



**STRATEGIES FOR MITIGATING DRUG ABUSE AMONG FEMALE LEARNERS IN
CHIREDDI DISTRICT. AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE.**

BY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved husband, Daniel Tsingo, my children, Kudakwashe, Kudzaishe and Tafara. They always believed and supported me throughout this journey. They have been my pillars of strength.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female secondary school learners in selected Chiredzi district schools. At the same time, the study established if learners were aware of the adverse effects of drug abuse. The study was informed by Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory and the Feminist theory. The theories were chosen on the basis that the Ecological theory attempts to explain the behaviour of children in relation to the environment they are nurtured in, while the Feminist theory is related to gender issues that affect the girl child. The researcher employed the interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative case study design. Data were generated through purposive sampling of four school heads, four disciplinary committee chairpersons, four Guidance and Counselling heads of departments and twenty-four learners. Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis were used to collect information from the participants. The study established that the fight against drug abuse by female secondary school learners could be won by making homes more habitable and schools conducive to the academic well-being of female secondary school learners. The study also revealed that schools were trying their best to stop drug abuse among learners through school-based campaigns, stringent school rules and guidance and counselling, despite the fact that the teachers lacked guidance and counselling professional qualifications. The study recommended that all stakeholders collaborate in the fight against drug abuse. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should train Guidance and Counselling teachers so that they may be able to deal with drug abuse issues. The study also recommended that Non-Governmental Organisations and churches take the lead in the campaigns against drug abuse and also that the police should be more vigilant and should receive continuous training on drug abuse issues. Thus, all stakeholders need to revisit the root causes and fight against drug abuse in pursuant of the mantra by His Excellence, the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, that *Nyika inovakwa nevene vayo*. The study contributes a model for mitigating drug abuse in which schools will be serving as focal centres.

KEY TERMS

Drug abuse

Ecological theory

Feminist theory

Rural farming areas

Strategies

ABBREVIATIONS/ ACRONYM

UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
NIDA	National Institute on Drug Abuse
CADCA	Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
ADAAZ	The Anti-Drug Association of Zimbabwe
WHO	World Health Organisation
NCI	National Cancer Institute
USC	University of Southern California

CASA	The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse
UNIDCP	United Nations International Drug Control Programme
NACADA	National Authority for Campaign Against Alcohol and Drugs
ANCASA	The American National Center on Drug Addiction and Substance Abuse
ZNDMP	Zimbabwe National Drug Master Plan
ASUDZIM	Alcohol and Substance Use Disorder of Zimbabwe
NCC	National Call Center
PCO	Prevention Coalition Organisation
ZCLDN	Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
ZUPCO	Zimbabwe United Passenger Company
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Systems, subsystems and their interaction in relation to family. -----	19
Figure 2. Nested systems surrounding the child's development. -----	25
Figure 3 Summarising mitigating strategies that may be used by schools. -----	217

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: The International Evidence of the Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Misuse. ----	4
Table 2: Estimated number of illicit drug users in 2008 aged 15-64. -----	50
Table 3: Overview of illicit drugs commonly used in South Africa. -----	51
Table 4: Rates of substance use amongst grade 8-11 South African learners. -----	53
Table 5: Main reasons why youngsters abuse drugs. -----	61
Table 6: Common myths related to substance/drug abuse. -----	71
Table 7: Characteristics of interpretivism. -----	96
Table 8: Themes, sub-themes and elements. -----	127

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	PAGE
Title page.....	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Abbreviations	v
1.0 CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background to the study.	1
1.3 Statement of the problem	9
1.4 Research Questions	9
1.5 Objectives of the study	10
1.6 Significance of the study	10
1.6.1 Female learners.	10
1.6.2 Schools	10
1.6.3 Parents	11
1.6.4 Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education	11
1.6.5 Responsible Authorities	12
1.6.6 Fellow academics	12
1.7 Limitations	12
1.8 Delimitations of the study	13
1.9 Definition of terms	13
1.10 Summary	14
1.11 Chapter outline	15
2.0 CHAPTER TWO THEORETICALFRAMEWORK.....	16
2.1 Introduction	16
2.2.1 The Ecological theory	16
2.2.2 Ecological concepts	17

2.2.3 Systems theory	18
2.2.4 Urie Bronfenbrenner’s model of child development.	24
2.2.4.1.1. Family	26
2.2.4.1.2. School	31
2.2.4.1.3. Peers.	33
2.2.4.2. The mesosystem	37
2.2.4.3. The exosystem	40
2.2.4.4. The macrosystem	40
2.2.4.5. The chronosystem	43
2.2.5 The Feminist theory	45
2.4 summary	48
3 0 CHAPTER THREE LITERATURE REVIEW.....50	
3.1 Introduction	50
3.2 An overview of drugs commonly used by learners.	50
3.3.1 The first sub-question examined why female learners abuse drugs.	61
3.3.2 The second sub-question focused on the adverse effects of drug abuse on female learners.	69
3.3.3 The third sub-question ways to enhance female learners’ understanding of the risks involved and how they could be assisted to stop using drugs.	73
3.3.4 The forth sub-question sought to establish how best families and schools could be assisted to mitigate drug abuse among female learners.	77
3.3.5 The last research sub-question analysed strategies to reduce drug abuse among female learners.	87
3.4 Summary	89
4.0 CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....91	
4.1 Introduction	91
4.2 Research paradigm	91
4.2.1 Interpretivist paradigm	96
4.3 Research approach	103
4.4 Research design	106
4.4.1 Case study	107
4.4.2 Advantages of a case study	110
4.4.3 Disadvantages of case study	111

4.4 Population	112
4.5 Sampling and sample size.	113
4.6 Instrumentation	114
4.6.1 Semi-structured interview	114
4.6.2 Focus group discussions	116
4.6.4.1. Advantages of documents	122
4.6.4.2. Disadvantages of documents	123
4.7 Data trustworthiness	124
4.8 Data collection procedure	126
4.9 Data analysis	126
4.10 Ethical considerations	129
4.11 Summary	129
5.0 CHAPTER 5 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....	131
5.1 Introduction	131
5.2 Research Objectives	131
5.3 Research Questions	132
5.3.1 Main Research Question.	132
5.3.2 Sub-research questions	132
5.4 Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion.	132
5.4.1 Participants codes.	132
5.4.2 Organisation of themes and sub-themes	132
5.4.3.1 Why do female learners abuse drugs?	136
5.4.3.2 How adversely can drug abuse affect learners?	159
5.4.3.3 Enhancing female learners' knowledge of the risks of drug abuse and ways of helping them to stop abusing drugs.	165
5.4.3.4 How best can schools and families reduce drug abuse by female learners?	172
5.4.3.4.1 What are the schools doing to curb drug abuse among female learners?	172
5.4.3.4.2. The family's role in reducing drug abuse among female learners.	210
5.4.3.5. Strategies for mitigating the drug abuse problem among female learners in Chiredzi District	216
5.5 Model of the strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in schools.	224

5.6 Summary	227
6.0 CHAPTER SIX Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.....	229
6.1 Introduction.	229
6.2 Summary of the study.	229
6.3 Conclusions	235
6.4 Recommendations based on the findings.	236
6.5 Recommendations for future studies.	238
APPENDIX 1 Ethics certificate	i
APPENDIX 2 Letter requesting permission from District Schools Inspector	ii
APPENDIX 3 Letter requesting School Heads to participate in the study	iv
APPENDIX 4 Consent letter for participants	vi
APPENDIX 5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS	vii
APPENDIX 6 Interview guide for Disciplinary Committee Chairpersons	viii
APPENDIX 7 Guidance and Counselling Head of Department interview schedule	ix
APPENDIX 8 Focus group discussion guide.	i
APPENDIX 9 Document analysis guide for Disciplinary Committee Chairpersons	ii
APPENDIX 10 Document analysis guide for Guidance and Counselling Heads of Departments	iii

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1.1 Introduction

This study explored strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in rural farming secondary schools in Chiredzi district, Zimbabwe. A lot has been said by psychiatrists, psychologists and educationists concerning drug abuse by school learners. Extensive research has also been carried out to show the prevalence of drug abuse among secondary school learners. Drug abuse is indisputably a cause for concern for parents, schools and communities; hence the importance of conducting this study, given the increasing rate of drug abuse among both male and female learners. This research study is, therefore, significant in that it may shed more light on the strategies to mitigate drug abuse among female learners. To the researcher's knowledge, very few studies have examined strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners, especially those in rural African farming communities.

In this chapter, the background to the study was discussed using the funnel approach. The chapter also highlighted the statement of the problem, the research questions and objectives of the study, its significance, limitations and delimitations. Some terms important to the study were defined. The general structure of the thesis was also outlined.

1.2 Background to the study.

Drug abuse is a global problem which affects both developed and developing countries and also raises a number of health problems (Chakravarthy, Shahs & Lotfirpour, 2013). In the same study, the trio report that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) indicated that approximately 5% of the world's population used illicit drugs in 2010 and also that 27 million of the world's adult population can be classified as drug users. It is estimated that alcohol abuse results in 2.5 million deaths per year and that heroin, cocaine and other drugs are responsible for 0.1 to 0.2 million deaths per year. In the same study, Chakravarthy et al. (2013) reveal that in addition to causing death,

substance abuse is also responsible for morbidity. The treatment of drug addiction creates extreme burdens to society. UNODC (2021) indicates that around 269 million people used drugs in 2018. This is affecting many countries financially. Worldwide, costs related to treating drug abuse are estimated to total \$200-\$250 billion or 0.3-0.4% of the global domestic product. Blog Post (2022) indicates that the United States of America spends a total amount of \$647 billion every year on drug abuse-related treatment.

From the survey carried out by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) (2016) in the United States of America, it was revealed that there was high use of marijuana among 12th Graders in the states that had medical marijuana laws compared to those without them. The study revealed that in 2016, 38.3% of high school seniors in states with medical marijuana laws reported marijuana use compared to 33.3% in non-medical marijuana states. In another research study done by NIDA (2017) it was revealed that in 2016 approximately 2.1million Americans over the age of 11 suffered from opioids such as prescription pain medication and heroin. CASA Columbia (2011) reveals that three quarters of school students from 1000 high schools surveyed in the United States of America have used addictive substances, including cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana and cocaine. The Report holds that 46 per cent of all high school students currently use addictive substances. NIDA (2017) outlines the most commonly used drugs in America as, tobacco (nicotine), alcohol, marijuana, opium, heroin stimulants and cocaine. The Report also reveals that most youths start smoking, drinking or using other drugs before the age of 18. This age coincides with the age group of participants involved in the current research.

Drug abuse is also prevalent in European countries. In a study NIDA (2017) carried out to compare alcohol use in the USA and Europe, it was revealed that drinking among high school students was common, with Iceland showing the lowest rates of drinking at 17 per cent; followed by Albania's 32 per cent and Norway's 35 percent. According to that study, European high school students' drinking frequency exceeded 50 cent. Portugal showed rates of 52 per cent while France showed 67 per cent, United Kingdom showed 70 per cent and Germany 73 per cent.

Asia is not left out in this drug abuse pandemic. According to UNODC (2020) Afghanistan and Myanmar are the world's leading producers of opium and this has increased the availability and use of illicitly-produced opiates in South Asia. The same survey reports that in 2011, there were 1 380 000 to 3 170 000 opiate users in South Asia.

It is evidently clear that drug abuse is a global problem which needs immediate and serious intervention before it eats up deep in the fabric of society. A number of studies carried out in America reveal that efforts are being made to alleviate the effects drug abuse. NIDA (2017) perceives drug abuse as a complex interaction of biological, social, environmental and developmental factors which requires a whole systems approach to treat. NIDA (2017) advocates for a comprehensive therapeutic research portfolio which pushes for more effective medication and behavioural therapies. UNODC (2021) also emphasises the need to develop knowledge that leads to personalised and customised treatments, and also that these treatments should be community based.

According to the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (2016), more strategies should be co-ordinated in order to change specific behaviours. The thrust of this organisation was to create strategies that could empower the youth to make healthy decisions as well as create family, school and community environments that could promote and support healthy decision making by the youth. They came up with seven strategies for effective community change, namely; provision of information, enhancement of skills, provision of support, changing access, changing consequences incentive, changing physical design, and modifying and changing policies (CADCA, 2016).

According to the government publications in England (2015) UNODC has also come up with drug abuse prevention interventions, which include addressing entire populations such as schools in order to prevent or delay substance use, and targeting specific populations such as families and individuals who are already abusing drugs. UNODC

emphasised prevention across the life course, that is, from prenatal to adulthood. This was summarised in the table below:

Table 1: The International Evidence of the Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Misuse

	Pre-natal & Infancy	Middle childhood	Early adolescence
Family	Targeting pregnant women with substance abuse disorders	Parenting skills	Social skills
School		Early childhood education-classroom management	Personal and social skills-policies to keep children in school-school policies and culture Addressing individual vulnerabilities
Community		Community based multi-competent initiatives.	Media campaigns Entertainment venues

Source: Adapted from CADCA (2016)

The UNODC suggests a collective approach towards the reduction of drug abuse, which should start from the family as suggested by the table. For schools, UNODC recommends staff that is qualified and competent to deliver the interventions they provide (CADCA, 2016). Griffin and Bitvin (2015) advocate for the development of a variety of prevention initiatives for children and adolescents. They add that these

prevention measures should include educational and skills training programmes for young people in school settings and programmes that teach parents on effective ways to monitor and communicate with their children and to establish and enforce family rules regarding substance use. Griffin and Bitvin's (2015) research shows that school-based prevention can be categorised into three types, namely; social resistance skills training, normative education training, and competence enhancement skills training. According to their findings, the students who received life skills training showed a significant decrease in smoking, drunkenness and marijuana use after a considerable time of training. They added that the strongest intervention effects were observed among students exposed to at least 60 per cent of the intervention.

On the abuse of opioids, Wright, Scholl and Bernstein (2016) posited that medical practitioners should avoid prescription of opioids to a particular type of patient and also limit the prescribed opioids to the lowest effective dose for the shortest effective duration. They added that the patients should be monitored and assessed regularly. Given these international efforts to alleviate the drug abuse problem, it is the researcher's conviction that more could also be done in Zimbabwe, particularly in the rural farming areas to reduce the drug abuse by female learners.

Regionally, African countries are facing similar challenges of drug abuse by the youths. Shidhudhu (2013) reports that the Minister of Education in Namibia reported to parliamentarians in the National Assembly that a random drug test at a Windhoek school in Namibia revealed that twenty-four (24) learners in a class of thirty (30) pupils tested positive to drugs. In his statement the minister added that drug and alcohol usage among school learners has led to alarming instances of violence among learners and cases of uncontrollable levels of indiscipline, gangsterism, fighting and even killings in the school grounds (Shidhudhu, 2013). In Ghana, Nkyi (2014) reveals that the most extensive research on substance use among the youth was done by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organisation in 2021. Reports from this research show that the average age of first use of substance ranged between 14 and 19 years (Nkyi, 2014). The findings indicate that the youth commonly used substances such as alcohol,

cigarette, cannabis, cocaine, tranquilisers and heroine. Nkyi (2014) posits that research carried out by Anumonye (1980), Adelek (1989) and Adu-Mireku (2003) recognise the importance of family cohesion which plays an important role in alleviating youth substance abuse in Ghana. In his research study on drug abuse in secondary schools in Kenya, Maithya (2009) found that drug abuse was increasingly becoming a problem for many nations. Maithya's (2009) study showed that almost every Kenyan youngster experiments with drugs at one time or another, especially beer and cigarettes. His findings show that drug abuse among boys and girls was common. Drug abuse among learners is also said to be prevalent in Swaziland. Similar results were observed by Gugu and Makondo (2017) in their research study on the prevalence of drug and substance abuse in one of the regions of Swaziland. The study found that drug abuse was so prevalent in the studied schools that students carried alcohol in their water bottles into classrooms and also used toilets as hiding places from where they consumed alcohol and smoked marijuana.

Since drug abuse has become a menace in most African countries, intervention strategies have been put in place. Fareo (2012) recommended in her research study that drug control counselling centres should be established in every community in Nigeria, where qualified health counsellors would be employed in order to help drug addicts with special advice on how to go about with the withdrawal process. Fareo (2012) also suggested that there should be promotion of family education on drugs and schools should design curricula on drug education. She emphasised the importance of campaigns against drug abuse. The current study also intends to come up with strategies to minimise or eradicate problems of drug abuse among female learners in rural farming areas in Chiredzi District.

Drug abuse is also said to be rampant in South Africa. Mothibi's (2014) research in Esleben village, Botlokwa Ga-Ramokgopa in South Africa reveals that the problem of drug abuse has recently increased in schools. Presentations made by the chairperson of the Central Drug Authority in the South African parliament reveal that the use of drugs in South Africa is double the global average and South Africa is amongst the top

ten nations that consume a lot of alcohol (Ramadibe, 2011). Manu, Maluleke and Douglas (2017) in their study in the South Cape of South Africa found that South Africa has a high rate of substance abuse among the youth, both in and out of school. Their study revealed that the Eastern Cape Province was reported to be experiencing an increase in young people, aged twenty and below, who were seeking treatment for substance abuse. In another study on substance use amongst secondary school students in South Africa, Takalani, Tshitangano and Tosin (2016) noted that substance abuse by people in all parts of the world, particularly adolescents, has been of scientific, political and public concern. This concern is due to the adverse effects associated with the use of substances such as cigarettes, drugs, cannabis and other stimulants.

As has already been noted, drug abuse has detrimental effects on the learner. UNICEF (2013) points out that in 2010 the government of South Africa established an inter-ministerial committee to curb alcohol and drug abuse. This strategy, according to UNICEF (2010), focused on the prevention of drug and alcohol abuse among learners. The aim was to create an enabling environment for the learners who had become addicted to alcohol and drugs so that they could access treatment care and support services. This is also an inclusive strategy where families, schools and communities are involved. In the current study the researcher involved high school learners so as to come up with strategies to mitigate against drug abuse.

Like all other nations, Zimbabwe is also facing the same predicament. Research by Mpawusi, Maseko and Ngwenya (2014) shows that reports from Zimbabwe are consistent in their reporting of a remarkable expansion in student interest in the use of substances. This is despite the many innovative and ongoing programmatic interventions targeted at reducing adolescent substance use. Research by Mutsvagwa (quoted by Mpawusi et al. 2014) shows that over 80 per cent of substance use begins at adolescence and it was fast spiralling out of control. The Ministry of Health and Child Care's Department of Mental Health indicated that 135 drug-induced psychosis admissions were recorded at Harare Hospital alone in 2013, and 865 patients were documented in the same year (The Zimbabwean, 2014). Mandizha (2014) also reports

that statistics presented by the United Nations Association Youth President in 2013 revealed that about 65 per cent of Zimbabwean youth suffered mental problems due to drug and substance abuse and unemployment. David Parirenyatwa, the then Zimbabwean Minister of Health and Child Welfare told a press conference that drug abuse had significantly contributed to the increase in Zimbabweans suffering from mental disorder. Parirenyatwa, as quoted by Mudadigwa (2016), added that 1.3 million Zimbabweans have some form of mental illness. The Anti-Drug Association of Zimbabwe (ADAAZ) also states that up to 43% of students in Zimbabwe know of schoolmates who have been found in possession of drugs (*The Zimbabwean*, 2014). The ADAAZ also reports that four out of five school-going age children abuse drugs without the knowledge of parents. Mudadigwa (2016) further reveals that in August 2015, statistics by the Zimbabwe Government showed that alcohol and drug abuse was highest among young adults aged between fifteen (15) and twenty-nine (29) years of age and the lowest among adults aged sixty-five (65) and older. Recent reports by the World Health Organisation have shown that Zimbabwe's youths are ranked among the highest abusers of drugs in the world. Youth between the age of fifteen (15) and nineteen (19) engage in heavy episodes of drinking (Zimfact sheet, 2023).

The rate of drug abuse in Zimbabwe is quite alarming as noted in the discussion above. Nhengo, who was quoted by *The Zimbabwean* (2014), suggested that parents should give guidance to their children and should monitor their children's progress in and out of the school. She also pointed out that parents should limit the pocket money they give to their children. However, ADAAZ refuted this point and argued that money was not the real issue because some drugs were not very expensive (*The Zimbabwean*, 2014). This current study was, therefore, necessitated by the need to come up with relevant strategies for female learners in rural farming areas, since most researches have been urban-oriented.

According to Nhengo, cited in *The Zimbabwean* (2014), the problem of under-age drug abuse goes deeper than the family and school policies. To this extent, the focus of the present study is to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female

learners in rural farming schools in Zimbabwe. The research is premised on the conviction that learners are abusing drugs, females included. Most researches, as cited above, have tried to give evidence that drug abuse is rampant in schools. It is therefore important to come up with strategies to curb this kind of behaviour before it destroys the lives of many young learners. In order to come up with strategies that mitigate drug abuse, the researcher involved those affected by the situation, namely; female learners, school heads as well as Guidance and Counselling heads of departments.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Drug abuse, as noted earlier, is prevalent in secondary schools and has substantial effects on learners. Internationally, some strategies have been put in place to minimise drug abuse and these include life skills training, campaigns in schools and communities, and involvement of health care systems and early learning centers, schools, colleges and universities (National Prevention Council, 2014). Drug abuse continues to be a challenge despite the fact that some strategies have been put in place to alleviate the problem. It is the researcher's contention that minimum research has been done on strategies that mitigate drug abuse among rural female learners, especially in farming communities, hence, the present study.

1.4 Research Questions

This research was guided by the following research questions:

Main research question

What strategies should be employed to mitigate drug abuse among female learners in rural farming secondary schools?

Sub-research question

- i) How adversely can drug abuse affect female learners in Chiredzi secondary schools?
- ii) How can female learners be assisted to enhance their knowledge of risks related

- to drug abuse?
- iii) How best can schools be assisted to mitigate drug abuse among female learners in Chiredzi district secondary schools?
 - iv) What strategies can be used to reduce problems caused by drug abuse among female learners in Chiredzi secondary schools?

1.5 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. examine the effects of drug abuse among female learners.
- ii. enhance female learners' knowledge of risks related to drug abuse and ways of stopping use of drugs.
- iii. discuss strategies that should be employed to assist schools to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse.
- iv. make recommendations on how drug abuse among female learners can be stopped

1.6 Significance of the study

This study might help a number of people to come up with strategies to mitigate drug abuse among learners. This may include the female learners themselves, parents, schools, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and responsible authorities of schools. These are going to be discussed separately below.

1.6.1 Female learners.

Drug abuse, according to Alleyne (2016), has multiple effects on the academic life of a learner. From this study, learners may be made aware of the dangers of abusing drugs and they will be given the chance to come up with ideas of alleviating this problem since the study might enable them to construct knowledge which is based on the realities

surrounding them through life skills training and counselling. Thus, the study may help female learners to know strategies they can adopt to mitigate effects of drug abuse.

1.6.2 Schools

Learners spend most of their time in schools and this influences their behaviour greatly. The disciplinary trends, school rules and how they are implemented and also the members of staff's behaviour influence learners' attitudes. Through classroom management, school policies and addressing individual vulnerabilities, schools might go a greater way in eradicating the problem of drug abuse. Research by UNODC (2016) reveals that school environment improvement programmes, positive ethos, participation, academic and social-emotional learning have positive outcomes in behaviour modification. Therefore, it can be safely concluded that schools may benefit from this study as they will be involved in coming up with strategies to mitigate drug abuse.

1.6.3 Parents

Reports from ADAAZ as quoted in *The Zimbabwean* (2014), show that parents are taking little or no attention to drug abuse by children and have adopted a laissez-faire parenting style where they think that children are old enough to make correct decisions. This study may assist parents to come up with better parenting styles. Fareo (2012) suggests that parents should not use drugs indiscriminately in the presence of youngsters and they should discourage their children from associating with unknown gangs or suspicious neighbourhood peer groups. UNODC (2016) also advocates for multi-component programs involving parenting interventions and support for individuals and families. Thus, according to their research study, this will yield positive results. Research studies by Anumonye (1980), Adelekan (1989) and Adu-Mireku (2003), quoted by Nkyi (2014) show that lack of family cohesion plays an important role in youth substance abuse in Ghana and the chances of substance abuse are less when the adolescent stays with both parents rather than without any one of them. Parents of abusers are often divorced, separated or never married. Therefore, this study is significant to parents since their family structures may force adolescents into delinquent behaviour.

1.6.4 Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

Since this study is school-based, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education might benefit from the findings. According to Griffin and Bitvin (2011) school-based intervention can be categorised into three types; social resistance skills training, normative education and competence enhancement skills training. Therefore, schools have a pivotal role to play and the ministry will need to craft a curriculum which works hand in glove with the suggested strategies. The Ministry is the policy-maker in terms of curriculum. Therefore, this study analysed strategies related to the curriculum and technology and made recommendations on how best the Ministry could help alleviate drug abuse by female learners.

1.6.5 Responsible Authorities

Some schools are not owned by the government, for example, those owned by Tongaat Hulett Zimbabwe, the latter of which is the responsible authority in this current study. These authorities influence what is going on in schools, for example, the culture of the schools, values and norms. Tongaat Hullet also influence families since they are employers of the learners' parents. The study by UNODC reveals that community-based interventions have positive outcomes in drug abuse prevention (UNODC, 2016). Given that the study was carried out in farming areas, responsible authorities might be assisted to strategise ways of eradicating drug abuse among female learners. They may come up with campaign strategies and alcohol and tobacco policies in their communities.

1.6.6 Fellow academics

This study will also add to the literature on learner drug abuse and intervention strategies, particularly on female learners in rural farming areas. Globally, research has shown that there are intervention strategies which may be employed such as those which are family, school and community-based (UNODC, 2016). However, most of these interventions were carried out in urban areas and in schools which were adequately equipped with both human and material resources. This research might add value to the available literature since the study is based in rural farming areas.

1.7 Limitations

Challenges were faced in relation to focus groups. More time was needed to have dialogue with the learners since the research was done during school term time. However, time was sought from the school authorities and this enabled effective discussions. Since this was a school-based research, some learners were not ready to reveal their feelings for fear of stigmatisation and victimisation by school authorities. The researcher, however, managed to create a relaxed atmosphere and guaranteed confidentiality to the participants. Data collection was also affected by closure of schools due to lockdowns. The researcher overcame this by creating WhatsApp chat groups for focus group discussion.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

The study explored strategies to mitigate the problem of drug abuse among female learners. The research was limited to four rural farming secondary schools in Chiredzi District. The schools have been chosen because they were affected by the Government of Zimbabwe's 2000 Land Reform Program which saw such schools enrolling students from different walks of life, leading to a sharp increase in enrolment.

In order to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners, the study employed the interpretivism paradigm. The qualitative research approach was used to gather information concerning drug abuse among female learners. This approach was relevant because it helped the researcher to interpret human behaviour through interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis so as to come up with strategies to mitigate drug abuse among female learners.

To understand the nature of the problem, the study was underpinned by the Ecological and Feminist theories. It was important to understand why female learners behaved the way they did. Some behaviours are influenced by the environment and others by gender related issues.

1.9 Definition of terms

Drug abuse: The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2021) defines drug abuse as the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs. National Cancer Institute (NCI, 2022) also defines drug abuse as the illegal use of prescription or over-the-counter drugs for purposes other than those for which they are meant to be used, or in excessive amounts.

Ecological theory: Donald et al. (2010) say that the Ecological theory refers to the interdependence between different organisms and their physical environment. In this study it refers to the interdependence between the female learner and her environment, that is, family, school, peers, curriculum and teachers.

Feminist approach: Gelling (2013) asserts that the feminist approach focuses on the experiences of women in natural social settings where the aim is to make them visible, raise their consciousness and empower them. In this study the theory is inclined to the girl child and how she can realise her potential in future by shunning drug and alcohol abuse.

Strategies: Fred (2015) defines strategies as a plan designed to achieve a long term or overall aim. He adds that strategies are concerned with how the aim is achieved. In this study the term refers to a plan of action intended to mitigate or if possible eradicate the prevalence of drug abuse among female learners.

Rural farming areas: According to Westlake (2017) a rural farming area is an area that is outside of a municipal area with streets, city utilities and an urban environment. Farms are defined as rural settlements on large plots of land which are used to grow crops. For the purpose of this study, rural farming areas refer to the sugarcane farm settlements in Chiredzi District.

1.10 Summary

This chapter highlighted the background to the study and analysed the prevalence of drug abuse among learners, globally. A brief review of mitigating strategies as presented by other international researchers was done. The statement of the problem also highlighted the effects of drug abuse on learners. The chapter outlined the

research questions, objectives, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations. The next chapter will review related literature.

1.11 Chapter outline

This study was structured into 6 chapters as follows:

Chapter 1. Introduction. This chapter highlighted the introduction, background to the study, statement of the problem, main research question and sub-research questions, research objectives, and significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework. This chapter discussed the theoretical framework that underpinned the study.

Chapter 3. Literature review. This chapter discussed literature based on the research questions to see what is known or is not known about these questions.

Chapter 4. Research methodology. This chapter presented the research method and the main methodological components discussed are: research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling, instrumentations, credibility and trustworthiness of data, data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 5. Data presentation, analysis and discussion. This chapter presented, analysed and discussed the data and results.

Chapter 6. Summary, conclusions and recommendations. This chapter gave the summary of the whole study, drew conclusions based on the findings of the study and made recommendations based on the findings of the study and for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discussed the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. According to the University of Southern California Research Guide (USC, 2023) theoretical framework is a structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. Kam-Ray (2014) asserts that in any given situation, people tend to interpret an event differently because they have different points of reference and this is what is regarded as their theoretical framework. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists. So, in any given study, the theoretical framework is very important because it gives the reader room to make critical evaluation of propositions assumed. It also connects the researcher to existing knowledge (Vinz, 2019; USC, 2023). USC (2023) adds that when using a theoretical framework, it would be possible to make hypotheses and choose the correct research methods to use. In the theoretical framework crucial concepts are discussed and the

questions of how and why are addressed. A strong theoretical framework also gives the researcher a sound scientific basis and gives direction allowing the researcher to convincingly interpret the findings (USC, 2009).

2.2.1 The Ecological theory

From the above discussion it is evident that a theoretical framework forms the backbone of any research. The current research is, thus, underpinned by Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory and the Feminist theory. These two theories were used so that they complement each other in order to give a full picture of strategies that are needed to mitigate drug abuse among female learners.

The Ecological theory by Uriel Bronfenbrenner emanated from the ecosystemic perspective which is a combination of ecological and systems theory (Donald et al., 2010). In order to come up with a clear understanding of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory it is important to have an exploration of the ecosystemic perspective first. Donald et al., (2010) posit that the main focus of this perspective is to show how individuals and groups at different levels of society are linked in dynamic interdependent interacting relationships. It is the researcher's contention that the Ecological theory will go a long way in revealing the interaction between learners and the society they live in, and possibly come up with strategies to mitigate the problem of drug abuse among female learners.

2.2.2 Ecological concepts

Ecological theory is rooted on the interdependence between different organisms and their environment and these relationships are studied as a whole. Every part is as important as another to keep the cycle going and ensuring the survival of the whole. (Donald et al., 2010; McLeod, 2023). Donald et al. (2010) illustrated this through an analogy of a worker bee and a flower. The bee needs the flower in order to collect its pollen and nectar so that the bee can feed itself and the young ones. At the same time, the flower needs the bee to transfer the pollen to other flowers of the same species so that the fertile seed can be set and new flowers can grow. This ensures constant regeneration of the ecological system with both parts being important. Accordingly, this

system can be easily disturbed if a farmer uses insect poison to control fruit flies on a tree, thus killing bees in the process. The cycle will be disturbed because the flowers in the area will not set seeds and new flowers will not grow, thereby destroying the cycle. Thus, things happening in one part of the system can affect other parts of the system and the ecological system as a whole is affected. There should be a balance within the whole system or its survival is threatened. If there is disturbance in one part of the system, the balance of the whole system is also disturbed (Donald et al., 2010)

In this current study the learner is part of the whole environment that is in the form of the school. She is better understood through analysing the learning environment and all the forces in action. This may assist to explain the kind of behaviour portrayed, hence, strategies for mitigating drug abuse may be found. It is important to analyse behaviour in its social context.

2.2.3 Systems theory

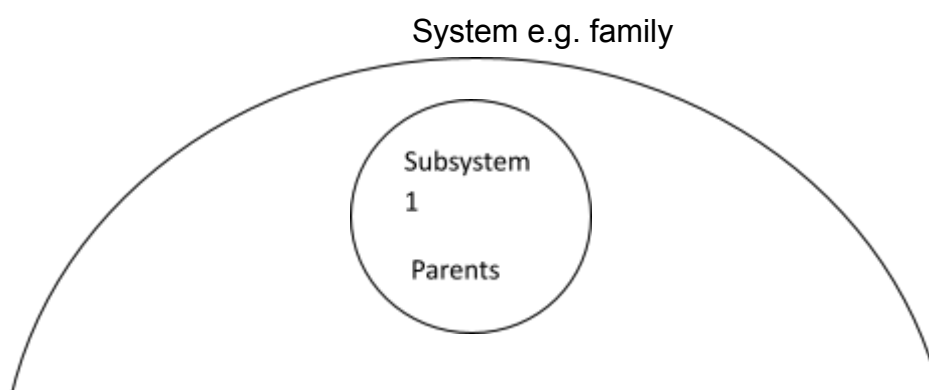
Systems theory is another important component of the ecosystemic perspective. It sees different levels and groups of people as interactive systems where the functioning of the whole depends on the interaction between all parts. For example, a school is a system with different parts, namely; staff, learners, curriculum and the administration (Donald et al., 2010; Sarah, 2012). In order to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners there was need to examine and understand the above mentioned parts. Thus, this study encompassed the learners, the administrators and Guidance and Counselling heads of departments since these are the subsystems in a school set up. Learners do not exist in a vacuum; they are a part of the whole. The concept of the bee and flower mentioned above can also be used in this scenario to understand the interactions between the learner and the group of people living in the same environment with her. Thus, it helps in the understanding of the learner in her family, in the classroom and at school. This research is directly concerned with these interactions so as to come up with intervention strategies on drug abuse by female learners.

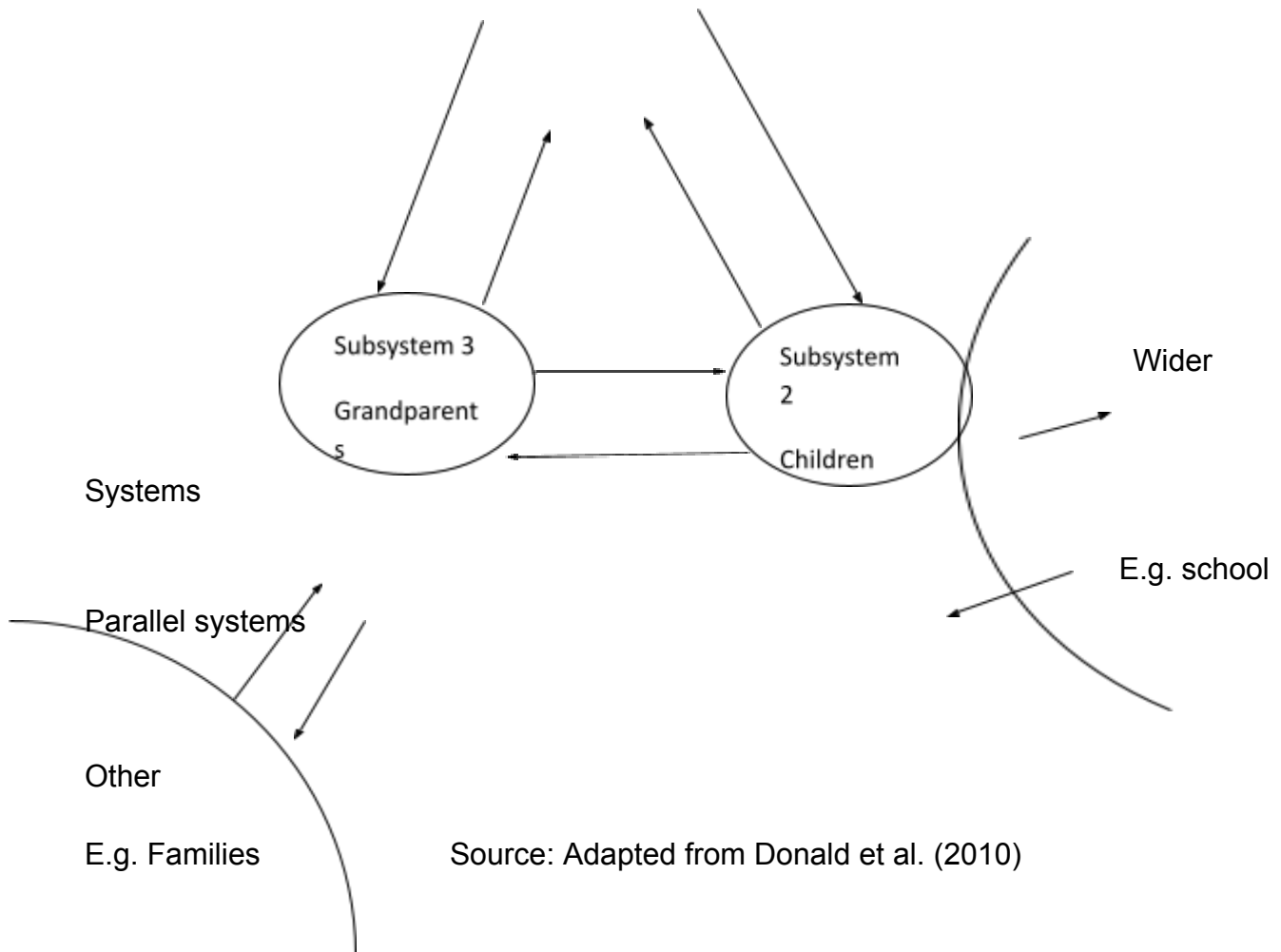
It was also noted that a number of elements and processes characterise human systems and subsystems (Donald et al., 2010). This is when the whole system interacts with other systems around it, for example, a family interacts with other families, school or church. Equally, subsystems interact with one another. Such interactions have influence on the behaviour of a child. This will be further discussed and elaborated under Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory. In order to come up with strategies for eradicating drug abuse among female learners, it is important to understand the learner in her system and as a subsystem.

Donald et al. (2010) identified a number of patterns of functions that exist in systems. The first one is that all parts of a system have an influence on the system as a whole. This was illustrated through a spider's web and that whatever happens in one part affects the whole. If one part of the web is affected the whole structure collapses. Thus, people in human systems interact with one another in distinctive ways or patterns. In a family individual members shape and are shaped by these patterns in a continuous process of adjustments. If a tension arises in one part of the family, it affects the whole family. The whole family responds to this tension distinctively. For example, if there is tension between parents due to physical abuse, children may react accusingly against the father. The whole family may reject the father and delinquent behaviour may start to show in the children. The children may become arrogant and disobey their father. The mother may defend her children's bad behaviour as a way of responding to the abuse from the father. The paternal grandparents, if they are staying in that same family, may tend to incline with their son's behaviour. In the end, the family as a system may fail to function properly.

The diagram below illustrates systems and subsystems and their interaction in relation to family.

Figure 1. Systems, subsystems and their interaction in relation to family.





Source: Adapted from Donald et al. (2010)

The diagram above shows that in patterns of functions there are cycles of cause and effect. This cycle explains that due to interrelationships between the parts, an action in one part may influence behaviour in the other parts of a system. However, it does not influence an action in another part in one direction. Rather, there is a cycle of cause and effect which is formed. If this pattern is repeated it may give rise to unwritten rules that restrain the whole system and the members may confine themselves to particular ways of relating to one another. This is evident in a school system. What happens at home may influence the behaviour of a child at school and in the neighbourhood. The school is the focus of this current study, therefore, patterns of functions as they were analysed assisted in coming up with strategies of mitigating drug abuse among female learners.

In the patterns of functions there are also goals and values. These goals and values may be both stated and hidden and are influenced by the system as a whole and its interaction with other systems (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2003). Teaching and learning may be the declared goals in a school but authoritarian discipline might be an invisible and more powerful goal. This notion is important for this current study. Schools have goals and values which govern the day to day running of the school and the learners' behaviour. If these goals are not properly articulated and implemented, this may lead to unruly and rowdy behaviour among learners.

This is why the current research is based in rural farming areas. The goals and values of schools in such an environment may be different from those of schools in urban areas. The researcher has also realised a geographical gap in most of the researches since most of them are urban-based and concentrate on male learners. It was important to analyse how these goals and values influence the behaviour of female learners and generate strategies of alleviating drug abuse problems among female learners. Farming communities from both urban and rural areas are different. The way of life in such areas is unique in a way.

