

The Nexus Between Substance Abuse And Domestic Violence Using The Case Of Kuwadzana High Density Suburb In Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Background: Previously researchers studied substance use and domestic violence as separate phenomena. There has been a paradigm shift in recent time globally with increasing acknowledgement of the link between substance use and domestic violence. However, a cursory glance of the literature on the nexus between substance use and domestic violence reveals a largely narrow stock of studies on the phenomenon mainly conducted in high resource countries around the world. Therefore, the present study sought to bridge the gap by analysing the nexus between substance abuse and domestic violence in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Materials and Methods: The study was a mixed methods case study based on a pragmatic research paradigm. For the quantitative part, the researchers randomly sampled 89 victims and perpetrators of substance abuse and domestic violence from Kuwadzana High Density Suburb in Harare. 39 of them were males while 50 were females. Their age group was 18-50 plus years. The participants of the qualitative part of the study were 31 key informants who were purposively sampled. Data for the study was collected using self-administered questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) © Version 16 was used to analyse quantitative data while qualitative data were grouped into themes and analysed using content analysis.

Results: Findings showed that substance abuse and domestic violence were widespread in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb in Harare. The most prevalent form of domestic violence was physical abuse while drug and alcohol abuse were the most prevalent forms of substance abuse. A strong positive correlation between substance abuse and domestic violence was reported.

Conclusions: The study established that substance abuse and domestic violence are prevalent in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb in Harare and a strong positive correlation between these two community problems was reported. Given the nexus between substance abuse and domestic violence, a multi-sectorial approach should be used to address the realities of these life-threatening problems. The preventive efforts should target the root causes of the problems while mitigating efforts should address the presenting effects of the problems.

Key Words: Nexus; Alcohol abuse; Domestic violence; Substance abuse.

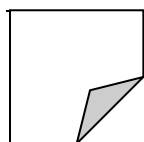
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I. Introduction

Substance abuse refers to the use of alcohol, nicotine, prescription drugs or illegal drugs, over the counter drugs and indigenous plants amongst other similar substances in a manner that causes harm to the user or the wider community (Brown et al., 2017; Chen & Green, 2018). On the other hand, domestic violence is defined as misuse of power as well as control by one partner over the other within the context of an intimate relationship, more commonly by men over women, and in some cases by women over men (Kalmuss, 2017). It should be noted that the meaning of domestic violence goes beyond partner abuse to include abuse of other family members such as children. In line with this broader view of domestic violence UNICEF (2017) identifies various forms of domestic violence perpetrated by intimate partners and other members of families, and these include physical abuse (slapping, kicking, stabbing, choking, strangling, burning, murder, and threats with weapons), traditional practices that are harmful to women which (female genital mutilation prevalent among certain ethnic groups in developing countries), psychological abuse which include (threats of abandonment, surveillance home confinement, denial of basic needs including food, destruction of objects, isolation, verbal abuse, and constant humiliation) (Boles & Miotto, 2017). Psychological abuse is intended to persecute and intimidate victims (Noonan, Taylor & Burke, 2017).

Several studies were conducted to establish the link between domestic violence and substance abuse. A study conducted by Wilson, Graham and Taft (2014) revealed that 50% of perpetrators of sexual assault were



alcohol abusers. Another study conducted in South Africa by Bailey (2018) showed that men in battering usually experienced violent episodes a few hours after taking alcohol. In Brazil, Caetano (2018) reported that 75% of perpetrators of abuse had once consumed alcohol, while almost 25% had experienced alcohol problems at some point in their lives. A recent study conducted by Zannettino (2020) in the USA revealed that 67% to 93% of wife batterers were alcohol abusers. Similarly, The United Kingdom Drug Strategy (2021) noted a high prevalence of domestic violence perpetrators amongst men undergoing treatment for drug abuse than in the general population. Other emerging studies have also shown positive links between child abuse and alcohol abuse (Zweig et al., 2002, cited in Gadd et al., 2019). Yates (2018), therefore, concluded that alcohol use is a risk factor for domestic violence. Irons and Schneider (2019) noted showed that the actions and behaviours of perpetrators of domestic violence and substance abusers were similar. These actions and behaviours included loss of control, blaming others, the persistence of certain behaviours despite them being detrimental, denial, unfulfilled promises to change, and cycles of escalation. Research has also shown that victims of domestic violence use drugs as mechanisms for lowering the threshold of perceived provocation (Fals-Stewart, Leonard, & Birchler, 2017; Kolstermann & Fals-Stewart, 2016). For example, some battered women use drugs in order to cope with different traumas caused by domestic violence (Stern & Heise, 2018). This phenomenon was endorsed by Choenni, Hammink, and Van de Mheen (2017) who observed that chemically dependent women were available sexually and ready for sexual aggression.

