SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

An assessment of peer dynamics and parental influence on substance Abuse in youths of Mpatamatu, Luanshya district: A cross-section study.

BY

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DECLARATION FORM

DECLARATION

Name of student and ID: Ethel Mpundu BSPH22115038

I declare that this proposal is my creative work and to the best of my acquaintance has not been presented for a degree in any other institution.

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This dissertation has been submitted with my approval as a University of Lusaka (UNILUS) supervisor.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved family, whose unwavering love, encouragement, and prayers have been my greatest source of strength throughout this academic journey.

To my parents, for instilling in me the values of hard work, discipline, and perseverance.

To my friends and colleagues, who stood by me through every challenge and triumph your support means the world to me.

Most importantly, I dedicate this work to the youth of Mpatamatu and beyond, with the hope that it contributes to creating awareness and fostering positive change in our communities.

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Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
UNILUS	University of Lusaka
REC	Research Ethics Committee
IDI	In-Depth Interview
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
GSHS	Global School-based Student Health Survey
WHO	World Health Organization
NVivo	Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Not an acronym, but used as a name)
ZMW	Zambian Kwacha
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
NHRA	National Health Research Authority

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Substance abuse among youth is a growing global concern, particularly in low-income and developing regions. In Zambia, like in many other parts of the world, adolescent substance abuse has emerged as a pressing issue with long-term implications for public health, education, and social development. Mpatamatu, a residential area in Luanshya, Zambia, faces a rising incidence of substance abuse among its youth. This research aims to assess the influence of peer dynamics and parental relationships on substance abuse behaviours in this community.

Substance abuse during adolescence can be a consequence of various factors, but peer pressure and parental influence have been identified as two of the most significant contributors. Peer influence involves the impact that friends or peers have on an individual's decision-making process, while parental influence pertains to how family relationships, values, and behaviours shape youth attitudes toward substances. Understanding these dynamics in the context of Mpatamatu can provide insights into the root causes of substance abuse and inform effective interventions.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Substance abuse among youths in Mpatamatu, Luanshya, is a rising problem, yet the contributing factors, especially the roles of peer dynamics and parental influence, remain underexplored in this region. This gap in understanding complicates the development of targeted prevention and intervention strategies. Therefore, this study was seeking to investigate how peer pressure and parental influence contribute to substance abuse behaviours in youths of Mpatamatu.

1.2 Justification of the study

Substance abuse among youth remains one of the most pressing public health challenges, particularly in regions where peer pressure and parental involvement are often major influencing factors. In Zambia, and specifically in Mpatamatu, Luanshya District, the escalating problem of substance abuse among young people has become a critical concern. This study was essential for several reasons such as understanding the dynamics of substance abuse among youth and how they can vary significantly from one community to another, creating

awareness among parents and youths and the results will help design more effective and targeted intervention programs for youth in Mpatamatu.

1.3 General research objective

The primary objective of this study was to assess the influence of peer dynamics and parental relationships on substance abuse in youths in Mpatamatu, Luanshya.

1.4 Specific research objectives

Specifically, the study:

1. Examined the extent to which peer influence contributes to substance abuse among youths.
2. Investigated how parental relationships and attitudes toward substance use affect the likelihood of youth engaging in substance abuse.
3. Identified the types of substances abused by youths in the area.

1.5 Research questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. To what extent does peer pressure influence substance abuse among youths in Mpatamatu, Luanshya?
2. How do parental attitudes and behaviours regarding substance use affect the likelihood of youths engaging in substance abuse?
3. What are the most commonly abused substances among youths in Mpatamatu?

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Recent research in Africa underscores the significant impact of peer relationships and parental guidance on youth substance use. A systematic review in sub-Saharan Africa found that adolescents from homes with weak family bonds, poor communication, and limited parental oversight were more likely to engage in substance use (Adu-Mireku, 2019). Conversely, studies suggest that strong family connections and consistent parental monitoring contribute to lower rates of substance abuse among young people (Mugisha et al., 2021). In South Africa, findings indicate a strong correlation between inadequate parental supervision and heightened alcohol consumption among adolescents (Brook et al., 2020). On the other hand, parental guidance characterized by warmth and firm discipline is linked to lower levels of drug and alcohol use among young individuals (Mudavanhu, 2022). Increased parental vigilance has also been shown to delay the initiation of substance use and decrease its frequency.