Communications patterns play a vital role in the functioning of these systems. Communication takes place between subsystems, and the emphasis is that communication must be made clear and must not be mixed or contradictory (Meyer et al., 2003). Donald et al. (2010) add that the message should be conveyed directly to the supposed person and not indirectly. For example, in a school set up, if the school authorities make a mass address to learners, to reprimand the mischievous learners instead of directly addressing the culprits, this may have a negative impact on other learners. Such learners may have mixed feelings towards the administrators as well as the culprits. It was noted that not addressing the offender directly may give rise to conflict between the subsystems, that is, the culprit, other learners, teachers and administrators. Since school heads were participants in the present study it was vital to hear their views concerning their patterns of communication. This helped in coming up with strategies of reducing drug abuse among female learners.

Communication should be between the school as a system and other wider systems such as the family. If communication between school and family is inadequate this may affect the way the child is dealt with in both systems. For example, a child may portray different behaviours at home and at school if there is lack of interaction between the school and the family. This theory proposes that there should be effective communication between the school and family.

For systems to function properly there must be clearly defined roles within the systems so that systems function as wholes (Donald et al., 2010). For example, in a family, members may have a number of different roles. With the advent of the diaspora population among Zimbabweans, mothers may assume the roles of both mother and father, especially in some families such as those in the sugarcane farming areas where the majority of mothers stay in their rural homes while the father stay with children at the commercial farms. The child may be expected to assume the role of both child and parent. Such a set up may have detrimental effects on the child's behaviour since there could be no one to provide proper guidance. This is why the researcher has opted to carry out a study in such areas where the lives of female children are a bit complex. Knowledge about the patterns of functions of systems may assist the researcher in coming up with means and ways of alleviating drug abuse among female learners.

Contradictory roles may be evident in the school system as well, especially in instances where the roles of school counsellor overlap with those of a disciplinarian. Counsellors are expected to listen to problems of learners and exercise empathy and unconditional positive regard whereas disciplinarians punish and reprimand bad behaviour. In schools where there is shortage of qualified manpower, senior ladies are given the roles of both counsellor and administrator. These roles have conflicting goals. This may have a negative impact on learners with wayward behaviour. The behaviour will be difficult to control, hence the desire in this study to collect data from both counsellors and disciplinarians so as to come up with intervention strategies against drug abuse by female learners.

According to Donald et al. (2010) boundaries between systems and subsystems are of paramount importance and they need to be considered. These boundaries may be rigid or flexible and affect the functionality of the system. How open a school is to its community may influence both the school's effectiveness and the community itself. There is need to assess the positive and negative practices of the community and come up with best ways of utilising the positive aspects. Due to multiculturalism in farming communities the school may be threatened by some of the norms and values which may lead to eradication of good behaviour. For example, cane cutters are known to be smokers of cannabis, if there is unmonitored interaction between learners and such workers drugs will be trafficked into schools (Mangwaya, 2023). This knowledge about boundaries thus assisted the researcher in coming up with strategies of mitigating drug abuse.

The last element in the patterns of functions is time and development. This parameter holds that all human beings change and develop over time. Children develop through the stages of infancy, childhood to adolescence. This has effects on the family and the school's function and development since developmental changes in one system have an impact on the developmental changes in other systems. The development in one system influences the development in another and this happens in a continuous cycle (Donald et al., 2010) It is clear from this illustration that as children develop physically they also develop socially and psychologically. These developments have impact on

behaviour changes which may be negative or positive. Thus, it is important to understand learners in their developmental systems. Hence, this study was carried out in school systems where children were observed as they developed from childhood to adulthood. This research study covered the age group twelve to eighteen/nineteen years of age, that is, from the onset of puberty to early adulthood. This stage is critical because there are a lot of biological and psychological developments that take place in the development of the child. These developments influence behaviour changes which may be positive or negative. Therefore, in order to come up with mitigating strategies the research included these learners as participants.

The Eco systemic perspective has influenced the work of Urie Bronfenbrenner to a great extent. Having explored this theory, it is now pertinent to analyse in detail Bronfenbrenner's Ecological theory. Most of his ideas are embedded in the Eco systemic perspective.

2.2.4 Urie Bronfenbrenner's model of child development.

For quite a long time efforts have been made to understand how the development of children is shaped by social contexts. Bronfenbrenner (1979) made an impact in shaping people's understanding of how different levels of systems in the social context interact in the process of child development. Bronfenbrenner identified four factors which are central to child developmental process (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These factors are:

- Person factors, for example, the temperament of the child or parent.
- Process factors, for example, the forms of interaction that occur in the family.
- Context factors, for example, families, school or local community.
- Time factors, for example, changes over time in the child's development.

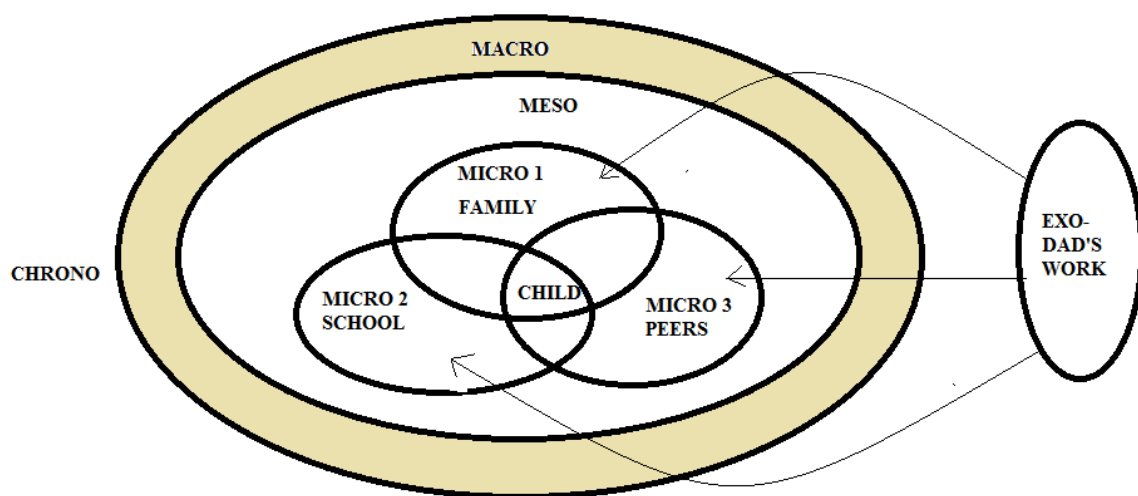
Bronfenbrenner (1979) adds that interactions that occur face-to-face are most significant in shaping long term aspects of development, for example, relationships between mother or caregiver and child, teacher and learner and child and peers. Bronfenbrenner termed these proximal interactions. The aspect of proximal interaction is very significant in this theory and is centered on the power of reciprocity. There are

reciprocal influences in families, peer groups, classroom, school and local communities. Therefore, proximal interactions are affected by person factors and social contexts.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) human development is largely influenced by different types of environmental systems. This theory tries to explain why people portray different behaviours in different environments. The behaviour of a child in the presence of his or her parents may be different from that child's behaviour at school. The theory holds that people encounter different environments throughout their life span and this may influence their behaviour in different ways. Bronfenbrenner then identified five nested systems which influence the development of a child, namely; the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystem. These levels are interdependent as was discussed earlier on under Eco systemic perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The above systems are going to be discussed in more detail as the researcher tries to justify the theory's relevance to the current study.

The diagram below will help the researcher to explain the interaction and interdependence of the systems that surround the child's development. The child is the central point. All other activities are taking place around the child and they influence the child's development in a positive or negative way.

Figure 2. Nested systems surrounding the child's development.



Source: Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979)

2.2.4.1. The microsystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes the microsystem as the direct environment one has in life, such as a family, friends, classmates, teachers, neighbours and other people whom the child has direct contact with and this is described as proximal interaction. This level is the most influential in the development of a child. The theory states that the child is not just a recipient of the experiences they have when they socialise with other people in the microsystem environment but the child contributes to the construction of such an environment. Bronfenbrenner (1979) alludes to the patterns of functions as has already been discussed. That is, microsystems involve roles, relationships and patterns of daily activities that shape many aspects of cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual development.

It is important at this juncture to look at the three components of the microsystem in detail, namely; the family, school and peers. The researcher feels that an understanding of these variables may assist in coming up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners.

2.2.4.1.1. Family

Before indulging into much detail, it is important to understand the family as an entity. Roostin (2018) came up with four definitions of a family:

- A social group comprising two or more people with blood ties, marriage or adoption. They can be described as small social groups consisting mostly of fathers, mothers and children.
- A group of people with marriage, birth and adoption ties aimed at creating, maintaining culture and improving the physical, mental, emotional and social development of each family member.

- Two or more individuals who live in one household because of blood, marriage or adoption relationships. They interact with each other, have their own role, create and maintain culture.
- A smallest unit of society consisting of the head of the family and several people who gather and live in a place under one roof in a state of interdependence.

The above definitions show that a family consists of people with blood ties, the members usually stay together forming a household, they are a unity of people who interact and communicate with one another and they play roles of husband and wife, father and mother, children and relatives. Thus, a family maintains common culture largely derived from a wider common culture. Therefore, a child's behaviour is better understood within the confines of his/her family. Urie Bronfenbrenner in his Ecological Theory argues that it is important to understand the family from which the child comes from because the family has proximal interaction with the child from childhood through all the stages of development (Blazevic, 2016), hence a family plays an important role in the social development of a child.

According to Blazevic (2016) a parent's upbringing styles are of paramount importance to children's behaviour. Negative or positive patterns of behaviour portrayed by children are outcomes of social relations that the child acquired from the family and are directly influenced by parental styles of the family. The researcher feels it is important to have a look at these parental styles. This will help understand the behaviour of the children and may help to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners.

Berk (2002), as quoted by Blazevic (2016), described four types of parental styles which may influence the behaviour of a child. These are:

- Authoritarian. This is when parents control everything and they do not show signs of love, attachment or warmth. Consequently, a child from such a family may have low pro-social behaviour, filled with aggression, being quarrelsome, bad temper and self-destructiveness. Such children have high chances of abusing drugs.

- Authoritative. The parents in this case are caring, sensitive to their children's needs, empathetic and they have limits to their children. A child from such a family develops a high self-esteem and usually produces higher academic results. Research has also shown that children from families where there is open communication exhibit desirable skills and potential in solving problems (Stenberg & Silk, 2002).
- Indifferent. The parents are not caring, not concerned and are apathetic. They are not worried about their children's behaviour and achievements. The children are neglected and are not supervised. Resultantly, the children may have bad behaviour and drug abuse in some cases.
- Indulgent. In this case the parents have a warm and caring relationship, but with too much pampering, children from such a family may become impulsive, irritable, spoilt and without self-control. This may result in depression and ant-social behaviour (Cherry, 2022).

Parents are the first teachers in the child's development. They therefore have a lot of influence in the socialisation of the child and their behaviour development. According to Faith (2020) it is not only parental styles that affect a child's social development but also the socio-economic status of the family may have influence on the child's behaviour. Research by Martineli, Pizeta and Loureiro (2018) identified some risk factors that may influence children's behaviour. One of the identified risk factors is socio-economy. This may affect the child's developmental outcome resulting in maladaptation. Zanolli (2015) also adds that family problems such as conflicts, mental problems, gender violence and involvement with drug trafficking, criminal behaviour or alcoholism by legal guardians may cause despondence in children. This may result in children from such families abusing drugs.

World Health Organisation also noted that families have influence on a child's development and cited maternal depression as one of the risk factors that affects child development, impacting on their behaviour (WHO, 2017a). The same research identified an array of risk factors that may affect child development. These include low social status, single parent, physical abuse, low maternal education and drug and

alcohol abuse. Conners-Burrow (2016) states that early contact with maternal depression symptoms increased the risk of children presenting internalising and externalising behavioural problems during school age years. All these researches support Urie Bronfenbrenner's idea of the interdependence of the systems. The child's social development is nested in the family. Therefore, in order to understand a learner's behaviour there is need to understand the family's background. Although this research is centered on schools, the family cannot be left out. In order to understand why female learners, abuse drugs and come up with possible strategies to curb this behaviour, there is need to understand the complexity of the family.

Figueirido and Dias (2012) opine that divorce is another factor that may influence children's behaviour during childhood. Divorce can be a very stressful experience for a child during his or her childhood. As has already been noted in the previous discussions, the family is a part of other contexts and systems which insert cultural and communication contexts that affect family behaviour. The child is one of the smallest units that forms a family. Thus, whatever happens to the family as a whole will affect the child directly or indirectly (Faith, 2020). Figueirido and Dias (2012) add that the family system is influenced by the level of family organisation. A family is atomic and individualistic. Parents influence their children's behaviour and, in turn, children influence their parents' behaviour. Thus, the family plays a pivotal role in transmitting a social self. Children have their first relationship experience in the family and the family has a key role in their children's social development. The family is thus regarded as the primary source of socialisation. Children first acquire values, attitudes and behaviours accepted by society from their family. The basic rules are learnt in the family (Faith, 2020). Roostin (2018) echoes that the family is regarded as a place of learning.

Blazevic (2016) augmented the above ideas by coming up with theories of psychology of development that support the idea that early childhood experiences have a bearing on the behaviour of a child in later stages of social development. These theories include the theory of attachment as propounded by John Bowlby, who emphasised the importance of early relationship of parent/caregiver and child in child development and its great influence on the individual's future social relationships. According to Cherry

(2022), Ainsworth expanded the attachment theory adding that children who have been highly connected to their mothers as babies have a tendency to develop stronger self-respect and better self-confidence. They become independent in school. They have more successful social relationships and experience less anxiety (Cherry, 2022). Such children may manage to develop trust. On the other hand, those children who do not gain trust in early childhood may suffer from behaviour disorders. Social Cultural theory is another theory which emphasised the influence of early childhood development on later behaviour. According to Blazevic (2016), Vygotsky suggests that early childhood socialisation patterns acquired in the family have a bearing on the child's future relationships with other people. This is because a child learns new cognitive and social skills through interaction with adults, that is, the family members.

Linking the above discussion with Bronfenbrenner's ideas makes it clear that what happens in the family has a bearing on the child's behaviour. The relationships in the family influence what happens to the child as he/she develops. For instance, in families where the father is an alcoholic or where alcohol is sold, the child may see nothing wrong in taking alcohol even at a tender age. Where the parents are too strict and use authoritarian parental style children may tend to be rebellious resulting in delinquent behaviour. As has already been noted in the Eco systemic perspective, contradictory roles may lead to unbecoming behaviour. Parents are supposed to be the bearers of the family's norms and values and are role models to their children. If they do not behave well the children may tend to behave so as well.

The issue of family relationships was further explored by Jabbari and Rouster (2021) who posited that unhealthy marital relationships and weak paternal or maternal figures can expose learners to drug abuse. Permanent family problems may lead children to experiment with drugs and those living with relatives with poor family relations have a higher chance of drug use. This is because they lack guidance and yardstick rules and limits. When children lack affection from the family and receive threatening treatment and are always punished they tend to resort to delinquent behaviours such as drug abuse (Jabbari & Rouster, 2021). Therefore, the family's interaction with the child plays a pivotal role in moulding the child's behaviour. This is why data for this research was

collected from the learners themselves so as to get their views concerning their interaction with family members, so as to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse against secondary school female learners.

2.2.4.1.2. School

The school is also an important part of the microsystem. Children spend most of their time at school and this influences their behaviour. The relationship between the teachers and learners, learners and their close friends as well as learners and administrators influence the learners' development and behaviour (*The Pediatrics*, 2017). The behaviour of teachers in front of their learners is important. Teachers are role models and children learn through observation and at times imitate such behaviour (Bandura, 1986). It was important in this research to make an analysis of the relationships that existed in the schools under study, so as to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners.

According to Osher, Kendziora, Spier and Garibald (2014) the school plays an integral role in the development of children. This is because learners spend most of their time with colleagues and teachers at the school. The school is regarded as a social microcosm of the broader society and reciprocally influences communities. Martinezi (2017) adds that teachers and other aspects of the school play a pivotal role in children's behaviour. The school resources at the learner's school contribute significantly to the learner's behaviour. The child's chances of engaging in risk behaviour may be influenced by the school's resources. For example, a school with sufficient resources, health curriculum and good teacher-learner ratio will have a low rate of risk taking behaviour such as violence, alcohol use and dangerous actions. Blazevic (2018) pointed out that the school is a community where learners grow and they should feel successful and satisfied. They should show their knowledge, potential and skills. Research by Sammons, Sylva, Melihuish, Siray, Taggart, Senees and Toth (2014) revealed that attending a school with a high percentage of learners with special needs indicated poorer social outcomes. So, schools could be influential in the social development of the learner. They should help all learners feel welcomed, accepted and

respected and should encourage the overall development of the learners. Failure to achieve this may result in delinquent behaviour (Martinez, 2017).

According to Osher et al. (2014) the school plays a pivotal role in protecting and promoting safety, motivation, relationships and support for positive learner outcomes. Nevertheless, some schools may employ unpleasant and non-inclusionary discipline which may yield negative outcomes. Thus, a school is seen as a social institution which may have negative or positive impact on learners.

The school climate and learning conditions are also very significant in shaping the learners' behaviour. A conducive learning environment is important for behaviour moulding (Martinez, 2017). Osher et al. (2014) concur saying that learning conditions include physical and emotional safety, challenge and engagement, support for learners and their connection to the school. These include the social and emotional competencies of the learners. Thus, according to the theory under discussion the school is a very important part of the microsystem because it influences the behaviour of the learners.

The report by the National Research Council as quoted by Osher et al. (2014) asserts that one of the most consistent findings in the early childhood literature is that an emotionally warm and positive approach in situations leads to constructive behaviour in learners. The same report claims that the school may expose learners to physical and emotional violence, boredom, alienation, academic failure and frustration. Osher et al. (2014) add that conditions for learning are shaped by caring and supportive interpersonal relationships as well as by positive approaches to discipline and effective classroom management practices. This is why in the current research disciplinary chairpersons and school heads were involved. According to Martinez (2017) school heads carry the tone and culture of the school on their shoulders.

This idea of the school climate as a determinant factor of behaviour supports John Dewey's Social Field theory which purports that success and failure are well defined in the social field and the school plays a key role as part of the social field (Osher et al., 2014). According to this theory, family, school and community are the main social fields.

These social fields are critically important for each stage of the child's development. In each social field there are social task demands. Success or failure regarding these demands are determined by the adequacy of behavioural responses of the individual to specific task demands within each main social field at each stage of life. These social fields are said to have natural raters that define the task demands and these include parents, teachers and significant peers (Osher et al., 2019). Faith (2020) explains that success or failure determines if the individual fits in the social context. Behaviour traits such as aggression, academic problems, drug abuse and other behavioural problems could be viewed as not residing in the child but also as inherent in the social fields of family, school and community. Therefore, if schools fail to function as protective factors negative results may emanate in form of bad behaviour.

The school curriculum is also significant as it directly interacts with learners. Blazevic (2016) emphasises the importance of the school curriculum and says it should be well planned. Activities in the school curriculum should be all encompassing and should have different school activities that enhance the learner's knowledge, skills and capabilities. Thus, the school curriculum must cater for all learners' abilities, that is, academic as well as co-curricular activities. Drug abuse and other delinquent behaviours are a result of non-involvement and such will come as compensatory behaviour. Faith (2020) adds that besides building up the learner academically, the school should also instil problem solving skills because they are essential for the development of a learner. These social skills may help the learner to analyse situations and come up with solutions and they should be able to strategise and re-strategise. If a learner does not have social skills he/she will not be successful in life, hence, a school plays an integral role by helping learners to interact positively with peers and teachers (Faith, 2020). The current research thus agrees with Bronfenbrenner that the school has a proximal influence on the learner. Therefore, the researcher assessed some of the schools' policies in order to come up with the strategies to eliminate drug abuse among female learners in secondary schools in Chiredzi district.

2.2.4.1.3. Peers.

Having discussed how the learner interacts with the family and school, it is important to examine another component of the microsystem. Peers play an important role in the social development of a child. Some behaviours portrayed by children are a result of the type of friends they interact with. As the children grow up they may suffer from peer pressure and peer influence (Blazevic, 2016).

Jacobsen (2021) asserts that peer pressure is when a choice is made to do something one would otherwise not do but has done because he/she wants to be accepted and valued by friends. Thus, peer pressure has a big influence on a learner's decision making. Friends play a significant role in decision making. If a child hangs out with people doing certain things there is a high chance of the child following suit (Shehan, 2021).

According to Blazevic (2016), as youngsters grow up they want to be accepted and recognised, especially by peers. Hence, peer pressure might cause teenagers to choose same clothes, hairstyle or jewellery as their friends. They may also choose to break laws as a way of conformity. This idea is supported by Tajfel and Turner's (1986) social identity theory. This theory suggests that individuals are defined by their group memberships and this impacts on intergroup behaviour. Vinney (2019) posits that social identity theory is built on three cognitive components, namely; social categorisation, social identification and social comparison. This suggests that the sense of who an individual is depends on the group to which they belong. Vinney (2019) elaborates saying that people are categorised according to their class, race and background. In the current research, the researcher is analysing what is happening in rural farming day schools. These schools may have traits different from urban day schools or boarding schools. In social identification individuals adopt the identity of the group that they belong to. They develop emotional significance and self-esteem around that identification. This can be seen where teenagers change the way they talk or the words they use. They may engage in risk behaviour such as breaking the law, not working hard in school, taking illicit drugs or drinking alcohol. They do all these things in order to identify with a certain group (Shehan, 2021).

To augment Tajfel's ideas Muldoon (2021) suggested that peer pressure should be observed through the lens of Social learning theory where there could be social reinforcement. That is, individuals receive consequences in relation to certain situations. Youngsters may be afraid to lose their friends and will try to stay in line to maintain their adherence to the group. For example, they may fear to be judged if they do not drink alcohol at a party or at school when others would be drinking. The individual will say, 'If others can do it why can't I?' Muldoon (2021) adds the concept of modelling behaviour, where individuals learn new behaviour by emulating others. Learners may take drugs when they see others doing it. Cognitive process is another concept in social learning theory. This is defined by Muldoon (2021) as a thought process associated with situations. These solutions can lead to increased involvement if they are positive or decreased involvement if they are negative. For instance, if one thinks that drinking makes one more intelligent, it means one will continue to drink. This concept is also supported by Vygotsky's Social-cultural theory where he emphasised cognitive processes for children's social behaviour and social interactions. The child learns new cognitive and social skills through interaction with significant others (Blazevic, 2016).

According to Blazevic (2016) children want acceptance and recognition, especially by their peers, so they tend to behave in a manner that makes them popular. If they are not accepted or unpopular they may feel rejected, neglected and isolated. Consequently, they become hyperactive, aggressive and egoistic. This shows that as a child grows up he/she needs support from the peers. Supportive behaviour from peers enhances the child's functioning and resilience to difficulties. It yields healthy emotions and comforts that protect the child against anxiety and stress.

Jacobsen (2021) came up with types of peer pressure that may influence a child's behaviour:

- a) Negative versus positive peer pressure. Children can be influenced by their peers in constructive or destructive ways, especially when it comes to drugs. Children are more likely to take risks in groups rather than when they are alone. Youngsters have strong influence on one another. They want to be accepted by their peers so they reciprocate by accepting what their peers do. This could be in a positive or negative

way. Positive peer pressure yields good behaviour whilst the reverse is true for negative peer pressure. For the purpose of this research, the researcher concentrated on negative peer pressure. Some examples of negative peer pressure include; if friends are skipping school one may also agree to skip because he or she does not want to be the only one to show up at school. If friends abuse prescription drugs he or she may steal some out of the parents' medicine cabinet at home so as to fit in. According to Shehan (2021), a study carried out by the National Institution on Drug Abuse revealed that teens were more likely to act out risky behaviours if they knew their friends were watching. Thus, drug and alcohol users like to spend time with people with the same habits as theirs. They also tend to solicit for more people to join them. In a school set up such learners may form their own cliques. Hence, it is important to come up with strategies to discourage such clicks in schools in order to eradicate the spread of drug abuse by female learners.

- b) Spoken versus silent pressure. Silent peer pressure involves modelling some behaviours without saying anything. For example, teens who are considered to be part of the popular crowd may be seen smoking cigarettes or weed. This may lead others to believe that smoking is a desirable thing to do. Silent pressure may involve observing peers dressing in a certain way or listening to certain type of music. This, in turn, may pressure others to like the same type of dressing or music. Jacobsen (2021) observed that peers have a greater influence on adolescents than do parents. Peers can encourage friends to use drugs and alcohol or tease them for refusing to try them, which leads to initiation into drinking and drug use.
- c) Direct peer pressure. This can either be spoken or unspoken. It can include coercing or forcing a person to choose between using drugs and doing something negative. There is the idea of imposing with no other option but to comply. This is normally done by bullies.
- d) Indirect pressure. This is normally in a situation where there is a popular opinion. A large group is doing it then it becomes the in-thing and legitimate.

From the above discussion it is evident that peer pressure plays a pivotal role in behaviour moulding, especially for adolescents. This age group coincides with the age group under discussion in the study, making Bronfenbrenner's theory more relevant. To

come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners the current research included the learners themselves because they are well-versed with how peers may influence one another into indulgence.

The last aspect to be discussed under peer pressure is peer victimisation. According to Bursal (2017) peer victimisation is when a child receives threats from peers, which causes physical and emotional damage. The child is victimised by peers by being beaten or teased, actions which lead to loneliness and absenteeism. The child may end up having low self-esteem, depression, external behaviour problems and academic failures. That child may fail to actively engage in classroom activities resulting in failure to emotionally adjust. This could also deter the child from accessing opportunities and resources that are important for social and economic development.

In conclusion, it is clear that the microsystem is an integral part in the development of a child. So, in order to understand learners' behaviour it is important to look at the school attended by the learner, the family background and the friends the learner hangs out with. This could help come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in rural farming areas in Chiredzi district. This is why the researcher chose the Ecological theory to assist in coming up with the strategies

2.2.4.2. The mesosystem

The second level as propounded by Bronfenbrenner (1979) is the mesosystem. This is a set of microsystems that continuously interact with one another. For example, what happens in the family or peer group can influence how children respond at school and vice versa. If a child is not supported by his or her family or parents he/she may experience care and understanding from a neighbour, peer or teacher. This may have a negative impact on the child's behaviour in that a child who is neglected by his/her parents may develop negative attitudes towards teachers and may withdraw from other peers and become a loner. That child may not be assertive.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) further explains that the mesosystem provides the connection between the structures of the child's microsystem such as connection influenced by her experiences at home and at school. Some delinquent behaviour like drug abuse is a

result of the child's experiences at home or what she experiences in her proximal interaction. If the relationship in the proximal interaction breaks down the child will not have the tools to explore other parts of the environment. This hinders the child's development. Children looking for affirmation that should be present in the child/parent relationship or child/other-important adult relationship look for attention in inappropriate places. These deficiencies manifest themselves in adolescence as anti-social behaviour, lack of self-discipline and inability to provide self-direction (Paquette & Ryan, 2015). In connection with this, Covington (2008) asserts that a history of abuse increases the likelihood that females will abuse alcohol and drugs.

The interactions between family members also fall under the mesosystem. That is, father/mother relationship may have an indirect effect on the development of the child. For example, the parents' divorce may have an influence on the behaviour of a child. According to Ribeiro cited by Figueirido et al. (2012) divorce is so rampant that one in ten children live with only one of the parents and normally the mother. This sudden change where the child who had been guided by both parents suddenly becomes the responsibility of one parent may give rise to problems for the child. Family roles and functions may become chaotic. At times, due to divorce, families may have financial problems due to changes of residential home and school which affects the child. The style of living is abruptly changed. Ribeiro notes that divorce is a complicated process which gives rise to multiple changes in the lives of the affected family members. Divorce may cause nasty experiences including domestic violence and negligence. If this happens to the mother it may also affect children psychologically and socially. This may lead to long lasting pain causing confusion, anger and resentment through aggressive behaviour (Figueirido et al., 2012). Blazevic (2016) comments that such experiences may affect children emotionally as well and some may fail to adapt and may resort to drug abuse.

King (2001), in Blazevic (2016) postulated that divorce can interfere with the child's development through three areas:

- the ability to regulate aggression, the child's feelings of pain generated by the absence of a parent may lead a child to defend him/herself with anger and aggression.
- the ability of the child to separate themselves emotionally from the parents,
- the identity, that is, if there is lack of a male parent, children may feel abandoned and rejected.

From the above points it can be concluded that the father and mother are the foundations to healthy child development. Children develop a sense of belonging, stability and security if their parents are around. Thus, divorce leads to an increase in the risk of social problems, substance abuse and academic decline. Research has shown that children with divorced parents had more problems in school than those whose parents were still together (Robertson & Goldstein, 2009). Therefore, if there is disequilibrium in the family, children tend to have rowdy behaviour resulting in drug abuse in some cases.

The mesosystem also involves the interaction between the child's teacher and his parents (Paquette & Ryan, 2015). If there is no interaction between the teacher and the parent the child may tend to have a double standard life. This theory suggests that there must be effective communication between the school and the parent. Lack of communication may lead to bad behaviour such as drug abuse. Paquette and Ryan (2015) further suggest that this theory has implications for the practice of teaching because knowing about the child's home environment may help in assisting those learners with behaviour problems. It is possible for our educational system to make up for the deficiencies. It seems that it is necessary for schools and teachers to provide stable long-term relationships. However, Bronfenbrenner believes that the primary relationship needs to be with someone who can provide a sense of caring for it to last a lifetime (Sarah, 2012). This suggests that although schools and teachers provide an important secondary role they cannot provide complexity of interaction that primary adults can provide. Bronfenbrenner says that we should foster societal attitudes that value the work done on behalf of children at all levels: parents, teachers, extended family, mentors, work supervisors and legislators. Thus, the purpose of this research

study was to try and understand learners in their social environment such as the school and probably come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners. There is need to understand learners' behaviour in relation to their environment.

2.2.4.3. The exosystem

The third level which is the exosystem includes other systems in which a child is not directly involved but may influence the people who have proximal relationship with him/her in his/her microsystems, for example, parents' workplace, brother's peer group or teacher's involvement in a local community organisation (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Given that the area of this study is a rural farming environment, it will be important to note how parents' work place and location of schools may influence female learners' behaviour. Some of the workers in these farms go on night shifts leaving their children on their own. This may have adverse implications on the development of a child, especially the girl child. Most farm workers are low income earners and some of the families do not have stable marital relationships. Some are single headed families, and in others, wives stay in rural homes to supplement the husbands' low income earnings. Therefore, it was necessary for the researcher analyse these relationships and find out if this could influence drug abuse among female learners and probably come up with ways to eradicate the problem.

The location of schools falls under the exosystem and it was therefore important to consider this in the current study. The schools under study are located in the eastern part of the country which is close to Mozambique and South Africa, both of which are known for drug abuse, with South Africa occupying the 10th position in the world for drug abuse (Chakravarthy et. al, 2013). Chiredzi District is close to Mozambique which is notorious for producing *musombodhiya* and *chikirango*, illicit alcohol trafficked into Zimbabwe (*The Zimbabwe*, 2014). Using Bronfenbrenner's ideas, it was important to look at the relationship between the location of the schools and the female learners' behaviour and find out if behaviour was influenced by location and possibly come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse.

2.2.4.4. The macrosystem

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) the macrosystem is the fourth level in the ecological system. This level encompasses dominant social and economic structures, values, beliefs and practices that influence all other social systems. For example, a culture value may include obeying authority and senior members of the community. This value will then influence the proximal interactions in the child's microsystems and even the whole mesosystem. To Bronfenbrenner, the macrosystem is a combination of the wider community and the whole social system. School and family values have influence on the child's behaviour.

For the benefit of this study, the researcher looked at the school culture and how it may influence the behaviour of learners at particular schools. According to Melesse and Molla (2015) school culture refers to the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes and written and unwritten rules that govern the operations of the school. It involves the physical and emotional safety of the learners, the orderliness of the classroom and public spaces or the extent to which the school accepts racial, ethnic, linguistic or cultural diversity. Chittenden (2020) adds that school culture embodies the mission statements and values and this has an impact on the entire learning of the school. Garrick (2019) asserts that the culture of the school is composed of parents, teachers, administrators, and the community as the main players. This is because a school is a miniature society; it is a microcosm of the society. Thus, the school is influenced by the society. According to Garrick, there is an interconnected relationship of all stakeholders in the school. The responsible authority and the community dictate how the school is run by the administrators and this is cascaded to the learners. The relationship of the stakeholders is enacted to support the school's mission statement, vision, values and models. If there is integration between the school and the community the members of the community would be able to freely express their feelings. There would be mutual relationship between the community and the school resulting in teachers collaborating with learners. Teachers will then be able to engage with learners giving them voice and agency in their school.

In support of the above ideas Chittenden (2020) quoted UCDS' mission statement which reads:

To design a culture of inquiry is essential to meaningful learning. Through this environment, we have cultivated reflective, collaborative and skilful thinkers who ignite positive change in the community.

This is an example of a mission statement which is all encompassing and is bend on moulding a learner who will perfectly fit in the community. The cultivation of collaborative skills is important in the upbringing of a child. In a way, the learners will be positive thinkers and feel responsible for their actions and the community they live in. Thus, a positive mission statement, if well implemented, may help learners to be responsible citizens. For a school to have an effective culture, all stakeholders should be dedicated and committed to the implementation of the mission and values of the school.

According to Shama and Patidar (2018) school discipline framework should be coined from the school's culture. Learners are expected to follow directions from teachers. They should be respectful of adults and colleagues, respect their rights and others' properties. The school should set out rules of high standard and encourage appropriate conduct which should provide guidelines for acceptable behaviour. Garrick (2019) was also of the opinion that discipline in school was important in the teaching and guidance of learners. School teachers are expected to respond logically, appropriately and consistently discourage disruptive or inappropriate behaviour. The learners should be treated with equity and fairness. The learners should also be given the opportunity to correct and regulate their behaviour. Parents should also be involved so that the school community appreciate the interventions taken by the school to curb bad behaviour (Chittenden, 2020).

It is evident from the above discussion that the culture of the school determines learners' behaviour. Schools have different cultures that are influenced by the school tone and ethos. Some schools have rules and regulations which they strictly enforce while learners are strictly expected to follow them. The way these regulations are enforced influence the behaviour of learners of that particular school. The schools under

the current study are Tongaat Hulett schools. As Responsible Authority, Tongaat Hulett has influence on the culture and values of the school. The learners do not directly interact with the responsible authority but feel the negative and positive forces involved as they interact with those in their proximal interaction, namely; the parents (as employees of the company) and the teachers. The way the Responsible Authority interacts with the school has a bearing on learners' behaviour and attitude. For instance, it is the responsibility of the company to ferry learners to and from school. If learners are not ferried on time they may be left exposed to the environment where no one would be looking after them as they wait for the buses. That time when learners are left idle is very critical and influential. That is normally the time they may start experimenting on different substances. Therefore, to strengthen the analysis of strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners, it was of paramount importance to make an assessment of these interactions as well as the culture and values of the school. The researcher analysed the school culture as presented through the school mission statement, vision and rules.

2.2.4.5. The chronosystem

The last level, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), is the chronosystem. This affects the interaction between systems and their influences on individual development, for example, families and all the systems in which developing children are involved are continuously changing and developing themselves. There might be changes in the family such as the death of a parent which means the child is left with a single parent. Political changes are some of the changes that may be brought about by changing times such as the 2000 land invasions that saw some changes in the structure of the company. Some parents lost their jobs in the process (De Villiers, 2003). Staff movement falls in this category as well. Economic constraints in the country forced some teachers to leave the country and in some cases this brought with it instability in schools. Shizha and Kariwo (2022) posit that the education system in Zimbabwe is collapsing because of poverty and many teachers are leaving the country for greener pastures. Natural disasters such as Cyclone *Idai* and the current pandemic, Covid-19

are also in the chronosystem. These changes and catastrophes may have negative impact on the learner. It was, therefore, relevant for the researcher to make an assessment of the social, political and economic factors which may influence the behaviour of the learners and come up with best ways of assisting the learners to avoid indulgence in drugs.

Donald et al. (2010) concludes that this theory sees different levels and groups of people as interaction systems where the function of the whole is dependent on the interaction between all parts. Paquette and Ryan (2016) add that this theory has implications where they say that the school is a system with different parts such as its staff, its students, its curriculum and its administration, and that these parts are interdependent. Female learners' behaviour should be understood in this context.

It was necessary in this study to assess how schools were affected by the current pandemic Covid-19. The disease brought with it lockdowns and closure of schools worldwide and Zimbabwe was not spared. A study by Youngminds in London revealed that the closure of schools impacted negatively on the mental health of the youth (Watson, 2020). According to this study schools play an important role in supporting the mental wellness of the learners. Through accessing learning resources, the learners will have their academic achievements obtained. Lack of this will be detrimental and this particularly affects those learners who already have behaviour problems and those who come from poor backgrounds. Ebohon (2021) adds that the implementation of lockdowns and closure of schools resulted in learners failing to communicate with their teachers directly. This resulted in learners feeling stressed, anxious, isolated and depressed. The schools could not provide emotional and social support to the learners as was normally the case. Crawford (2020) echoes that some families, especially in African countries, lacked motivation for learning because of limited resources. Crawford (2020) further points out that vulnerable children had no opportunities to escape from pressures of an adverse home environment. Schools provide protection since learners engage with responsible adults, that is, the teachers who care about their well-being and monitor their behaviour. The learners trust their teachers who, in turn, provide pastoral care. Closure of schools brought with it uncertainty to learners. It represented

loss of a safe and stable environment. The pandemic has also brought with it bereavement in families. Some learners have lost their parents, caregivers and guardians (Dessy, Gninafon, Tiberti & Tiberti, 2021). This undoubtedly shows that Covid-19 may have long lasting effects on the learner. The learner's daily routine life was disturbed, thus impacting negatively on mental health. Risk factors such as domestic violence and alcohol consumption increased and services such as counselling which the learners received from the schools were stopped (Watson, 2020). Research carried out in Africa insinuated that in Kenya girl children reported being harassed by their fathers, and that their household chores increased. In Malawi, South Sudan and Tanzania the study reports that some girls were forced into marriages (Ebohon, 2021). In Nigeria the study by Dessy et al. (2021) asserts that girls between twelve and eighteen years of age were adversely affected by the pandemic. A handful of them did not report back to school when schools were opened. The attendance probabilities were reduced by 6.94 per cent.

From the above discussion it can be argued that the chronosystem is important in understanding what happens to children as they grow up. There are a number of unforeseen events that may emerge and these may have a negative effect on the well-being of the learner. It was important in this research to examine if schools under study were also affected and to come up with strategies to reduce drug abuse among female learners.

The Ecological theory is, therefore, relevant for the present study because of its basic tenets. That is, the interaction within the systems at all levels influences the child's behaviour. Those learners negatively affected by the nested systems may eventually seek refuge in delinquent behaviour such as smoking and heavy drinking. This theory thus enhanced the analysis of strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners because it goes deeper to the root cause of some behaviour.

2.2.5 The Feminist theory

Having looked at the Ecological theory in detail it is important now to look at the Feminist theory. The ecological theory unveiled the interaction between the child and

the environment that surrounds him/her in general during development. The Feminist theory will augment by exploring further on information relating specifically to females so as to come up with a complete analysis of the female learners' experiences. This may help to come up with strategies that are relevant to female learners.

Crossman (2017) posits that the Feminist Theory is a major branch of theory within the sociology that shifts its assumptions, analytical lens and topical focus away from the male viewpoint and experience and places its focus towards women. According to Anderson (2019) most researches done on drug abuse excluded women, who were viewed through male lens. Since the early 1980s research now uses the gender lens where researchers take cognisance of the impact of social and cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity on individual and group drug abuse. This means that the society and culture assign gender and behaviour is said to be appropriate or inappropriate as prescribed by the specific sex (Anderson, 2019). Fischler (2018) adds that drug policy discussions in countries such as America often focused on men, leaving the women's experiences ignored and silenced. The Feminist theory illuminates social problems, trends and issues that are otherwise overlooked or misidentified by the historically dominant male perspective within social theory. The theory advocates for people to see specific experiences of women, including those who use drugs (Fischler, 2018). Crossman (2017) adds that these factors include discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sex and gender.

