BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

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Mental Health And Substance Abuse Interplay Amongst Socially Pressured Youths In Gwanda Urban

**RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
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Titled **MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE INTERPLAY AMONGST SOCIALLY PRESSURED YOUTHS IN GWANDA URBAN** in fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Social Work Honors Degree and recommend proceeds for examination.

Supervisor's Name………………… Signature……………………Date…………………

Chairperson of Department Board of Examiners

The Departmental Board of Examiners is satisfied that this dissertation report meets the examination requirements and I therefore recommend to the Bindura University to accept a research project by **NATASHA BANDA** titled **MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE INTERPLAY AMONGST SOCIALLY PRESSURED YOUTHS IN GWANDA URBAN** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Social Work Honors Degree

Chairperson's

Name..Signature.................................Date.........................

DECLARATION

I, B200819B hereby declare that this project is my original work and that it has not been copied or lifted from any other source without acknowledgement.

Signature………………………………………………

Date…………………………………………………...

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the Almighty God for his never ending grace. To my role model and inspiration, my late grandfather Reginald Banda who inspired me in every area of life . To my beloved Mother, Grandmother and sister Juliana, Mary and Nicola Banda thank you for all the love, inspiration, wise words, comfort and unwavering support. You are my pillar of strength and you have truly shaped my life.

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Student Name: NATN＋A BANDA   Signature: Banda   Date: 02| 10 |20 24

Supervisor's name: CHIGONDO E.   Signature: Ahydi   Date: 02| 10 |2024

Chairperson's name: P. J. Naowu   Signature: AR pp   Date: 02/10/2024

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ABSTRACT

The study analysed the link between metal health and substance abuse amongst socially pressured youths in Gwanda urban. The main objectives were to explore the current mental health issues and seeking behaviours of youths, to investigate the social pressures experienced by youths in Gwanda and how it influence their mental health and substance abuse behaviours and to provide recommendations of targeted prevention and intervention strategies that address mental health, substance abuse and social pressures in Gwanda urban. . The social learning theory and the ecological systems theory was adopted to shed more light on the mental health issues and drug and substance abuse that is faced by socially pressured youths, the aim was to identify and respond to the underlying causes of each of these and how they interlink with each other. Survey and interviews were used as a research design for this study. Data was collected using key informant interviews as well as a survey questionnaire for other participants. The target population comprised of young people from different community setups in Gwanda district and key informants were selected from people who are at Friendship bench who deal with such issues. The survey was done to complement the information provided by keys informants. The research findings showed that the causes of drug and substance abuse is these social pressure such as peer pressure, family pressure, school and academic pressure and pressure from the society and that indeed drug and substance abuse interlinks and informs mental health and vice versa among socially pressured youth. It was also noted that awareness raised has been of great impact as there was increased treatment of these mental health cases and a decrease in substance abuse.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

WHO   World Health Organization

SADC   Southern Africa Development Community

ZimStats   Zimbabwean Statistics

MOHCC   Ministry of Health and childcare

PTSD   Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

UNICEF   United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

GAD   Generalized Anxiety Disorder

PST   Problem Solving Therapy

FB   Friendship Bench

CHW   Community Health Worker

SA   South africa

AYC   African Youth Community

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<div align="center">**CHAPTER ONE**</div>

1.1. Introduction

Mental health, alcohol and substance abuse, and social pressures are interconnected issues that profoundly affect the well-being and development of youth, particularly in urban environments like Gwanda. The global prevalence of mental health disorders among adolescents is concerning, with approximately 20% affected, as noted by Costello et al. (2019). Despite the significance of this issue, research focused on youth mental health in Gwanda is sparse, highlighting the need for further study. Alcohol and substance abuse represent major risks to both the mental and physical health of young individuals, with Degenhardt et al. (2018) estimating that around 35% engage in hazardous drinking. Additionally, patterns of substance use, including drugs like cannabis and opioids, are increasingly problematic. Social pressures from peers, family, and community significantly influence youth behavior, as emphasized by Prinstein et al. (2020), underscoring the importance of understanding these dynamics in Gwanda. The intricate relationships among mental health, substance abuse, and social influences are characterized by bidirectional effects, where mental health issues can heighten the risk of substance abuse and vice versa, as demonstrated by Keyes et al. (2019). Given the limited research on this population, a comprehensive case study in Gwanda Urban is essential for uncovering the unique factors and challenges that shape these interrelationships, ultimately informing targeted interventions to enhance mental health outcomes and mitigate substance abuse among youth.

1.2. Background of the study

Mental health issues and substance use disorders among youths represent a growing worldwide concern, an estimated 13-20% of young people globally experience mental health disorders.

The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes the importance of mental health for overall well-being World Health Organization, 2018. Youths are prone to the onset of mental health conditions like anxiety, depression, and substance use disorders, Kessler et al., 2009]. Untreated mental health issues can have lasting negative consequences on academic achievement, future employment, and overall quality of life. Globally mental health disorders affect millions of people with young individuals being particularly vulnerable. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 10 – 20 % of children and adolescents experience mental health disorders worldwide. Mental health issues such as depression may harm education, well-being, and social integration.in developed nations trends show rising rates of anxiety depression and loneliness coupled with declining life satisfaction among youth Bor et al (2014). Normalization and easy access to drugs and illicit substances alongside social media influence has given rise to risk-taking behaviors, Martines-Raga et al (2017). The global shortage of trained providers and weak integration of youth-specific mental health services with health care systems pose additional barriers to prevention and treatment worldwide.

At a regional level, Sub-Saharan Africa faces unique challenges related to mental health and substance abuse. Limited access to mental health services, cultural stigma, and social pressure worsen the situation for vulnerable populations including youth. Substance abuse, including alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs, is a significant public health concern among youth in Southern Africa, De Silver, 2019. Substance use can be a coping mechanism for mental health issues or a social activity influenced by peer pressure, the high rates of unemployment, and poverty make the situation worse for African youths. It can exacerbate existing mental health problems and lead to addiction, risky behaviors, and physical health problems, studies have shown that 1 in 5 youths in Africa will experience a mental disorder in their lifetime. Social pressure from peers and societal expectations can significantly impact young people's mental health and substance use behaviors Mounts & Cooley, 2017. The desire to fit in, gain

acceptance, or rebel against authority figures might lead teenagers and young adults to engage in risky behaviors, including substance use. In South Africa, 15.3% of youths report binge drinking alcohol frequently, while 14% report lifetime cannabis use Reddy et. al, (2010)

Zimbabwe faces a growing crisis of mental health issues and substance abuse among disadvantaged young populations. Approximately 60% of Zimbabwe's population is under the age of 24 ZimStats 2022, however, socio socio-economic challenges including unemployment and poverty disproportionately impact the well-being of Zimbabwean youths. The fragile healthcare system and the shortage of mental health care professionals have resulted in 75% of the population not receiving these services MoHCC, (2017). Poverty prevents many from accessing private services. Rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal behaviors have been rising among Zimbabwean youths in recent years, Zungu et al (2019). Stressors such as unemployment and family hardships exacerbate risk, Chimhuya et al 2020. Additionally, the use of low-cost illicit brews and prescription drugs is increasingly common among vulnerable youths in both urban and rural areas, Fernandez et al (2018)

Gwanda Urban, Zimbabwe, presents a unique context for exploring this interplay. Socioeconomic challenges, limited access to mental health services, and potential cultural norms around substance use might influence how social pressure translates to mental health and substance use behaviors among youth.

1.3. Aim

To explore the interplay between mental health and illicit substance abuse among socially pressured youth in Gwanda Urban

1.4. Statement of the Problem

Rapidly changing social conditions have worsened stress on disadvantaged youth populations over recent decades, and these vulnerabilities have been compounded by social and economic pressures specific to the context of Gwanda Urban, where youth face unique challenges related to mental health and substance abuse. There is a lack of comprehensive understanding and awareness regarding mental health and substance abuse among the youth in Gwanda urban. This includes a lack of knowledge and ignorance that is seen within the Gwanda community about signs and symptoms of mental health disorders, misconceptions about substance abuse and the lack of resources and support services. Social pressures also such as peer pressures, societal expectations academic stress, and family dynamics can lead to these two factors of substance abuse causing mental health issues or vice versa. By addressing this knowledge gap the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics and inform effective prevention and intervention strategies.

1.5. Objectives

1. To explore the current mental health issues and mental health seeking behaviors of youth in Gwanda urban.

2. To investigate the social pressures experienced by youth in Gwanda Urban and how they influence their mental health and substance abuse behaviors.

3.. To develop clear suggestions for designing and implementing personalized prevention and intervention programs that address the complex connections between mental health, alcohol and substance use, and social pressures impacting young people in Gwanda Urban.

1.6. Research Questions

1. What are the common mental health issues and seeking behaviors experienced by youth in Gwanda urban Zimbabwe?

2. What are the social pressures experienced by youth in Gwanda Urban and how do these pressures influence their mental health and substance use behaviours?

3. What are the protective factors that promote positive mental health and prevent alcohol and substance abuse among youth in Gwanda youth?

4. How can targeted prevention and intervention strategies be developed and implemented to address the complex dynamics of mental health, alcohol and substance abuse and social pressures among youth in Gwanda?

1.7 Assumptions

The study assumes that there is a correlation among the three factors which are mental health, substance abuse, and social pressure among the youth in Gwanda. The study also assumes that the data collected from interviews, questionnaires, and other research methods will be accurate and reliable. It assumes that participants will provide truthful and representative responses to the questions asked and also that reports and other literature already existing are valid and reliable sources of information. The study also assumes that the concepts will be culturally relevant to the Gwanda urban context and understanding of these factors aligns with the specific values and norms of the Gwanda urban community. The study assumes that youth in Gwanda face specific challenges and stressors that may contribute to their susceptibility to mental health issues and substance abuse however the sample drawn from the youth in Gwanda can be generalized to the larger population of youth in similar setting, however it acknowledges the fat that there may be unique characteristics and contextual factors specific to Gwanda urban that limit the generalizability of the results to other populations or regions.

