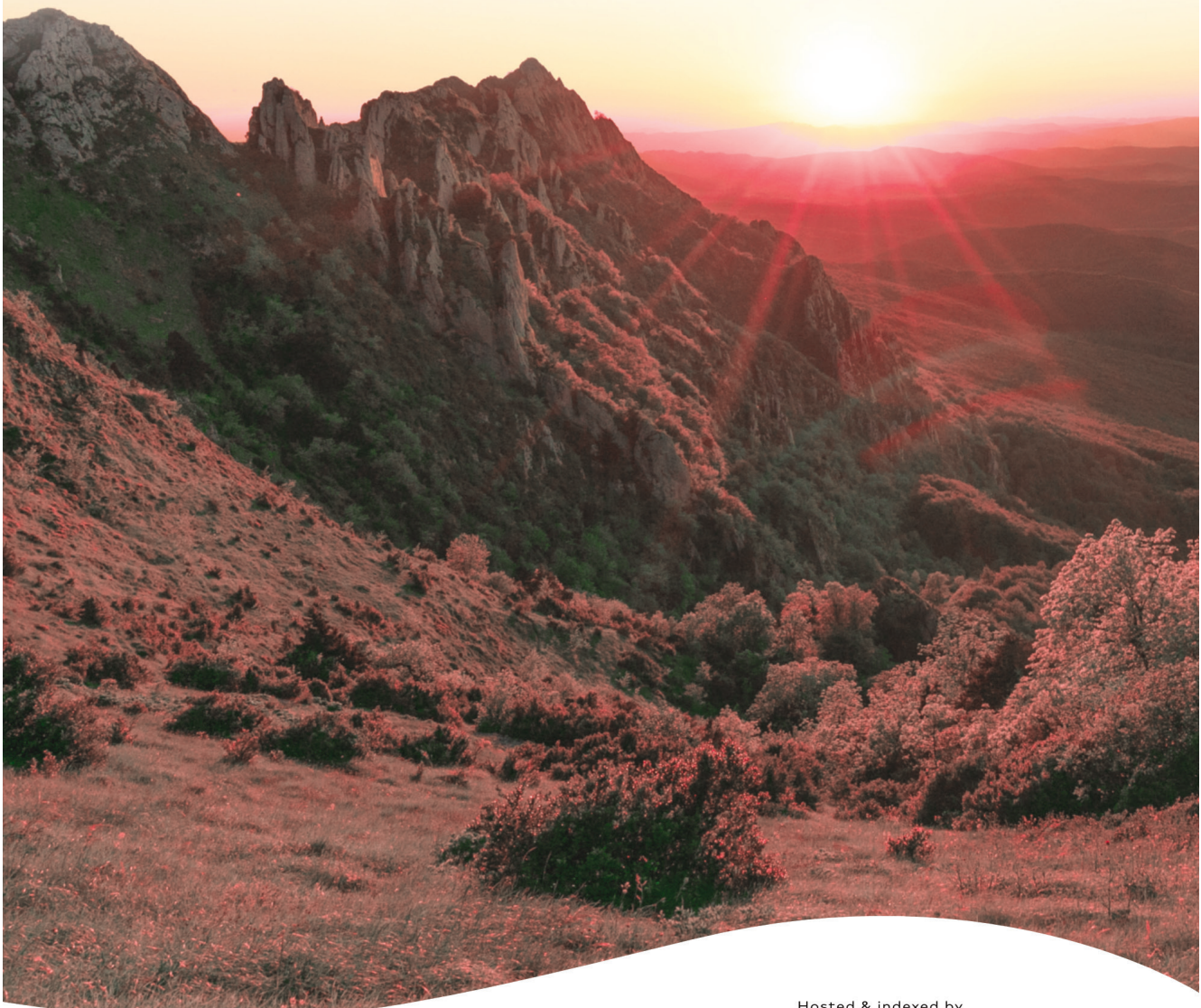


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## Adaptive intervention to drugs abuse: Guidance and counselling teachers opine syllabus efficacy