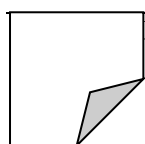
Due to high prevalence of domestic violence and substance abuse worldwide, ways to deal these problems have been sought. Peralta, Tuttle, and Steele (2017) argue that the first in mitigating and or preventing substance abuse and domestic violence is to track these problems in communities. Thereafter, there is need to create community awareness of the root causes and consequences of substance abuse and domestic violence (Abramsky et al., 2018; Crane & Easton, 2017). Another strategy used in the developed world is to strengthening legislation and regulations on licensing and purchasing of alcohol in the community. A study conducted by Goldemid (2017) in Australia showed that restrictions on the hours during which alcohol could be sold to the public resulted in a reduction in the incidence of domestic violence as measured by the number of victims presenting to healthcare facilities. According to Black, Sussman, and Unger (2019), in low- to medium-income countries, strengthening legislation and regulation around liquor shop licensing and the legal age for purchasing alcohol is common and may actually an effective strategy dealing with substance abuse and domestic violence. Webster et al. (2018) argue that at international and national levels alike, health organisations have an important role to play in advocating policy measures that address domestic violence and related substance abuse and the implementation of different remedies that will optimise public health.

Cursory surveys have shown a drastic increase in both substance abuse and domestic violence in Zimbabwe (News online, 2 April 2022; Youth Surveys reports, 2019 cited in Musasa Project, 2020). The commonly abused substances are crystal meth, cocaine, marijuana, mangembe, cane spirit, broncleer and glue (News online, 2 April 2022). The use of crystal meth in Zimbabwe has been of particular concern amongst policy makers and the society at large because it is addictive and affects the central nervous system (Cafferky & Mendez et al., 2018). Increased abuse of substances among the youths is attributed to unemployment and need for recreation (Youth Surveys reports, 2019 cited in Musasa Project, 2020). Efforts to address substance abuse and domestic violence separately have yielded limited results worldwide including Zimbabwe. The current approach is to jointly tackle the challenges that emanate from substance abuse and domestic violence. However, there is a paucity of evidence on the nexus between substance abuse and domestic violence in the Zimbabwean context. Therefore, this study which was conducted in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb, sought to provide empirical evidence on prevalence substance abuse and domestic violence; to provide empirical evidence on the nexus between the substance abuse and domestic violence and to document key informants' views on ways of addressing domestic violence and substance abuse.

II. Material And Methods

Research design: A mixed methodology case study design was utilised to investigate the nexus between substance use and domestic violence. This design approach is appropriate for studies that collect both numerical and verbal data and use descriptive statistics and qualitative strategies to analyse the data (Borg & Gall, 1989). The total study sample was 128 which included key informants (social workers, police officers, church leaders, court officials, and medical staff), perpetrators of domestic violence, victims of domestic violence and those recovering from drug and substance abuse. Convenience sampling was used to identify and recruit key informants while stratified random sampling was used to identify and recruit perpetrators of domestic violence, victims of domestic violence and recovering drug and substance abusers. Male and female participants of age group 18 to 50 plus years were included in this study. Ninety-seven perpetrators of domestic violence, victims of domestic violence and recovering drug and substance abusers responded to self-administered questionnaire while 31 key informants were engaged in in-depth interviews.