Merriam (2017) defines the feminist theory as the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. Thus, feminists advocate for equal rights between men and women. The ground should be level for both. Crossman (2017) noted that the Feminist theory aims to understand the nature of gender inequality and observe critically, women's social roles, experiences and interests. Guerrero (2015) points out that theorists and practitioners in the field of alcohol and drug abuse have ignored the experiences unique to women. Guerrero (2015) adds that females face unique social stigmatisation as a result of their drug use and they may also face stigmatisation as they try to receive treatment. They are treated as unfit parents and fallen women. To support this notion, women from Eastern Europe and Central Asia held a meeting in Berlin to

express their sentiments. According to Fischler (2018) the meeting revealed that women were being ill-treated by doctors through violence and were also sexually abused, criminalised and stigmatised within the community. From some of the discussions from the meeting, women who use drugs believe that they cannot share their experiences with families because of the way family members might react. One woman said:

Some people treat you with pity and the majority with contempt and disgust.

Sometimes you feel that the best option is to die from an overdose.

That was a reaction from one of the participants (Fischler, 2018). From this perspective, feminist approach thus, supports harm reduction which encourages people to shun false distinction between good and bad women, those that deserve support and those that do not. Women need to be listened to and come up with solutions. (Fischler, 2018; Chang, 2019). Chang also adds that women who use drugs need their voices to be heard and to be cared for; not to be pitied, shunned, segregated and rendered useless and irrational.

The National Institute on Drugs and Addiction (NIDA, 2020) asserts that women face a myriad of challenges when it comes to substance use due to sex differences based on biology and gender differences. They have issues related to hormones, menstrual cycle, fertility, pregnancy, breast feeding and menopause. Women have unique reasons for abusing drugs, for example, controlling weight, fighting exhaustion, coping with pain, and trying to get rid of mental health problems. Ettore (2021) suggests reasons why it is necessary to use the Feministic approach when dealing with the problem of women abusing drugs. The following are some of the reasons:

- Feminist perspective moves beyond masculinity truth.
- Substance abuse is a gender illuminating notion.
- Help to come up with women-oriented methodology.
- Women have unique reasons for abusing drugs.
- It will open avenues for more work for women by women

The feminist approach thus, addresses psychological issues through the integration of services which are relevant to the culture rendering women the chance to improve their

socio-economic conditions (Crossman, 2017). The Feminist theory analyses inequality and advocates the promotion of women's interests. Since women are marginalised, their challenges are not looked into critically. Accordingly, women who abuse drugs have a variety of different treatment and psychosocial needs influenced by their backgrounds, experiences and drug problems. Guerrero (2015) posits that research has shown that alcoholic women are likely to suffer depression as compared to their male counterparts and women may turn anger on themselves rather than others. It is, therefore, important to understand females in this context in order to come up with strategies to alleviate drug abuse among female learners. Some female learners could be having problems which may lead them to delinquent behaviour.

Research by Covington (2008) shows that social and environmental factors such as gender socialisation, roles and inequality, account for many behaviour differences between men and women. Covington (2008) further posits that a history of abuse increases the likelihood that a woman will abuse alcohol and other drugs. Covington (2008) also pointed out that in one of her first studies on women and addiction, she discovered that 74 per cent of the addicted women reported sexual abuse and 77 per cent reported emotional abuse. It was further deduced that the addicted women reported more incidents of incest and rape. It is evident, therefore, that many females who abuse drugs have suffered from sexual, physical and emotional abuse. Friedman (2008) adds that women's use of drugs is a possible indicator of raising gender equality in the society and regards drug use as a denial of the passive role for the female and, hence, adoption of a more independent and rebellious lifestyle. It is the researcher's contention that there is need to analyse female learners' behaviour so as to come up with strategies that are relevant to them.

The researcher is, therefore, convinced that the Ecological and the Feminist Theories helped to get an in depth understanding of female learners' behaviour and come up with an analysis of the strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners. The learners' behaviour is influenced by the environment; that is, the school type, values and culture, the location of the school, the teachers' behaviour and also parental styles. From the feminist point of view, it was important in this research to involve female

learners and empower them to come up with remedies for drug abuse among female learners.

2.4 summary

This chapter explored the Ecological Theory and the Feminist Theory as they related to child development and how they may assist in understanding female learners' behaviour. An understanding of these theories may go a long way in coming up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviewed related literature. Hofstee (2006) describes literature review as both a summary and an explanation of the complete and current state of knowledge on a limited topic as found in academic books and journal articles. This literature review first focused on drugs commonly used by learners and then moved on to literature

based on the research questions, in order to see what is already known and what is not known concerning strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in rural farming communities. This review helped the researcher identify the gaps in knowledge which the current research study filled.

3.2 An overview of drugs commonly used by learners.

Literature related to the drugs used by learners shows that globally, learners abuse alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana. Kaliszweski (2019) posits that in the United States of America children commonly use alcohol, marijuana, opioids, stimulants and sedatives. A report by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA, 2016) elaborates that in America, alcohol is on the top of the list of drugs commonly abused by the youths, followed by cigarettes and marijuana. The Report notes that most of the learners are initiated into the use of drugs at an average age of 13 and 14 years old, cigarettes at the average age of 13.6, marijuana at an average age of 14.3 and alcohol at 14 years old (NIDA, 2016)

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA Columbia, 2011) came up with the following analysis on an American high school which had thirty students; twenty-one to twenty-two (21-22) had used alcohol, thirteen to fourteen (13-14) had smoked, eleven (11) had used marijuana and four to five (4-5) had used controlled prescription drugs, two (2) had used inhalants and one (1) student had used methamphetamine or heroin. NIDA (2017) adds that inhalants were commonly used In North America. Hickey (2006) posits that cannabis is popularly used in Britain, recording 20-25% of the total youths and young adult population who used illegal drugs. In Canada, glue and solvent sniffing is prevalent among the youths of ages fourteen (14) and fifteen (15). Recent studies by Hull (2021) show that teens continue to experiment with drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, painkillers, amphetamines and inhalants. It is evident from the above analysis that drug abuse is purely an adolescent phenomenon, hence, the relevance of the current study.

A study by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (2002) revealed that in India, 90 per cent of the women who were under study used heroin or brown

sugar, 30 per cent used alcohol, 23 per cent used minor tranquilisers, 15 per cent used cough syrup and 11 per cent used cannabis. In a research study on drug abuse among students in public secondary schools in Kenya, Chebukaka (2014) analyses countries with leading production of illegal drugs. The following observations were made; Columbia, Mexico and Jamaica were leading producers of marijuana, Bolivia, Columbia, Peru and Ecuador were leading producers of cocaine whilst Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran were leading in the production of heroin. Some African regions were also noted to be leading in the abuse of certain drugs. In a study by the National Authority for Campaign Against Alcohol and Drugs (NACADA, 2011) it was found that regions in Kenya were leading in the abuse of the following drugs: alcohol (Western and Central Nairobi), tobacco (Central Nairobi), marijuana (Coast and Western Nairobi) (Chebukaka, 2014). Thus, drug abuse is a global problem, especially among the youngsters.

UNICEF (2013) came up with a summary of the estimated number of illicit drug users in Africa in the year 2008 for age group fifteen (15) to sixty-four (64).

Table 2: Estimated number of illicit drug users in 2008 aged 15-64

	Cannabis		Opiate		Cocaine		Amphetamines	
	Lower no.	Upper no.	Lower no.	Upper no.	Lower no.	Upper no.	Lower no.	Upper no.
N. Africa	4 080000	10 390000	130 000	540 000	30000	50000	260 000	540 000
W. C. Africa	14 050000	22 040000	160 000	340 000	640 000	830 000	Cannot be calculated	
E. Africa	4 490000	9 190000	150 000	1 730000	Cannot be calculated		Cannot be calculated	
Sn. Africa	4 450000	11 170000	240 000	320 000	290 000	900 000	310 000	1 090000

Source. Adapted from: UNICEF (2013)

The tabulated information shows that there was rampant use of drugs across the African continent. Southern Africa leads in the use of cannabis and this is the region where Zimbabwe is located. According to these statistics, drug use starts at the age of fifteen (15) and this age group coincides with the current study's age group. So, there is evidence that youngsters use drugs and there is need to alleviate this problem in the behaviour of learners.

Closer to Zimbabwe is South Africa where drug abuse is prevalent. Peltzer et al. (2011) gave an overview of commonly used drugs in South Africa. This was tabulated as follows:

Table 3: Overview of illicit drugs commonly used in South Africa

Illicit drugs	Introduced/Production	Use/Practices	Price
Cannabis/dagga	16/17 th century. Cultivation of illicit appears confined to widespread cultivation of cannabis	Smoking Eating	1rand per gram. A kg of cannabis can be bought on the street of South Africa for US\$20 but in the USA the kg is US\$2300 and in UK \$3400
Mandrax	Late 1980s. During the 1980s and the early 1990s. Apartheid agents reportedly produced	The most serious abuse is when Mandrax is combined with diazepam. These	R25-R65 per tablet.

	one thousand kilograms of both Mandrax and MDMA. Now produced and sold illegally in SA.	pills are often crushed and smoked with mixture of tobacco.	
Cocaine/ crack	Cocaine not commonly available in SA prior to 1994 and the first arrest occurred in 1995. All is illegally imported.	Crack is cheaper than cocaine powder.	R150-R250 per gram but is available on street at R50 for a snatch.

Source. Adapted from: Peltzer et al. (2011)

This research study gives an elaborate analysis of drugs that are abused in South Africa showing that due to price trends of illegal drugs shown, it is quite easy to access illicit drugs in South Africa. This meant that a number of people could afford these illicit drugs.

UNICEF (2010) was more explicit on drug use in South Africa among learners. This was also tabulated to show the prevalence of drug use among grade 8-11 learners by gender.

Table 4: Rates of substance use amongst grade 8-11 South African learners.

		Male	Female	Total
Alcohol	Ever used	54.4%	45.1%	49%
	Current (past month use)	40.5%	29.5%	34.9%
	Binge drinking	33.5%	23.7%	28.5%
Cigarettes	Ever used	36.8%	22.4%	29.5%
	Current (past month use)	26.4%	15.8%	21.0%
Cannabis	Ever used	17.9%	7.6%	12.7%
	Current (past month use)	13.1%	6.5%	9.7%
Inhalants	Ever used	12.8%	9.2%	12.2%
Mandrax	Ever used	9.2%	5.7%	7.4%
Club drugs	Ever used	9.0%	4.7%	6.8%
Cocaine	Ever used	8.7%	4.7%	6.7%

Methamphetamine	Ever used	8.7%	4.6%	6.6%
Heroin	Ever used	7.4%	5.0%	6.2%

Source. Adapted from: UNICEF (2013).

The table shows that drug abuse is prevalent among learners in South Africa and that both male and female learners use drugs. The thrust of this research is, therefore, to come up with strategies that may help alleviate and eradicate drug abuse among female learners in Chiredzi District of Zimbabwe in particular.

In the Zimbabwean context, research has also shown that similar drugs as outlined above are abused by learners. Learners in both rural and urban areas abuse drugs like tobacco and cannabis. Pediatrics (2007) also argues that most of the drugs used by students in Zimbabwe come in the form of sweets, cakes and chewing gums. Girls are said to hide drugs in toothpaste and sanitary pads. A study by Alleyne (2016) gives an outline that shows that students commonly used drugs such as alcohol, cannabis, prescription medicine, cocaine and heroin. Mudadigwa (2016) adds cordina, bronchol cough syrup, cannabis, *maragada*, *musombodhiya*, *tegu-tegu* and *zedi* as some of the popularly used substances among Zimbabwean youth and that these drugs are easily accessible. Mudadigwa (2016) adds that *tegu-tegu* is locally brewed in Mutare and it is then distributed across Zimbabwe. It has been alleged that cannabis is also locally grown by the Tonga people along the Zambezi River in Binga. The Tonga people openly use cannabis in their traditional rituals and ceremonies and also for their healing purposes (Maguchu & Denhere, 2017). The same source posits that cannabis is also grown in Chipinge and Chiredzi but some of it is smuggled from Malawi and Mozambique. In Zimbabwe, cocaine, heroin and other hard drugs are said to be smuggled into the country through their known bases in Latin America. UNODC’s survey in 2015 reveals that heroin bound for Europe has been smuggled to South Africa and Zimbabwe across the Indian Ocean. Maguchu and Denhere (2017) add that there are several underground syndicates that operate in major cities and border towns such as Beitbridge and Mutare, which give them access to neighbouring countries. Chipunza and Kazembe (2019) note that cross-border traders are smuggling drugs into the country using haulage trucks and unscrupulous bus operators, mainly through the

Beitbridge border post. These drugs are said to be ferried by haulage trucks to different destinations.

Current studies in Zimbabwe (see Matutu & Mususa, 2019) show that drug abuse is not only spreading at an alarming rate but is also becoming complicated. This research study shows that 57 per cent of the youth in Zimbabwe abuse drugs and the commonly abused drugs are marijuana and alcohol. The World Health Organisation (2021) shows that Zimbabwe has the highest number of children between the ages fifteen (15) and nineteen (19) who abuse drugs. According to Matutu and Mususa (2019) these children take up to six pints of alcohol a day. Of these youngsters who abuse drugs, 70.7 per cent are males and 55.5 per cent are females (Zimfact, 2021; Mlambo, 2022). According to Mlambo (2022) the youth in Zimbabwe have shifted from abusing drugs only to substance abuse. They use other things to substitute drugs. Mlambo (2022) also adds that the youth these days boil diapers and drink the water to intoxicate themselves and they extract substances from light bulbs and smoke them. They also smoke tissue papers and mosquito coils. Masiyiwa (2021) adds that drug abusers also ingest chemicals from TV tubes and industrial ethanol to get high. The Report by Mlambo (2022) on the prevalence of drug abuse in Beitbridge shows that the Ministry of Health is now overwhelmed with the problem of substance abuse in Beitbridge. This is because if left untreated, drug addiction may lead to mental health problems, leading to substantial cost to society. In a research study by Masiyiwa (2021) in Harare, it was revealed that some girls in Mbare started using marijuana at the age of fifteen (15) and gradually progressed to harder drugs. This significantly affected these girls' well-being and future.

Given the proximity of Chiredzi to some of the sources of drugs mentioned and the fact that females are also abusing drugs at a tender age, the current study tried to establish if female learners in Chiredzi's rural farming areas were also using the above drugs so as to come up with strategies that may be used to minimise or eradicate abuse of drugs by female learners in Chiredzi District.

It was substantially evident that various drugs were being abused by learners globally and this has necessitated the current study to come up with mitigating strategies for

drug abuse among female learners. Previous studies have shown trends of drug abuse by both female and male learners. The aim of this study was to look at female learners specifically and especially those in marginal areas and probably suggest ways of curbing the problem of drug abuse among them.

3.3 Literature review based on research questions

This section explored literature based on research questions in order to see what is already known and what is not known about the questions raised in the study. This was important because it helped the researcher to identify the gaps in the already known literature which filled by the current study.

The main research question for this study was about mitigating strategies against drug abuse among female learners. A number of researches carried out on drug abuse among school learners have come up with suggestions as to how this problem could be alleviated. A study carried out in Peru by NIDA (2016) suggests that the best way to address this problem is through prevention at an early age and the school and family environments are most suitable for this kind of approach. Early prevention and intervention are important. The public need to be educated through public awareness campaigns (Crossman, 2003). However, brilliant as the idea may sound, it is lacking in that it does not suggest how families and schools are going to prevent drug abuse. Therefore, the current study further explored how families and schools could prevent drug abuse. Ramadibe (2015) produced a guideline that recommends the need to carry out public education awareness campaigns and school and community-based programmes.

The American National Centre on Addiction and Substance Abuse (ANCASA, 2011)'s survey on adolescent substance use in America reiterated the need for health systems to work to prevent or delay the onset of substance abuse through effective public health measures. The same source adds that routine screening be conducted by health care providers so as to identify 'at risk' teens and ensure that treatment needed is provided. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2016) suggests that, since

peer pressure, curiosity and lack of awareness are the major causes of youth getting involved in drugs, it is essential to generate awareness and organise programmes about the effects of drugs in schools and colleges. The DAPC grant awarded to Nepal is one such programme, which is being used in Japan. This programme focuses on drug abuse prevention activities amongst the youth. Under this grant a youth campaign led by twenty colleges was initiated. The report adds that the students organised drug prevention programmes across thirty schools in Nepal and reached out to one thousand five hundred school students. They used drama, song and quiz competitions to educate school students about drugs and the harmful effects of drug abuse. UNODC (2016) also reports that the success of this programme led to the initiation of SAATH council which comprises seven school students and one faculty member. The same report reveals that the councils have been formed across all schools in Nepal and they carry out interactive programmes on drug use, such as writing articles on the issues, talking to their classmates and generating awareness. Such interactive programmes, if effectively coordinated, could be implemented in Zimbabwean schools, since they do not need much financial assistance. Thus, the focus of the present study was to make an assessment of relevant strategies that can be used in rural-farming areas.

Maithya (2009) suggests that Guidance and Counselling should be more effective in schools as a mitigating strategy against drug abuse. Maithya adds that schools should co-opt drug education into other subjects and peer counselling. Maithya suggested that this could be done through conducting seminars and debates as well as inviting medical practitioners and psychosocial motivational speakers. Maithya also recommended that learners with drug use problems should approach their class teachers, school counsellors, school Chaplain, peer educators or the school Head, so as to get assistance. These suggestions can be incorporated into rural farming schools in Chiredzi District.

In Zimbabwe, most of the intervention strategies against drug abuse are not school-based. The country is taking a holistic and national approach to overcome the problem. According to Matutu and Mususa (2019) some stakeholders in Zimbabwe suggest that drug abuse should be treated as a health problem not a criminal offense. A

public health approach should be used to address drug abuse challenges instead of a legal approach. Most young people do not seek help for fear of being arrested. Zimfact (2021) reports that in order to alleviate the drug abuse problem in Zimbabwe, the World Health Organisation, the Zimbabwe Government and other civic society organisations have launched public awareness on drug abuse. The same report adds that the Vice President of Zimbabwe, Constantine Chiwenga, launched the special initiative on mental health on July 2021. He warned that Zimbabwe faces a high risk of decline in the quality of life of the youth because of alcohol and drug abuse. Moyo (2021) adds that there are organisations in Zimbabwe such as Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drugs Network that seek to come up with strategies for alleviating drug abuse challenges. A study by Masiyiwa (2021) reveals that the Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drugs Network, in collaboration with the government led coalition of non-profit academics and the law enforcement representatives, formulated a Zimbabwe National Drug Master Plan which was launched in 2020. The aim was to review existing policies, and strengthen education and prevention efforts. They also push for harm-reduction programs and the rehabilitation of drug users (Masiyiwa, 2021). Tapfumaneyi (2021) adds that the Minister of Information for Zimbabwe, Monica Mutsvangwa, played a key role in this campaign. She launched a Harare clean-up campaign named Operation Clean-up Harare in a bid to curb drug and substance abuse among the youths. According to this report, the operation included extreme prevention, harm reduction and elimination of supply and availability of illicit substances and drugs on the market. The operation was expected to start in Harare, cascading across the country.

Tapfumaneyi (2021) gave an outline of the master-plan of the operation as proposed by the Zimbabwean Minister of Information. The following are some of the suggestions:

- The government was going to operationalise Zimbabwe National Drug Master Plan (ZNDMP 2020-2025)
- The government was going to operationalise treatment and rehabilitation guidelines of Alcohol and Substance Use Disorder of Zimbabwe (ASUDZIM)
- The government was going to identify and improve community based activities including establishment of parent support groups and patients support groups.

- The government was going to establish National Call Centres for drug and substance abuse which would provide online psychosocial support and related information and opening of youth centres to increase empowerment opportunities for the youths and strengthen their vocational training programmes.
- Establish family support structures and facilities that address the negative impacts of drug addiction on the immediate and extended family, such as family clubs, churches and faith-based organisations.
- Training workshops will be held for supervisors and their relevant personnel to prevent, and deal with substance abuse at workplaces.
- The media will play an active role in increasing outreach and awareness through theatre, arts, edutainment, music and other multi-media platforms.
- The government to review the National Policy on Drug and Substance Abuse and amendment of the Dangerous Drugs Act.

It is clear from the above-outlined points that stakeholders were trying to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among the youths. It was, therefore, the purpose of this study to find out if this was being implemented in schools, let alone rural farming schools. Hence, the thrust of this study was to come up with intervention strategies relevant to rural farming schools.

3.3.1 The first sub-question focused on the effects of drug abuse on female learners.

This question examined the effects of drug abuse on female learners. It was important to have an understanding of risks involved so as to come up with appropriate intervention strategies.

Women are affected by drug abuse physically, socially and biologically more than men are. According to a study by NIDA (2020) women in United States of America have different biological facts which make them more vulnerable to drugs. These include sex chromosomes and hormones. The study further explains that women may have problems related to hormonal changes. Young girls may have problems with their menstrual cycle which may lead to infertility, late pregnancy and breastfeeding problems

in womanhood. It is therefore important to encourage female learners to abstain from using drugs since drug abuse may ruin their future lives.

NIDA (2020) and Turnbridge (2022) noted that sex hormones drive women to be too sensitive. They have more cravings than men and are at a higher risk of relapse. NIDA (2021) compiled a comprehensive analysis of some of the biological factors that influence women's experiences when they use drugs.

- Women have more body fat as compared to men. Thus, they trap certain drugs in their body for a long time. Their bodies do not dissolve or process them fast.
- They have lower volumes of water in their bodies as compared to men. This makes them have higher blood alcohol concentration because they have less water to dilute drugs and alcohol.
- Stomach acidity which helps in the breakdown of drugs is lower in women than in men, so women absorb certain drugs faster than men. Consequently, they are affected by strong drugs more quickly and more strongly than men.
- The livers of women process drugs and alcohol slower than men's, hence, drugs and alcohol stay longer in the bodies of women.
- Women's kidneys function more slowly than those of men, thus, drugs and alcohol are not flushed out of their systems quickly. This may lead to kidney failure in the long run.

Turnbridge (2022) summarised the above facts saying that females are more physically different from men. For example, they are smaller in stature, their bodies carry less water and they have more hormonal changes due to menstrual cycle. Because of this, their bodies retain drugs and alcohol for longer periods. That is why they easily get addicted even if they take smaller quantities of drugs (NIDA, 2021).

Given these drastic effects of drug abuse on women, it is mandatory for schools, families and communities to join hands to eradicate drug abuse among female learners. All stakeholders should campaign against drug abuse.

Besides biological factors females are also affected physically by drug abuse. Research by the Centre for Behavioural Health Statistics (CBHS, 2017) reveals that women

experience physical problems that may affect a number of their body parts, including their heart, blood vessels and the liver. NIDA (2021) asserts that drugs may also have physical effects on females' menstrual cycle, which may be altered resulting in lighter or heavier menstrual periods and increased cramping.

According to SAMHASA quoted by NIDA (2021) specific drugs have specific physical effects on females. SAMHASA drew a table of these drugs and their effects on females.

- Marijuana impairs spatial memory in women more often than in men.
- Normally, women try to self-medicate. As a result, they misuse prescription drugs such as anti-depressants or benzodiazepines and this leads to addiction, resulting in anxiety, depression, insomnia and other mental health issues.
- Women who drink alcohol heavily suffer from liver diseases, hypertension, breast cancer, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C.
- Drugs may also affect women in perception and loss of body control. They may experience clenching of jaws, loss of appetite and dry mouth.

Given these negative physical effects of drug abuse, it was necessary to come up with intervention strategies. There is need to protect young and old women from these adverse effects of drug abuse. More should be done to rescue female learners. Zero tolerance to drug abuse should be promoted at all learning institutions and the community.

Women also suffer from mental health issues due to drug abuse. Women are affected more differently in mental health compared to men. According to Cormier (2004) and Quarnotta (2022) women who abuse drugs are more prone to mental health problems like, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, panic and eating disorder. WHO (2001) as quoted by Kalb (2020), defines mental health as:

A state of well-being which encompasses, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence and intergenerational dependence.

Mental health is also regarded as the self-actualisation of one's potential among other things (Quarnotta, 2022). Thus, mental health is the state of the mind. Mental health

problem is however a complex subject. It is not just mental disorder as individuals are affected differently. Kalb (2020) suggests that mental health and mental illness are aligned concepts. However, mental health is a more positive term which is understood from a deficiency aspect. Women are affected by mental illness differently from men because women's reproductive hormones regulate mental illness. As a result, depression in women is more common than in men.

NIDA (2021) reveals that abuse of drugs by women may have long term effects on their lives. Females who start abusing drugs at a tender age may have their future lives affected. Quarnotta (2022) gives an outline of drug effects on the later lives of women. Taking drugs at a youthful stage may lead to heavy drinking in adult age, which may cause infertility and delayed conception. Madamombe (2023) adds that alcoholism may lead to inflammation of the pancreas, liver disease and cancers. Pregnant alcoholic mothers may also affect the unborn baby. Women who use cocaine, heroin, crystal Meth and alcohol risk affecting their unborn babies. Alcohol transmits to the baby through the placenta and the baby may have low birth weight, and other birth defects. This may also cause premature birth and sudden infant death syndrome. Research by NIDA (2021) shows that in America, in every twenty-five (25) minutes a child with neonatal abstinence syndrome is born. This is because the mother would have abused drugs during pregnancy and the baby becomes dependent on the drug after being exposed to it through the placenta.

Given these adverse effects of drug abuse on the females, it is significant that females should abstain from abusing drugs for whatever reasons. Once they become addicted, they are affected for the rest of their lives.

It has also been shown that female learners who abuse drugs are affected socially. Action Pals (2022) asserts that drug abuse causes one to be anti-social. One may not relate with their peers well. At times they become bullies and isolated. According to Mokwena and Nomkanka (2021) drug abuse causes risk behaviours such as unprotected sex, leading to sexually transmitted infections. Arasi and Ajuwori (2020)'s study reveals that in Nigeria, alcohol abuse contributes much to HIV/AIDS, leading to

high risks of unwanted pregnancies, abortions, teenage motherhood, high school drop-out and poverty.

Drug abuse affects academic performance. Odhiambo (2020) observes that learners who abuse drugs lack seriousness about school work, and they abscond lessons and always absent themselves from school. They do not participate in class and normally don't complete work assigned. They are normally lazy to do school work. Action Pals two (2021) observed that drug learners abusing drugs tend to lie. They always try to conceal something, they may change friends, they may steal at home and at school, they tend to be emotional and violent.

Having observed that, if individuals start using drugs at an early age, there is a likelihood of continued and problematic use at a later age, it is imperative that drug abuse should be eradicated among female learners. For whatever reasons, young girls should not be allowed to not even to taste drugs. Intervention strategies should be put in place.

3.3.2 The second sub-question ways to enhance female learners' understanding of the risks involved and how they could be assisted to stop using drugs.

It was therefore necessary to examine the knowledge that learners had concerning drug abuse and how to enhance that knowledge, so that the problem of drug abuse among female learners could be alleviated.

Haddad, Shotar and Umlauf (2010) reveal that, Jordanian students of both sexes were knowledgeable about aspects of substance abuse and also its harmful effects, yet, lacked an in-depth understanding of the phenomena. Unlike in the above study, the thrust of the present study was to empower female learners with the knowledge of drug abuse and the strategies for mitigation.

Young people lack basic knowledge about effects of drug abuse. They hold some myths concerning drugs and they indulge in drug use because of those myths. It is, therefore, important to equip learners with the correct information. Module 13 on causes and

effects of drug abuse tabulated the common myths that youngsters apprehend and the correct facts they need to be educated about (Archangel. 2018).

Table 6: Common myths related to substance/drug abuse.

Myths	Facts
There is no harm in just trying drugs once because one can stop after that.	Almost all drug addicts start by trying just once. Once the drug is taken, the user is always amenable to further drug intake which becomes part of his/her habit.
Drugs increase creativity and makes the user more imaginable.	Drug addicts lose clarity and become incoherent in action.
Drugs sharpen thinking and lead to greater concentration.	Drugs induce dullness and adversely affect the normal functioning of the body and mind. Drugs may remove inhibitions but temporarily.
Will power alone can help the drug addict stop taking drugs.	Addiction transforms into a disease, which requires medical and psychiatric treatment.
Most of the addicts get their drugs from a peddler or a pusher.	Most of the addicts get their dose of drugs from a friend or a close association.
Alcohol helps people forget their problems.	Very often the opposite is found to be true. People bring up forgotten problems under intoxication. Alcohol adds on other problems.
Drug use makes one 'cool' and better accepted by peers.	In the beginning it may seem that use of drugs helps in winning more friends but this is a myth as these peers are not true friends or well-wishers. Furthermore, over a period of time drug

	dependence makes one asocial and isolated.
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Source: Adapted from Archangel (2018).

The table shows that some youngsters do not have adequate information concerning the effects of drugs and that the knowledge they have is detrimental. The purpose of this study was to unveil the myths learners have and possibly come up with mitigating strategies.

In a survey carried out by Mothibi (2014) in Kenya, a considerable number of participants indicated that drugs pushed or drove them into criminal activities. Manu, Maluleke and Douglas (2017) reveal that in East London, South Africa, learners were aware of colleagues who used drugs in the school premises but were hazy on the effects of drugs on those who took them. A survey by Uniprojects in Ekiti State Nigeria (*Uniprojects*, 2018) has also shown that the majority of participants had adequate knowledge on the definitions and types of substances found in the areas and sketchy knowledge of the effects. Since research (Mothibi, 2014; Uniprojects, 2018) has shown that learners do not have in-depth understanding of the effects of drugs, the thrust of the current study was to unveil some of the dangers of drug abuse and come up with probable mitigating strategies.

From the above discussion, it is clear that learners have limited information on risks involved in abusing drugs. It is therefore important to explore literature which reveals risks of drug abuse. This may help to equip learners with information concerning drug abuse and in the process empower them to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse. Lack of information leads students to abuse drugs.

There are risks peculiar to females as far as abuse of drugs is concerned. Research by SAMHSA (2015) has shown that results of drinking and drug use tend to be magnified in women in terms of health, family, societal and emotional consequences. It is believed that women have less body mass and less water content to diffuse alcohol. This negatively impacts on them. Female alcoholics have a higher percentage of death due to alcohol related accidents, organ failure and suicides than males (Bush, 2017). It is

against this background that the researcher found it necessary to get an in-depth understanding of the risks females face through drug abuse. Learners were equipped with this information for them to come up with relevant mitigating strategies against drug abuse.

Becker and Ming-Hu (2007) argue that there are risks involved when females abuse drugs. Females have a higher chance of becoming addicted once they start using drugs. While women's drug abuse rates are lower than men's, they tend to develop substance use disorders much more quickly than men. They are also said to be at higher risk for relapse following abstinence (Bush, 2017). In the same study it was pointed out that women who abuse drugs were more prone to heart, muscle and liver diseases than men. Drugs may interfere with women's menstrual cycle and cause birth defects in babies of mothers who use drugs, and may, at times, affect their immune systems (Turnbridge, 2022).

In their study on women's drug use and offending behaviour, Rushforth and Willis (2003) found that women who participate in criminal activities were more likely to have a history of illicit drug use. Some of the women in their study were found to have extreme levels of psychiatric distress and higher levels of depression. Rushforth and Willis noted that employment opportunities for drug-abusing women were often limited and those with parental responsibilities, career options were severely limited. This shows that drug abuse has long term effects, especially for women. Due to drug abuse women may have criminal tendencies.

In another study by the Ministry of Social Justice in India (2002) that examined patterns and characteristics of women drug abusers, it was revealed that 45 percent of the women who abused drugs were involved in sex work and that 15 per cent were involved in peddling activities across the site, 31 percent were not married, 32 percent were separated or divorced and the majority of them lived with their parents. From this study, it is clearly evident that it is difficult for women abusing drugs to have stable marriages. In this survey, it was discovered that most of these women started using drugs when they were very young. They were initiated at the average age of 15.9 years and that most of them had become sexually active as early as seventeen (17) years of age on

average. Most respondents from the study indicated that they had been introduced to drugs by friends (48%) and some had taken to drug use due to humiliation, shame, anger and powerlessness. These women also reported physiological and psychological problems. Some of them suffered from insomnia, menstrual irregularities, depression and anxiety. Moyo (2021) posits that if drugs are abused for a long time it may lead to the person becoming mentally retarded. The brain is damaged to the extent that he/she may hallucinate, see things and hear voices asking him/her to do certain things. At times they may become violent and dangerous.

Given the effects of drug abuse on females as outlined above, it was important for the current study to equip learners with adequate information about the risks involved in abuse of drugs. Learners were then able to come up with alleviating measures on the problem of drug abuse among female learners.

3.3.3 The third sub-question sought to establish how best families and schools could be assisted to mitigate drug abuse among female learners.

From what has been discussed so far, it appears that schools and families have a role to play in alleviating drug abuse problems. The third sub-question explored strategies they should employ. According to Harinarin (2009) the environment where one lives determines one's behaviour and emotions. Harinarin (2009) posits that unhealthy marital relationships and weak maternal or paternal figures can expose the learner to drug abuse. Thus, learners use drugs as a way of coping with stress, school and personal problems. Harinarin (2009) also points out that learners with negative self-esteem may feel inferior and may seek recognition through engaging in unacceptable behaviour such as taking drugs. Family background, therefore, has a strong bearing on behaviour. Thus, the researcher looked at what related literature said concerning family-based interventions.

A study in Peru, addressing cases of adolescence as cited by Harinarin (2009), revealed that parental influence can reinforce values, attitudes and conducts in view of drug use. It was also reported that the experimental use of drugs among youth was a result of problems prevalent in the family. Those living with relatives with poor family

relations have a higher chance of drug use. This is because they lack guidance; there are no yardstick rules and limits. Furthermore, such children do not find affection. They receive threatening treatments and punishment. Their problems are not attended to, hence, they resort to drug abuse. Learners living in such threatening environments should receive proper guidance and counselling from the school (Nhunzvi, 2019).

Donald et al. (2010) gave a case study of a girl who lived in a family where there were poor family ties, which affected the girl child to a greater extent.

Nomsa Case study

Nomsa, a girl aged 13 comes from a family of five children, 4 boys and a girl. They live with mother, father and grandfather in a small house in semi-rural township in the Eastern Cape where she attends school. Her mother and father work at a local farm and they travel a long way and get back late. Her grandfather is home most of the time and does very little to help with work at home. Nomsa is expected to look after the young brothers, supervises their homework, does all household chores and then does her own homework. She has no time to interact with her peers. Her father is very strict. He seldom talks to Nomsa except to give instructions. When he is not pleased with something she has done he complains to the mother not to her directly. He is also having problems at his workplace where he is threatened with losing his job. This is creating a lot of tension at home, so that he is drinking more than usual and often loses his temper.

Nomsa is quiet and assertive. She gets little support from the mother when tension is high. Controlling the boys is also a mammoth task for Nomsa and the boys are more like their father and grandfather, they do not support Nomsa. They believe all household chores should be done by girls. At school she is not doing very well although she is bright her homework is done poorly or not done at all. Little is being done by the school to build the bridge between the home and the school. The class teacher has never enquired about home circumstances. He is an authoritarian teacher who rules the class very critically and strictly. The teacher is critical to the students and the students are critical to one another.

Nomsa does not have friends from her neighbourhood because she does not have time to make such friends. So she tends to be isolated in the class.

Adopted from Donald et al. (2010)

Nomsa's world is collapsing upon her. There is poor interaction at home and the school is not helping her either. All the systems in her environment are not nested resulting in her feeling lonely and dejected. This gives rise to delinquency. Schools and family should create environments that promote the well-being of developing children.

To collaborate what has been highlighted above, NIDA's Report quoted by Chakravarthy, Shah and Lotfipour (2013) emphasises the role of family and community prevention programs as vital in their deterrence of child and adolescent substance abuse. The report asserts that family bonding and using appropriate discipline are some of the family prevention programmes. Families are also encouraged to eliminate risk factors such as substance abuse, high levels of family conflicts or inconsistent parental discipline so as to focus on enhancing family bonding, parental skills and changing parental behaviours. It has been noted that if an elder in a family engages in substance abuse, for instance, youngsters in that family are most likely to start abusing the same or another substance (Arcangel, 2018) Learners who were raised in violent homes are likely to be violent in school. They reflect what is happening at their home. Thus, the current study needed to enhance parents' knowledge of mitigating strategies against drug abuse. American Addiction Center (2019) notes that prevention of drug abuse should start at home since this could go a long way in building self-awareness for individuals, improving parent-child communication skills and family bonding. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the education of their children on the hazards of drug abuse and should enforce family rules as well as monitor their children's activities.

Morin (2017)'s research study in some USA Malls revealed that teenagers who abuse prescription drugs in most cases struggle with anxiety and some just want to be popular. They also lack understanding of how prescription drugs can be harmful. Morin (2017) and Action Pals Two (2022) suggest that to curb this behaviour, parents must

talk to their children about the dangers of abusing prescription drugs. This should be an ongoing education.

It was important in this study to find out from learners if parents were playing their roles in trying to nip the prevalence of drug abuse among female learners in the bud.

Besides the home environment, the school has an influential effect on the behaviour of learners. Pediatrics (2007) point out that learners spend most of their time in school. The school environment provides a standard against which young people test behaviour. School rules and regulations come into play. Some schools are not strict enough while others are located in environments that enable drug abuse such as those located in farming areas. Kwaramba, as quoted in *The Zimbabwean* (2014) suggests that schools should stipulate the amount of money parents could give as pocket money to ensure that their children did not have extra money which they might use to buy drugs. Nhengo as cited in *The Zimbabwean* (2014) accuses teachers of being the sources of heroin and cocaine. Eide, Butau and Acuda (1999) reveal that secondary school students in South West Nigeria engaged in the use of commonly available drugs and they recommended that stringent measures should be taken by schools to eradicate demand and supply. CASA (2011) corroborated that school authorities should have clear policies that explain the measures to be taken if a student is caught using drugs at school. If nothing is done to the perpetrators, the behaviour may be perpetuated. Learners learn vicariously. Therefore, bad behaviour should be punished to reinforce good behaviour. It is clear that most of the experiments at school are done because of peer pressure. Learners tend to emulate bad behaviour. Crossman (2017) suggests that schools should try to reduce the prevalence and spread of drug abuse through school-based awareness campaigns and should also come up with programs and effective regulations that reduce availability and accessibility of drugs.

In school set-ups, teachers should hold open discussions about drugs through guidance and counselling sessions. Research by Prevention Coalition Organisation (2019) advocated open and honest discussion between teachers and learners rather than using scare tactics. Teachers should maintain authority and professionalism by creating close relationships with learners, thus, providing unconditional positive regard for

learners. The study further proposed that anti-drug topics should be embraced in all subject areas and that teachers should prepare lesson plans for effective implementation. For example, in Science classes effects of drugs could be incorporated in lessons on the body and brain. In languages, anti-drug pamphlets can be made. Health classes may focus on the importance of keeping a strong body and mind. Lastly, Social Studies classes could explore the use and effects of drugs in different times and cultures, for example, prevalence of marijuana and heroin use among American soldiers in Vietnam. This implies that drug abuse education should be delivered as part of the curriculum.

Teachers were encouraged to use online drug education resources such as audio and visual aids. Prevention Coalition Organisation (2019) outlined these online programmes, namely; 'The Doubles'. This programme was formulated for early and middle school students to learn about drugs and alcohol. The 'Above the influence' was another programme which contained quotes, drug facts, quizzes and social media resources to get older teens involved in the drug quiz. The 'Sara Bellum' was created to educate teens about the adverse effects of drug use. According to PCO (2019) these lesson plans were created by the National Institute of Drug Abuse to give information on the effects of specific drugs such as opiates, hallucinogens and cocaine. However, it should be noted that some of these prevention measures may not be applicable to developing countries. The purpose of the current study was to try and come up with strategies that were relevant to the geography and population under study.

The report by NIDA (2011) emphasised that schools and communities should work hand in glove to eradicate drug abuse among learners. The report proposed that schools should introduce drug abuse programmes at the early stages of development, for example, at ECD. The programmes would address risk factors for later substance abuse such as aggression, poor social skills and academic challenges. NIDA (2011) also cited prevention programmes such as the one named 'Reconnecting Youth', which is a school-based programme for high school learners. This programme was for learners with poor academic achievements and who were on the verge of dropping out of school and also those who showed signs of various behaviour problems including

substance abuse, depression, aggression and suicidal behaviours. The learners were screened and invited to participate in the programme. The goal of the programme was to improve school performance, reduce drug use and equip them with skills to manage mood and emotions. Results of the study done in the USA by NIDA (2011) show that there was a 20 percent decrease in school dropout, reduction of hard drug use by 60 percent and reduction of drug use problem.