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### ARTICLE HISTORY

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the efficacy of the Guidance and Counselling (G&C) syllabus in addressing the drugs and substance abuse in secondary schools in Zimbabwe. This follows incidents of drugs and substance abuse increasingly becoming common among secondary school learners, now reaching unprecedented levels. Prior to the foregoing, the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) infused topics involving drugs and substance abuse in the school curriculum. Thus, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), the responsible ministry, designated G&C to be the main vehicle for spearheading programmes to conscientize the youths on the dangers that befall them if they indulge in taking drugs. Despite the efforts, the prevalence of drugs abuse in schools continued to escalate. This scenario begs the question, 'Is the G&C failing or has it not yet taken root?' The approach to empirical research adopted for the current research study was one of a qualitative research design with the data being collected via the 'WhatsApp', social media platform, an emerging form of doing research. 15 G&C teachers were purposively selected from secondary schools around the Kwekwe district to seek their opinions on the efficacy of the G&C syllabus. The study established that the syllabus has all that can help to fight drugs and substance abuse but then schools have not yet fully institutionalized the practice thereby demonstrating the disjuncture that can exist between policy and practice. The study recommends that G&C teachers and school administrators complement the school's drugs abuse syllabus by incorporating adaptive intervention strategies to annul drugs and substance abuse. In addition, Teachers have to be sufficiently trained to deliver the G&C syllabus so that they can effectively help drugs abusers. The study further recommends that, despite the economic challenges that befall the country's economy forcing law enforcement agents to turn a blind eye on drugs peddlers who sell drugs to school children, there is need for the government to give them a living salary so that they effectively carry out their duty thus complementing G&C.

**Keywords:** adaptive, drugs, intervention, counselling, abuse, guidance

## **Introduction**

There is mounting concern over the prevalence of anti-social conduct among learners in both private and public schools around the country. Experts opine that such behaviours are caused by drugs and substance abuse. Related to that, there has been a lot of noise from different social circles complaining that the moral fabric in most secondary schools has ruptured into some kind of moral wreck (*The Sunday Mail*, 5 February 2023). More so, the press is replete with reported cases of ant-social behaviours that observers attribute to drugs and substance abuse.

In a 20<sup>th</sup> July 2009 televised address to mark the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, the theme was 'Do drugs control your life and your community?' In that report, the WHO-Zimbabwe Director raised concerns about children in elite schools for abusing histalix, cocaine, alcohol beverages and marijuana (Dziro & Makaruse, 2012). Dziro and Makaruse (2012) opine that these children got into drugs because of the considerable amounts of pocket money they receive from their well up parents.

In March 2010, the *Trends* published a story at Conway College, an lite private institution, being involved in peddling in hard drugs and drinking spirits by school children. Chingono, Woek, Fritz, Bassett and Todd (2002) said that the practice had become rife particularly by 'O' and 'A' level students despite the policy mechanisms and institutions put in place by government and civil society organisations to curb the growth of substance abuse by youths and adults alike. For instance, the Education Act of 1987 clearly disallows students from taking alcoholic drinks or to be found drunk both within and outside the school premises, even if they are 18-years of age in the case of Advanced Level students (Chidarikire, 2017).

In 2016, according to Chidarikire (2017), seven school girls in Manicaland from Danganvura and St Joseph's High Schools were arrested for smoking mbanje, an illegal substance, in the country. Drugs of this nature are the underlying drivers of anti-social conduct that lead young people to depart from what society values. Jeram (2010) views this as the bedrock of juvenile delinquency. In 2023, at one of Harare's elite learning institutions, the Dominican Convent High School, eight female pupils were expelled for allegedly abusing drugs while on an educational trip to Nyanga (*The Sunday Mail*, 29 February 2023). All these events suggest that student indiscipline has plagued schools leading to

series of unrest and anti-social conduct. For Mpofu (2011), students who often engage in numerous anti-social conduct such as fighting, bullying, theft and vandalism of school properties, are most likely to be under the influence of drugs. Of late, in Bulawayo, a fatality in which a Form four Founders High School boy was murdered in a gang-related violence has been published in the press and various media platforms (*The Sunday Mail*, 5 February 2023). The father of the deceased learner, asked for the send off funeral service to be held at the school so that learners can have a full appreciation of the consequences of violent behaviour and drugs abuse. Commenting on the incident, sources from Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) said the ministry conducts routine guidance and counselling sessions in schools as part of efforts to address conflicts (*The Sunday Mail*, 5 February 2023).

**R**ecent evidence indicates that the streets of urban areas in the Zimbabwe are awash with drugs of all kinds from marijuana or *mabanje* to broncleer, Histalix, Cocaine, Cordain, *musombodhiya*, *Tegu-tegu*, *katsotsi*, soldier, and zed, double punch, Heroin and Mangemba (Gunda & Mbwirire, 2020). ZCLDN (2014) further established that drugs havens, popularly referred to as bases, have been sprouting especially in high density suburbs across the country. The Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare established that schools are ready market which pushes high volumes of drugs for drugs dealers. Apart from being users, it has been found that learners are also being used as mules by drugs peddlers. Thus, dealers identify learners who are potential peddlers and give them the stuff in exchange for either payment or free stash (*The Sunday Mail*, 5 February 2023). In its surveys, the Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drugs Network found out that drugs dealers believe that children will easily get off the hook should they be arrested and that it is highly unlikely for the authorities to go and search for drugs in schools or even conduct stop and search operation on learner (*The Sunday Mail*, 5 February 2023).