1.8. Significance of Study

This study will enhance mental health awareness and reduce stigma through the focus on mental health disorders. Individuals struggling with mental health issues and substance abuse. It will also inform early intervention strategies and prevention. By studying the interplay amongst these factors, the study can contribute to a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms and identify potential areas for intervention to improve youth well-being.

Another significance is being in a position to generate data from this study as evidence-based policy contributing. The insights given in the study can assist policymakers utilize the research findings to generate data to contribute to evidence based policymaking. Policymakers can utilize the research findings to develop targeted policies and programs that effectively address these issues and promote positive youth development

1.9 Delimitations

This study will narrow itself to Gwanda urban using youths who live in the area and also workers at Frendship Bench who deal with mental health and substance abuse . The targeted population is socially pressured youths.

1.9.1 Key Definitions

Mental health

Mental health according to WHO (2014) is defined as a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their abilities, can cope with normal life stresses, can work productively, and can make a positive contribution to their community. It is not merely the absence of mental disorders, but also encompasses emotional psychological, and social well-being.

Alcohol and Substance abuse

According to American Psychiatric Association alcohol and substance abuse refers to the patterns of excessive use of alcohol or psychoactive substances that can lead to various physical, psychological, and social problems.

Substance abuse often involves the recurrent use of substances in situations where it is physically hazardous, leads to legal problems, interferes with important social or occupational roles, or results in interpersonal conflicts.

Social pressures

Social pressures can be defined according to Martin R & Hewstone , M (2008) social pressures encompass the expectations and demands placed on individuals by society, peers, and other social groups which may influence their attitudes behaviour, and decision-making processes.

Youth

According to the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (no 20) Act 2013 section 20, the youths are defined as people between the ages of 15-35 years guided by the African Youth Charter for which Zimbabwe is a signatory. The Zimbabwe Youth policy is also in line with the national constitution on the definition of Youth

1.10 CHAPTER OUTLINE:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background of study.

This chapter introduces the topic under study, highlighting the background of study, significance of study, the study objectives, research question, aim and finally the conclusion of the chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This Chapter consists of theoretical framework explaining the theory in detail, the relevance of the theory in the study. Thischapter reviews literature which complements the research globally, national and regionally and a justification of study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter consists of the research methodology to be used in data collection, analysis and compilation by the researcher.It reflects on the research approach, research design, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection methods, data collection tools, data analysis, ethical consideration, assumptions, limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation, analysis and discussion of findings.

This chapter presents the data analysis based on the findings. The data is presented in form of tables and graphs.

Chapter 5: Chapter Summary, conclusions and recommendations.

This is the final chapter of the research study which includes the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study undertaken.

Chapter Summary

This chapter covered various issues that form the basis of this study. The background of the study, statement of the problem, study objectives, research questions, significance, and delimitation of the study were covered. The next chapter will review related literature.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATIRE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This section seeks to detail the different opinions entailed by different authors on a global, regional, and local scale on issues to do with mental health and substance abuse amongst socially pressured youths. The section seeks to explain how mental health and substance abuse are interconnected and also in relation to the youth. A literature review is an overview of previously published work on topics either a full scholarly paper or articles and research. Arlene (2015) defines literature review as survey books, scholarly articles, and any other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory, and by so doing provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works with the research problem to be investigated. The literature seeks to review the subjects at hand.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological Systems Theory, proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, emphasizes the influence of various systems and environments on an individual's development. The theory identifies multiple nested systems, including the microsystem (immediate environment), meso-system interactions between micro-system, exo-system (external environments indirectly affecting the individual), and macro-system (larger cultural context).

Application

This theory suggests that mental health, substance abuse, and social pressures are influenced by multiple interacting systems. The microsystem may include family dynamics, peer relationships, and school environments, all of which play a direct role in the experiences of young individuals. The mesosystem involves interactions between these microsystems, such as how family dynamics impact school performance or how peer influences affect substance use. The exosystem includes factors such as community resources, access to mental health services, and societal norms, which indirectly affect youth. Finally, the macrosystem encompasses the broader cultural and societal context , including cultural beliefs about mental health, substance use norms, and policies related to youth well-being.

Implications

Understanding the ecological systems in which youth urban are embedded helps identify points of intervention and support. Interventions targeting multiple levels, such as family-based programs, school initiatives, community resources, and policy changes, can create a more comprehensive approach to addressing mental health, substance abuse, and social pressures among youth. This theory underscores the importance of considering the interconnectedness of various systems and environments in shaping the experiences and outcomes of young individuals.

2.2. Common Mental Health Issues and Seeking Behaviors

The prevalence of mental health disorders among youth, such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), has been noted in studies (Patel et al., 2019). From South Africa, a 2021 study published in the South African Journal of Psychology examined the experiences of university students and found that academic demands, family expectations, and feelings of isolation fueled high rates of depression, anxiety, and substance use (Mampane & Huddle, 2021). The researchers highlight the need for campus-based mental health

interventions that address both individual and systemic stressors. Patel et al. (2018) found that globally social adversity, including poverty, family dysfunction, and peer influence, was a major risk factor for the development of co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders in young people worldwide. However, there is often a reluctance to seek mental health services due to stigma and lack of awareness (Chibanda et al., 2016), exacerbated by limited mental health resources and services in rural and urban areas. Youth globally, face a myriad of common mental health issues that significantly impact their well-being. Studies have revealed a notable prevalence of conditions such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among this population(Patel et al., 2019). A study done in Canada, by Reddy et al (2019), these mental health challenges often arise from a complex interplay of factors, including economic instability, social pressures, and traumatic experiences. The economic challenges prevalence, , characterized by high rates of unemployment and poverty, have a profound impact on the mental health of youth(Mutowo et al., 2013). The stressors associated with financial insecurity can lead to feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and anxiety, contributing to the development or exacerbation of mental health disorders.

Despite the prevalence of these mental health issues, there exists a significant stigma attached to seeking help for such conditions within society (Chibanda et al., 2016). This stigma often results in delays in seeking treatment or avoidance of mental health services altogether. Furthermore, there is a lack of widespread awareness about mental health and available resources, further hindering help-seeking behaviors among youth. The fear of being stigmatized or ostracized by peers and communities can act as a significant barrier to seeking mental health support among youths (Mkandla et al., 2016). Additionally, the scarcity of mental health professionals and facilities, both in rural and urban areas, poses a considerable challenge to accessing timely and adequate care.

Gender norms and cultural beliefs also play a crucial role in shaping how mental health issues are perceived and addressed especially in the Sub-Saharan region with the African cultural context. For instance, traditional beliefs may attribute mental health symptoms to spiritual causes, leading to alternative treatment-seeking behaviors(Sorsdahl et al., 2017. Moreover, societal expectations regarding gender roles may influence the likelihood of seeking help, with males often expected to exhibit strength and resilience, potentially deterring them from acknowledging mental health struggles.In the face of these challenges, substance abuse often emerges as a coping mechanism among youths(Tomlinson et al., 2016). Alcohol and drug use may provide temporary relief from stress and offer an escape from difficult circumstances. However, this coping strategy can lead to further mental health complications and dependency issues, exacerbating the overall well-being of the youth population.

Traumatic experiences, such as exposure to violence or the loss of loved ones, also contribute to the mental health challenges faced by youth. Research indicates a correlation between exposure to traumatic events and the development of PTSD and other anxiety disorders (Chibanda et al., 2016). These experiences can have long-lasting effects on mental well-being, impacting daily functioning and relationships.Despite the prevalence of mental health issues among youths, there exists a pervasive stigma surrounding mental health that acts as a significant barrier to seeking help(Mkandla et al., 2016). Many individuals fear being labeled or judged if they disclose their struggles with mental health, leading to a reluctance to seek treatment. This stigma is often perpetuated by cultural beliefs and misconceptions about mental illness, further isolating those in need of support.Furthermore, the shortage of mental health professionals and facilities in Zimbabwe, especially in rural areas, limits access to care(Chibanda et al., 2020). Even when individuals are willing to seek help, long wait times and the need to travel long distances to access services pose significant challenges. This lack of accessibility exacerbates the already daunting task of reaching out for support.

In response to these challenges, some youth may turn to substance use as a coping mechanism. Alcohol and drug use can provide temporary relief from emotional distress, but they also carry significant risks. Substance abuse can worsen mental health symptoms, lead to addiction, and create additional barriers to seeking help for underlying mental health concerns.

Addressing the mental health needs of youths requires a multifaceted approach that tackles stigma, increases access to mental health services, and provides targeted interventions. Community-based mental health programs, peer support groups, and educational campaigns can help reduce stigma and raise awareness about mental health(Chibanda et al., 2020). Integrating mental health services into primary care settings and providing training for healthcare workers can also improve access to timely and appropriate care [(Sibanda et al., 2017).

In conclusion, the mental health issues faced by youths globally and nationally are complex and multifaceted, influenced by a range of social, economic, and cultural factors. Overcoming the barriers to seeking help requires a concerted effort to destigmatize mental illness, increase access to services, and provide effective interventions tailored to the unique needs of youths .

2.2 Social Pressures and Their Influence

Economic challenges, including unemployment and poverty, are prevalent around the world , reflecting broader trends in Zimbabwe(Dube et al., 2018). Additionally, peer pressure and social norms significantly shape youth behaviors, particularly regarding substance use. These social norms, alongside dysfunctional family dynamics like parental substance abuse and neglect, contribute to mental health challenges among youth(Ghazinour et al., 2016).Youth in , Zimbabwe, navigate a landscape of profound social pressures that significantly influence their mental health and well-being. These pressures stem from various sources, including peer

relationships, societal expectations, and the broader cultural context, creating complex challenges for this demographic.

Peer pressure stands out as a potent force shaping the behaviors and attitudes of youth (Bukowski et al., 2018). The desire to fit in and gain acceptance among peers can lead to risky behaviors, including substance use and engagement in activities that compromise mental health. The fear of rejection or exclusion often drives youth to conform to peer norms, even when those norms may be detrimental to their well-being. Societal expectations also weigh heavily on the shoulders of young people. There is often a pressure to achieve certain milestones, such as academic success or financial stability, at a young age. The inability to meet these expectations can lead to feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and heightened anxiety(Makoni, 2020). Moreover, traditional gender roles may dictate specific behaviors and attitudes, further restricting the freedom of expression and individuality among youth.

