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Male Drug ab(use) Amongst Youth in Amatolaville, Eastern Cape

by

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A Master's Research Report

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Declaration

I, Anesipho Melane, student number 2597500, earnestly declare that this research report is entirely my own work, and it has not been submitted for examination at any other academic institution. I'm fully aware of the ethical implications of plagiarism, as well as the significance of academic integrity. Therefore, all external sources used in this research have been cited and referenced in compliance with academic standards of the University of the Witwatersrand.



Signature **Date: 18 March 2025**

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Abstract

This research report explored the factors contributing to male drug use in Amatolaville, a township in the Eastern Cape of South Africa, where socio-economic inequalities and cultural norms significantly influence drug-related behaviours. This study used the Sociological Imagination as a theoretical framework to examine the relationship between individual experiences, community attitudes, and overarching structural factors that perpetuate drug use among young males

The research employed a qualitative approach, utilising semi-structured interviews with young men, their families, community members, and the police to elucidate nuanced narratives that underscore personal problems and socio-economic challenges encountered by the population. The findings indicated that mental health concerns, family instability, and social expectations regarding masculinity significantly contribute to individuals resorting to drug use as a coping strategy. The research highlights the significance of community culture in influencing drug-related behaviours.

The study supports community-based initiatives that empower local voices and tackle the underlying causes of drug use, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3). The report contextualised local experiences within a wider socio-economic framework, enhancing our comprehension of substance addiction in township settings and underscoring the need for tailored policies that tackle both individual and structural issues. This research will assist in enhancing mental well-being and cultivate healthier communities through identifying inclusive and contextually relevant strategies for drug usage prevention.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Most recently, drug use among young people has been acknowledged as one of the most significant health and social issues that post-apartheid South Africa is currently grappling with (Moleko & Visser, 1999; Parry and Bennets, 1998). It was estimated that millions of young South African adolescents consume alcohol, tobacco, cannabis (dagga), solvents (such as petrol and glue), and other substances (Parry & Bennets, 1998).

Drug use poses a significant challenge not only in the communities from which we originate, but also in South Africa as a whole. This challenge has underscored the necessity of conducting a sociological research to identify the various factors that contribute to its origin. It is imperative to identify and comprehend these structural factors in order to create interventions that can effectively reduce the effects of substance use on both individuals and the community.

The sociological imagination theory facilitates the understanding of the relationship between personal issues, and broader social concerns (Mills, 1957). This method enables us to perceive drug use as a multifaceted issue that is influenced by both individual experiences and broader societal factors. The objective of this study was to elucidate the underlying causes of drug use, challenge societal norms, and inform targeted interventions that address both personal and structural factors.

The significance of this study is further emphasised by its alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3), which prioritise the promotion of health and substance use prevention. The objective of this study was to assess the efficacy or inadequacy of community-based programs in enhancing healthcare outcomes and decreasing substance abuse rates among male adolescents in Amatolaville. By concentrating on this particular demographic, this report sought to fill a gap in literature by utilising personal narratives to analyse the interplay of individual and societal factors that contribute to drug use. Consequently, the research uncovered community-based interventions that can be implemented to promote well-being and prevent drug use.

1.2 The background to male drug abuse among youth in Amatolaville, Eastern Cape.

Van Rensburg Dorp is a township within Stutterheim located in the Amahlathi Local Municipality, Eastern Cape. Stutterheim is a small town situated on the Amathole mountain escape route in the Eastern Cape of South Africa (Infos, 2011). The town is located in the border region of the Eastern Cape province. The majestic Amatola Mountains serve as a distinct beacon on the horizon as this route extends from Adelaide in the west to Stutterheim in the east (Infos, 2011).

Amatolaville is renowned for its cultural heritage and rich history. It was discovered in 1976 and named after Van Rensburg, a prominent lawyer of the era. It was initially purchased for Coloured people; however, after 1994, the ANC government allowed Black individuals to settle in the region, and the area was no longer racially designated. The name was also changed to "Amatolaville" by the ANC government, as "Amatola" is a representation of the surrounding Amatola mountains.

Drug use has become a pervasive and multifaceted issue in Amatolaville, profoundly rooted in the community's economic and cultural landscape. The region is characterised by significant unemployment rates, which exacerbate the availability and consumption of drugs. This results in a cycle of addiction that impacts the majority of the community, particularly young males (Dewing et al., 2006; Parry et al., 2004; Mthembi-Mahanyele, 2021). The history of drug use within the community is intricately linked to more general structural issues, including inadequate social services, limited employment opportunities, and the historical repercussions of apartheid. The socio-economic conditions in the township have been permanently influenced by the legacy of apartheid policies, which systematically marginalised black communities and restricted their access to resources. This is a prevalent issue in townships, as Chen (2023) posits that marginalisation serves as a breeding ground for drug use as a coping mechanism for the brutal realities that the community encounters.

Local interviews have revealed that drugs are not only readily accessible but also occasionally manufactured within the community, which contributes to the normalisation of drug use among residents, particularly among the youth[1]. The widespread use of drugs in Amatolaville has resulted in substantial repercussions, including an increase in crime rates, including theft and domestic violence, as individuals turn to illicit activities to satisfy their addictions.

Amatolaville has been plagued by the prevalence of substances such as alcohol, crystal methamphetamine (tick), and Mandrax, which has impacted individuals of all ages, particularly young people. The residents are more susceptible to drug use due to the social dislocation and the limited educational and employment opportunities that resulted from the absence of recreational facilities.

As it is known that drug use can be a way to assert masculinity, a similar pattern could be occurring in Amatolavlle. Chen (2023) further posits that the pressure to adhere to conventional notions of masculinity can result in men engaging in risky behaviours, such as substance use, in order to demonstrate their masculinity.

1.3 The Objectives of the study

1.3.1 The Sociological Imagination theory was employed to explore the factors that contribute to male drug use in Amatolaville, with the objective of elucidating the impact of broader social structures on individual behaviours.
1.3.2 The research investigated the impact of community culture and attitudes towards drugs on the drug use behaviour of young males in Amatolaville.
1.3.3 Target 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals was implemented in the research to promote mental health and the prevention of drug use in Amatolaville, as well as to develop community-based solutions.

[1] In this community, it's what everybody does, I am going to say 80-70 percent of the people from 16, it can go until 60 years are all drug users. Mostly using crystal meth and Mandrax so it's like normal, so me trying to rehabilitate myself in this community won't work because wherever I go it's a hobby, that's the only thing (James, 04-09-2024).

1.4 The aims of the study

1.4.1. The study gathered personal narratives from young males, their family members, community members and the police regarding their experiences with drug use and factors that contribute to this phenomenon.

1.4.2. The study assessed the socio-economic factors that contribute to drug use among young males in Amatolaville, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3), which is dedicated to assuring the health and well-being of all individuals, regardless of their age. This research emphasises the necessity of creating targeted interventions that address the underlying causes of drug use, including poverty, unemployment, and limited access to education and healthcare. These interventions are indispensable for the enhancement of the overall quality of life for residents and the promotion of healthier communities.

1.4.3. The research aimed to empower individuals by allowing them to articulate the factors contributing to drug use in their community, emphasizing that solutions should emerge from within the community itself. By adopting a bottom-up approach, this study seeks to fill the existing gap in understanding by engaging with those directly affected, which can lead to more relevant and effective local solutions.

1.5 Research questions

What factors contribute to men (ab)using drugs in Amatolaville?

Research sub-questions

1.5.1 What are the individual factors that influence male drug abuse in Amatolaville, and how can addressing these factors contribute to achieving SDG 3 targets to reduce substance abuse and promote mental well-being?

1.5.2 How do societal factors in Amatolaville impact male drug abuse, and in what ways can addressing these social influences support SDG 3 goal in reducing harmful drug use and improving health outcomes for individuals, families, and community?

1.6 Outline of the report

Six chapters comprise this research report. Chapter One is the introduction, which provides the background of the study, the aims, objectives, and research questions. The second chapter then reviews the existing research on male drug abuse, identifying major themes and gaps in literature. Theoretical frameworks that underpin the research are examined, such as the sociological imagination theory, is employed to examine the relationship between personal struggles and public issues regarding substance abuse. The methodology section of Chapter Three subsequently provides a comprehensive overview of the research design and methods that were implemented to address the research question. The research location and scope of Amatolaville are defined, and a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for capturing the lived experiences of participants. Chapter Four presents the primary themes that were identified during participant interviews. Patterns and shared experiences among participants were revealed through the analysis of these themes, which provided insights into the factors that contribute to substance abuse in the community. The findings are interpreted in Chapter Five in relation to the research question, objective of the study and the existing literature. The main findings of the research are summarised in Chapter Six, which concludes with significant reflections and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter Two presents a thorough literature review that serves as a foundational component of this study, focusing on the multifaceted issue of drug use among men in Amatolaville. The literature review chapter synthesizes existing research, theoretical frameworks, and conceptual frameworks that inform an understanding of drug use, while also identifying key themes and gaps in the literature. By synthesizing these diverse strands of research, chapter two sets the stage for the subsequent analysis of the factors influencing drug use in Amatolaville, ultimately guiding the development of the effective strategies to address drug use and promote community well-being.

2.2. Drug use in Townships

Drug use is understood as the self-administration of psychoactive drugs, this includes any substance that has the potential to influence perception, emotion, cognition, behaviour, or motor activity when consumed (National Drug Master Plan, 2019). Addiction is a chronic, recurrent condition that affects both the mind and behaviour. In many circumstances, it includes the use of legal (in some countries) substances such as alcohol, tobacco, over the counter (OTC) and prescription medication, as well as cannabis, cocaine, and heroine (NDMP, 2019). Lindesmith (1938) emphasises that teenagers frequently turn to drugs in high school to explore new sensations or escape undesirable sentiments, initially finding pleasure and solace in drug use.

A township is a term commonly used in South Africa to refer to the urban settlements that were designed for blacks during the apartheid era (Christopher, 2001). Areas on the periphery of urban areas are marginal areas. These areas were segregated based on race and were characterised by poor infrastructure, limited access to resources, and beset with social and economic challenges (Christopher, 2001).

Lindesmith (1938) posits that addiction is not a personal struggle, but rather influenced by collective symbols that are deeply ingrained in society, such as culture and knowledge. For instance, the normalisation of drug culture in a township can make it easier for young people to become attracted to it. This suggests that the way in which individuals perceive and interact with

substances is influenced by their cultural beliefs and knowledge, which in turn contributes to the development of addiction.
bell hooks' (1993) "Sisters of the Yam" offers a distinctive viewpoint on addiction in the black community, elucidating the institutionalisation of white supremacist culture that promotes drug use in townships. hooks (1993) critiques the black community's neglect of addiction and underscores the role of institutional oppression in promoting substance use (hooks, 1993).

In addition, Myers, Smith., and Johnson (2008) shows that the prevalence of drug use in townships is influenced by a mix of social, economic, and environmental factors. South Africa has seen an increase in drug misuse, with substances such as white pipe (a blend of Mandrax and marijuana), crack cocaine, cannabis, crystal methamphetamine (known as tik), and alcohol being widely used (Sedibe and Hendriks, 2020).

In contrast to crack cocaine and crystal methamphetamine, which are stimulants that can induce severe cravings and addiction, mandrax is a sedative-hypnotic substance with a high potential for addiction (Parry, Pluddemann, and Myers, 2004). Informal networks and secret markets within townships are frequently used to acquire drugs. These networks are facilitated by conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and limited opportunities for recreational activities within the community.

Mandrax costs R25-R65 per tablet, while crack/cocaine costs R150-R250 per gramme but is available for R50 per'snatch' (Drugware 2006). Methamphetamine is more affordable in this community (about R20-R30 for a ‘straw') (Pluddemann et al., 2005). The terminology is likely to vary in different communities and this terminology only applies to this case study.

Drug sales in townships are frequently conducted by members of organised crime networks or local gangs who derive revenue from the illicit drug trade, as per Parry et al. (2004). The vendors operate in these areas discreetly, with a particular emphasis on adolescents, thereby perpetuating the cycle of instability and addiction (Parry et al, 2004).

While scholars like Lindesmith (1938) provide valuable insights into the sociological aspects of addiction, there is a substantial gap in understanding how addiction manifests among youth in townships, drug culture and experiences can vary significantly among different communities.

2.3. Gender and Drug use

Khunou (2012) emphasises that men's health is a multifaceted and intricate issue that encompasses social, cultural, and environmental influences in addition to biological factors. Recognising that men's health is influenced by broader societal factors (2012), the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines a healthy man as an individual who experiences optimal physical, mental, and social well-being. Smith (2007) emphasises the significance of examining men's health from a socio-economic perspective in order to comprehend the effects of inequality. Challenging the stereotype that associates masculinity solely with negative behaviours, scholars like White et al. (2006) advocate for a more holistic approach to men's health. They argue that men's health should not be limited to reproductive issues but should encompass a wide range of health concerns. In South Africa, where HIV/AIDS, alcohol abuse, violence, and risk-taking behaviours are prevalent amongst men, addressing hegemonic ideas of masculinity is crucial.

The link between masculinity and risky behaviour poses significant health risks for men, as noted by Mfecane (2008) and Addis and Mahalik (2005). The practice of masculinity often promotes unhealthy and risky behaviours, leading to reduced life expectancy and higher mortality rates among men. This association with risk taking behaviour also manifests as violence, both towards women and children, perpetuating harmful gender dynamics.
Khunou (2012) posits that efforts to improve the health of men should concentrate on the promotion of healthier behaviours, the combat of gender-based violence, and the challenge of idealised versions of masculinity. Interventions can enhance the overall well-being of men and boys in various social, emotional, and physical aspects by acknowledging the societal influences on men's health and advocating for a broader understanding of men's health issues.

Alcohol continues to be the most widely consumed substance on a global scale, as indicated by the Global Status Report on Alcohol (2004). Binge drinking, which is defined as the consumption of at least one bottle of wine, seven measures of liquor, or five cans/bottles of beer in a single drinking session, is a common behaviour among young individuals (Hope, 2004; Morojele and Ziervogel, 1999). Males are more likely to engage in binge drinking than females. According to recent surveys, the prevalence of binge drinking among young individuals in European countries is at its greatest. For example, in Ireland, binge drinking has become a prevalent practice among adolescents, with 58 out of every 100 drinking occasions resulting in binge drinking for males and 30 for females (Ramstedt and Hope, 2004). One-third of 16-year-olds in Poland are habitual binge drinkers, and one-fourth reported being intoxicated ten or more times in the past year (Hope, 2004). In the same token, 27.7 percent of males and 24.6 percent of females in Canada reported that they had consumed more than five beverages in the previous month (Hartnagel, 1996). In 2004, Thompson and Walters reported that over half (58 percent) of young Americans in the United States had experienced binge-drinking episodes.
Cannabis is currently in widespread use as an illegal substance among young school pupils in South Africa (SACENDU, 2000; Edmonds and Wilcocks, 2000). Flisher et al. (1998) reported that 32 percent of male students and 13.1 percent of female students had used dagga in the previous month. South Africa is a significant producer of dagga, which is why it is both affordable and easily accessible. A matchbox of dagga typically costs around R5.00 (Edmonds and Wilcocks, 2000).

2.3.1 Masculinity and drug use in townships

In townships, drug use and abuse patterns are influenced by masculinity, which is indicative of complex power dynamics, identity, and social expectations (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Dada, Burnhams, Erasmus and Parry (2018) contend that in numerous South African communities, traditional notions of masculinity prioritise qualities such as emotional stoicism, domination, and toughness, which in turn affects individuals' interactions with these substances. The relationship between substance use and masculinity in townships is also connected to broader issues of social status, control, and power. Dada et al. (2018) substantiates this assertion by examining the potential for male drug users to perceive substance addiction as a means of

enhancing their social status in their communities, demonstrating their masculinity, or demonstrating their fortitude. The interplay between masculinity, identity, and drug use is complex, as drug use can be associated with concepts of rebellion, risk-taking, and deviation from authority (Data et al, 2018).

There is a well-documented connection between substance abuse and mental health issues among male drug users in South African Townships. Anxiety, depression, and other mood disorders are prevalent, with substance abuse often exacerbating these conditions (Moyo et al., 2020). The escalation of drug use is typically marked by both a progressive increase and frequency of use, with users often adopting more risk-laden behaviours such as engaging in criminal activities to support their addiction. This behavioural shift is often accompanied by increased aggression, impulsivity, and increased withdrawal from traditional social structures like family and the community (Moyo et al., 2020). Seedat Van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla, and Ratele, (2009) provides crucial insights on the intersection between masculinity and drug use, which was investigated in the report. This is because lived experiences vary, thus these explanations may not apply to every male who uses substances. Addressing the relationship between masculinity and drug use in townships necessitates a sophisticated knowledge of how gender norms influence behaviour and attitudes towards substance usage. Recognising the importance of masculinity in creating drug use patterns, particularly in townships, allows policymakers and community organisations to build more targeted and successful methods to combat usage (Seedat et al., 2024).

2.4 The epidemiology of drug use

The prevalence of drug use in South Africa is not well-documented. Scheibe, Versfeld, Marks, Shelly and Howell (2017) estimated that the lifetime prevalence of developing drug use is four percent and drug dependence is one percent. This estimate was based on a nationally representative household survey. The South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug use offers self-reported surveillance data from drug-use disorder treatment centres throughout the nation. However, these data are subject to selection bias as a result of financial and geographical constraints that restrict access. Nevertheless, between January and June 2016,

82 centres reported 10,540 patients, with cannabis and alcohol being the primary substances of use (Scheibe et al., 2017). In addition to cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and methaqualone were identified (Scheibe et al., 2017). The data that is currently available offers some insight into the trends of drug use over time; however, there is still a requirement for a more comprehensive and accessible dataset on drug use and trends.

The necessity for studies that investigate the socio-economic, cultural, and structural factors that contribute to drug use is emphasised by the limited/lack of comprehensive research on drug use trends in South Africa. It is essential to comprehend these factors in order to create targeted interventions that address the underlying causes of drug use, rather than merely treating its symptoms. The objective of this research is to elucidate the intricacies of substance use among males in South Africa, with a particular emphasis on marginalised communities.

2.5. Drug use as a personal problem.

Young males in South African townships experience a multitude of personal challenges that exacerbate their substance use. Mokwena and Morajele (2014) identify trauma, family instability, and social marginalisation as personal issues that significantly influence the drug use behaviours of men in townships.

Trauma, both individual and societal, has a significant role in male drug use in townships. Sedibe and Hendriks (2020) report that many men in these communities have experienced violence, abuse, or loss, leading to unresolved emotional and psychological suffering. Drugs may then be used as self-medication by trauma survivors, suppressing painful memories and providing temporary relief from emotional suffering. Sedibe and Hendriks (2020) add that the interplay of trauma and substance misuse highlights the complex relationship between personal issues and drug use habits among males in the township.

2.5.1 Family instability

Adolescents' behaviours and decisions are significantly influenced by their family structure. Youth from unstable family environments, which are defined by parental conflict, divorce, or absence, are at a heightened risk of engaging in substance abuse (Myers et al., 2008). The absence of a stable family unit can result in feelings of neglect and abandonment, which can

encourage young people to turn to drugs as a means of self-soothing (Sedibe and Hendriks, 2020). The impact of family instability is frequently exacerbated in townships, where socio-economic challenges are prevalent, resulting in elevated rates of substance use among young males.

Another critical factor in influencing the behaviour of youth is parental use of substances. According to Lindesmith (1938), children of parents who abuse drugs and alcohol are more likely to adopt similar behaviours, as they may view substance use as a normalized strategy. This cycle of addiction can perpetuate itself across generations, particularly in communities where drug culture is prevalent. This normalization of substance use within the family can diminish the perceived risk associated with drug use, making it more likely for youth to experiment with drug (hooks, 1993).