Peer influence is another critical factor influencing adolescent substance use. A meta-analysis established a significant relationship between peer dynamics and substance use, demonstrating that young individuals tend to conform to the behaviours of their social circles over time (Nkansah-Amankra & Minelli, 2021). This highlights the role of peer interactions in shaping youth substance consumption patterns. Studies conducted in Nigeria have revealed that peer pressure is a major predictor of substance use among university students (Adelabu et al., 2020). Additionally, psychological distress has been linked to increased substance use, suggesting that both social and emotional aspects must be addressed to effectively curb substance abuse among young people (Olawole & Akinpelu, 2021). Further research from Uganda has confirmed a direct link between peer influence and alcohol consumption among adolescents in school settings (Okello et al., 2019).

In Zambia, the pattern of youth substance use reflects similar concerns. A study by Siziya et al. (2017) analysing data from the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) revealed that 23% of Zambian adolescents had consumed alcohol, with a significant association between substance use and lack of parental supervision. The research found that students who reported parental understanding and engagement were significantly less likely to engage in risky behaviours, including substance use. Similarly, Phiri and Mbulo (2020) identified peer

influence and family disintegration as key predictors of early initiation into alcohol and drug use among Zambian adolescents. Their study emphasized the vulnerability of adolescents in urban and peri-urban areas where community controls and family cohesion are weak.

Furthermore, Mwansa and Mutinta (2021) explored the socio-cultural drivers of substance use in Lusaka and found that youth commonly cited peer pressure, unemployment, and lack of recreational opportunities as leading causes. The study also revealed that exposure to substance use within the household, especially among older siblings or guardians, normalized the behaviour for adolescents. Intervention efforts, they argue, should focus not only on parental involvement but also on strengthening youth-friendly community programs and peer mentorship.

In a school-based qualitative study, Simwanza and Munsaka (2019) found that adolescents in Zambia perceive substance use as a coping mechanism for academic pressure and emotional stress. This supports findings from other African contexts that highlight the psychological dimensions of youth substance abuse. Their recommendations included integrating mental health awareness into school curricula and improving school-family communication to mitigate risk factors.

Additionally, social learning theories suggest that adolescents model behaviours they observe in their immediate environment, reinforcing the role of both peer influence and parental guidance (Scalici & Schulz, 2017). Adolescents are more likely to engage in substance use when exposed to social environments where such behaviour is normalized, further highlighting the importance of positive role models in both peer and family settings (Musomboli et al., 2023). Studies have also shown that the presence of strong cultural or religious values within families can act as a protective factor against substance abuse, helping adolescents resist peer pressure (Omaku et al., 2024).

Moreover, economic and environmental factors contribute to the prevalence of substance use among African youths. Research suggests that socio-economic deprivation and community norms around drug use can exacerbate the likelihood of substance experimentation among adolescents (Gershon, 2024). In Zambia, where many communities face economic challenges, this dynamic is pronounced. According to Chisanga et al. (2022), adolescents in low-income compounds of Lusaka and Kitwe often experience limited access to structured extracurricular activities, contributing to idle time and increased exposure to peer-led risky behaviour. In such

environments, substances like alcohol and cannabis become both a recreational outlet and a means of social bonding.

Understanding these contextual factors is essential in developing multi-faceted intervention strategies that go beyond parental and peer influences. Tailoring prevention programs to the local realities of Zambian youth such as urban poverty, weak community engagement, and lack of mental health support can lead to more effective outcomes.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The interaction between peer influence and parental involvement plays a crucial role in determining adolescent substance use behaviors. Peer influence manifests through direct and indirect pressure, modeling behaviors, and shared group norms, making adolescents more susceptible to engaging in drug and alcohol use when surrounded by substance-using peers. Research has shown that youth often adapt their behaviors to align with their peers, making peer relationships a major contributor to substance use trends (Nkansah-Amankra & Minelli, 2021).