In Canada, the Canadian Government came up with effective school-based prevention programmes (Public Safety Canada, 2018). The first one was named Project Success in which the schools used coordinated community efforts to strengthen learners. The programme focused on at-high-risk youth. Highly trained professionals were assigned to schools to provide a range of substance use prevention and early intervention services. The project was tested with 14-18 year old youngsters who attended an alternative school that separated them from the general school population. A project success counsellor was assigned to work in the alternative school. The counsellor would make provisions for drug abuse prevention and intervention to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors. The programme entailed prevention education series. The project success counsellor carried out an eight session substance abuse prevention education programme. Group and individual counselling were conducted in the school. Parents were also involved as collaborative partners. For more intensive counselling, learners were referred to appropriate agencies or practitioners in the community. Public Safety Canada reports that evaluation of the study done in New York showed a decrease of 37 percent in drug abuse, 23 percent of learners quitted using drugs and there was a marked decrease in problem behaviour. There was also reduction of relationships with friends who used drugs. Thus, project success was effective with both male and female learners from different ethnic groups and across grade levels from 9th to 12th.

The second Canadian intervention project was called 'Project Toward No Drug Abuse' (TND). This project was designed to help adolescents between the ages of 14 to 19 years resist substance use. This was again a school based programme, which consisted of 40-50 minute lessons, which entailed motivational activities, social skills

training and decision making components delivered through group discussions, games, role playing exercises, videos and student worksheet, over a period of four weeks. Results showed that TND led to a reduction in hard drugs and alcohol use (Public Safety Canada, 2018)

According to Public Safety Canada (2018) the third prevention measure by the Canadian government was Project Alert which was a universal project targeting junior high school learners to reduce the use of cigarettes, marijuana and alcohol. It was a two-year classroom curriculum of eleven sessions plus three booster sessions. Its aim was to help learners of between the 12 to 14-year age group identify and resist pro-drug pressures and understand the social, emotional and physical effects of harmful substances. It imparted on learners' the skills necessary for effective resistance behaviour and motivated them against using drugs. This project was a science-based programme which borrowed ideas from Social Learning theory; whose main tenets are that behaviour is learnt through observation and which puts emphasis on modelling and imitation.

The fourth and last programme according to Public Safety Canada (2018) is named Project Life Skills Training. This was a three year programme which was conducted in school classrooms. It was designed to address alcohol, tobacco and marijuana cases. It focused on the psychosocial factors associated with the onset of drug use. It impacted on drug related knowledge, attitudes and norms, drug related resistance skills and personal self-management and social skills. The programme gave learners information and skills needed to develop anti-drug attitudes and norms as well as resist peer and media pressure to use drugs. Reports by Public Safety Canada (2018) show that the programme had three components. The first one was that it had been designed to teach learners a set of general self-management skills such as assertiveness in social interaction and demonstration on how to use it. Learners would be given the chance to practice these skills in role play during class and outside class. The second component was that it taught general social skills, and the last one included information and skills that were specifically related to the problem of drug abuse. Service providers, outside health professionals and regular teachers were the facilitators. The results have shown

about 80% reduction in the use of tobacco, alcohol or marijuana (NIDA, 2015; Life Skills Training, 2018).

As has been noted above, that the Canadian programmes are quite effective. An evaluation of the programmes has shown a positive impact on behaviour change in learners. However, the question remains whether this is applicable in the Zimbabwean situation, given the current economic challenges and the level of acceptance by the community and the government itself. The thrust of the current study is thus to look at the strategies which are relevant to Zimbabwe's rural farming areas in particular. It is the aim of this study to analyse the strategies that could be applicable and how best they could be applied in rural farming areas.

Regionally, South Africa has come up with a national strategy for the prevention and management of alcohol and drug use among learners in schools (UNICEF, 2013). The aim of the strategy is to retain learners in school and create a safe and conducive learning environment that contributes towards quality education. The objectives of the strategy are to ensure that schools are alcohol and drug free zones. The learners are expected to be rich in knowledge, life skills and confidence. The strategy is anchored upon four pillars; enabling environment, primary prevention, early detection and treatment, care and support. The Department of Basic Education in South Africa came up with the idea so as to prevent drug abuse. It suggested that for the strategy to be successful the environment should be enabling and this could be done through development of integrated policies. The policy should be implemented in schools and should be renewed on regular basis. The schools are expected to establish support teams, human and financial resources should be made available. The schools should also establish more services appropriate to age groups in the institution, records of alcohol and drug use must be kept. According to UNICEF (2013) schools should link with and partner with lobby groups such as non-governmental organisations and the community so that they could be able to effectively implement the programmes.

Another important pillar of the strategy is primary prevention. The aim is to have school-based alcohol and drug use prevention programmes including life skills training. There is need for the implementation of information and awareness campaigns.

Co-curricular activities and safety interventions such as peer education clubs, should be availed in schools. The schools should implement drug free sport programmes. Families and communities should be involved (UNICEF, 2013).

According to the Department of Basic Education, another preventive method to be used in this strategy is early detection of the use of drugs by learners. The Department advocated for the training of educators and parents so that they could be able to identify warning signs. Educators should be trained to conduct drug testing so that they could implement drug testing whenever there is reasonable suspicion that learners are using drugs.

Treatment, care and support are embedded in the last pillar of this strategy. The call is for schools to establish strong referral systems to access treatment care and support whenever need arises. Schools are encouraged to have strong support and create awareness of treatment and counselling services. Barriers that hinder access to treatment should be addressed. Such barriers may include transport, cost and stigma (UNICEF, 2013).

According to UNICEF (2013) the Department of Education in South Africa introduced a policy in 2002 that bans the possession, use and distribution of alcohol, cigarettes and illegal drugs on all school premises. However, despite this ban drug use is still prevalent in South African schools and it has been recorded that in 2008, 13 percent of learners had used drugs at school prior to the survey, 8 percent used cannabis, 8 percent attended school after drinking alcohol and 9 percent of learners had been offered, sold or given drugs in the school premises. This is why the current research study involved learners to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners. It is the researcher's conviction that learners are well-placed enough to come up with lasting solutions to this menace.

In Zimbabwe, there is little literature that reveals school-based drug abuse prevention measures. There are no clear cut policies pertaining to the use of drugs by learners. However, research quoted in early sections has shown that drug abuse is prevalent in Zimbabwean schools. World Health Organisation (2010) asserts that there is no

substance abuse policy in Zimbabwe but there is a draft policy for alcohol and drugs together. WHO (2010) adds that there are legislative provisions for the treatment and rehabilitation of people with substance use disorder and there are no drug courts in the country. Maguchu and Denhere (2017) add that Zimbabwe has no school-based policy concerning drugs but it has a Dangerous Drugs Act (Chapter 15:02) which makes it clear that drugs such as coca leaves, coca bush, cannabis plant or Indian hemp and opium are illegal. The law prohibits the production, possession, sale or use of these drugs and the cultivation of the plants. The country, according to Maguchu and Denhere (2017), takes part in a number of international instruments that deal with the problem of drug trafficking. According to this study, Zimbabwe is part of the 1961 United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1971 United Nations Convention of Psychotropic Substances, the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illegal Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, the 2000 United Nations Convention Against Transitional Organised Crime and the 2003 Convention Against Corruption. Zimbabwe is also a member of the SADC Protocol on Combating Illicit Drug Trafficking. Although Zimbabwe is part of these organisations, drugs are still being trafficked into the country because of corrupt immigration officers and police at border posts (Maguchu & Denhere, 2017). Members of the community are generally concerned by the way teenagers are abusing drugs in Zimbabwe. Mavhunga (2019) reports that a group of concerned Zimbabweans has started an anti-drug campaign targeting communities in which unemployed youths have resorted to drinking and using narcotics to curb the stress of failure to find employment. However, the group is not targeting schools. Thus, this current study is important because, it aims to come up with school-based strategies.

Another element which is important in school-based interventions is the teacher. Teachers need to be well-equipped to tackle issues of drug abuse so that they are able to engage in ongoing professional counselling of drug abusers (McNeilage, 2011). Harinarin (2009) notes that if a learner has long periods of idleness, laziness and boredom, this could lead to experimentation and abuse of drugs. Thus, schools should ensure students are given lots of work to do. This suggests that teachers should be competent in their classroom management skills. They should create an orderly but relaxed classroom and constantly reinforce expectations for learners' classroom

behaviour and achievement. Most parents believe that if they place their children in the care of teachers they would provide their children with improved minds and good character. They expect teachers to play roles that are supportive, loving, guiding and counselling. The teacher stands in loco-parentis while the child is at school (Serpes, 2000). Teachers are encouraged to work fairly with learners, respecting their ideas and differences, regardless of their sex, economic status or race. The researcher has decided to use school heads as well as Guidance and Counselling teachers because learners do not exist in a vacuum. The schools have a bearing in the moulding of the behaviour and character of learners. It is against this background that the study sought to analyse strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in rural farming areas in Chiredzi District, Zimbabwe.

3.3.4 The last research sub-question analysed strategies to reduce drug abuse among female learners.

Drug abuse among learners has continued to be a cause for concern for both parents and educationists. Researchers have tried to come up with recommendations for mitigating drug abuse among female learners. According to Crossman (2017) feminists posit that there are social problems, trends and issues that are overlooked or misidentified by the historically dominant male perspectives within societies. Therefore, they recommended that issues of discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sex and gender should be addressed. The feminists further emphasised that focus should be on female interactions and experiences within the society in order to ensure that half the world's population is not left out of how they (feminists) perceive and understand social forces, relations and problems (Crossman, 2017).

Boom, Owen and Covington (2003) postulate that for every setting that serves women certain principles should be followed. These include creating an environment which is based on safety, respect and dignity. Peltzer et al. (2011) assert that economic and social changes lead to uncertainties about the future, for example, expansion of public education in South Africa in the 1990s contributed to anxieties among the youths leading to indulgence in drug use. Therefore, governments should not make radical changes. Boom et al. (2003) recommend the need to develop policies, practices and

programmes that are relational and which promote healthy connections to children, family, significant others and the community. Thus, the socio-economic conditions should be improved. To support the idea CASA (2011) recommended that it was important to educate the public that teen substance use was a public health problem and that, addiction was a complex brain disease that, in most cases, originates in adolescence. In a way, this may deter some youths from indulging in drug use. Routine screening should be conducted by health care providers to identify at-risk teens. Once these teens are identified health care providers must intervene to reduce risk use and provide appropriate treatment if needed (CASA, 2011).

McNeillage (2014) recommends that schools should get support from the government, communities and the drug and alcohol sector in order to address the challenges they face. Teachers should be trained on drug issues so that they will be well-informed when they deal with cases of drug abuse.

Since most of the youths spend most of their time at school, Boom et al., (2003) advocated for the creation of programmes and curriculum which have gender responsive material for women and girls. Appropriate educational programs need to be formulated and tailored to meet the needs of rural adolescents. CASA (2011) adds that focus groups of learners and teachers should be created in order to come up with functional strategies for mitigating drug abuse.

Schools in Zimbabwe need support from the government in order to come up with effective strategies that mitigate drug abuse among learners. Mutingwende (2017) quotes Sofia Mapuranga, the Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network media officer, who says Zimbabwe does not have a drug policy and that drug misuse is dealt with under the Criminal Law Codification Act and the Dangerous Drugs Act. Muchengeti, in Mudadigwa (2016) blames the government of Zimbabwe for failing to control the sale of some of these drugs on the local market. Muchengeti alleges that the government has failed to control the illegal entry of such substances via the Mozambique border (Mudadigwa, 2016). Nyamukapa who is coordinator of ZCLDN called for policymakers and parliamentarians to come up with a national drug policy. Nyamukapa also encouraged media practitioners to use investigative journalism techniques to unveil the

supply chain of drugs from producers to smugglers and consumers. Civil society organisations were encouraged to ensure that their research and documentation on drug abuse was evidence-based and to hold consultative dialogue meetings with the women, religious leaders and legislators and to increase their advocacy against drug abuse (Mutingwende, 2017). Mudadigwa (2016) urged the government to install controlling measures on the importation of drugs and intoxicating drinks from neighbouring countries.

Most of the recommendations raised above are relevant and applicable to developed countries. For developing countries like Zimbabwe, it would be a mammoth task to implement them because of the following impediments; poor funding, insufficient skilled health personnel, poor laboratory facilities, inadequate treatment facilities and lack of political will and lack of clear cut policy on drug abuse. This, therefore, necessitated the need for the current study to come up with recommendations which are more relevant to rural farming areas and more applicable to the Zimbabwean situation.

3.4 Summary

This chapter discussed drugs commonly used by learners and literature based on research questions to determine what was already known and what is not known concerning strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in rural farming areas. Most researches carried out in Zimbabwe are based on urban communities. The current research study is school-based and looked at rural farming learners. These learners are marginalised and researchers seem to be less concerned about them. As evidenced by the reviewed literature, most researches in Zimbabwe do not focus on farming areas. It is high time that the voices of those learners in the marginalised areas were heard.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focused on the research methodology that was used in this study. The methodological aspects discussed are: the research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sample and sample selection, the research instruments and their trustworthiness, data collection and data analysis procedures.

4.2 Research paradigm

Creswell (2018) posits that every research is governed by some underlying philosophical assumptions which lead to the selection of research methods that are appropriate for the development of knowledge in a given study. Thomas (2010) defines a paradigm as a culture with a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that a community of researchers has in common regarding the nature and conduct of research. It is also regarded as a model that symbolises a real world view that describes what the researchers embrace (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). Cohen, Marion and Morrison (2000) elaborate that a research paradigm is a research model that is used to conduct research that has been verified by a research community. So, paradigm refers to the researcher's world view of the nature of reality and knowledge or shared understanding

of reality. Therefore, the paradigm influences the researcher's choice of design and methodology to use in gathering and analysing data (Creswell, 2018).

Dawson (2009) identifies three main types of paradigms which are: positivism, post-positivism/post empiricism/pragmatism and interpretivism / social constructivism. Ryan (2018) postulates that positivism originated from foundationalism and empiricism. Positivism is associated with quantitative research. It is objective and bound on proving hypotheses whilst interpretivism has its historical roots in anthropology. Vico, cited in Chowdhury (2014), posited that there is a difference between the natural and the social world and that people make perceptions of reality and truth from constructs of social organisation and social experience. Thus, Vico rejected positivist perceptions which argue that external reality exists and is discovered through prediction, experience and testing hypothesis through deductive reasoning (Ryan, 2018). According to the interpretivism perspective, knowledge is subjective, culturally and historically situated and is based on life experiences and how people understand these experiences. This, in a way, guided the researcher in the way data were collected, interpreted and analysed. Interpretivism engages with qualitative methodologies and is used to obtain an understanding of the world from an individual's point of view and it takes a subjective stance in collecting and analysing data. It believes that individuals have more knowledge about their experiences and the researcher is an active participant in the study. Post-positivism uses a mixed methods approach, that is, it employs both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Bitzer, 2017).

These basic beliefs entail philosophical assumptions about the ontology, epistemology and methodology of the research. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) ontology and epistemology form the foundation of research. Ontology refers to the nature of beliefs about reality. Researchers have assumptions about reality, how it exists and what can be known about it (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). In the current research, the ontological questions about drug abuse led the researcher to make an inquiry about the kind of reality that exists. The researcher looked at the female learners' understanding of drug abuse, school heads' and heads of departments' perceptions concerning drug abuse among female learners. The aim was to unveil the causes of drug abuse among female

learners and suggest mitigating strategies. Brown (2023) adds that ontology looks at socially-constructed multiple realities. The reality in the present research is that female learners abuse drugs and that some of them are aware of the repercussions of such behaviour. Drug abuse is a social phenomenon which is interpreted differently by different individuals, hence, ontological questions show the nature of reality as conceptualised by the researcher. In the current research, ontology helped the researcher to unveil how people make sense of their social worlds in their natural settings. The learners were studied in their natural setting, namely, the school set up. The researcher made use of focus group discussions to get an in-depth understanding of the learners' views, interpretations and understanding of drug abuse.

The second basic philosophical assumption in a paradigm is epistemology. According to O’Gorman and Macintosh (2015) quoted by Brown (2023), epistemology refers to the study of the nature of knowledge and the process through which nature is acquired and verified. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) assert that epistemology concentrates on the nature of knowledge, and how it can be acquired and communicated to other human beings. Pervin and Mokhtar (2022) opine that epistemological questions lead to debate on the possibility and desirability of objectivity, subjectivity, causality, validity and generalisation. Knowledge is assumed to be gained through specific approaches. These approaches consider the differences between the human world and the objects of natural sciences and thus, require an understanding of the subjective meaning of social action. Thanh and Thanh (2015) assert that epistemology assumes that events are understood through the mental processes of interpretation that are influenced by interaction with social contexts. In the current study, the participants constructed knowledge from their experiences. The learners, school heads, Disciplinary Committee chairpersons and heads of departments came up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse. There was an interaction between the participants and the researcher through talking, listening, writing and reading. Data were collected through interactive means, particularly through focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The researcher employed the epistemological philosophy to gain more knowledge concerning drug abuse in secondary schools in rural farming areas, through interaction with the learners and teachers.

The third assumption is the methodology. Bitzer (2017) posits that methodology guides the researcher in deciding the type of data required for a particular study and the most appropriate data collection tools for the study. The methodological questions give an insight to the researcher on how the world should be studied. In this study, the methodological choices were influenced by their suitability to the task of collecting information concerning participants' perceptions, experiences and feelings. The researcher collected information using focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and analysis of documents.

Having assessed the perceptions of these paradigms of ontology, epistemology and methodology, it may be concluded that they differ in that interpretivism was the best paradigm for the current research because. Interpretivism believes in multiple realities and strives to understand and interpret meaning attached to an action. The researcher was able to interact with the participants so as to come up with mitigating strategies for drug abuse.

For the purpose of this research study, it is important to give a detailed discussion of the interpretivism to justify why it was important in this research to use interpretivism.

4.2.1 Interpretivist paradigm

According to Pervin and Mokhtar (2022) an interpretive approach is based on the assumption that social reality is not singular or objective but is shaped by human experiences and social contexts. Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2011) quoted by Dean (2018) share the view that interpretive researchers discover reality through participants' views, experiences and the participants' backgrounds. Thus, it allows the researcher to perceive the world through the perceptions and experiences of participants. These experiences will be used to construct and interpret the researcher's understanding of the gathered data. Interpretivism helps the researcher to explore the world by interpreting the understanding of individuals (Nguyen & Tran, 2015). Reality, according to interpretivism is socially-constructed and there are multiple realities. Thus, Willis (2007) echoes and says that interpretivism is premised on the belief that there is need to promote a participatory and holistic approach to come up with what the participants in

the study have to say about their experiences. Chowdhury (2014) adds that interpretivists look for meanings and motives behind people's actions, how people behave and interact with others in the society and culture. In his modern anthropological conceptualization, Boas (1995) in Chowdhury (2014), emphasised the importance of culture since it integrates symbols, values and ideas that should be studied as a working system. Important data cannot be obtained if enquirers use their own conceptions to guide the process of enquiry. The purpose of this study was to explore strategies to mitigate drug abuse among female learners at secondary schools in rural farming areas of Chiredzi district. Using these concepts, the researcher was able to collect data through interaction with the participants. Interpretivism was, therefore, relevant for the current study because it endeavoured to derive constructs from the field of an in-depth examination of the phenomena of interest.

Gephart, as quoted by Creswell (2018), argues that interpretivists assume that knowledge is an act of interpretation: there is no objective knowledge that is independent of human thinking and reasoning. Creswell adds that the premise of interpretive researchers is that access to reality is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meaning. Thus, in this study, information about events, especially, drug abuse activities in schools and strategies to mitigate abuse was collected. Knowledge was constructed from the data collected and interpreted, making inferences and judging the match between the information and some abstract pattern as suggested by Creswell (2018). To come up with ideas about mitigating strategies for drug abuse, there was need to form an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. This was possible through participation, collaboration and engagement. To this, Nickerson (2023) adds that interpretivism is more subjective. Its goal is to value subjectivity and objective research on human behaviour. Answers in interpretive research are not sought in rigid ways. They approach the reality from subjects who own their experiences and who come from a particular group or culture. For this research study, the researcher looked at female secondary school learners who live in rural farming areas. Interpretive methods were most convenient for the current study because they accept multiple perspectives, which yield a comprehensive understanding of the situation. It facilitates in-depth and insightful information from the

population rather than numbers or statistics. Learners in rural farming areas come from different educational, social and economic backgrounds, hence, interpretivism made it possible for the researcher to gather diverse and multi-faceted information (Nguyen & Tran, 2015). Therefore, engagement with learners opened an avenue for the researcher to come up with possible strategies for mitigating challenges of drug abuse among female learners.

Thomas (2010) asserts that the interpretive paradigm is underpinned by observation and interpretation. Thomas further explains that to observe is to collect information about events while to interpret is to make meaning of that information by drawing inferences or by judging the match between the information provided and the participants' experiences. Creswell and Creswell (2022) add that observations should be interpreted through the eyes of the participants and interpretation must occur through viewing the phenomena from the subjective perspective of the social participants. It should also be done through understanding the participant's experiences in order to come up with a thick description or rich narrative that communicates why the participants acted the way they did. In the current study, the researcher managed to collect information from learners, heads of departments and school heads and then drew inferences through comparing the data collected to come up with strategies for mitigating challenges of drug abuse among female learners. Meaningful oriented methodologies such as interviewing participants assisted the researcher to judge, refine, evaluate and refine theory concerning mitigating strategies for drug abuse among female learners.

Another important aspect of interpretivism is that it is based on hermeneutics and phenomenology. Dean (2018) opines that hermeneutics provides the philosophical grounding of interpretivism. It involves interpreting and understanding texts or documents, and the deeper meaning within them. (Ryan, 2018) adds that hermeneutics also suggests ways of understanding the meaning and trying to make sense of textual data which may be unclear in one way or another. In the current study, the researcher analysed documents from the school such as the school mission statement, school rules, minute books and school drug policy document where it was available. These

documents helped the researcher to understand what the schools under study were doing to curb drug abuse among learners. Denzin and Lincoln (2001) in Ramsook (2018) state that hermeneutics entails the idea that all human understanding is achieved by considering the interdependent meaning of the parts and the whole. So in this regard, human beings are understood in their social context. This is why the current study's setting is the school because this is where learners are found in their natural setting. There is a relationship between learners' behaviour and the environment they are brought up in, and in this case, schools play a pivotal role since learners spend most of their time at school.

The phenomenological aspect of interpretivism describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals (Thomas, 2010; Nel, 2020). Crucial information is gathered through inductive qualitative research methods such as interviews and observation. The experiences and perceptions of individuals are brought to the fore. The relevance of interpretive approach was, therefore, premised on the fact that the researcher wanted to gather information concerning strategies for mitigating drug abuse using those learners who have experienced it in their lives or those who have peers who have experienced that.

Interpretive research is also guided by a set of parameters. According to Creswell (2018) interpretive research is naturalistic, which means that social phenomena must be studied within their natural settings. It contends that social phenomena are situated within, and cannot be isolated from their social context. For the current research, it means the use of drugs by learners cannot be investigated outside the school premises. Therefore, to come up with mitigating strategies for problem of drug abuse among female learners the researcher gathered information from learners in their natural settings.

The other parameter is that in interpretive research the researcher is considered as an instrument (Abbadia, 2020). Nel (2020) explains that in the interpretive paradigm, the researcher does not stand above or outside, but is a participant-observer who engages in the activities and draws the meanings of actions as they are expressed in specific social contexts. The researcher is often included in the social context that they are

studying and is considered part of the data collection. The researcher is expected to use his/her own experiences and personal insights and knowledge about the phenomenon. In this study, the researcher is a teacher and school administrator in a rural farming area and is well-versed in learners' behaviour in such settings. However, it should be noted that the researcher is not expected to be biased to come up with a fair and accurate portrayal of strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners.

Another important aspect of interpretivism as noted by Creswell (2018) is the use of expressive language. An interpretive researcher should be able to document the verbal and non-verbal language of participants. An analysis of such language is of paramount importance. In the current study, the researcher was able to document verbal and non-verbal communication during focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. The researcher was able to capture the emotions and experiences of the participants during these discussions.

For the benefit of this discussion, it is important to give a summary of the characteristics of the interpretivism paradigm. Some of the examples will be drawn from the current study.

Table 7: Characteristics of interpretivism

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
Purpose of research	Come up with strategies for mitigating problems of drug abuse among female learners. Discuss why female learners abuse drugs Examine effects of drug abuse among female learners. Assess female learners' understanding of risks involved in drug abuse Discuss strategies that should be employed to assist schools to come up

	<p>with strategies for mitigating drug abuse.</p>
<p>Ontology</p>	<p>There are multiple realities concerning drug abuse among female learners in schools.</p> <p>Realities were explored and constructed through interaction with learners, School Heads, Disciplinary Committee Chairpersons and Heads of Departments.</p> <p>Discover how learners make sense of their social world in their natural setting</p> <p>Many social realities exist due to varying learners' experiences including their knowledge, perceptions and interpretations.</p>
<p>Epistemology</p>	<p>Events were understood through the mental processes of interpretation that is influenced by interaction with social contexts.</p> <p>Those active in the research process socially constructed the knowledge by experiencing the real life or natural settings.</p> <p>The researcher and participants were interlocked in an interactive process of talking, reading and writing. Interactive mode of data collection was used.</p>

Methodology	Processed data collected through interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis.
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Source: Adapted from Thomas (2010).

The above table summarises how the current research was carried out using interpretivism assumptions. The key principles to this approach include participation, collaboration and engagement.

It may be concluded that the interpretivist paradigm assisted the researcher to analyse strategies to mitigate the problem of drug abuse because the researcher was given the opportunity to discover how people made sense of their world in the natural setting. For example, female learners' awareness of risks involved in drug abuse, the causes of drug abuse by female learners and the mitigating strategies. This paradigm gave the female learners a chance to construct their views concerning drug abuse as they interpreted their experiences in a natural setting. Thus, the paradigm permitted the researcher to use more personal interactive modes of data collection such as focus groups and semi-structured interviews. It also permitted the free participation of the female learners.

4.3 Research approach

According to Chetty (2016) a research approach is a plan and procedure consisting of basic assumptions and detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation. This is classified into two categories; the approach to data collection, and the approach to data analysis. Creswell and Creswell (2022) identified three types of research approaches, that is, qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches. Before delving into more detail concerning the qualitative approach which was used in the current research study, it is important to give an overview of the three basic approaches.

These three approaches have different assumptions about the world or reality. According to Nel (2020) the quantitative approach believes that there is a single reality which can be measured, whilst the qualitative approach believes in multiple realities and the mixed approach assumes that reality is outside what people think. George (2022)

argues that there are differences in these approaches concerning research response. In the quantitative approach they establish relationships between measured variables, in mixed methods they consider both variables and participants' perceptions, whilst in the qualitative approach the research is understood as a social situation through participants' perceptions. In the current study, it was necessary to understand the school heads, the Guidance and Counselling heads of departments, the disciplinary committee chairpersons as well as the learners' perceptions about drug abuse by female learners.

According to Panhwar et al. (2017) these approaches differ in the processes and procedures that they follow during research study. In the quantitative approach, the procedures are established before a study begins, whilst the mixed approach balances between quantitative and qualitative; hypothesis maybe formulated but it remains flexible and any one strategy may be changed. This is because the mixed approach researches on the experiences of the majority, and that the results of what the majority say is reality and acceptable. It is both deductive and inductive. In the qualitative approach there is flexibility and no hypothesis is formulated at the beginning of the research (George, 2022).

Having made a thorough assessment of the basic tenets of the qualitative, the mixed methods and the quantitative approaches, the researcher opted to use the qualitative approach. The approach is informed by the assumption underpinning the study. In the current research study the research was underpinned by interpretivism which employs the qualitative approach.

According to Putra (2021) the qualitative approach is relevant to a study with research questions that call for inductive reasoning where specific objects will be observed in their natural setting. Weyant (2022) states that the qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based on multiple meanings; socially and historically, to develop a pattern. Therefore, this approach is relevant for this study because the researcher will be enabled to have in-depth and detailed information concerning drug abuse among female learners.

According to Thomas (2010) the qualitative approach understands meaning through looking at and describing experience, ideas, beliefs and values. The qualitative approach takes into cognisance the cultural standards that frequently change and weighs the data against current social norms, thereby making it possible to connect the researcher and the subject (Weyant, 2022). In this research study, the aim was to understand behaviour in its natural setting. That is, female learners needed to be understood in their natural settings and this attracted the use of focus group discussions, interviews and document analysis. The qualitative approach is naturalistic; it attempts to study the everyday lives of different groups of people and communities (Thomas, 2010). Cohen et al. (2007) assert that through the naturalistic approach, the qualitative approach attempts to find meaning or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. It therefore makes the qualitative approach more convenient because it is most relevant in educational settings and processes. The researcher was able to get an in-depth understanding of the problem and strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners were analysed in the process. Qualitative data sources, including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion, document analysis and observation were used for this inquiry. Through these sources, the current study gained insight from the learners, school heads, heads of departments and disciplinary committee chairpersons' experiences.

The current research study also employed the qualitative approach because of the nature of the topic under study. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011) the qualitative approach inquiry is important because it examines and understands the topic under study through the interpretation of behaviour. It uses concepts and classification to interpret human behaviour as it is viewed by the researcher and the people whose behaviour is being described. So, the researcher links what the participants say, their actions and their historical backgrounds in a given situation. The researcher captures interactions in the participants' natural settings and this enables the researcher to understand the differences and similarities in certain contexts (Cohen et al. 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This was useful in the current study because the researcher was able to analyse learners' actions in relation to their backgrounds and interaction in the school. The researcher compared what the learners said to the views of school

heads, disciplinary committee chairpersons and Guidance and Counselling heads of departments.

A qualitative approach has its advantages and disadvantages. Creswell (2018) posits that using qualitative research is advantageous because it moulds or changes existing theory because the data is analysed and interpreted in light of the concepts of a particular theoretical orientation. Using this aspect, the current researcher was able to discuss the findings in relation to existing knowledge and demonstrating how the present has contributed to the expansion of the knowledge base.

The qualitative approach is useful because it assists the researcher to examine and understand a topic under study through classification of concepts and interpretation of human behaviour. Human behaviour is interpreted both in the view of the analysts and the people whose behaviour is being described. Thus, it assists people to understand the social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The fact that it is concerned with the collection of rich descriptive data regarding a particular phenomenon makes it even more useful in research. In the current work, the qualitative approach assisted the researcher to explore the perceptions, feelings, attitudes and experiences of learners, teachers and school heads.

Another advantage of qualitative approach is that it allows the use of triangulation in data collection which makes the research more credible and reliable. However, qualitative research has some disadvantages. For instance, it is said to have researcher bias in data collection. The background information may be missing, focus groups may not be representative of large populations and also that, it takes time to build trust with participants (Thomas, 2010).

Although the qualitative approach has these shortcomings, the researcher still found it useful for the current study. To minimise on the above challenges, the researcher focused on credible and conformable research through prolonged engagement with participants, member checking and triangulation. In the focus group discussions all levels were represented, that is, ZJC, O' Level and A' Level. Drug abuse is affecting all levels of learners at high school. It was therefore necessary to all levels represented.

4.4 Research design

Research design refers to the overall strategy that a researcher chooses to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby ensuring that the research problem is effectively addressed (William, 2006). A research design assists the researcher to choose research methods suitable for the research problem. It determines which research tools to be used (McCombes, 2021). Ryan (2016) adds that research design helps the researcher to make decisions about the overall aims and approach, the sampling methods or criteria for selecting subjects and data analysis methods. Methods should match research objectives. According to Cohen et al. (2011), a research design is a procedure for collecting, analysing and reporting research. It is based on the researcher's assumptions, research skills and research practices (Bhandari, 2023).

There are quite a number of research designs one can find useful. Bhandari (2023) classified research designs into categories of those that may be employed in quantitative research on one hand, and those that may be used in qualitative research, on the other. Quantitative research uses designs which allow the identification of cause and effect relationships and those that allow the researcher to measure variables and describe relationships. On the other hand, qualitative research designs aim to gain rich and detailed understanding of a phenomenon and are more creative and flexible. According to McCombes (2021) quantitative designs include; experimental, quasi-experimental, descriptive and correlational, whilst qualitative research designs entail case study, ethnography, grounded theory and phenomenological. In the current research study the case study design was employed. The reason behind was that the research study sought to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners. To come up with such strategies, there was need to have an in-depth understanding of drug abuse among female learners. This was made possible because, through case study design, the researcher was able to get answers for specific research questions using appropriate data collection methods.

4.4.1 Case study

Given the interpretive stance adopted for this study, the case study design was the most appropriate. Gilham (2000) defines a case study as an investigation to answer specific questions that seek wide ranging evidence from the case settings. It allows the exploration and understanding of complex issues and it is commonly used in social science research (Harrison, Birks, Franklin & Mills, 2017). A case study enables a researcher to closely examine data within a specific context and usually selects a small geographic area. Case studies explore real-life situations through detailed analysis of a limited number of events, conditions and related. This is the reason why the current study engaged it. Drug abuse is a real life challenge that is worrisome to schools and families. A case study can be further classified as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. The researcher found the case study to be relevant for this study because it allowed for an in-depth inquiry of a single case or event. The schools were systematically observed and data collected (Yin, 2014).

According to McDonough and McDonough (2018) researchers may use single or multiple case studies depending on the problem of inquiry. They can also be classified into three classes, namely; exploratory, descriptive and explanatory case studies (Yin, 2014). McDonough and McDonough (2018) include interpretive and evaluation as other forms of case studies. Through the interpretive case study, the researcher interprets the data by developing conceptual categories that could be supporting or challenging the assumptions made (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2018). Since the current research adopted the interpretive paradigm the case study design was most appropriate.

Creswell (2018) gives an outline of the key elements of the case study. These include: the case which is described as the object of interest that is to be analysed such as the program, individual groups, social situation, organisation, event and/ or process. In the current research study the researcher looked at the female learners and their interactions with the systems that they are found in and the organisation. In this case, we have schools as the organisations, and the influence they have on the learner. According to Merriam (2009) research must be conducted in the setting where all the variables are operating, hence, the current research study looked at four schools which

were analysed as individual cases. This was because these schools were not the same in terms of school organisational structures. For example, they differ in school schedules, norms, roles and values.

Another important element as noted by Harrison et al. (2017) is that a case study is a bounded system. It is bound by time, space, and activity. This includes a system of connections. This applies to the management of contextual diversities because context is another important element in the case study. Lincoln and Guba (2000) add that the context is studied in its natural setting, the way the case is understood and the contextual variables that may include political, economic, social, cultural, historical and other organisational factors. Thus, the case study design gives the researcher room to make an in-depth inquiry based on fieldwork and an intensive analysis of the phenomenon. The case should have clear boundaries and parameters (Yin, 2014). In the current study, the research was carried out among female learners in Chiredzi District's rural farming secondary schools, Zimbabwe. The researcher was thus able to make an exploration of learners' decisions, the schools' cultural and social processes, and perceptions of school heads and those of the chairpersons of disciplinary committees. The parameters and boundaries were specific which assisted the researcher to come up with possible mitigating strategies against the problem of drug abuse among female learners.

Yin (2014) further states that selecting the case is of great importance when using a case study design. This embraces the scope of the case, that is, whether it is a single or multiple case sampling. It also considers whether the case captures ordinary, unique, varied or accessible aspects. The researcher adopted the multiple case study. This enabled the researcher to explore and analyse varied responses from different school heads, disciplinary committee chairpersons and Guidance and Counselling heads of departments. This made it possible for the researcher to have a representative sample for rural farming schools. The research was carried out at different sites with multiple cases which shared common characteristics. This was also important because the researcher was able to compare these case schools since each school was unique.

This idea is supported by Yin (2014) who asserts that multiple sources of evidence give a comprehensive depth of inquiry; hence, it was relevant to the current study.

This study wanted to gain insight into how to curb drug abuse problem among female learners in rural farming areas. It was therefore important to engage the case study design which employed multiple sources of evidence. Using this design, the researcher was able to use different methods of data collection, including semi-structured interviews, observations, focus group discussions and document analysis. The data analysis method used was systematic and rigorous.

Stake (2006) and Stewart (2014) concur that for a case study research to succeed, there is need for careful preparation and planning, including a systematic implementation structure. There is a need to align philosophy and methodology with the research purpose and methods employed in order to come up with a rigorous research process. This study is underpinned by the interpretive paradigm which calls for an in-depth inquiry of the phenomena. Thus, the case study design becomes most suitable. Creswell (2018) posits that a case study is a qualitative approach in which the researcher explores a case or multiple cases over time through detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. The philosophy and methodology were, therefore, well aligned in this study. Data were collected systematically from the female learners, school heads, heads of Guidance and Counselling departments and heads of school disciplinary committees.

4.4.2 Advantages of a case study

Many scholars claim that the case study design has many advantages. One advantage is that data are examined within the context of use, that is, within the situation the activity is taking place (Yin, 2014). In the current study, analysis of data was done in the context of the four schools under study. Knowledge about female learners' behaviour was drawn from the context of living experiences. Learners spent most of their time in school so it was more convenient to analyse data in the context of the schools as the social systems.

Detailed and thick qualitative accounts produced in case studies help to explore or describe real-life experiences and also assist to explain complexities in real-life situations that may not be captured through experiment or survey research. Data are generated from real-life experiences (Harrison et al. 2017; McLeod, 2019). The researchers turn their opinions into information that can be verified as fact. In this research, the researcher generated data about drug abuse by female learners from what is being experienced by the learners themselves and what is happening in schools.

Another advantage of a case study is that it gives room for an in-depth description of a specific incident and thus, give research more credibility. Creswell (2018) observes that the case study makes research relevant to all those participating in the process. Researchers can stay actively engaged in the data collection process and participants may broaden their knowledge growth because they would be keen to know the outcome of the case study. McLeod (2019) concurs that the case study has the advantage of permitting investigation of impractical situations or those cases that people are not very comfortable to discuss.

The current study chose the case study design because it gave the researcher room to get an in-depth understanding of drug abuse among female learners through an exploration of the causes and risks involved in abusing drugs and come up with strategies for mitigation. Thus, data were collected using qualitative instruments, particularly, interviews, group discussions and documents. Data triangulation was done to make the analysis more comprehensive. This was done through comparing data from different sources, for example, comparing data from observations and interviews and checking for the consistency of what learners said in group discussions and interviews. Perceptions of school heads, Guidance and Counselling heads of departments and disciplinary committee chairpersons were also compared. This resulted in the construction of well-informed knowledge and understanding of strategies for mitigating drug abuse.

4.4.3 Disadvantages of case study

Although it is convincingly clear that the case study design is useful in research studies, there are criticisms levelled against it. According to Yin (2014) a case study is rigorous, and at times, researchers are sloppy or biased, which may influence the direction of the findings. Case studies are also criticised for providing little basis for scientific generalisation because they use a small number of subjects (Harrison et al. 2017; McLeod, 2019).

Another disadvantage of a case study is that it is often long, difficult to conduct and it produces a large amount of documentation. Yin (2014) adds that case studies are difficult to conduct and they are merely simplified descriptions of natural proceedings in which readers are expected to interpret and produce their conclusions. There is also a danger of misrepresentation of cases in the use of multiple cases. The data may be diluted, distorted or exaggerated, hence, affecting the overall analysis.

Even though the case study has those outlined shortcomings, the current researcher still found it useful. The researcher overcame them through verification of information given by participants through triangulation. The researcher accepted all that was said by participants and worked from an inductive point of view.

4.4 Population

Creswell (2007) posits that 'population' refers to a large collection of individuals or objects that is the focus of inquiry. These individuals should have similar characteristics. A population is also referred to as a complete collection to be studied. Research studies are done to benefit populations, but because of the size of populations, researchers cannot use all individuals, so they use samples (Stewart, 2014).

The population of this study comprised four heads of four secondary schools in the rural farming areas of Chiredzi District, all one hundred and forty secondary school teachers from these schools and all three thousand six hundred students (both males and females) in the schools. The heads of schools were considered in this research because they were the chief administrators responsible for the day-to-day running of

the schools. They had the responsibility to craft the rules and regulations of the schools. They ensured that the school had good ethos and they set the tone of the school. Generally, heads are responsible for the enforcement of discipline in the school. The learners' behaviour is a mirror image of the type of leader in the school. All matters of student discipline also rest in their hands. Hence, school heads were very important elements in the study.

Disciplinary committee chairpersons were important in this study as well because they handle all disciplinary cases concerning learners. They deliberate on matters of learners' discipline and these cases are normally recorded. Therefore, the researcher analysed their disciplinary case records. The same applied to heads of Guidance and Counselling departments as they keep records of those who visit them for counselling. Learners with disciplinary problems are often referred to this department for counselling. Some learners with behaviour problems may seek help from counsellors, therefore, it was prudent for the researcher to involve them in the current research study.

Learners were also very important for this study. Learners are the ones mostly involved in drug abuse. They had all the information concerning drug use and reasons why youngsters abuse drugs. It was important to include them so that they could give what they considered to be the best ways of curbing the problem of drug abuse.