Young males frequently experience emotional and psychological distress as a result of family instability, which can exacerbate their substance use. Youth from unstable family circumstances may experience elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, all of which are linked to an increase in substance use, as per the Health Sector Drug Master Plan (2019-2025). Youth may resort to substance abuse as a means of alleviating their emotional distress as a result of family disputes or parental neglect.

2.5.2 Boredom

Particularly among young males residing in townships, boredom is becoming increasingly acknowledged as a substantial factor contributing to substance abuse. This study examined the correlation between drug use and boredom, with an emphasis on the potential for a dearth of engaging activities and opportunities to result in an increase in substance use among males in these communities.

Boredom is frequently characterised as a state of dissatisfaction that results from a lack of stimulation or engagement (Fisher, 1993). Boredom can become ubiquitous in the context of townships, where economic opportunities and recreational facilities are limited. Individuals who are experiencing chronic boredom may pursue alternative methods of stimulation, such as

substance use, according to Mann (2014). In an effort to evade mundane realities, individuals engage in risky behaviours, such as substance abuse, in quest of excitement (Harris, Smith, and Johnson, 2016).

The absence of sufficient recreational facilities and programs for youth in townships frequently results in an increase in tedium among young males. As a means of entertainment and escape, the absence of structured activities can lead individuals to resort to substance use Dada et al. (2018). Substance addiction may serve as the primary source of stimulation due to the scarcity of constructive outlets for creativity and energy.

Feelings of social isolation can be exacerbated by boredom, particularly among young males who may feel removed from their peers. According to Seedat et al (2009), individuals who are isolated are more likely to engage in drug use as they seek social connection through substance use. In numerous instances, drug use is transformed into a social activity, as individuals form bonds through their shared experiences with substances, thereby perpetuating the cycle of abuse.

Boredom can also serve as a catalyst for emotional distress, resulting in individuals seeking relief through substance use. Sedibe and Hendriks (2020) emphasise that young men in townships may resort to substance use as a coping mechanism for the hopelessness and despair that are a result of their socio-economic circumstances. The behaviour can be reinforced by the transient relief provided by drugs, resulting in a recurring response to emotional pain and boredom.

2.6 Drug use as a public issue.

Drug use in townships is a complex public issue influenced by various social and structural factors that intersect with individual experiences.

The socio-economic conditions and social structural composition of South African townships have been permanently influenced by the historical context of apartheid policies (Sedibe and Hendriks, 2020). In the post-apartheid era, the legacy of apartheid has established a fertile environment for drug use as a coping mechanism for residents who are confronted with harsh realities, including limited economic opportunities, inadequate social services, and marginalisation of black communities (Sedibe and Hendriks, 2020).

According to Mokwena and Morajele (2014), unemployment is a public concern that is associated with the use of drugs by men in townships. According to Sedibe and Hendriks (2020), the absence of consistent employment results in men experiencing feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and social alienation. This, in turn, increases their susceptibility to substance addiction as a coping mechanism for the stress and unpredictability of unemployment.

Poverty is a persistent public issue in communities, restricting access to essential resources, employment opportunities, and education. Additionally, Sedibe and Hendriks (2020) suggest that men residing in poverty may employ drugs as a coping mechanism to ameliorate feelings of financial stress, despair, and hopelessness. Drug use may be employed by individuals who are economically unstable and lack social support to momentarily alleviate or escape the harsh realities of their situation.

Additionally, the absence of recreational facilities and a restricted social support network in townships results in feelings of inadequacy, isolation, and dislocation among the residents. These social factors, as per Sedibe and Hendriks (2020), exacerbate the susceptibility of individuals, particularly men, to engage in risky behaviours such as drug use in order to either escape or manage with the circumstances.

The public health consequences of drug use are further exacerbated by the closure of harm reduction programs and the limited access to healthcare services in townships (Marks and Moodley, 2021). An example is the closure of needle exchange programs in South Africa. Accessing treatment and rehabilitation programs is a challenge for individuals who are struggling with substance abuse, underscoring the necessity of comprehensive support services to mitigate the social and health consequences of drug abuse in these communities (Allen, 2024).

2.7 Sustainable Development Goals

As part of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, the United Nations established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. These 17 interconnected global objectives are intended to promote sustainable development. In 2015, all United Nations Member States

adopted this agenda, which functions as a global framework for the attainment of sustainable objectives by 2030.
The objectives of these goals are to confront a diverse array of global challenges, such as poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. The United Nations (2015) emphasises the necessity of collaborative efforts across nations, sectors, and communities to achieve sustainable development, as each objective has specific targets and indicators to measure progress.

The objective of SDG 3 is to guarantee the health and well-being of all individuals, regardless of their age. SDG 3 was established as part of the United Nations (2015) 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. It encompasses a wide range of health-related objectives, such as the prevention and treatment of drug use, the promotion of mental health, the fight against communicable diseases, and the reduction of maternal and child mortality. Target 3.5 is particularly concerned with the enhancement of the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, which encompasses the detrimental use of alcohol and narcotic drug abuse. This underscores the urgent necessity for comprehensive strategies to address these concerns. (O'Sullivan, 2018).

Nunes, Lee, and O'Riordan (2016) examined the significance of integrating a framework to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically in the context of health and wellbeing. The proposed objectives underscored the significance of intersectoral actions, including the enhancement of access to social protection and health systems, the mitigation of risk factors such as smoking and pollution, and the promotion of healthy lifestyles (Nunes, Lee, and O'Riordan, 2016). These actions were considered essential for the purpose of resolving health disparities in marginalised communities in accordance with SDG 3.

This research recognises the importance of SDG 3, as well as the current gap that explicitly links local substance abuse issues to global health objectives. This research endeavoured to illustrate how the comprehension of the factors that contribute to drug use in Amatolaville is consistent with the overarching objectives of fostering health and well-being, thereby contributing to the public discourse.

The objectives of this study concentrate on environmental and behavioural factors; however, they may not adequately address the fundamental social determinants of health in marginalised communities, including poverty, discrimination, and inadequate education. A more comprehensive approach that takes these determinants into account could result in more sustainable improvements in health outcomes.

Although the framework proposed by Nunes, Lee, and O'Riordan (2016) acknowledges the significance of addressing health issues in marginalised communities through SDG 3, there is a requirement for targeted interventions that address access disparities and social determinants of health to guarantee equitable health outcomes for all individuals. There is a necessity for targeted strategies to address extant disparities, such as overcoming barriers related to distance, cost, and cultural factors, as marginalised communities frequently encounter difficulties in accessing quality healthcare and social protection services.

2.8 The health and social system in South Africa

There is an additional necessity to examine the localised plans, as the sustainable objectives are an international development plan. The South African Health Sector Drug Master Plan (SHSDMP) (2019-2025) identifies the primary health and social issues associated with substance use as the prevention of substance use disorders, the treatment of substance use disorders, and the prevention, treatment, and care of HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis, and other blood-borne infectious diseases among injecting substance users. The plan encompasses the prevention of the early initiation or delayed uptake of alcohol and other psychoactive substances among children and adolescents. The plan also prioritises the prevention of the progression to severe substance use disorders among individuals at risk, while simultaneously improving the quality, availability, and coverage of evidence-based substance use interventions in a variety of settings (SHSDMP, 2019-2025).

The plan prioritises the expansion of access to the comprehensive management of substance use disorder treatment, rehabilitation and recovery, and social integration in terms of treatment. The SHSDMP (2019-2025) aims to enhance equitable access to evidence-based HIV-prevention and

substance use disorder medications at the community, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of the public health system in the planning for prevention, treatment, and care for HIV/AIDS.

Specifically, the plan is distinguished by its emphasis on prevention strategies, including the delay of substance use initiation among young males, the implementation of universal screening and brief intervention, and the enhancement of public awareness campaigns (SHSDMP, 2019-2025). Furthermore, the establishment of a policy framework for medication-assisted treatment and the promotion of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care among injecting substance users illustrate a comprehensive approach to drug use.

The plan's dedication to enhancing access to controlled substances for medical, scientific, and research purposes while preventing diversion, abuse, and trafficking is highly commendable. The emphasis is on the quality and affordability of controlled substances, which underscores a balanced approach to ensuring their availability for legitimate purposes.

In essence, the South African Health Sector Drug Master Plan 2019-2025 offers a comprehensive and proactive strategy for addressing substance misuse in South Africa. It integrates a variety of policies and initiatives to comprehensively address the complex issues.

Nevertheless, the plan's efficacy in addressing substance use in communities such as Amatolaville may be impeded by the lack of community-based strategies and grassroots involvement. The patterns of substance use and access to care are significantly influenced by community-specific challenges, resources, and cultural factors. The plan may not be able to provide the most impactful interventions and services to those most affected by substance use disorders if it does not take a targeted approach that considers the specific requirements of marginalised communities.

The Eastern Cape Vision 2030 Provincial Development Plan posits a strong focus on developing the economy through research and development (R&D), innovation, and policy instruments (Makalima, 1997). While these strategies are essential for economic growth, there seems to be a lack of specific mention of addressing drug use in marginalised communities.

Furthermore, investing in R&D and economic incentives, while important for economic growth, may not directly address the underlying issues that contribute to drug use in marginalised communities (Makalima, 1997). The plan could benefit from incorporating social development programs aimed at addressing the root causes of drug abuse, such as poverty, lack of opportunities, and social exclusion.
Addressing drug use among youth in Stutterheim could also potentially lead to several economic benefits. By implementing programmes and initiatives to combat drug abuse amongst males, the overall health and well-being of the community could improve. A reduction in drug abuse could lead to lower crimes, a more stable workforce, and increased productivity. As a result, businesses in the area may find it more attractive to invest and operate, leading to potential economic growth for the community.

To fully understand and address drug use in marginalised communities, a more holistic approach is needed. Drug use and addiction are complex issues that requires targeted interventions, including education, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation programs. Without specific strategies outlined in the Provincial Development Plan to address drug use, marginalised communities are likely to struggle with this problem (Makalima, 1997).

The Amahathi Local Municipality Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (2024/2025) does not expressly delineate a specific plan for the prevention of drug abuse and the promotion of social development in local communities such as Amatolaville. The plan concentrates on the municipality's performance evaluation, reward system for employees, and work stoppages (IDP, 2024/2025). In order to effectively address substance use/abuse and social development, it may be necessary for the municipality to incorporate targeted strategies and interventions into the IDP. These strategies may encompass community-based awareness campaigns, youth empowerment programs, substance misuse prevention initiatives, rehabilitation services, and collaboration with pertinent stakeholders, including law enforcement, healthcare providers, and community organisations.

Although drug use in townships is generally understood, there is a dearth of research that specifically addresses the distinctive socio-economic and cultural dynamics of Amatolaville and their correlation with drug use among males. The objective of this research is to address the gap by offering localised insights that are reflective of the unique challenges and experiences of young males in this community. The literature does not sufficiently investigate the specific ways in which societal norms regarding masculinity influence the substance use behaviours of young males in Amatolaville, despite the fact that it speaks on the relationship between masculinity and drug-use. The investigation of this intersection was furthered in the study. The literature frequently portrays drug use as either a personal problem or a public issue. However, a more comprehensive framework that takes both perspectives into account simultaneously is required. This research endeavoured to reconcile this gap by investigating the ways in which societal structures influence the individual experiences of drug use, thereby offering a comprehensive perspective on the matter.

Disconnected from the lived experiences of individuals from these marginalised communities, the targeted interventions that were examined for example the Amahlati Local Municipality Development Integrated Development Plan (IDP, 2024/2025) either fails to incorporate drug use into their strategy or fail to address it. Local development plans must address drug use, as it is a social issue that requires the involvement and input of local residents.

The majority of the current research on drug use is based on quantitative data, which may result in the neglect of the personal narratives and lived experiences of individuals who have been impacted by substance use. This study utilises a qualitative methodology to document the perspectives and experiences of young male drug users, thereby enhancing comprehension of the personal and societal factors that contribute to drug use.

2.9 Theoretical framework

2.9.1 The sociological imagination

The theoretical framework for this research is grounded in the concept of the sociological imagination as articulated by sociologist C. Wright Mills (1957). It refers to the ability to understand the relationship between individual experiences and larger social forces. Essentially,

it emphasizes that personal troubles (like drug use or unemployment) are often rooted in broader societal issues (such as economic inequality, cultural norms, or institutional failures). Mills advocated for a perspective that situates personal problems within the context of societal structures, thus urging sociologists to analyze how various societal forces shape individual lives and experiences.

Brewer (2004) emphasises that Mills' career trajectory led him to focus on public issues, but his time at the Bureau of Applied Social Research in New York intensified his professional and personal conflicts. He expressed disdain for empirical survey work, state-sponsored 'practical' sociology, and statistical analysis, feeling that it interfered with meaningful work that aligned with his interests.

Mills' negative experiences at the Bureau influenced his views on the division within sociology between statistical research and heavy theoretical discourse. He critiqued the manipulation of data without meaningful analysis and criticized the professional separation between these approaches (Brewer, 2004).

Consequently, the pragmatic statements in the sociological imagination were significantly influenced by Mills' (1957) personal experiences, particularly his frustrations with empirical research and professional divisions within sociology.

Mills (1957) connects private troubles with public issues by emphasising the intersection of personal experiences and broader social structures (Brewer, 2004). By bridging the gap between individual problems and societal contexts, Mills (1957) argues that personal challenges are often intertwined with larger social issues that transcend individual actions. This connection is significant in the field of sociology as it challenges the conventional way of understanding problems as purely either individual or society.

Mills (1957) highlights how personal issues such as unemployment or marital conflict, can be symptomatic of larger structural problems like economic inequality or cultural norms. By illustrating how personal troubles are shaped by public forces, Mills urges sociologists to analyze

the social structures that influence individual lives (Brewer, 2004). This framework encourages a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena by situating personal experience with the broader social context.

By applying the sociological imagination, the research sought to understand how personal choices regarding drug use amongst young males in Amatolaville are influenced by larger social factors, such as economic conditions, cultural norms and historical contexts, and researching these structures in more detail.

The framework posits that drug use cannot be viewed solely as an individual failing; rather it is influenced by broader social structures such as inadequate economic prospects, social disorganisation, and historical marginalisation (Merton 1968).
Furthermore, the sociological imagination theory of private troubles and public issues is critical in studying male drug use in townships because it gives a framework for understanding drug use as a multifaceted phenomenon formed by individual experiences that are linked to broader social circumstances. By integrating this theoretical lens, this research aims to uncover the complex interplay individual behaviour and societal influences, ultimately informing targeted interventions that address both personal and structural dimensions of drug abuse in the community.

The sociological imagination has also been used in various studies; to amplify its meaning, a few of these case studies are outlined to understand the framework.

Jamal (2015) applies a sociological imagination to public health science by examining how the interactions and relationships within the school environment impact students' health outcomes. Jamal (2015, 52) discusses the influence of teacher-student relationship on health. By highlighting how factors like teachers being disconnected from students' realities, school rules being implemented without student input, and inconsistent application to rules contribute to poor staff-student relationships, Jamal (2015) shows how sociological factors within the school system can affect students' health behaviours. This analysis goes beyond individual actions and considers broader societal structures and dynamics that shape health outcomes in school settings.

Sage (2015) used the sociological imagination to highlight the importance of human rights as a key element of global culture and governance. Sage (2015) touches upon the interconnectedness between individual experiences (private troubles) and broader social issues (social problems through the lens of human rights. It suggests the recognition and protection of human rights at the global level serves as a normative framework that impacts citizens' relation to societies and the world at large, regardless of their country of residence. This perspective aligns with the sociological imagination concept of Mills (1957), which encourages individuals to perceive the intersection of personal experiences within the larger social structures at all scales as well as the historical context.

By emphasising the role of international agreements, conventions, and the legal documents in shaping human rights discourse and governance structures, Sage (2025) indirectly underscores how private troubles, such as individual rights violation, can be reframed as social problems requiring collective action and systematic change. It implies that societal issues related to human rights violations are not isolated incidents but interconnected with broader political, legal and cultural dynamics that impact individuals on a global scale.

The discussion reflects the sociological imagination's core principle of understanding personal challenges with broader social, historical, and political contexts that shape an individual's experiences and experiences. It encourages one to recognise the interconnectedness between private troubles and social problems in the context of human rights and global governance

2.10 Conceptual framework

The research's conceptual framework is substantiated by the works of numerous prominent sociologists and theorists. Notably, Mills' sociological imagination (1957) serves as the foundation theory, emphasising the connection between individual experiences, which refer to the unique perceptions, emotions, and interpretations that a person has based on their personal encounters and interactions with the world around them (Giddens, 1991). It encompasses an individual's emotions, thoughts, and the importance they attribute to the events and circumstances they encounter in their existence. Personal history, cultural heritage, social

context, and broader social structures are all factors that influence individual experiences. Conversely, social structures are the well-organised patterns of social relationships and institutions that collectively constitute society (Bourdieu, 1993). They establish a framework that facilitates social interactions, which encompasses cultural norms and values, institutions (such as family, education, and government), and social hierarchies.

Additionally, social disorganisation, a sociological concept that denotes the dissolution of social structures and institutions within a community, can result in a lack of social cohesion and an increase in social issues. Urbanisation, poverty, and family instability can all contribute to this disorganisation, which in turn leads to elevated rates of substance misuse, crime, and other social issues. The theory of social disorganisation posits that communities with weak social ties and limited resources are more susceptible to these issues (Shaw and McKay, 1942). Substance abuse is among the behaviours that are influenced by this.

Substance abuse is the term used to describe the detrimental or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, such as alcohol and illicit drugs, which results in substantial negative consequences for both the individual and society. It is distinguished by a consumption pattern that leads to health issues, social problems, and impaired functioning. Substance abuse is frequently associated with mental health disorders and social disorganisation, and it can be the result of a variety of factors, such as psychological, social, and economic influences (World Health Organisation, 2014)

The social and cultural characteristics, behaviours, and roles that are associated with being male are collectively referred to as "masculinity." It incorporates a variety of attributes that society generally associates with men, including emotional stoicism, assertiveness, and strength. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) have observed that these characteristics can differ substantially among various cultures and contexts.

The term "Male" is a biological and social term that denotes the sex of an organism. In humans and numerous other species, it is typically defined by the presence of XY chromosomes (Fausto-Sterling, 2000). In a more specific context, males are identified by their reproductive anatomy,

which includes organs such as testes that produce sperm, and secondary sexual characteristics that may include features like body hair, a deeper voice, and increased muscle mass (Butler, 1990).

The term "young" generally denotes individuals who are in the developmental period of youth, which typically encompasses the years from adolescence to early adulthood. This period is distinguished by substantial physical, emotional, and social transformations, as well as the examination of independence and identity (Arnett, 2000). The beliefs, values, norms, customs, and practices that a group of individuals shares are collectively referred to as culture. It influences the behaviours and perceptions of individuals and is passed down from one generation to the next. Language, art, and social interactions are among the numerous aspects of existence that are influenced by culture (Hofstede, 2001).

The term "infrastructure" denotes the fundamental facilities and systems that facilitate the operation of a society, such as transportation, communication, utilities, and public services. It is crucial for the overall quality of life in a community and economic development (World Bank, 1994).

"Poverty" is a condition in which individuals or groups are unable to satisfy their basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, and healthcare due to a lack of financial resources. It is frequently quantified in terms of income levels and can have a significant impact on overall well-being, education, and health (Sen, 1999).

The term "unemployment" denotes the circumstance in which individuals who are capable of working and are actively pursuing employment are unable to secure employment. Economic distress can be indicated by elevated unemployment rates, which can result in heightened destitution and social issues (International Labour Organisation, 2016).

"Boredom" is a psychological condition that is defined by a lack of interest, engagement, or stimulation. It can result from a lack of variety in activities, repetitive tasks, or insufficient challenges, which can contribute to feelings of dissatisfaction and restlessness (Fisher, 1993).

