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The purpose of *the Oikos - The Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University Bulletin of Ecology, Science Technology, Agriculture and Food Systems Review and Advancement* is to provide a forum for scientific and technological solutions based on a systems approach and thinking as the bedrock of intervention.

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# **The Doping-Sport-Cultural Matrix: A Noxious Trending Issue Among Zimbabwean In-school and Out-of-school Youth Athletes**

PRINCE CHIMONERO<sup>1</sup>

## **Abstract**

Doping and Drug use, especially within the sporting fraternity, have increasingly become noxious large-scale trending issues with health-care costs on personal and societal settings. This study explored the doping-sport-cultural matrix among in-school and out-of-school adolescent athletes. It critically probes into how doping threatens the integrity of athletic competition and the decay of moral fabric in Zimbabwean schools and society. The study was a descriptive cohort underpinned by a quantitative research approach. It was hinged on the Social Control and Problem-Prone Behaviour and General Deviancy Models. A population of 120 participants was drawn from Primary and Secondary schools, University, Victim Friendly Unit, School Psychological experts, Pharmacists and Ministry of Health and Child Welfare. Random sampling was used to select the study participants. Questionnaires were used as data collection tools for the study. Collected data were presented on tables using descriptive statistics. Findings reveal increased prevalence doping trends in sport, ethical fabric rot culminating into increased crime rates, family disintegrations, scandalous sportsmanship, and psycho-active disorders in young adults. The study recommends that government and line Ministries enforce stringent legislative measures redressing

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the social-ills, sporting and cultural fabrics through multi-sector and community-driven interventions. Awareness flagship programmes conscientising adolescents on doping and substance abuse health impacts need regularisation at different fora. Accessible counselling points at micro and macro-settings are essential in providing new pigments to authentic citizenry responsiveness programmes with clear reporting frameworks. Drug testing platforms are necessary to curb substance abuse in sport.

**Keywords:** doping, culture, substance abuse, drug, moral,

## INTRODUCTION

Doping and drug abuse is a noxious trending issue whose impact has captured the attention of most societies. While sport immensely contributes to personal and professional achievements, its significant role in the updated curriculum has considerably turned most athletes towards the use of performance enhancement substances. Subsequently, cultural rot, sport ethics demeanour, and chronic-oriented health issues, have exponentially mutilated the once treasured societal normative standards into ugly locales in most sporting populations. Given this backdrop, the current study explore the lethality that substance use and abuse has brought on the sport and cultural landscape among in-school and out-of-school student-youths in Zimbabwe.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Two theoretical models underpin this study; the Social Control Theoretical Framework (Hirsch and Stark, 1969) and the Problem-Prone Behaviour and General Deviancy Framework. The Social Control Theory explicates that human behaviour is not innately compliant but is prone to mistakes and can only achieve compliance through adherence to major ethical codes of commitment, attachment,

involvement and belief. When the moral bond that binds people to each other and to social norms is broken, mechanisms of social outstanding restraining antisocial behaviour become fragile. Weak social controls propagate deviant behaviour from socially acceptable societal norms through use of illicit drugs. The expected outcomes are poor commitment to conventional society and conventional social groups. The Problem-Prone Behaviour and general Deviancy Theory looks at adolescent dropout and substance use as an assemblage of problem behaviours co-varying with other deviant behaviours to which certain adolescents are susceptible. As argued by this theory, deviant behaviours stem from adolescents' non-conforming attitudes to values identifying themselves as independent adult persons. Such individuals are more likely to indulge in multiple non-conformist engagements of drug, alcohol and smoking use. Twinning the two frameworks delineates critical multi-roles of responsible line ministries and stakeholders in identifying and uprooting deviant behaviours in adolescent youths through problem-oriented approaches. Hence the choice of the two frameworks for this study was aimed at ascertaining their close links with the trending issue of drug abuse that has paralysed most sporting frameworks and educational institutions in the country.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section provides an insight into literature that has a bearing towards the problem under investigation. It opens with the general impact of drug use at different fora that then provides a lens into commonly used inadvertent drug dietary supplements in sport. It ends with a discussion on evidence-informed empirical studies conducted in the field on substance abuse.