On the other hand, parental involvement, including monitoring, parenting styles, and parental substance use behaviours, serves as a crucial protective factor. Studies in sub-Saharan Africa highlight that adolescents with strong parental relationships and consistent supervision exhibit lower tendencies toward substance use (Mugisha et al., 2021). Additionally, research in South Africa has linked heightened parental monitoring to delayed substance use initiation and lower overall usage (Brook et al., 2020).

The combined effect of peer influence and parental involvement determines an adolescent's susceptibility to substance use. Strong parental guidance can counteract negative peer influence, while inadequate parental supervision may increase the likelihood of substance abuse. Recognizing these dynamics is essential for designing effective intervention programs to curb substance use among youth in Mpatamatu, Luanshya District.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Study Approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to explore in-depth how peer dynamics and parental influence affect substance abuse among youths in Mpatamatu, Luanshya District. This approach was used for gaining rich, descriptive insights into the lived experiences, perceptions, and social contexts that contribute to youth substance use. The qualitative method allowed for a deeper understanding of complex social and emotional factors that cannot be captured through numerical data alone.

3.2 Study Design

A phenomenological design was employed to understand the lived experiences of youths who are either engaged in or at risk of substance abuse. This design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to gather personal stories and meanings that participants attach to peer and parental influences in their substance use behaviours.

3.3 Study Population

The study population consisted of youths aged 13 to 24 years residing in Mpatamatu, Luanshya District. This age group was specifically targeted because it represents a critical developmental stage where peer and parental influences are most pronounced and where the risk of initiating substance use is typically high. Both in-school and out-of-school youths were included to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issue across different subgroups. In addition, the study included parents or guardians, community leaders, teachers, and healthcare providers to gather diverse perspectives on youth behaviour and substance use in the community. Including these voices provided a well-rounded understanding of both risk factors and protective influences.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who have relevant knowledge or experience concerning substance abuse, peer dynamics, or parental involvement. The researcher aimed to engage approximately 15 to 20 youths, 5 to 10 parents or guardians, and 3 to 5 key informants such as teachers, community leaders, or health professionals. These participants were chosen intentionally based on their ability to provide rich, relevant, and diverse data. The final number of participants was determined by data saturation, the point at

which no new information or themes are emerging from the interviews. This approach ensured that the data collected was both meaningful and sufficient for addressing the research questions.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Data was collected through in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). In-depth interviews allowed participants to share their personal stories and reflections in a confidential setting, while focus group discussions encouraged group dialogue and reveal shared norms and collective perceptions. A semi-structured interview guide was developed, guided by the study objectives, to maintain consistency while allowing flexibility for follow-up questions based on participants' responses. All interviews and discussions were conducted in English, Bemba, and were audio-recorded (with consent) to ensure accurate transcription and analysis. Field notes were also taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to allow an in-depth understanding of participants lived experiences and perceptions regarding substance abuse. Through this design, the researcher sought to understand not only what young people do, but why they engage in certain behaviours and how these are shaped by their interactions with peers, family members, and the broader community. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with a total of 35 participants, comprising: 20 youths (11 males and 9 females, both in- and out-of-school), 10 parents or guardians, and 5 key informants (including community leaders, teachers, and healthcare workers).

3.6 Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed using thematic analysis, a method that involved identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. Once all interviews and focus group discussions have been transcribed, the researcher engaged in a systematic process of reading and re-reading the transcripts to gain familiarity with the data. This was followed by coding key statements and grouping similar codes into broader themes that relate to peer and parental influences on substance abuse. The analysis was guided by both the research objectives and theoretical insights from social learning and behavioural theories. Qualitative data analysis software NVivo was used to organize and manage the coding process.

4.6.1 Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process followed the six-step Thematic Analysis framework as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis was used because it provides flexibility in identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. The steps are outlined below.