## **What is the problem?**

**I**ncidents of drugs and substance abuse are increasingly becoming common among secondary school learners in the country. The GoZ has seen it fit to infuse topics involving drugs abuse in the school syllabus. Thus, MoPSE, as the responsible ministry designated G&C to be the main vehicle for spearheading programmes tailor made to conscientize the youths on the dangers that befall them if they indulge in taking drugs. Despite the effort the problem seems to

be escalating to unprecedented levels as the substance use culture in schools is fast spiralling out of control. This scenario has resulted in the following research questions being posed that:

- How do G&C teachers conceptualise the G&C syllabus?
- What problems do teachers experience in the delivery of the G&C Syllabus?
- Has the G&C syllabus failed to reduce the prevalence of drugs and substance abuse in schools?
- What measures can be taken to improve the delivery of the G&C Syllabus?
- plans.

## **Review of Literature**

The literature reviewed in this paper serves to provide the basis on which to understand the nature of the curriculum that has been designated as the major vehicle for transmitting information on substance and drugs abuse. The researcher finds the literature quite essential as it is not very easy to judge the efficacy of the G&C syllabus when its theoretical genesis and intentions are unknown.

### *A synopsis of the theoretical genesis of the G&C syllabus*

The G&C curriculum was introduced after the recommendation made by the 1999 Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into Education and training (CIET). The commission was appointed by the then President, Robert Mugabe, to look into the country's Education and Training. In 2005, the Ministry of Education, Sport, Art and Culture (MESAC) came up with *Director Circular Minute Number 23* which sought to strengthen and institutionalise G&C as an important curriculum subject (Chimonyo, Mapuranga & Runganye, 2015). The initial syllabus paid no attention to the concept of drugs abuse until recently when the Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education (CFPSE) 2015-2022 was introduced (Chidarikire, 2017). The decision to include drugs abuse in the G&C syllabus was made after realising that there was need for preventative drugs abuse curriculum since drugs abuse were becoming a national pandemic cutting across almost all races, tribes and religions (Anderson, Beckerleg, Hailu & Klein, 2020; Oliha, 2014).

Drugs abuse is characterised as a cancer that is slowly, but dangerously destroying the country to the core (Rugobo, 2019). As such, in a keynote address during the National Youth Day Celebrations, President Mnangagwa vowed to scale up the national response to drugs and substance abuse to make Zimbabwe a drugs free society. The G&C school curriculum was regarded as one of the important pillars in fighting the scourge (*The Sunday Mail*, 26 February 2023). Thus, MoPSE as the responsible ministry had already designated the Guidance and Counselling (G&C) curriculum as the main vehicle for providing better tools with which to annul drugs abuse and associated problems in schools (Chimonyo, Mapuranga & Runganye, 2015). Apparently, drugs abuse had to be infused as one of the key concepts in the G&C syllabus (2015-2022) found under the topic on 'Health', one of the six topics in the syllabus (see Table 1 below):

*Table 1: Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (undated)*

Topic: Health		
LEVEL	KEY CONCEPTS	UNIT CONTENT
Form one	Drug and substance abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drug and substance abuse</li> <li>• Causes of drug and substance abuse</li> <li>• Types and sources of drugs and substances</li> <li>• Ways of preventing drug and substance abuse</li> <li>• Effects of drug and substance abuse</li> <li>• Management of drug and substance abuse-rehabilitation</li> </ul>
Form two	Drug and substance abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drugs and substances prone to abuse</li> <li>• Effects of drug and substance abuse</li> <li>• Ways of preventing drug and substance abuse</li> <li>• Managing drug and substance abuse e.g. rehabilitation</li> </ul>
Form three	Drug and Substance Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drugs and substance abuse</li> <li>• Sources</li> <li>• Long and short term effects</li> </ul>
Form four	Drug and Substance Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drugs and substances prone to abuse</li> <li>• Effects of drug and substance abuse</li> </ul>

Albeit, G&C being a recognised subject in Zimbabwe and currently being studied in primary and secondary schools, Chimonyo, Mapuranga and Runganye (2015) aptly concluded that in most schools, there has been no meaningful measures in terms of appropriate syllabus and training of teachers

taking place. Chimonyo, Mapuranga and Runganye (2015) further observed that the teachers that seemed to be co-ordinating the G&C in schools do so on the basis of seniority rather than the appropriate qualifications and training, thus, raising eyebrows on the effectiveness of guidance and counselling delivery.