Disruptions in family structure and dynamics, such as divorce, separation, or frequent changes in carers, are referred to as "family instability." This instability can have a detrimental effect on the emotional and social development of children (Amato, 2000).

"Development" is a multifaceted process that encompasses economic development, social progress, and enhancements in the quality of life. It encompasses a variety of components, such as infrastructure, health, and education, with the objective of improving the well-being of both individuals and communities (Todaro and Smith, 2011).

In the literature review, this study synthesized existing research on drug use among young males, focusing on the unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics present in township settings. It identified and analysed critical factors that contribute to drug use, emphasising the intertwining roles of individual experiences, community pressure and economic conditions.
It highlighted the significance of masculinity in shaping drug use patterns, making the case for targeted policy and interventions that address both individual and broader systemic issues. By employing a theoretical framework rooted in sociological imagination, this study effectively illustrated how drug use should be viewed not only as an individual challenge but a complex socio-economic phenomenon influenced by various structural factors.

Overall, this research report sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the factors surrounding drug use, especially in Townships like Amatolaville, ultimately, like SDG 3, aiming to inform better community-based interventions

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive literature review that integrated both theoretical and conceptual framework to deepen our understanding of drug use amongst men in Amatolaville. By employing Mills (1957) sociological imagination as the theoretical lens, this chapter has illuminated the intricate connection between personal experiences of drug use and broader societal issues. This perspective underscores the importance of viewing drug use not merely as an individual problem but as a phenomenon deeply rooted in social structures, economic conditions and cultural norms. The conceptual framework outlined in the chapter has further

clarified the various dimensions influencing drug use, categorizing them as individuals, social, and structural factors.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOGY

3.1 Introduction

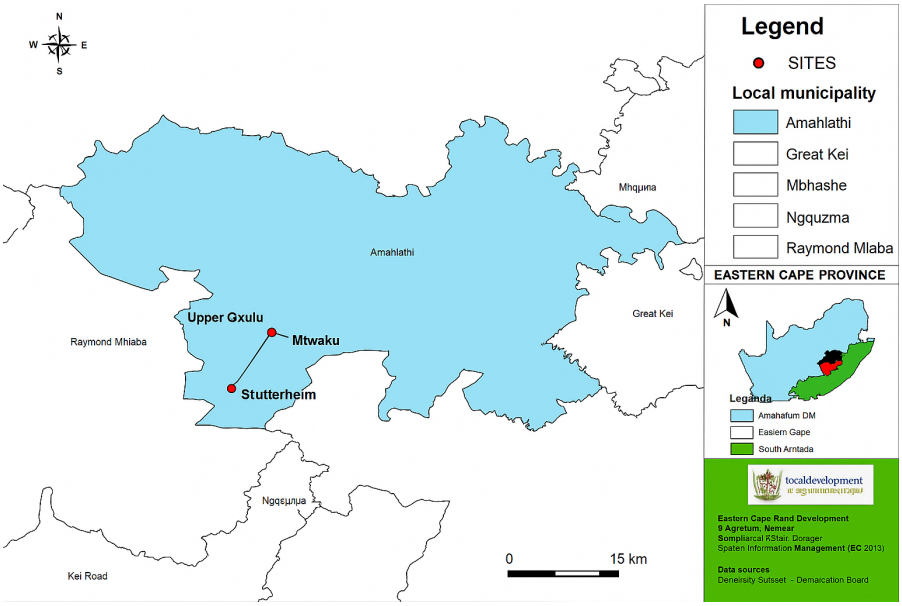
Chapter Three delineates the research design and methods employed to answer the research question of factors contributing to drug use amongst young males in Amatolaville, Eastern Cape. This study employed a qualitative approach, which was particularly suited for exploring complex social phenomena and understanding the lived experiences of individuals within their specific context (Croswell and Poth, 2014)). By utilising qualitative methods such as interviews, the research aimed to capture the nuanced perspectives of young males affected by drug use, allowing for a deeper understanding of the interplay between individual behaviour and broader societal influences.

The selection of a qualitative methodology is predicated on the understanding that drug use is not merely a singular issue, but rather a multifaceted phenomenon that is influenced by a variety of social, economic, and cultural factors. This research revealed the underlying motivations, challenges, and experiences of young males in Amatolaville through the use of personal narratives and semi-structured interviews. It also provided insights into the behavioural changes that accompany addiction, such as backchat, as well as physical changes, such as weight loss. Detailed information regarding the research context, participant selection, data collection procedures, and the analytical framework used to interpret the findings is provided in this chapter. This chapter guarantees that the insights acquired contribute meaningfully to the comprehension of drug use as a critical development issue by explicitly stating the methodological approach. The research's credibility is thereby established.

3.2 Context and Location

This research was conducted in Amatolaville, which is located in the Amahlati municipality in the Eastern Cape province (Statistics South Africa, 2011).

Figure 1: Map of the local municipality of Amahlati



Source: ResearchGate

Figure 1 is an illustration the Amahlati Local Municipality in the Eastern Cape and provides a visual representation of its geographical layout. Amatolaville is within Stutterheim, situated on the South-westerly side of the Map.

The Amahlati Municipality is a residential area, and the population is confronted with challenges related to the effects of endemic poverty and underdevelopment (IDP, 2024). The total population of Amahlati Local municipality has increased from 101 035 in 2011 to 115 703 in 2022, as per the South African census of 2022. Amahlati's population is predominantly female, with females comprising 51.2 percent of the total. Males account for 48.8 percent of the population, while the adolescent and early adult population, aged 15-34, comprises 30 percent of the total. The Eastern Cape region distributed the following social grants in March 2024: - Care Dependency Grant: 24,626 - Child Support Grant: 1,956,118 - Disability Grant: 175,412 - Foster Care Grant: 54,798 - Grant-In-Aid: 55,917 - Old Age Grant: 625,600 - War Veteran's Grant: 1 The total number of grants issued in the Eastern Cape region was 2,892,472 (Fact Sheet, 2024).

3.3 Study Scope

Amatolaville is situated in Ward 6 of Amahlati municipality, which has a total population of 1000 residents (IPD, 2024). The social fabric of this community is characterised by its close-knit nature, with the majority of residents being acquainted with one another (ECSECC, 2024).

Amatolaville is confronted with substantial socio-economic obstacles, such as poverty, high unemployment rates, and restricted access to educational and recreational facilities. The community's needs, as delineated in the Integrated Development Plan report, encompass the construction of Reconstruction Development Plan (RDP) houses, the establishment of a school, the establishment of a clinic, the creation of employment opportunities, and the expansion of streetlights (IPD, 2024).

The social environment and relationships in Amatolaville, in conjunction with these demands, have had a substantial impact on the way in which young males engage with and experience drug use. These young males' perceptions of drug use, their experiences related to drug use, and their decision to use drugs have been influenced by factors such as peers, family dynamics, and community norms and attitudes towards drug use.

3.4 Research Methodology

3.4.1 Research approach

Qualitative research methodology was implemented in this study. Qualitative research is primarily defined as a method of inquiry that seeks to understand human behaviour, experiences, and social phenomena through the collection of non-numerical data (Creswell and Poth, 2014). It underscores the meanings, concepts, characteristics, and descriptions of phenomena**.**

3.4.2 Qualitative Research Approach.

A qualitative research approach is well suited to explore a specific issue to understand participants' lived experiences. Qualitative research was chosen for this study to gain in-depth insights into the personal narratives and social contexts surrounding drug use among young males. Qualitative approaches are important in research that involves a group or community,

explores variables that are difficult to measure, or to hear silenced voices (Creswell and Poth, 2014). According to Creswell and Poth (2014), this detail can only be established by speaking directly to people, visiting their homes or workplaces, and allowing them to share their stories without regard for what we expect to find or what we read in literature. Using qualitative research is particularly advantageous for gathering data that addresses complex research questions, especially those related to human experiences and social phenomena. The qualitative research approach allowed for a robust approach to answering the research question on the factors contributing to drug use amongst men in Amatolaville. By generating rich, descriptive data that encompass diverse experiences and perspective, the qualitative approach uncovered the complexities of the issue, providing insights that are important for understanding and addressing the root causes of drug use. This method aligns with the inherent nature of the research question, which sought to delve into the individual and societal dimensions underlying drug use.

3.4.3 Research Design

The research design states the framework and methodology that were implemented to comprehend the factors that contribute to substance use among young males in Amatolaville. This is exploratory research. Explorative research entails the critical assessment of existing research and understanding (Blaxter, Hughes, and Tight, 2006). In order to advance knowledge in the field, it is necessary to recognise the deficiencies in both your own work and that of others, place your work within the framework of others' work and beliefs, and then contribute to the ongoing debate. Therefore, explorative research is fundamentally concerned with the analysis and evaluation of existing research, the recognition of its strengths and shortcomings, and the subsequent contribution to the discourse in order to advance the field. Explorative research has the potential to reveal the intricate social dynamics and nuanced experiences that contribute to the issue of drug use among young males in Amatolaville, thereby facilitating the development of more effective interventions and solutions.

3.5. Data Collection Method

The primary data collection method for this research were face-face interviews. An interview is a research method that entails direct discussion with individuals or groups to acquire information,

insights, and viewpoints (Rubin and Rubin, 2012, 4). Face-to-face interviews are ideal for gathering rich 'data', both verbal and non-verbal (Legard, Keegan and Ward, 2003). This involves employing a combination of direct techniques (explicit queries) and indirect strategies (neutral verbal expressions, empathy, mirroring, body language signals, and enough time for a response) (Legard et al., 2003).
The quality and breadth of the material collected were significantly impacted by my role as a researcher during the interview process. Some of my primary responsibilities included establishing rapport, active listening, remaining neutral, promoting the discourse, adapting to participants, and managing time (Legard et al, 2003). By adopting these roles and responsibilities, I was able to assure the ethical treatment of the participants, acquire rich and interesting data, and conduct interviews effectively.

The duration of each interview ranged from 45 minutes to an hour. The interviews were conducted in English; however, in certain instances, I encountered participants with varying proficiency in English, necessitating on-the-spot translation of certain words or phrases into isiXhosa to ensure mutual understanding and comfort. This only happened 10% of the overall interviews as most of the participants were fluent in English.
This process involved translating specific responses or terminology from isiXhosa back into English during transcription to preserve the participants' original meanings while making the data accessible for analysis. My bilingual proficiency and cultural awareness played a critical role here, as language is deeply intertwined with cultural identity, social norms, and individual expression.

A semi-structured interview's strengths include access to rich data that is extensive, detailed, and contextual, as well as access to private accounts and the beliefs and behaviour of the participants, which allow the researcher to probe for further depth and detail, gain actual participant understanding, piece collective explanations together, and clarify any potential ambiguity (Legard et al., 2003). This was an advantageous method of inquiry, as it enabled me to acquire the responses to my enquiries, while also providing them with the opportunity to elaborate further if they desired. Whenever necessary, I was able to enquire further and incorporate some spontaneous follow-up enquiries.

Using Otter, a transcription program, I first recorded the interviews using a digital device, which is my cell phone and then uploaded these audio files to Otter for automated transcription. Recognizing that automated transcriptions may contain inaccuracies, I meticulously reviewed the Otter-generated transcripts, listening to the original recordings while editing the transcriptions as necessary to ensure accuracy.

In addition to digital transcription, I complemented this process by maintaining detailed field notes and observation memos during and after the interviews. These notes captured non-verbal cues, contextual observations, and reflections that were not directly transcribed by Otter. When discrepancies or gaps occurred in the automated transcripts—such as inaudible words or interpretative nuances—I referred back to these field notes to fill in missing information or clarify meanings.

This integrated approach—automated transcription validated and supplemented by careful review, combined with field notes and observation memos—ensured that the final transcripts accurately reflected both verbal responses and contextual insights, thereby enhancing the reliability and depth of the qualitative data.

3.6 Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was employed in this study, which included predefined questions but no fixed order, open-ended responses, and the ability to add additional questions for clarification as needed. Researchers employ an interview schedule as a planned strategy or guide to conduct interviews during semi-structured interviews (Legard et al, 2003).

An interview schedule is a research tool used during the semi-structured interviews and is a planned strategy or guide used by researchers when conducting interviews (Legard et al, 2003). The interview schedule included primary research topics and themes and a series of research prompts; there was no predetermined order of asking questions; the interviews proceeded as directed by the participants' responses and covered issues of greatest importance to them. For example, the questions first probed their background, explored their perspectives on what factors contribute to their drug use as well as their perspectives on how the issue can be addressed by linking to the SDG 3 target. I set these specific questions not only to address the research questions but to cover my aims and objectives as well. I asked 14-18 open-ended questions,

guided by my prompts and requests for clarification. This number enabled a thorough study of the research issues while also allowing for the interview to flow spontaneously based on the participants' responses. I began with icebreaker questions to assist interviewees to feel at ease, then moved to more specific inquiries and followed a logical progression from one topic to the next. This method was helpful for the interviewees to feel comfortable and almost forget that this is an interview and more like a conversation. It was challenging as in some interviews as some participants spoke about their lives or pre-empted some questions before I could ask them. However, I did allow for flexibility based on their responses so that the conversation flowed smoothly without interruption. Each interview concluded with closing questions that summarised everything that they had stated and opened space for them to share any final thoughts they had.

I devised four distinct interview questionnaires for various groups of respondents. There was an interview for drug users, another for family members and Amatolaville committee members, and a different one for community police officers. The interview schedules are included in the Appendices section.

The interviews with the first three categories took place in the community hall, an environment that was both comfortable for them and safe for me, which was accessible to everybody in Amatolaville. The interviews with the police officers took places at their respective offices at work and during their lunch break.

I maintained my focus by taking fieldnotes and reflective memoranda, which are notes of insights, interpretations, and conceptual and theoretical development as the research progressed, in addition to recording with my phone and laptop as backups.

3.7 Data Management and Analysis.

Data management is the process of organising and rationalising data, thereby reducing it to a size that can be easily managed. Thematic and narrative analysis were employed to interpret the data. Thematic analysis entails the identification of themes or patterns within qualitative data in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the research subject. Legard et al (2003) refers to thematic analysis as a qualitative data analysis technique. It assists researchers in comprehending the fundamental themes or patterns that are evident in the data that has been gathered.

Conversely, narrative analysis entails the examination of the narratives or stories that participants have shared in order to extricate meaning and reveal the underlying context of the research topic (Legard et al, 2003). Despite the absence of explicit discussion in the excerpt provided, narrative analysis typically entails the examination of the stories that individuals tell in order to elucidate their perspectives, experiences, and emotions regarding a specific phenomenon. In conclusion, thematic analysis is concerned with the identification of themes and patterns in data, whereas narrative analysis explores the narratives related by participants to offer a more profound understanding of the research topic (Legard et al, 2003). Both methods are beneficial in qualitative research as they facilitate the discovery of meaning and the comprehension of participants' viewpoints.

3.8 Sampling

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of individuals or items from a larger population to gather data or draw conclusions about that population (Legard et al., 2003). This was done to make the study more manageable and cost effective, as it is typically impractical to study the entire population.

3.8.1 Sample Size

Eight drug users, six family members, two community members, and two police members comprised the specific number of participants, which was eighteen.

The principle of data saturation, which denotes the point at which no new information or themes emerge from the data, was used to determine the sample size for this research (Blaxter, Hughes, and Tight, 2006). Saturation was largely achieved in my study as the responses from the interviews began to repeat similar themes and narratives. In addition, the interviews yielded a wide variety of viewpoints that adequately addressed the variety of personal, cultural, and socio-economic factors associated with drug use and informed community intervention.

Saturation was also achieved as a result of the sample's representation of pertinent demographic groups. For example, the age, knowledge, and perspective of drug users, family members, community members, and the police are all distinct. In order to accurately represent the intricacies of the factors that contribute to drug use, the sample was heterogeneous.

Table 1 below provides information on the demographic profile of the respondents and their contribution to the research

Interview Category	**Number interviewed**	**Age range**	**Gender**	**Contribution to research**
Drug users	8	18-35	Male	They provided a perspective on the individual factors (private troubles) that contribute to males using drugs
Family members	6	Late youth to middle-aged adults, including one pensioner	Mixed including 4 females and 2 males	They provided a perspective on the meso-level (private troubles) implications of males using drugs
Amatolaville Committee	2	30 and 42	Male	They provided a perspective on the community factors (public issues) of these young individuals consuming
Police officers	2	40-44	Female	They provided information on the implications of drug use in the community (public issues) and how they are dealing with it effectively

3.8.2 Sampling Techniques.

The sampling techniques employed in the study were crucial for ensuring that the data collected accurately reflected the experiences and perspectives of young males affected by drug abuse in

Amatolaville. Non- probability sampling was implemented for this study. A non-probability sample is a sampling technique where not every individual in the population has a chance of being selected (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2006). In non-probability sampling, participants are chosen based on non-random criteria. The methods included a combination of purposeful and snowball sampling to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

3.8.2.1 Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling also known as purposive sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique where participants are selected based on specific characteristics that align with the research objectives (Blaxter et al, 2006). This means that the researcher chooses individuals and study sites based on their ability to provide the best understanding of the research question and primary phenomenon (Cresswell and Poth, 2014). The deliberate stratification of the sample allows for easier comparison (Cresswell and Poth, 2014). Drug users, family members, the Amatolaville Committee, and police officers were the precise strata or subgroups in the study. The deliberate stratification of the sample allowed for the easier comparison of answers to the questions (Cresswell and Poth, 2014).

Criteria for inclusion: The sample of young people or drug users were between the ages of 18 and 35, regardless of their employment status, education, or occupation. A mother, father, or sibling, who is preferable an adult, was required to reside with a drug user. Community members were required to be an active member of the community and, preferably, an adult, and to have resided in the community for a period exceeding five years. The station commander selected the two constable offers based on their knowledge and experience with drug users after they received national and provincial ethical clearance.

Consequently, participants were chosen based on their age, their domicile in Amatolaville, their relationship with a drug user, and their self-reported experiences with drug use. This guaranteed that the sample was pertinent to the research questions and that the participants could offer valuable insights into the factors that contribute to substance abuse in the community

3.8.2.2 Snowball sampling

Snowball Sampling (also called network, chain referral, reputational, and respondent-driven sampling) is a method for sampling (or selecting) the cases in a network (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2006). This technique is frequently appropriate for qualitative research, particularly when studying hard-to-reach populations.

The initial participants were identified through prior knowledge and community familiarity, given my personal connection to Amatolaville and the community's social fabric. Specifically, I relied on existing relationships and community rapport to approach potential participants who fit the study's criteria. To ensure ethical standards were upheld, I obtained preliminary contact and consent from these initial participants before utilizing snowball sampling.

The initial participants were then requested to refer other young males who were willing to share their experiences with substance use. The sampling strategy's adaptability was advantageous, as several of my selected participants declined to participate in the interviews. The snowball sampling method was notably effective in Amatolaville due to the tight-knit nature of social networks.

Process. After conducting the interviews, participants were encouraged to identify and connect me to other young males who met the criteria for the study. The drug user also had to give their consent for me to interview their family members. This approach not only expanded the sample size but also helped build trust and rapport, as participants were more likely to engage with me when referred to by someone who they knew (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2006).

3.9 Access

Qualitative research entails investigating a research site(s) and obtaining permission to study the place in a way that allows for straightforward data gathering (Cresswell and Poth, 2014). Obtaining access to sites and individuals required multiple stages. The first phase was to seek ethics permission from the Wits University ethics committee. Ethics approval was obtained online from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) on the 28th of August 2024. The second step involved participants at the research location. I gained access to the community and

people because of my rapport and familiarity with the environment and the people. I had also visited the community in April and June to inform them of the research I intended to conduct. [2]

My long-term embeddedness in the community facilitated deeper trust and provided better access to participants, allowing them to feel comfortable sharing sensitive information. This trust enabled me to engage with drug users, family members, community members, and the local police more effectively. I have made this clearer in the report.
Amatolaville is also a small community in which the majority of individuals are acquainted with one another, which made it effortless to exchange information. Since I have a sibling who is a drug addict, I was able to identify a drug user by observing physical signs, such as weight loss, poor hygiene, or unusual body odours, as well as red or watery eyes. Mood swings and social withdrawal from families were among the behavioural indicators.