Cultural norms and values within the different cultural contexts in the world and in Sub Saharan context also play a significant role in shaping social pressures. From a global perspective, a review in the Annual Review of Clinical Psychology by Lund et al. (2018) examined the influence of cultural factors on the experience and expression of mental illness. The authors highlight how concepts of individualism versus collectivism, illness attributions, and social stigma can create significant barriers to accessing care in many cultural contexts. In the African context, a 2019 review in Transcultural Psychiatry by Abbo et al. examined how traditional beliefs, gender norms, and socioeconomic factors shaped mental health perceptions and help-seeking in Uganda. The authors found that mental illness was often attributed to supernatural causes, leading many to seek traditional or religious healers rather than biomedical treatment.. The emphasis on collectivism and community harmony may create a reluctance to

acknowledge personal struggles or seek help for mental health issues(Chibanda et al., 2016). Additionally, the stigma attached to mental illness within some cultural beliefs can lead to silence and secrecy surrounding mental health concerns.Family dynamics further compound the social pressures faced by youth . Dysfunctional family environments, marked by parental substance abuse, domestic violence, or neglect, can significantly impact the mental well-being of young individuals(Ghazinour et al., 2016. The lack of a stable and supportive family structure can leave youth feeling vulnerable and isolated, exacerbating the challenges they face in navigating social pressures.

Moreover, the influence of media and technology cannot be understated in today's interconnected world. The pervasive presence of social media platforms and digital communication channels can create unrealistic standards of beauty, success, and happiness. Comparing oneself to curated images and lifestyles on social media can lead to feelings of inadequacy and a sense of being left behind, further contributing to mental health challenges among youth. The world faces a myriad of social pressures that significantly influence their mental health and well-being. These pressures often stem from the interplay of various factors, including societal expectations, cultural norms, economic disparities, and the influence of modern media.

One significant aspect of these social pressures is the challenge of forming identities amidst societal expectations. The pressure to conform to certain standards of behavior, appearance, and achievement can create a sense of conflict within young individuals. This struggle for identity can manifest in various ways, such as feelings of insecurity, self-doubt, and a constant quest for validation from peers and society.

Another influential factor is the impact of urbanization and globalization on youth that is seen around the world As the city experiences rapid growth and modernization, young individuals

are exposed to a myriad of new ideas, lifestyles, and cultural influences. This exposure can create a sense of dissonance between traditional values and modern aspirations, leading to internal conflict and a search for identity and belonging.

In today's digital age, youth are also confronted with the pressure to succeed and measure up to idealized standards propagated through social media platforms and online channels. The constant comparison to images of success, beauty, and perfection can create unrealistic expectations and feelings of inadequacy. This pressure to meet unattainable standards can take a toll on mental health, leading to anxiety, low self-esteem, and a distorted sense of self-worth.

The SADC region history of political and social unrest has left a lasting impact on the psyche of its youth. The instability and uncertainty that often characterize these periods can create a sense of fear, anxiety, and hopelessness among young individuals. The constant upheaval and lack of predictability in the political landscape can lead to feelings of powerlessness and a sense of being trapped in an unchanging environment.Moreover, in many SADC communities, there is a strong emphasis on the collective welfare of the family and community. Youth often feel a sense of duty and responsibility to contribute to the well-being of their families, both financially and emotionally. This pressure to fulfill familial expectations and support those around them can create immense stress and feelings of burden, particularly when faced with limited resources and opportunities.

In conclusion, the social pressures faced by youth globally, regionally and in Zimbabwe, are diverse and multifaceted. From societal expectations and identity formation to the influence of urbanization, globalization, and political unrest, these pressures shape the experiences and mental well-being of young individuals. Recognizing and addressing these pressures through targeted interventions, community support, and initiatives to build resilience are crucial in creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for the youth.

2.3 Protective Factors for Positive Mental Health

Strong social support networks, encompassing friends, family, and the community, serve as crucial buffers against mental health stressors(Fazel et al., 2014). Furthermore, access to education acts as a protective factor, offering empowerment and social mobility opportunities for youth (Makoni, 2020). Traditional cultural and religious beliefs also play a role, providing resilience against mental health challenges(Peltzer et al., 2018).

While youth, face significant social pressures that can impact their mental well-being, there are also protective factors that can promote positive mental health outcomes. These factors, when present and nurtured, can serve as buffers against the challenges and stressors young individuals encounter.One crucial protective factor is the presence of strong social support networks(Chibanda et al., 2020). Positive relationships with family members, friends, and mentors can provide a sense of belonging, acceptance, and emotional support. These connections offer opportunities for open communication, sharing experiences, and seeking guidance during times of difficulty. Additionally, being part of a supportive community can foster resilience and coping skills, enabling youth to navigate challenges more effectively.

Engagement in meaningful activities and hobbies is another protective factor that promotes positive mental health among youth. Involvement in sports, arts, volunteering, or other extracurricular activities provides a sense of purpose, accomplishment, and personal fulfillment(Bukowski et al., 2018). These activities offer opportunities for self-expression, skill development, and building self-confidence. By participating in activities they enjoy, young individuals can experience a sense of joy, satisfaction, and connection to their interests and passions.

Access to quality education and opportunities for skill development is also a significant protective factor for positive mental health(Makoni, 2020). Education not only provides

knowledge and academic growth but also equips youth with the skills and tools needed to navigate life's challenges. It fosters critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and a sense of achievement. Additionally, education opens doors to future opportunities, empowering young individuals to envision and pursue their goals and aspirations. Cultural and spiritual beliefs can also serve as protective factors for positive mental health among youth. For many, religious or cultural practices offer a source of comfort, strength, and guidance during difficult times (Sorsdahl et al., 2017). These beliefs provide a framework for understanding life's challenges, fostering resilience, and promoting a sense of purpose and meaning. Engaging in cultural traditions and spiritual practices can create a sense of connection to one's heritage and values, offering a sense of belonging and identity.

Furthermore, access to mental health services and resources is essential for promoting positive mental health outcomes among youth. When individuals have access to timely and appropriate mental health care, they can receive the support and treatment needed to address challenges and build resilience (Esmaeilzadeh et al., 2018). This includes access to counseling, therapy, and psychiatric services, as well as community-based mental health programs and support groups. By addressing mental health concerns early and effectively, youth can develop healthy coping mechanisms and strategies for managing stressors.

In addition to the aforementioned protective factors, there are further aspects that contribute to the promotion of positive mental health among youth .Empowering youth to actively participate in community initiatives and decision-making processes can have profound benefits for their mental well-being. When young individuals are given opportunities to contribute meaningfully to their communities, they develop a sense of agency, purpose, and civic responsibility. This involvement fosters a sense of belonging and connection to the broader community, enhancing their self-esteem and resilience, (World Health Organisation., 2020). Equipping youth with essential life skills and emotional intelligence tools can enhance their

ability to cope with stressors and navigate challenges. Programs that focus on teaching communication skills, problem-solving techniques, stress management, and conflict resolution empower young individuals to handle difficult situations effectively. These skills not only promote positive mental health but also prepare youth for the complexities of adulthood (Bukowski et al., 2018). Encouraging healthy lifestyle choices, such as regular physical activity, balanced nutrition, and sufficient sleep, is crucial for positive mental health. Physical activity has been shown to have significant mental health benefits, reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. Similarly, a nutritious diet and adequate rest contribute to overall well-being and mood stability. By promoting these habits, youth can enhance their resilience and maintain optimal mental health (Makoni, 2020).

Having access to positive role models and mentors can significantly impact the mental health and development of youth. Mentors provide guidance, support, and encouragement, offering insights and perspectives that help young individuals navigate challenges and make informed decisions. Positive role models also inspire hope, ambition, and a sense of possibility for the future, motivating youth to strive for their goals and aspirations (Sorsdahl et al., 2017) .

Creating a culture of open dialogue and destigmatizing conversations about mental health is essential for promoting positive mental health outcomes. When young individuals feel safe and supported to discuss their feelings, struggles, and concerns, they are more likely to seek help when needed. This includes educating communities, schools, and families about mental health, raising awareness about available resources, and normalizing seeking help for mental health concerns(Chibanda et al., 2016). Tailoring mental health interventions to be culturally relevant and responsive to the unique experiences of youth is essential for their effectiveness. Recognizing and honoring cultural beliefs, traditions, and practices can enhance the acceptability and accessibility of mental health services. Culturally competent interventions

ensure that young individuals feel understood, respected, and supported in their mental health journeys(Lwidiko, et al 2020).

Therefore in conclusion protective factors such as strong social support networks, engagement in meaningful activities, access to quality education, cultural and spiritual beliefs, and access to mental health services play vital roles in promoting positive mental health among youth. Nurturing these protective factors can empower young individuals to navigate the challenges they face, build resilience, and foster a sense of well-being and fulfillment. By investing in these resources and opportunities, we can create a supportive environment that promotes the mental health and flourishing of the youth population.

2.4 Awareness, Policy Changes, and Resource Allocation

Community-based interventions, such as awareness campaigns and mental health education, have proven effective in reducing stigma and promoting help-seeking behaviors among youth, Mall et al (2016). Integrating mental health services into primary healthcare settings can also enhance accessibility and reduce barriers to treatment (Gulliver et al., 2017). Policymakers are urged to develop and implement policies addressing the social determinants of mental health, including poverty alleviation and youth empowerment programs (World Health Organization, 2013). A study done in Tanzania, by Unicef, (2020) showed that raising awareness about the importance of addressing mental health, alcohol, and substance abuse, and social pressures among youth at a global regional, and local scale by use of social media, is crucial for initiating meaningful change. This includes educating the community, schools, parents, and young individuals themselves about the prevalence of these issues and their impact on well-being. Awareness campaigns can focus on reducing the stigma associated with mental health, promoting help-seeking behaviors, and providing information about available resources and support services(Chibanda et al., 2016).

Moreover, policy changes are essential for creating a supportive environment that fosters positive mental health outcomes for youth. This may involve the development and implementation of comprehensive mental health policies that prioritize prevention, early intervention, and access to quality care. Policies can also address the regulation of alcohol and substance use, ensuring that measures are in place to prevent underage drinking and substance abuse [(Chibanda et al., 2016).