As a matter of fact, the real concern is that, drugs abuse in the Zimbabwean secondary school is not getting any better, rather it is almost reaching crisis levels (Jakaza & Nyoni, 2018). For Mutsvanga (2011 p. 65), “the substance use culture in schools is fast spiralling out of control, sucking into its vortex, adolescents.” This worsening scenario in schools begs the question: ‘Is G&C failing to fight the scourge or has it not taken root as yet?’ To that end, the foregoing alludes to the need to understand the various perceptions of teachers about the efficacy of the G&C syllabus in order that a “scaled” intervention to influence students who abuse drugs and substances can be arranged for.

## Drugs (ab)use in Zimbabwe

### *Nature of teenage drugs abuse*

In this study, drugs abuse connotes its use in a negative nuance, that is, describing the act of taking too much of a drugs too often, or taking the drugs for the wrong reason (Dziro & Makaruse, 2012). Chidarikire (2017) further alludes that the use of drugs in ways that are not approved of by one’s culture; that negatively impact on health is abusing drugs. In a study to investigate the causes of drugs abuse in secondary schools, Gunda and Mbwirire (2020) discovered that drugs widely used by the school going youths include, *marijuana* (*mbanje*), pain relievers, alcohol, cough mixtures (containing codeine) and slimming tablets, as well as solvents especially glue.

Consistently, literature revealed that in the African continent drugs and substance abuse has grown into a worrisome pandemic with ‘cannabis’ (*mbanje* or *marijuana*) being the most abused illicit substance followed by amphetamine-type stimulants such as “ecstasy” (World Health Organisation, Africa, 2018).

More recently, Ndasauka and Kayange (2019) identify different types of substances abused across the African continent. Among the substances, are benzodiazepines such as diazepam, chlorpromazine and a repertoire of inhalants and injection drugs (see Table 2). The forenamed data is based on statistics reported by the United Nations World Drugs Report of 2014 which identified 39.1% of substance abusers being high school adolescents. Ndasauka

and Kayange, (2019) portray the substance abuse situation in South Africa as very serious, with drugs usage reported to be at twice the world norm. According to the South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drugs Use report, March 2017, 12% of all South African learners had used at least one illegal drug a figure that is still the highest in the African sub-continent. Tanzania is considered the second highest country after Kenya in east Africa with an increasing number of drugs users mainly school going adolescents (Driskell, 2017).

**B**asic views this shows that is so devastating as the issue of drugs and substance abuse does not affect the individual alone but rather affects families, community and even nations at large (Maraire & Chethiyar, 2020). Elsewhere, Chikoko (2013) has argued that, like any other country in Africa, Zimbabwe experiences similar drugs abuse problems. Recent evidence proffered by Dziro and Makaruse (2012) shows that in Zimbabwe drugs abuse in schools is historically linked to the period immediately soon after national independence in 1980. The view raised by the authors is that the policy of education for all opened the school gates even for those young adults who had spent time using drugs during the liberation struggle as the major cause of drugs and substance abuse. Nhapi and Mathede (2016), however, point out that the abuse of drugs and substance by the Zimbabwean youth is not only harmful to abusers but is costly to the GoZ in terms of revenue spent in the enforcing, prosecution, incarceration and rehabilitation of the youth drugs abusers.

### *Why teenagers get into drugs abuse?*

**I**n the past two decades or so, a number of researchers have sought to determine what lured adolescents go into drugs or substance abuse of which several reasons have been proffered. This study has found the following top the list. Newcomb, Maddahian and Bentler (2009) mentioned that parents who use drugs influence their children who end up getting into drugs abuse. Oliha (2014 p. 22) claimed that many drugs abuse behaviours are heavily tied to peer culture, thus, as children learn from and imitate the peers they like and admire. (Newcomb, Maddahian & Bentler (2009) are of the idea that poor school grades, relationships between adolescents and parents give rise to the prevalence of drugs and substance abuse. For Newcomb et al. (2009) adolescents enter into drugs abuse because of low self-esteem, depression, and psychological distress. Kaplan (2008), Aneshensel and Huba (2014); Newcomb, et al (2009) and



Jerie (2015) consent that academic difficulty, absenteeism and feeling of self-worthlessness are some of the reasons that push adolescents into drugs abuse.