I had adhered to the police protocol, which involved submitting an application for ethics from the SAPS National level. Subsequent to SAPS national sanction, I was granted access to the two officers I interviewed by the SAPS provincial level, which in turn communicated with the local police station. The letters granting permission for interviews are attached in the Appendices section.
In order to address the multidimensional research question concerning the factors that contribute to drug use among young males in Amatolaville, it was essential to access a variety of categories of respondents. The unique insights of each group I interviewed, when analysed collectively, provided a comprehensive understanding of the problem. Additionally, they informed community solutions that were necessary to address the problem.

3.10 Ensuring Rigour.

It is essential to establish the reliability of the findings in qualitative research. In order to guarantee the validity of the results obtained from the investigation of drug use among males in

[2] As part of the Advanced Research Methods (ARM) course, I was tasked with visiting my research field to explain my study and recruit potential participants to facilitate the data collection process. I was born and lived full-time in the community for about 18 years—it's my home.

Amatolaville, the data are evaluated according to the criteria of transferability, audibility, and confirmability.

In qualitative research, the consistency and dependability of the research findings are essential (Babbie 2013). This implies that the same results would be obtained if the study were to be repeated under similar conditions using a similar instrument (Babbie, 2013).
The accuracy and authenticity of the findings in qualitative research are referred to as credibility and transferability, which ensure that the data accurately depicts the experiences and perspectives of the participants (Babbie, 2013). To address internal consistency or credibility, which is the degree to which the perceptions and experiences of participants have been accurately represented (Babbie, 2013). The following strategies were implemented to bolster the credibility of the research findings.

3.10.1 Member checking: Participants were informed of preliminary findings one week following the interviews to confirm the veracity of their responses and interpretations following data collection. This feedback cycle enabled participants to verify that their perspectives were accurately represented, thereby bolstering the credibility of the findings.

3.10.2 Thick Description: To establish external consistency or transferability, I used tactics such as thick descriptions that gives rich and extensive description of research findings, including quotes, examples, and context. This approach allows readers to understand the depth and complexity of the data, enhancing the transferability of the findings to similar contexts that may include other townships or communities facing drug abuse issues, urban areas with high rates of substance use, or regions with comparable socio-economic challenges.

3.10.3 Triangulation: To strengthen the validity of the research, data was gathered via interviews with drug users, family members, Police officers, and community members. This triangulation of perspectives helps to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to drug abuse and reduces the likelihood of bias from a single group of participants.

3.10.4 Peer Debriefing: I engaged with my supervisor and postgraduate colleagues to discuss the research process and findings to provide external perspective that challenge assumptions and interpretations. This process helped to ensure that the research is grounded in a broader academic context and enhanced confidence in drawing conclusions from the data.

The following strategies were implemented to improve the confirmability and auditability of this research report.

3.10.5 Standardised Interview Protocols: In order to guarantee that all participants in various interview schedules were asked comparable questions, a semi-structured interview guide was created (Babbie, 2013). This method facilitated the comparison of interviews with various groups on the same topic and contributed to the reduction of variability in the information collected.

3.10.6 Detailed field notes: I maintained detailed fieldnotes throughout data collection process. These notes comprised observations, reflections and contextual information that could influence the participant's responses. Keeping detailed records enhances the dependability of the findings by providing a clear account of the research process (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2006).

3.10.7 Reflective Diaries: Reflexivity is the practice of acknowledging and contemplating how the researcher's own presence may affect their research at every stage of their research process (Cresswell and Poth, 2018). Reflexivity is a critical component of qualitative research, emphasising the researcher's awareness of their own biases, perspectives, and influence on the research process. In this study, reflexivity plays an important role in ensuring that the findings are credible and that the research is conducted ethically and responsibly. This section outlines the reflexive practices employed throughout the research process.

Throughout the research process, I employed reflective diaries to record my insights and interpretations. This method enabled me to monitor the development of my comprehension and guarantee that personal biases were recognised and rectified.

3.11 Researcher's Background and Positioning

As a researcher, I have a personal connection to the topic of drug abuse, having grown up in an environment affected by drug abuse and having a brother who struggles with addiction. This background has shaped my understanding of the issue and my motivations for conducting this research. While my experiences may provide important insights, they also present potential biases that need to be acknowledged.

3.11.1 Awareness of Bias: The researcher needs to recognise that their personal experience may influence their interpretations and interaction with participants to share their stories (Cresswell and Poth, 2018). To mitigate this, I consciously strived to approach the research with an open

mind, allowing participants to share their stories without imposing my own views or assumptions.

3.11.2 Engagement With Participants: My familiarity with the community and its members facilitated access to participants and helped foster trust. Participants indicated that it was easier for them to share their insights with me because my body language and attentiveness indicated that I cared about them, beyond the research. However, this familiarity could have led to assumptions about participant's experiences. I actively sought to listen and learn from narratives, prioritising their voices over my preconceptions because I understand that everyone has their different experiences and all insights are valuable.

3.11.3 Documenting insights: The journal served as a space to explore my reactions to participants stories, ethical dilemmas encountered, and moments of discomfort. By reflecting on these experiences, I aimed to enhance my understanding of how my positionality influenced the research process

3.11.4 Identifying assumptions: Regularly revisiting my journal helped me identify and challenge my assumptions about drug abuse and the individuals affected by it. This ongoing self-reflection is important for maintaining the integrity of the research and ensuring that participants' voices are authentically represented.

In essence, reflexivity was an integral part of this research on drug abuse amongst young males in Amatolaville. By acknowledging my background and maintaining a reflexive journal, I aimed to conduct the research with integrity and respect for participants' experiences. This reflexive approach not only enhanced the credibility of the findings but also contributed to a deeper understanding of the complex factors influencing drug abuse in the community.

3.12 Ethical Considerations of the Study.

As noted above, prior to commencing the study, the ethics application was accepted by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), bearing the Protocol Number H24/07/22. This process entailed a comprehensive evaluation of the research proposal and the ethics application to guarantee that ethical standards were adhered to. The medium risk level was assigned to this research, indicating that there is a possibility of some damage to both the

researcher and the participants. The ethics clearance certificate is attached in the Appendices section.

Protecting participants and maintaining the integrity of the research process necessitates meticulous attention to ethical considerations when conducting research on sensitive topics like drug use. In order to protect the well-being of the community and participants, this investigation implemented ethical standards and principles. The subsequent ethical considerations were assessed.

3.12.1 Informed consent

Informed consent is a fundamental ethical principle in research. Participants were provided with comprehensive information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits before agreeing to participate.

Most of the interviewed drug users were active users at the time of the study, with only one being a recovering user. I understand that this raises important ethical considerations regarding the question of consent, particularly because active drug users may experience cognitive impairments, impulsivity, or emotional distress that could influence their capacity to provide fully informed and voluntary consent.

To address these, I ensured that consent was obtained through clear verbal communication, emphasizing that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any point without consequence. I also took extra care to assess participants' willingness and understanding during the consent process, remaining attentive to any signs of distress or confusion, and reaffirming their right to decline participation or pause the interview.

3.12.2 Clear communication: Participation Information Sheets were developed to explain the research in an accessible language, but I also used isiXhosa as most users were Xhosa, thereby ensuring that participants understood what their involvement entailed. This included details about the voluntary nature of participation and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. These are included in the appendices section.

3.12.3 Documentation: The ethical principles surrounding consent emphasize the importance of ensuring that participants understand the study and their rights, regardless of whether consent is formal or informal (Blaxter, Hughes, and Tight, 2006). I sought both formal and informal

consent. Formal consent is characterized by written documentation, clarity, and legal protection, ensuring that participants are fully informed about the research and their rights, I have included the template in the appendices section. This is crucial in ethical research, especially in sensitive contexts (Cresswell and Poth, 2014). Informal consent involves verbal agreements and is often used in situations where formal consent may not be practical. It allows for flexibility and sensitivity to the participants' comfort, particularly in research involving stigmatized topics (Babbie, 2013). Formal consent in the form of consent forms was obtained from the committee and the police. Informal, verbal consent was obtained for drug users and family members. verbal consent with drug users and family members was recorded because of the nature of the research topic. This was to ensure that they acknowledged their understanding of the study and their agreement to participate willingly.

3.12.4 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality and **anonymity** are critical ethical principles in research, particularly when dealing with sensitive topics. They serve to protect participants' identities and the information they provide, ensuring their privacy and safety throughout the research process. Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity is important when dealing with sensitive information, especially in a small community where individuals may be easily identifiable. Confidentiality refers to the obligation of researchers to protect the privacy of participants by keeping their data secure and only sharing it in ways that do not identify them (Cresswell and Poth, 2014). Anonymity means that participants' identities are not known to the researcher or are not linked to the data they provide. This can be achieved by not collecting identifying information or by using pseudonyms in data reporting (Cresswell and Poth, 2014)

3.12.4.1 Data Protection: I kept the data acquired during the interview confidential and securely saved on my phone and laptop. I limited access to the data to only to myself and to my supervisor, who has access to transcriptions. I accomplished this by employing data security measures such as safe storage to prevent unauthorised access to participant data.

3.12.4.2 Use of Pseudonyms: In order to further protect the anonymity and privacy of the participants, I omitted their actual names from the transcripts and included pseudonyms in the report.

3.13 Minimising Harm In light of the sensitive nature of the subject matter, measures were implemented to mitigate any potential psychological or emotional injury to participants.

3.13.1 Distress Protocol: A distress protocol was implemented to provide support for participants who may have experienced emotional discomfort during or after the interviews. This encompassed providing information about local counselling services and support groups for individuals affected by substance abuse and is attached in the appendices.

The distress protocol was actively utilized during the research process. Specifically, during one interview, a family member became visibly distressed and broke down emotionally while recounting experiences related to drug use. In response, I paused the interview, offering immediate emotional support by providing a safe and empathetic environment. I then implemented the distress protocol by explaining that support services were available and offering information about local counselling and support groups. The family member was given the opportunity to take a break, and I reassured them that their well-being was the priority. Throughout this process, confidentiality was maintained, and the family member's emotional safety was prioritized, with arrangements made to connect them with professional support services if needed. This approach ensured that the research adhered to ethical standards, actively responding to emotional distress while respecting participants' dignity and agency.

3.13.2 Sensitive interviewing techniques: I sought training from the methods postgraduate course I completed in the Sociology department in the first semester of 2024, and I watched multiple interviews on how to approach discussions about drug abuse with sensitivity and empathy, allowing participants to share their experiences at their own pace without pressure.

3.14. Community Engagement.

Engaging with the community is important for ethical research, particularly in marginalised areas.

3.14.1 Community awareness: The research objectives, prospective risks, and benefits of the study were communicated to the community. This encompassed consultations with community leaders and members of the community. In order to cultivate trust and transparency, a WhatsApp group conversation was established.

3.14.2 Feedback Mechanism: In order to guarantee that participants' voices were heard and taken into account, a feedback mechanism was implemented to enable them to provide input on the research process and findings.

3.15 Conclusion

This chapter provided comprehensive information on the methodological framework used in the study for understanding the factors that contribute to drug abuse among young males in Amatolaville. By adopting a qualitative approach, the research was positioned to delve deeply into the lived experiences of participants, capturing the intricate interplay between individual behaviours and broader societal influences. The administration of in-depth face-to-face interviews facilitated narrative-driven data collection, allowing participants to express their perspectives in their own words.

The careful selection of participants and the ethical considerations outlined ensure that the research was conducted with sensitivity and respect for the individuals involved. This methodological rigor not only enhances the credibility of the findings but also aligns with the overarching aim of the study: to inform targeted interventions that address the root causes of substance abuse within the community.

CHAPTER 4: INTRICATE INTERPLAY OF THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO MALE DRUG ABUSE IN AMATOLAVILLE.

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Four delves into the complex factors contributing to male drug abuse in Amatolaville, building upon insights gathered from the qualitative research conducted in this community. This chapter unpacks the complex interplay of individual, social and structural elements that influence substance use behaviours amongst young males. This is through a series of five themes that emerged from the interviews. By analyzing the narratives and experiences of participants, the chapter seeks to illuminate the underlying motivations, challenges, and societal pressures that shape their relationship with drugs. The chapter commences with an overview of the data analysis strategy employed to interpret findings following this, key findings are presented, highlighting the various factors identified by respondents as significant contributors to their drug use. Ultimately, this chapter aims to provide a thorough understanding of the factors contributing to drug abuse among young males in Amatolaville, setting the stage for the subsequent discussion chapter.

4.2 The study's participants

Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 have been included in this report to provide a full summary of the participant demographics as well as factors pertinent to the study's focus on drug use and its impact on communities. These tables are meant to provide an improved understanding of the different backgrounds of the people involved, allowing for meaningful analysis and comparisons of key demographics like age, ethnicity, gender, and reasons for use. The total number of participants was eighteen; of this drug users comprised thirty percent, family members of users comprised twenty-five percent, police officers comprised twenty percent, and community members comprised twenty-five percent. The figures highlight the diverse perspectives covered in this study, providing insight into how different demographics experience and interpret drug-related concerns. Beyond demographic data, the other columns, known as characteristics, are gathered from a semi-structured questionnaire distributed to participants. This questionnaire contains important information about personal experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of drug usage. By

incorporating both demographic and characteristic data, the tables add depth and richness to the research, providing a comprehensive insight of the social dynamics around substance use in the community.

Table 2: Drug user sample descriptive

Characteristics	**Description**
Age Range	Predominantly young adults, ages 18-35, with some users starting to experiment with drugs as early as 14 years
Number of interviews	8
Race	Four Black Africans, Four Coloureds[3]
Gender	All male
Type of Substances Used	Commonly reported substances include tobacco, hookah (locally referred to as Oka pipe), weed, mandrax, crystal methamphetamine (locally referred to as tik)
Reasons for Use	Initial use often attributed to peer pressure, curiosity, and coping with emotional or psychological pain or the environment
Frequency of Use	Many users report daily use, with some indicating multiple times a day, particularly for "tik"

[3] The terms "Black" and "Coloured" are used here as social identities shaped by South Africa's colonial and apartheid histories. Under apartheid, racial classifications were imposed by the state to structure social, economic, and political life. "Black African" typically refers to individuals of indigenous African descent, while "Coloured" refers to people of mixed racial ancestry, often with Khoisan, African, European, and Asian heritage. These categories remain salient in post-apartheid South Africa due to their continued socio-economic implications and administrative use in redress policies. However, they are also contested and fluid, with many individuals actively redefining or rejecting imposed racial labels (Posel, 2001).

Impact on Daily Life	All users describe significant negative effects on personal relationships, employment, and overall health
Family Awareness	Most users indicated that family and friends are aware of their drug use and often intervene; however, there are a few who mentioned that their family does not intervene in their drug use.
Legal Issues	Many users have faced legal challenges, including arrests related to drug use
Desire for Change	A common sentiment among users is a desire for support and opportunities for rehabilitation rather than punitive measures
Community Support	Users express a lack of effective community support systems

Table 3 : Family members sample descriptive

Characteristic	**Description**
Number of Interviews	6
Age Range	Family members typically range from late youth to middle-aged adults, and one pensioner
Race	One coloured, five blacks
Relationship to User	Common relationships include parents, and one siblings
Awareness of Use	Most family members were aware of the drug use, with varying degrees of acknowledgment and acceptance

Emotional Impact	Family members reported feelings of sadness, frustration, and helplessness due to the user's behaviour and addiction
Communication Dynamics	Communication within families was often strained, with frequent conflicts and misunderstandings related to drug use
Support Seeking	Many family members have sought support from community organizations, such as FAMSA, and rehabilitation centres but report limited effectiveness
Coping Mechanisms	Family members often coped through engaging in support groups or relying on faith and community support
Financial Strain	Families frequently experienced financial difficulties due to the drug user's behaviour, including theft or neglect of responsibilities
Desire for Change	A strong desire for the user to seek help and for the family to heal, with hopes for rehabilitation and improved family dynamics
Community Perception	Family members expressed concern about the stigma associated with drug use, which affects their social interactions and support networks

Table 4: Community members sample descriptive

Characteristic	**Description**
Number of interviews	2
Age Range	Between 31-42

Gender	Both male
Race	One black and one Coloured
Community Role	A community development worker and a ward committee member
Awareness of Drug Use	High awareness of drug use prevalence in the community
Perceived Causes	Commonly identified causes include economic hardship, lack of education, peer pressure, and cultural factors
Impact on Community	Reports of increased crime rates, family breakdowns, and a general decline in community cohesion due to substance abuse
Support Systems	Limited availability of effective support systems and rehabilitation programs, leading to calls for more community resources
Community Initiatives	Not sufficient community initiatives
Desire for Change	A strong collective desire for improved community safety, health, and support for individuals struggling with addiction
Stigma and Challenges	Community members expressed concerns about the stigma associated with drug use, which hinders open discussions and support efforts

Table 5: Local police sample descriptive

Characteristics	**Description**
Number of Interviews	2
Age Range	36-46
Gender	Females

Police Roles	A Crime Intelligence Official (CIO) and a drug-designated constable
Main Focus	Addressing drug use among young women and men and its implications for public safety and community well-being
Challenges Identified	Limited resources (manpower and vehicles), Difficulty engaging community members, High crime rates linked to drug use (theft, assault, murder)
Strategies Discussed	Awareness campaigns ,community engagement, collaboration with other agencies (e.g., Correctional Services)
Community Involvement	Emphasis on the role of community members in reporting drug-related activities and providing information to the police
Government Role	Need for government intervention to establish treatment facilities and support social development programmes
Training Needs	Importance of providing trauma response and drug education training for police officers to better understand and respond to drug users
Future Directions	Explore affordable treatment options, Enhance communication and collaboration with parents and community stakeholders
Success Stories	Mention of awareness programmes that have positively impacted drug use reduction in the community

4.3. Thematic development of findings

This section outlines key themes and sub-themes arising from the interviews with the drug users, their families, community members and the police

Table 6: The chain of Addiction

	Main-Theme	**Sub-Themes**
Theme One	The Chain of Addiction	-The development of addiction -Behavioural Changes -The impact of addiction

Table 6 shows the progression and factors that contribute to drug addiction among drug users. Theme one, the chain of addiction, is further characterized by three subthemes, development of addiction, behavioural changes and the impact of addiction. The availability of drugs in Amatolaville contributes to a cycle of experimentation and addiction, family members detect the behavioural changes of their family members who use drugs and drug users consider the significance of the impact of addiction in their lives. The shared and differing narratives of participants underscore the complexity of addiction and various factors that perpetuate addiction. The theme was developed from data collected from eight respondents

The chain of Addiction

4.3.1.1 The development of addiction

The sub-theme illustrates how a combination of initial curiosity and social influence factors contribute to the progression from casual use to full blown addiction for all eight reported drug users.