In terms of resource allocation, it is imperative to invest in mental health services, facilities, and trained professionals to meet the needs of youths around the world and at all levels. . This includes establishing accessible and affordable mental health clinics, providing training for healthcare workers in youth-specific mental health issues, and offering counseling services in schools and community centers. Adequate funding should also be allocated to substance abuse prevention programs, youth empowerment initiatives, and community-based interventions(Makoni, 2020)

Furthermore, partnerships between government agencies, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and community groups are essential for effective policy implementation and resource allocation. Collaborative efforts can leverage diverse expertise, resources, and networks to create holistic and sustainable solutions to address the mental health needs of youth(Chibanda et al., 2020)Advocacy plays a pivotal role in driving policy changes and securing resources for mental health and substance abuse prevention efforts. Engaging with policymakers, local leaders, and stakeholders through advocacy campaigns, policy briefs, and community forums can raise awareness, garner support, and influence decision-making processes. By advocating for the prioritization of youth mental health on the policy agenda, stakeholders can contribute to the creation of a more supportive and resilient community for young individuals (Bukowski et al., 2018).

Ensuring sustainable changes in awareness, policy, and resource allocation for youth mental health, involves ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of interventions.Regular monitoring and evaluation of mental health programs and policies are essential to assess their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. This includes tracking key indicators such as rates of mental health service utilization, prevalence of substance abuse, and changes in awareness levels among the youth population. By collecting and analyzing data, policymakers and stakeholders can make informed decisions about resource allocation and program adjustments(Chibanda et al., 2020).

Given the dynamic nature of youth mental health and social pressures, interventions must be adaptable and responsive to changing needs and circumstances. This requires flexibility in policy frameworks to incorporate new evidence-based practices, emerging trends, and feedback from the community. By remaining agile and open to innovation, stakeholders can ensure that interventions remain relevant and effective(Makoni, 2020).

Investing in the capacity of local healthcare providers, educators, and community leaders is crucial for the sustainable implementation of mental health programs. This includes providing training on youth mental health issues, substance abuse prevention strategies, and culturally sensitive approaches to care. Building local expertise and leadership can enhance the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of interventions(Sorsdahl et al., 2017).

Involving youth in the design, implementation, and evaluation of mental health initiatives is essential for their relevance and effectiveness. Youth-led advocacy groups, peer support programs, and youth-friendly services can empower young individuals to take ownership of their mental health and contribute to positive change in their communities. By valuing their perspectives and lived experiences, stakeholders can create interventions that resonate with the

needs and aspirations of youth(Bukowski et al., 2018).Encouraging research and innovation in youth mental health is vital for advancing knowledge, identifying best practices, and developing new interventions. This includes supporting local researchers, academic institutions, and community organizations in conducting studies on mental health determinants, effective prevention strategies, and innovative treatment approaches. By fostering a culture of research and learning, stakeholders can drive continuous improvement and excellence in youth mental health care(Chibanda et al., 2016)

In conclusion, ensuring sustainable changes in awareness, policy, and resource allocation for youth mental health requires a multi-faceted and holistic approach. By prioritizing monitoring and evaluation, adapting interventions to changing needs, building local capacity, engaging youth, and promoting research and innovation, stakeholders can create a supportive and resilient ecosystem that empowers young individuals to thrive. This commitment to ongoing improvement and collaboration is essential for building a healthier and brighter future for the youth.

2.5 Research Gap

There may be scarcity of research that examines the interplay of these subjects of mental health and substance abuse as interplayed however only as single entities or separately. This research therefore aims to research the interconnectedness of these entities and draw up recommendations as seen that one is the causation of the other and vice versa.

While research can be generalised for example in Africa and Zimbabwe there is a research gap that covers Gwanda as specific community thereby putting in and addressing the community in its geographical and cultural context that distinguishes it from other places the literature review also reveals a research in that the recommendation are tailored for a larger community context and not the specific needs of the Gwanda urban community which has unique mental

health issues, substance abuse disorders and problems and also youths are socially pressured differently than other communities because of the economy , geographical location and the cultural context.

This study will therefore aim to cover up the research witnessed in the shortcomings of the existing literature and aim to cater and concentrate on the unique characteristics of the research area.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter covered the review of the literature. Literature was reviewed on linking the topic at hand to substance abuse and mental health amongst socially pressured youth. Also on mental health linking to substance abuse amongst socially pressured youth. The literature review covered different scholarly information and their previous work on the topics of mental health, substance abuse and social pressures as well. The chapter also covered answering objects set for the research. Chapter also covered on theoretical framework and stress coping model was chosen which is explained by Lazarus and Folkman's work on how stress and coping are transactional and that it is a dual process model which focuses on adaptive an maladaptive coping mechanisms. The chapter also covered the research gap which goes to show the purpose of this specific research which is to fulfil the research gap.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is going to give details of the research methodology that was employed by the researcher in conducting their study. The chapter will also outline the resign design, sampling, data collection techniques. The methodology comprises of the research design, ethical issues, possible limitations, research instruments, sampling technique, sample size, target population and data analysis.

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

The study uses a qualitative research approach. According to Teherian, Martimiankakis (2015) qualitative research approach is systematic analysis into social phenomena in natural environment which may include the country's experience on life aspects, behaviours and individuals as well as how interaction shapes relationship. Research objectives are clearly defined to guide the study. Interviews and questinnaires provide the researcher with further enlightenment on people's behaviour and also gives response straight from the horse's mouth. This approach was chosen because it provides a better understanding of the research problem and helps gain a deeper understanding of the interlink between mental health and drug abuse among socially pressured youths. Qualitative data to identify recurring themes, patterns and unique perspective. Ethical considerations adhering to ethical considerations in the research process. This done by obtaining informed consent from participants and also ensuring their confidentiality. Data interpretation and researching interpreting the findings in light of the research objectives and existing literature presenting findings in a clear and concise manner.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research deign is understood as the main method used by researches when conducting research. It is regarded as the basis for the whole research process key in ensuring that the research meets its aims and objectives and guides the researcher's research methods and approaches decisions and operation Bless et al (2006).

A survey research design is adopted for this research. This will cover 30 participants including 5 key informants to participate in the research. A survey research design allows for efficient data collection, and allows a researcher to collect data from a large number of participants efficiently. By using standardized questionnaires survey enables researcher to gather responses quickly and analyse them in a relatively short period. The survey will allow for comparability with fixed responses on the mental health issues and drug abuse instanced among the socially pressured youth. Surveys also because of the anonymity and confidentiality offer a level of anonymity which can encourage more honest responses as the participants share personal experiences without the fear of judgement.

The researcher adopted the survey design particularly because it is useful to employ when there is a need for an in depth appreciation of an issue, event or phenomenon of interest in its natural real life context. This research design adopted allows the researcher to explore and unpack the perceptions of participants on mental health and drug abuse among the socially pressured youth.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND RESEARCH

3.3.1 Key informant interviews

In interviews the researcher used key informants to get objective information in the area of study. Key informant interviews were conducted with expects who were purposively selected

and insight into their thought were explored. The interview guide based on the main objectives of the study and were closely linked to the survey used for the youth participants to give a fairly superficial level of response. Key informants key informants are the people that have information on the participants such as their age and other personal information that may be distorted importance of using key informants is to avoid one sided research and bias as people may distort information key informants help thoroughly do the research without or with little to no mistakes

3.3.2 Survey Questionnairre

Surveys, questionnaires are used as research methods. Developing a questionnaire that includes validated scales and measures related to mental health substance abuse and social pressures. Administering the surveys to the selected participants in person and online can be useful to get detailed responses from participants. Observations on the community and youth behaviours in mental health and drug abuse matters. Use of observation and observing skills of the Gwanda community to come up with assumption around the proposed topic.

3.4 Target population

The target population for this dissertation is youth in Gwanda who are experiencing or at risk of mental health issues, alcohol and substance abuse and social pressures. **30** youths are targeted and at least **5** key informants. The specific age range or criteria for qualifying youth are aged between ages 15-35 as per the youth definition adopted.

3.5Sample

The sample for this dissertation topic consists of youth living in Gwanda urban, Zimbabwe, who are between the ages 15-35 years old. The sample size is determined by the availability of

27

resources however the proposed sample size is on a range of 30 to 50 individuals. This is to be able to focus on all the age groups in the overall age group proposed and also be able to assess different cultural contexts.

3.6 Sampling technique

One sampling technique used in the research is **<u>stratified </u>**sampling. This is done by dividing the population of youth in Gwanda urban into relevant types based on factors of age, gender, socioeconomic background or status and educational attainment. Then randomly selected individuals from these factors to represent their population. This technique will ensure the representation of different subgroups within the youth population.

3.6.1 DATAPRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Descriptive statistics can be use in summarizing and presenting statistics got from samples such as demographic information, mental health indicators, substance abuse patterns and social pressures variables and percentages. Also Qualitative analysis by using Qualitative data such as interviews or open ended survey responses are collected, thematic analysis and content analysis can be employed. Analysing qualitative data by identifying recurring themes, patterns or categories pertaining to mental health substance abuse comprehension and social pressures. Data visualization by using appropriate data visualization techniques such as tables and diagrams to present findings in a clear and accessible manner. Visual presentations enhance understanding and communication of complex relationships and patterns in the data.

3.7 ETHICAL ISSUES

3.7.1 Informed consent

Obtaining informed consent from all participants or their legal guardians. Clearly explaining the purpose of the research to participants, the procedures and benefits of the study. Ensuring participants understand their rights.

3.7.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Safeguarding the confidentiality and privacy of participant. Using pseudo names instead of personal identifying information.

3.7.3 Protection of vulnerable population

Considering the vulnerability of the population under study that is with mental health and drug abuse matters and youths who may be more susceptible to harm thus their safety should be ensured by obtaining additional consent from guardians.

3.7.4 Cultural sensitivity

Respecting the cultural norms, values and beliefs of the community being studied. Adapting research method and procedures to be sensitive to the cultural context and are respectful and appropriate.