**Drugs abuse and associated risks**

Noteworthy, drugs and substance abuse have destroyed and devastated the Zimbabwean youths’ lives as well as negatively affected families, community and nation at large (Nhapi & Mathede, 2016). The youth drug-abusers exhibit both physical and mental negative effects of drugs abuse (Nhunzvi & Mavindidze, 2016). A number of surveys conducted by Nhunzvi (2019) consistently reveal that the 10–35-year age group constituting 67.7% of the total population has greater opportunity for exposure to drugs.

The Herald of August 14 2014, published findings on individuals that mostly abuse drugs as the youths of school going age. Of these, 65% of them were found suffering from drugs-induced mental problems. In 2016 the Anti-Drugs Abuse Association of Zimbabwe (ADAAZ) found out that at Chitungwiza Central Hospital 60% of its mental patients were youths between 15 and 24 years old. Mosby (2002) confirmed that when consumed, drugs have the effect of influencing the person to act irrationally or in an anti-social way.

In the rest of cases, the use or abuse of drugs and substances according to Mosby leads to addictive condition which subsequently leads to dependence on the drugs. Quite often, the addictive condition causes great damage to the body as it can force users to want more and more drugs especially when this has been happening for a long time (Chidarikire, 2017). In the following section, the negative nature and effects of drugs are highlighted briefly.

Table 2: The nature and effects of drugs

Class	Examples	Mode of Use	Immediate Effects	After Effects
HALLUCINOGENS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marijuana</li> <li>• Cannabis</li> <li>• tobacco</li> </ul>	Smoked or ingested	Relaxation, hilarity, drowsiness, hallucinations, intellectual difficulties, motor in-coordination	Conjunctivitis, intellectual and motor disorders, panic, anxiety, psychiatric, respiratory and hormonal disorders, heart and lung diseases
DEPRESSANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heroine</li> <li>• Psycho-chemical</li> </ul>	Injected, smoked or sniffed	Euphoria, pleasure, nausea and vomiting, lack of appetite	Strong physical addiction, acute withdrawal syndrome, weight loss, anaemia, dental cavities, memory loss, depression, panic attacks

Class	Examples	Mode of Use	Immediate Effects	After Effects
STIMULANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cocaine</li> <li>amphetamines</li> </ul>	Sniffed, injected, ingested as pills	Talkativeness, reduced tiredness, excitement, sexual desire, aggressiveness, alterations, perception	Depression, lack of appetite, strong psychological dependence, high blood pressure, digestive disorders, respiratory disorders
INHALANTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>glue</li> <li>thinners</li> <li>petrol</li> <li>propellants</li> </ul>	Sniffed	Hallucinations excitement	Dizziness, vomiting, coma, heart failure,

Source: Escandon & Galvez, 2008 p.>

Previous studies revealed that drugs abusers face common short-term effects, viz; panic attacks, anxiety, hangovers, getting irritable, mood swings, hallucinating, withdrawals, paranoia and feeling a crash (Pufall, 2017). Long term effects of drugs abuse according to Rwafa, Mangezi and Madhombiro (2019) include stomach pains, paranoia, major depression, lack of production, unemployability, crime, deteriorating quality of life and increased violence.

In 53 am practitioner, Researches, Makande (2017) discovered, that a substantial number of youth drugs abusers in Zimbabwe become school dropouts and in the long run become a menace to society by becoming violent and engaging in criminal activities to sustain their livelihoods. Maraire and Chethiyar (2019) concur with Makande (2017) that peace in the communities is compromised as youth drugs abusers tend to be aggressive.

Cognisance of the foregoing, the G&C teachers need to be interrogated to capture their opinions regarding what they feel could be done to improve the syllabus so that it addresses the problem of drugs and substance abuse in schools where 67.7% of the total population has greater opportunity for exposure to drugs (Nhunzvi, 2019).

### Theoretical underpinnings

This research article contextualises the study within the theoretical discourse of three interrelated psychosocial theories. The decision to use the three was made upon the realisation that these theories are the windows through which teachers can view the world of drugs and substance abusers, which can assist in developing adaptive interventions that can provide clear cut practical guidance

for curbing the problem (Rohadi, 2017). These three theories are notably Cognitive Dissonance theory, Developmental theory and the Social Inoculation theory. A synopsis of the three is provided in the ensuing paragraphs, each in turn.