All eight of the drug users started using drugs in the following way: they started with the Hookah, then moved onto cigarette, then moved onto weed, then moved onto Mandrax and then moved into Crystal Methamphetamine. James details:

...I'd never liked, I never loved, never wanted to use drugs. I hated drugs. I wanted to be a pilot in the South African National Defence Air force. Yeah, but I went up until grade seven, so I

had to go to high school. Okay, I passed, I needed stationery. Okay, the person I depended on to buy the stationery disappointed me, I don't blame him, I accepted. The sooner you accept, the sooner you forgive yourself and forgive the person who hurt you, and the sooner you can move on, understand. So, I never finished school. And then I started smoking. It starts with a cigarette and then advances. It's stages. There are ones who go into the stages and get out, some of us could not, yes just like peer pressure, you know? So, I started with a cigarette, then I moved to smoking dagga, okay I needed something stronger I moved on to Mandrax, that is a round pill. You cut it into four quarters, a little bit of powder, that's what I call it... (James, 04-09-2024)
This perpetual patten occurred because the drug users were experimenting at first and they ended up becoming addicted. Avela states:

I started smoking in grade 8, I was 14 at the time, I met people who smoked weed and other drugs and I started smoking weed, then I realized I am only smoking weed, and my friends smoke serious drugs, and I decided to try Crystal methamphetamine. I continued with that, and I did not listen, got kicked out of school and I decided to drop out. I started stealing items from home and smoked drugs every day and I quickly became addicted (Avela, 03-09-2024).

Crystal methamphetamine, as mentioned by the drug users is the drug that is most addictive of all the drugs. Most drug users revealed that they even exchange goods like clothes, phones and groceries to the sellers to obtain these drugs.

4.3.1.2 Behavioural changes

The sub-theme of behavioural changes as reported by six family members underscores the changes in behaviour noted by family members.

Five of the six family members reported noticeable changes in the behaviour of the drug users. These changes include an outburst, withdrawal from family activities, and a decline in social interactions. The affected individuals may exhibit erratic behaviour, mood swings, and a lack of motivation with can strain family relationships.
Zukiswa details:

And when I was coming back from P.E [Port Elizabeth, now Gqeberha], *we had a problem with the car near the old age home. When I asked what the problem was? Hey, he shouted at me. Okay? How Come? He does not normally do that. He was doing it in front of his stepfather, Okay? I was so disappointed. Then I saw that no, this manner is caused by the drugs. It's okay, he does not reply to me like that, even my mother, you ask something from him, maybe confronting him, it's worse this other day he took his bowl and smashed it! Smashed it just because I shouted at him and threw it away, I thought maybe let me just leave him* (Zukiswa, 02-09-2024)

Back chat is also a symptom as most parents noticed changes in behaviour in terms of back chat and a shift from a respectful child to ones that steal items within the household, Jakes recalls, *The immediate change you see is back chatting, he started getting cheeky. So, in other words, he started getting disrespectful. He started developing anger problems and would have outbursts* (Jakes, 04-09-2024).

The behavioural changes are not the same for all parents, Thami noticed minimal changes in his son's behaviour:

Except for failing in school and selling items in the house, he is alright man, he's not violent so his demeaner has not changed much, except when he wants a fix, then he steals (Thami, 07-09-2024)

4.3.1.3 The impact on Physical well-being

The physical effects of drug use are profound and often debilitating, further complicating the lives of individuals struggling with addiction. All eight of the participants noted changes in their physical appearance since they started smoking.

Onothando stated that drugs physically changed him:

The drugs have really affected me because I was a little bit lighter but now, I am now darker. My face is ugly, and I do not feel like myself and I am a little bit thin. I did also lose weight because drugs suppress your appetite, and you just want to smoke all day long. It also affected my sleeping patterns and overall health (Onothando, 31-08-2024).

Jay unpacked the health issues he encountered because of drug use,

I got TB, it was five years back and it came from drug use, particularly Mandrax, so since then I have not been okay (Jay, 04-09-2-24).

Similarly, Avela recalled his share of health problems because of his addiction:
My older brother kept telling me I am going to die from using drugs, I did not listen until I got diagnosed with stroke. That is when I realized that this is serious because my right side does not work properly, it died, and I felt numb because of the drugs I was using. I stayed in hospital for four months; I could not walk or do anything (Avela, 03-09-2024).

Not only did the drugs have a negative on their but also had legal implications. Charles recalled his experiences:
I saw myself ending up in jail because of these drugs, getting arrested to feed my craving (Charles, 03-09-2024).
Similarly, Jay shared his experiences:
I got in trouble with the police and stuff. I went to jail for five years and when I came back, I had nothing to show for it (Jay, 04-09-2024).

4.3.2 The emotional Foundation of drug addiction.

This section outlines the second theme and sub-themes arising from the interviews with the drug users and their families.

Table 7: The emotional foundation on drug addiction

	Main Theme	**Sub themes**
Theme 2	The emotional foundations of drug use	**-**Coping Mechanism -Personal issues -Family Instability

Theme 2, the emotional foundation of addiction delves into the psychological and emotional factors that contribute to drug use amongst young males in Amatolaville. This theme highlights how personal experiences, mental health, and family instability play a significant role in the onset and perpetuation of addiction. The data from this theme was drawn from ten respondents, drug users and family members.

4.3.2.1 Coping mechanism

Five users frequently mentioned using drugs as a coping mechanism for negative emotions, such as feelings of worthlessness, stress, and isolation. Drugs provided a temporary escape from these feelings, although the relief was often short-lived. According to Onothando,

T*here are psychological challenges I face, because often I want to lock myself up. I want to stay alone, then I start thinking negatively, thinking you are useless when the drugs are not at your disposal and things like that, but when they drugs are available, you think everything is cool. So, I use the drugs to cope with stress and the minute the drugs are gone stress comes up*
(Onothando, 31-08-2024)

James admitted to using drugs to avoid confrontation:
Smoking mandrax helps because I am short-tempered. So, whenever someone is brushing me off the wrong way, I walk away so the drugs keep me in line (James, 04-09-2024).

In contrast, Jay admitted to using drugs for fun and not for any emotional reason or to escape anything, by stating:
Yes, the drugs do not overpower me. I use them with my brain, and I know how to control myself
(Jay, 04-09-2024)

4.3.2.2 Personal and Family Issues

Personal and family problems were reported as significant factors in the onset of drug use. Five users reported strained relationships with family members, which contributed to their emotional distress and subsequent drug use. Charles (03-09-2024) shared how he started to use drugs due to family stress, particularly his father's stroke, which affected his school focus:
It started when my father had a stroke, it started there and I did not want to listen and whenever I was at school, I could not focus, all I could think about was my dad and his stroke which stressed me (Charles, 03-09-2024).
Similarly, Avela recalls the passing of his grandmother, who was his primary caregiver when he was young as a significant factor that contributed because he could not process her death, so he used the drugs as a coping mechanism by stating:

When my grandmother died, I felt like I was free to smoke, and I did not want to process her death because it was working inside my brain then it felt better that I was entertaining myself with the drugs. I was very close with her; I used to live with her. (Avela, 03-09-2024).
In contrast, Onothando does not attribute his drug use to family issues, he revealed he got himself involved with drugs:
Thing is, my family did support me and advised that I must stop using drugs, but I decided to continue (Onothando, 31-08-2-24).

Similarly, Jay revealed that there were no personal issues involved in his drug use,
I am smoking for fun, there is no reason for me to smoke, my parents know I smoke, and they do not say anything (Jay, 04-10-2024).
For James, using drugs has strained the relationship with family beyond repair:
I do not want to smoke anymore. The only thing it does is that it pushes your family away; you take things away from home and you cannot control yourself. As we speak, I am living under protection-order with my mother, but she still accepts me with that protection order. She did not close it by that book, she's trying to keep me in line. But honestly, the relationship with my mom is broken, it's irreparable. I need help from my mother, it breaks my heart. There's no love no more, there's nothing. She sees me, she sees the devil. If she passed away, she told me everything that has happened in her life the past 10 years it's because of me, if she died, it's because of me (James, 04-09-2024)

4.3.2.3 Family instability.

Three family members highlighted family instability, such as parental separation or absence, which leads to emotional distress and lack of support as contributing factors to drug use among their family members. This instability often leaves young individuals feeling lost and more susceptible to using drugs as a coping mechanism. For example, Zukiswa shared how her son, Lunga blamed his addiction on various family issues, including the divorce of his parents and financial struggles:
I suspect the divorce between me and his father, yes, at a young age, being a young boy, I think it started there. He is blaming me when I am shouting at him, telling him to stop these drugs, he says it's because of you that I am smoking drugs now (Zukiswa, 02-09-2024).

Thami had a similar belief as he suspected that his son's drug use was due to his separation from his wife:

I suspect that my temporary separation and divorce from my partner and his mother did affect his drug consumption, but I eventually returned home, and it was a temporary situation (Thami, 07-09-2024)

Nolime, identified drinking and conflicts that contributed to her son's drug use. She stated that: *Me and his father liked to go to church but also drink sometimes. When we drink, we would be involved in some fights, get in conflicts, sometimes divorce, we would also live in separation* (Nolime, 03-09-2024).

Julia also thought that her drinking habits might have affected her son's drug use, and she recalled how her son often stated his displeasure with the family's drinking:

One thing that he usually says is that he does not like how my family drinks, he does not like it he does not even want it, he does not like how I used to drink, that is the only thing he does not want in his life (Julia, 03-09-2024).

However, this reality is not true for all family members. For example, Jakes, Leonard's father recollected that Leonard grew up a loving family as the only child and that the family had an open-door policy:

We believe we have an open-door policy that allows Leonard to speak to us freely. We had several meetings whereby we spoke to him about this. We talked about the implications of this, the health implications and the legal implications and there is always that promise that he will stop, and he does not (Jakes, 04-09-2024)

Lindeka also did not recall any form of instability within the family that might have affected the brother's drug use patterns. She acknowledged the death of her father and brother's death but does not think that was enough reason for the brother to use drugs.

4.3.3 Social Influences and Economic Realities of Addiction

This section outlines the third theme and sub theme arising from the interviews with the drug users, family members, community members and the police.

Table 8: Social influence and the economic realities of addiction

	Main theme	Sub-Themes
Theme 3	Social Influences and the economic realities of addiction	-Peer Pressure -The alleviation of boredom and lack of opportunities -Economic hardships

Theme 3, the social influences and economic realities of addiction examines the socio-economic factors that contribute to drug use in Amatolaville, highlighting how economic conditions and social structures impact individuals 'choices and behaviours regarding substance use. Overall, this theme underscores the complex interplay between socio-economic factors and substance use. It highlights the need for addressing economic challenges and fostering a community support system. The theme draws on data from eleven respondents.

4.3.3.1 Peer Pressure

Two of the drug users reported their desire to fit in and appear "cool" amongst friends had significantly influenced their decision to start using drugs. James highlighted the role of peer pressure and the role of social circle in his addiction by stating, with reference to his peers, that:
They are the second biggest people that affect me. That breaks my heart. It's my downfall. They changed me (James, 04-09-2024)
Onothando also attributed his drug use to peer pressure:
I can say it is peer pressure, because you see people doing it and you want to imitate. You think it is cool, and you want to appear cool to the crowd (31-08-2024).

However, Jay did not identify peer pressure as a contributing factor:
I don't hang out with people, I do not like friends, I like to be alone, so it is my own decision. (Donovan, 04-09-2024).

Jabez (03-09-2024) made similar points by stating that he did not have friends that influenced him in Amatolaville, he smoked alone, and his friends visited him occasionally.

Family members note that the young people often succumbed to peer pressure, feeling compelled to use drugs to fit in or gain acceptance amongst their friends. Jacobs stated: *Peer*

pressure is a factor, wrong friends. I can even, you know I have got an idea, where did he start and with whom, but I do not want to put the blame on other people because at the end of the day, if he's weak he must be blamed for that (Jacobs, 04-09-2024).

Thami mentioned how his son Onothando is influenced by friends and wants to be cool, he states that he has got friends, that are older than him who even influence him to steal things within the household for a fix.
Two of the six family members, Zukiswa and Nolime had a different view. Zukiswa shared that:
Peer pressure to fit in? I do not think it is that, because his friends are not drug users, and he grew up with them. He grew up with nice friends you see, I do not think it is peer pressure. He left his friends to go do those drugs. Whenever I ask him why are you not friends with Leo and them? He replied that they reprimand him against, and he does not want that (Zukiswa, 02-09-2024).

Nolime stated that she did not think peer pressure played a role in Avela's drug use:
I am not going to lie about the role they played. His friends did not notice what he was doing was wrong so they could not reprimand him. What I noticed is that he was the only looking for friends that smoked (Nolime, 03-09-2024).

Community members highlighted how these young men face immense pressure from their peers to engage in drug use. This peer influence was compounded by lack of positive role models and support systems, James states:
*Because Amatolaville is a small community and news travels fast, this is also amongst adults which also influences the young ones with whom they connect with from a young age. This allows for the youth to be involved with characters that are not sound just because the parents are okay with these relation*s (James, 02-09-2024).

4.3.3.2 The alleviation of boredom and lack of opportunities

All the individuals attributed their drug use to boredom and a lack of engaging activities or job opportunities. According to Onothando,

The drugs really do affect us especially if you are unemployed, you realize you are getting old and there is nothing you are doing with your life, you end up thinking about smoking because you are idling around but if you were busy, you have a job then maybe you would be occupied throughout the day (Onothando, 31-08-2024).

Jabez states that in Amatolaville, there's no sport, there's nothing new, there's nothing they can do, there are no development centres which is a major reason why most of the males engage in crime and turn to drugs.

For Xolisa, drug use has contributed to his job loss. He states that:

Now that I no longer work, I smoke more, I became extremely lazy and complacent, I lost my skill and sold all my working material. (Xolisa, 02-09-2024)

Similarly, Jay shared that:

C*rystal methamphetamine keeps you awake and Mandrax calms you down and makes you sleepy. So now I must smoke a lot of it. So, say from midnight to 6'oclock in the morning and not go to bed. Then when I do go to bed, I oversleep. Okay so it does affect me. Not going to work, smoking at work, it gets me in trouble* (Jay, 04-09-2024).

Four drug users suggested that creating job training programmes and community support like sport could help reduce drug use amongst them. According to Derk:

*If we can, if maybe we can create jobs for the youth. Like opening a working centre for the guys that have skills and one's that do not have, it's going to keep us busy and develop a skill at the end of the day. So, you can work for yourself, I think then there will be less drugs and more promising futur*e (Derk, 04-09-2-24)

4.3.3.3 Economic Influence

Economic hardships and high unemployment rates are significant factors mentioned by four family members. The police also mentioned limited manpower and resources available to SAPS. The financial strain experienced by families leads to individuals to seeking drugs as a form of escape or relief from their difficult circumstance. Lindeka also mentioned how drug users in particular robbed people as they are unemployed to sustain their habits.

Julia stated how money was a trigger to her son Jebez:

His problem is having money in his pocket. If he does not have money, he can go a year without smoking. His problem is getting money, a piece job then he will smoke (Julia, 03-09-2024).

However, it is not only a lack of money that is a contributing factor to drug use as two of the six drug users Thami and Jacobs also revealed that being financially stable enabled their sons to take items from their family homes without permission and sell them to feed their habits. Jacobs stated that he also believed his son was a provider amongst his friends. He added that:
He becomes very irresponsible in terms of utilizing his money and when he does get work, you will never see him contribute to the house simply because we are fine financially, he uses all his money on drugs (Jacobs, 09-2024).

Thami stressed that because their family was well-off financially, Onothando had most of his needs met and that fed into his drug habits:
Since he thought me and his mom is we are working in stable working environment. So, it makes it easy for him to feed the habit. (Thami, 07-09-2024).
Themba emphasized that high unemployment rates made Amatolaville more susceptible to drug abuse he states:
These unemployed individuals often work hard in piece jobs to earn money for drugs despite strain or getting involved in illegal activities such as robbery and theft to feed their habit (Themba, 31-09-2024).
Melville stated that the unfortunate thing about staying in the community is that people are impoverished, and these young men are always looking for a way out:
So, poverty creates a sense that I have got nothing to do, and I do not have a lot of money, and the money that I do have, I can afford this, which is recreational drugs that they learn something fun and becomes an addiction (James, 02-09-2024).

Melville highlighted that the drug dealers control the economy of Amatolaville, which is also a contributing factor:
The community is also heavily reliant on social grants, so the same people that sell drugs are also loan sharks, so they are controlling more than half of the finances in Amatolavolle. As the young males are so desperate for their fix, they will never report the dealers and some of the

family members live in fear of these characters as they have resources to threaten one as he reveals that he has been threatened before (James, 02-09-2024)

Nechi spoke about the police limited manpower and resources given to SAPS:
We have very limited manpower, we have very limited vehicles, our resources are limited, even the ones you are looking at are stationary. For example, one consumes drugs in one area and commit crime in another area. so our resources are strained in that regard (Nechi, 18-12-2024).

4.3.4 Cultural Acceptance and the Normalisation of Drug Use

This section outlines the fourth theme and sub themes arising from the interviews with the drug users, family members, community members and the police.

Table 9: Cultural acceptance and the Normalization of drug use

	Main themes	**Sub-Themes**
Theme 4	Cultural acceptance and the normalisation of drug use	-Cultural acceptance -Accessibility -Normalization of drug use

Theme 4, cultural acceptance and the normalisation of drug use explores how cultural attitudes, access and societal norms contribute to the normalization of drug use within the community of Amatolaville. It highlights the ways in which cultural influences shape perceptions of substance abuse and impact individual behaviours.

4.3.4.1 Cultural Acceptance.

Themba discussed the differences in cultural norms between the black and coloured people in Amatolaville, particularly regarding respect for elders, which he believes contributed to drug use:
So, in African cultures there are some things you cannot do in front of your elders, things like smoking and drinking because they have instilled some sort of discipline. Whereas in the coloured culture or tradition, it is something that is easily done. You can share a smoke with your dad. You can share a drink with your dad to such an extent that it becomes difficult for your

dad to reprimand you in a way even if you are in a situation where now you are using a substance that could be harmful or illegal to you as a person (Themba, 31-09-2024).

This links with James' analysis of the generational shift in moral values within the community, where the respect for elders and traditional values has declined. This decline in moral guidance contributes to a normalization of drug use amongst the youth, making it more acceptable within families and social circles. He stated that:

And the sad part about our community and the societal norms is that we have started setting in our communities is that our parents have lost control, yeah, and we have lost the moral fibre that was passed on by our grandparents and stuff, and somewhere a generational blockage happened. Now I am speaking as a theologist. You know exactly what I was thinking because moral fibre has shifted in this generation (James, 02-09-2024).

4.3.4.2 Access.

Themba expressed that Amatolaville is known as the drug hub of Stutterheim, and the drugs are extremely cheap. Mandrax costs between twenty rands and thirty and a bag of Crystal Methamphetamine can be bought for fifty rands.

Avela noted that Amatolaville community was a major factor in his drug consumption:

This place, this environment did affect my consumption, because in this community I started smoking at an early age and the people I used to buy from did not warn me and say you are too young to smoke, they were selling drugs to me because they were gaining financially that's all they care about, so that's how the norm here affected me. No one reprimanded me, in this environment it easy to become addicted (Avela, 02-09-2024).

Similarly, Jabez shared that majority of youth including the older generation use drugs as they are easily accessible, he stated:

Most people in the township smoke and it is easy to get drugs as they are very cheap and easily accessible, the people in the community do not care if you smoke drugs or not as the environment is filled with drugs (Jabez, 03-09-2024).

Xolisa explained how he accessed drugs:

*There is a scrap metal around and we exchange things for a fix, and we offer our services in exchange for drugs, even guys from other location, they come here to our township and exchange for drugs because it's culturally acceptable and normal, you get drugs for a cheap price. So, you know things changed a lot in the community, even people from outside come in to buy and infiltrate the place and it such a small community, so it is easier for a lot of people to get influenced and there are a lot of places that sell drugs, so it becomes hard to avoid (*Xolisa, 02-09-2024)

According to Themba, availability increases the likelihood of experimentation and addiction:

*Remember, I said that our community has been observed as a drug and substance abuse. There was a notion from the police that drugs are manufactured here, so it makes them easily available to anyone who intends on using them. So, they are easily available. Keyword, very, very easily available There are those who are willing to do peace jobs. Mh, just to ensure that they get some, some sort of financial compensation, okay to be able to afford, and what I have observed is that drugs are available very cheaply and not as expensive as we think they are. For 30 rands, a mere thirty-rand, twenty-rand and ten rand there is something that you can get, which makes them very easily accessible (*Themba, 31-09-2024).