Doping and Drug use have increasingly become large-scale trending issues with implicative health-care costs on personal and societal

settings (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2023; Heikkila *et al.*, 2020; Kim *et al.*, 2017). Their far-reaching effects are a severe scourge on the social and economic costs on human health with amplified crime and mortality rates in societies (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2022). Social ills of addiction, personal image discoloration and cultural issues significantly contribute to increase in drug abuse and curative costs in many countries (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2022). Worldwide epidemiology of alcohol and drug abuse disorders is a perturbing trending public health concern (WHO, 2023). Global statistics show drastic increase for all drug abuse disorders between 2000 and 2016 to be at 47.2%, with amphetamine and cocaine-based cases reported to be at 160.1% and 83.9% mortality among males and females respectively (Mattiuzzi *et al.*, 2019). World Health Organisation (2023) projections on global mortality for mental dysfunctions through drug abuse are expected to shoot up to 162.3% and, a further increase of 11.5% (males) and 27.29% (females). Although there is a significant rise in drug abuse disorders over the last 15 years, the next 40-year prediction might further report amplified figures (Papazisis *et al.*, 2018).

African states suffer from serious brain drain which has substantially exposed treatment gaps for mental, neurological and substance-induced disorders (Earn Show, 2020; Chibanda; 2017). At global level, alcohol and substance-use disorders are a menace to public health officials (Hammarlund *et al.*, 2018) that further indicates an acute demand for experts in this field. This epidemiologic girth has propagated a multiplicity of health complications among young adolescents due to doping and illicit drug malpractices.

In South Africa, substance and alcohol abuse among young adolescents have adversely impacted on community values and standards. Dada *et al.* (2018) found out that female adolescents indulged in methamphetamine drugs much as their male counterparts.

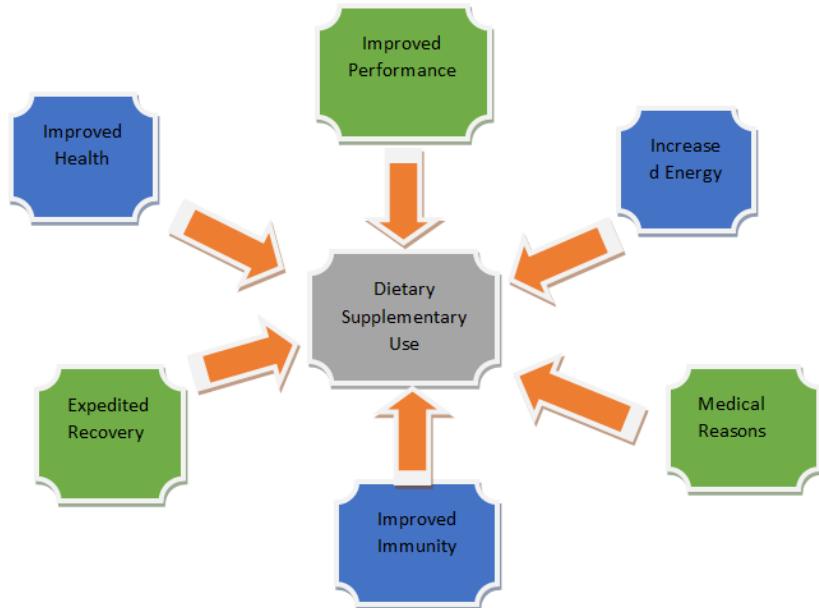
Current statistics show an average annual consumption of 5 billion litres of alcohol that largely contributes to amplified crime rate prevalence and foetal disorders (Pedersen, 2016). This inevitably, presents it as one of the world's drug hot spots (Geyer and Lombard, 2014). Nyaope, a hazardous South African drug much popularised among female adolescents than any drug on the market, is being abused and taken as injectables or smoking mixed with cannabis. Considerably, its use has prompted intolerable erosion and attrition of cultural values, principles and morals with increased crime rates (Chauke *et al.*, 2015), sexual violence and rape (Bala and Kang'ethe, 2020). Hlungwani *et al.* (2020) reported high stress levels among parents whose adolescents were hospitalised for mental health disorders in Giyani, South Africa following substance abuse. A similar survey in Kashmir Valley has revealed it as a hub for drug traffic and drug padding place with rampant substance abuse among adolescents. Commonly abused drugs were cannabis, heroin, cocaine, opium, morphine, alcohol, codeine, inhalants (nitrazepam) and sedative tablets (Zohra and Singh, 2021). Like many other countries in the impact of socio-demographic and cultural factors on alcohol and drug abuse (Cubbins *et al.*, 2012), Zimbabwe finds itself to be in treacherous and scandalous positions with regards to drug abuse, criminalised drug trafficking engagements, societal moral decadency and health risks.