Step 1: Familiarization with the Data

The researcher began by transcribing all interviews and focus group discussions verbatim immediately after data collection. This helped preserve the accuracy of participants' expressions and capture emotional tone. Transcripts were read several times to gain familiarity and identify recurrent ideas or concepts. During this stage, initial impressions such as "peer pressure," "lack of supervision," and "easy access to alcohol" were noted in the margins of the transcripts.

Step 2: Generating Initial Codes

Each transcript was examined line by line to identify meaningful statements. These statements were given short descriptive codes that summarized the essence of what participants said. Examples of initial codes included:

- "Friends influence decision to drink."
- "Parents never talk about drugs."
- "Alcohol easily available in shops."
- "Boredom leads to drinking."
- "Fear of disappointing parents."

The codes were then organized into preliminary categories that reflected the research objectives.

Step 3: Searching for Themes

Similar codes were grouped together to form broader themes. Three main themes and several subthemes emerged:

1. Peer Influence on Youth Substance Use
    - Pressure to conform and fit in

- Curiosity and group identity
- Peer acceptance and recognition

2. Parental Influence on Youth Behaviour
    - Communication gaps within families
    - Parental modelling of substance use
    - Inadequate supervision and inconsistent discipline
3. Community and Environmental Factors
    - Easy accessibility of substances
    - Lack of recreational opportunities
    - Weak community and institutional engagement

Step 4: Reviewing and Refining Themes

All themes were reviewed to ensure they accurately reflected participants' views. Some codes were merged or renamed for clarity. For example, "boredom" and "lack of recreation" were combined under the subtheme 'Lack of Recreational Opportunities'.

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Each theme was clearly defined, given a name, and supported with relevant participant quotations to enhance authenticity. The researcher linked each theme to existing theoretical and empirical literature to provide deeper understanding.

Step 6: Interpretation and Reporting

Themes were interpreted through the lens of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), which explains that individuals learn behaviours by observing and imitating others, particularly significant models such as peers and parents. The findings were then organized thematically and presented under results .

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Lusaka Research Ethics Committee. Permission was also sought from local authorities and schools in Mpatamatu. Participants were required to provide informed consent, and for those under 18 years, parental/guardian consent was obtained.

Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. Participation was voluntary, and participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequences.

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Results

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

A total of 35 participants took part in the study. Their demographic details are summarized below.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants

Category	Number	Age Range	Gender	Key Characteristics
Youths	20	13–24	11 males, 9 females	Both in- and out-of-school youths from Mpatamatu
Parents/Guardians	10	32–56	3 males, 7 females	Mothers, fathers, and guardians of participating youths
Key Informants	5	28–60	3 males, 2 females	Teachers, health workers, community leaders

This diversity ensured a wide range of perspectives from both male and female participants, across different social and economic backgrounds.

4.3 Summary Table

Table 2: Summary of results demonstrating peer dynamics, parental behaviour, and community factors

Peer Influence	Pressure to conform; Curiosity,Peer acceptance	Peers encourage substance use to gain social acceptance and group identity.	Peer conformity shapes youth decision-making and increases experimentation.
Parental Influence	Communication gaps; Modeling; Supervision	Poor communication and parental drinking behaviour increase risk.	Parental involvement and example are critical protective factors.
Community Factors	Accessibility; Lack of recreation; Weak engagement	Alcohol and drugs are readily available; few alternatives for leisure.	Weak policy enforcements

Overall, the findings demonstrate that peer dynamics, parental behaviour, and community factors interact to shape youth substance use patterns in Mpatamatu. Peer influence plays a direct role by encouraging experimentation and conformity, while parental factors serve as either protective or risk factors depending on family communication and supervision.

The community environment characterized by economic hardship, idle time, and the easy availability of substances amplifies the problem by normalizing substance use and providing limited positive outlets for youth energy.

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 Discussion

5.2 Presentation of Findings

The findings are presented thematically in line with the study objectives and research questions.