4.5 Sampling and sample size.

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies for mitigating the problem of drug abuse among female learners. Thus, the participants for this study were purposively selected. According to Patton (2002) purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases, participants with specific knowledge or experience who can provide information for the study. Creswell (2018) asserts that in purposive sampling a researcher should use many sampling procedures to find all possible causes of the most appropriate participants to use in the study. Cohen et al. (2011) contend that purposive sampling is an empirical sampling method used in qualitative research to get the meaning of the phenomenon from the participants in their natural settings. So,

purposive sampling aims to select quality participants who can supply credible information that is required for the study. The researcher should consider relevant participants who represent different cases and opinions. In this study, the researcher selected learners, school heads, heads of Guidance and Counselling departments and disciplinary committee chairpersons because they had information on drug abuse.

In this purposive sampling, the researcher selected a learners' sample comprising twelve (12) students (6 male and 6 female) from each of the four schools. So in all, forty-eight (48) learners were sampled. These learners were selected on the basis that they had information concerning drug abuse. Some of them were known to be using or to have used drugs before and others have had friends or relatives using drugs. A sample of this size enabled the number of focus group discussions to be manageable. All the levels in each school were represented, that is, Zimbabwe Junior Certificate, (n=2 males; n= 2 females), Ordinary Level (n=2 males; n=2 females) and Advanced Level (n= 2 males; n= 2 females). Four school heads, four Guidance and Counselling heads of departments and four disciplinary committee chairpersons were also purposively selected. Each school was represented and the sample in this study was representative. From the above sample, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and analysed their documents where issues about drug use were recorded. It can be concluded that by using purposive sampling the researcher managed to elicit information from participants who were knowledgeable about the phenomenon.

4.6 Instrumentation

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect information from school heads, heads of Guidance and Counselling departments and disciplinary committee chairpersons. Focus group discussions were used to collect information from learners. Policy documents and minutes of meetings on drug abuse were analysed. These data collection instruments were relevant in this study because of the interpretive approach that was adopted.

4.6.1 Semi-structured interview

According to Merriam (2009) an interview is a discussion between two people, one asking questions about a specific topic and the other one responding. It can be

regarded as an interchange of opinions by two or more people to get the knowledge that can be used to answer research questions (Cohen et al. 2011). Merriam (2009) identifies three types of interviews, namely; structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and open-ended interviews. For this research the semi-structured interview was selected.

In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer does not follow a formalised list of questions but more open-ended questions will be asked to allow discussion with the interviewee. Cohen and Manion (2007), Flick (2014) and Van Ryzin (2014) also note that in semi-structured interviews, interviewers use interview guides which have a set of questions. Semi-structured interview combines both structured and unstructured interviews. In the current study, the researcher prepared interview guides that were used to collect information from school heads and Guidance and Counselling heads of department and disciplinary committee chairpersons. Prepared guidelines were necessary because the researcher wanted to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners, hence, there was need to guide the interview. Van Ryzin (2014) opines that the researcher should have a structured section of the interview while allowing the interview to be guided by a loose set of questions. This assisted the current researcher to collect the information needed.

When using the semi-structured interview, the researcher should be consistent. All the participants should be treated the same and should be asked the same questions (Merriam, 2009). In the current research, the researcher was cognisant of this as the participants were asked the same questions although there was some form of flexibility.

It was advantageous for the researcher to use this type of interview in the current study because it enabled the researcher to get first-hand information from the participant. According to Merriam (2009), interviews help the researcher to be sensitive to participants' language and both linguistic and non-linguistic features will be observed. The researcher will be able to attach meaning to those features. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer will be able to make a follow up on specific issues, thus, providing more detailed information about the feelings and perceptions of participants

on the topic. In the current study, the researcher was able to elicit more information and probed whenever that was necessary.

However, this data elicitation method has its disadvantages. School heads may also like to protect the image of their schools. However, to curb these biases the researcher made a comparison of the data collected from different sources.

It also has a disadvantage in that it is time consuming. A lot of time is needed to conduct interviews, to transcribe the data, analyse, give feedback and write a comprehensive report. Nevertheless, all the precautions were taken to ensure bias-free interviews by accepting the information given as it was. Enough time was also scheduled to visit the schools.

4.6.2 Focus group discussions

Nyumba (2018) defines a focus group as a gathering of people from similar backgrounds or experience to discuss a specific topic of interest. It is a form of qualitative research where questions are asked about perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, opinions or ideas. A normal focus group discussion gathering should have 8 to 12 participants and all these participants are expected to freely participate (Basnet, 2018)

A focus group discussion has the following features and practices as outlined by Nyumba (2018):

- They are organised discussions with a selected group of individuals to gain information about their views and experiences of a topic. Mishra (2016) adds that participants should be carefully selected, those with information about the research question should be included. This is why in the current study the researcher used both male and female learners, and Guidance and Counselling heads of departments and disciplinarians because they have information about drug abuse among learners. Their contributions were significant.
- The group discussion should be carefully planned to create a non-intimidating environment. This means that the moderator or interviewer should well articulate the plan to participants so that it is clear to every member. The goal or objectives

of the research should be clear to participants before they join the group. Mishra (2016) adds that the researcher should explain the objectives in writing. To eliminate intimidation, the interviewer should lead the discussion with confidence and must be impartial and objective throughout the process.

- The interviewer's role is very significant and he or she should have good interpersonal skills for moderating a group successfully. The interviewer should make an outline of the questions to be asked which are compatible with the research objectives. For example, open-ended questions should be used so that the discussion becomes effective (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). Mishra (2016) opines that the interviewer should start with a welcome note, spell out the agenda of the meeting and the rules of the discussion. This makes the participants comfortable. Another role of the interviewer is to ensure that all members are given the opportunity to freely articulate their views. So he/she should be able to regulate the speakers. Naturally, there are some speakers who tend to dominate discussions. The interviewer should watch out for such participants. Passive members should be encouraged to speak through motivation using supportive language and body language. They need to be assured that their contribution is also significant.
- A focus group discussion is not static. The interviewer can bring changes in order to improve facilitation of the group discussion. It can be hosted in person or through online discussion. In the current research the researcher was able to carry out online discussions. Because of the Covid-19 lockdown regulations, schools were closed and there were Covid-19 protocols that needed to be followed. This made some of the meetings difficult to hold. Online discussions were very convenient because the members agreed on a time when they were all free, so a 100% attendance was possible. The invitations and reminders were sent out several times before the meeting.

The above procedures were supported by Bergold and Thomas (2012) who explain that focus group discussions are particularly useful because participants are allowed to enter into conversation with each other in a safe setting. Focus groups have provision for free and open discussions among respondents resulting in the generation of new ideas.

Bergold and Thomas (2012) posit that open dialogue will become the central point for the entire case study. This atmosphere enables taboo topics to be discussed. Focus group discussions were valid for this research because participants were given the chance to participate in a relaxed manner and articulated their views freely and they were able to address some of the questions raised in this study. The researcher was able to record non-linguistic features as well.

It can, therefore, be summarised that in order to conduct a successful focus group discussion there is need to select the right participants, choose a moderator, who may be the researcher, record the meeting, write clear discussion guidelines, generate a report and use the data to make a plan of action.

According to Mishra (2016) focus group discussion has the following advantages:

- It gives immediate access to a participant's opinion, making data collection quick and convenient.
- It is a great complement to other mediums. It enables collection of supporting feedback in large batches.
- It is highly flexible, the researcher can adapt to the needs and opinions of group members.
- It is easy to conduct regular discussion to eliminate inaccurate results.
- The researcher will be able to understand the true feelings and perceptions of the participants.

However, the focus group discussion has its disadvantages. Nyumba (2018) notes that focus group discussions may have problems in controlling participants who dominate discussions if the researcher is inexperienced. Some respondents may be reluctant to share sensitive ideas and concerns publicly, and the groups are too small to make a generalisation.

Although there are those weaknesses, the researcher was flexible and was able to control the participants. The fact that the researcher had knowledge about drug abuse among learners helped her guard against bias. The researcher ensured that all members participated by using the language well known by all learners. With the

assistance of the teachers from the schools under study the researcher was able to identify the required participants for the discussion. Interview guides were developed and the responses were recorded.

In order to come up with comprehensive data the researcher employed open-ended questions in both semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion. It is, therefore, important at this juncture to give a justification why it was necessary to use open-ended questions. In a qualitative research like this one a researcher is expected to provide an environment where participants can respond in a way that accurately and thoroughly represent their views about the phenomenon or the way they see that part of the world (Patton, 2002)

Open-ended questions were necessary in this research because the researcher wanted to collect information and capture the perceptions of learners, School heads and heads of departments without using preconceived ideas. This is because these questions provide a platform for participants to give their points of view without being coerced. They are not given a long list to choose from. Allen (2017) adds that respondents are given the chance to holistically look at the topic and give a comprehensive discussion. They are allowed to give their opinions and have more options. As a result, a diversity of data will be produced.

Farrell (2016) gives a summary of reasons why it is advantageous to use open-ended questions in qualitative research. These include:

- They allow more responses. Responses are not confined because the participants have the freedom to air their opinions.
- More detail is given. This is because participants are at liberty to be creative. More information than expected can be gathered. They can even tell stories.
- More insights are unveiled. Open-ended questions provide room for the researcher to probe more and more in-depth insights are revealed.
- Respondents are permitted to ask questions when they do not understand. As a result, adequate responses are obtained.

- The researcher may capture direct quotations which reveal participants' depth of emotions, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences and feelings.

In conclusion, in the current research study the researcher was able to usefully employ open-ended questions to have detailed information concerning drug abuse in schools among both male and female learners. The participants were at liberty to give their feelings and perceptions, and they assisted in coming up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in Chiredzi.

4.6.4 Documents

Triad (2016) defines document analysis as a form of qualitative research in which the researcher interprets the documents in order to gain an insight of the topic under discussion. The content is also coded into themes. Bowen (2009) echoes the view that all written communications found in the area of study are considered as data-gathering instruments. These written communications form part of the life activities of that particular area. Cohen et al. (2011) posit that documents are produced to serve as a record of activities. They may contain information regarding the background or progression of an organisation. They are ready-made sources of data that can be easily accessed by the researcher (Merriam, 2009).

To augment the above ideas, O'Leary (2014) identified three types of documents, which are:

- public records. These are official records of an organisation. In the case of the current research study where data is collected in schools, the public records include; attendance registers, school's mission statement and vision, school policies, student handbooks, school rules, records of disciplinary cases and guidance and counselling sessions. In this research study the researcher was able to get these records as requested.
- personal documents. These refer to accounts of an individual's actions, beliefs, experiences, calendars, e-mails, blogs, face book posts, duty logs and incident reports. In the current study the researcher was fortunate to have one participant, a female learner who wrote a confession about her experiences as a drug addict.

- physical evidence: This is in reference to physical objects found within the study setting, for example, flyers, posters, agendas, handbooks, training materials and notice board posters. Posters in the office of the head, disciplinary committee chairpersons and heads of departments speak louder than what the participants say. The researcher should be able to make some inferences on these physical documents. The researcher found them very useful in all the schools visited.

In order to carry out an efficient and effective document analysis, there are certain procedures to be followed. There is need to make a careful plan so that reliable results are achieved. Triad (2016) suggests that the researcher should formulate a checklist of texts to be explored. In the current study, the researcher was aware that a disciplinary committee chairperson kept records of all disciplinary cases they had sat for, school rules and records of disciplinary actions taken on perpetrators. All acts of misconduct by learners and the recommendations by the committee are recorded. Guidance and Counselling heads of departments also keep a record of cases of those learners with different behavioural problems. Learners with behaviour problems are referred to counsellors for assistance and some may choose to seek help from counsellors. Usually, counsellors compile their reports with great care so that they keep a correct record of learners' behaviour. Posters and notice boards in the offices were assessed so as to come up with a clear picture of what schools have in store, regarding drug abuse by female learners.

Another important aspect to consider in document analysis is how a text will be accessed, paying attention to linguistic and cultural barriers (Bowen, 2009). The schools in the current studies are located in an area populated by the Shangani people. It was important for the researcher to consider this. In some cases, testimonials from parents were written in Shangani which called for a translator (Bowen, 2009). The researcher was not conversant with the Shangani language and this necessitated the need for a translator. Triad (2016) asserts that the researcher should acknowledge and accept bias and should consider strategies to ensure credibility. He/she should know the data being looked for and should consider ethical issues, for example, some documents are confidential. Counsellors normally assist learners in confidence and information needs

to be handled with care because they even keep incriminating information. In this case, use of some drugs is prohibited by the law of the land. Thus, the researcher should treat this with confidentiality.

In the current study, document analysis was very important because it assisted the researcher to have a clear picture of what is happening in schools. These documents also contained the types of drugs that are used by learners. The counsellors' reports revealed some of the causes of drug abuse as narrated by learners involved. In some cases, recommendations were given as to how drug abuse could be eliminated among female learners. The chairpersons' minutes of meetings revealed a lot about drug use among learners and that it was not only a male learners' problem but a female learners' as well.

Bowen (2009) suggests that a researcher should carefully select texts to use because there may be a large number of them. Emphasis should be made on quality, not quantity. O'Leary (2014) adds that good document analysis should consider bias and subjectivity. It is important to evaluate the original purpose of the document, such as the target audience. In the present study the target audience could be the Responsible Authority, Permanent Secretary of Primary and Secondary Education, Provincial Education Director or learners' parents. The person generating the report may be biased or coin it to suit the expectations of the audience. The researcher should also observe whether the author was a first-hand witness or second-hand source. Some reports are solicited, edited or anonymous. All this needs to be considered (Triad, 2016). Another important issue to observe is the unwitting evidence or latent content of the document, that is, the style of writing, tone, agenda and facts or opinions that exist in the document. It is however, important to consider the data as an accurate or complete recording of events that have occurred (Bruce, 2018).

4.6.4.1. Advantages of documents

The following are some of the advantages of documents:

- According to Yin (2014) documents are crucial because they attest and augment evidence from other sources. They are an important tool of social research

method because they are a part of the triangulation of data. The data sources provide a conflux of evidence for credibility (Bowen, 2009). In this study, the researcher was able to compare information gathered from interviews and focus group discussions, thus making the findings more trustworthy. The researcher was able to understand the issue of drug abuse in schools better through an analysis of these documents.

- The document review has advantages in that it is not time-consuming because the cases are already recorded and it is not expensive to carry out (Yin, 2014).
- It is an efficient and effective way of data gathering because data are manageable and practical resources (Triad, 2016).
- Documents come in a variety of forms and are an easily accessible and reliable source of data.
- Documents are stable data sources. They can be read and reviewed many times and remain unchanged. They cannot be changed by research processes.
- Document analysis supports and strengthens data collection in different ways. It can be used as a primary method of data collection or as a complement to other methods.
- They contain data which can no longer be observed, provide details that informants may have forgotten and they can track change and development. They help in the formulation of questions that need to be asked or to situations that need to be observed and this leads to a critical and comprehensive research.

4.6.4.2. Disadvantages of documents

Document review has its own disadvantages. Some reports are written by individuals who are biased and the data becomes subjective, hence, the data may be diluted or exaggerated (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The researcher should thoroughly evaluate and investigate the subjectivity of documents to protect the credibility of the research. Another disadvantage as observed by Triad (2016) is that documents are not generated with a research agenda. They require some investigative skills. They will not provide all the information required to answer research questions. Some documents

may only provide little information which is useful data. Others may be incomplete or data may be inconsistent, leading to the need for more research.

Although it has these criticisms the researcher still found the instrument useful. O'Leary (2014) and Bowen (2009) concur that document analysis has no disadvantages. Rather, they refer to them as concerns because a researcher can easily avoid them by following clear procedures as mentioned earlier on.

4.7 Data trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (2016) the trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of the qualitative research results which involves multiple methods in data collection. Trustworthiness is a key element in qualitative research. According to Merriam (2009), it is achieved through credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

In this study, credibility was established through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, use of the triangulation technique, peer-briefing, referential and member-checking. The researcher used prolonged engagement where the researcher engaged the learners several times for group discussions to assess consistency. Lincoln and Guba (2016) assert that prolonged engagement involves extended participation which gives the researcher adequate time to learn the culture, test for false information, build trust and usually repeat the procedure central to the case study. Member-checking was also used to ensure credibility. This is when the researcher gives participants the compiled report of the findings so that they can check and confirm if the responses had been correctly captured.

Data triangulation was another method which was used to ensure the credibility of the current research. This was achieved through the use of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion and document analysis. Data from various schools were compared, thus, cross-case site was done using views from individuals' experiences. The researcher compared data collected from the school heads, Guidance and Counselling heads of departments, disciplinary committee chairpersons and learners.

Credibility was again established through referential adequacy. The researcher used established research methods derived from those that have been successfully applied in previous comparable projects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). For example, the research used grounded theory analysis. Theories were generated from real world data. That is, from information about drug abuse among female learners

Another criterion that was used in the research to ensure trustworthiness is transferability. This refers to the extent to which the finding of one study can be applied to other situations. To achieve transferability, the researcher must carefully define the research background and the expectations important to the study (Yin, 2014). It was important in this research to explain the rampant increase in drug abuse cases among learners, females included, and the need to have strategies for curbing that behaviour. This allows the readers to compare the findings of the current research to other works. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) give the importance of an accurate boundary of study so that transferability is enabled. In the current research study, the researcher made transferability easier by establishing the following measures accurately: location of the study and total number of schools involved was stated, number of participants who were interviewed was given, and data collection methods used were clearly explained.

Dependability is another element of establishing trustworthiness. Merriam (2009) posits that credibility and dependability are correlated. When one tries to ensure credibility, dependability may also be established. However, in dependability, the researcher should be able to account for the changes in the study design if there are any (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). In dependability, the researcher also conforms to the laid down procedures of conducting a study (Cohen et al. 2007). This may be done by documenting the techniques used to examine and re-examine data during the study. The researcher in the current study coded and re-coded data in data analysis for conformity. The researcher was also in constant contact with supervisors in order to conform to laid down procedures of carrying out a research study.

Trustworthiness was also established through conformability. According to Polit and Beck (2017), conformability refers to the objectivity of research during data collection and analysis. There should be congruency between two or more independent people

about the data's accuracy, relevance and meaning. The information provided by the participants and the interpretation of the data are not invented by the researcher. Kyngas and Karianen (2020) add that conformability describes the degree of neutrality. That is, the extent to which the findings of the study reflect the respondents' opinions and experiences, rather than the researchers' biases, motivations or interests. In the current study, conformability was seen through the way the participants responded to questions regarding drug abuse by female learners. Their feelings and experiences were expressed, rather than the researchers'

4.8 Data collection procedure

The researcher sought approval from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Masvingo province, Zimbabwe. Approval was also obtained from the District Schools Inspector in Chiredzi District to carry out research at the selected schools. The researcher visited the selected schools to make appointments with the heads and other participants.

The researcher sought permission from the heads of schools to carry out interviews with Guidance and Counselling heads of departments, disciplinary committee chairpersons and school learners. The researcher was assisted by heads of departments to select suitable learners. Learners were grouped according to their level of education, Forms 1 and 2, Forms 3 and 4 and then Forms 5 and 6. A sample from these learners was used in focus group discussions. The school heads, heads of departments and disciplinary committee chairpersons were interviewed. Documents, such as disciplinary committees' minutes, dropout reports from the school heads and reports kept by heads of departments were analysed to further provide qualitative data which was mainly used to buttress observations made through focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews. The researcher visited these schools in the afternoon because most of them did not have afternoon lessons. The researcher also made use of online discussions during the Covid-19 lockdown period.

4.9 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting and explaining data (Bhebhe, 2014). The grounded theory method of analysis was used to identify themes and categories. According to De Vos (2014) grounded theory is a systematic process of examining, selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising and interpreting data to address the initial propositions of the study. Punch (2014) adds that grounded theory is a set of procedures for developing theory through analysis of data. It generates abstract theory to explain what is central in the data. According to De Vos (2014) and Yin (2014) the thrust of grounded theory is to find a core category at a higher level of abstraction but grounded in the data which accounts for what is central in the data. Thus, grounded theory generates theory that is grounded in the data and it enables discovery of new theories that are based on the collection and analysis of collected data. According to Francis, Birks and Tie (2019), grounded theory was propounded by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Strauss used interactionism whilst Glaser used descriptive statistics. They discovered that theory could be generated from data inductively. Glaser and Strauss (1967) proved that qualitative research could involve rigour and could provide methods of comparative analysis that enable the generation of theory. However, the theory was modified and there are later models. Birks and Mills (2014) posit that grounded theory is a process of generating theory from the analysis of data. Theory is, thus, constructed by the researcher who views the world through the participants' own lens.

According to Francis et al. (2019) grounded theory involves the following procedures:

- Purposive sampling.
- Generation or collection of data. This is done through survey, interviews, focus group discussion and other methods of data collection. Data is collected from participants who are purposively selected. In the current research study; interviews, focus group discussion and document analysis were used. Purposively selected participants have answers to the research question.
- Initial coding. The researcher collects, codes and analyses data before further collection. Purposive sampling gives the initial data to be analysed. Theoretical sampling will then start and codes and categories are thus developed from the first data collected.

- Intermediate coding. This is when core categories are identified and there is comparative analysis.
- Advance coding. Development of the storyline and theoretical coding. It is the final stage towards achieving grounded theory.

Punch (2014) summarised the above procedures and says that in grounded theory, the researcher finds conceptual categories in the data at the first level of abstraction, identifies relationships between these categories and conceptualises and accounts for these relationships at a higher level of abstraction.

Using the above concept, the researcher read through the data collected, categorised the data generating themes, finding inter-related themes and interpreted the data accounting for the relationships that existed. The researcher also crafted themes from topics that recur, expressions, participant examples and expressions of their thoughts (Ryan & Bernard 2003). This is because at the heart of grounded analysis is coding, namely; open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Punch, 2014; & Yin, 2014). Using this idea, the researcher in the current study started by breaking the data to open up for theoretical possibilities and generating abstract conceptual categories (Punch, 2014). The researcher examined the data, identified conceptual categories and theoretical possibilities embedded in the data and then labelled the pieces of data. The data was then connected using what Strauss and Corbin (2013) called axial coding, that is, theoretical coding. This is when the researcher selects the core category by concentrating on the basic social process evident in the data. By so doing, the researcher managed to select central aspects of the data as a core category. The analysis then proceeded around the core category which became the centrepiece (De Vos, 2014).

Ground theory is useful in qualitative research because findings accurately represent a world setting. Theories used are directly derived from real world participants in real world settings using in-depth interviews (Charmaz, 2022). Francis et al. (2019) assert that grounded theory is advantageous because findings are connected to data and new discoveries lead to discovery of new theories. It also offers strategies for data collection and analysis, as data are collected and analysed.

In the same vein, this analysis method was useful to the current research because, it enabled the researcher to develop a theory which offered an explanation of the main concern of people regarding drug abuse among female learners and how this could be resolved. It can be concluded that grounded theory is the discovery of emerging patterns in data. It is the generation of theories from data. This is why the researcher found it very useful.

4.10 Ethical considerations

Before the commencement of the study, the researcher complied with the code of ethics proposed by Great Zimbabwe University. The researcher obtained a clearance certificate from the Great Zimbabwe University Research Department.

The researcher sought informed consent before carrying out the study by informing the participants about the purpose and methods to be used in the study. The participants were allowed to volunteer to participate in the study and that if they wished to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research process they were at liberty to do so. The participants were assured of their safety, both physically and psychologically (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). In any research, the researcher should ensure the safety of participants. Cohen et al. (2014) argue that in conducting research, ethical issues should be considered to avoid problems that may arise during the process of generating data and also to protect the rights of the participants. Thus, some standards need to be observed such as; confidentiality, informed consent, anonymity and the participants' rights. As a result, a researcher should have respect for participants and the truth. The current researcher adhered to these principles.

Data obtained from the participants were strictly confidential and the reporting of data was done anonymously as participants were not required to give their names during interviews and group discussions. Participants were coded as follows: School Heads (SH A-SH D), disciplinary committee chairpersons (DCC A-DCC D), Guidance and Counselling Heads of Departments (G & C HOD A-G & C HOD D) and focus group discussion (FGD A-FGD D). This was done to protect the identities of participants.

4.11 Summary

This chapter discussed the research methodology of the study. It specifically addressed the paradigms, approaches and research designs, paying special attention to the ones under-pinning the current study. The study used the interpretivist paradigm and the qualitative approach. The case study design which was adopted was discussed, highlighting its advantages in the current study. The researcher also discussed the relevant data collection tools which were used. These included semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and documents. Evidence was given to show that these research instruments were in line with the objectives of the study. Sample and sampling procedures were outlined giving the necessary detail. Data analysis, interpretation, measures to establish trustworthiness and ethical issues of the study were also discussed.

CHAPTER 5

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents, analyses and discusses data that were elicited from thirty-six (36) participants in four (4) study areas from Chiredzi District's rural farming secondary

schools. The thrust of the study was to come up with strategies for mitigating problems of drug abuse among female learners in the above mentioned area.

Qualitative data were provided through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion and document analysis. Grounded theory was employed to select themes using thematic content analysis. Thematic content analysis made it easier to handle huge volumes of statements which had been quoted. Coding was used to ascertain the frequency of similar ideas. It was, therefore, possible for the researcher to make inferences and to check for consistency.

As already indicated, data were presented, analysed and immediately discussed in order to avoid the repetition that often characterises work where the discussion of the data constitutes a separate chapter.

5.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- ii) examine the effects of drug abuse among female learners.
- iii) enhance the female learners' knowledge of risks related to drug abuse and ways of stopping the abuse of drugs.
- iv) discuss strategies that should be employed by schools and families to come up with strategies for mitigating the problem of drug abuse.
- v) make recommendations and come up with a framework which culminates in new knowledge on how drug abuse among female learners can be stopped.

5.3 Research Questions

5.3.1 Main Research Question.

What strategies should be employed to mitigate drug abuse among female learners?

5.3.2 Sub-research questions.

- i) How adversely can drug abuse affect female learners in Chiredzi?
- ii) How can female learners be assisted to enhance their knowledge of risks related to drug abuse and ways of stopping drug abuse?
- iii) How best can schools and families eradicate drug abuse among female learners?
- iv) What strategies can be used to reduce problems caused by drug abuse among female learners?

The questions used in the interviews were drawn from the research questions above. Each critical question had a number of questions formulated with the intention of addressing it (See Appendix). The different groups of participants responded to questions that intended to address critical issues which could enable the study to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners.

5.4 Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion.

5.4.1 Participants codes.

For smooth analysis of the data, the researcher assigned codes to the participants. The School Heads were coded (SH A to SH D), Disciplinary committee chairperson, (DCC A – DCC D) and Guidance Counselling Heads of Departments were coded (G & C HOD A –G & C HOD D) and focus group discussion (FGD A-FGD D).

5.4.2 Organisation of themes and sub-themes

From the data that were gathered five major themes emerged and they were divided into sub-themes and elements. The views of the participants were presented according to the categorised themes and sub-themes. The themes were anchored on the research sub-questions and the research objectives.

Table 8: Themes, sub-themes and elements.

Theme	Sub-themes	Elements
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<p>5.4.3.1 How adversely can drug abuse affect learners?</p>	<p>5.4.3.2.1. Academic issues</p> <p>5.4.3.2.2 Health issues</p> <p>5.4.3.2.3 Anti-social behaviour</p>	<p>5.4.3.2.1.1. School drop outs</p> <p>5.4.4.2.1.2. Decline in academic performance</p> <p>5.4.3.2.1.3. Unwanted pregnancies</p> <p>5.4.3.2.4 Indiscipline</p> <p>5.4.3.3.2.1 Addiction</p> <p>5.4.3.3.2.2 Mental and physical health issues</p> <p>5.4.3.3.2.3 Depression</p> <p>5.4.3.2.3.1. Negative peer association</p> <p>5.4.3.2.3.2 Lack of self-control</p>
<p>5.4.3.2 Enhancing female learners' knowledge of risks related to drug abuse and ways of stopping use of drug abuse.</p>	<p>5.4.3.3.1 Information dissemination</p> <p>5.4.3.3.2 Fear arousal</p> <p>5.4.3.3.3 Teaching morals</p>	
<p>5.4.3.3 Strategies employed by schools and families</p>	<p>5.4.3.4.1. Enforcement of strict school policy</p> <p>5.4.3.4.2. Guidance and Counselling</p>	<p>5.4.3.4.1.1. Manual punishment</p> <p>5.4.3.4.2.1. Suspension, expulsion and exclusion.</p> <p>5.4.4.3.1. Avail human and material resources.</p>

	<p>5.4.3.4.3 Drug abuse awareness campaign</p> <p>5.4.3.4.4 Responsible Authority</p> <p>5.4.3.4.5.5 Peer educators</p> <p>5.4.3.4.6.5 Family</p>	<p>5.4.3.4.3.2. child protection committees</p> <p>5.4.3.4.2.3. Junior parliamentarians</p> <p>5.4.5.2.4. Police Victim Friendly Unit</p> <p>5.4.5.2.5. Scripture Union.</p> <p>5.4.5.3.1 Wellness clinic</p> <p>5.4.5.3.2 Rehabilitation</p> <p>5.4.5.3.2 Peer Educators Training</p> <p>5.4.3.5.3.3 Class health masters</p> <p>5.4.3.5.3.4 Class representatives</p> <p>5.4.3.6.5.1 Child protection unit committee</p> <p>Positive parental guidance</p> <p>Positive role modelling</p> <p>Displaying good morals</p>
<p>5.4.3.4 Strategies to be employed in Chiredzi rural-farming schools.</p>	<p>5.4.3.5.1 Guidance and Counselling</p> <p>5.4.3.5.2. Drug abuse campaign</p>	<p>5.4.3.1.1 Schools and churches</p> <p>5.4.3.5.2.1 Avuxeni radio station</p> <p>5.4.3.5.2.2. Debate, drama, poetry and composition writing competition.</p>

	<p>5.4.3.5.3 Community involvement</p> <p>5.4.3.5.4 Routine checks on learners</p> <p>5.4.3.5.5. Clearly outlined school policy on drugs</p> <p>5.4.3.4.5.6. Government involvement</p> <p>5.4.3.4.6.7. Non-Governmental Organisations</p>	<p>5.4.3.5.2.3 Police Victim Friendly Unit</p> <p>5.4.3.5.2.2. Awareness campaigns.</p> <p>5.4.3.5.6.2 Ball games competition</p> <p>5.4.3.5.6.3. Referral teams</p> <p>5.4.3.5.6.4 Provision of testing equipment in schools</p> <p>5.4.3.5.5.1 Zero tolerance to drugs</p> <p>5.4.3.6.1. Ministry of Primary and Secondary education</p> <p>5.4.3.6.2. Ministry of Youth</p> <p>5.4.3.6.3. Ministry of Health and Child welfare</p> <p>5.4.3.6.4. Ministry of Legal and Parliamentary Affairs.</p> <p>5.4.3.6.5. Ministry of Home Affairs.</p> <p>Childline</p> <p>Plan International</p> <p>Regai dzive shiri</p> <p>Zimbabwe Trust</p>
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		Mubatirapamwe Trust CAMFED

5.4.3.1 How adversely can drug abuse affect learners?

Basing on the interviews and focus group discussions, all the participants were concerned with the negative effects of drug abuse among female learners. They raised an array of the effects of drug abuse among female learners. These included physical, social, and mental health issues.

Mokwena and Nomkanka (2021), in their research study on substance abuse among high school learners in Free State rural, found that when female learners abuse drugs they are affected mentally. It also emerged from the discussions in the present study that after lockdowns, there was rampant use of the drug called Crystal Meth which is highly addictive. School Heads A and B concurred that it seemed female learners were using more complex drugs which affected the brain. According to Madamombe (2022), Crystal Myth is a very dangerous drug. It is a stimulant drug that affects the central nervous system. Madamombe adds that the drug is a controlled prescription for the treatment of Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. The street versions of the drug are illegal and highly dangerous. The drug boosts the release of a neuron-transmitter called Dopamine, leading to an increase of this chemical in the brain. Dopamine is associated with motor function motivation, reward of the brain's pleasure centers. This has an adverse effect on the user for it causes hallucinations and delusional disorders (Madamombe, 2022).

One of the school heads who was worried by the behaviour of female learners, particularly felt that those alleged to be taking Crystal Meth, had this to say:

All schools should be wary of the introduction of Crystal Meth in schools. The effects of this drug are drastic and they destroy the learner's life.

A learner from focus group discussion, FGD (A), concurred that Crystal Meth has drastic effects on the user. She narrated:

In 2021 I was introduced to a new drug, Crystal Meth (guka makafella). A new ecstatic experience that made my blood rush, a drug that overpowered weed or alcohol.

According to the confession of the learner during the group discussions, this drug was different from other drugs because it was highly addictive. She claimed that the drug made her feel more energetic, confident and talkative. That made her want to experience it again and again. Thus, slowly and surely, she became addicted. This is similar to Moyo's (2021) views that drugs affect the brain of the user. Therefore, those learners who abuse drugs may suffer from mental health problems. Moyo adds that drugs may cause one to see things and hear voices telling one to do things and one may end up being violent and dangerous. Madamombe (2022) asserts that Crystal Meth is a deadly drug which heightens everything around the user; the good, the bad and the ugly. If one falls in love, the emotion is magnified. The sad or depressive thoughts may lead to suicide. A kind person may be turned into a monster. The effects of this drug may be summarised as follows: It affects the brain cells by sending a wrong signal; the person may not eat, sleep and bath. The person becomes addicted because of the strong urge to continue using the drug. If she does not take it anymore, she becomes angry, depressed, violent and paranoid. Thus, the person becomes anti-social and paranoid. In the end, the person becomes weak and lazy to work (Madamombe, 2022).

The above assertions were supported by a learner-participant who was then recovering from drug addiction, who said:

When I first used Meth, I didn't see anything wrong. The effects were not that harsh. However, without warning, everything began to crumble. A good relationship turned bitter and abusive in a short space of time. I was not myself anymore. I failed to pick myself up.

Research studies by Cormier and Poole (2004) and Turnbridge (2022) revealed that women are affected mentally by substance abuse. They may have problems

such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, panic and eating disorder. Madamombe (2022) commented that drugs such as broncolear affect the brain of the user in the way that one may snap in and out of reality. According to Madamombe it also has the effect of damaging the teeth. The learner from FGD (A) continued with her confession:

Broncho had a major go-slow effect that makes you lazy and its most effective stage is the zombie mode where you could be walking but being absent-minded mentally.

Guidance and Counselling heads of departments echoed the same sentiments, saying that normally those learners who abused drugs experienced depression and were withdrawn. They normally isolate themselves from the rest of the female learners in the school. Guidance and Counselling heads of departments were also worried by the issue of mental health. They agreed that if the brains are affected, it means that one may not be thinking straight and that may affect one's academic performance. G & C HOD (D) commented:

Drug abuse affects the way the brain processes and retains information.

This was in line with Villa (2022)'s assertion that when learners abuse drugs, they lose focus and concentration, resulting in low grades and school dropout. All the participants were in agreement that drug abuse affected academic performance. School heads pointed out that learners who abused drugs came to school inconsistently and at times they absconded lessons.

Guidance and Counselling Head of Department from School B provided written reports in which they recorded a case of two sixteen (16) year old O' Level girls who had been coming to school erratically ended up dropping out of school altogether. When investigations were carried out, it was discovered that the two were involved in drinking alcohol and had since eloped with their male partners.

Data from focus group discussions indicated that when learners start abusing drugs, they may not be able to attend lessons regularly. Similarly, Arasi and Ajuwori (2020) and Odhiambo (2020) found in their studies that drug abuse by learners contributed to

school drop outs. Their studies also revealed that students who abused drugs break school rules every day and they abscond lessons. A learner from FGD (B) added:

Female learners who abuse drugs are affected academically because they lack seriousness, they are not attentive, and they don't attend lessons regularly. They are not focused.

In a similar research study by Villa (2022), it was observed that learners who abused drugs were not punctual at school. They did not concentrate in class and they failed to perform tasks they had been assigned, resulting in the decline in their academic performance.

The interviews and discussions also revealed that besides dropping out of the school, learners who abused drugs were at the risk of falling pregnant and contracting sexually transmitted infections and HIV and AIDS. This is in line with Mokwena and Nomkanka's (2021) findings that female learners who abuse drugs may engage in risk behaviours such as unprotected sex, leading to sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies and teenage motherhood.

All school heads concurred that female learners who abuse drugs, normally hang out with elderly men and those men, besides sharing drugs with them, also sexually abuse them resulting in some girls contracting sexually transmitted infections. SH (C) commented:

There is a myth among these men that these young girls are still clean, so they indulge in unprotected sex with them.

Arasi and Ajuwori (2021) made a similar observation and reported that in their research study on the use of sachet alcohol and sexual behaviour, they found that seventy-five percent of those who used alcohol before sex did not use condoms. The same was said by an online newspaper *Ignite* (2022), which reported that the majority of men who abused drugs did not use protection when they indulged in sexual activities.

School heads were worried that female learners who abused drugs became victims of their own actions. They became vulnerable, since most male counterparts took

advantage of them. Hence, the above shows that there is need to come up with appropriate strategies to save girl learners from the evil world.

Learner-participants from focus group discussions mentioned biological problems which were caused by drug abuse such as changes in the menstrual cycle and loss of appetite. Similarly, NIDA (2020) asserts that women are affected differently by drugs as compared to men. This is because women are biologically different from men. Drugs in women cause hormonal changes which lead to changes in menstrual cycle. A learner recovering from drug addiction echoed:

Taking drugs affected my menstrual cycle. I was having very heavy and prolonged periods.

This above claim that drug abuse has biological effects on the users agrees with Odhiambo's (2020) observation that drug abuse affects the nervous system, may cause loss of appetite, vomiting and irresponsible behaviour..

Basing on the interviews and focus group discussions, it was found that drug abuse may lead to addiction. Once one starts using drugs, there is this urge to continue using the drugs. The drug abusers may start with mere experimenting on the drug or taking it just for fun but then continue forever. This concurs with Action Pal Two's (2021) views that when one starts using drugs, there is also the urge to try other types, leading to addiction. A learner recovering from addition commented:

I realised that smoking joints (rolled weed) was becoming hectic, as it involved a lot. I tried edibles like space cake and I experienced epic high that lasted for hours. I also indulged in the habit of drinking bronco.

The learner said that she enjoyed the experience and this led her into becoming more adventurous because the experiences intrigued her.

From the confession, it is clear that learners indulge in different drugs some of which are deadly. These drugs have negative impact on the learners. Although the number of female learners who abuse drugs may seem small, drugs have drastic effects on females and there is need to help them (Merlo et al., 2017). A study by Isenja (2022),

held in Kenya, has shown that if female learners start using drugs at an early age, several risk factors may increase the likelihood of continued and problematic use at later ages. In a similar study on drug use by females, Masiyiwa (2021) reveals that some girls in Mbare started using marijuana at the age of twenty-five (25) and gradually progressed to hard drugs and they have since become addicts. A learner from FGD (A) confessed:

My consumption rate and scale increased from smoking occasionally to smoking thrice a day or whenever I felt like smoking.

This shows that addiction is a risk that learners should be concerned with and that they should stop abusing drugs.

Guidance and Counselling heads of departments revealed that another major effect of drug abuse on female learners was that they might not repent once they started using drugs. In a similar study on drug abuse in Beitbridge, Mlambo (2022) found that drug abusers did not repent despite the threats from school administrators. Detective Assistant Inspector CID Drug and Narcotics Section in Zimbabwe alleged that drug users do not repent, making it difficult to deal with them (Mlambo, 2022).

G & C HOD (C) said:

We have had a case of a Form 2 girl who was involved in drug abuse. We tried all means possible to assist her but to no avail.

SH (D) also said that some learners continue to abuse drugs despite having been referred to professional counsellors and the police. The urge to use drugs is more powerful than all the threats they may get. Chikwanha (2021) contends that drugs affect the brains and make it very difficult for the individual to quit the habit. A lot of effort is needed for one to stop using drugs. Madamombe (2022) raised similar sentiments, that it was very difficult for a drug addict to stop using drugs. Therefore, there is a need to come up with serious intervention strategies.

Given all these adverse effects of drugs on female learners, it is important that schools, families and the community come up with relevant strategies to alleviate drug abuse among female learners.

5.4.3.2 Enhancing female learners' knowledge of the risks of drug abuse and ways of helping them to stop abusing drugs.

As already indicated, the third research sub-question sought to enhance the learners' knowledge of risks of abusing drugs in order to come up with the ways of helping them desist from that behaviour.