### *Cognitive Dissonance Theory*

The Cognitive Dissonance theory (CDT) theory is important in directing intervention strategies for combating drugs abuse in schools. The understanding of verbal inoculations helps to establish and strengthen beliefs and attitudes teachers can adopt to help the young person to resist using drugs. Significant portion of previous studies indicate that the resolution of dissonance can help a teenager to either abstain from drugs abuse or place a lower value on a chosen core curriculum activity.

Going by this theory, a teenager is convinced that taking drugs will diminish ability to do something of choice, thus, if convinced; the assumption is that the teenager will then place a high value on the choice rather than on drugs (Rhodes & Matheson, 2005). Noteworthy mentioning, the theory proposes that certain 'pre-treatments' are always available to help establish or strengthen beliefs and attitudes with which a person's behaviour is harmonize to avoid cognitive dissonance. Thus, Escandon and Galvez (2008) identified a pre-treatment approach involving making a behaviour commitment in the form of a contract or public announcement of one's beliefs and intentions such as the 'I will not use alcohol until I am of age'.

### *Developmental Theory (DT)*

The theory describes certain behaviours that are considered deviant such as smoking, and drinking alcohol, because they are essentially adult behaviours which are being exhibited at an early stage of the life cycle (Escandon & Galvez, 2008). According to the theory, as the adolescent's body is changing rapidly, the developing self-image coincides with the identity crisis that causes the adolescents to break away from the close guidance of their parents to seek support elsewhere, usually with a peer group (Escandon & Galvez, 2008). That is the stage where an adolescent may view smoking, or the use of alcohol and other drugs, as a way of expressing a growing sense of independence. An understanding of such behaviours helps on adjust interventions to contextual needs and developmental requirements of an individual (Rohadi, 2017; Rhodes and Matheson, 2005).

### ***The Social Inoculation Theory (SIT)***

Richard Evan's social inoculation theory increases understanding of social influences, beliefs, and attitudes that create pressure on a young person to use alcohol and other drugs (Escandon & Galvez, 2008). The theory describes how pressures such as peer pressure can lure an individual to join a group. Theory also provides a repertoire of programmes available to help students resist social pressures. For instance, programmes such as the popular "Just Say No" have stood the taste of time. In such programmes, students are taught first about the pressures that they can expect from peers to use alcohol and other drugs before they are taught various ways to get out of uncomfortable peer pressure situations.

In addition to the "Say No," the "Just Say No" groups teach alternative responses, such as "I'm not interested." Alternatively, the groups encourage public commitments from students as an added incentive to resist negative peer pressure (Harwood & Anderson, 2002). The theory has discovered that peer pressure is one of the most significant factors in alcohol use and abuse, and successful prevention strategies will address this fact. For instance, the most important correlate of beer drinking according to Harwood and Anderson (2002) is peer influence, followed by exposure to advertisements for beer. Peer influence has been found to have a significant impact on consumption levels and alcohol use behaviour (Harwood & Anderson, 2002; Egbochuku et al., 2009). Over and above, the study finds the theories quite handy in discussing the problem of drugs and substance abuse and the related adaptive intervention strategies.

### **Methodology**

The approach to empirical research adopted for this study was one of a qualitative study design with the data being collected via the 'WhatsApp', social media platform, an emerging form of doing research (Reeve & Partridge, 2017). By employing the method, I attempted to gain an understanding of the efficacy of the Guidance & Counselling Syllabus in fighting drugs and substances abuse by the school going Zimbabwean youths. The technique drew data from the analysis of fifteen N (15) G&C teachers from purposively selected secondary schools. Because of time and financial constraints, thus, a group chat was created where the G&C teachers' opinions were sought. In addition, literature reviews were specifically used to provide a theoretical support as well as to demonstrate to the readers how this particular research fits into the larger field

of enquiry. Above all, even if there were other suitable methods for this research study, the researcher could not adopt them due to the limitation of geographical spread of the informants.

## Results

In this section of the study, the researcher presents the results and immediately discusses them in order to avoid unnecessary repetition that usually results when presentation of results and their discussion are separated (Mouton, 2008). Noteworthy, the researcher uses thick descriptions together with the informants' own words in order that the analysis remains qualitative. The researcher dully acknowledges that the answers proffered by the informants are based on what they perceive as factors that impede the effectiveness of the G&C syllabus in annulling the drugs and substance abuse scourge. Besides, the study lays the findings against the three main theories discussed in this research. For example, it emerged from the chats that learners engage in drugs and substance abuse when they are subjected to peer pressure or through joining groups that exert pressure on them. This idea is better explained through Richard Evan's social inoculation theory. The researcher wishes to acknowledge that in soliciting for participation in this study, an undertaking was made to informants that their names were not going to be mentioned to conceal their identity. For instance, to get the best out of the discussions, the researcher tried to control the chats and managed to steer on the topics that were of interest. Thus, what follows is based on the responses drawn from online chats with the G&C teachers who participated during the study.