Peer Influence on Youth Substance Use

Peer influence emerged as the most prominent factor contributing to substance use among youths in Mpatamatu. Most youths reported that their decisions to try alcohol or drugs were strongly shaped by their friends' behaviours, social expectations, and the desire to belong to a peer group.

a) Pressure to Conform

Many respondents admitted that peer pressure was one of the strongest motivators for substance use. A 17-year-old male youth explained: "My friends told me I was boring because I don't drink. One day I decided to try just to prove I could fit in. After that, it became normal whenever we were together." Similarly, a 16-year-old female youth shared: "Sometimes you feel left out when your friends are having fun and you are the only one who doesn't drink. So, you just join in." This finding indicates that youths often engage in substance use to gain social acceptance and avoid rejection. Substance use, therefore, becomes a symbol of group membership and a way of maintaining friendships. This aligns with Nkansah-Amankra & Minelli (2021), who found that peer conformity significantly predicts substance use among African adolescents.

b) Curiosity and Group Identity

Several participants described substance use as an act of curiosity and experimentation driven by peer interactions. "We just wanted to see how it feels to smoke. It started as a game after school," said one male participant aged 18. Another respondent explained: "Sometimes we use alcohol not because we are addicted, but because it's part of how we enjoy ourselves as friends." Curiosity and the desire to form a group identity influence initial substance use among youths. These activities often occur in social gatherings or after-school interactions where youths seek entertainment or shared experiences.

c) Peer Acceptance and Recognition

Youths also expressed that substance use earned them recognition among peers. "When I started drinking, older boys began inviting me to their parties. I felt respected," said a 19-year-old male youth.

Peer networks provide both emotional and social validation. In this context, substance use operates as a social currency that grants acceptance and perceived maturity.

Parental Influence on Youth Behaviour

Parental involvement, or the lack thereof, significantly affected youth behaviour. Three main subthemes emerged: communication gaps, parental modeling, and supervision and discipline.

a) Communication Gaps

Many youths indicated that their parents rarely discuss substance use with them. “My parents just tell me not to drink, but they don’t explain why. I learn more from my friends than from them,” said a 15-year-old female student. Parents also admitted facing challenges communicating with their children: “Sometimes it’s difficult to talk to teenagers about drugs. They think we are judging them,” said a 43-year-old mother. Lack of open communication between parents and children reduces opportunities for prevention and early intervention. When parental guidance is absent, peers and media fill the informational gap.

b) Parental Modeling

Some participants grew up in households where alcohol use was normalized. “My father drinks every day after work. It feels normal to drink because I’ve seen it all my life,” reported one 20-year-old male youth. Parents acknowledged this influence: “We drink during family gatherings, and children also see us. Maybe they think it’s okay,” said a 50-year-old male parent.

Parents who use alcohol or drugs inadvertently send a message of acceptability to their children. This finding supports Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes learning through observation.

c) Supervision and Discipline

Both youths and parents emphasized that lack of supervision contributes to risky behaviour. “Most parents are busy working. Children are left on their own,” said a 36-year-old teacher.A youth respondent added: “We hang out at night without anyone asking where we are going. That’s when most drinking happens.” Weak parental monitoring increases unsupervised peer interaction and opportunities for substance use. Parents who spend limited time with their children may unknowingly allow harmful peer influences to dominate.

Community and Environmental Factors

Environmental factors were identified as indirect yet powerful influences that shape youth behaviour toward substance use.

a) Easy Accessibility of Substances

Nearly all respondents stated that alcohol and marijuana are easily accessible in Mpatamatu. “Even children can buy beer from some shops. No one asks for age,” reported a 15-year-old male youth. The lack of enforcement of alcohol regulations facilitates underage access. This reflects a weak regulatory environment that perpetuates youth substance use.

b) Lack of Recreational Opportunities

Many youths cited boredom and unemployment as leading causes of drug and alcohol use.

“There’s nothing else to do. No football fields, no youth centers. Drinking is our only way of having fun,” said a 22-year-old male youth.
Limited recreational infrastructure pushes young people to seek entertainment through alcohol and drugs. Providing community-based activities could reduce this risk.

c) Weak Community Engagement

Key informants noted that community involvement in addressing substance abuse is minimal.