From the interviews and focus group discussions, there were mixed feelings concerning learners' knowledge of the risks of abusing drugs. Some participants felt that learners did not have an in-depth understanding of the effects of drugs on their lives. So, there is need to enlighten them on the dangers of abusing drugs. Drugs may cause death and mental health illness. Mlambo (2022) reported that in Beitbridge alone 114 mental cases were recorded between January and April 2022 and several deaths were also recorded. The Beitbridge District School Remedial Tutor, Ignatius Munikwa, as recorded by Mlambo (2022) said that their department had recorded several deaths of learners and alleged that these learners had been supplied with drugs by parents and relatives. Data from focus group discussions suggested that it was necessary to equip learners with information concerning the adverse effects of drug abuse, so that they could confront parents or relatives who abused drugs.

Chiredzi District is close to the Beitbridge border town and this proximal distance is not healthy for most of the female youth, for they have relatives who travel to this Beitbridge for business. A participant from FGD (A) added:

Most female learners here have relatives who are border jumpers who do a lot of business in Mesina which is a source of some of these drugs.

Some participants suggested that learners should be encouraged to cut ties with such relatives who have untoward behaviour. It is, therefore, important to provide these learners with relevant information so that they do not fall prey to the adverse repercussions of drug abuse.

Matutu and Musasa (2019) assert that some learners abuse drugs because they have limited knowledge about the adverse effects of drug abuse. There is need for schools to intervene so as to enhance the knowledge of learners about drug abuse. Schools should launch awareness campaigns at their schools (ZIMFACT, 2021). G & C HOD B suggested:

We need to come up with more strategies to help these learners understand the effects of drugs.

The Guidance and Counselling heads of departments pointed out that those learners from poor backgrounds need to be checked constantly because they normally engage in drug abuse because of social problems they normally face. This is in line with UNODC's (2020) findings that young people from poor backgrounds engage in harmful activities such as drug abuse. Therefore, parents and schools should respond to the problems of such children through close monitoring.

Those who have become addicted should be provided with the necessary help. According to Masiyiwa (2021), if left untreated, drug addiction results in substantial costs to family and society because addicts need medical assistance. However, in Zimbabwe, rehabilitation centers for drug addiction are very expensive. Most families may not afford the costs. Most females do not seek help because they fear being labelled. Some females do not seek help because they cannot afford private treatment and may not go to mental health hospitals for fear of imprisonment.

G & C HODs were in agreement with the above. They also felt that female learners do not normally disclose their problems because they fear stigmatisation and being chucked out of school. G & C HOD (A) commented:

As our school we are doing a lot to help female learners. We refer them to the Medical Centre where they get treatment.

G & C HOD (B) added that schools normally sent drug addicted learners to the Medical Centre without the consent of the Head in order to avoid the victimisation of the learner

or any disciplinary action being taken. The Guidance and Counselling heads of departments also felt that administrators should not only think of punishing drug abusers, but should also help them find the necessary assistance. Similarly, Mlambo (2022) suggested that these learners should be treated as victims and not as criminals.

According to NIDA (2020) women are affected by drugs differently from men. Women use smaller amounts of drugs but they become addicted easily. From the discussions, it was clear that learners did not have in-depth information concerning the effects of drugs. Therefore, it is necessary that they are equipped with such information concerning drugs, so that they desist from trying to using drugs.

All the participants felt that some of these learners who abused drugs were aware of the risks involved, but still continued to abuse drugs. SH (A) opined:

Learners are aware of the risks involved in drug abuse. Their major problem is that they enjoy taking these drugs. They just want to have fun. Another factor is that drugs have something to do with the learners' stages of development

A learner from FGD (D) supported the above notion adding:

The majority of those who abuse drugs are aware of the risks involved but they start the habit as a way of alleviating stress or just to have fun. Then they become addicted. Some of these learners are arrogant. They think they can control the outcome.

A recovering drug addict from focus group discussions had a lot to say about this. She said:

Learners are aware of the risks that are involved in drug abuse, but the urge they have to be high surpasses everything else.

She also had this to say about herself:

My consumption rate and scale increased from smoking occasionally to smoking thrice a day or whenever I felt like. Some sessions were group chills which meant many blunts, usually at lunch time at a secluded place. I

mastered self-protection and picked my associates wisely. My tolerance level also developed as I never failed to do my school work.

From the above confession, it became clear that those learners were aware of the risks involved but believed that those affected by drugs were the weaker ones. They rated themselves as invincible. The confessing learner added:

I soon made a name for myself as I was a ganja queen. I never tapped out, never lost control and never failed to enjoy myself.

In a similar research study on substance abuse, Nhunzvi (2019) commented that some learners were not worried about the health implications. Such learners believed in the myth that make them more intelligent and joyful. Those females who take drugs consider themselves to be very strong and that habit makes them proud. A FGD (B) learner commented:

These drug abusers are proud of themselves and they feel they are strong female characters and vibe setters.

From the interviews, the school heads and Guidance and Counselling heads of departments were in agreement that female learners who abuse drugs never want to give the world a reason to taint or shame their drug use lifestyle. They also want to demonstrate that females can still be stoners without being loose, weak and dependent. Some of them try to balance their stoner life with their education. However, this does not work because they normally fall victim to addiction. Their education and health are always usually ruined. According to Merlo et al. (2017), these unrealistic beliefs learners have on drugs have a negative impact on their lives. For example, they may end up having low self-esteem and depression because of the drugs. SH (D) added:

It is really sad to note that learners are quite aware of the risks involved but they just want to prove a point that they are able to overcome all the risks related to drug abuse.

Basing on the observations, it was noted that some of the learners who abused drugs did not believe that once one started on drugs it would be difficult for one to

stop. Similarly, Chidarikire et al. (2021) noted that adolescents wanted to experiment and believed that risk-taking and experimentation would shape their identity. In the process they became victims of their actions. G & C HOD (C) added:

It is evident that once one starts taking drugs one becomes arrogant and complacent. One only realises one's blunder it when it is already too late.

This is why this research study is very important. There is dire need to come up with mitigating strategies to address drug abuse among female learners. There is need to enhance the learners' knowledge about the risks involved and come up with strategies of rescuing female learners. Drugs are more devastating to female than to male learners.

From the confession by a learner from FGD (A), it was evident that some learners were aware of the risks but continued to use drugs for one reason or the other. She had this to say concerning her experience with the use of Crystal Meth:

Meth was different from weed. I couldn't tell my non-addict friends about it, so naturally I got closer to other addicts and the gang was cliqued. Unfortunately, Meth led to the unveiling of many hidden and unpleasant traits being revealed in my new life style.

A research study by Tapfumaneyi (2021) revealed that the use of drugs may cause abusers to be anti-social. In the current research study, learner-participants in the focus groups raised the same issue. The learners added that those who abused drugs ended up affecting their erstwhile good relationships unknowingly and lost some of their non-abusing friends. Therefore, such learners need more help so that they might be saved before their lives are ruined.

From the discussions, it was clear that some learners were aware of some of the risks of abusing drugs but they really did not understand some of the effects. For instance, they suddenly became addicted. And addiction manifests in different forms. Some addicts hide their actions. They feel invincible, invisible and they manipulate the reality

that drugs may affect their health and social well-being. The learner who confessed was on the verge of dropping out of school had she not decided to open up to her family.

Most of the school heads expressed displeasure with learners who abused drugs. Learners continue to abuse drugs despite the risks involved. The heads agreed that these learners need serious help so that they do not get involved in drug abuse. This is because once they start using drugs it becomes difficult to stop. This resonates with Madamombe's (2022) findings on some drugs that are used by learners these days. The drugs are highly addictive such that when one starts using drugs one may not turn back.

SH (B) commented:

Once a learner starts abusing drugs, he/she will continue to do so regardless of the risks involved. The learner knows the repercussions but due to peer pressure and addiction, he/she continues to take the drugs.

SH (C) added:

Learners are aware of the negative effects of drugs because we always address these issues and tell them how they can be negatively affected by drugs. They have also witnessed some of their colleagues dropping out of school because of drug abuse, but they still don't care. They enjoy using drugs and they believe these drugs may help them run away from their sorrows and miseries. I also feel that some of them are just reckless.

SH (A) was more sympathetic to these learners:

These female learners who abuse drugs usually fall prey to abusers and are sexually and physically abused. This may lead to unwanted pregnancies and learners may also contract sexually transmitted infections, which may lead to HIV and AIDS.

SH (D) had the same opinion:

There are some adults who provide female learners with drugs so that they sexually abuse them. So, some of these learners are victims. They are at risk of becoming addicts and eventually dropping out of school.

Although these school heads had mixed views, they all agreed that female learners should be assisted. Female learners need more education concerning the effects of drugs on their lives. Similarly, Turnbridge (2021) asserted that there was need to address the attitudes of learners towards drug abuse. Turnbridge added that learners were victims who need not be judged. Instead, they need compassion.

Most learners in focus groups felt that dissemination of information on drugs should be cascaded to primary schools. This was because the use of drugs may start as early as at eight (8) years of age (Turnbridge, 2021). The young girls may not even understand what they would be doing, let alone the repercussions. It is not very clear why learners start abusing drugs at that age. These learners need professional help in order to rescue them from the drug trap.

On the same issue, an FGD (A) learner, who is a Junior Councillor, commented:

The problem of drug abuse does not start at secondary school level. Some of these learners start abusing drugs at primary school level. Therefore, to say they know and understand the repercussion is questionable.

It can, therefore, be concluded that drug abuse is a serious problem that needs to be nipped in the bud before this youthful generation is destroyed. According to the Feminist theory, females face a lot of problems which are based on biology and gender differences. They have issues related to hormones, menstrual cycle, fertility, pregnancy and menopause (NIDA, 2020). This is why it is mandatory to help female learners understand the risks involved when they abuse drugs. That way we might possibly come up with strategies to stop drug abuse among female learners.

The fourth sub-research question sought to establish how best schools and families could reduce drug abuse by female learners. This sub-research question is treated below.

5.4.3.4 How best can schools and families reduce drug abuse by female learners?

Having looked at why female learners abuse drugs, the adverse effects of drug abuse and also the learners' knowledge about risks of abusing drugs, the fourth sub-research question sought to assess what schools and families could do to curb the spread of drug abuse among learners. The first part of this sub-research question looked at what schools could do to curb drug abuse among female learners. What families could do to eradicate drug abuse by female learners was treated separately. In a way, this helped the researcher to come up with a generalisation of the strategies schools may use to eradicate this pandemic in Chiredzi District.

5.4.3.3.1 What are the schools doing to curb drug abuse among female learners?

From the schools visited, all the participants were in agreement that the following ideas should be implemented in schools.

- Strict school rules
- A blue print drug abuse policy
- Guidance and Counselling programmes
- Drug abuse awareness campaigns
- Engagement with the Zimbabwe Republic Police
- Assistance from the Responsible Authority
- Enhancing peer education.

These ideas echo what Gcelu et al. (2020) and Nzuma and Ajani (2021) recommended in their studies. They recommended that schools should have proper codes of conduct which should be strictly applied, viable guidance and counselling programmes, peer education and drug abuse campaigns in the schools. It should also be noted that the school exists in the microsystem and whatever happens in the school, including the school rules and other policies, have direct influence on the behaviour of the learner.

The school heads in the present study concurred that in order to curb drug abuse among female learners, schools should be seen to be doing a lot, since learners spend most of their time at school. SH (A) had this to say:

The number of cases of drug abuse in schools is increasing rapidly, therefore, as schools we need to be more vigilant. Our rules should be explicit and should be enforced accordingly.

The researcher was keen to find out from the participants how the schools under study dealt with the issue of drug abuse. In order to come up with a vivid picture of how these schools were run, the researcher looked at variables such as school drug policy, school rules and school culture.

From the interviews and discussions, it emerged that all the schools had school rules which spelt out that use of drugs was a punishable offence. All the school heads interviewed agreed that they had school rules that guided the conduct of learners in the school premises. The researcher was able to analyse the schools' rules. All the rules clearly stipulated that taking intoxicating substances was a punishable offence. On enrolment at Form 1 or Lower Sixth, the learners were given school rules which they read alongside their parents and then signed to acknowledge that they had understood. These findings find resonance in the sentiments expressed by Mugabe and Maposa (2013) and the United Nations on Drugs and Crime (2016) that schools should have firm school rules and codes of conduct which should be applied effectively to manage discipline.

SH (B) added:

As schools we try our best to enforce discipline on learners but we still have culprits in the school who abuse drugs. These culprits are dealt with accordingly.

From the documents provided by the Disciplinary Committee chairperson from school B, it was evident that the school did not condone the use of drugs. The school rule number 2(h) read:

Bullying, fighting, insubordination, smoking and consumption of intoxicating drugs at school be reported promptly to the nearest teacher.

From the cited school rule, it is clear that this school did not allow learners to use drugs. However, the rule was not explicit. It should have clearly stated the repercussions of taking or using drugs in the school. The rule was also compressed. Given that drug abuse has become rampant in schools, school rules should be more explicit. According to the United Nations office on Drugs and Crime (2016), school learners should be acquainted with the repercussions of abusing drugs.

A learner from FGD (A) argued:

Although our rules state that drugs are not allowed in the school, the rule is not being religiously followed by some learners because the school does not enforce these rules when cases of drug abuse arise.

From the discussions, it was evident that the majority of learners were not happy with how these school rules were being administered. The majority alleged that they were given these rules at the time of enrolling and there seemed to be no follow-up. They signed the rules and returned the forms to the administrators. They agreed that they should be given their own copies to keep, so that they would constantly refer to them. This view is in tandem with Marandure et al. (2022)'s recommendation that learners should sign pledges that they will not use drugs. Similarly, School B Head reiterated that when they enrol Forms Ones and Fives they induct them and spell out all the school rules to them. He said that the issue of drug abuse would be clearly spelt out during induction. SH (C) emphasised the same point saying:

At this school we do not allow any form of intoxicating liquor or any illicit substance. All the learners are aware of this, because it is embodied in our school rules. So we don't tolerate any incidents of drug abuse. This is a serious offence that leads to expulsion or exclusion.

At School D, their school rules also stipulated that drug abuse was not allowed in the school. The introductory clause from the school rules reads:

This school is our second home. Among other things courteous and considerable children make a happy and peaceful family. Every pupil therefore shall abide by all the rules below.

In conjunction with this, was Rule Number 9 which reads:

Theft, drinking, smoking and illicit associations are totally out-lawed at this school.

The teachers work in *loco-parentis* since the school is the learners' second home. This idea supports Mugabe and Maposa (2013)'s suggestions that schools should cultivate self-discipline and good behaviour rather than using authoritarian ways of controlling behaviour. The school is regarded as a family which should always instil a sense of belonging.

However, from the focus group discussions it appeared the learners felt that more should be done in terms of conformity because, the rules at times were not being adhered to. They suggested that administrators should be more vigilant because rules with no action would not solve the drug abuse problem. The learners alleged that some innocent souls were being recruited at as early as Form 1 and their lives could be ruined. The learners felt that signing of school rules by learners and parents was not enough. What was needed was the implementation and enforcement of the rules which are the key to the eradication of the problem of drug abuse. The learners disputed Mugabe and Maposa's (2013) recommendations that parents and learners should sign contracts of compliance with school rules. They argued that some of the learners merely signed without reading.

School rules from School A as provided by DCC (A) indicated a more serious stance on the problem of consumption of illicit substances:

Clause 7 of the rules reads:

Drinking, smoking (in whatever form, variety and guise), drug trafficking and taking drugs, glue sniffing and tobacco smoking and snuffing and stealing are the most serious offences in the school.

Although the rule worked in tandem with other rules, it was more explicit and elaborate. It clearly stated the drugs the learners should not take. However, the researcher observed that it was also important to review these school rules in order to indicate other more current drugs being abused by learners. It may also be important to give a bracket term rather than listing all the drugs because, new drugs are being introduced every day. According to *Lowveld Checkpoint News* (2023), the youths could prepare their own intoxicating substances using household products, such as mixing Zapnaks and water, Cerevita and Orange Crush, Sherbet and Jolly Juice and many other substances. Therefore, schools needed to be more vigilant.

A learner from this school's focus group discussion had this to say:

We understand that the school does not allow taking of drugs and it is well expressed in the school rules. Notwithstanding, I feel school heads and other administrators should occasionally remind learners about these rules. They are not doing enough to curb drug abuse among learners. They take a casual approach towards misbehaviour. That type of administration used here aggravates the problem of drug abuse among the female learners.

From further focus group discussions, the researcher gathered that most learners blamed their school heads for rendering a deaf ear to their cries. These learners felt the Heads were being too lenient and tolerant, thus, leading to an increase in the number of drug abuse cases in the schools. The learners were worried that the perpetrators were being given manual punishment only and left to continue in the school. Gcelu (2020) recommended that educators should apply school rules in a transparent manner and there should be collaboration among learners, teachers and administrators.

The researcher also sought to find out what heads and disciplinary chairpersons felt about these allegations. School heads agreed that schools should do more in order to eradicate abuse of drugs among learners. Heads concurred with what the learners from focus group discussions had said. The heads also felt that, as schools, they were doing a lot in dealing with the drug abuse problem. However, they had challenges in that, after they had set up rules, the implementation and enforcement of the rules required a lot of effort from the teachers and parents. For example, the schools have policies from the

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education that guide them. The schools were also expected to be child-friendly schools which should take positive stances that would not affect the learners' well-being. Where schools had serious offences, the heads recommended suspension, exclusion or expulsion and they always sought the approval of the Provincial Education Director and that also went through the District Schools Inspector. If they did not follow the correct procedure, the decision would be reversed and the learner would be reinstated. Similarly, in their research study, Mugabe and Maposa (2013) noted these challenges that schools faced. Schools do not have the mandate to expel or exclude learners without the approval of the provincial education directors (PEDs). Human rights organisations are also against these punitive measures. However, the process of engaging the different offices is very long, during which perpetrators would be operating unhindered. SH (D) commented.

This has a negative effect on the school. It should be noted that in as much as we may want to enforce rules, there are some parameters we cannot ignore.

Interview data from disciplinary committee chairpersons revealed that all the four schools were doing a lot to deal with those learners abusing drugs but the committees' powers were limited. Schools made decisions but at times those decisions were reversed by the powers that be. The disciplinary committee chairpersons agreed that they were doing a lot as far as dealing with indiscipline among learners was concerned, but their hands were tied. They were not at liberty to expel learners who abused drugs. As committees, the schools sat down to make recommendations to the school head for onward transmission to the district schools inspector and provincial education director, who may approve or disapprove. At school A, the Disciplinary Committee Chairperson availed a minute book in which they recorded recommendations that they had made to transfer a learner who was known to be trafficking drugs from drug dealers into the school. The decision was later reversed because of lack of convincing evidence. The learner was then still in the school and continued with her behaviour and this time with even more confidence because she felt she was invincible

It became clear from the interviews that schools were not independent entities. All their decisions should be approved first before being implemented. There are also a number of players in such cases. Besides the Ministry of Education, there are human rights activists, organisations that deal with the girl child, Child-line and other non-governmental organisations. All these need to be considered because if they feel the case has not handled properly, they always make noise. This would jeopardise the image of both the school and the Head. The media also comes into play. The school might have negative publicity (Bowman, 2016; Chen, 2022).

A Disciplinary Committee Chairperson from school (A) recorded in their disciplinary case log book, a case of some A' Level learners who were bringing alcohol to school. They sat for their hearing, parents had been invited. The committee had found the learners guilty and had recommended transfer. This could not sail through because one of the parents was very influential and the school was directed to give them manual punishment and not transfer them. According to Sibanda (2017) there should be transparency in all the actions to be taken against a child. If this is not done properly, the school may have problems with the authorities. Thorough investigations must be carried out.

In Zimbabwean schools, the code of conduct is guided by the Secretary's Policy Circular Number P.35 (Mugabe & Maposa, 2013; Sibanda, 2017). This circular is distributed to all provincial education directors, district schools inspectors, schools inspectors, heads of schools, responsible authorities and teachers' associations.

Based on the interviews with disciplinary committee chairpersons, schools have reservations on the use of the circular. The schools are expected to instil discipline in learners without using punitive measures. According to Sibanda (2017) suspension, expulsion and exclusion should be used as a last resort. The Secretary's Policy Circular Number P35 of 1999 was availed. Of particular interest was clause 1.1:

1.1 The enforcement of and administration of proper school discipline is in fact a pre-requisite to successful learning. Without discipline, no meaningful, academic, moral and physical education are possible.

The researcher noted that if schools failed to use clearly-defined channels of communication and transparent school rules, to which both teachers and learners contributed in the formulation and execution, they would face problems of eradicating drug abuse among female learners. In this regard, the school management was influential in dealing with the drug abuse problem in schools.

The school heads and disciplinary committee chairpersons agreed that for them to effectively enforce discipline in the schools, they should be given the power to suspend, exclude or expel learners. This is contrary to what the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education expects. Suspension is regarded only as a measure to facilitate investigations to be carried out without possible interference by the suspect (Secretary's Circular Policy Number P.35. 1999). Clause 2.0 reads:

Suspension is not a penalty for an offence but a measure which is intended to give time to complete investigation and decide on the appropriate course of action.

From the interviews, school heads felt suspension should be used as a deterrent measure such that, if learners observe others being suspended those learners would desist from taking drugs. The heads believe that children learn vicariously. Similarly, in their research study, Mugabe and Maposa (2013) found that school heads advocated the implementation of this circular without interference from the PED. Therefore, it is clear that school administrators do not have the mandate to make decisions without the involvement of their superiors from the Ministry. Sibanda (2017) observed that schools were permitted to implement Circular Number P.35 for serious acts of misconduct by learners, but with the full involvement of the Provincial Education Director. Clause 2.2 of the Circular reads:

A Head may suspend a pupil who is suspected of misconduct of a serious nature for a period not exceeding 14 days, while the matter is being investigated. However, before suspending a pupil, the Head should inform the Regional Director through the District Education Officer as soon as possible

This is done in order to minimise the possibility of ill-considered decisions such as suspending pupils over minor misdemeanours. The Secretary determines whether the suspension period could be extended or not (Circular Number P.35, 1999)

According to Obera (2017) the jurisdiction to remove a learner from a school is upon the Provincial Education Director. The school head can only recommend but cannot implement without prior approval from above. In the current research study, it was observed that this instrument was very old; it is a 1999 policy. Participants felt that it had been overtaken by events, thus, making it very difficult to apply. Currently, there are a number of organisations vying to protect learners, especially the girl child. Such a scenario makes it difficult to employ the instrument. Today, the culprits are viewed as victims who should be helped and protected from the wrath of the law. The human rights activists advocate the abolishment of these disciplinary measures since psychologically they affect the learners (Sibanda, 2017; Obera, 2017).

Concerning this instrument DCC (D) had this to say:

It is quite disheartening that you make decisions as a school, because you are the people on the ground and you understand the gravity of the offence and how it affects the well-being of the school, only to be told to drop all the charges. You appear very stupid in front of all the learners. You even become a laughing stock and powerless. The perpetrators continue to be in the school

DCC (C) added:

I think this Circular is now irrelevant and archaic because it's very difficult to implement and yet it is the only instrument that we have. It should be revised so that it matches the current policies in the country. For example, if you want to suspend a learner, enlightened parents will ask you what will happen to the lost learning time during suspension and what happens if the learner is found innocent. A lot of forces come into play when one tries to apply this instrument and in most cases we hit a hard surface.

DCC (B) commented:

As administrators we feel threatened even by the society because the law doesn't seem to protect us. The perpetrators are protected but the rest of the students are not. The issue of drug abuse cannot be solely solved by schools alone. All the stakeholders should collaborate. A drug abuser should not be treated as a victim. They should take responsibility of their actions. At times it's important to take a harsh stance so that in the process these children learn something.

The above sentiments are in support of Bronfenbrenner's exosystem, where other systems in which a child is not directly involved may influence the people who have proximal relationship with him/her in his/her microsystems (McLeod, 2023). Therefore, it is important that such policies are addressed for the benefit of learners.

Guidance and Counselling heads of departments, however felt that drug abuse learners, especially females, had been affected by a myriad of problems which led them to abuse drugs. Thus, they should be protected. Schools should help learners rather than suspend, expel or exclude them. They applauded schools for having school rules that guide learners. Generally, they all agreed that school rules are good and they help maintain discipline which leads to improvement in academic performance. Similarly, Mugabe and Maposa (2013) applaud the use of school rules to curb indiscipline without causing physical and psychological harm to the perpetrators.

Guidance and Counselling heads of departments agreed that schools have the mandate to inculcate knowledge, skills and values as expected by the society. Thus, they have the mandate to guide and control learners' behaviour, their schools' morals and social principles. The Guidance and Counselling heads of departments also recommended that school administrators should involve parents in school discipline. Similarly, Obera (2017) made a recommendation that, in order to effectively curb indiscipline in schools, parents should be consulted when their children misbehave. There should be interaction between the parents and the school. G & C HOD (B) argued:

If these learners are suspended, expelled or excluded, there are higher chances that they will drop out of school. Instead, schools should seek assistance from professionals. These learners need affection so that they

disclose the cause of abusing drugs. Some of them have serious problems and they have no one to share with, therefore, they turn to drugs.

The four Guidance and Counselling heads of departments agreed that schools are there to protect learners from the harsh environment they come from. They urged administrators not to be too judgmental and that they should take drug abuse as a problem because some of the learners were addicts already. Moving them out of the school was not the solution. Rather, they argued, it should be the mandate of the school to help learners achieve their goals in life. They stressed that school rules should be effectively used because they help to mould and instil good behaviour in learners. Learners should be encouraged to adhere to these rules. Similarly, Villa (2022) felt that administrators should be more sympathetic when dealing with learners who abuse drugs since some of them already suffer from mental health problems.

In order to come up with a clear picture of how school administrations may influence drug abuse in the school, the researcher wanted to know if these schools had **drug abuse policies**. This was discussed in conjunction with the learners' knowledge of the drug abuse policy and its effectiveness. The researcher wanted to know if each of the schools had a blue print policy which the learners were aware of. United Nations On Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2016) recommended that in order to eradicate drug abuse in schools there was need for schools to have drug abuse policies which the learners, teachers and parents knew about.. Therefore a policy is a very important instrument in a school.

It emerged that all the schools under study had an implied drug abuse policy. All the school heads argued that their drug abuse policies were embedded in the school rules. They were convinced that learners were aware that drug abuse was a serious offence which could lead to expulsion or exclusion. This is contrary to the findings by UNODC (2004) where in countries such as Italy, Australia, Kenya, Uganda and South Africa, schools have set up drug abuse policies. In another research study, Mokwena et al., (2020) found that in South Africa a national drug policy was established in 2002. The purpose of that drug policy was to provide guidelines on how schools could manage drug abuse by learners. The current research observed this gap that, in Zimbabwean

schools there were no blue print drug policies. Hence, the research is necessary to come up with such intervention strategies. From the interviews, SH (A) argued:

Yes, we have a school policy on drug abuse but it is not written in black and white. The policy is entailed in the school rules. Learners are aware that drug abuse is a punishable offence. In our school rules it is clearly stated that drug abuse is a serious offence which could lead to expulsion or exclusion.

SH (B) added:

The school policy is crafted from the ministry of education's circular number P. 35 on the learners' discipline. Learners are aware that if they are caught abusing or in possession of drugs they will be expelled or excluded as spelt out in the circular.

SH (C) confirmed:

Our school has a drug abuse policy which is embedded in our school rules. We conscientise learners about this policy during assembly time or during Guidance and Counselling sessions. The learners are aware that if they are caught abusing drugs, their parents would be invited to school and their case would be brought up for disciplinary hearing, leading to serious punishment preferred against them.

The school heads each argued that they had a school culture which is drawn from their school's mission statement and core values. They said their mission statements have core values. These values include integrity, honesty and transparency. They argued that these values were very important for the moral building and uprightness of the learner. Thus, learners know that the school does not condone the consumption of illicit substances. According to Mokwena et al. (2020), school-based policies are important because they help to prevent abuse in the school environment. Therefore, it is the contention of the researcher that schools in Zimbabwe should have such policies which are crafted by the government and disseminated to schools.

At schools A-C the Guidance and Counselling heads of departments were complying with the school drug policy entailed in the school rules and were assisting learners accordingly. They reported that they had conducted and recorded individual and group meetings with learners. They assisted learners in line with the policy. They recommended that learners with drug abuse problems should not be withdrawn from the school and that they should be helped to achieve their life goals through rehabilitation. They should also be referred to professionals. This is in line with United Nations office on Drugs and Crime's (2016) recommendations that learners who abuse drugs should not be judged or threatened. They should be understood and schools should create a learning environment which is caring and understanding.

G & C HOD D was not at liberty to discuss the issue of policy since it was not clear to her. The Head of Department professed ignorance about any policy in the school. She purported that the school did not have a clear policy but only school rules which stipulated that learners were not allowed to use drugs in and around the school. G & C HOD. D had this to say:

The issue of drug abuse is not solved on a piece of paper. As a school we have school rules which clearly state that use of intoxicating substances is not allowed.

It is evident from these interviews that school counsellors believe that drug abusers have mental health problems and that they needed professional assistance. Their views are different from those of administrators and learners. The administrators believe that learners who abuse drugs are outcasts and are not supposed to be in school. The administrators regard such learners as rotten eggs which affect the good ones and they should be left to deal with their problems on their own. However, it should be noted that they all agreed that school rules are important and that they should be used to reinforce good behaviour among learners.

However, despite the fact that schools did not have a blue print policy on drugs, there was documentary evidence from disciplinary committee chairpersons to prove that drug abuse was not condoned in schools. They recorded such cases in their log books. At school A, there was a record of some A' Level female learners who had been caught

abusing drugs and had been suspended. Their parents had been invited to the school to discuss the case which had been brought before the disciplinary committee. In another case the same disciplinary committee chairperson provided information of another case which they had recorded, where the parents had been requested to transfer their daughter to another school for she had allegedly been selling alcohol in and around the school.

At school B, they had recorded a case of a form four learner who would sell *ngaimani* to her colleagues. It was alleged that her father who works at a distillery station where they use ethanol, brought ethanol home. Ethanol is used to brew *ngaimani* or *musombodhiya*. The girl had been stealing from her father so that she would sell.

At school C, the disciplinary committee chairperson provided evidence of written rules which had been crafted soon after the Covid-19 lockdowns to curb rampant drug abuse in the school. The rules spelt out common drugs that were being abused in the area, the counselling strategies, possible types of punishments preferred against offenders, and reporting procedures, that is, to the parents and Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Investigating procedures were also included. This is in line with what UNODC (2016) and Gcelu et al. (2020) recommended. They urged schools to review their school rules yearly, so that they remain relevant.

From these interviews, it became evident that although schools did not have each a school policy concerning drug abuse, the learners had been conscientised about drug abuse at enrolment into the schools. Based on document analysis, that is, the minute books which were availed by 3 out of 4 disciplinary committee chairpersons, Form 1 learners were inducted by the senior masters and senior women on admission. Here, they were enlightened on the school rules and policies. The learners were given copies of the school rules which they signed and returned to the school administration. Although they did not have any written policy, the relevant policies were conveyed orally. This is in line with Wonda, Ahmad and Fitriani's (2021) views that, if school rules were properly managed and applied consistently discipline would prevail in the school. Discipline should be cultivated in the minds of the learners so that they have self-control (Chen, 2022). Thus, in a way, schools are doing their best to prevent the spread of drug

abuse among learners. The focus of this research was thus, to try and assist schools to come up with more effective ways of eradicating drug abuse among female learners.

It can be concluded that, basing on the interviews with disciplinary committee chairpersons and school heads, schools have unwritten drug abuse policies which are being effectively used in conjunction with the Secretary's Policy Circular number P35. All the interviewees agreed on the procedures to follow when dealing with drug abusers. That is, investigations are done, parents are informed and perpetrators are punished, suspended or withdrawn from the school, with the approval of the Provincial Education Director.

Learners had their views concerning the drug abuse policy in schools. They also agreed that they had not been given any written policies but these were implied in the school rules. They claimed that, as learners, they understood that if they were to be caught abusing drugs they might be withdrawn from the school. They said they were always reminded about this during their routine meetings with their senior masters and senior women.

FGD (A) learner commented:

Our school does not have a drug abuse policy per se, but we know that drugs are not permitted in the school.

FGD (B) learner concurred saying:

Some policies are not written down but it's a known fact that drugs are not allowed and if reported, one will be severely punished or be removed from the school. Our school does not condone such kind of behaviour.

FGD (C) and FGD (D) learners raised the same sentiments, that drugs were prohibited at school. Most of those caught were withdrawn from the school depending on the gravity of their offence. What these schools are doing is similar to what Turnbridge (2021) suggested, that in order to eradicate the problem of drug abuse by learners schools should address attitudes. Although there are no written policies schools are addressing the problem through conscientisation of learners.

To infer more on schools drug policies, the researcher managed to analyse some documents which were availed by the disciplinary committee chairpersons. These included; the disciplinary cases minute books, school rules, schools' mission statements and Circular Number P.35. It was prudent to analyse these documents and deduce if they had anything to do with drug abuse policy since all the interviewees constantly referred to them as important tools of administration. Circular Number P.35 and the school rules have already been discussed.

According to Kempton (2019) the school's mission statement is important for student development and effective learning. This is because the mission statement guides the daily decisions of the school. It is aligned to the school culture and ethos and it gives a reflection of the school climate, values and morals (Bolling, 2022). Therefore, to understand the policies in the schools, there was need to assess and analyse their visions and the mission statements. All the schools under study were able to avail these.

Mission statement for school A. reads:

We are here to provide, at the lowest possible cost, a high quality and relevant all round basic education to each student, as well as to our community in order to enable each individual to reach full potential and develop capacities required for the overall development of patriotic Zimbabweans with Unhu/Ubuntu.

With reference to the above mission statement, the school vows to produce citizens with good morals. The school emphasises **unhu/ubuntu**. This can only be achieved through impartation of good behaviour. Hence, these administrators argued that from their mission statements, it was clear that drug abuse was not accepted. They believe that there cannot be future leaders who are alcoholics or drug addicts. The above statement explains why the school exists and what it wishes to achieve. Their day to day operations are centered on producing an individual learner who is equipped to reach his/her full potential in life. They believe that this could be achieved through the eradication of drug abuse to zero percent tolerance. Similarly, Allen and Kern (2018) viewed the school mission statement as a way of empowering learners and promoting

good mental health. Schools' mission statement does not prioritise academic achievement alone but also emphasises the values of the school. Thus, schools should be providers of quality education for the socio-economic transformation of learners.

According to the head of school A, their mission statement was derived from their school vision. This implies that, the school has the mandate to provide quality education. Quality education is a product of hard work and discipline. According to Allen and Kern (2018) the school's vision gives an outline of the objectives of the school and the mission statement shows how the school plans to achieve the vision. The two are inter-related. The vision is to provide education which enables an individual to fit in the society socially and economically. The mission statement shows that basic education is provided to each student to enable them to reach their full potential and to develop in them the capacities required for overall development. So, the vision and mission statement are normally vested on declaring the school's values. These statements do not prioritise academic achievements only but other themes are considered as well. This could be why administrators argued that they had school policy on drugs. They believed that it was enshrined in the school vision and mission statement.

School B only had a mission statement with a cliental charter. There was no school vision. They claim to have drawn their mission statement from the one from Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

Their mission statement reads:

We aim at internally introducing in the final analysis products that are mentally and physically well equipped to ably sail through all situations that may arise in their lives. They should dedicate their lives to serving the nation.

Deducing from the above statement, it was found that the school was dedicated to producing a product which is relevant to the society and adds value to the country. It is interesting to note that their mission statement embraces the mental health of the learner. According to Allen and Kern (2018) school mission statements should incorporate and promote good mental health. This is why schools do not allow learners

to take intoxicating substances because they affect their mental health and it impacts negatively on their academic performance.

In addition to the mission statement, the school had a cliental charter which summarises all that the school is mandated to do in order to achieve their goals. It explicitly outlines the purpose of the school and what students should learn.

Of particular interest was clause b of the mission statement, which reads:

The school aims to achieve its goals by promoting decorous behaviour through silent curriculum, with teachers playing pivotal and exemplary roles to inculcate in the pupils, virtues like, honesty, respect, reliability, personal hygiene and above all taking pride in the dignity of labour and services

This is corroborated by number 2 which reads:

The school undertakes to assess children with special needs and attend to these needs within the first month of every term.

These statements show that the school was committed to working tirelessly with all learners facing problems. Drug addicts have a mental health problem, thus, they belong to the special needs category. The school showed readiness to assist such learners. This is in line with Kempton's (2019) assertion that a school mission statement is important because it helps in developing the learner socially and psychologically, and that it also assists in the learning process. This is because the school statement influences what learners achieve in life.

This was collaborated by the Guidance and Counselling Head of Department from the same school who revealed that their school had a drug abuse policy. She indicated that their policy was attached to their Responsible Authority's health department. However, the policy was not in black and white as was the case with other schools. She stated that the drug abuse policy was linked to the local medical centre. The Responsible Authority took all complex cases for counselling, rehabilitation and treatment. They had also recorded the case of a learner who was on the verge of dropping out of the school,

who was later referred to the medical centre. The learner had been given the necessary assistance. She has so far been rehabilitated and she is now recuperating. The school was so happy with the assistance being rendered and they expect her to pass A' level.

The researcher observed that this school takes the issue of drug abuse more seriously as compared to the other schools under study. The Guidance and Counselling head of department added that they held campaigns against drug abuse in line with the school policy.

The researcher was also able to analyse the school vision and mission statements from school C. The researcher found that the school had not crafted its own vision and mission statement, but used the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's vision and mission statements. This was also the same with school D. It looks like the schools in Zimbabwe could not craft their own school mission statements and vision statements, despite the call from the government to formulate such.

It was also interesting to note that all the four schools had the same core values, namely: integrity, commitment, empathy, accountability, transparency, good governance and team work. All the administrators were in agreement that these core values governed the behaviour of both teachers and students. All the stakeholders in the schools were accountable for their behaviour. The school values were used in conjunction with school mottos. The mottos were also linked to the non-written school policies. These included:

School A: Rock Foundation

School B: Integrity

School C: Your attitude determines your altitude

School D: Be good

On analysing the literal meanings of these mottos, one can conclude that all the schools endeavour to mould children with good behaviour which would be acceptable wherever they go after school. For example:

- Rock foundation: means a firm beginning, so children from such a school are expected to have good morals and should excel academically.
- Integrity means uprightness: It embraces all good characteristics a human being should possess.
- Your attitude determines your altitude: shows learners are being taught and trained to be more focused. Setting goals and aiming to achieve them.
- Be good: is a holistic approach to good behaviour and personal well-being. Aiming to do what is expected wherever one is, in and out of school.

All the interviewees agreed that school rules played a pivotal role in enforcing discipline in the selected schools. Therefore, there was need to have rules which were in tandem with the current behaviour of contemporary learners. Similarly, UNODC (2016) urged schools to have firm school rules which are reviewed annually or regularly, so that they address prevailing issues. SH (B) added:

We need to re-visit our school rules because they do not explain what happens to those who abuse drugs. They just state that drug abuse is not allowed. More has to be done.

Disciplinary committee chairpersons also felt that the current generation of learners was very different from other previous generations of learners. They wondered whether this was due to technology and globalisation. They agreed that these learners did not merely need a word of caution but rigorous measures. In a similar research study on drug abuse by learners carried out in South Africa, UNODC (2016) encouraged schools to have drug policies which should be publicised to all learners. The policy should include all the measures to be taken against those who do not adhere by the policy. Such measures should include the type of punishment to be administered on perpetrators, involvement of parents, counselling and referrals.

SH (C) concurred:

Given the rise in the number of learners who abuse drugs these days, it is important that we formulate a drug abuse policy which is merged with our current school rules.

The administrators also felt that it was important for schools to formulate new school rules. All the stakeholders, namely, teachers, learners and parents should give their input in the crafting of these school rules. The administrators felt that their school rules were now outdated. Similarly, Mugabe and Maposa (2013), UNODC (2016) and Gcelu et al. (2020) recommended that, for schools to eradicate drug abuse, there was need for collaboration among the stakeholders in the formulation of school rules. If learners make their contributions towards the crafting of rules, there would be a sense of belonging and they might find it compelling to adhere to the rules.

The interviewees agreed that schools were working hard to eliminate drug abuse among learners. This was done through following disciplinary procedures, that is, whenever they had cases of drug abuse, they always tried to gather enough evidence to prove that the learner was abusing drugs. The disciplinary committee set up a hearing for the perpetrator, and the parent was summoned to the school. The case was determined, and then an appropriate punishment was determined. The administrators added that the offenders were normally given manual punishment and where the case was serious, the parent would be asked to transfer the learner. This would act as a deterrent measure for others. Depending on the gravity of the case, administrators would refer to the Ministry of Education, recommending expulsion or exclusion. This is in line with recommendations made by Mugabe and Maposa (2013) who recommended that parents should be involved whenever their children commit an act of misconduct, because it is their duty to inculcate good morals in their children.