3.8 Validity and reliability of research instruments

Middleton (2019) states that reliability and validity are concepts used to evaluate the quality of the research which indicate how reliability is the consistency of a measure and validity is the accuracy of a measure. The study instruments are feasible in many ways that bone. One such way is that the study has access to participants. Participants in Gwanda urban are available

for participation. The population size allows for the research and most organizations are willing to cooperate and can facilitate participant recruitment. Collaboration and support from local stakeholders such as schools and healthcare providers can increase the likelihood of successful implementation. the chosen research design of qualitative design is also feasible in that it aligns with the research objectives and the data collection methods such as surveys, interviews or focus groups are relevant.

3.8.1 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS

3.8.2 Sample representatives

The sample may not fully represent the diversity within the youth population in Gwanda urban limiting generalizability of the findings

3.8.3 Self-report bias

the study relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to recall bias or **social desirability bias**

3.8.4 Generalizability to other contexts

since the study focuses on a specific location (Gwanda) the findings may not be directly applicable to other urban or rural areas with different sociocultural contexts

3.8. 5 Limited scope of variables

there may be other individual, familial or environmental factors that could play a significant role but are not included in the study

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provides an overview of the research design, methodology, data collection methods, target population, sampling technique, data analysis procedures, ethical considerations, feasibility, and possible limitations of the study. The chapter begins by discussing the importance of research design as the foundation for the research process. A survey research design is chosen due to its efficiency in collecting data from a large number of participants. The use of standardized questionnaires allows for comparability and anonymity, encouraging honest responses from socially pressured youth. The survey design also enables the exploration of participants' perceptions of mental health and drug abuse.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of a study examining the relationships between mental health, alcohol and substance abuse, and social pressures among youth in Gwanda Urban, while also discussing the implications of these results in the context of existing research. The study revealed a high prevalence of mental health issues, particularly depression and anxiety, among youths experiencing social pressures, which were closely linked to substance abuse behaviors. Common coping mechanisms included the use of alcohol, cannabis (locally referred to as "mbanje"), opioids, and stimulants. It highlighted the significant impact of social pressures, particularly peer influence from schools and communities, on shaping youths' behaviors and decisions. Moreover, societal expectations, academic stress, and family dynamics were identified as key contributors to mental health challenges and substance use. Although these findings are consistent with broader global trends, the study underscores the necessity for context-specific research to fully understand the unique dynamics in Gwanda Urban. It emphasizes the need for targeted interventions that cater to the specific needs of local youths and for enhancing awareness and access to support services. By improving mental health resources and substance abuse prevention programs, Gwanda Urban can better support the well-being of its youth. The chapter also details the methodology, including the thematic analysis of data from 30 youth participants and 5 key informants associated with Friendship Bench

4.1.1 Demographic information

Hayes (2022), demographic analysis is the study of population based on factors such as age, race and sex. Demographic data refers to socioeconomic information expressed statistically, including employment, education, income, marriage rate, birth and death rates, Hayes (2022).The demographic information gathered from the interview guide give information used to gain insights into the characteristics of the respondents and how they may influence their perspectives on mental health, substance abuse, and social pressures in Gwanda urban.

4.2.0 Gender distribution

The researcher questioned about youths with mental health and substance abuse tendencies. Gender characteristics of respondents played a significant role in this study. Examining the gender distribution of the respondents allows us to explore potential gender differences in experiences and perceptions of mental health, substance abuse, and social pressures. Gender norms and expectations may shape youths' behaviors and attitudes towards seeking help and coping with stress. For example, males may face unique pressures to conform to traditional notions of masculinity, which could impact their willingness to seek support for mental health issues..

Fig 4.1 Gender distribution

N=30

Source: Primary data

33
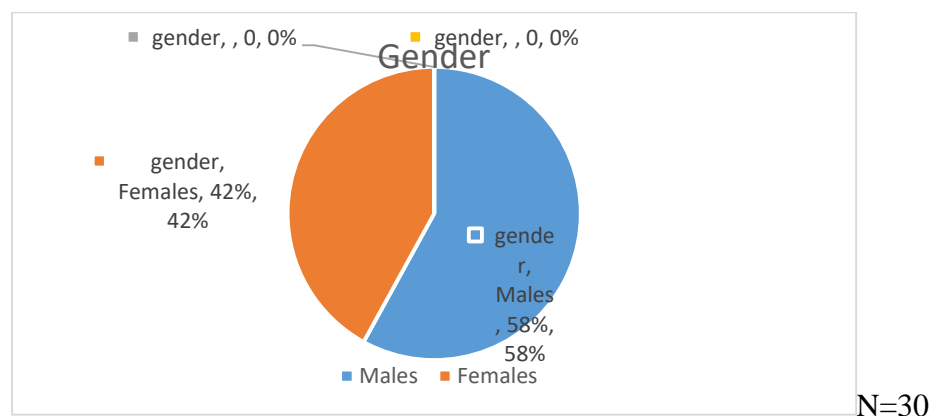
The figure above indicate gender respondents of 42% females and 58% males from that is 13 females and 17 males .This shows that more information was obtained from males compared to females. There is gender disparity, however, the gap is not big and it had very little impact on the quality of the results.

4.3.1 Age analysis

Age analysis is significant in research studies, Watts and Robertson (2015). By the way (2019), age analysis helps the researcher to understand different behaviors of the population.

Table 4.1 Age analysis

Source: Primary data

Age range	Number
Below 25	13
25-30	7
31-35	10

N=30

The figure above, 45% respondents are below 25 years, between the ranges of 25 to 30years is 25% and 30% between 31 to 35. The age distribution of the respondents provides valuable context for understanding the experiences and perspectives of youths in Gwanda urban. By analyzing the age groups represented in the interviews, we can identify common challenges and concerns that may be specific to certain age demographics. For example, younger adolescents may face different social pressures and developmental challenges compared to

older youths. Additionally, age can influence help-seeking behaviors and attitudes towards mental health and substance abuse.

4.3.4 Level of Education

The researcher understands that one's qualifications determines his/her level of knowledge. The figure below shows the respondents' qualifications.

Table 4.2 Respondents' qualifications

Source: Primary data

Level of education	Males	Females
O level	10	5
A level	3	6
Degree	4	2
None	0	0

N=30

Table 4.3Key informants qualifications

Designation	Gender	Organization	Years of Experience	Qualification

Implementation Manager	Female	Friendship Bench	13	Masters in Counselling Psychology
Assistant implementation manager	Female	Friendship Bench	6	Degree in Developmental studies
District Mental health focal person	Male	MOHCC	16	Bachelor of Science honours in counselling
CHW and FB Grandmother	Female	Friendship Bench	6	Certificate in PST Friendship Bench
CHW and FB Grandmother	Female	Friendship Bench	6	Certificate in PST Friendship Bench

The figure shows that 50% of the participants have O level certificates, 30 percent completed through A level and 20 % are degree holders. .Understanding the occupational status of the respondents provides insights into their socioeconomic background and access to resources. Occupations may influence youths' exposure to stressors, such as academic pressure or employment-related stress, which can impact their mental health and substance abuse behaviors. Additionally, occupational status may influence access to mental health services and support networks, with certain professions providing more resources for addressing mental health issues than others.

Discussion and Analysis of Results

4.2 Results Theme 1: Mental Health and Substance Abuse Intersection

The study found that the most common mental health issues faced by socially pressured youths in Gwanda urban include depression and anxiety. These mental health challenges are often

exacerbated by social pressures such as peer pressure, societal expectations, academic stress, and family dynamics. Participants reported that substance abuse, particularly alcohol and drugs like cannabis, opioids, and stimulants, is a coping mechanism for managing these mental health issues and dealing with social pressures. This concurs with what Ghazinour (2016) highlights on that substance abuse and neglect contribute to mental health challenges. He also highlights on dysfunctional families as a cause of this which is complemented by the systems theory which details how individuals are a product of systems and what goes wrong in them and this includes the family system.

The study delved into the intricate relationship between mental health issues, particularly depression and anxiety, and substance abuse among socially pressured youths in Gwanda urban. Through interviews and observations, several patterns emerged, shedding light on the nuanced ways in which these factors interact. Social pressures exerted significant influence on the mental health of youths in Gwanda urban. For instance, academic stressors, such as the pressure to excel in school to secure future opportunities, weighed heavily on many youths. Interviews revealed instances where students felt overwhelmed by the expectations placed upon them by their families and communities. Respondent 1 lamented,

> "*I feel like I have to be perfect all the time, and it's exhausting. If I don't meet everyone's expectations, I feel like I've failed.*"

Moreover, peer pressure played a pivotal role in exacerbating mental health issues among youths. As indicated by Bukowski et al (2018) in the previous literature that peer pressure stands out as a potent force shaping the behaviours and attitude of youth. These pressures looking at the systems theory can be gotten from peers in any level of the systems that include the micro, macro, meso and macro system in social settings, particularly within school environments, youths often felt compelled to conform to certain behaviors and standards set by

their peers. Examples included succumbing to peer pressure to experiment with drugs or alcohol as a means of fitting in or escaping feelings of loneliness or social isolation. Respondent 5 recounted,

> "*Everyone else was doing it, so I felt like I had to try it too. I didn't want to feel left out.*".

Moreover, the competitive nature of academic environments exacerbated these challenges, as students felt compelled to constantly compare themselves to their peers. The fear of falling behind or not meeting expectations led to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, further impacting their mental well-being. Some respondents described experiencing panic attacks or intense anxiety before exams or deadlines, highlighting the toll that academic stress can take on youths' mental health. One key informant mentions that

> '*Youths end up in anxiety and depression because of comparison from the children next door and from around us* '

Peer pressure emerged as a pervasive influence on youths' behaviors and attitudes, particularly concerning substance abuse. Respondents recounted instances where they felt pressured by their peers to engage in risky behaviors, such as drinking alcohol or using drugs. The desire to fit in and gain acceptance within their social circles often outweighed concerns about the potential consequences of substance abuse, leading many youths to succumb to peer pressure. Moreover, the fear of social exclusion or ridicule compelled some youths to engage in behaviors that they were not comfortable with, further exacerbating feelings of anxiety and insecurity. Respondents described feeling trapped in a cycle of conformity, where the need for acceptance overshadowed their own values and beliefs. This struggle to balance social acceptance with personal integrity took a toll on their mental health, contributing to feelings of isolation and disconnection.