“We only hear about substance abuse during Youth Day or health campaigns. There is no continuous education,” said a community leader.
Inadequate community sensitization, coupled with the absence of regular prevention programs, limits awareness and collective action. This demonstrates a need for sustained community-based education and youth support structures.

4.7 Theoretical Interpretation

The findings are consistent with Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), which asserts that behaviour is learned through observation and imitation of role models. Youths in Mpatamatu are influenced by: Peers who normalize substance use, Parents who indirectly endorse it through their actions, and Societal structures that fail to provide alternative role models or healthy social outlets. Thus, both the micro-level (family, peers) and macro-level (community, policy) factors collectively shape substance use behaviour among adolescents.

5.3 Limitations of the study

This study was limited by several factors that should be considered when interpreting the findings:

1. Sample Size and Scope:
   The study involved a relatively small number of participants within one community (Mpatamatu, Luanshya). This limits the generalizability of the findings to other settings or regions with different social and economic contexts.
2. Self-Reporting Bias:
   Data were collected through interviews and focus group discussions, relying on participants' self-reported information. Some respondents may have underreported or exaggerated their experiences due to fear of judgment or social desirability bias, especially given the sensitive nature of substance abuse.
3. Cross-Sectional Design:
   Because the study design was cross-sectional, it only captured data at one point in time. This limits the ability to establish causal relationships between peer and parental influences and substance abuse behaviours.
4. Cultural Sensitivity and Stigma:
   Cultural attitudes toward substance use and the stigma associated with it may have affected participants' willingness to discuss their experiences openly, leading to potential gaps in the data.
5. Language Barriers and Interpretation:
   Although interviews were conducted in English and Bemba, some nuances in meaning may have been lost during translation or interpretation, potentially affecting the richness and accuracy of responses.

6.0 CHAPTER SIX

6.1 Conclusion

The study revealed that peer dynamics, parental influence, and community environment play significant roles in shaping substance use behaviours among youths in Mpatamatu, Luanshya District. Peer pressure, curiosity, and the need for social acceptance were key motivators for initiating substance use. On the other hand, lack of parental supervision, weak communication, and parental modeling of alcohol consumption were identified as major contributing factors.

Furthermore, environmental factors such as the easy accessibility of substances, limited recreational facilities, and weak community engagement exacerbate the problem. These findings support the Social Learning Theory**,** which posits that individuals learn and imitate behaviours observed in their immediate environment particularly from peers and parents.

In conclusion, youth substance abuse in Mpatamatu is a multifaceted problem requiring collective efforts from families, schools, communities, and policymakers. Addressing these social and environmental determinants is essential for reducing the prevalence and long-term consequences of substance abuse among young people.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. For Parents and Families

Strengthen parent–child communication on substance uses through open, non-judgmental discussions. Serve as positive role models by avoiding substance use in front of children and reinforcing healthy behaviours. Increase parental supervision and involvement in adolescents' social lives and activities.

2. For Schools and Educational Institutions

Integrate substance abuse education and life-skills programs into the school curriculum to enhance awareness and resistance to peer pressure. Establish peer mentorship programs where positive peer leaders promote healthy behaviour among fellow students.

3. For Community Leaders and Organizations

Develop and support youth recreational centres and sports activities to provide alternatives to substance use.

Conduct regular community sensitization campaigns on the dangers of substance abuse and the importance of parental guidance. Strengthen community surveillance and collaboration with law enforcement to regulate the sale of alcohol and drugs to minors.

4. For Policy Makers and Government

Enforce existing substance control laws to prevent underage access to alcohol and drugs. Support community-based rehabilitation and counselling programs tailored for youths struggling with substance use. Invest in mental health and social welfare programs that address the underlying causes of substance abuse, such as unemployment and social exclusion.

5. For Future Research

Conduct longitudinal studies to examine causal relationships between peer influence, parental behaviour, and youth substance abuse. Expand research to include diverse communities in Zambia for broader generalization and comparative analysis. Explore the role of digital media and social networks in influencing substance use behaviours among youths.

