressed, and appropriate measures should be taken against the offender.				
2	Directly engaging teens in preventing violence helps them.				
3	Provision of an atmosphere that is conducive to growth and development				
4	Provide proper sex information and sex education to teenagers.				
5	There is a need for active counsellors in school.				
(b)	Role of Parents/Guardians				
6	Teenagers should be encouraged to report any form of bullying to their parents or guardians.				
7	Parents should establish open communication with their teenage children.				
8	Parents/guardians should be role models to their children/wards.				
9	Parents/guardians should try to know the friends their children/wards keep, and the family they are from.				
10	Early detection of LD in teens would help save them from years of struggle.				
11	Parents should inquire about drug testing with their teen's doctor.				
12	Parents should consciously regulate the video games played, the movies watched and the use of social media by their teens at an early age.				
C	Role of Community				
13	The community should encourage and reward moral behavior.				
14	Teenagers should be engaged in volunteer work, working together with others on a project for the community.				
15	The creation of a prevention programme tailored for teens, as starting early, is necessary to reduce and perhaps prevent youth violence.				
D	Role of Government				
16	Screening teens for drug use at an early stage (AAP suggests at 9 years old)				
17	The government should limit the risk factors associated with teen violence.				
18	Teenagers' use of social media should be regulated.				