In Zimbabwe drug abuse among young adolescents is a problematic issue (Nhapi , 2019; Duffy *et al.*, 2015) whose tentacles has even spread to age groups below 10 years (Mazuru, 2018). Statistical reports of drug abuse in 2017 among youths stands at 43% and rose to 45% in 2018 and 57% in 2019 (Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drugs Network, 2019). Rwafa *et al.* (2019) study has substantiated a figure of 45% hospitalised cases of mental health complications among Zimbabwean youths involved in substance abuse. Further introspection reveal that about 80% of the youths had drug-related psychological dysfunctions

(ZCLDN, 2019). Chikoko *et al.* (2019) study of street children of Harare Central Business District established that substance abuse and early sexual debuts existed that grossly violated children's' rights subjugating them to many vulnerabilities. Similarly, Chikuvadze and associates (2022) brought to the fore the fact that peer pressure and physical proximity was the chief cause of substance abuse among Zimbabwean male and female high school students.

Athletes unintentionally indulge in use of prohibited drugs (Mallick, Camacho, Daher & Khoury, 2023). These commercial brands supplement athletes' diets for sustenance of good health (Government of Canada, 2022) and are readily available on the market in forms of vitamins, minerals, probiotics, protein, herbs and botanicals (Knapik *et al.*, 2016). Other prohibited substances often abused include anabolic androgenic steroids, erythropoietin, peptides hormones, metabolic modulators and hormones, diuretics, masking agents, growth factor modulators and beta-2 agonists. Often these would be found in DS (10). While DS can be found in consumable foods (Garthe and Maughan, 2018) the prevalence of contamination is reported to be at 28%. Considerably athletes are at great risk to inadvertent doping and health hazards (Kozhuharov *et al.*, 2022) as traces of prohibited substances may still be existent (Duivan *et al.*, 2021). Thus drug testing protocols is a pertinent exercise for WADA (Matthew, 2018) to encourage fair competition and prevent health risks.

Ingesting DS can intentionally be done by athletes and often opens corridors to addictive attitudes and behaviours towards doping (Matthew, 2018). This makes them strong predictors of doping behaviours (Kozhuharov *et al.*, 2022; Martinez-Sanz *et al.*, 2017) in various athletes. Athletes are strongly tempted to boost their predominant glycolytic and Creatine energy systems to unfairly win in competitions. Some of the major reasons for doping in sport are summarised in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Reasons for dietary uptake by athletes (Mallick *et al.*, 2023)

There is widespread evidence indicating that athletes use dietary supplements to enhance performance, for health and regenerative purposes (Mallick *et al.*, 2023). Aljaloud & Ibrahim (2013) found that about 43.8% and 32.6% Saudi Arabian elite athletes engaged in dietary supplements and health enhancers in sports. In another study de Silva *et al.* (2010) reported 79% dietary supplements use among Sri Lankan athletes to boost their athletic performances with 19% using them for health enhancements. Tavares *et al.*'s (2020) cross sectional study of 453 Portuguese institutional gym users showed that 11.1% reported using prohibited substances for the same reason of performance enhancement. Similarly, Mohammed *et al.* in their (2020) study of Ethiopian cross country athletes positively identified that 59.2% were highly involved in doping and substance abuse. Further, Ghulam, Nazia and Ghulam (2020) established a similar dilemma among 377