The researcher found it pertinent to establish how participants conceptualise the G&C syllabus that was intended for the current study. When asked How G&C teachers conceptualised the G&C syllabus, most of them indicated that they never had chance to get hold of the original copy of the syllabus hence found it difficult to plan for the lessons effectively. One Participant remarked:

*At our station we do not have the original document of the syllabus but the teachers' guide from which we draw what to teach. The handbook is kept with the HoD and only made available upon request. The guide, as the word implies, does not have the content that we can use to teach the subject effectively. The teaching of G&C becomes very difficult without adequate material for reference particularly books or any equipment to beef up the contentment. In most cases, we use information on the internet even though we are aware of the dangers of using such resources.*

This was a common response from almost all the participants. They, however, declined that G&C was failing, instead, expressed concern over the harsh economic conditions which have forced the youths into gold panning. As one of the participants puts it, gold digging is not an easy thing to do, one needs courage and bravery, behaviour is found, which is the drugs. The participants further alluded that G&C was not failing but gave blame to the home for significantly promoting drugs abuse as the behaviour is not starting in schools but at gold panning sites. 'Gold panning is destroying our learners who cannot stop doing it because poverty is not stopping too', vowed one of the participants.

The study revealed that the G&C syllabus is quite comprehensive and covers important topics including drugs and substance abuse. Drugs and substance abuse has of late received much attention after realising that it was escalating to intolerable heights and becoming an issue of concern. With respect to the G&C syllabus efficacy, participants consented that the syllabus is very effective but expressed concern over the little attention that is given to it. The major reason cited is that as an unexaminable subject, teachers concentrate more on those subjects that are examinable. This reason prompted the researcher to consult with the syllabus to find the truth out of the assertion and indeed found that G&C was examinable. This is indicative of the little value attached to the syllabus which can help in judging its efficacy.

On further enquiry, it emerged that G&C was not seriously taught in schools; hence, its effectiveness was not felt. Participants opine that the scarcity of resources has posed limitations on the implementation of the syllabus hence teachers often tent to teach those concepts that are not critical and requiring general information.

It emerged that the topics that attracted frequent attention were mentioned, these include sexuality, peer pressure, drugs abuse and puberty. In a number of instances, participants echoed similar sentiments pointing out that drugs abuse has now become topical and therefore explain why teachers are growing much interest in it. In light of the foregoing, however, to assume that G&C alone can solve the problem is a minimalist strategy to combat drugs abuse. There is need for concerted effort by all stakeholders to fight the scourge. Parents are called upon to be proactively involved since the drama is starting at their doorsteps. According to the developmental theory, parents have a crucial role in directing and inculcating good behaviour in their children at home. This position is shared by Jeram (2010) who insist that parents are another important stakeholder that

needs to support the eradication of drugs abuse by school pupils since they are the immediate caretakers of the children. It also emerged from the study that school leavers provide drugs to a sizeable number of pupils who take drugs. Parents are advised not to dish out money to their school going children because they end up using the money to buy drugs.

One other observation made by the participants was that when the youths are coming from holiday, they are tougher than ever because the holidays expose them to drugs of all sorts when they mix with school drop outs at gold panning sites. The situation in Silobela was said to be very bad. Learners are reported to bring weapons to school and teachers cannot risk interfering because these youngsters are daring as they will be under the influence of drugs. This agrees with Mosby (2002)'s contention that when consumed, drugs have the effect of influencing the person to act irrationally or in an anti-social way. For Mutsvanga (2011:65), "the substance use culture in schools is fast spiralling out of control, sucking into its vortex, adolescents". One of the participants lamented nothing that:

*These days learners are bringing dangerous weapons; drugs and all sort of stuff to school. In Silobela learners bring all weapons to school, and it is difficult to stop them lest they hurt you. In class, they don't participate but are always dozing and one wonders if they ever have time to sleep at home. They perform dismally in class and only come to school to show off to girls and to bring drugs to other learners. Often, they drop out of school and join their brothers as gold diggers.*

This behaviour tallies with observations made by Jeram (2010), who found out that learners that take drugs often experience deterioration in scholastic performance, achieve low grades and often display hostile, defiant and unco-operative behaviour towards others in the school. It is also in line with Makande's (2017) observation that a substantial number of youth drugs abusers in Zimbabwe become school dropouts and in the long run become a menace to society by becoming violent and engaging in criminal activities to sustain their livelihoods.

