

# **Coping with drug and substance abuse among the university youth in Zimbabwe: Towards a ‘quad-helix’ model**

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## **Abstract**

The emergence of drug and substance abuse (DSA) among the youth has long become a global ‘panic’ but has continued to attract fervent interest and attention from both scholarship and development practice. Although extant literature shows how the Zimbabwe government and non-state actors have over the years attempted to disrupt the drug and substance supply, and demand chains, the scourge has remained a recalcitrant challenge. The failure to comprehensively deal with the issue potentially undermines the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in particular SDG3 and also the country’s vision of attaining the status of a ‘middle – income economy’ by the year 2030. It also threatens the ZANU(PF) party-led administration’s mantra of ‘inclusive’ development, given that the youth who are the expected drivers of the country’s future are at the centre of the problem. This article acknowledges the multi-faceted and layered nature of the phenomenon. In light of this, it draws inspiration from a multi-sectoral development philosophy and deploys Flora and Flora’s ‘Community Capitals Framework’ to analyse the factors influencing DSA among the youth, particularly university students and delineate possible ways of addressing the challenge. With a particular focus on the youth in Zimbabwean universities and colleges, the research on which the article is based followed a qualitative approach, predicated on a combination of documentary survey of print and digital evidence, and snippets of ethnographic unstructured interviews and lived experiences of selected key informants. As a coping strategy, the article recommends the adoption of a ‘quadruple helix’ (quad-helix) framework that promotes a multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional approach involving synergistic interactions among universities, private and public sector, communities and civil society.

**Keywords:** community capitals, drug, substance abuse, quad-helix