Pakistan International and national athletes (17-35 years) from 10 disciplines who were in camp preparing for the 2019 South Asian Games. Males reported use of prohibited substances than females. Didymus and Backhouse's (2020) qualitative study also reported rugby players' exploration of permitted and prohibited substances to cope with stressors (pressure, injury, selection). On the contrary, use of ergogenic substances is a publicly denounced act in Norwegian sport. It carries self-defined roles with morals considered to be the pinnacle to sport ethics (Gilberg *et al.*, 2006).

Despite the use of performance and health enhancing substances in sport, it is a worrisome development as most dietary supplements are contaminated with doping substances obtainable through clandestine black markets that have become potential threats to public health (Government of Canada, 2022).

Anti-doping trends regarding rule violation from 2003 – 2020 were reported to be at 26% for use of dietary supplements. Stimulants were the most prevalent substance group linked to supplements (12.5%). High risk products involved use of multi-ingredient pre-workout supplements (10.4%) and fat-burning products (2.1%) (Lauritzen 2022). Presently anti-doping rule violation has increased to more than 60% (Backhouse, 2023). Predictably figures could alarmingly reach unprecedented levels worldwide by 2040.

With high influx of athletes into sport and exercise engagements, healthcare professional skill sets from pharmacists has become a pharmacological basis for combating inadvertent coping (Voravuth *et al.*, 2022). Their vast pharmacological background knowledge regarding medical drug use to athletes and users serves to prevent doping and subsequent drug use/abuse (Howard *et al.*, 2018).

Illegal smuggling of drugs like 'bronco' has found their way into Zimbabwe (Jakaza and Nyoni, 2018) and has become a popularised brand within the social frameworks of 'touts or rank marshals' (mawhindi) and vendors 'makorokozas'. Further, musombodia and methamine (highly addictive stimulant termed mutoriro) use affects functional levels of the Central Nervous System and is heavily linked to hospitalisations in adolescent youths (UNICEF, 2021). Although most Zimbabwean youths shelter in substance abuse, most families and communities have indirectly or directly suffered drug effects (Macheka and Masuka, 2019) from subversive behaviours (Mahiya, 2016). Of note, sky-rocketing unemployment rates in Zimbabwean communities (Mazuru, 2018) further perpetuates increased drug networking systems that have turned the country into a transit point for drugs enroute to South Africa and Botswana (Makanda 2017). While marijuana (cannabis) locally termed 'mbanje', is a highly esteemed basic household commodity with medicinal properties among the Zimbabwean Tonga tribe (Moyo, 2015), its health risks have been felt in the country. With similar reasoning Binga area has traditionally been known as a 'hot spot' of cannabis production and illegal trade has gone unnoticed through the porous borders to South Africa. Over 3 million Zimbabweans are illegally settled in South Africa where the culture of drug abuse has reached unparalleled levels at world ratings. Thus, transitionalised culture permeations among Zimbabweans and South Africans have inflamed societal cultural values and the aspect of 'ubuntu' or 'unhuism' (humanistic character) among adolescents. These cross-cultural values brought along with them a repulsive landscape that has set a bad tone on the social and economic fabric of Zimbabwe.

Section 5(1) of Zimbabwean Chiefs and Headman Act indicates that part of the chiefs' roles lies in "promoting and upholding values among members of the community under his jurisdiction...promoting

maintenance of good standards of health and education ...notifying...outbreak of any epidemic or prevailing diseases..." (Chakaipa, 2010:49). Despite this supremacy investment for total observance by stakeholders, the porosity of Zimbabwean borders, poverty abjection, organised criminal activities and amplified unemployment rates have significantly fragmented the once enjoyed societal co-existence and upholding of community values. Traditional chiefs and community leaders' powers seem to have been totally extinguished and overtaken by events of drug and substance abuse. Cultural ethics are now a beckon of nightmare with decolourised moral and cultural fabric. Despite the launch of the Zimbabwe National Drug Master Plan (2020-2025) to subdue substance use, the 60% figure of hospitalised substance-induced ailments (Zimbabwe National Drug Master Plan, 2021), is in resonance of predicament levels of substance risks Zimbabwean adolescents are entrenched in.