SH (D) echoed the same sentiments:

To eradicate drug abuse in schools, as administrators we need to be stricter. We should use all the instruments we have to deal with the culprits. Drug abusers should be suspended, expelled or excluded from the school. They do not belong to the school. If we are not very strict, then the whole school will be contaminated. This will affect our pass rate and the school's reputation is in turn affected.

However, the idea of suspension, expulsion and exclusion is contrary to Mugabe and Maposa (2013)'s ideas that schools should cultivate self-discipline behaviour rather than

using severe measures as mentioned above. Mokwena et al. (2020) concur, saying that these punitive measures have long term negative effects on learners. They increase anti-social behaviour. However, Sibanda (2017) argues that schools should be permitted to suspend, exclude or expel learners who would have committed serious offenses such as drug abuse, but they should use this as a last resort. Thus, schools should not use authoritarian methods to control behaviour, but should be fair when dealing with learners.

The disciplinary committee chairpersons suggested that schools should do more in order to conscientise learners about these policies and rules. At schools A and B the administrators stated that they spelt out school rules to learners during assemblies and class teachers were also responsible for reading out these rules to learners. Similarly, Obera (2017) argued that it was the class teacher's duty to enforce discipline on his/her class and ensure that the learners adhered to school rules.

DCC (A) opined:

It is not enough to just have school rules or policies but it is also important to conscientise learners about these rules. We can make them more conscious about these rules through meetings. There is need to frequently address these learners. We used to meet them once a month but we have since revised this to twice a month. The more we talk about effects of drug abuse to them the more they internalise this and in the process a life is saved.

All the school heads and disciplinary committee chairpersons agreed that the war against drugs by learners could only be won through team work. Class teachers should work with administrators to curb this pandemic. The administrators suggested that senior teachers in the schools should hold frequent meetings with female learners and educate them about drug abuse and its negative effects on their lives. Learners with social problems should be identified by class teachers so that they get the necessary help. The school heads felt that if class teachers carried out their duties loyally, the drug problem would be eradicated. DCC (B) commented:

Our class teachers should take the morning sessions, for moral education seriously. They should attend to issues affecting their classes. They are mothers and fathers to those classes so they should know and understand these learners individually. They should act in loco-parentis. They should educate these learners about drug abuse in their small groups.

This supports what Mugabe and Maposa (2013) recommended. They recommended that class teachers should inculcate knowledge, skills and values into their learners as expected by the school. This is because they meet these learners on a daily basis. In support of the importance of class teachers on inculcating discipline, the Disciplinary Committee Chairperson from school A provided a document entitled '*Roles of a class teacher*'. This had been pinned up on his notice board. Of interest was the introduction which summarised the roles of a class teacher. It read:

*While there are certain administrative responsibilities of a class teacher as listed below, perhaps the most significant contribution to the life of the school can be in **building up a relationship with that class that will achieve a feeling of community and commitment to something outside themselves.***

The school's Disciplinary Committee Chairperson explained that class teachers had a very important caring role which may manifest itself in listening to an individual learner's problems and counselling, as well as helping the class to take important decisions concerning its working relationships and even insisting on a level of social and academic behaviour. The class teacher is regarded as the mother/father of the class who should show most concern for the class and individual members of the class for the benefit of the school. Thus, if class teachers carry out their duties seriously and professionally, drug abuse cases could be minimised.

Class teachers have a pivotal role to play in schools. They form the backbone of discipline in a school set-up. As highlighted above, the class teacher should build a relationship with the learners so that the learner has that feeling of belonging and affection. Weak class teachers will also produce weak learners in terms of discipline. This substantiates Willings's (2019) assertion that the class teacher is the mentor for the

class. The class teacher shapes the child's future through helping him/her to become a better human being. This is done through the imparting of knowledge, acceptable values and helping them to face modern day challenges. The learners will then be able to tackle their problems through the guidance provided by the class teacher. The class teacher also provides pastoral care for the learners.

All the interviewees were in agreement that another key person whose duties should be effectively utilised was the senior woman. The role of the Senior Woman in a school set-up is to assist the girl child. The interviewees agreed that schools should empower the senior woman so that she confidently handles all cases related to female learners. Given that cases of drug abuse are increasing, the participants believed that these senior women should also re-strategise, so that they curb the spread of drug abuse among female learners. This is in line with what Museveni (2020) suggested in Uganda concerning the role of the senior woman. The Minister of Education and Sports and the Secretary of Education in Uganda crafted the roles and responsibilities of the senior women. According to the guidelines, the senior woman plays a pivotal role in promoting learners' emotional, social and physical well-being. In order to improve female learners' behaviour, there is need to have day-to-day meetings with learners which address their problems (Apiot, 2016; Museveni, 2020; PEAS, 2022). The school head at school D reiterated that senior women should increase their meeting sessions with female learners. SH (D) said:

Our senior ladies now meet female learners every other Friday. They are assisted by other willing lady teachers in the school. They have also adopted the idea of a suggestion box, where students drop in the names of those engaging in drug abuse in or out of the school. They have a motto which says; "You are your sister's keeper".

At school B, the Head said that the senior lady would request learners to report all acts of misconduct by their colleagues, so as to save the life of a sister. The Head felt that, this has helped to scare some of those female learners who just wanted to join drug abuse for fun. In a way the Senior Woman will be empowering the learners to be responsible citizens. Similarly, a Blog on Promoting Equity in African Schools (2022)

posted that Senior Women have a duty to empower, promote and coordinate female learners' activities. So, if the Senior Women increase meetings and hold free discussions with these female learners, it will go a long way in assisting drug abuse victims.

According to the PEAS (2022) the responsibilities of the Senior Woman and that of the class teacher are inseparable. In Zambia, the Ministry of Education designed network programmes of role models and class teachers who are headed by the senior woman. (PEAS, 2022). Commenting on the role of the class teacher and the senior woman, DCC (D) had this to say:

The senior woman and the class teacher are very important in the moulding of the female learners' behaviour and should perform their duties in the best interest of the learners, so that they don't infringe on the learners' rights.

However, some disciplinary committee chairpersons felt that for these class teachers and senior women to do their work whole-heartedly, they need to be well remunerated. The disciplinary committee chairpersons concurred that given the economic challenges faced by everyone in the country, most of these teachers were no longer carrying out their duties seriously. Similarly, the Ugandan government made the same observations and proposed a funding in schools that would cater for senior women and men in schools (Museveni, 2020). If these senior women were extrinsically motivated they would not drag their feet. However, a lot is expected from them in order to achieve meaningful results in dealing with drug abuse cases.

Museveni (2020) outlined some of the qualities of an effective senior woman. These include interpersonal skills such as integrity. Senior women play the roles of parents and they should be role models as well as present themselves in a dignified manner. Therefore, for schools to be fully assisted by senior women in eradicating drug abuse, they should equip them financially.

In order to find out if these class teachers and senior women were effective as mentioned above, the researcher analysed documents from the heads' offices. One out of the four school heads had the duties of the senior woman displayed on the notice

board. However, the responsibilities were skewed towards discipline. This is contrary to what Apiot (2016) and PEAS (2022) suggested. They recommended that the senior woman should work together with the Guidance and Counselling teacher. In Zambia, the senior women are referred to as child protection focal persons (PEAS, 2022). They are not administrators as purported by the schools under study. The senior woman should have a positive impact on the female learners' behaviour change. They should lead in the provision of pastoral support for the learners so that learners will then be free to share their experiences with them.

Besides the senior woman and the class teacher, all the participants agreed that a well-supported guidance and counselling program in a school could help to solve the drug abuse problem. The researcher then wanted to find out if Guidance and Counselling was being effectively implemented in the schools under study. This was done through interviews with the school heads, the disciplinary committee chairpersons and document analysis in the Guidance and Counselling departments.

All heads agreed that Guidance and Counselling was essential for eradicating the drug abuse menace among female learners. Mokwena and Nomkanka (2021) made similar observations in South Africa that Life Orientation Learning Area, which is similar to Guidance and Counselling, was important in curbing the drug abuse problem. However, in the current research study, it was disheartening to note that three out of the four schools had no viable Guidance and Counselling department. In these three schools the senior women were the heads of departments. The researcher noted that there was role conflict here, because the counsellor's role was to empathise with learners with behaviour problems whereas that of an administrator was to effect punishment. The learners may not be able to share their problems with an administrator. These schools did not have Guidance and Counselling slots on their master timetable. Mokwena and Nomkanka made similar observations about South Africa. There were problems in the delivery of Life Orientation Skills due to challenges at schools and community levels. Some schools did not have proper facilities in which to carry out life orientation skills

Despite the fact that Guidance and Counselling did not have slots on the timetable, the heads of departments pointed out that they always had time for the learners in the afternoon during sports days or when learners did not have lessons.

G & C HOD (B) commented:

Although the school does not have slots on the time table for Guidance and Counselling, we always reserve time for learners who have problems. During registration time our class teachers attend to such. We hold guidance and counselling sessions once every week with learners in their respective levels, that is, ZJC, O' Level and A' Level.

DCC (B) who is also the Deputy Head of the school confirmed that Guidance and Counselling as a subject was not on the timetable but learners were getting assistance since each class was assigned a counsellor who is also the class teacher of that particular class.

He had this to say concerning Guidance and Counselling as a subject:

I agree that guidance and counselling is an integral tool when dealing with the issue of behaviour. However, our main challenge is time. We have a wide curriculum which makes it very difficult to allocate time for Guidance and Counselling as a subject. We also don't have enough manpower.

School A has a well-established Guidance and Counselling department. The school has the subject slotted on the time table. They also have a head of department who has an office where individual counselling sessions take place. The office is well equipped. The documents in the office showed that they carried out guidance and counselling sessions on a daily basis and these sessions were recorded. The set-up is in line with what UNODC (2016) recommended, that schools should have viable Guidance and Counselling departments which are appropriately equipped to carry out individual and group counselling. The Head of Department for school A has a spacious office that makes it possible for him to use interactive methods and small group work.

G & C HOD (A) explained:

We carry out individual counselling sessions every day, especially with those learners who openly admit that they have problems with taking alcohol and smoking. At times, we invite those who are reported to be abusing drugs. We get reports anonymously through our suggestion box.

In addition to counselling, school A had peer educators. This was again different from other schools. The school made use of peer educators and class monitors to assist their colleagues who had drug abuse problems. This was in line with what Villa (2022) recommended that schools should recruit peer educators, who will facilitate peer education through seminars and workshops. There is need for positive peer relationships with non-drug-using peers.

Although some of the schools did not have viable guidance and counselling, all the interviewees agreed that there was need for proper guidance and counselling in schools. The learners who already have drug abuse problems should be assisted through counselling. UNODC (2016) and McGuire (2022) proposed that schools should have proper counselling sessions, where they use selective methods to address adolescents who are at high risk of abusing drugs, such as learners with deviant behaviour, those coming from abusive families and those from poor backgrounds. Therapy would help to reduce and end the use of drugs by learners.

All the four Guidance and Counselling heads of departments agreed that schools should have counselling sessions which are properly managed. They concurred that, among other things, guidance and counselling remains the most important tool for eradicating drug abuse among female learners. G & C HOD (A) commented:

Guidance and Counselling is effective. We have managed to rehabilitate and restore sanity in some learners through counselling. Counselling takes learners through stages of development until they are able to make informed decisions about health and wellness.

G & C HOD (B) added:

Guidance and Counselling provides awareness on the dangers of drug abuse, offering individual and mass counselling to all learners and at times we refer cases to the administration, police or hospital.

G & C HOD C echoed:

Guidance and Counselling offers preventive roles through pro-active drug abuse education, awareness campaigns and using the referral system.

The above sentiments are in line with what UNODC (2016) suggested, that schools should address drug abuse through counselling and should have school-based programs which are universal and selective.

From the interviews, it was revealed that schools face a myriad of problems in carrying out counselling because of lack of qualified counsellors. They just have general knowledge but no professional qualifications. The same problems were realised in Kenya by King'endo (2015) who observed that learners who abused drugs were suspended from school because the schools lacked skilled personnel to handle drug abuse problems. King'endo recommended that the government of Kenya should declare drug abuse a catastrophe and should involve professionals to assist. UNODC (2016) similarly advocated professional counselling in schools. The teachers should have effective life skills and should instil a sense of self-worth in learners. School counsellors are not expected to threaten or judge the drug abusing learners. The learning environment should be caring, understanding and should reflect involvement (UNODC, 2016). It is thus important that teachers should have knowledge about the theoretical rationale underpinning the drug abuse prevention and they should learn the skills needed to deal with challenges of adolescence. G & C HOD (B) commented:

We just use our general knowledge, what we read from books and experience.

At School A, the Guidance and Counselling head of department revealed that since they did not have professional qualifications, they referred serious cases to the medical centre. She praised their Responsible Authority for assisting:

We need to thank our Responsible Authority for the assistance they give us when we are faced with serious drug abuse cases. We refer such cases to our medical centre for professional help.

The researcher observed that the Responsible Authority supported only one out of four schools. Given the rate at which drug abuse was spreading among the youths, the Responsible Authority should have given more support in terms of health care facilities for rehabilitation and guidance and counselling.

It has been observed that schools are trying their level best to curb drug abuse among female learners. They have drug abuse policies embedded in the schools' mission statements and school rules. Schools also have some form of Guidance and Counselling programmes. However, the programmes need to be well structured. Then they also have to put in place the disciplinary committees, senior women and class teachers who would be responsible for the discipline of the learners.

Having looked at what schools were doing to curb drug abuse among female learners, the discussion now shifts to what families were doing to stop the spread of drug abuse among female learners. Besides lack of professional qualifications, counsellors also revealed that they had failed to assist some learners because the problems were family-related. The same challenge was observed by Rono (2020) who asserted that school counsellors in Kenyan public schools fail to assist learners because some drug-abusing learners' families have a history of addiction and some learners come from families with tense environments characterised with domestic violence. G & C HOD (C) concurred:

Although as counsellors we try to assist these learners, we face challenges in carrying out our duties, because some of these problems emanate from their homes and to provide counselling for the learner only is not enough.

The Head of Department for School D availed a record of some learners who stayed with parents who abused drugs or who were alcoholics. They recorded a case of a Form 3 female learner who reportedly frequented drinking spots. When they

investigated the issue, they were surprised that she would go with her alcoholic father. The step-mother had tried to intervene but could not succeed. It was very difficult to deal with such a case. Such cases may require family therapy and schools would not have the capacity to handle them. Boyani, Safalaeian, Chehrazi, Zaghian, and Mashhadian (2018) made a similar observation and recommended that schools should employ school-family and community-based approaches. This means that the teachers should have training in the relevant life skills.

Despite all the challenges related to counselling in schools, it was still evident that Guidance and Counselling remained an integral tool which all schools should use to address the drug abuse problem among female learners. Some of these learners lack guidance; they emulate and imitate bad people.

From the focus group discussions, it emerged that learners supported the establishment of viable guidance and counselling. If learners are conscientised about the effects of drug abuse, it might go a long way in eradicating drug abuse among female learners. They also suggested that counselling should start at primary school level. This is because learners start abusing drugs earlier than expected. It would be very difficult to deal with learners who are already addicts. Similarly, Museveni (2020) and Isenja (2022) suggested that schools should disseminate information and teach about the risks associated with drug abuse as soon as the learners are enrolled. Thus, schools should provide life skills education. .

It can be concluded that Guidance and Counselling is the answer to the reduction and elimination of drug abuse by learners. It gives the learners direction, information and choices. The learner is saved. He/she makes informed decisions. The learner must be grounded in the truth about growing up and not be misled by myths. However, it should be noted that the learners' background, environment and friends impact on learners' personality. So, counsellors should always consider these when they try to help the learners. Learners should be able to make concrete and informed decisions and to accept who they are.

In addition to counselling, drug abuse awareness campaigns were also identified as an important strategy which could be used by schools to eradicate drug abuse. The

participants concurred with Boyani et al. (2018) who suggested that schools should launch awareness campaigns in schools. Participants advocated that since we are in a technological world, there should be maximum use of videos, the internet, mobile phones and emails. However, this is largely affected by socio-economic factors. For instance, most of the schools under study could not afford these facilities. Instead G & C HOD (A) suggested:

Drug abuse awareness campaigns are very useful. These may start at school level, where learners will use dramas and debates on drug abuse. Administrators should also make use of assemblies to campaign against drug abuse.

Some heads of departments agreed that competitions at form level would also help to disseminate information about drug abuse. They concurred that learners have lots of information concerning drug abuse and if they were given the opportunity to compete they would share much information. This is similar to what UNODC (2016) suggested, that schools should use cooperative learning through debate. In this manner, learners may be able to solve their drug abuse problems through exploration of shared experiences.

From focus group discussions, the learners emphasised that these campaigns should be all inclusive. All learners should be given equal chances to participate. Children learn more as they take part in the activities. They were happy that schools organised drama and debating competitions at class level, thus making everyone participate.

From some of the records of G & C HOD (A) it was evident that during some of the campaigns only peer educators and child protection committee members participated. Ironically, the perpetrators were not involved. It is important to involve those who are victims already.

The participants also proposed the use of pamphlets, newsletters and school magazines with answers to commonly asked questions on drug abuse. The same sentiments were raised by Nzuma and Ajani (2021) who suggested that school administrations should ensure that these tools were in place.

G & C HOD (B) echoed the same sentiments adding:

Awareness campaigns are very important. However, for them to be more effective the administration should diarise them in the school calendar of events.

Guidance and Counselling heads of departments also suggested that school campaigns should involve the police through the victim-friendly unit in the police department. These are said to be important because learners may be equipped with more information concerning repercussions of taking drugs. Similarly, Chikwanha (2021) reported that Plan International and the Zimbabwe Republic Police were assisting schools to launch campaigns against drug abuse in schools. G & C HOD (C) added:

It is very useful to involve the police. If they visit schools and outline the effects of drug abuse, a number of learners will be rescued. The community should also be involved in these campaigns. Our learners come from different sections in the estate, it would be helpful if compound supervisors organise such activities for their sections.

G & C HOD (A) concurred, adding:

Senior women and counsellors from our department conscientise the girl child about the dangers of drug abuse. The victim friendly unit from the Zimbabwe Republic Police have slots in the school for their meetings with girls. The hospital staff also hold discussions with school staff members in a bid to equip them with the knowledge of how to tackle drug abuse among female learners.

There was documentary evidence to support the above assertion. The Head of Department provided a log book which had been signed by the police details who had facilitated during the campaigns. The topics, number of learners, age and sex of learner participants were also recorded. However, this evidence was only provided at two schools. The other two schools did not have such records.

School heads added that campaigns were also done during sports days, where they would have requested sports directors to address the learners first before they commenced their competitions. This is in line with McGuire's (2022) views that schools should make use of all assemblies at school to address the issue of drug abuse. SH (C) added:

We have realised that during sports competitions, our learners get carried away and that's when some of them indulge in drug abuse. It is, therefore, important for sports organisers to prepare campaigns against drug abuse. They may design T-shirts with messages condemning drug abuse. Before they commence their competitions they should start by giving speeches discouraging learners from taking drugs. The message should also be sent to those retailers who sell intoxicating substances at the sports grounds.

During focus group discussions, the learners hailed the idea of addressing the issue of drugs during sports days. This was because, as they claimed, some learners were influenced by peers. Therefore, they should be reminded of the adverse effects of drugs. They also suggested that all learners should be encouraged to participate in sports. Similar sentiments were raised by Maire et al. (2020) who argue that all learners should be involved in sporting activities so as to curb negative peer pressure. FGD (D) added:

It is important to let every learner be involved in sporting activities because those who are idle will always find something to occupy themselves with and they indulge into drug abuse.

The interviewees suggested that in order to curb drug abuse by learners, there should be collaboration among the school, the community and Non-Governmental Organisations. Isenja (2022) raised the same sentiments that there is need for all stakeholders to work together. The school heads felt that the engagement of ward councillors, and mother support groups may yield better results in the attempt to curb drug abuse among female learners. SH (B) suggested:

Ward councillors, mother support groups (appointed by the Campaign for Female Education Organisation), and influential community members should be involved in spreading the word.

SH (A) added:

We should also make use of annual general meetings to conscientise parents about the dangers of drug abuse by learners. We should take this opportunity to encourage parents to closely monitor their children at home, so that they do not indulge in drug abuse.

Previous research (e.g. Tapfumaneyi, 2021) has shown that parents lack the knowledge about drug abuse by learners. Therefore, it is important for schools to enlighten them. School heads lamented that some parents took a casual approach to drug abuse by learners and some of them even shared alcohol with their children as if there was nothing wrong with that.

Since these schools have the same Responsible Authority, the researcher wanted to find out what the Responsible Authority was doing to assist schools eradicate the drug abuse problem among female learners. The researcher gathered that a lot was being done to help schools curb the spread of drug abuse among female learners. Such efforts included training of peer educators and teacher mentors, provision of qualified counsellors whenever there was need and provision of rehabilitation to willing drug abusers. This is in line with Museveni's (2020) views that the responsible authority should offer specialised services and should mobilise resources for their schools. Therefore, they should help schools eradicate the drug abuse problem among learners.

G & C HOD (A) applauded their responsible authority for the assistance rendered. She had this to say:

We are grateful that our Responsible Authority is helping us a lot. They provide basic training to our Guidance and Counselling staff. They also train peer educators on a yearly basis. The school is provided with a wellness clinic and we have learners and teachers who are trained to do this. Every Friday the learners assemble to discuss wellness issues. We also refer

serious drug abuse cases to them and they provide them with professional counselling and rehabilitation. In some cases, they test learners who are suspected to be abusing drugs.

Given the splendid job being done by the Responsible Authority, the researcher was not enthused by the fact that only one school was getting that assistance. On probing further, the researcher was informed that the reason was the location of the schools. School A was located close to the medical centre whilst the other three schools were located very far away from the centre. There were differences in how these entities were run despite the fact that they were run by the same responsible authority.

Another strategy which was cited by most of the participants was peer education. They agreed that all schools should have peer educators. These peer educators would assist in the campaign against drug abuse. Previous research studies by Arasi and Ajuwori (2020) and Mokwena et al. (2020) recommended that schools should have positive peer influence and this could be done through peer education and training. Most participants in the current study felt that learners would listen better if they were being advised by their peers. Three out of four schools had set up peer educators and child protection committees. These peer educators were responsible for identifying and cushioning their peers who had problems. They coordinated child protection programs and campaigns. They also reported learners with behaviour problems to the school counsellor and administrators.

The researcher had the privilege to analyse documents from school A, on peer education. It was observed that each form had six (6) peer educators and each class was represented. These peer educators coordinated peer education programs which were recorded. They also carried out campaigns. The one recorded in 2021 was entitled, 'Advocating change.' They also have a child protection committee which advocates girl child empowerment. In October 2022 they launched another campaign entitled 'Catch up strategy'. The thrust of the campaign was again to come up with strategies that may help the girl child to overcome her day-to-day problems, including drug abuse.

One of the learners in FGD (A) who happened to be a peer educator hailed the importance of peer education in schools saying:

The future of this country is in the hands of a girl child. The problem is that our society looks down upon the girl child. That's the reason why you find her being sexually, physically and emotionally abused. These girls need everyone's support. Most of those girls who abuse drugs, do not do it by choice, they have a story to tell. As peer educators we should listen to their stories and try to assist them to get the necessary help.

It is the researcher's contention that peer education is very important in schools and all schools should endeavour to have peer educators to curb drug abuse among female learners.

From the interviews, some of the disciplinary committee chairpersons felt that there was need to revise some of the school policies so that they match prevailing situations. DCC (A) presented a document which the school's disciplinary committee had prepared and submitted to the school head. Similarly, UNODC (2016) and Obera (2017) recommended that school policies should be revised and reviewed regularly, if possible annually.

The preamble of the document provided by DCC (A) read:

Considering the gravity, number and frequency of cases of indiscipline which are mostly related to drug abuse and improper associations by both male and female learners, especially form 2 and form 3s. We made our recommendations which we forwarded to the Head for consideration and approval.

From the above, it is clear that the Disciplinary Committee wanted to review the policies in the school as to match the changing times and learners' behaviour.

The Disciplinary Committee recommended:

- The school should transfer learners who commit serious acts of misconduct such as drug abuse,

- Make a complete overhaul of the school rules so that they become relevant to the new and grave cases of indiscipline, especially those related to drug abuse.
- There is need for tact and prudence in enrolling students from outside the estate.
- The perimeter wall should be completed within the earliest convenient time.
- Blacklist Form 4 learners who commit serious offences and not give them A' Level vacancies.
- Accept transfers into the school only at the beginning of the term and not at any time during the term.

The school should have permanently stationed security details manning the entrance or have them stay reasonably longer and not change them too frequently before they get to know the students.

From this document, it is clear that the disciplinary committee was eager to curb the spread of drug abuse among female learners. If this were to be implemented the school would be able to cage the learners and reduce indiscipline.

In the other schools under study, there were no such recommendations. Therefore, it was necessary to enlighten the other schools in the district to have more relevant school policies to curb drug abuse among female learners. It is clear from all the discussions that the schools have a pivotal role to play in order to eradicate drug abuse among female learners. This could be done through conscientisation speeches at assembly, during sports days, in the classrooms, guidance and counselling sessions, addresses by police officers and in peer education. If this were done on routine basis, change would be seen in a number of learners. Schools should adopt a zero tolerance stance on drug abuse.

5.4.3.4.2. The family's role in reducing drug abuse among female learners.

Having looked at what schools could do to reduce drug abuse among female learners, it became necessary to assess the role of the family. It would be practically impossible for schools to win this battle against drug abuse without the involvement of the parents or guardians of the learners.

Almost all the participants strongly felt that the family had a major role to play since the learners were day scholars. They commuted from home to school every day. The participants felt that parents should be more concerned about the welfare of their children and what happens between the school and their homes. The Centre for Drug Control and Prevention (2022) similarly pointed out that families had a strong influence on the lives of their children. To come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners, families should be considered. Families should set clear behaviour expectations for their children and should continually monitor them.

SH (A) commented:

The problem we are facing is that we have these learners between 7am and 4pm, what happens after that no one knows. This is where parents should come in. They should be wary of what their children do after school. Some learners stay very close to the school but we are reliably informed that they arrive home well after 6pm.

It is, therefore, the duty of the parent to have strict rules at home. School heads agreed that parents should enforce some form of curfew at home. If there are no strict rules at home then children are at liberty to do whatever they want and to go whenever they want. These are the times they may indulge in delinquent behaviours with their unruly friends, and that is when they may abuse drugs. Abdu-Raheem (2013) and UNODC (2016) raised the same concerns that parents should provide guidance to their children and should guide them on choosing friends. They concurred that parents should enforce family rules and should be able to detect early signs of drug abuse.

During focus group discussions, the learners raised the issue of the mode of transport which the learners used to school. At School A, learners felt that some female learners were being abused by the bus crew members. Some crew members took advantage of learners from poor backgrounds who boarded the said vehicles without paying anything. However, they would pay in kind. Thus, parents should be wary of such activities. CDC (2022) suggested that parents should monitor their children's movements. Hence, parents should be aware of the mode of transport their children use. Learner from FGD (A) explained:

Yes, we have some of our colleagues who don't want to board the Zimbabwe United Passenger Company bus when coming to school. They prefer the so called 'zvikipipi'. This is because the drivers overload their vehicles and some of the occupants do not pay bus fare. Usually, these females who ask for favours from the young drivers do not pay for the ride. In turn, the drivers will be paid in kind instead of money.

The learners alleged that, by not paying the transporters, these girls ended up having improper relationships with them. Parents should, therefore, be wary of the form of transport their children use.

Another learner from the same focus group added:

I suggest that parents should pay monthly bus fare to the ZUPCO bus, such that their children are obliged to use the ZUPCO. Some girls are given money for transport but they use it for other things.

From the above, parents are encouraged to be more vigilant. They should ensure that their children use safe transport and are dropped at safe places. They should be concerned about the time their children spend between school and home. Homes should have rules and the children should abide by those rules.

However, Guidance and Counselling heads of departments said they were doing a lot to help parents understand their children's behaviour. This is in line with Museveni's (2020) views that there should be a link between the school and the parents. G & C HOD.A recorded a case of some Forms 2 and 3 learners who had been using unscrupulous forms of transport. Authorities have since invited the learners for counselling.

She had this to say:

As counselling department we are trying our best to help these learners. We have cautioned them about using those private owned modes of transport but some of them turn a deaf ear to our advice. We can't do this alone, we need

assistance from the parents. We have reported some cases to administration and the parents of the culprits were summoned to school.

DCC (A)'s records supported the above allegations. The parents had been invited and the disciplinary committee had advised them to be more concerned with the transport mode that their children used when coming to school. According to the records the parents claimed that they gave their children enough money for transport and there was no need for them to use informal transport. The parents were however advised to pay ZUPCO, the public sector bus company, upfront so that the children would not find reasons for using alternative transport. It was also alleged that the learners used the loose money their parents gave them as bus fare to buy such things as drugs.

From the interviews and discussions, it was agreed that there was need to improve communication between the schools and the parents or guardians. Participants from school (A) revealed that, although their school was situated in the rural farming areas, it enrolled learners who commuted from Chiredzi urban. Some participants felt that these learners had a bad influence on those learners from the farming areas. The researcher feels that the school should enhance communication between them and their learners' families, so that parents may closely monitor the movement of their children. This is similar to what Isenja (2022) recommended. There should be communication between the school and community members.

Another learner from FGD (A) complained:

I wonder why parents leave schools that are close to their residential areas to enrol their children in our school. I understand our school was built for children of bona fide Tongaat Hulett employees, those that live within the estate. These other ones are intruders and they are contaminating good people from this side. Parents should be content with enrolling their children in the schools which are close to their homes. This is causing more harm than good because distance is influencing bad behaviour.

Another learner from the same group echoed:

Given this distance between the school and home, some learners who walk home pass through thick bushes and it is in those bushes that they take drugs. Both boys and girls are involved in this behaviour. Some learners choose to walk home even if they are given transport money. They reserve the money for drugs and alcohol.

The Disciplinary Committee chairperson from the same school was in agreement with the learners that the issue of distance was a thorn in the flesh for this school and should be considered seriously so that drug abuse among female learners is eradicated. Documents in DCC (D)'s possession revealed that some parents sent their children to a school which was more than ten kilometres away from their residential area. The reason was that the particular school produced the best academic results in the district. However, the children were taking advantage of the distance to misbehave. The records showed that three Form 2 female learners would sneak out of the school in between lessons and sneak out with one Form 4 boy and two male school leavers. It is alleged that these learners had quality time at the Form 4 learner's house since he stayed alone. On some days the girls would skip school. They left their homes pretending to be going to school but they would never reach the school. They would spend the whole day at the boy's house drinking alcohol and wine.

The report also indicated that these learners had been seen by one of the teachers visibly drunk. When quizzed about this they did not deny. The school had thus been left with no choice but to ask them to transfer to schools closer to their homes. In like manner, Chidarikire et al. (2021) expressed worry that if parents were not involved in the day-to-day lives of their children, the results could be disastrous. They encouraged parents to be actively involved in their children's lives. Thus, they should consider factors such as distance before they enrol their child at any school.

The DCC (A) commented:

Our major problem is that parents prefer to send their children to this school without considering the issue of distance and its repercussions. We have failed to convince some parents to transfer their children to schools closer to their homes because they say those schools' learning standards are poor.

It was disheartening to note that one of the girls cited in the Disciplinary Committee chairperson's records stayed thirty kilometres away from our school. The record revealed that the girl was no longer coming to school. She would instead go to her boyfriend's place. The school eventually asked the father to transfer her to another school. DCC (A) added:

We have now adopted a new policy that the school will not enrol learners who stay outside the estate. In a way we will be forcing parents to consider the issue of distance when they are looking for form 1 places.

All the interviewees concurred that given the rate at which drug abuse cases were increasing, parents should reconsider into which schools they enrolled their children. Parents should accept that many factors contribute to whether one obtains good or poor marks in an examination. It is not only the teacher's effort or the school's standards but also the learner's attitude towards school work that counts (Mudawairi, 2022).

Another factor which was raised was the issue of family disintegration. Parents of some learners have moved to the diaspora in search of greener pastures leaving their children with relatives or one of the parents. In the process, they lack family integrity. The situation where the father or parent figure is missing could lead to moral decadence. At times, some parents spoil their children with a lot of money. That money they pamper their children with might be used to buy intoxicating substances. Madamombe (2022) asserted that childhood trauma contributes significantly to abuse of drugs by the youth. For example, children who may have grown up under harsh conditions may turn to drugs. On the other hand, there could be some relatives who may be so liberal that they give the children whatever they want. Parents in the diaspora might send a lot of money to their children and the children might end up misusing the money, leading to uncouth behaviour. The children may hold what are known as Vuzu house parties, pool parties and bush parties where they engage in immoral acts. Here, the youth indulge in drug abuse. According to *Ignite Media Services* (2022), thirty-nine (39) learners were recently arrested in Bulawayo. The police reported that during the arrests, they recovered used and unused condoms, beer and cigarettes at the vuzu party scene. Therefore, parents who provide a lot of money to their children could be risking their children's lives. This is

why the current research needs to come up with intervening strategies against drug abuse. The parents should be informed about all the risk factors that lead to drug abuse.

Since the study was carried out in the rural farming areas, the school heads revealed the peculiar challenges related to a farming environment. Some male learners are children of A2 farmers and they are given lots of money to spend. In a way, some of them misuse the money as they try to lure girls. Similarly, Khoza and Shilubane (2021) asserted that a good financial background may encourage learners to abuse drugs. This is because their parents or guardians give them more pocket money and may not be worried about how the money is spent.

SH (B) elaborated:

Some A2 farmers who occupied the farms are not properly looking after their children. The male children are given large sums of money which they use to lure girls. The parents should monitor how their children spend the money they give them.

This particular school (B) recorded cases of fifteen year old Form 3 female learners who had fallen prey to the boys who flashed money and cars that their parents gave them. It was alleged that, when they met these female learners they would not give them money alone, but they would also share drugs with them so that they could easily take sexual advantage of them. The participants echoed that some of the girls' parents actually encouraged their children to be involved with farmers' children because farmers were highly regarded in the community. Parents working in the estate wish their children were married to those rich boys. However, the harsh reality is that they would just be used and ditched.

It can therefore be concluded that families should play their roles earnestly so that the female learner is rescued from this scourge of drug abuse. The schools need the support of families in the community so that they can stop the spread of drug abuse among female learners.

5.4.3.5. Strategies for mitigating the drug abuse problem among female learners in Chiredzi District

The final sub-research question looked at the strategies that should be employed in Chiredzi rural-farming areas in order to mitigate the problem of drug abuse. The school learners under study mixed and mingled with learners from other areas in the district. It was, therefore, relevant to look at what Chiredzi District should do to eradicate drug abuse among female learners. The issue of drug abuse affects all families and all schools in the country, in one way or the other.

All the participants from the four schools strongly agreed that schools should have effective guidance and counselling programmes. Similarly, Mokwena and Nomkanka (2021) advocated viable Guidance and Counselling in schools. They suggested that Zimbabwean schools should have Guidance and Counselling as a learning area like what is happening in South Africa where they have Life Orientation Learning Area which encompasses personal psychology, neurocognitive, motor, physical, moral, spiritual, cultural and socio-economic areas. These are all important for child development.

SH (B) suggested:

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should put in place viable guidance and counselling strategies. There is need to train teachers to teach Guidance and Counselling as a subject. Most of the teachers we have in our schools did not specialise in Guidance and Counselling. Some of them covered it under Psychology of Education but they are not specialists. They lack knowledge on therapeutic issues.

The general observation was that all teachers who teach Guidance and Counselling in Zimbabwe did not hold the required qualifications. The interviewees agreed that in order to effectively help learners who abuse drugs, it is essential to have qualified teachers. This observation was also made by King'endo (2015) who stated that in Kenya, there were no proper drug abuse programmes in schools because the teachers did not have the proper qualifications to deal with drug abuse problems.

The heads from the three schools which did not have slots of Guidance and Counselling on their timetables agreed that most of the teachers were overwhelmed by their own subject loads.

SH (D) explained:

We have realised that it's sheer waste of time to allocate Guidance and Counselling load to someone who is not trained to teach the subject. Most of them don't attend the lessons. They have a negative attitude towards the subject. We have also realised that counselling has a lot to do with personality and not all people are counsellors. So, imposing such a duty on someone who has a negative attitude is a futile attempt.

SH (A) from the school where guidance and counselling was being effectively done pointed out that:

Schools should have a proper policy on guidance and counselling, despite the fact that teachers are not qualified. A head should identify teachers who are keen to help learners. We have those teachers who are always there for learners. Appoint one of them as head of department. Things will run smoothly because the head of department is intrinsically motivated and also self-motivated.

These ideas are similar to what Museveni (2020) suggested, that when choosing teachers to place in those critical positions, one needs to look at personal attributes such as leadership qualities and personal conduct. Heads of departments who are self-motivated are the best choice. They should be empowered to identify and recruit interested teachers into the department. The school head added:

This is what we did here; the head of department is very enthusiastic and it is her mandate to invite teachers interested to join the department. They scheme their work, teach assigned classes, and above all, provide counselling to their classes. The head of department has privileges like any other head of department in the school. Teachers in that department are also supervised like any other teacher in the school.

So, Guidance and Counselling should be taken seriously and should be incorporated into the school curriculum. This will make everyone in the system take it seriously. The subject should not only be made compulsory, but it should also be examined like all other subjects. Similarly, the idea of co-opting Guidance and Counselling as a subject was raised by Gudyanga et.al. (2015), who argued that Guidance and Counselling should be made part of the curriculum and should be slotted on the timetable. The key players in the implementation should be the teachers, learners, school heads and district schools inspectors. These should play their roles effectively (Gudyanga et al., 2015).

SH (C) argued:

For Guidance and Counselling to be effective in schools, there is need for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to provide the necessary facilities and resources. It should be regarded as a compulsory subject and should be examined at O' Level. We don't have both human and material resources for the subject in schools. It should be understood that it's a mammoth task to ask someone to teach a subject which is not examinable.

G & C HOD (D) added:

For Guidance and Counselling to be effective, we need to have a well-equipped room specifically for guidance and counselling. If we don't have a conducive environment for counselling, learners with problems will be reluctant to come for assistance. We don't have a room for counselling at this school, so most of the learners do not come for help.

The above sentiments are in support of UNODC (2016) who suggested that the school environment should be conducive for guidance and counselling. That is, the physiological environment and the materials provided by the school should embrace guidance and counselling.

Besides the provision of Guidance and Counselling to learners, some participants felt that in order to eradicate drug abuse in schools, all stakeholders should support the schools' efforts. The Ministry of Home Affairs should also assist.

FGD (A) learner who was also a junior councillor suggested:

The Zimbabwe Republic Police should help to eliminate drug abuse. Besides awareness campaigns, police should arrest all drug dealers in the district. Some police details should be posted to schools to do routine checks and sniff out drug peddlers.

Participants in the focus group discussions agreed that the police should work hand in glove with the communities, involving councillors and other community leaders. Those learners who would have been nabbed should be given severe sentences by the magistrate. This would deter other learners from using drugs. This is similar to what Chigodora (2021) suggested, that the Zimbabwe Republic Police should assist schools to eradicate drug abuse.

Some school heads felt that schools could do better in dealing with drug abuse issues if they were empowered to do so. They also reiterated that some policies were making it difficult for them to effectively instil discipline in learners. Similarly, Mugabe and Maposa (2013) in their research study on methods of curbing misconduct in Zimbabwean schools, found that teachers were not happy with the Secretary's Circular P35 because it was too restraining. SH (C) commented:

If schools are well empowered they will be able to deal with this drug abuse problem effectively. The policy makers should help schools. For example, Circular Number. P35. This policy is affecting our operations. Those who abuse drugs should be punished severely, through suspension, exclusion or expulsion. Since these children learn through observation, if they see others being punished ruthlessly they will be scared to commit the same crime.

The heads agreed that policy makers should revise some of these policies to suit the prevailing situations. They complained that the laws of the land gave learners too many rights. Sadly though, some of these children were irresponsible.

Data from the focus group discussions indicate that learners felt that schools should be stricter when dealing with drug abuse. They advocated for stringent corrective

measures against abusers. They agreed that drug abusers should be excluded from school because they will spoil other learners.