The police also noted this easy access of drugs in the community. As constable Maca stated:

*the community does not have a sense of openness with us as the police to tell us who transports the drugs or when they get in the community, or which house sells drugs. You also find out that sometimes even the members that claim to be working with us as police, it is them that sell the drugs, they want intel on police's moves so it is also people that claim to work with us that sell drugs, so they are also contributing factor*s (Maca, 18-12-2024).

4.3.4.3 The Normalisation of Drug Use

The normalisation of drug use within Amatolaville community was a factor that made it easier for them to start and continue using drugs. As James stated:

In this community, it's what everybody does, I am going to say 80-70 percent of the people from 16, it can go until 60 years are all drug users. Mostly using crystal meth and Mandrax so

it's like normal, so me trying to rehabilitate myself in this community won't work because wherever I go it's a hobby, that's the only thing (James, 04-09-2024).

Onothando described drugs as trendy and enjoyable, which further encouraged his use:

Using drugs, is like trending now. People are enjoying it now; it's like people are enjoying it. People are smoking as though nothing is happening, but in my experience, it is not cool because I know its effects (Onothando, 31-08-2024)

Similarly, Derk shared that societal factors played a role in drug use:

All I can tell you is that drug use in the community is getting out of hand, small kids are growing up smoking drugs because they see from us that it is normal, it is a cool thing and they have no one to reprimand them that it is not right, it's like there is a "crab mentality" in the township. (Derk, 04-09-2024).

The family members recognized that drug use had become normalised among the Amatolaville community. All the family members expressed concern that this acceptance diminished the perceived risks associated with drug use, making it more likely for individuals to engage in these behaviours without fear of consequences.

According to Zukiswa regarding her son Bonga:

People are using him. He can do hard work for fixing your car only for R30 and just to buy drugs. Okay so it has affected us as a family because it's a disgrace (Zukiswa, 02-09-2024)

Jakes also stated that the community did not try warning them about Leonardo's drug use. James was critical about the community's enabling behaviour and lack of support for families dealing with drug use.

Thami also believed that the community's willingness to buy stolen items from his son encouraged his behaviour by stating:

The problem in the community is that they buy the things he sells. They encourage this thing of him using drugs by buying the things he sells. They do not report it to us as a family (Thami, 07-09-2024)

Melville highlighted that drug use had also become normalised within families, which made it challenging for young people to resist the temptation to use drugs. He stated that:

You look at your parents today, who grew up smoking hookah. They say it is fine for their kids to smoke hookah. The other day on social media, I saw somebody, a two-year-old kid smoking hookah because the mother was fine with it, and she said it was healthy. Okay so societal norms have changed, and our moral fibre has decayed so much, it is that these things have become a norm, the mentality in the location has become crab (Mellville, 02-09-2024).

4.3.5 Call for Action: Bridging the Gap in Community Support and Rehabilitation

This section outlines the fifth theme and sub themes arising from the interviews with the drug users, family members, community members, and the police.

Table 10: Call for action: bridging the gap between community support and rehabilitation

	Main theme	**Sub-themes**
Theme 5	Call for action: Bridging the gap in community support and rehabilitation	-Community support systems -Rehabilitation programs -Advocacy and policy Change

Theme 5, the call for action: bridging the gap in community support and rehabilitation addresses the urgent need for enhanced community action and support systems to combat drug use among males in Amatolaville. It highlights the deficiencies in rehabilitation facilities and community resources, emphasizing the need for collective efforts to address the addiction crisis.

4.3.5.1 Community Support systems

Melville noted the absence of involvement from community organisations such as churches, police and social development in addressing drug abuse:

*There are six churches in the community which are Public Benefit Organizations (PBOs) churches in Amatolaville are not involved in the issue of drug abuse and they do not even speak against it (*Melville, 02-09-2024).

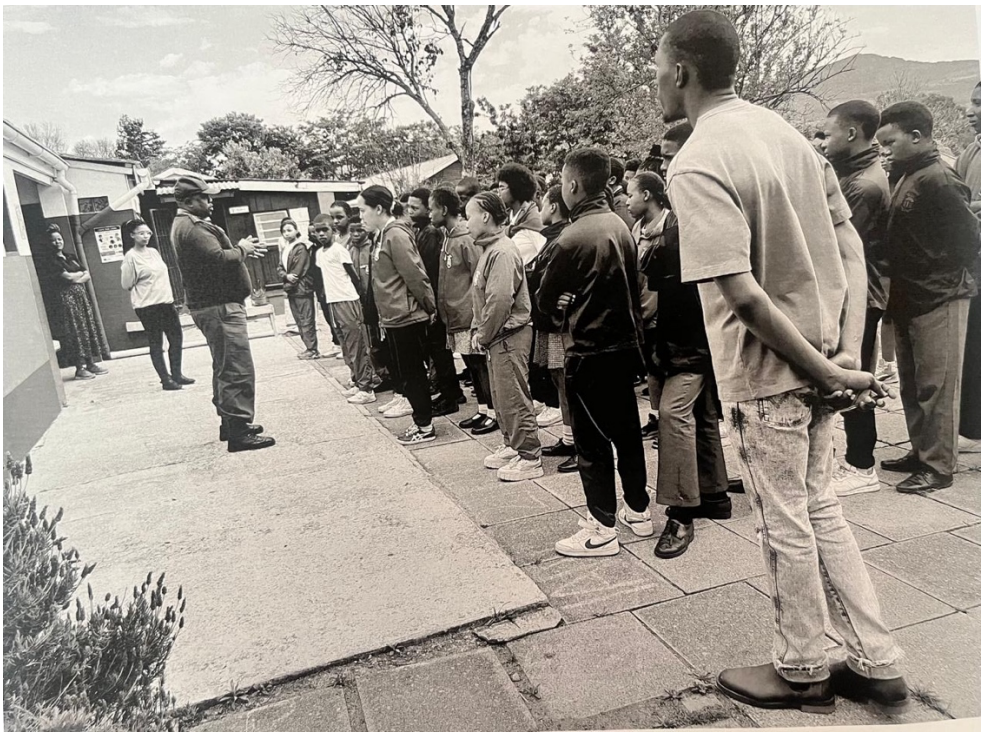
He also mentioned that SAPS do not play a role in the control of drug abuse in the community:

Drugs are so rapidly available that you do not even have to hide that you are selling because SAPS do not play a role. You can report it to them a hundred times and they would still not play any role. (Melville, 02-09-2-2024)

The police mentioned that they are involved with the community. As constable Maca remarked:

We do have awareness programs awareness campaigns, mostly at schools even in our communities we do branch out for GBV and substance abuse (Maca, 18-12-2024).

Figure 2: Police speaking in a school assembly



Source: Photo taken by Stutterheim police officers.

Figure 2 is illustrating the police hosting an awareness program about drug use at Amatolaville Junior School. This engagement highlights the proactive approach taken by law enforcement to educate young students about the dangers of drug use, aiming to prevent future substance abuse.

However, Maca mentioned the reception was not entirely positive:
The community needs to be truthful to us because when they hear that the police are coming, they hide things even the criminals. when we ask community members about the perpetrators and pressing issues that happen, they become lost, they tend not to know each other or report each other they protect each other and not want to report their friends/family members and Amatolaville people really love drugs. We do have operations every now and again but do not usually get help. Operations to search certain houses but the resistance from the community makes these hard to become accessible. And the problem we encounter in Amatolaville, when we call meetings people, they don't attend.

*They don't want to come, we call in imbizos with other departments, but attendance is usually poor (*Maca, 18-12-2024).

This lack of support hindered efforts to provide moral guidance and alternative activities for the youth. Themba mentioned that it started with community members who turned a blind eye to the magnitude of drug abuse amongst young males so this lack of responsibility stemmed from the community:

You know, there is a tendency amongst the community members of protecting each other, okay, even, even if someone does protect another deliberately or not, there's just someone, there's just this notion of people don't want, not wanting to report on others, even if they've seen that someone has committed a crime. But they, they are not the ones who want to be seen as snitches, okay, for lack of a better word. Call it snitches. But in kasi terms, you are usually called impimpi[4]*, the one who snitched us to the police, so welcome to there's also an element of intimidation, okay, okay, yeah. There's also an element of intimidation. If you are the one who reported us to the police, we will deal with you. Then that element of intimidation makes it a bit impossible for anyone to tell on others, because at the end of the day, they don't want to be dealt with. You know, and you never know what's going to happen when people promise to deal with you. Never know what's going to happen to yourself, maybe to members of your family or your wife, your children, your parents and stuff. So, there is that element of not deliberately protecting each other, but this unwillingness amongst community members to come forward and report whoever is committing whatever felony there is* (Themba, 31-08-2024).

The police also stated that the lack of training also had influenced their effectiveness. Constable Nechi stated that:

A*lso, training is a huge problem, SAPS is not even provided with enough training support for us to deal with the things we find on the ground. Sometimes other cases you feel like you are using your own discretion, it is the first time you face such a case, there is no training to refer to.*

[4] The term **impimpi** (isiXhosa/isiZulu) refers to a person who is perceived as an informer or traitor, particularly one who collaborates with authorities or the police against their own community. During apartheid, the label carried severe social stigma, as it was associated with betrayal of anti-apartheid activists. The word continues to hold deep historical and emotional weight in township contexts (Harries, 2007).

Another confusion the government made was to allow people to legally smoke dagga and plant it at the back of their yard such an initiative was not properly introduced in SAPS, We need education on that for example how many grams are planted. And you must remember again, whatever quantity is planted within the yards can make one high enough to commit crime so the laws of the personal dagga usage are detrimental to us as the police (Nechi, 18-12-2024).

4.3.5.2 Rehabilitation Programs

The limited access to or lack of rehabilitation centres emerges as a critical theme in identifying the factors that contribute to drug use. The interviews highlighted key aspects of how this impacts drug users and their family.

Charles mentioned the importance of rehab centres and proper healthcare support systems and sees potential if these come, the positive changes if he quits, such as returning to school, church and sports:

The government should do something like a rehab centre, for the current ones to stop smoking so that the kids can be saved. Everyone speaks about how they would like to quit but if proper help is given, maybe we would (Charles, 03-09-2024).

Jabez, who was taken to the local hospital because of limited rehabilitation facilities, stated that:

When they were draining my blood, I asked how many drugs are still there and she said she does not know. I just wish they could work with us and do counselling services and do follow-ups with our parents and the entire community. (Jabez, 02-09-2024)

Avela, who was also admitted to the local hospital, feels like more should be done, the department of health needs to work with social development to address the problem. He stated that:

We also need counselling on the other side, like social workers, because they are going to ask us relevant questions as they know more about this. They should do follow ups and try explaining that drugs are not healthy for deeper awareness for the drug users because we do not know enough. The information that we do have is not sufficient, we only know that drugs are dangerous but to a certain extent, for example crystal meth makes on to be active and Mandrax

calms you down, but we do not go far as thinking these things can destroy your lungs and organs, so we need deep education on the substances (Avela, 02-09-2024).
However, this is not the same for all drug users because Onothando states that he was afforded many opportunities by his parents but reverted to drug use. This also planted a seed of doubt on others. According to Jay:
Rehab, no they do not help, it's not about whatever rehab, it's about your mind, it's your mind, how you work with it. I saw it with my friend. That's why I said no, rehab is useless because it is up to you to change your mind, rehab makes you worse (Jay, 04-09-2024).

All family members emphasised the need for better support systems, including access to rehabilitation programmes and community resources. They felt the absence of these resources left individuals without the necessary tools to combat drug use.
Zukiswa emphasised the need for a better education and awareness amongst parents. She suggested collaboration with social workers and community organizations to implement follow-up programs and initiatives:
I sought help from FAMSA, a local NGO that does support and counselling but was told Jabez needed to attend sessions himself, which he refused. I was unhappy with the lack of follow-up from the program and their refusal to do family visits (Julia, 03-09-2024).
Two families that could afford these programs often struggled. According to Thami
Our son uses drugs, so that's our problem, we though since we took him to rehab. We thought he was going to stop using drugs, but he did not (Thami, 07-09-2024).
Jacobs also detailed Leonard's rehabilitation history, including multiple rehabilitation attempts and the current rehab programme he was in. He also discussed the financial constraints of these. Jacobs highlighted the need for family support and role of religion in providing strength and hope (04-09-2024)

The police also emphasised the lack of support from the government. As constable Nechi stated:
As the police we do not refer, those types of things were available in the white/ apartheid government but not anymore. They would get sent to rehab places such as Weskoppies, they would be there and get detained and get educated about drugs. Now our government does not want to invest in that (Nechi, 18-12-2024).

4.3.5.3 Advocacy and Policy Change

Both Themba and Melville emphasise the importance of community responsibility and collaboration in addressing drug abuse. They advocate for community-led interventions, increased police presence, and sustainable programmes that tackled the root causes of drug use within the community.

Themba stated that the importance of community involvement in coming up with solutions by stating:

In fact, I'm going to say this in as much as there is, there are some interventions that can be made by the government, but we also need to take our minds away from this notion that every solution to a community will come by being brought by the government. We should take that notion away from our minds. We should instil into ourselves the sense of responsibility that every solution to this community will come from, from this community, exactly, you know. So, we need that there was, there were, I think it was in 2008 it's something that was said by people of Zimbabwe, that solutions to the problems that Zimbabweans are having will only come from the Zimbabweans. So I'm saying it in that spirit that every community that has a problem will have to first look at itself, okay, and say we are the ones that can bring about a solution to whatever problem we are having in as much as we are expecting government efforts to come and try to solve our problems, but as a community, we have a responsibility of ensuring that we first take it upon ourselves to ensure that we have a better community (Themba 31-08-2024).

Themba also advocates for the development of sustainable programs that address the root cause of drug use amongst young males instead of just awareness programmes.

Melville unpacked the need for social impact programs to keep young men from using drugs:

When we speak of social impact programs, and we talk of that consistency, I can't, one day have a sports tournament, and then I call it annual, and then the next year it's gone. We need people to come on board and say, I'm going to be consistent, because I need to help these people. And if I'm going to help them, I need my consistency to be on point to these people, so that my social programmes are not dependent on me as a person, but they're dependent on us as a community. So, all of us step up to that plate and say, we're going to make these programs work and come up

*with ideas as a community. If the community develops programs from community, and those things are going to come from the community, because the community knows the community has problems. If those things come up and then are implemented and then consistent (*Melville, 02-09-2024).

Melville mentioned examples of the success of a fishing programme and driving programmes in teaching young men valuable skills. Melville emphasised community engagement and the role of fathers in providing alternatives to drug use. Melville also discussed the importance of creating an alternative lifestyle for young men and the role of community leaders in modelling positive behaviour.

The police also called for the working together of different stakeholders, Constable Maca emphasised stakeholders working together for the programs to be effective:
All the relevant departments for example the department of education, SAPS, department of correctional services, department of social development goes hand in hand with SASSA and then home affairs as well NGOs like FAMSA too if we could work together, more than just punishing them to being drug users. We ought to give them help because as the police we should be the last resort, we should not just act and arrest them, it is important to understand the root cause for them to end up committing crime/ become drug users (Maca, 18-12-2024).

4.6 Conclusion

Chapter four has thoroughly examined the multifaced factors contributing to male drug use in Amatolaville, drawing on rich qualitative data from respondents. The findings revealed that substance abuse among young males is not solely an individual issue but is deeply intertwined with a range of social, economic, and cultural influences. Key themes emerged from the findings, highlighting the significant role of socio-economic challenges, such as poverty and unemployment, which created an environment for vulnerability and limited opportunities. In essence, chapter four has provided a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay of factors contributing to drug use in Amatolaville. The insights gained from this chapter not only

enhance our understanding but also inform the development of targeted interventions aimed at mitigating the impact drug use within the community.

CHAPTER 5: TRANSFORMING THE INTRICATE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO MALE DRUG USE INTO MEANINGFUL INSIGHTS.

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Five: "Transforming the intricate factors contributing to Drug use into meaningful insights" serves as a critical examination of the complex interplay between individual, social, economic and cultural influences that drive substance abuse in Amatolaville. This chapter emerges from the recognition that drug use is not merely an individual choice, but a multifaceted issue deeply rooted in the community's social fabric. Ultimately, the insights gained from this analysis are intended to inform targeted interventions that do not only address the immediate challenges of drug use but also promote long-term community well-being and resilience. By transforming the factors contributing to drug use into meaningful insights, we can pave a way for a more informed and effective response to substance abuse in Amatolaville and similar communities.

A social problem, such as drug use among young males, is a social condition that has adverse effects on both the individual and society. Drug use is a social problem with an objective reality. Schreiber et al. (2017) estimated that the lifetime prevalence of drug use among South Africans is approximately four percent, with substance dependence at approximately one percent, according to a nationally representative household survey. Additionally, this study has collected data from individuals who use drugs.

However, there is a subjective reality too- drug use among males is perceived as problematic by the parents, the community and the police. The reason for this study focusing on public issues here is because sociologists make a distinction between troubles that can be addressed by changing the individual and issues which can be resolved by understanding the social forces that created them.

Mills (1957) contended that numerous social issues are not innate or the result of individual shortcomings; rather, they are rooted in society (the structures and interactions between individuals). These public issues include family dynamics, socio-economic challenges, cultural attitudes and norms, education deficits and lack of access to support services.

Consequently, as sociologists, we must identify and elucidate the social processes and structures that have established a generalised pattern for the private issue of drug use among males, transforming it into a public concern in the community. The community is characterised by a high prevalence of drug users.

5.2 The emotional Foundation of Drug use

According to Khantzian (1997), drugs are often used as a maladaptive coping mechanism for underlying issues such as depression and feelings of worthlessness. The findings revealed that individual vulnerabilities, such as feelings of worthlessness, depression and a loss of control over their lives contributed significantly to drug use amongst males. Drug users expressed sentiments of hopelessness and despair, with drugs as a coping mechanism as there's rarely other options to cope within the community.

Amatolaville has not made it fashionable for young men to be vulnerable regarding their mental health, both in the family and the community. The substance consumption rates of these young men was also influenced by the township ideology of strong masculinity. This has subsequently compelled them to seek solace in drugs and has perpetuated a cycle of addiction and emotional distress (Seedat et al., 2024; Mokwena & Morajele, 2014). The health behaviours of men, such as their propensity to indulge in substance abuse as a means of coping with emotional pain or asserting their identity, can be influenced by traditional views of masculinity, as discussed by Courtney (2000).

In addition to the social issue, there are disagreements between drug consumers and family members regarding the most effective approach to addressing this addiction. Drug users frequently experienced a sense of hopelessness and a lack of control over their circumstances, while family members frequently emphasised personal responsibility and accountability. This is due to the fact that drug users have reported experiencing social isolation as a result of the stigma and the dissolution of relationships with family members and acquaintances.

The conflicts between drug users and family members are indicative of more general family dynamics and concepts of accountability and responsibility. This distinction underscored a potential contributory factor: a lack of comprehension regarding the deep-seated motivations that underlie drug use.

Furthermore, the absence of appropriate channels in Amatolaville that enable these young males to confront their emotional impulses is also a structural failure. The majority of drug users expressed a desire for mental health resources and awareness campaigns to be easily accessible in order to assist them in the development of healthier coping strategies and the reduction of feelings of isolation. This necessitated not only individual and familial consensus, but also systemic change to establish support for these young males.