Drug abuse has economic implications. In America, psychoactive disorders claim a lifetime prevalence of 10% in the general population with more than 23 million adults reported to be suffering from health problems from drug abuse. Only a fraction receives treatment (Ignaszewski, 2021). In 2017 the US Department of Health and Human Service reported increased Opiod overdoses leading to over 42 000 mortality cases in 2016 (HHS Press Office, 2023). Overdose mortality and substance use complications increased from clandestine drug markets that fuelled care and curative challenges in the health industry (Ornell *et al.*, 2020). Further, alcohol use disorders as reported by the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions announced an overall sharp increases of lifetime prevalence trends from 8%, 13.9% to 29% in American adolescents (Hasin and Grant, 2015). Drug abuse furthers socio-economic and political instability, undermines sustainable development hampering efforts to reduce

poverty and crime (Singer, 2008; Kavan, 2003). For instance, corruption of government officials and employees is reported in Afghanistan in the illicit opium industry that has undermined public institutions (Byrd and Buddenberg, 2006; Barker, 2006).

A community engagement survey conducted by Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network in 5 provinces of Zimbabwe reveal that socio-cultural and economic factors were key drivers of increased indulgence in illicit drug trade (Box, 2020). Indian truckers pay an estimated USD 45 billion annually towards bribery with 45% being pocketed by the policemen on forced road blocks (Robinson, 2021). In Kazakhstan, drug-related corruption among government officials is a problematic issue (Turlubekova, 2022). Moreover, South Africa is regarded as the epicentre and shipment point or destination on trafficking routes of various drugs with the police and airport bigwigs being implicated in illegal dealings (Machethe and Mofokeng, 2022). This could be the reason why drug abuse seems to be legalised issues in South African communities and Zimbabweans staying there have been highly subjugated to these trends. This has significantly affected Zimbabwean communities, to date as migration patterns between the two countries are well networked.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study design was of a descriptive orientation anchored on a quantitative research approach. The study was hinged on the 'Social Control' and 'Problem-Prone Behaviour and General Deviance' theoretical optics. Its population comprised 120 participants from Primary and Secondary school students, University students, Victim Friendly Unit Section, School Psychological experts, Pharmacists, and Ministry of Health and Child Welfare. Selection of participants was done using purposive sampling. Questionnaires were used as data

collection tools for the study. Collected data were presented on tables using descriptive statistics.

## FINDINGS

Based on age most respondents are in the 19-23 categories (21%) with the 15-18 and over 24 age ranges having a slight difference (19% and 18%) for users. The 11-14 age range has the least figure of 14%. There are more High school and university non-users (10%) than the primary (6%) and out-of-school (5%) sections. Distribution indicates that the greatest concentration of substance users is out-of-school (35%), high school and university segments (30%). The least number is among primary children (14%). Most male respondents are substance users (23%, 20%, 10%) compared to females (12%, 10%, 4%). There are more substance non-users among high school and university students (10%) compared to out-of-school (5%) and primary children (6%). These are indicative of high prevalence rates of substance abuse among most adolescent youths and inevitably, risk multiple health risks.