FGD (B) learner lamented:

These drug abusers are affecting us. They seem to go unnoticed and even if we report them nothing happens. So, I suggest that schools should have a zero tolerance policy on drug abuse and if possible, schools should use breathalyses to identify culprits. Schools should have effective disciplinary measures.

These suggestions are similar to Marandure et al. (2022)'s observations that schools should be more strict and should ask learners to sign pledges that they will not use drugs and that schools should team up with law enforcement agents. Thus, schools should have strict zero tolerance drug policies.

There was a call for a holistic approach to this problem from all the school heads. Schools cannot do it alone, they need support. Heads believed that Non-Governmental organisations could also assist them. According to Dhillon and Singh (2022) non-governmental organisations are influential in societies and may be used, through awareness campaigns, to mobilise behaviour change among learners. This is in line with what Action Pals Two (2021) suggested.

SH (A) argued that:

Non-governmental organisations should also chip in. We have organisations like CAMFED, which are already assisting girls. They should mobilise campaigns and sponsor activities such as school competitions in drama, debate, poetry, essay writing and any other useful games learners can participate in to send the message. Plan International should also assist.

SH (D) added:

In as much as we try to stop drug abuse among female learners we also need to understand that we already have learners in schools who are

addicts. These learners need professional health assistance. Organisations that deal with counselling should be ready to offer those services to schools.

The school heads made recommendations that there was need for more health care institutions to help those who had already been affected. For example, there is, Childline, Regai dzive shiri, the Social Welfare and many others. The heads requested that these organisations should visit schools regularly to assist learners. They said that some of the learners did not even know where to go to seek help. These NGOs should engage and sponsor motivational speakers who should move around schools educating the learners about the importance of setting goals in life, focusing on goals and avoiding behaviour that derails one from achieving one's set goals. Turnbridge (2022) raised the same sentiments where she noted that females with drug abuse problems did not normally seek help for fear of stigmatisation. So, if these organisations moved around schools, learners would be assisted. Similarly, Dhillon and Singh (2021) asserted that NGOs collaborated with the community and schools to combat drug abuse by learners. They also opened primary health care centres and opened de-addiction clinics.

The school heads noted with concern that rehabilitation centres and health centres were being opened in big cities and the government seemed to turn a deaf ear on rural areas. There was the need to have such centres in rural communities since drug abuse by learners was spreading to those areas.

The participants, however, applauded the government for adopting the idea of local radio stations. They felt it was important that Chiredzi district should make use of Avuxeni FM to broadcast awareness campaigns against drug abuse by the youth. Great Zimbabwe University radio station could also be used for such campaigns, since it covers Chiredzi district.

G & C HOD (A) commented:

The local authorities should make use of Avuxeni FM to carry out awareness campaigns against drug abuse. For example, we have that Youth Focus programme. The producers must source more information about drug abuse and broadcast it.

The heads of departments echoed that most of the youth enjoy listening to this station because it broadcasts in Shangani which is the main local language for Chiredzi. They suggested that the station should invite some recovering addicts and interview them. The station could also include programmes on drug abuse such as talk shows and phone-in programmes where they discuss drug abuse issues. This is in line with Mataire (2022) and Butaumacho (2021) who observed that the opening of Avuxeni was a great stride towards the empowerment of the Shangani community because the main purpose of the station is to disseminate information to the marginalised people of Chiredzi. Local content is broadcast in local languages. Thus, information concerning drug abuse could be aired. If these youngsters hear more about the dangers of abusing drugs they may realise that it is possible to stop using drugs.

SH (A) commented:

If learners hear people from their community talking about drug abuse on air, they may change their behaviour. The local people will have correct information about what is happening in their area.

The participants agreed that politicians should also mobilise resources and host drug abuse awareness campaigns in the district. They may engage motivational speakers who will talk to the youth in the district. This could be done by councillors with the support of local members of parliament. They may engage the youth in smaller groups, like ward by ward, so that they may catch the attention of all learners. They may even do it at schools.

The church was also cited as another important sector which should not be left out in order to curb the spread of drug abuse. It was agreed that almost every family was attached to a church. It was, therefore, felt that church leaders should not only preach the word of God but should also use the word of God to rebuke bad behaviour such as drug abuse. Similarly, Maraire, Chethiya and Jasni (2020) in their research study on Zimbabwe's response to drug abuse and substance abuse established that the church was a significant factor in addressing social issues, including drug abuse.

G & C HOD (C) had this to say:

It's high time that churches should move away from teaching their church's doctrines only. They should talk more about drug abuse and its repercussions. I have a feeling that some of these learners have been initiated into Satanism, because if you think of someone drinking the dirty juice from a used diaper or sanitary pad, that's sheer Satanism. They have a duty to pray for these children.

Focus group discussion participants also agreed that some of the learners who abused drugs were demon-possessed, and needed prayers. This is in line with what Asante, Asiana-Sampong and Appiah (2021) proposed that the church should collaborate with non-governmental organisations to come up with lasting solutions on drug abuse problems.

Learner from FGD C commented.

Seriously speaking, some of these learners are possessed by demons. Their behaviour is no longer normal. I suggest that pastors should always pray for them because drug abusers need deliverance.

The participants agreed that churches should organise youth conferences and seminars where church counsellors teach about the effects of drug abuse. They should organise prayer sessions with boys and girls. The church could also organise home visitations and engage in family counselling for the benefit of both the family and the child. The church may invite motivational speakers to lead in seminars. Pastors or church leaders could also visit schools to address learners on risks of abusing drugs. The arguments corroborate what Maraire et al. (2020) and Asante et al. (2021) recommended in their studies. *Redaction African News* (2022) also reported that some youth in Zimbabwe have now engaged in prayers as a way of reducing their drug-taking habits.

In the focus group discussions learners commended the role that the church played in eradicating drug abuse among learners. They raised the issue of scripture unionism in schools. They also supported sentiments raised by *Action Pals Two* (2021). This is a

Zimbabwean magazine that encourages schools to use scripture union functions to convert learners to Christianity.

One learner from FGD (D) commented:

If all learners participate in scripture union, drug abuse will be eradicated.

Scripture union gives you moral values which are important in your life.

It can therefore be concluded that for there to be effective strategies for mitigating drug abuse, all schools should emphasise Guidance and Counselling and engage and conscientise parents about the effects of drug abuse on learners. All the ministries should rally behind schools. Non-governmental organisations and churches should also assist. For the schools to succeed in eradicating the drug abuse problem, teamwork is the key. The combined efforts of all stakeholders in any given community would perhaps bring an end to or at least, minimise this scourge.

5.6 Summary

The chapter presented data gathered through interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. The thrust of the study was to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in Chiredzi district. Data gathered through interviews and focus group discussions were merged with that from document analysis so as to come up with basic strategies for mitigating drug abuse. This triangulation of data collection procedures was used to enhance data trustworthiness.

Generally, the findings of the study revealed that drug abuse among female learners was increasing at an alarming rate, with reasons for this ranging from increase of indiscipline in schools, reluctant parental life styles, peer pressure and the onset of Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown regulations, stress, experimentation, to school culture. The risks resulting from abusing drugs were also identified. The female learners were aware of these risks but the urge to experiment and other social factors such as peer pressure and family background overrode everything else. Learners who abused drugs were in danger of dropping out of school and performing poorly in school, getting unwanted pregnancies, developing long term health problems, among others etc. Drug

abuse did not cause problems to the abuser only but it also affected the family, friends, school and the country at large.

The study came up with mitigating strategies and all stakeholders should be involved. The school, the family, the responsible authority, the government, the church and non-governmental organisations should actively take part. The study also came up with a model of strategies that may be used to mitigate drug abuse among female learners.

The subsequent chapter presents the summary of the study, draws conclusions, and makes recommendations based on the findings of the study as well as for future studies and a model of new knowledge.

CHAPTER SIX

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations.

6.1 Introduction.

This chapter summarises the study, gives conclusions and makes recommendations based on the findings. Further recommendations for future studies are also given. The chapter has been divided into four sections. The first section raises issues that were discussed in chapters 1 to 5. The second draws conclusions based on the findings, the third gives recommendations based on the findings of the study and the fourth section proffers recommendations for further studies.

6.2 Summary of the study.

The first chapter presented the statement of the problem, main research question, sub-research questions, objectives and significance of the study and the definition of the key terms. Limitations and delimitations of the study were also outlined. The chapter finally presented definitions of key terms and the structure of the whole study.

The chapter addressed the problem and its setting in the background to the study. It reviewed the international, regional and Zimbabwean context of drug abuse by the youths. The thrust of the study was to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners. The chapter addressed the prevalence of drug abuse around the world. It highlighted the fact that drug abuse was a global problem affecting both developed and developing countries. The drug abuse problem affects the young and the adults, females and males, the school-going age groups as well as the working and non-working classes (World Health Organisation, 2021). Many nations are trying to

come up with means and ways to eradicate drug abuse among the youths. For most of these countries, the problem has brought devastating effects. The chapter highlighted the intervention strategies being used by some countries, including Zimbabwe. These interventions included counselling, school and community based campaigns among other things. The focus of this study was to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female students in rural-farming areas in Chiredzi District, and in the process, seeing how these strategies compare with strategies observed in existing literature.

Chapter Two discussed the theoretical framework underpinning the study. This study was underpinned by two theories, the Ecological Perspective and the Feminist Theory. The Ecological Theory was most relevant for the study because it presented the interactions that happen to children as they grow up and how these interactions influence behaviour and personality. Whatever surrounds a child through the process of development has a lot of influence on him/her. The Ecological Theory explores how the environmental systems are nested and intertwined, leading to behaviour moulding. People are seen as interactive systems. The girl child interacts with the family, school, community and all these institutions influence behaviour. These ideas were used to come up with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners. According to this theory, a child's development is affected by an array of factors that include person, process, context and time (Donald et al. 2010; Sarah, 2012; Paquette & Ryan, 2015; Guy-Evans, 2020).

The Feminist Theory was also important for this study. This approach advocates equality between men and women. Given the setting of the study, the researcher felt it was necessary to conduct a study involving female learners in order to empower them by alerting them to the dangers of drugs. The female learners were empowered through the discussions, which enabled them to actively come up with mitigating strategies against drug abuse. The Feminist approach was also necessary because females and males are affected by drugs differently (NIDA, 2020). Therefore, it was necessary to come up with appropriate intervention strategies suited to female learners.

The third chapter presented a review of related literature. The literature revealed that drug abuse was rampant around the world and particularly in Zimbabwe where research studies by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2021) have shown that Zimbabwe has the greatest number of young people between the age of fifteen and nineteen who abuse drugs. It was also revealed that drug abuse in Zimbabwe increased especially after the Covid-19 lockdown regulations. The youth were not only abusing those common drugs, but they also abused substances from diapers and light bulbs. Crystal Meth was also regarded as the worst drug being abused by the youth, resulting in mental illness (Moyo, 2020; Masiyiwa, 2021; Tapfumaneyi, 2021; Madamombe, 2022).

The chapter also presented a review of literature based on research questions. The main research question reviewed literature on the mitigating strategies against drug abuse among female learners. A number of strategies have been put forward in different countries, which include: early prevention and intervention, awareness campaigns in the community and schools, screening of learners who abuse drugs, peer education and effective guidance and counselling programmes. From the sub-research questions, it was revealed that there are a myriad of reasons which cause female learners to abuse drugs. These included physiological, psychological, economic and social factors. It was also revealed that women were affected by drugs differently as compared to men and were at higher risk of suffering addiction and relapse (Turnbridge, 2022). It was also revealed that there was need to equip learners with information about the adverse effects of drug abuse. The chapter also revealed what schools and families should do to mitigate drug abuse among female learners. Review of empirical evidence showed that there was no drug policy in Zimbabwe as compared to other countries (Masiyiwa, 2021). Therefore, in the absence of explicit policies, the current study was necessary to come up with intervention strategies that could be used to assist female learners, given their vulnerability to external influences, particularly from male adults.

Chapter Four presented the methodology of the study. The interpretive research paradigm was employed in this research study. The qualitative approach, in line with the interpretivist paradigm, was chosen for it enabled the study to come up with an in-depth understanding of drug abuse among female learners. Thus, in this research study, the

qualitative approach enabled the researcher to establish the main causes of drug abuse, risks involved in drug abuse, how learners could be assisted to enhance their knowledge about drug abuse and what schools and families should do to stop the spread of drug abuse.

Focus group discussions with learners, interviews and documents were used to gather data. These instruments were most appropriate because they enabled the researcher to collect views, feelings and attitudes of participants. The researcher was able to gather in-depth information about drug abuse among female learners from four school heads, four disciplinary committee chairpersons and four Guidance and Counselling heads of departments using interviews. A total of twenty-four learners formed the focus groups. Purposive sampling was used to select the four schools and the learners. All the participants consented to this. These participants had rich data relevant for the study and the thematic approach was used to analyse the data through generation of themes.

Chapter Five presented, analysed and discussed the data collected. Interview and focus group discussion data were complemented by data from documents. Thus, triangulation was done to ensure data trustworthiness. The study revealed that drug abuse among female learners was caused by family background. All the participants agreed that stresses emanating from unstable family structures may lead to drug abuse. Family problems such as health issues, parenting styles, family economic status, and domestic violence were identified as major causes of drug abuse. These findings were similar to CDC (2016) and Manzvanzvike's (2021) findings that family challenges may influence drug abuse by female learners. From the focus group discussions, peer pressure and experimentation were identified as the major causes of drug abuse among female learners. This was similar to findings by Perez (2022) who found out that some learners abused drugs because of the people they hang out with.

The study also established that learners abused drugs because they wanted to be identified with certain peers. They want to conform to group identity. It was also observed that some learners abuse drugs because of lack of monitoring from parents. Some parents are not worried about who their children be-friend and how their children spend their leisure time and where. The same observations were also made by

Chidarikire and Chikuvadze (2021) where they say that some parents lack involvement in their children's lives, which leads to drug abuse by these children.

Another argument put forward by learners from focus group discussions was that female learners abused drugs because they were being influenced by elderly men with whom they had sexual relationships. Due to poverty and greed, some female learners may fall prey to unscrupulous elderly men who just want to exploit them sexually. Accessibility was also identified as another cause of drug abuse by female learners. The geographical setting of the learners influenced them to access *ngaimani*, an illicit alcoholic concoction which is made from the ethanol extracted from sugar cane. Also, some learners have proximal interaction with cane-cutters who are notorious abusers of cannabis. This makes this study peculiar because of the type of people the learners interact with. There was need, therefore, to come up with strategies which were relevant to rural-farming areas.

Like Mlambo (2022) and *Redaction Africa News's* (2022) findings, the current study revealed that drug abuse had also been aggravated by the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns. Some family secrets, such as the parents' HIV status, were unveiled during that period, leading to drug abuse by female learners.

It was also revealed that school policies may influence drug abuse. The schools under study did not have school drug policies. For each school, the policy was only implied in the school rules. The style of administration and how rules were being applied in schools were also identified as influential to drug abuse by female learners.

The study's findings also revealed that female learners were adversely affected by drug abuse. Female learners were affected mentally such that they lost focus in school work and their academic performance declined. It was also revealed that female learners who abused drugs were at high risk of falling pregnant and contracting sexually-transmitted infections and HIV and AIDS. The findings were also similar to those of NIDA (2020) and Chikwanha (2021) who found that female learners who abused drugs were affected biologically. Drugs cause hormonal changes which lead to changes in the menstrual cycle. It was also revealed that female learners who started abusing drugs at a tender age were likely to continue using drugs later in life. Like in other studies by Mlambo

(2020) and Masiyiwa (2021), the current study established that female learners were aware of the risks linked to abusing drugs although they continued taking them. However, there were arguments that, although female learners knew about the negative effects of drugs, they lacked in-depth understanding of these adverse effects. The thrust of the current study was to come up with strategies to curb drug abuse. The learners, therefore, should be equipped with more information concerning the adverse effects of abusing drugs. The participants also agreed that learners who abused drugs had misconceptions about the drugs. Thus, there was need to demystify these misconceptions.

The study established that schools and families were key players in the eradication of drug abuse among female learners. It was argued that schools should have strict rules, effective guidance and counselling programmes, awareness campaign programmes and proper peer education programmes. These findings were similar to those by Gcelu et al. (2020) and Nzuma and Ajani (2021) who urged schools to have stringent rules which they revised regularly as well as a well-established and effective guidance and counselling department in schools. The research findings were also similar to UNODC (2016) who suggested that schools should have rules which are in tandem with the changing times. There was also emphasis on team work among the teaching staff, administrators and school counsellors and the family. Thus, the interaction between the school and the family could help eradicate the drug abuse problem.

The researcher's findings were similar to those of King'endo (2015), UNODC (2016) and McGuire (2022) who found that viable Guidance and Counselling in schools could help eradicate drug abuse among female learners. However, the current research revealed that only one out of the four schools under study had viable Guidance and Counselling lessons slotted on the master timetable of the school. The research thus revealed that in order to achieve this goal, schools should have effective Guidance and Counselling lessons, manned by professionally qualified teachers. It was noted that the teachers lacked Guidance and Counselling qualifications. Similar observations were made by Museveni (2020) in Uganda. The school heads agreed that for Guidance and Counselling to be effective, it should be incorporated in the school curriculum and be

slotted on the time table like any other subject. It was also revealed that for this subject to be effective there was need for a conducive environment. UNODC (2016) made similar observations and recommended that schools provide relevant material resources to embrace Guidance and Counselling. It was also established that all the heads of departments did not hold a qualification in Guidance and Counselling. However, it was pleasing to note that they all had experience in Guidance and Counselling and that they were all qualified teachers.

It was further revealed that parents should play a leading role in eradicating drug abuse among female learners. The participants called for parents to be more vigilant. Parents were urged to provide proper transport for their children, set strict rules and know the type of friends their children hung out with. Some recorded cases in one of the schools revealed that some learners used dubious modes of transport, whose providers were associated with drug use. The learners befriended the drivers of those vehicles who, in turn, introduced them to alcohol. The participants also agreed on the need for improved communication between the schools and the parents. Similarly, Isenja (2022) emphasised the need for interaction between the school and the family.

The study also revealed that the police should play any integral role to eradicate drug abuse among female learners. They should work together with schools and the community and arrest all those learners found abusing drugs. Similarly, Chigodora (2021) suggested that the Zimbabwe Republic Police should assist schools in curbing the spread of drug abuse.

The study further established that non-governmental organisations should help to solve the drug abuse problem through awareness campaigns and health care for those learners who were already addicted. Community radio stations were identified as another effective way of spreading word against the negative effects of drug abuse on learners. Political figures such as Members of Parliament were identified as instrumental in organising awareness campaigns against drug abuse in their constituencies. The participants also called for churches to effectively participate in eradicating the disease which was affecting most of the country's youths. Similar observations were made by Asiama-Sampong and Appiah (2021) that the church

should collaborate with non-governmental organisations to come up with lasting solutions to the problem of drug abuse by learners. These findings show that in order to eradicate drug abuse among female learners, there was need for a holistic approach. All stakeholders should be actively and effectively involved.

6.3 Conclusions

The research study established that there were an array of reasons why female learners abused drugs in Chiredzi district. It has also been found out that Zimbabwe was rated by the World Health Organisation as one of the countries that had the highest number of youth between fifteen and nineteen years who abused drugs mostly due to poverty. The study also revealed that drugs were affecting both male and female learners.

Given the above, it can be concluded that in order to win the fight against drug abuse, the focal point should be the family. The family has proximal interaction with the child. Children are socialised first at their homes. What the parents do and what they associate their children with influence the children's behaviour. Families should be good role models and should instil good morals in their children. Parents and guardians should desist from alcoholism and the use of illicit drugs.

The study also concluded that schools were not playing their roles fully. There was lack of proper and adequate monitoring in many schools given that most drug abuse took place in the school premises. Schools play an integral role in child development.

The Government should play its role in eradicating drug abuse. There was need for the formulation of drug abuse policies under the guidance of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

The findings also suggested that non-Governmental organisations and all other stakeholders have a pivotal role to play in the eradication of drug abuse among female learners. The study established that learners had been adversely affected by drugs but continued to use them. It was revealed that some of them had dropped out of school

and others had fallen pregnant. Therefore, there is need for rigorous awareness campaigns.

6.4 Recommendations based on the findings.

- Against the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that a lot should be done by all stakeholders in order to come up with effective drug abuse intervention strategies. The government, the school, the family, the church and the community should work together to eradicate drug abuse among the youths.
- Schools should play their role fully. There is lack of proper and adequate monitoring in many schools given that most drug abuse cases reported took place in the school premises. Schools play an integral role in child development. Therefore, they should lead in the eradication of drug abuse among female learners. Children spend most of their time at school and learn a lot there. As a result, schools should have more strict rules which are reviewed regularly to curb drug abuse and guidance and counselling should be done effectively. Guidance and Counselling in schools is hindered by lack of staff with professional qualifications. Teachers are not equipped to deal with serious cases of drug abuse. Therefore, Guidance and Counselling teachers should attend refresher courses, so as to equip themselves with current information about drug abuse and its management. Schools should employ the authoritative style of administration and should have well stipulated drug abuse policies which are effectively implemented. Schools should carry out drug use screening on learners and should also engage the police when serious cases are encountered.
- The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should train Guidance and Counselling teachers for effective counselling in schools. Guidance and Counselling as a subject should be incorporated into the school curriculum. The Ministry should intensify the use of workshops so as to equip teachers with relevant knowledge about drugs.

- The Government should play its role in eradicating drug abuse. There is need for the formulation of drug abuse policies and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should take the lead. The Ministry should liberalise the implementation of the Secretary's Circular Number P35, that circular which governs student discipline in schools. School heads should be allowed to suspend, exclude or expel learners who abuse drugs. It was established that schools were doing a lot to curb drug abuse but they were not at liberty to use the Secretary's Circular Number P35 because they were required to seek prior approval before implementation. The procedure is so strenuous such that schools end up not employing it. The Ministry should review the circular so that it matches the prevailing situation.
- The findings also suggested that non-governmental organisations and all other stakeholders should cooperate in order to curb the spread of drug abuse among female learners. Awareness campaigns should be intensified in schools and the community. Non-governmental organisations should lead in the funding of such awareness campaigns. The study established that learners were being adversely affected by drugs but continued to use them. It was revealed that some of them had dropped out of school and others had been made pregnant. Therefore, there was the need for rigorous awareness campaigns.
- The police should be more vigilant and enforce control over the availability of drugs on the streets and shops.
- Advertisements aired on television and radio should also be controlled. Families and the community should closely monitor the behaviour of youngsters.
- The findings also suggested that churches should give a hand in eradicating drug abuse. Local radio stations should also be used to disseminate information concerning the adverse effects of drug abuse.

- The government should develop a national drug policy which should be used in the country at large and be applied in schools effectively.

6. 5 Model of the strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in schools.

From the findings, it became clear that schools were doing a lot in order to curb the problem of drug abuse among female learners. However, there was need to modify some of the strategies so that they could be more effective. The following suggestions were drawn from the data. The diagram below presents a summary of the strategies that could be used to curb drug abuse among female secondary learners.

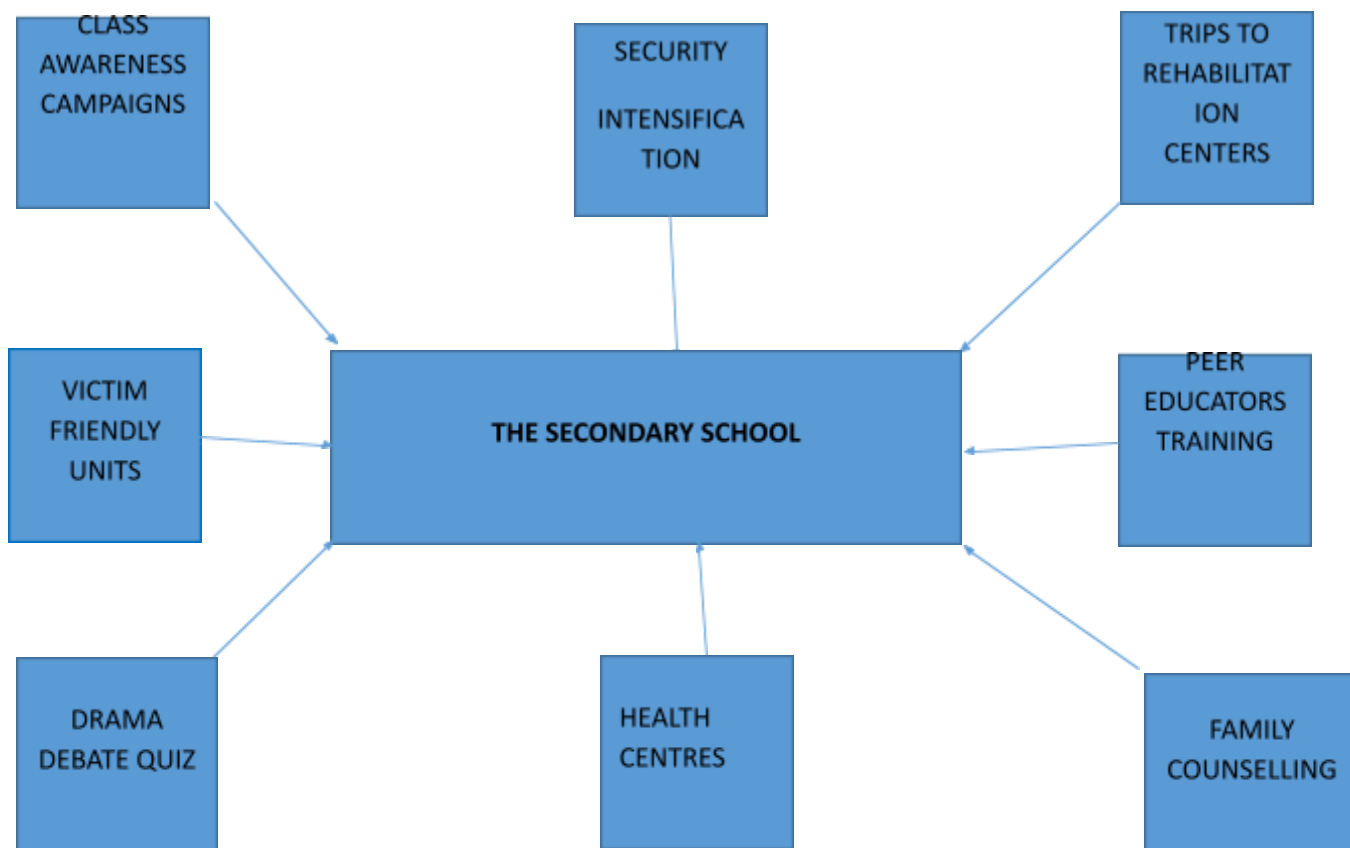


Figure 3: Summarising mitigating strategies that may be used by schools.

As suggested by the diagram, the school is the central point from where all the strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners should emanate. The strategies are further explained below.

- Schools should hold family counselling. The current study has established that disharmony in family leads learners into drug abuse. It was also established that the study area was different from other rural-farming areas because in this particular study area, intoxicating substances maybe be easily made from ethanol. Therefore, schools should engage families to alert them about the dangers of brewing *ngaimani* at home using ethanol. Family engagement would again be important since it has been established that due to the peculiar work shifts, some learners were left alone at home, which facilitated the infiltration of drugs. Engagement could be done with the involvement of qualified counsellors. The researcher feels that if counselling is provided to the learners without addressing the root cause, the problem will persist. There should be more interaction between schools and families.
- Schools should improve on the strategies they use in their awareness campaigns. They should show posters around the school, posters that discourage drug abuse. Every classroom should have posters that clearly state the repercussions of abusing drugs. Thus, the school should embrace the zero tolerance approach to drug abuse.
- Schools should design pamphlets and flyers that should be given to all students and their parents or guardians. The pamphlets should indicate sources of drugs which are specific to these rural-farming areas.
- All schools should have peer educators who are trained by specialists. Each class should have at least four peer educators, both male and female. All the schools should request qualified personnel from Tongaat Hulett, the Responsible Authority, to train peer educators and school health representatives.
- Drama, debate and quiz competitions on drug abuse should be done from class to inter-schools levels. This will enable all learners to benefit.

- Schools should have health centres in their premises, so that learners quickly get assistance whenever there is need.
- Schools should organise class trips to rehabilitation centres so that learners get acquainted with the adverse effects of drug abuse.
- Security should be intensified in schools. Random inspections should be done every week.
- Schools should hold scheduled special assemblies targeting the female learners, where Victim Friendly Unit and trained health personnel are invited.
- There is need for early intervention. Drug abuse campaigns and education should not start at secondary level but at Early Childhood Development level. According to Sigmund Freud, the first five years of childhood development are very critical (Cherry, 2022). Thus, learners should be conscientised about the negative effects of drugs as early as possible.
- All the staff members should be more vigilant. These days learners tend to use even some of their food stuffs to prepare intoxicating substances. The report made by *ZimEye Newspaper* (2023) revealed that learners mix orange crush and cerevita to make an illicit substance. This calls for all staff members to be alert so that such behaviour may not go unnoticed.

6.5 Recommendations for future studies.

- The current study looked at the strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in Chiredzi district's rural farming areas. It may not be prudent to generalise basing on these findings as this was a case study involving four schools only. Therefore, it is recommended that a more comprehensive study be carried out in Zimbabwe's rural areas to assess the gravity of drug abuse in rural areas, and come up with more intervention strategies suitable for rural areas.
- The future study could have a comprehensive assessment of what stakeholders, such as the church, the family and community are doing to eradicate drug abuse among female learners.

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APPENDIX 1

Ethics certificate



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GREATZIMBABWEUNIVERSITY

NAME OF APPLICANT: TSINGO CONSTANCE
DEPARTMENT: SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
PROJECT TITLE: STRATEGIES FOR MITIGATING DRUG ABUSE AMONG FEMALE LEARNERS IN CHIREZI DISTRICT: AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

APPROVAL No: 2021/03

COMMENCEMENT DATE: NOVEMBER 2021


APPROVAL VALID TO: NOVEMBER 2024

COMMENTS:


The researcher must report immediately to the School Ethics Review Committee anything that might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol. This includes adverse reactions of the proposed changes in the protocol, and any other unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

In issuing this approval number, it is required that all data and consent forms are stored in a secure location for a minimum period of five years. These documents may be required for compliance audit processes during that time. If the location at which data and documentation are retained is changed within that five-year period, the School Ethics Review Committee should be advised of the new location.

SIGNATURES:


Chairperson, School Ethics Review Committee

Date 22/11/21


Director, Research and Postgraduate Studies


Date 23/11/21

APPENDIX 2

Letter requesting permission from District Schools Inspector

Researcher name: Tsingo Constance

Great Zimbabwe University

Masvingo

Zimbabwe.

Mobile +26377292670

E-mail address: tsingocon@gmail.com

29 April 2021

The District Schools Inspector

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

P O Box 181

Chiredzi

Masvingo

Zimbabwe

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Research on Strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in Chiredzi District. An Ecological Perspective.

I hereby seek permission to carry out a research study in four of the rural-farming schools in your district. The research seeks to find out why female learners abuse

drugs. The study may enhance learners' knowledge of risks related to drug abuse. It may also assist schools to come out with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners.

The study will involve School Heads, Disciplinary Committee Chairpersons, Guidance and Counselling Heads of Departments and learners. They are going to participate in interviews, focus group discussions and the researcher will also carry out documentary analysis.

The participants will voluntarily participate. They have the choice to withdraw from participation if they wish to do so and they can inform me that. There will be no penalties preferred against them and they will not be prejudiced in any way. Data collected will remain anonymous and confidential. No names will be recorded anywhere and their answers will not be traced back to them. The participants will not be linked to any data that maybe published by Great Zimbabwe University. All schools will be assigned pseudo names.

My supervisor, Professor Mushoriwa can be contacted on +26378676857 or mushoriwat@staff.msu.ac.zw. You can also contact my co-supervisor at Great Zimbabwe University on +263773551922 or kchinyoka@gzu.ac.zw. Whenever there is need you may contact the University's Research department.

Your authorisation for schools to participate in this study is highly appreciated.

Should you allow your schools to participate in this study kindly complete the following consent form:

I (Full name and surname) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of the document and nature of research study. I therefore consent on behalf of Chiredzi rural-farming schools to take part in this study. I understand that participants are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time if they so wish.

Signature

Date.....

APPENDIX 3

Letter requesting School Heads to participate in the study

Researcher name: Tsingo Constance

Great Zimbabwe University
Masvingo

Zimbabwe

Mobile: +26377292670

E-mail address tsingocon@gmail.com

29 April 2021

The School Head

..... School

Chiredzi

Masvingo

Zimbabwe

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Research on strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in Chiredzi District. An Ecological Perspective.

This letter seeks permission to carry out a research study in your school. The research seeks to find out why female learners abuse drugs. This study may also enhance learners' knowledge of risks related to drug abuse and may assist your school to come out with strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners.

The study will involve you as the School Head, Disciplinary Committee Chairperson, Guidance and Counselling Head of Department and learners. They are going to participate in interviews, focus group discussions and the researcher will also carry out documentary analysis.

The participants will voluntarily participate. They have the choice to withdraw from participation if they wish to do so and they can inform me of their decision. There will be no penalties preferred against them and they will not be prejudiced in any way. Data collected will remain anonymous and confidential. No names will be recorded anywhere and their answers will not be traced back to them. The participants will not be linked to any data that maybe published by Great Zimbabwe University. Your school will be assigned a pseudo name.

My supervisor, Professor Mushoriwa can be contacted on +26378676857 or mushoriwat@staff.msu.ac.zw. You can also contact my co-supervisor at Great Zimbabwe University on +263773551922 or kchinyoka@gzu.ac.zw. Whenever there is need you may contact the University's Research department

Your preparedness to participate in this study is highly appreciated. Your contributions as a school will significantly add value to the aforementioned study. Contact details have been provided. For more information concerning the study feel free to ask.

Declaration of informed consent

I..... full name and surname confirm that I have understood the contents of this document and the nature of the research study. I understand that participants are allowed to withdraw at any time as they wish without any negative consequences.

I hereby consent/do not consent to have this interview recorded

Signature of School Head.....

Date

APPENDIX 4

Consent letter for participants

I hereby agree to participate in the research study regarding strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in Chiredzi District. I understand that I am participating freely. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point and that this decision will not negatively affect me in any way.

I understand that I will not benefit personally from this research project.

I have received contact details of the person to contact should I have any enquiries to make regarding this study.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the interview and my answers will remain confidential. I understand that if possible, feedback will be given to my school on the result of the completed research.

Signature of participant..... Date.....

APPENDIX 5

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Interview guide for School Heads

I wish to start by expressing my gratitude towards your acceptance to take part in this interview. I am a PhD student in the faculty of education at the Great Zimbabwe University. I am carrying out a research study on the topic; Strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in Chiredzi District. An Ecological Perspective. All your responses will be solely used for academic purpose and confidentiality will be observed.

1. Do you think female learners abuse drugs?
2. What do you suggest are the sources of drugs in your school?
3. Give possible reasons why female learners abuse drugs.
4. How do you identify learners who abuse drugs?
5. Give any three effects of drug abuse on female learners.
6. What strategies have you put in place as an institution to enhance female learners' knowledge of risks related to drug abuse?
7. Does your school have any policy on drug abuse?
If yes, what does it entail?
8. How knowledgeable are the learners about this policy?
9. What form of punishment is given to those who are found using or in possession of drugs?
10. What measures have you put in place to reduce drug abuse by learners?
11. Does the school involve the family of abusers?
12. What do you suggest family of drug abusers should do to help their children?
13. What do you suggest schools in Chiredzi rural farming areas should do to reduce drug abuse among female learners?

Thank you for sparing this time for me.

APPENDIX 6

Interview guide for Disciplinary Committee Chairpersons

I would like to begin by thanking you for sparing your precious time to take part in this interview. I am a PhD student in the faculty of education at the Great Zimbabwe University. I am carrying out a research study on the topic; Strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in Chiredzi District. An Ecological Perspective. All your responses will be solely used for academic purpose.

1. Have you ever sat for disciplinary hearing for learners who abuse drugs?
2. Which age group and sex mostly abuse drugs?
3. Which drugs are commonly abused by female learners?
4. How do you identify learners who abuse drugs?
5. What do you suggest are the causes of drug abuse among female learners?
6. What do you think are the repercussions of abusing drugs to female learners?
7. Do you think female learners are aware of these repercussions?
8. What disciplinary measures are taken by the school against those who abuse drugs?
9. Do you have a stipulated drug abuse policy?
10. From a disciplinary point of view do you think schools are well equipped to deal with drug abuse among female learners?
11. From your own point of view what strategies should schools in rural farming areas employ to curb drug abuse by female learners.
12. Do you involve parents you are dealing with drug abuse cases?

Thank you once more for participating in this interview

APPENDIX 7

Guidance and Counselling Head of Department interview schedule

I would like to begin by thanking you for sparing your precious time to take part in this interview. I am a PhD student in the faculty of education at the Great Zimbabwe University. I am carrying out a research study on the topic; Strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in Chiredzi District. An Ecological Perspective. All your responses will be solely used for academic purpose and confidentiality will be highly observed.

Section A:

Professional qualification:

Diploma in Education

Bachelor of Education

Master of Education

Other (Specify).....

Experience Guidance and Counselling Head of Department in years.....

Do you hold any qualification in counselling? Yes /no.....

Section B: Questions

1. How often do you meet with learners to discuss their social problems?
2. Have you ever handled any cases of drug abuse by learners?
3. How often have you dealt with cases of drug abuse among female learners?
Specify (weekly, monthly or very rare)
4. How are these cases brought to your attention?
5. What types of drugs are commonly abused by learners? Name 3 in order of frequency.
6. From your findings do learners use drugs at home or at school? Elaborate.
7. What are the sources of drugs for female learners?
8. Give 3 reasons why female learners abuse drugs.
9. Do you involve parents of perpetrators in your counselling sessions?
10. List three dangers that are faced by female learners who abuse drugs?
11. Does the school have any policy relating to drug use in and around the school?
12. How effective is the policy?

13. What is the role of Guidance and Counselling in controlling drug abuse by female learners?
14. What do you suggest should be done by schools in Chiredzi rural farming areas to reduce drug abuse by learners?

Thank you once again for participating in this interview.

APPENDIX 8

Focus group discussion guide.

I would like to begin by thanking you for sparing your learning time to take part in this interview. I am a PhD student in the faculty of education at the Great Zimbabwe University. I am carrying out a research study on the topic; Strategies for mitigating drug abuse among female learners in Chiredzi District. An Ecological Perspective. All your responses will be solely used for academic purpose and confidentiality will be observed.

Section A: Biographical Data

Gender male female

Level of Education:

ZJC

O'Level

A'Level

Section B: Questions

1. Are you aware of colleagues who abuse drugs in and around the school?
2. Do you know of any female learners who abuse drugs? If so, what levels are they in?
3. From your own point of view why do female learners abuse drugs?
4. Which drugs are commonly used by female learners?
5. What are the sources of these drugs?
6. What are the risks of drug abuse on female learners?
7. Do you think those who abuse drugs are aware of these risks?
8. Why do learners continue to abuse drugs despite the risks involved?
9. What strategies are being taken by your school to reduce the rate of drug abuse by female learners?
10. Does your school have a drug policy?
11. Is the drug policy being used effectively?
12. Are the parents of learners who abuse drugs aware of it?
13. Do you think parents are doing enough to assist their children?
14. Do you think your school is doing enough to curb the spread of drug abuse by female learners?
15. What do you think schools in Chiredzi rural farming should do to eradicate drug abuse by female learners.

APPENDIX 9 Document analysis guide for Disciplinary Committee Chairpersons

The research will be guided by the following guidelines to gather information on documents that are kept in the school by Disciplinary Committee Chairpersons.

1. Age group of learners who are recorded.
2. Level of education of drug abusers.
3. Sex of perpetrators.
4. Number of drug abuse cases recorded termly.
5. Number of cases related to female learners.
6. Involvement of parents.
7. Forms of punishment administered to drug abusers.
8. Number of meetings held for awareness termly

APPENDIX 10

Document analysis guide for Guidance and Counselling Heads of Departments

The research will be guided by the following checklist to gather information from recorded minutes of meetings on drug abuse.

- a. Age group of learners who are recorded.
- b. Level of education of the learners recorded.
- c. Sex of the learners.
- d. Number of cases recorded termly.
- e. Number of female learners counselled per term.
- f. Involvement of parents of drug abusers.
- g. Actions taken by the department to assist perpetrators.
- h. Number of meeting held with learners both abusers and non-abusers.
- i. Frequency of awareness campaigns.
- j. Materials used by the department to assist drug abusers.
- k. Posters in the office relating to drug abuse.
- l. Information on notice board in the office.
- m. Set up of the office.