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Appendices

Table 3: Workplan that shows the duration of the research

Activity	May 2025	June 2025	July 2025	August 2025
Proposal writing and approval	✓			
Ethical clearance and authorization		✓		
Development and pretesting of tools		✓		
Data collection			✓	
Data entry and cleaning			✓	
Data analysis			✓	✓
Report writing				✓
Submission and dissemination of findings				✓

Table 4: Budget that will cover all the expenses

S/N	Item	Unit Cost (ZMW)	Quantity	Subtotal (ZMW)
1	Ethics Clearance- Payment	500	1	500
2	Transport for data collection	150	6	900
3	Printing of interview forms	3	350	1050
4	Refreshments	400	1	400
5	Printing & Binding of the report	3	150	450
6	Miscellaneous (stationery, airtime, etc.)	800	1	800
	Subtotal			4,100
	Contingency (10%)			410
	Total Budget			K4,510

Data Collection Tools

Interview form

1. Semi-Structured Interview Guide

This guide is designed for use in in-depth interviews (IDIs) with youths, parents/guardians, and key informants as part of the study titled: 'An Assessment of Peer Dynamics and Parental Influence on Substance Abuse in Youths of Mpatamatu, Luanshya District.' The interviews will explore participants' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions regarding peer and parental influence on substance use.

A. Interview Guide for Youth Participants

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself (age, school/work status, and who you live with)?
2. In your opinion, what are the most commonly used substances among youths here in Mpatamatu?
3. What do you think makes young people start using these substances?
4. Do you or your friends use any of these substances? If yes, how did it start?
5. How do your friends or peers influence your decisions about using or avoiding substances?
6. Have you ever felt pressured or encouraged by your friends to try alcohol or drugs?
7. How would you describe your relationship with your parents or guardians?
8. Do your parents talk to you about substance use? What do they say?
9. How do your parents monitor or guide your behaviour (for example, where you go, who you spend time with)?
10. What do you think parents can do to prevent their children from abusing substances?
11. Are substances easily available in your community? From where?
12. What kind of support do you think young people need most to stay away from drugs and alcohol?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add about how peers or parents influence youth substance use?

B. Interview Guide for Parents/Guardians

1. How would you describe the current situation of youth substance abuse in Mpatamatu?
2. What challenges do parents face in guiding or supervising their children?
3. How do you communicate with your children about drug and alcohol use?
4. What family practices or habits may encourage or discourage substance use?
5. What support do parents need to prevent substance abuse among youths?

C. Interview Guide for Key Informants (Teachers, Health Workers, Community Leaders)

1. What are the major causes of youth substance abuse in this area?
2. How do peer relationships influence this behaviour among youths?
3. How does parental involvement (or lack of it) affect the problem?

4. What interventions currently exist in Mpatamatu?
5. What do you recommend to reduce substance abuse among young people?

2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide for Youths

This guide is intended for focus group discussions with youths aged 13–24. Each group should have 6–10 participants, separated by gender if culturally appropriate. The FGD will explore collective perceptions, social norms, and shared experiences about substance abuse, peer influence, and parental roles.

1. What types of substances are commonly used by youths in your area?
2. Why do you think young people use these substances?
3. How do friends influence each other's behaviour toward drug or alcohol use?
4. What are some ways youths can resist peer pressure?
5. How do parents or guardians influence young people's choices about substance use?
6. Do parents in your community talk to their children about drugs and alcohol?
7. How available or accessible are substances like alcohol or marijuana in your area?
8. What role does the community (church, school, or police) play in prevention?
9. What could be done to reduce youth substance abuse in Mpatamatu?
10. What message would you give to other young people about avoiding substance use?

Consent Forms

A. Participant Consent Form

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled 'An Assessment of Peer Dynamics and Parental Influence on Substance Abuse in Youths of Mpatamatu, Luanshya District.' The purpose of this study is to understand how peers and parents influence substance use behaviours among youths in Mpatamatu. Participation is voluntary. You may choose not to answer any question or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Your responses will be kept confidential.