**Table 1:** Bio-data of respondents: in-school, university and out-of-school

Background characteristics	Users						Non-users					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	n	%	N	%	N	%	n	%
Primary (N=20)	10	10%	4	4%	14	14%	3	3%	3	3%	6	6%
Secondary & University (N40)	20	20%	10	10%	30	30%	6	6%	4	4%	10	10%
Out-of-school (N=40)	23	23%	12	12%	35	35%	3	3%	2	2%	5	5%
Age Group (years)												
11-14	6	6%	6	6%	12	12%	2	2%	8	8%	10	22%
15-18	10	10%	9	9%	19	19%	3	3%	3	3%	6	25%
19-23	13	13%	8	8%	21	21%	2	2%	5	5%	7	28%
24+	11	11%	7	7%	18	18%	3	3%	4	4%	7	25%
	40	40%	30	30%	70	70%	10	10%	20	20%	30	100%

**Table 2:** Age distribution of respondents from ministries (Health, Victim Friendly Unit, youth, School Psychologists)

Sex	Respondents N (20)					
	Male		Female		TOTAL	
Age	N	%	N	%	N	%
25-30	3	15%	2	10%	5	25%
31-40	3	15%	4	20%	7	35%
41+	4	20%	4	20%	8	40%
	10	50%	10	50%	20	100%

Most of the participants in this study were above the age of 40 years (40%) followed by 31-40 age range (35%) with the 25-30 age range having the least figure (25%). This indicates a mature group of participants who are knowledgeable and aware of the detrimental effects of substance abuse on adolescents' well-being.

**Table 2:** The use of doping agents in studied respondents

Questions	Trainers (n=10)			Students (n=100)		
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't know (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Don't know (%)
Is doping a common trend in Sport?	8 (80)	2 (20)	-	80 (80)	15 (15)	5 (5)
Can impressive results be achieved without using doping in sport?	7 (70)	1 (10)	2 (20)	77 (77)	20 (20)	3 (3)
Can the use of doping be justified in sport?	6 (60)	3 (30)	1 (10)	35 (35)	65 (65)	-
Are doping measures readily available in sport?	-	10 (100)	-	-	29 (29)	71 (71)
Have you ever been urged to use doping to enhance sport performance?	9 (90)	1 (10)	-	84 (84)	16 (16)	-
Have any of your friends or athletes taken any doping substances?	8 (80)	1 (10)	1 (10)	92 (92)	5 (5)	3 (3)

Doping is a common issue in sport as indicated by 80% apiece of respondents. However, most trainers (70%) and athletes (77%) believe training to be an important aspect than relying on drugs for performance enhancement in view of their health implications. The unavailability of doping measures (100%) indicates common doping trends among trainers (90%) and athletes (84%) despite other respondents' lack of knowledge on this issue (71%, 3%). Results therefore portray porous doping measures in sport from absence of drug testing measures and operational frameworks to curb clandestine drug abuse. Although there is widespread doping most respondents advised that doping precipitate unfair competitive settings in sport. A surge in doping figures could imply that users may sacrifice protecting personal and institutional sporting prowess and jobs. Subsequently, these proliferates decay of ethical issues that constitute critical benchmarks of sport participation.

**Table 3:** Frequency of abuse of psychoactive substances at least once in a lifetime among adolescents

Psychoactive substances	No. of respondents		
	Primary school (N20)	High school & University (N40)	Out-of-school (N40)
Alcohol			
Once	2	7	5
Several times	8	21	19
Everyday	0	5	9
Never	6	3	3
No answer	4	3	4
Heroin			
Once	-	4	5
Several times	-	6	8

Every day	-	1	1
Never	-	10	12
No answer	20	15	14
Marijuana			
Once	3	4	2
Several times	5	22	23
Every day	-	7	10
Never	10	3	4
No answer	2	4	1
Musombodia			
Once	2	4	2
Several times	3	19	26
Every day	-	14	10
Never	4	3	2
No answer	11	-	-
Cocaine			
Once	-	4	3
Several times	-	14	21
Everyday	-	5	9
Never	-	4	5
No answer	20	3	2
Amphetamines			
Once	3	6	8
Several times	2	23	19
Everyday	-	8	9
Never	6	3	4
No answer	9	-	-
Inhalants			
Once	3	3	5
Several times	4	25	28
Everyday	-	9	17
Never	6	3	-
No answer	7	-	-