This study further established that besides G&C being a noble initiative, lack of resources had compromised guidance and counselling programmes. Participants said there are several issues that need to be addressed if sanity is to prevail in our schools. Some of the participants admitted that the G&C syllabus has all that can help learners abstain from drugs abuse but however, parents seem are letting teachers down. In their position as immediate caretakers, parents have lost control over their children. This thinking is contrary to the Richard Evan's

social inoculation theory which advocates for a repertoire of programmes for teaching students to resist social pressures such as the popular "Just Say No" as opposed to the use of a whip as proposed by one of the participants who said:

*The law against corporal punishment has made the situation even worse. The learners have grown so wild and wayward. Gone are the days when peace prevailed in the schools because of the whip. The President was right when he said the whip should be used to straighten behaviour.*

It also emerged that there was lack of buy in from parents. Participants opined that they were not certain as to whether parents were aware of their roles in the fight against drugs abuse. The participants appeared to agree that the school complement the efforts of the home and not vice versa. This is consistent with Jeram's (2010) position that parents should also set and enforce curfews, and encourage participation in school and after-school activities as well as take time to ask what their child is thinking, feeling and doing every week and listen to answers without interrupting. According to the developmental theory, the adolescent's body changes coincide with the identity crisis that breaks them away from the close guidance of their parents leaving them to seek for support elsewhere, usually with a peer groups. This is the time they are exposed to drugs abuse and therefore require close monitoring and guidance from all quarters (Escandon & Galvez, 2008).

The study found out that the war on drugs abuse was not easy to win without the corporation of all stakeholders to include the law enforcement agents, the police in particular. The participants put it point blank that the law enforcement agents are the chief perpetrators. It was alleged that, instead of controlling the situation, the police made it worse by harbouring drugs traffickers and peddlers who use the school children as their agents. A commend passed by a participant was:

*Even if we as teachers try to instil discipline, we face a huddle just because those that should assist us to fight drugs abuse promote it. True to say, the locations of drugs peddlers and where they keep the drugs is not a secret to the police. The illicit drugs peddlers are everywhere and the police are lackadaisical in dealing with such issues. In certain communities you find the learners are a very big market for these peddlers.*



Many concur that there is need to engage all stakeholders to complement the G&C teachers in schools. One participant had the following to say when responding to issue of effectiveness of the G&C syllabus:

*G&C is not given a chance to operate as it should in schools. I was a G&C coordinator at a primary school in Mbizo where I teach. The headmaster does not understand how I should operate and so offers me no support. I tried to explain to him but still I am faces with problems even more. While we may say it is impossible to eradicate indiscipline, I can safely say, given chance, G&C can go a long way in reducing indiscipline which may lead to drugs and substance abuse that is if there is support and co-operation amongst staff members.*

The participants affirmed that G&C has not failed but it is actual trying to bring back sanity in schools after the damage caused by the Covid 19 lock down. The participants indicated that the G&C is the way to go and that the ministry should continue to give support and see to it that G&C is given enough space on the master. In the same view, the research findings concur with the theories laid in this study in that they all advocate for adaptive interventions as a means to annul the prevalence of drugs and substance abuse in schools around the country.

## **Conclusion**

From the study, the syllabus has all that can assist in combating drugs abuse. The effectiveness in combating drugs and substance abuse has suffered from among other things the lack of resources and buy in from most stakeholders including law enforcement agents. It emerged from this study that the G&C curriculum is the way to go and that in order for it to bear fruits school administrators should be supportive and give it enough space on the master timetable in addition to massive training of teachers. Over and above, the study established that schools have not yet fully institutionalized the G&C syllabus thereby demonstrating the disjuncture that can exist between policy and practice.

## **Recommendations**

In light of findings of the study and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were forwarded to help the G&C curriculum to be more effective in combating drugs and substance abuse:

- G&C teachers together with school administrators should complement a school's drugs abuse programme by incorporating adaptive intervention strategies that will help to annul drugs and substance abuse.
- Teachers have to be trained to teach G&C so that they can effectively help students who abuse drugs.
- School administrators should provide regular opportunities for teachers to meet for discussions about drugs use and how they can fight the problem.
- Despite the economic challenges that befall the country's economy forcing law enforcement agents to turn a blind eye on drugs peddlers who sell drugs to school children, there is need for the government to give them a living salary so that they effectively carry out their duty thus complementing G&C.

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