Study Design: Mixed method case study



Study Location: Kuwadzana High Density Suburb in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Study Duration: November 2021 to November 2022.

Sample size: 128 participants.

Procedure methodology

Ethical approval for the study was sought from the Research Council of Zimbabwe while permission to conduct the study was sought from the gatekeepers of Kuwadzana Community. Each participant signed a consent form. Questionnaires were administered at a community hall in Kuwadzana provided by the gatekeepers while interviews were scheduled for a time when the participants felt comfortable talking to the researchers. Before the study commenced, participants received information about the research. The information provided explained in detail the research purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits including the rights of the participant and contact information of the researcher. Questionnaire administration lasted for 20 minutes while each interview took between 45 to 60 minutes and all interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. To ensure credibility, in-depth individual interviews were conducted to get to the core of the nexus between substance abuse and domestic violence. Interview scripts were written in a notebook to allow for auditing of the research process, and this helped to improve trustworthiness of the data (Davidson, 2009).

Statistical analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) © version 16 was used to analyse quantitative data using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies percentages and standard deviation were used to report patterns and trends which emerged from the data. Qualitative data were grouped into themes and analysed using content analysis.

III. Results

Prevalence of domestic violence in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb

Table 1 below shows that domestic violence is prevalent in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb. The majority (49.10%) of victims of domestic violence reported enduring physical abuse, 30.19% experienced psychological violence while the remaining 20.71% endured economic abuse.

Table 1: Form of abuse endured by victims

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Physical Abuse	26	49.10
Psychological	16	30.19
Economic	11	20.71
Total	53	100

Source: Primary data (2022)

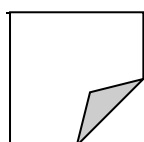
During in-depth interviews key informants confirmed the prevalence of the three forms of domestic violence in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb. Key informant 2 said: *We have seen many cases in our jurisdiction and they differ greatly though they are all cases of domestic violence.* In concurrence Key informant 5 stated: *We deal with different cases and these are usually unique in relation to other reported cases of domestic violence.* Key informant 4 reported that: *Victims of domestic violence that we have worked with experienced different forms of violence, which is physical, economic and psychological violence.* Research has acknowledged the prevalence of the forms of domestic violence revealed by the present study worldwide (Boles & Miotto, 2017; Nigam, 2020; Noonan, Taylor, & Burke, 2017; UNFPA, 2020; UNICEF, 2017).

Prevalence of substance abuse in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb

Submissions by key informants showed that there is a high rate of substance abuse in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb. Key informant 11 had this to say: *Substance abuse is a problem in our locality as many individuals are caught up in the detrimental practice. A lot of people are struggling with substance abuse.* Brown et al. (2017) concurred that substance abuse is harmful to the user and non-using members of the community. According to Key informant 12 substance abuse particularly alcohol abuse is serious in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb. The typical statements of this key informant were: *The two forms of substance abuse have proven to be a challenge for stakeholders and we deal with a lot of cases of both.* Key informant 14 noted: *Alcohol abuse is widespread in Kuwadzana and though beer drinking is an old practice, the abuse of alcohol is quite rife in the area. Many are struggling with alcoholism and it is quite a challenge that affects many individuals.*

Extent to which acute substance abuse has contributed to use of violence in the households

According to results shown in Table 2 below 50.94% of the participants indicated that substance abuse contributed immensely to domestic violence, 30.10% reported that substance abuse minimally contributed to



domestic violence while 16.98% of the participants said that substance abuse lowly contributed to domestic violence. During in-depth interviews participants disclosed substance abuse especially alcohol abuse breeds violence in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb. The situation in this suburb was aptly described by Participant 13 who said: *There is a lot of violence perpetrated largely by alcohol abuser and this violence happens even with non-drinkers. People of all genders may experience this violence.*

Table 2: Extent to which acute substance abuse contributed to domestic violence

Response	Frequency	Percentage
High level of contribution	27	50.94
Middle level of contribution	17	30.10
Lower level of contribution	9	16.98
Total	53	100

The study findings are in line with findings of similar studies conducted elsewhere in the world which reported a link between substance abuse and domestic violence (Bailey, 2018; Caetano, 2018; Counhary, Kaithwas & Rana, 2017; The United Kingdom Drug Strategy, 2021; Wilson, Graham & Taft, 2014; Wendt and Zannettino, 2020; Yates, 2018; Zannettino, 2020).