Sedatives			
Once	2	4	6
Several times	-	8	5
Everyday	-	3	4
Never	16	21	23
No answer	2	4	2
Bronco			
Once	4	4	7
Several times	2	13	17
Everyday	-	21	25
Never	3	2	1
No answer	11	-	-

The most frequently abused psychoactive substances were alcohol, marijuana, 'musombodia', inhalants, cocaine, amphetamines and bronco. High school, university and out-of-school adolescents were highly involved in the abuse of these substances. Most addictive behaviours were reported from abuse of marijuana, inhalants, bronco, alcohol, amphetamines and cocaine while small figures were recorded for sedatives and heroin. General trends indicate alarming substance abuse prevalence among adolescents despite small figures from the primary segment.

**Table 4:** Participants attitudes towards legalisations of drugs

Personal history of experimenting with illicit substances	No. of participants N=100			
	Pro	Against	Don't know	No answer
Yes	35 (35%)	20 (20%)	6 (6%)	4 (4%)
No	10 (10%)	8 (8%)	4 (4%)	3 (3%)
Unknown	5 (5%)	2 (2%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)
TOTAL	50 (50%)	30 (30%)	12 (12%)	8 (8%)

As indicated, half of the participants felt substance use should be a legitimate practice (50%) while (30%) were against the practice whereas figures of 12% and 8% were respectively undecided on the issue. Regarding personalised experimentation with illicit drugs 35%

were positive while 10% never attempted experimenting with drug use. Although 8% is reflective of adolescents who did not venture into substance use, the prevalence of substance abuse was high among adolescents.

**Table 5:** Response on drug abuse among adolescents from ministry participants (N=20)

Respondents (Health Ministry, Victim Friendly Unit, Ministry of Youth, School Psychologists, Pharmacists)	YES N %		NO N %		TOTAL
Increased drug abuse in youths	16 80		4 20		20
High networking of drug dealers	18 90		2 10		20
Increased drug-related crimes in youths	20 100		- -		20
Increased psychoactive disorders	14 70		6 30		20
Family disintegration	17 85		3 15		20
Multi-sector interventions	8 40		12 60		20
Cultural erosion among youths	19 95		1 5		20
Adherence to prescribed drug laws	18 90		2 10		20
Increasing awareness programmes	16 80		4 -		20
Modularising drug abuse in all institutions	15 75		5 25		20
Community-driven interventions	12 60		8 40		20

Drug abuse is a worrisome issue as shown by 80% of the respondents. This is substantiated by high networking of substance drug dealers

(90%) that further perpetuates overwhelming drug-related criminal activities (100%). Activities of this nature have led to family disintegration and cultural erosion as shown by figures of 70% and 95% respectively. There are reports of psychoactive disorders from different sectors as indicated by 70% of the respondents although the 30% could be indicative of unreported cases within the communities. These could be hospitalised cases or some families may not disclose such information to the rightful centres for assistance. Of these, 90% felt laws were not observed to the last element among adolescent adults possibly due to issues of frustrations, boredom, regret and anger in life situations. The issue of multi-sector interventions seem not to be highly regarded by most stakeholders (60%) compared to community-driven interventions (60%). The possible explanation could relate to knowledge deficiencies and scarcity of information. Substantial numbers indicated the need for increasing awareness programmes (80%) and enforcing legislative rules to modularise drug awareness programmes in learning institutions and community-based fora (75%).

## DISCUSSION

Drug and substance abuse are reported to have reached alarming rates among Zimbabwean adolescents. Taking this as a true fact, Zimbabwe considerably, appears to be among the list of world leading countries rated as 'drug hotspots'. For instance, some of the commonly abused drugs reported in this study like marijuana, alcohol, cocaine, amphetamines and inhalants have reportedly been found under immense abuse by adolescents in Kashmir Valley (Zohra and Singh, 2021). Like in this study, Dada *et al.* (2018) reports that female adolescents indulged in methamphetamine drugs much as their male counterparts with Pedersen (2016) indicating an annual consumption of 5 billion litres of alcohol. This inexorably, is predictive of amplified crime rates, moral degradation and melting of societal fabric (Ahmadi