I have read and understood the above information and agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Name: _____

Signature/Thumbprint: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

B. Parental/Guardian Consent Form (for participants under 18)

I, the undersigned parent/guardian, give permission for my child to participate in this research study titled 'An Assessment of Peer Dynamics and Parental Influence on Substance Abuse in Youths of Mpatamatu, Luanshya District.' I understand that participation is voluntary and that confidentiality will be maintained.

Parent/Guardian's Name: _____

Signature/Thumbprint: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Authorization letter, from NHRA, UNILUSREC

UNIVERSITY *of* LUSAKA

Passion for Quality Education: Our Driving Force

UNIVERSITY OF LUSAKA RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (UNILUS-REC)

Plot No. 37413, Off Alick Nkhata Mass Media. P. O Box 36711, Lusaka.
Phone: +260211258505, 258409 Fax +260211233409; Cell +260976075850,961917862,
E-mail:unilus@zamnet.zm,ictar@zamnet.zm

UNILUS-RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Ref no: FWA00033228-1166(08)/(08)/{2024}

Date: 16 October 2025

STUDENT NAME: **Ms. Ethel Mpundu**

An assessment of peer dynamics and parental influence on substance Abuse in youths of Mpatamatu, Luanshya district: A cross-section study.

The above research was submitted to the research ethics committee for review. The study has no major ethical problems and is approved subject to the following:

1. The study cannot be changed without express permission of the UNILUS research ethics committee.
2. Approval from the necessary authority should be sought.

NATIONAL HEALTH RESEARCH AUTHORITY
Lot No. 18961/M, off Kasama Road, Chalala, P.O. Box 30075, LUSAKA
Tell: +260211 250309| Email: znhrasec@nhra.org.zm | www.nhra.org.zm

Ref No: NHRA-11177/28/10/2025 Date:28th October, 2025

The Principal Investigator
Ethel Mpundu
University of Lusaka
Lusaka

Dear Ethel Mpundu,

RE: REQUEST FOR AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The National Health Research Authority is in receipt of your request for authority to conduct research titled "An assessment of peer dynamics and parental influence on substance Abuse in youths of Mpatamatu, Luanshya district: A cross-section study."

I wish to inform you that following submission of your request to the Authority, our review of the same and in view of the ethical clearance, this study has been approved on condition that:

1. The relevant Provincial and District Medical Officers where the study is being conducted are fully appraised;
2. Progress updates are provided to NHRA bi-annually from the date of commencement of the study;
3. The final study report is cleared by the NHRA before any publication or dissemination within or outside the country;
4. After clearance for publication or dissemination by the NHRA, the final study report is shared with all relevant Provincial and District Directors of Health where the study was being conducted, University leadership, and all key respondents.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Victor Chalwe
Director and Chief Executive Officer
NATIONAL HEALTH RESEARCH AUTHORITY

UNIVERSITY
of LUSAKA

Plot No. 37413, Off Alick Nkhata Mass Media. P. O Box 36711, Lusaka.
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E-mail:unilus@zamnet.zm,ictar@zamnet.zm

All correspondence should be made to the Vice-Chancellor

.....

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

REF: INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR UNIVERSITY OF LUSAKA STUDENT

The above caption refers.

This serves to introduce....., a bonafide student of the University of Lusaka, with student number ..... The student is in fourth year pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Public Health in the School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

He/she is interested in doing an internship/attachment at your Organisation/Institution in order to gain practical experience relating to Public Health practice.

Among the modules successfully completed are:

- Health services Management and Policy;
- Health Systems Development and Management ;
- Occupational Health and Ergonomics;
- Community Health Service Delivery ;
- Strategic Management and Marketing Health Care Organisations;
- Project Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation and Entrepreneurship Skills; and
- Climate Change and Public Health.

The University of Lusaka has no objections regarding the student's interest and believe that the experience gained shall benefit him/her as a future public health professional.

Any assistance rendered to the student shall be greatly appreciated.

Eva Kangwa (Mrs.)

Head of Public Health Department

School of Medicine and Health Sciences