Correlation between substance abuse and domestic violence

As shown in Table 3 below a significant and positive correlation between substance abuse and domestic violence was reported. This means that whenever substance abuse increases domestic violence also increases.

Table 3: Correlation analysis			
		Substance abuse	Domestic violence
Substance abuse	Pearson Correlation	1	.412
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.030
Domestic violence	Pearson Correlation	.412	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	

Source: Survey data (2022)

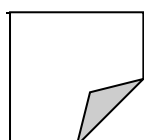
The findings are in harmony with those by Bailey (2018) who noted that men in battering usually experience battering violent episodes a few hours after taking alcohol. Similarly, Counhary, Kaithwas, and Rana (2017) show that alcohol is the main cause of domestic violence in India, and the majority of women are unaware of their rights as well as the laws that relate to domestic violence. Caetano (2018) in a study in Brazil found that 75% of perpetrators of abuse had once consumed alcohol, while almost 25% had experienced alcohol problems at some point in their lives. Though the study findings appear to indicate that the nexus between substance abuse and domestic violence is about alcohol use, it should be realised that the phenomenon is much broader in scope.

Chi-Square Test

Pearson Chi-square performed (see table 4 below) indicated a significant association between substance abuse and domestic violence. This finding corroborates the finding of a study conducted by Schneider (2019) that revealed the e actions and behaviours of perpetrators of domestic violence and those of substance abusers were similar which included loss of control, blaming others, the persistence of certain behaviours despite them being detrimental, denial, unfulfilled promises to change, and cycles of escalation. Further support of the association between the twin evils (i.e., substance abuse and domestic violence) is provided by findings of a study conducted by More et al. (2018) which showed that the relationship between substance abuse and domestic violence episodes was close to 92%.

Ways of addressing substance use and domestic violence in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb

Key informants were in agreement that there is need to raise community awareness of the root causes and consequences of the twin problems of substance abuse and domestic violence. This strategy has been successfully used in Western health systems (Crane & Easton, 2017). As suggested by key informant 11 another strategy would be to address various stressors which fuel the abuse of substances and drugs in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb. This informant said: *There is a lot of stress amongst the individuals in the society. Various economic and social challenges are being faced especially with the state of the economy. Many young people are unemployed and families are struggling to make ends meet. All these contribute the status quo and they need to be targeted as part of the solution.* Community counselling is another strategy proposed by Key informant 1. The typical words of this informant captured during in-depth interviews were: *Counselling is important in ensuring that there is little possibility that individuals will turn to detrimental coping mechanisms including use and abuse of various intoxicating substances. Availing such services would help ensure that there is little resort to violence.* Furthermore, strengthening legislation and regulations around licensing and purchasing of substances could help



curb the twin problems in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb. For example, Key informant 4 said: *The policy framework around domestic violence can be revamped to ensure greater effectiveness in ending the problem. Both preventative measures and remedial measures need to be balanced to ensure that the policy measures are more effective.* This strategy is well support by research (Abramsky et al., 2018; Black, Sussman & Unger, 2019; Goldemid, 2017; Peralta, Tuttle & Steele, 2017; Webster et al., 2018).

IV. Conclusion

The study revealed that substance abuse and domestic violence are prevalent in Kuwadzana High Density Suburb. Findings also showed that perpetrators of domestic violence were abusers of alcohol while victims of domestic violence used substances as mechanisms for lowering the threshold of perceived provocation. A significant relationship between substance use and domestic violence was reported. The strategies for dealing with substance abuse and domestic violence in this suburb could include creating community awareness of the root causes and consequences, addressing various stressors which fuel the abuse of substances, counselling perpetrators and victims of domestic violence and strengthening legislation and regulations around licensing and purchasing substances.

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