*et al.*, 2023; Heikkila *et al.*, 2020). Coupled with the porosity level of borders and high unemployment rates, Zimbabwe and its neighbours are deemed to commonly share these dangerous rides in their communities due to existing inter-culture systems. As Chakaipa (2010) avers, chiefs are an integral organ or superglue regarding the upholding of cultural and community values and conveyance of critical information on the outbreak of any endemic. Basing on results of this study, traditional leadership together with other organisations like Victim Friendly Unit, and Health ministry are finding it difficult to abate the drug abuse pandemic. On regular basis the issue of substance-related cases (sexual abuse, psychoactive ailments, and daylight killings) are reported, an indication showing disregard of legislative rules. Subsequently, chiefs and these organisations' powers have been totally eroded that makes it difficult for them to contain rampant drug abuse in every community.

While drug and substance abuse have been declared a global public health menace to administrators (Hammarlund *et al.*, 2018), results from this study substantially contribute to the health, social and economic ills of care and curative costs, crime rates and family destabilisations (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2023). As Mattiuzzi *et al.* (2019) point out drug abuse disorders rose to 47.2% between 2000 and 2016 with WHO (2023) further making projections of 162.3% and 203.85% million increase by 2060. Certainly with the nature of the epidemic reported in this study, the future of the young Zimbabwean generation hangs on a thread even in the next 20 years to come. In this case Mazuru (2018) and Makanda (2017) warns on the increase of drug networking systems that have turned the country into a transit point for drugs enroute South Africa and Botswana. Arguably, some of these adolescents undoubtedly constitute part of illegal drug cohorts of peddlers making this a source of living due to high rates of employment that have devastated the country. These illegal smuggling

of drugs (Nyoni, 2018) such as bronco and other illicit drugs has turned the face of the society into seemingly legalised activities within the social frameworks of rank 'touts or rank marshals' (mawhindi) and 'vendors' (makorokozas) who have become a strong and addictive 'drug abuse sect' at public transport pick up points. In actual fact most of these youths are part of a highly educated crop trying to make ends meet while pushing through these mud-spattered terrains.

Findings from this study reflect the impact of substance abuse in family disintegration and cultural deformation. Results corroborates well with those reported in previous studies of Macheka and Masuka (2019) and Mahiya (2016). Hlungwani *et al.* (2020) reported high stress levels among parents whose adolescents had been hospitalised following mental disorders in the South African district of Giyani. Equally this could also have similar bearings in families and communities in Zimbabwe in spite of different settings.

In view of the prevailing drug and substance abuse among Zimbabwean adolescents, they significantly replicate those reported by Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network contacted during 2017, 2018 and 2019. Statistics sharply rose from 43%, 45% to 57% respectively. Although these figures are far much below those reported in this study, they commonly depict trends and levels of predicament the adolescents are entrenched in. More latently, the cultural landscape is at risk of extinction while a multiplicity of psychoactive and physiological health risks are highly predictable.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is rampant abuse of drugs and substances among young adolescents in Zimbabwe. Societal and cultural fabric patterns have drastically been eroded. Subsequently, the rule of law binding cultural ethics have been reduced to mere trash to a point that government

arms and traditional leadership powers seem unable to contain this scourge. Most illicit drugs find their way into the country through unscrupulous means via porous borders. Hence, there is urgent need to redress the existing worrisome trends. Government and traditional leadership should be engaged in crafting legislative rules to redress the social and cultural fabric of the society through multi-sector and community-driven interventions. Awareness and flagship programmes to conscientise youths on substance abuse should be regularly carried out at different fora through relevant line ministries and organisations. Establishment of functional organisations within the reporting frameworks of WADA are essential. Counselling points are necessary and should be available from micro to macro-settings for ease of access to all citizens. This could reduce the levels of substance and drug dependence rates paving way for vibrant, flourishing and well-cultured societies.

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