Moreover, strained relationships within the family unit, such as conflicts with parents or siblings, further exacerbated feelings of anxiety and depression among respondents. The lack of support or understanding from family members made it difficult for youths to cope with their mental health struggles, leading some to seek solace in substance abuse or other maladaptive coping mechanisms. Through an intersectional analysis of these examples, it becomes evident that social pressures stemming from various sources – academic, peer, and familial – intersect to create a complex web of challenges for youths in Gwanda urban. This is complemented by the systems theory in that the family in the micro system hon individual behaviour. as an effect These pressures not only contribute to the development and exacerbation of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression but also serve as catalysts for substance abuse as a means of coping or self-medication. Substance abuse emerged as a coping mechanism for many youths struggling with mental health issues and social pressures in Gwanda urban. Alcohol, cannabis ("mbanje"), opioids, and stimulants were among the substances commonly used by youths to alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety or to escape from stressors in their lives. For some, substance abuse served as a temporary reprieve from the overwhelming feelings of sadness or anxiety. However, this coping mechanism often led to a vicious cycle, where substance use exacerbated mental health issues and created additional challenges for youths.

"*I started drinking to forget about my problems like school and work , but it only made things worse in the long run*," shared participant 3

. "*I felt more anxious and depressed, and I ended up relying on alcohol even more.*"

The intersection of social pressures, mental health issues, and substance abuse created a complex web of challenges for youths in Gwanda urban. For instance, academic stressors and peer pressure to succeed academically contributed to heightened levels of anxiety among

students. In turn, some students turned to substance abuse as a coping mechanism to alleviate their anxiety and stress, leading to further mental health complications. Similarly, family dynamics and societal expectations placed additional strain on youths' mental well-being, exacerbating feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. Substance abuse often served as a means of self-medication or escape from these pressures,

The idea of Patel et al (2019) who also explains how these mental health challenges often arise from a complex interplay of factors, including economic instability, social pressures, and traumatic experiences lack of monetary resources has mislead teenagers into drug and substance abuse as a way to escape thoughts of poverty. The systems theory compliments the view in that economic constrains and disruptions to the family system increase the risk factors for teenage substance abuse, ultimately the systems theory provides a holistic, interconnected view of how economic pressures have also led to mental health issues and rug and substance abuse.

4.3 Results Theme 2: Social Pressures Experienced by Youth in Gwanda Urban

Social pressures experienced by youths in Gwanda urban are diverse and multifaceted. Peer pressure emerged as a significant influencer, with youths feeling compelled to conform to certain behaviors and norms to fit in with their peer groups. Societal expectations, academic stress, and family dynamics were also identified as prominent social pressures impacting youths' mental health and substance use behaviors. This concurs with Chibanda et al (2016) on that community harmony may create a reluctance to acknowledge personal struggles or seek help for mental health. These pressures contribute to the complexity of the interplay between mental health, substance abuse, and social factors among youths in Gwanda urban. Respondents highlighted the pervasive influence of peer pressure on youths in Gwanda urban. For instance, within school settings, students often felt pressure to conform to certain behaviors

and norms established by their peers. Examples included pressure to dress a certain way, engage in risky behaviors such as substance abuse, or participate in activities that may go against their personal values.

One key informants shared that these youths experience feeling pressured to try alcohol for the first time at a party, despite feeling uncomfortable with the idea. The fear of being ostracized or labeled as "uncool" by their peers outweighed their own reservations, leading them to engage in behavior they later regretted. Respondent 3 says youth would say :

> " I was feeling pressured and was scared of being labelled as a bore, I ended up taking drugs so that I can fit in and be on the same level as everyone because what is the use of going out if I cannot do what everyone else is doing "

This example illustrates how peer pressure can influence youths' decision-making processes and contribute to the adoption of unhealthy behaviors. Societal expectations, particularly concerning gender roles and norms, also exerted significant pressure on youths in Gwanda urban. Respondents described feeling constrained by traditional gender roles that dictated their behavior and choices. For example, young men felt pressure to conform to notions of masculinity, which may include behaviors such as aggression, dominance, or risk-taking. This concurs with Tomlison et al (2016) as he says that expectations regarding gender roles may influence the likelihood of seeking help, with males often expected to exhibit strength and resilience, potentially dettering them from acknowledging mental health struggles. This goes to show linking complemented by the systems theory in that the macro system which is the society as well and cultural context has influence on behaviour.

Similarly, young women often faced expectations to prioritize domestic responsibilities and conform to standards of beauty and femininity. This pressure to meet societal expectations

placed undue stress on youths, leading to feelings of inadequacy or insecurity if they did not fit neatly into these predefined roles.

Academic stress was another prominent social pressure experienced by youths in Gwanda urban. Respondents described feeling overwhelmed by the pressure to excel academically, driven by expectations from their families and communities. The fear of disappointing their parents or failing to meet societal standards of success weighed heavily on many students, contributing to heightened levels of stress and anxiety. Additionally, the competitive nature of academic environments exacerbated these challenges, as students felt pressured to outperform their peers to secure future opportunities. This pressure to succeed academically often came at the expense of youths' mental well-being, leading to burnout, exhaustion, and feelings of worthlessness. Family dynamics played a significant role in shaping the social pressures experienced by youths in Gwanda urban. Respondents described feeling pressure from their families to uphold certain traditions or fulfill specific roles within the household. For instance, expectations to adhere to cultural norms or to prioritize familial obligations over personal aspirations placed additional strain on youths, contributing to feelings of conflict or tension within the family unit.

Moreover, strained relationships with family members, such as conflicts with parents or siblings, further exacerbated feelings of stress and anxiety among respondents. The lack of support or understanding from family members made it difficult for youths to navigate the challenges they faced, leading to feelings of isolation or disconnection from their support networks. This informs the ecological systems theory on that points outs the micro and meso systems as contributing to the behavior of youths in this case how the family informs behaviour.

4.4 Results Theme 3: Protective Factors Promoting Positive Mental Health and Preventing Substance Abuse

Protective factors that promote positive mental health and prevent substance abuse among youths in Gwanda urban were identified through the study. Strong family support, access to mental health resources and services, positive peer influences, and community engagement were highlighted as key protective factors. Fazel et al , (2014) also points out these protective factors including strong support networks , encompassing friends, family, and the community who serve as crucial buffers against mental health stressors. These factors serve as buffers against the negative impact of social pressures and contribute to resilience among youths in the face of mental health challenges and substance abuse temptations. Key informant 4 highlighted that

> "*Youths should have strong support systems from around them and they should be able to feel supported emotionally in the world we are living in fo so many pressures that they are facing around them*"

Respondents emphasized the importance of strong family support as a protective factor promoting positive mental health among youths in Gwanda urban. Examples were provided of families that fostered open communication, emotional support, and a sense of belonging, which helped youths navigate challenges and build resilience. For instance, key informants described how youths feel comfortable confiding in their family members about their struggles and receiving unconditional love and acceptance in return. The presence of strong family support serves as a buffer against the negative impact of social pressures and helps youths develop healthy coping mechanisms. Fazel et al also points out positive relationships with family and friends to provide a sense of belonging. By fostering a supportive home environment, families

can promote positive mental health outcomes and reduce the risk of substance abuse among youths in Gwanda urban.

Access to mental health resources and services emerged as another crucial protective factor for youths in Gwanda urban. Respondents highlighted the importance of having access to counselors, therapists, and support groups that provide guidance and assistance in managing mental health challenges. Examples were provided of youths who sought help from school counselors or community organizations and benefited from the support and guidance they received. Access to mental health resources and services empowers youths to address their mental health needs proactively and seek help when needed. By providing accessible and culturally sensitive mental health support, communities can promote early intervention and prevent the escalation of mental health issues and substance abuse among youths.

Positive peer influences were identified as protective factors that promote positive mental health and prevent substance abuse among youths in Gwanda urban. Respondents described the importance of having supportive friendships and peer networks that encourage healthy behaviors and provide a sense of belonging and acceptance. Examples were provided of youths who surrounded themselves with peers who shared similar values and goals, which helped them resist negative peer pressure and make healthier choices. Positive peer influences play a vital role in shaping youths' attitudes and behaviors. By fostering supportive peer networks and promoting positive social interactions, communities can create environments that reinforce healthy behaviors and protect youths from the negative influence of peers engaged in substance abuse. Key informant number 3 highlighted that:

> *'Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu alabo – meaning a person is a person by the people he has around them , thus youths are supposed to be able to surround themselves with positive influences around them'*

Community engagement and involvement emerged as protective factors that promote positive mental health and prevent substance abuse among youths in Gwanda urban. Respondents described the importance of being actively involved in community activities, such as sports teams, youth groups, or volunteer organizations, which provide opportunities for social connection, skill-building, and personal development. Examples were provided of youths who found a sense of purpose and belonging through community engagement, which helped them develop resilience and resist negative influences.Community engagement provides youths with opportunities for positive social interaction, skill development, and personal growth. By fostering a sense of belonging and connection to their community, youths can develop a strong sense of identity and purpose, which serves as a protective factor against mental health issues and substance abuse.

4.5 Results Theme 4: Challenges Faced in Intervention Strategies

Challenges in intervention strategies to curb mental health issues and substance abuse among youths in Gwanda urban were identified. These challenges include a lack of awareness and understanding within the community about mental health disorders and substance abuse, limited access to resources and support services, and cultural and societal barriers to seeking help. Participants highlighted the need for culturally sensitive and context-specific interventions that address the unique challenges faced by youths in Gwanda urban.