Family members frequently articulated their optimism for recovery and the potential for positive change, underscoring the significance of support and intervention. Conversely, certain drug users experienced a sense of hopelessness or resignation regarding their circumstances, which impeded their motivation to pursue assistance.
These personal difficulties and public issues both emphasise the necessity of offering multifaceted and targeted support services that cater to the distinctive obstacles encountered by the individuals and their families.

5.3 Family dynamics and influence

The immediate social environment, particularly family dynamics, plays a crucial role in influencing an individual's drug use behaviours due to the proximity of relationships and the direct impact of familial interactions.
Family instability was frequently identified as a substantial factor by both drug consumers and family members. Feelings of isolation and susceptibility to drug use were perceived as being exacerbated by the absence of strong parental figures, family conflicts, and emotional distress. A recurring theme was the role of personal trauma, such as the divorcing of parents and the intergenerational patterns of drug use, in the creation of an environment that is conducive to drug use.
The prevalence of female-headed households among drug users in Amatolaville—six out of eight interview participants identified as such—underscores a substantial factor that contributes to

drug use. Many mothers expressed the challenges they face when rearing young males, frequently feeling overwhelmed and lacking the resources necessary to offer effective guidance. One mother underscored the necessity of educational programs that are designed to enhance the parenting abilities of mothers, particularly those who are raising males. She observed that the strained communication within the household is a result of the animosity resulting from their children's drug use, which she believes may be a contributing factor to the current issue.

Some participants noted that their family members and the community normalized their behaviour, leading them to perceive addiction as an acceptable coping mechanism.
When family members engage in substance use or struggle with addiction, it creates a normalized perception of drug use that can easily be adopted by younger individuals within the household. According to the social learning theory, individuals learn behaviours through observation and imitation of others (Bandura, 1977).
In households where drug use is normalized, these young males see substance use as normative and accepted behaviour. This environment can cultivate a sense of acceptance or even encouragement towards substance experimentation, which can make it difficult for young people to recognise the risks associated with such behaviours. Consequently, drug use should not be exclusively considered an individual issue; rather, it is significantly influenced by the social environment in which an individual resides, including familial relationships, which collectively perpetuate patterns of substance use.

In order to promote well-being and reduce substance use, the need for families to work together and seek external support, such as from organisations like FAMSA, was a common point of discussion. The interviewees also noted that family unity and communication were crucial in supporting individuals struggling with addiction. Kumpfer et al (2012) on family strengthening states that it is essential to explore interventions that encompass family dynamics within substance program. Family-centred approaches, especially those that engage family members in discussions about drug use and coping strategies, can effectively change perception and reduce the prevalence of substance use among the youth. In the interviews, family members in particular suggested engaging families in treatment and promoting dialogue on drug use and how to be better parents which can foster healthier family environments.

Although participants mostly noted the significance of family support, they held varying perspectives on the extent to which family dynamics influenced substance use. According to certain respondents, drug use is significantly influenced by dysfunctional family relationships and relationships that are in conflict. Others noted that substance use can still be influenced by external factors, such as peer pressure and community norms, even in supportive family environments, suggesting that the family alone is insufficient.

Rogers and Badhwar (2008) examine the potential intersection of family dynamics with community influences, including peer pressure and social norms. Although a supportive family may offer resilience, external community factors can disrupt this, resulting in drug use. This emphasises the necessity of intervention that encompasses both familial systems and broader community support structures, further emphasising that drug use is not solely an individual failing but a structural failure.

5.4 Societal influence and economic realities of addiction

Theme Three demonstrated that male drug use in Amatolaville is a complex issue deeply rooted in social and economic contexts.

The influence of peers on drug use was a recurring theme. The individual's desire to conform to the norm and the pressure from companions drove them to experiment with drugs, as identified by family members, drug users, community members, and the police. Drug users explicitly observed that their decision to begin using drugs was significantly influenced by their ability to fit in with their peers. This sentiment is consistent with Gohn (2016), who emphasises peer influence as a critical factor in the development of drug use in adolescents.

The desire to conform to peers often overshadows individual judgements, highlighting an urgent need for community-based education targeting social acceptance of drug use (Chen, 2023). This is further supported by social learning theory, which posits that behaviours, such as drug use, are learned through observation and imitation, especially from peers (Bandura, 1977).

To promote healthcare and well-being, drug users pointed out the importance of fostering positive relationships and environments that discourage drug use.

Economic challenges, including poverty and unemployment, were also commonly identified as factors that drove individuals towards drugs. The economic challenges of Amatolaville have created an environment where drugs serve as an escape from the monotony and hopelessness that boredom and lack of job opportunities imposes (Bourgois, 2003).

Having financial resources also played a significant role in contributing to drug use within the community. Drug users revealed that when drug users have access to even a small amount of money, they often prioritize spending it on substances, such as drugs for smoking. This behaviour highlights how financial means also perpetuates a cycle of addiction, as the availability of money enables users to continue their substance use, leading to increased consumption and dependency. Many users indicated that without financial pressure, they might not resort to drug use as frequently, suggesting that economic factors are a crucial component in understanding the dynamics of substance abuse in the community.

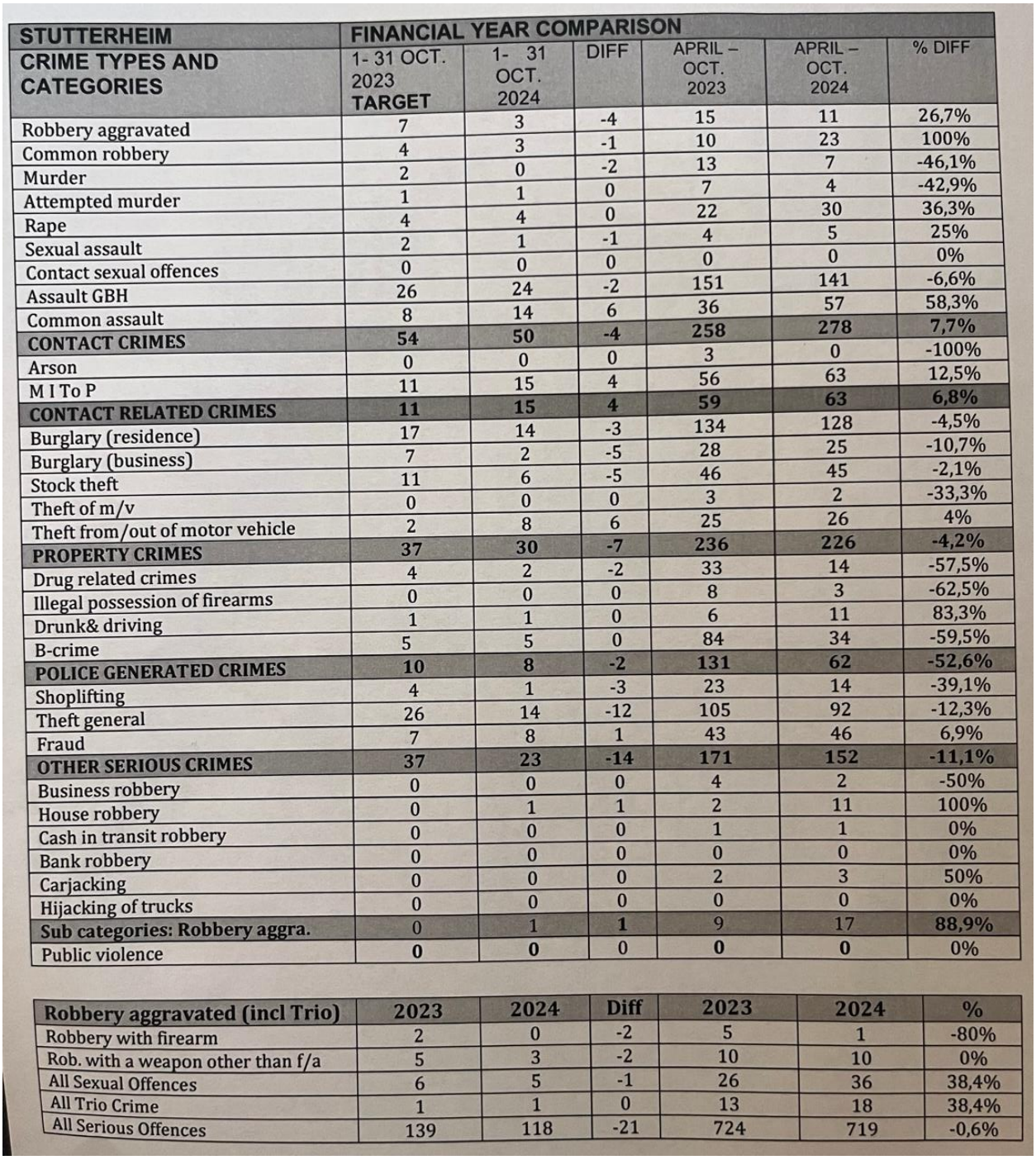
Family members, the police and community members also emphasized that financial strain led to desperation and a search for escape through drugs. Family members specifically mentioned experienced financial difficulties due to drug users behaviour including theft within the family and the neglect of responsibility, aligning with the study of Lundgren and Amodeo (2009) that indicates economic instability is worsened by drug use. The lack of financial stability was identified as a significant contributing to drug use in Amatolaville. Drug users articulated how economic distress not only influences behaviour but also perpetuates a cycle of addiction, where the inability to secure employment leads to drug use, which in turn also affects their future employment opportunities (Samson et al., 2018).

If a number of young males are not working due to drug addiction, this not only contributes to the labour of the community but South Africa perpetuating a cycle of poverty and crime in townships further reinforcing that drug use is a consequence of many systemic issues (Chikanda, 2018).

The police provided statistics regarding the offences they observed in Stutterheim that were linked to drugs. Public safety, crime rates, and community well-being are all affected by the prevalence of substance use among young people. Drug-related crimes, including larceny and

assault, are associated with this issue, suggesting that it extends beyond the confines of individual experience and becomes a social issue (Finney, 2014).

Figure 3: Crime statistics for Stutterheim in October 2024



STUTTERHEIM CRIME TYPES AND CATEGORIES	FINANCIAL YEAR COMPARISON					
	1- 31 OCT. 2023 TARGET	1- 31 OCT. 2024	DIFF	APRIL – OCT. 2023	APRIL – OCT. 2024	% DIFF
Robbery aggravated	7	3	-4	15	11	26,7%
Common robbery	4	3	-1	10	23	100%
Murder	2	0	-2	13	7	-46,1%
Attempted murder	1	1	0	7	4	-42,9%
Rape	4	4	0	22	30	36,3%
Sexual assault	2	1	-1	4	5	25%
Contact sexual offences	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Assault GBH	26	24	-2	151	141	-6,6%
Common assault	8	14	6	36	57	58,3%
CONTACT CRIMES	**54**	**50**	**-4**	**258**	**278**	**7,7%**
Arson	0	0	0	3	0	-100%
M I To P	11	15	4	56	63	12,5%
CONTACT RELATED CRIMES	**11**	**15**	**4**	**59**	**63**	**6,8%**
Burglary (residence)	17	14	-3	134	128	-4,5%
Burglary (business)	7	2	-5	28	25	-10,7%
Stock theft	11	6	-5	46	45	-2,1%
Theft of m/v	0	0	0	3	2	-33,3%
Theft from/out of motor vehicle	2	8	6	25	26	4%
PROPERTY CRIMES	**37**	**30**	**-7**	**236**	**226**	**-4,2%**
Drug related crimes	4	2	-2	33	14	-57,5%
Illegal possession of firearms	0	0	0	8	3	-62,5%
Drunk& driving	1	1	0	6	11	83,3%
B-crime	5	5	0	84	34	-59,5%
POLICE GENERATED CRIMES	**10**	**8**	**-2**	**131**	**62**	**-52,6%**
Shoplifting	4	1	-3	23	14	-39,1%
Theft general	26	14	-12	105	92	-12,3%
Fraud	7	8	1	43	46	6,9%
OTHER SERIOUS CRIMES	**37**	**23**	**-14**	**171**	**152**	**-11,1%**
Business robbery	0	0	0	4	2	-50%
House robbery	0	1	1	2	11	100%
Cash in transit robbery	0	0	0	1	1	0%
Bank robbery	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Carjacking	0	0	0	2	3	50%
Hijacking of trucks	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Sub categories: Robbery aggra.	0	1	**1**	9	17	**88,9%**
Public violence	**0**	**0**	0	**0**	**0**	0%

Robbery aggravated (incl Trio)	2023	2024	Diff	2023	2024	%
Robbery with firearm	2	0	-2	5	1	-80%
Rob. with a weapon other than f/a	5	3	-2	10	10	0%
All Sexual Offences	6	5	-1	26	36	38,4%
All Trio Crime	1	1	0	13	18	38,4%
All Serious Offences	139	118	-21	724	719	-0,6%

Source: Statistics captured by Stutterheim police station.

Figure 4: Crime statistics from November 2024 in Stutterheim

STUTTERHEIM	FINANCIAL YEAR COMPARISON					
CRIME TYPES AND CATEGORIES	1- 30 NOV. 2023 TARGET	1- 30 NOV. 2024	DIFF	APRIL – NOV. 2023	APRIL – NOV. 2024	% DIFF
Robbery aggravated	2	2	0	17	13	-23,5%
Common robbery	4	4	0	14	27	92,9%
Murder	1	0	-1	14	7	-50%
Attempted murder	1	0	-1	8	4	-50%
Rape	5	2	-3	27	32	18,5%
Sexual assault	1	2	1	5	7	40%
Contact sexual offences	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Assault GBH	25	18	-7	176	159	-9,7%
Common assault	6	3	-3	42	60	42,9%
CONTACT CRIMES	**45**	**31**	**-14**	**303**	**309**	**1,9%**
Arson	0	0	0	3	0	-100%
M I To P	6	6	0	62	69	11,2%
CONTACT RELATED CRIMES	**6**	**6**	**0**	**65**	**69**	**6,1%**
Burglary (residence)	38	25	-13	172	153	-4,5%
Burglary (business)	4	1	-3	32	26	-18,75%
Stock theft	3	5	2	49	50	-2%
Theft of m/v	2	1	-1	5	3	-40%
Theft from/out of motor vehicle	1	5	2	26	31	19,2%
PROPERTY CRIMES	**48**	**37**	**-11**	**284**	**263**	**-7,3%**
Drug related crimes	0	8	8	33	22	-33,3%
Illegal possession of firearms	0	0	0	8	3	-62,5%
Drunk& driving	0	0	0	6	11	83,3%
B-crime	2	1	-1	86	35	-59,3%
POLICE GENERATED CRIMES	**2**	**9**	**7**	**133**	**71**	**-100%**
Shoplifting	7	4	-3	30	18	-40%
Theft general	12	11	-1	117	103	-12%
Fraud	1	5	4	44	51	15,9%
OTHER SERIOUS CRIMES	**20**	**20**	**0**	**191**	**172**	**-9,9%**
Business robbery	0	3	3	4	5	25%
House robbery	1	0	-1	3	11	100%
Cash in transit robbery	0	0	0	1	1	0%
Bank robbery	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Carjacking	0	0	0	2	3	50%
Hijacking of trucks	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Sub categories: Robbery aggra.	1	3	**2**	10	20	**100%**
Public violence	**0**	**0**	0	**0**	**0**	0%

Robbery aggravated (incl Trio)	2023	2024	Diff	2023	2024	%
Robbery with firearm	0	0	0	5	1	-80%
Rob. with a weapon other than f/a	2	2	0	12	12	0%
All Sexual Offences	6	4	-2	32	39	21,9%
All Trio Crime	1	3	2	14	21	50%
All Serious Offences	119	94	-25	843	813	-3,6%

Source: Statistics captured by Stutterheim police station.

Figure 3 is illustrating the overall crime statistics for October 2024, highlighting a notable focus on property crimes, which include thefts and burglaries. Additionally, it reflects an uptick in drug-related offenses during this period, indicating a concerning trend that may warrant further investigation and community intervention efforts.

Figure 4 provides the crime statistics for November 2024, revealing a continuation or potential escalation in property crimes compared to October. The data shows an increase in incidents of drug-related crimes as well, suggesting that the issues are persisting or worsening. The statistics over these two months underline the need for comprehensive strategies to address both property crime and substance abuse within the community, as these are critical areas that impact public safety and well-being

Three of the drug users mentioned that they were confronted with legal challenges, including arrests and incarnation as a result of robberies that were motivated by a desire for a fix. Furthermore, the absence of resources for law enforcement and the community support system is a public concern that exacerbates the private struggles of individuals. The police officers emphasised that their capacity to effectively address drug-related issues is impeded by the limited manpower and vehicles at their disposal. This systemic failure is indicative of a more extensive social issue that pertains to community support, policy, and funding (Gordon, 2015).

There was a consensus on the necessity for better resources, including affordable treatment centres and counselling services. Drug users suggested being involved in community working centres as jobs could release the pressure of constantly wanting to rob to get a fix.
They also stressed the importance of government intervention and collaboration with healthcare providers to create effective systems for individuals and families affected with drug use.

The call was for a multifaceted approach when tackling drug use, recognising that effective interventions must address not only the individual choices but also the broader societal and economic conditions that facilitate these behaviours. By fostering community resilience, enhancing economic opportunities, and reshaping social norms around drug use (Fleming and

Haggerty, 2011), community members can thus work toward mitigating the risks associated with addiction Amatolaville.

5.5 Theme four Cultural acceptance and the normalisation of drug use

Cultural acceptance, high availability, easy access and the normalisation of drug use in Amatolaville emerged as significant public issues affecting young males. There was a recurring theme across all interviews that drug use has been normalised within the Amatolaville community, making it more acceptable and less stigmatised.

The normalisation of drug use in Amatolaville, high availability, and simple access, are significant public issues that affect young males. Drug use has been normalised within the Amatolaville community, resulting in a decrease in stigma and an increase in acceptance, as a consensus was reached in all interviews.

The normalisation of drug use among peers was particularly noticeable by community members, resulting in a culture in which drug use is both accepted and disregarded. According to Christopher (2001), the acceptance of drug use in townships is frequently influenced by a variety of socio-cultural factors, such as the absence of strong community support, economic hardship, and peer influence. In Amatolaville, the cultural approval of drug use is evident in the manner in which it is incorporated into community practices and social interactions. As indicated in the interviews, the stigma associated with drug use is reduced and its normalisation is promoted by the acceptability of sharing substances among family members.. This cultural context fosters an environment in which drug use is not only tolerated but frequently encouraged, resulting in elevated rates of experimentation and addiction among young individuals.

The concept of "crab mentality" is closely associated with how the interviewees described the attitude toward drug use in the community.

Crab mentality is a social phenomenon in which members of a group attempt to impede the success of others who are attempting to improve their situation. This behaviour frequently results from feelings of envy, insecurity, or fear of being outperformed (Cruz, 2014). According to Durkheim (1983), the collective consciousness theory posits that the beliefs and values that are

shared within a community have a substantial impact on the perceptions and behaviours of individuals.

In the context of Amatolaville, the concept of crab mentality is vividly displayed in the struggle for individuals to better themselves amidst a community that often undermines such aspirations. Many young males expressed a desire to break free from the cycle of poverty and substance abuse that afflicts their community, as was emphasised in the interviews. Nevertheless, the prevalent normalisation of substance use and peer pressure frequently impede these positive intentions.

Many individuals who endeavour to adopt healthier lifestyles or pursue rehabilitation encounter ridicule or opposition from their peers, as the community's acceptance of substance use fosters an environment in which such behaviour is perceived as the norm. James elucidates this dynamic in his interviews, where he observes that the majority of community members are drug users, and that the pervasive influence of drug culture renders any attempt at recovery futile. One interviewee stated, "In this community, it's what everybody does," illustrating the strain that compels individuals to use drugs as a coping mechanism for their situation.
Additionally, the practice of drug peddling, particularly to young men and boys, perpetuates a cycle of addiction.