Limited Access to Mental Health Resources

A significant challenge in intervention strategies is the limited access to mental health resources faced by youths in Gwanda urban this is complemented by World health organisation (2013) as it says that stigma associate with mental health should be reduced and also policy makers should develop relevant policies. This is in the macro system of the systems theory which

details the interaction of people with the policy change makers and the government. For example, Key informant 5 responded that

> *"Many youths don't even know how to access mental health services , reliance has been in the family and friends system and the can only do so much. Some are scared to look for help because of stigma however some because therapy is expensive "*

There is a long wait times to access counseling or therapy services, as there are few mental health professionals available in the area. Additionally, financial constraints often prevent youths from seeking help, as they may not be able to afford private therapy sessions or medication. Furthermore, some youths expressed reluctance to seek help due to stigma or lack of awareness about available resources, leading to delays in receiving support.Limited access to mental health resources poses a significant barrier to early intervention and treatment for youths experiencing mental health issues. Without adequate support, youths may struggle to cope with their challenges and may turn to maladaptive coping mechanisms such as substance abuse. Addressing this challenge requires increasing funding and resources for mental health services in Gwanda urban and raising awareness about available support options.

Stigma and Discrimination

Stigma and discrimination surrounding mental health present significant challenges in intervention strategies. Many respondents described experiencing judgment or ridicule from their peers or community members when seeking help for mental health issues. For example, some youths reported being called "crazy" or "weak" for seeking therapy or taking medication for mental health conditions. This stigma creates a culture of silence surrounding mental health and prevents individuals from seeking the help they need.Stigma and discrimination create barriers to seeking help and accessing appropriate care for mental health issues. They can exacerbate feelings of shame and isolation among youths, preventing them from seeking

support and perpetuating the cycle of silence surrounding mental health. Addressing stigma and discrimination requires community-wide education and awareness campaigns to challenge negative attitudes and promote acceptance and understanding of mental health conditions. Cultural and societal norms also present challenges in intervention strategies aimed at addressing mental health issues and substance abuse. Respondents described how cultural beliefs and attitudes towards mental health may discourage open discussion or acknowledgment of mental health struggles. For example, mental health issues may be viewed as a sign of weakness or spiritual deficiency, leading to reluctance to seek professional help. Additionally, cultural practices and traditions may prioritize family and community support over individual well-being, making it difficult for youths to prioritize their mental health needs. Cultural and societal norms influence perceptions and attitudes towards mental health, shaping help-seeking behaviors and treatment preferences. Interventions must be culturally sensitive and tailored to address the unique needs and beliefs of the community to be effective. This may involve collaborating with community leaders and organizations to challenge harmful cultural norms and promote positive attitudes towards mental health.

Lack of Community Support

The lack of community support emerged as a significant challenge in intervention strategies. Respondents described feeling isolated or unsupported by their communities when dealing with mental health issues or substance abuse. For example, some youths reported feeling judged or marginalized by their peers or community members, leading to feelings of alienation and despair. Additionally, the absence of support networks or community-based programs makes it difficult for youths to access the resources and support they need to recover and thrive. Community support plays a crucial role in promoting mental health and preventing substance abuse among youths. The systems theory details that youths are affected by the exo system and thus community should have an influence in how youth behaviour is shaped be it positive r

negative. When communities fail to provide a supportive and inclusive environment, youths may struggle to access the resources and support they need to recover and thrive. Addressing this challenge requires building stronger community networks and implementing programs that promote mental health awareness and support. By fostering a culture of acceptance and understanding, communities can create environments where youths feel valued and supported in their journey towards mental well-being.

Lack of centralized treatment centres

Treatment centres are mostly institutions such as the Ingutsheni institutions for both mental health and substance abuse disorders. Engutsheni is situated 2 hours drive from Gwanda so people fail to get access to these institutions , there is too much stigma associated with its name even people are scared to access these services. Because these institutions are not centralized it proves difficult to travel and also monetary limitations are seen as well intervention is ignored in the environment

The reality of the situation is most people who suffer from mental health issues and also abuse substances is they go back to the root cause of the problem , drug addicts go back to suppliers and youth with mental health issues go back to where they are triggered . This backslides the intervention strategies as they only work with the individual when they go through rehab and counselling however the question is if the person is being sent to the same environment that is the cause of the problem how far will it work.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study underscore the objectives that include complex interplay between mental health, substance abuse, and social pressures among youths in Gwanda urban. The results highlight the need for comprehensive and integrated approaches to address these

interconnected issues. This is complemented by the systems theory that calls for an integrated approach when making intervention. Interventions should be made at all levels that is the person, at family level, at community level and at policy level. Chibanda et al(2017) ensuring sustainable changes in awareness, policy, communities and resource allocation for youth mental health. also concurs this in that he talks of By understanding the specific challenges and protective factors present in the community, targeted prevention and intervention strategies can be developed to promote positive mental health outcomes and reduce substance abuse among youths in Gwanda urban.

Based on the second objective provided by the respondents offer valuable insights into the social pressures experienced by youths in Gwanda urban and warrant a thorough analysis to understand their implications. The examples shared by respondents for example respondent 3

Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu alabo – meaning a person is a person by the people he has around them , thus youths are supposed to be able to surround themselves with positive influences around them'

highlight the pervasive influence of peer pressure on youths' behaviors and decision-making processes. The pressure to conform to certain norms and expectations set by peers, such as engaging in risky behaviors like substance abuse, illustrates the power dynamics within social groups. This pressure often stems from a desire to fit in and gain acceptance, even at the expense of one's own values or well-being. The analysis suggests that peer pressure can significantly impact youths' mental health by creating a sense of internal conflict and contributing to feelings of inadequacy or regret. It underscores the need for interventions that empower youths to resist negative peer influences and cultivate healthy relationships based on mutual respect and support. The discussion of societal expectations and gender norms sheds light on the restrictive roles and stereotypes that youths in Gwanda urban may face. The

pressure to conform to traditional notions of masculinity or femininity can constrain individuals' autonomy and self-expression, leading to feelings of alienation or dissatisfaction. This concurs with Lwikido et al (2020) who speaks on Culturally competent interventions ensure that young individuals feel understood, respected, and supported in their mental health journeys to ensure that masculinity and feminity do not constrain youths self expression (Lwidiko, et al 2020).This analysis highlights the intersectionality of social pressures, as gender norms intersect with other factors such as peer pressure and academic stress to shape youths' experiences.

Based on the third objective addressing these societal expectations requires challenging entrenched norms and promoting gender equality and diversity. Interventions aimed at empowering youths to resist gender stereotypes and embrace their authentic selves can foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for all individuals.

The discussion of academic stress underscores the high expectations placed on youths to excel academically, often at the expense of their mental health. The fear of failure and the pressure to meet societal standards of success can create a toxic cycle of stress and anxiety, leading to burnout and exhaustion. Key informant from MOHCC highlighted that :

> '*School is the biggest pressure that youths face , as they say it's the key to success , youths ought to have pressure on something that is used as a measurement of their failures or success* "

This analysis highlights the need for a holistic approach to education that prioritizes students' well-being and fosters a supportive learning environment.Interventions aimed at reducing academic stress should focus on promoting a balanced approach to education that values personal growth and resilience over purely academic achievement, this is complemented by Makoni (2020) who highlights that Education not only provides knowledge and academic

growth but also equips youth with the skills and tools needed to navigate life's challenges. Providing students with access to mental health resources and support services can help alleviate the pressure and create a culture of self-care and self-compassion within schools.The discussion of family dynamics underscores the significant influence that familial relationships can have on youths' mental health and well-being. The pressure to fulfill familial obligations or adhere to cultural norms can create feelings of conflict or tension within the family unit, contributing to stress and anxiety.This is informed by the systems theory on the pressures individuals face from intersecting problems as it uses an intgreted approach. This analysis highlights the importance of fostering open communication and understanding within families to support youths' emotional needs and aspirations.Interventions aimed at strengthening family relationships should focus on promoting positive communication and conflict resolution skills. Providing families with access to support services and resources can help address underlying issues and create a supportive environment where youths feel valued and understood.

4.7 Chapter Summary

In summary, the study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of mental health, substance abuse, and social pressures among youths in Gwanda urban. By exploring the intersection of these factors and identifying challenges and protective factors, the study contributes to the existing literature and informs the development of context-specific interventions. The findings emphasize the importance of holistic approaches that address the complex interplay between individual, social, and environmental factors in promoting youth well-being in urban settings like Gwanda.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summaries the study findings on investigating the interplay of mental health and substance abuse on socially pressured youths. It presents conclusions from the research findings namely the impact of mental health and substance abuse on socially pressured youths, social pressures and their influence on mental health and substance abuse seeking behaviours as well as recommendations for the development and implementation of targeted prevention and intervention strategies to address these complex dynamics.

5.1 Summary of findings

The preceding chapters discussed the background of the study, reviewed the literature, methodology and the data presentation, analysis and discussion. The study sought to investigate

the interplay of mental health and substance abuse among socially pressured youth in Zimbabwe, the study was carried out in Gwanda urban. The study was guided by three objectives which were:To explore the current mental health issues and seeking behaviors of youth in Gwanda urban, To investigate the social pressures experienced by youth in Gwanda urban and how these pressures influence their mental health and substance abuse behaviors, To provide recommendations for the development and implementation of targeted prevention and intervention strategies that address the complex dynamics of mental health, alcohol and substance abuse and social pressures among youth in Gwanda urban. The social learning theory alongside the ecological systems theory was used as a reference and guiding framework of study. To collect data, the research made use of interviews for the key informants and observation complemented by questionnaires and community observation which sourced quantitative data as well. Thirty youths with mental health and substance abuse issues were sampled through stratified sampling to participate in the survey whereas five key informants where chosen as well from the organisation that gave permission for research.

5.2 Effects of mental health and substance abuse on socially pressured

On the effects of mental health and substance abuse amongst youths, the researcher managed to point out that these were common amongst the youth that managed to participate in the questionnaire. These include one depending on the other and one being an effect of the other, social pressures being causing the other these lead to depression, anxiety, social withdrawals, poor performance in education. These are affecting the youths as mental health issues and substance abuse within the society which destroys the youth.

5.3 Role played by the society

Paying particular attention to the guiding framework, the study findings revealed that the society indeed has a huge impact on consequences on youths substance abuse, mental health

and them being labelled as socially pressured youths. Society has huge expectations on youths especially in social set ups such as the school, the church and the family. The society puts pressure on the youth to succeed and puts a label on what it means to be successful. This brings out the close relationship of mental health issues and substance abuse disorders to the society paying particular attention even to that the same society that should be protecting the youth is the same society that puts pressure on the youth leading to mental health issues and also being the society itself that sells and supplies these substances to youths as suggested by the ecological systems model.