The belief that drug use is acceptable and even desirable is further entrenched by the fact that drugs are so easily accessible in the community. These young males are attracted to this cycle by observing their older peers or role models engaging in drug use without confronting social reprimand, which leads them to begin using substances such as crystal meth and Mandrax. As described by participants in the interviews, this lack of accountability perpetuates the notion that drug use is not only tolerated but also encouraged. They observed that children "see from us that it is normal" and that family members occasionally contribute to this normalisation by sharing substances among themselves.

The crabs-in-the-bucket mentality is apparent when we consider that, rather than assisting those who are striving for improvement, members of the community may inadvertently undermine

their efforts to change by perpetuating the cycle of addiction. Consequently, in a community such as Amatolaville, where economic hardship and limited opportunities are prevalent, the interplay between social acceptance of drug use and individual aspiration embodies a potent challenge that impedes progress and perpetuates despair among young males.

To address these broader societal issues, interventions in Amatolaville must aim to challenge the narrative around drug use. Some respondents suggested that educational programs in schools and community could challenge the normalisation of drug use and promote healthier lifestyle choices. Hawkins et al (1992) has shown that educational interventions can effectively shape attitudes and behaviours regarding drug use, highlighting the importance of addressing societal factors that contribute to drug use. By promoting resilience and fostering community dialogue, such interventions can mitigate the detrimental effects of drug normalisation and empower these young males to pursue healthier, more fulfilling lives and reduce drug use in Amatolaville. However, these interventions remain futile if the community does not want to change its mentality on drugs.

5.7 Call for Action: Bridging the Gap in Community support and Rehabilitation

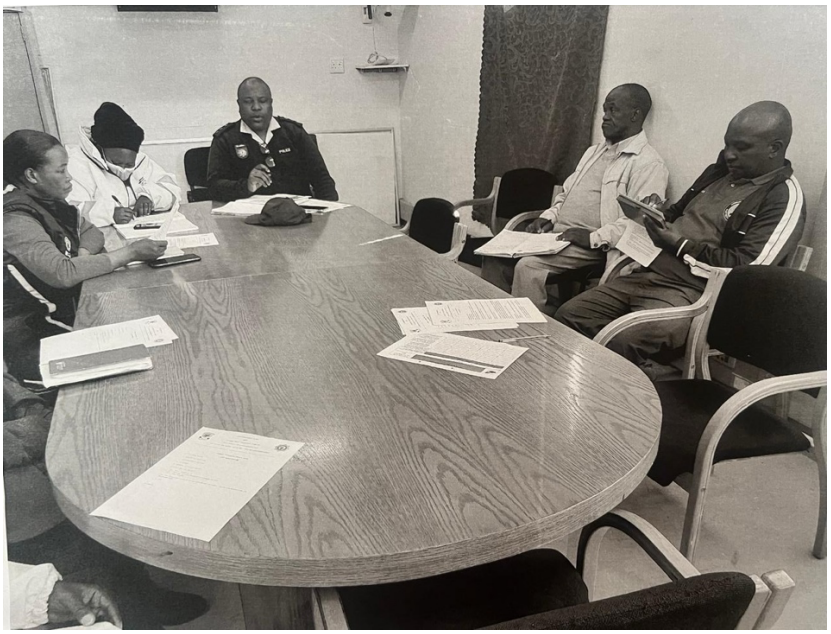
The “Call for Action” theme served as rallying point for change in Amatolaville. It emphasized the urgent need for concerted efforts to bridge the existing gaps in community support and rehabilitation services.

The respondents argued that drug use was a result of broader societal issues such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to education. Cerda (2010) posits that economic instability, such as poverty and unemployment, can increase vulnerability to drug use as young men resort to substances to cope. Drug users expressed a lack of effective community support systems, community members also noted limited availability of support systems and rehabilitation programs and insufficient community initiatives.

There was a significant call among all interviews for community involvement in addressing male drug use in Amatolaville, with the respondents, particularly the police and community

members expressing the need for stronger ties between community members and local authorities. They recalled community-led initiatives to address these root causes and promote healthier lifestyles.

Figure 5: Engagement between the police and the community



Source: Picture captured by the Stutterheim police officers.

Figure 5 is illustrating the engagement between the police and community members in Stutterheim. This figure highlights various initiatives or events where police officers interact directly with the community, fostering trust and improving relations. Such engagements are essential for building community safety, as they encourage open communication and collaboration.

These community led organisations should address various needs, including housing, education, and recreation, to create a supportive environment for recovery. To achieve these, several interviewees advocated for a holistic approach to addressing drug use, which included tackling underlying issues such as unemployment, mental health issues, lack of education, and social inequality all together.
Engaging communities in proactive dialogues about drug prevention and support could promote a more collaborative effort in combating the drug problem, as per the interviews.

Participants identified a critical need for government intervention to establish treatment facilities and educational programs on drug use and its implications. Education was emphasised as a critical factor in the prevention of drug use. They emphasised the necessity for awareness programmes that educated community members about the dangers of drug use and promote healthier lifestyles. Interviewees called for improved education programmes in schools and communities to raise awareness about the risks associated with drug use and to equip individuals with the knowledge to make informed choices. The effectiveness of educational initiatives in precenting drug use is also emphasised in numerous studies. For instance, the World Health Organisation (2011) highlights that awareness and education empowers individuals with knowledge linked to drug use, thus promoting healthier choices. However, community members expressed that the community should note solely rely on government to produce solutions, it should start from the community's mentality to not only want change but pursue it.
They suggested creating sustainable long-term community programmes, such as sports teams and volunteering projects, to engage drug users and the community and effectively reduce drug use. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (2018), robust community support structures, including mentorship and recreational activities, can provide these individuals with positive alternatives to drug use.

The police acknowledged hosting these awareness programs in schools and encouraged the community to attend and take them seriously as in the past tended not to attend/ take them seriously.

Figure 6: Police hosting awareness programs



Source: Picture captured by the Stutterheim police station.

Figure 6 is illustrating police officers hosting awareness programs about drugs for high school children in Stutterheim. These initiatives are vital in educating young people about the dangers of drug abuse and promoting healthier lifestyle choices. By actively engaging with students, the police play an essential role in prevention efforts, helping to empower youth with knowledge and resources to make informed decisions

The police also called for increased training for the police and community leaders to better understand and respond to drug-related issues as critical, emphasizing a multifaceted approach to intervention that encompasses community and institutional collaboration.

In summary, all the participants collectively acknowledged the multifaced nature of drug use and the need for collaborative, community-driven approach that encompassed education, family

support, and comprehensive resources to effectively address the issue. The role of collaborative efforts amongst drug users, families, community members is important, McMahon and Cormier (2018) highlights that integrated approaches that involve diverse community stakeholders lead to more effective prevention and intervention strategies.

While there were common themes among the interviewees regarding the challenges of drug use, their perspectives differed significantly in terms of the individual versus community responsibility, the role of family dynamic, approaches to prevention and treatment, and the influence of cultural and societal factors. Some of the drug users focused more on the individual experiences of drug users, discussing personal stories and the psychological aspect of addiction without delving deeply into the cultural context. In contrast, family members prioritized immediate family dynamics and family relationships as the primary focus for addressing drug abuse.

The police officers highlighted the importance of collaboration between law enforcement, social services, and community organizations. This collective response indicates that drug use is not solely an individual problem but a requires coordinated effort to address the root causes and provide support. Community members advocated for proactive measures, such as mentorship programs, community mentality change and community engagement initiatives, to prevent drug use amongst youth. They emphasized the need for positive environments and opportunities for young people. Conversely, family members focused on reactive measures, such as rehabilitation and counselling for those already affected by drug use. They stressed the need for immediate support system rather than solely focusing on prevention. Marlatt and Donovan (2005) suggests that successful rehabilitation programmes must be culturally sensitive and community-oriented, addressing the specific needs and values of the population they serve.

There were differing opinions on the best approaches to treatment. While family members and community members stressed the importance of education and awareness programmes to prevent drug use, some drug users felt such initiatives were often disconnected from their realities and did not address the underlying issues they faced.

Conclusion

The analysis of the research findings were specifically addressed in this chapter. The analysis of the data employed the sociological imagination to elucidate how individual drug use behaviours are influenced by broader social structures, including socio-economic factors, the culture, and the absence of community programs, in exploring the factors that contribute to male drug use in Amatolaville. This demonstrates the multifaceted nature of the drug use issue, underscoring the necessity of obtaining the perspectives of drug users, family members, community members, and the police in interviews. The interviews' fundamental causes and solutions underscore the interplay between individual troubles and public issues, indicating that solutions would require a comprehensive approach.

The "crab mentality" of the community was a significant public issue that impacted these young males. The concept of social disorganisation was brought to our attention by the collapse of social structures and institutions in Amatolaville, which resulted in a lack of social cohesion and an increase in social problems. This established a favourable environment for the normalisation of drug use within the community and the development of a community culture that condones it. Individuals in Amatolaville exhibit a "crab mentality," which has become a public concern in both the community and the country.

By incorporating target 3 of the sustainable development goals, it is evident that substance misuse necessitates a comprehensive strategy that takes into account the socio-economic and cultural contexts in which these issues arise. In order to establish a comprehensive framework for addressing substance abuse, there must be a willingness to participate from all community members and collaboration among stakeholders, including local government, healthcare providers, and community organisations, in order to enhance community support and rehabilitation.

Chapter 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of the Research report

The sociological imagination was employed as a theoretical framework to explore the underlying causes of drug use among males in Amatolaville. The study explored the individual, social, and structural factors that influence drug use, as well as the ways in which these factors are influenced by community culture and attitudes towards drug use. The study collected personal narratives from a variety of sources, such as adolescent males, family members, community members, and police, to investigate their perceptions and experiences regarding male drug use.

The study was prompted by the increasing prevalence of drug use in communities such as Amatolaville, where socio-economic challenges, including poverty, unemployment, and limited access to education and health services, create a conducive environment for drug use. The objective of the research was to address the extant gaps in the comprehension of the intricate interplay of factors that contribute to drug use among men, with the objective of promoting mental well-being and preventing substance abuse, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3). The literature suggested that drug use among men is frequently associated with the cultural constructs of masculinity, in which drug use is perceived as a means of coping with vulnerability and asserting one's identity. This research furthers the notion that drug use should be considered not only an individual decision, but also a reflection of more complex social issues, such as cultural norms and structural inequality. The significance of confronting both personal struggles and systemic challenges in the development of holistic interventions that promote community well-being is emphasised by the prevailing perspective in current research.

6.2 Objectives Achieved

The research on male drug use in Amatolaville has methodically addressed and achieved each defined target through an integrated approach that combines qualitative analysis, theoretical frameworks, and community interaction. The following clarifies the fulfilment of each objective:

6.2.1 Application of the Sociological Imagination Theory

Achievement: The research utilised Mills' Sociological Imagination to contextualise the examination of male drug use within the overarching framework of social systems. Interviews from participants have been analysed to reveal that their experiences with drug use are not isolated occurrences but are significantly shaped by societal issues, including economic adversity, norms of culture, and historical settings.

Analysing personal narratives in conjunction with social factors revealed the interrelation between individual behaviours and broader social challenges. The findings demonstrated that drug usage may serve as a coping technique in a population grappling with unemployment, poverty, and restricted leisure options. This theoretical framework facilitated a more nuanced comprehension of male drug use, recognising it as an expression of broader societal conditions and achieving the goal of clarifying these effects.

6.2.2 Investigating community Culture and Perspectives on Substances

Achievement: The research incorporated insights into local community culture and prevailing attitudes towards drug use through qualitative interviews with young boys, families, community members, and stakeholders, including law enforcement.

The data collected indicated that drug use is frequently normalised within the cultural context of Amatolaville. Peer pressure, perceptions of masculinity, and cultural acceptance of substance use and 'crab mentality' within the community significantly influenced the drug behaviours of young guys. The objective was effectively achieved as the study revealed the direct influence of cultural attitudes on individual drug use decisions, underscoring the necessity for tailored interventions aligned with community values and beliefs.

6.2.3 Implementation of Target 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals

Achievement: The research corresponded with Target 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3), which emphasises the promotion of mental health and the prevention of substance abuse. This was specifically examined by assessing the effectiveness of current community initiatives in diminishing substance use and improving mental health services.

The study evaluated the efficacy of existing intervention programs and found deficiencies in mental health and addiction support within the community through the collection of qualitative data and personal narratives. Suggestions were offered for creating community-oriented solutions that empower communities and employ locally educated tactics for prevention and assistance. By including local perspectives into the solution design, the research achieved its objectives of fostering community-based responses that address the needs of young males in Amatolaville, while also seeking to match with global health objectives.

6.3 Aims Achieved.

6.3.1 The study has successfully achieved its aims by employing a qualitative methodology. The study gathered personal narratives from young males, family members, community members, and the police in order to address the limited epidemiology data on drug use data in South Africa. This approach allowed for the capture of a diverse spectrum of experiences. The qualitative method provided a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which the individual experiences of the residents of Amatolaville reflect the broader societal issues in South Africa.

6.3.2 It is imperative to comprehend the socio-economic and cultural obstacles that are distinctive to Amatolaville and that contribute to the prevalence of male drug use, as well as the shared and divergent perspectives of community members. The research aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 3, which emphasises the promotion of mental wellness and the reduction of substance use, by examining the role of these socio-economic challenges in the development of drug use among males.

6.3.3 The research employed a bottom-up approach, enabling drug users and community members to express their experiences and the obstacles they encounter in relation to drug use. The significance of community-driven solutions in addressing drug use is underscored by this empowerment, which thereby bridges the divide in understanding and promotes local interventions.

Ultimately, the study has advocated for grassroots solutions that empower the community by engaging with community members, applying pertinent theoretical frameworks, and identifying

socio-economic and cultural factors that contribute to drug use. In essence, the study has successfully met its aims.

6.4 Answering the Research Question

6.4.1 What factors contribute to men using drugs in Amatolaville

The research identified multiple contributing factors to male drug use in Amatolaville, including personal struggles with mental health, family instability, socio-economic conditions, peer and pressure. The normalisation of drug use in Amatolaville, creating a 'crab mentality' amongst community members, influenced by masculinity and social expectations, exacerbates the issue. The findings illustrated that drug use is not merely contributed by an individual problem, but a complex phenomenon interwoven with broader societal issues.

6.4 .1.1 Sub-question 1

What are the individual factors that influence male drug use in Amatolaville, and how can understanding these factors contribute to achieving SDG 3 targets to reduce substance abuse and promote mental well-being?

Individual factors such as mental health deficiencies, trauma, and the need for coping mechanisms, and the desire for social acceptance influence male drug use in Amatolaville. The study highlights that addressing these individual influences, such as providing mental health support and promote healthier coping mechanisms, can lead to improved well-being and contribute to achieving SDG 3 targets by reducing drug use and promote well-being in Amatolaville.

6.4.1.2 Sub-question 2

How do societal factors in Amatolavile affect male drug use, and in what ways can addressing these social influences support SDG 3 goals in reducing harmful drug use and improving health outcomes?

Societal influences such as poverty, crab mentality, cultural perceptions of masculinity and drug use social norms surrounding drug use have a profound impact on male drug use in Amatolaville.

The research underscored that these structural issues create an environment where drug use becomes an escape.

Societal factors such as peer pressure, unemployment, and boredom significantly impact male drug use. The research underscores that these structural issues create an environment where drug use becomes a coping mechanism. By addressing societal influences through community development initiatives, educational opportunities, and economic support, it can lead to improved health outcomes. Collaborative efforts involving local government, community organizations, and healthcare providers can effectively reduce harmful drug use and bolster overall community health, aligning with SDG 3 goals.

Overall, the study demonstrates that there is an interplay between individual and societal factors contributing to drug use among men in Amatolaville. While the initial turnout for participants was limited, which was anticipated, it has opened the door for further data collection and future initiatives. Utilizing qualitative methods, such as interviews, has allowed me to gain insights from diverse perspectives across various groups, enriching my understanding of the issue at hand.

6.5 Contributions

By centring the study on Amatolaville, a specific township, the study provided a nuanced understanding of drug use within this socio-cultural context. This highlights that drug use behaviour can vary considerably by location, providing a more localised perspective adds depth to existing literature on drug use in South Africa.

The use of Mills' Sociological Imagination as a theoretical framework allowed the exploration of the connections between personal experiences and broader societal issues. This approach deepens the analysis of how socioeconomic structures and cultural norms shape individual behaviours related to drug use, encouraging a framework that considers both personal and public issues, thus enriching sociological discourse

Khunou (2012) was critical of previous studies on men's health and urged future studies that address men's health should critically focus on idealised versions on masculinity and promote well-being. This research focused specifically on the experiences of the males and emphasizes the importance of incorporating the voices of community members, including drug users, their

families, and local authorities, into the understanding of drug use. This engagement ensured that solutions are rooted in the realities of those directly affected, fostering community-based approaches that offer more sustainable and acceptable interventions.
The focus on Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3) allows the study to situate its findings in a global agenda, linking local drug abuse issues to international efforts to improve health and well-being. This connection underscores the relevance of local studies in contributing to broader global health initiatives and strategies.

Overall, the study extends existing knowledge on male drug use by presenting a detailed, contextually rich analysis that emphasises the importance of community perspectives and socio-economic frameworks, thereby serving as a valuable resource for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners engaged in addressing substance abuse issues.

6.6 Limitations

Despite the valuable insights gained from this research, the study acknowledges several limitations. The qualitative nature of the study, while providing depth and richness to the study, limits generalizability of the results to other contexts. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, as respondents may be reluctant to disclose their substance use behaviours fully.

6.7 Recommendations

One of the primary limitations of this thesis pertains to the somewhat disjointed relationship between the literature review and the empirical analysis. With additional time, I would have sought to more thoroughly integrate the literature into the empirical discussion in order to develop a cohesive and analytically rigorous narrative throughout the thesis. I recognize the importance of explicitly linking theoretical insights with empirical findings to enhance the overall coherence and scholarly contribution of the work. Furthermore, conducting an extension or a supplementary study could potentially improve the depth and robustness of the analysis.

There is a notable lack of conceptual clarity in the thesis concerning the distinction between 'drug use' and 'drug abuse.' The use of the stylized term “drug ab(use)” in the title appears to reflect a deliberate and critical engagement with the discursive and analytical boundaries between these concepts. To strengthen the conceptual framework, future research should explicitly differentiate between 'drug use' and 'drug abuse' by drawing on literature from public health, addiction studies, and critical drug research. Such an approach would facilitate more precise categorization of behaviours—such as culturally accepted use, risky or harmful use, and dependence—thereby enhancing both conceptual clarity and analytical rigor in understanding the complexities of substance-related behaviours.

With additional time to refine and develop the research, I would have achieved a more cohesive integration and clearer articulation of the conceptual framework throughout the analysis. This would have enhanced the overall coherence between the theoretical underpinnings and the thematic findings, thereby strengthening the validity of the conclusions. Moreover, it would have provided a more solid and comprehensive foundation for practical interventions and policy recommendations. Recognizing this as a key area for improvement, I will prioritize its development in future research to ensure more impactful and theoretically grounded outcomes.

Given sufficient time, I would have incorporated the influential work of Kopano Ratele, particularly his publication *Liberating Masculinities*, to enrich the analysis. Furthermore, for any future extensions of this study or related research, it is highly recommended to give careful consideration to Ratele's work, as it offers valuable insights and a nuanced understanding of masculinities within this context. Integrating his perspectives would significantly enhance the depth and relevance of the analysis and contribute to more comprehensive intervention strategies.

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APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix A: Ethics clearance certificate

7.2 Appendix B: Participant Information Sheets

7.3 Appendix C: Consent form

7.4 Appendix D: Interview Schedules

7.5 Appendix E: Distress Protocol

7.6 Appendix F: Permission letters