5.4 Coping mechanisms and protective factors

The study findings indeed highlighted the copying mechanisms which some socially pressured youths use to cope up with situations. This goes back to the topic that in order to cope up with mental health issues youths resort to drugs and that because of drug abuse they resort to drug abuse. Discussion with someone in the same predicaments also arose as one of the coping mechanisms which is why the respondents suggested societies for youths are important where they feel seen and like they are contributing to the society. Adaptation is also part of the coping mechanisms.

5.5 Conclusions of the study

 Deducing from the findings of the research, the study arrived at the following conclusions;

Mental health and substance abuse indeed has an effect on socially pressured youths. Socially pressured youths are prone to have mental health issues and abuse substance or vice versa due to the social pressures that they face. Society puts high expectations when it comes to the church, school and getting an education as well as when it comes to their peers. These challenges emanate from the definition from society of what success me as and because of this

pressure youths end up with mental health and substance abuse in order to cope up with the situations they are facing. One ends up affecting the other and because of mental health from social pressures may end up doing drugs or because of social pressures one may end up doing drugs and end up having mental health issues because of drugs.. On the same note, through analysis the study concludes that policies, laws and actions taken on behalf youths attempting to address their needs should also take into consideration their position as most undermine important factors surrounding mental health and drug abuse. From the findings, the study concludes that social pressures indeed an issue as they lead to the interlinked effects of mental health on drug abuse and vice versa.

Given the findings, the study concluded the importance of educating as a weapon of conscientization. Due to lack of education most youths are not aware of entreprenuship opportunities, how to avoid and get support on mental health and drug rehabilitation services. The research, upon analysis of findings arrived at the conclusion that rehabilitation programmes can assist in bettering the position of youth with mental health and drug abuse. Also society should ease on the definition of success as these social pressures are the driving force behind mental health and drug abuse.

5.6 Recommendations

- Government should promote empowerment programmes that can assist youths with mental health issues and substance abuse issue. This is because with empowerment it is better to reach a wider audience and also able to make follow ups on whether this intervention succeeded or not. With government assistance it is better for funding to be more dispensed and reach a higher number of people. .

- Simplify mental health for everyone's understanding. From an early age mental health should be simplified for everyone through career guidance and information disposal

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from a young age. There is also need to establish effective communication and direct participation in addressing issues that affect the youth.

- Awareness campaigns should also be commenced so as to enlighten the society on how it can work together with the youth and also educate them on how the societal pressures are affecting the youth. Also since the society is the main supplier of these drugs that youths abuse so it is important that society knows that the damage they do now is going to cost them in the future. Society should be able to be educated on matters that success is relative and that it does not happen at the same time for everyone and the societal standards they put are not always realistic therefore youths should be given a chance to prove themselves and be given a chance as hey always face mental health issues and end up abusing substance.

- The government should also work towards ensuring the availability of manpower and services to ensure mitigation of mental health issues and substance abuse disorders as well. Lack of services has proven to be a setback as most services such as Engutsheni are far away from youth in Gwanda. The government should be able to also close the mental health gap and provide people with enough services such that the burden of drugs and mental health is reduced. These services should also be provided on a free basis as most of these social pressures that make youths have mental health issues and substance abuse issues are because they do not have the monetary capacity

- Need for youth enterprenuership and showcases. The government, churches, organisations and the society as well should push for youth entreprenuership skills. This helps keep the youth busy while earning an income and also helps keep them off the streets away from drugs. Youth enterprenuatship should be well funded and youths

should be encouraged to participate in these programs so as to create equal opportunities especially from youths with less priviledged backgrounds.

- Online campaigns against mental health and drug and substance abuse. Most youths are well versed with mobile devices nowadays and have access to social media like Whatsapp, Instagram, Tiktok, twitter (x) and Facebook. More online campaigns should be done to increase the net of information disposal by the use of hashtags and group chats to inform the youth on mental health awareness and also the dangers of drug and substance abuse.

- NGOs that focus on Mental health and substance abuse should assist in facilitating meetings with youths with mental health issues and substance abuse within given areas to discuss issues affecting them with the help of qualified personnel for example counsellors.

- More research should be done on mental health and the mental health gap, substance abuse and society and social pressures for the subjects lacks understanding and few researches have been done on the subject.

5.7 Chapter summary

The foregoing gave a synopsis of research findings; it made conclusions and gave recommendations for the easing of mental health issues, substance abuse and social pressures amogst youths in Gwanda urban. . It highlighted the effect of mental health and drug abuse on youths well being which include development of mental heslth issues such as depression and anxiety and alsom drug addiction explaining how these in turn cause the other emanating from social pressures.. The chapter also addressed findings linked with other objectives of the study. It also addressed how the framework which guided the study was put to use. More importantly

is outlines the relationship between the society and the effect it has on mental health and drug abuse , that is, how the society immensely contributes to the in aggravating the consequences of mental health and substance abuse in youths. The chapter lastly listed some recommendations towards addressing the subject of the study. The recommendations include further studies for better understanding of mental health and drug abuse interlink as a whole, educating youths about mental health and substance abuse, awareness campaigns, government to promote empowerment programs, provide ease access to medication, NGOs that focus on mental health and drug abuse as well as enterprenuership to host rehabilitative meetings amongst others. Hence proposals levelled in this study may serve as frames of reference to the occupations and professionals dealing with social pressures, the youth , mental health as well as drug abuse.

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APPENDIX 1 – APPROVAL LETTER

19 February 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Permission Letter for Natasha Banda's Study at the Friendship Bench

This letter serves as formal notification that Natasha Banda, a BSc Social Work student at Bindura University of Science Education, has been granted permission to conduct research at the Friendship Bench. Their study is titled **"MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE INTERPLAY AMONGST SOCIALLY PRESSURED YOUTH IN GWANDA URBAN."**

The study aims to examine the interplay between mental health, alcohol and substance abuse comprehension and social pressures among youths in Gwanda urban and to explore whether there is a correlation between mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, social pressures and alcohol and drug abuse. We are confident that the findings of the study will be of great benefit to the Friendship Bench organization and contribute to the growing body of knowledge.

We appreciate your support towards this important project.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require any further information.

Yours Faithfully,

Dr Jermaine M. Dambi - Friendship Bench Research Co-ordinator.
Email: jermaine.dambi@friendshipbench.io   Cell: +263773444911

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

SECTION A – Demographic data

1)Age

2) Gender

3) Occupation

Section B - Mental health and substance abuse intersection

3) Based on your experience and knowledge what are the common mental health issues that are faced by socially pressured youths in Gwanda ?

4) Based on your knowledge and experience what are the common substances abused by socially pressured youths in Gwanda urban ?

5) What kind of social pressures mostly affect the youth in Gwanda urban ?

6) How do you think mental health issues intersect with substance abuse or vice versa?

7) How do social pressures intersect with both mentalhealth and substance abuse

Section C- Challenges faced

8) what challenges are you facing in the intervention strategies implemented in order to curb mental health and substance abuse

9) Are there any cultural and societal challenges associated as well.?

Section D - Recommendation and Solutions

10) What pre and post measures can be put in place to enhance the existing intervention strategies for both mental health and substance abuse.

11) What new intervention strategies can be put in place to improve the mental health and well-being of socially pressured youth in Gwanda urban

SURVEY GUIDE FOR 30 SOCIALLY PRESSURED YOUTH IN GWANDA AFFECTED BY MENTAL HEALTH AND DRUG ABUSE

Section A: Demographic data

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?

   A. Male
   B. Female
   C. Other

3. **Occupation**

   A. Student
   B. Formal employment
   C. Informal employment
   D. Unemployed

4. **How long have you been residing in Gwanda Urban?**

   A. 1-5 years
   B. 10 to 15 years
   C. More (specify)

Section B – Substance abuse and seeking behaviours among the youth

5. **Have you ever felt socially pressured to engage in substance use?**

   Yes
   No
   Somewhat

5. **What types of substances have you used in the past year? (Select all that apply)**

   a. Alcohol
   b. Tobacco
   c. Marijuana
   d. Prescription drugs

e. Other (please specify)……………………………….

6. How frequently do you consume these substances?

  a. Daily
  b. Weekly
  c. Monthly
  d. Occasionally

7. Have you ever sought help or treatment for substance abuse?

Yes   No

8 If answer is yes , to what extent has this helped you

A. Greater extent
B. Somewhat
C. No help

Section C : Mental health and seeking behaviours among the youth

9. Are you aware of the mental health services available in Gwanda Urban

Yes   No

10. Have you experienced symptoms of mental health issues such as anxiety or depression?

Yes
No
Partly

11. Do you believe that substance abuse can reduce mental health issues?

Yes

No

Sometimes

Section D social pressures among the youth

12. What are the main sources of social pressure for youth in Gwanda Urban? (Select all that apply)

 a. Peers

 b. Family

 c. School

 d. Social media

 e. Other (please specify)

13. How do you cope with social pressure? (Select all that apply)

 a. Substance use

 b. Seeking support from friends

 c. Engaging in hobbies or activities

 d. Seeking professional help

 e. Other (please specify)

14. Are you aware of any mental health support groups or organizations in Gwanda Urban?

Yes

No

There are no support groups in Gwanda

15. How comfortable do you feel discussing mental health issues with your friends or family?

a. Very comfortable

b. Somewhat comfortable

c. Not comfortable

d. I haven't tried discussing it

16. Have you witnessed any negative consequences of substance abuse among your peers?

Yes

No

Somewhat

17. Do you agree that substance abuse causes mental health issues and vice versa on socially pressured youth

Agree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Section D : Reccommendations

18. In your opinion, what steps can be taken to reduce social pressure related to substance abuse among youth in Gwanda Urban?

19. How effective do you think the current interventions are in addressing mental health and substance abuse issues in Gwanda Urban?

a. Very effective

b. Somewhat effective

c. Not effective

d. I'm not sure

20. What would you suggest is done to ensure the leasening of the following on youths

Social pressure

Substance abuse

Mental health issues

21. Would you be interested in participating in workshops or awareness campaigns related to mental health and substance abuse?

Yes

No

Maybe

Anonymity and confidentiality when conducting this research was considered .